

Fight on!

A FANZINE FOR THE OLD SCHOOL RENAISSANCE

**for Fantasy Role Playing Campaigns played with
Pencil, Paper, and Your Imagination**



**ISSUE #5
SPRING 2009**

dedicated to Timothy J. Kask
for his pioneering editorship of *The Dragon*.
May he always make his saving throw.



Gary and I shared the opinion that one of the things that kept *D&D* from spreading any more rapidly was the lack of imaginative DMs...*OD&D* required an awful lot from the very first DMs that are/were responsible for the game becoming accepted and played. The entire burden was on them. When I took *D&D* back to my game club, I had to concoct a story line, build dungeons from scratch, call upon every bit of fantasy I had ever read and spin it all together...We all had to do that; if we hadn't, *D&D* would have died aborning. I have the utmost respect for that first generation of DMs, precisely because I was one and know how terribly hard it was. But, lordy lordy, SO much fun!

- Tim Kask, *Dragonsfoot* message boards, April-May 2007

The necromancer leaned on his dragonskull staff as he walked the broken, rocky shoreline. At the farthest point of the promontory he stopped, gazing deeply into the sea. Under the ocean an ancient, forgotten world met his eldritch stare: shattered temples, derelict libraries, rotting parklands, crumbling academies of arcane lore. Ghostly voices bubbled up through lapping waves: laughter and dispute, joyful camaraderie and valiant oaths.

The base of his staff struck the rock as he spoke a single word: *Rise!* The earth shook; the sea boiled; strange sibilant runes wove gossamer threads through the din.

The ancient continent rose....

Welcome to issue #5 of *Fight On!* Our unstoppable march to FRP glory continues apace with the news that we have proved victorious in lulu.com's first-ever author sales contest, for the month of March. We are honored and humbled by all the support we received during the contest; we'll try to thank you by continuing to put out the best magazine we can. Thanks also as usual to M.A.R. Barker for his blessing in publishing material for the original *Empire of the Petal Throne* game, and also to Dan Proctor for similar permission with respect to *Labyrinth Lord*. Our abbreviations should be broadly recognizable to lovers of old-school fantasy games. We use DC for Defense Class.

Fight On! is a quarterly publication, and we need your submissions! Please email anything you'd like to share to iggyumlaut@gmail.com, especially contributions for our regular columns. Our authors and artists own all their own work. *Fight On!* only asks for the right to print your work in the issue it's originally published in, in that form, in perpetuity. Authors and artists own all other rights and may re-use and re-sell their work to anyone else as they see fit. If you want to contact one of our authors or artists, drop me a line and I'll put you in touch (or just contact them directly if you know how). Written submissions or artwork for the magazine can be sent to 1122 Pearl Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48197 USA. If you have received an issue of *Fight On!* in print or PDF form without paying for it, please consider sending \$1 (or whatever you feel is appropriate) via www.paypal.com to iggyumlaut@gmail.com or by mail to the address above.

Fight On! is a journal of shared fantasy. We who read and write for this magazine are a community of role-playing enthusiasts unified by our love of the freewheeling, do-it-yourself approach that birthed this hobby back in the 1970's. We are wargamers who write our own rules and fantasists who build our own worlds, weekend warriors sharing dreams of glory and authors collaborating on tales of heroism and valor. We talk, paint, draw, write, act, costume, build and roll dice in service of our visions. We game. And you're welcome to join us.

-Ignatius Ümlaut, Publisher and Editor

Table of Contents:

Background Professions (Akrasia).....	3
The Scholar (Zachary Houghton).....	4
The Wuuky! (Moritz Mehlem and Frank Ditsche).....	5
Distinctive Magic (Houghton, Dörfliger, & Calithena).....	7
The Deck O' Stuff (Jeff Rients).....	9
The Tomb of Ixtandraz (Lee Barber).....	11
Delvers Delve: Extended Crawling (David Bowman).....	17
Tables for Fables (Age of Fable).....	20
Dungeon Motivations (Paul Vermeren).....	21
Knights & Knaves (Del L. Beaudry).....	23
Black Blood (Gabor Lux).....	25
Pentastadion (Gabor Lux).....	36
Creepies & Crawlies (Alex Schröder, Wayne Rossi, Jeff Rients, Terje Nordin, and Geoffrey McKinney).....	39
Tucker & Co. (M. "Chgowiz" Shorten).....	44
Bad Hair Day (Peter Schmidt Jensen).....	44
Fight On! (Jason Vasché).....	45
Education of a Magic User (Douglas Cox).....	45
A Few for the Road (Michael Curtis).....	47
A Giant Dilemma (Frank Farris).....	50
Clarisseth (Tony Dowler).....	53
It Used to be a Hobbit Hole (Baz Blatt).....	54
The Barrow of Therex (Erin "Taichara" Bisson).....	55
The Devil's in the Details: Pygmy Folk (Baz Blatt).....	56
Seven Kings Mountains (Judd Karlman).....	62
The Darkness Beneath, Level 2 (Calithena).....	67
The Tower of Thalen Garh (John Hitchens).....	78
Oceanian Legends (Del L. Beaudry).....	79
Guest Editorial (Timothy J. Kask).....	81
Merlin's Mystical Mirror (Jeff Rients).....	83
Artifacts, Adjuncts, & Oddments (Greg Backus, Terje Nordin, Jeff Rients, and Calithena).....	87

Front Cover by Kevin Mayle (kevinmayle.netaidz.com/main.php). Back Cover by Settembrini. *Fight On!* and Erol Otus logos by Jeff Rients. Tim Kask photo by Rich Franks. *Knights & Knaves* and *Creepies & Crawlies* logos by Lee Barber. Interior artwork and cartography by Andrew Reyes (4,19), Richard Scott/Otherworld Miniatures (5), Andy "Atom" Taylor (7), Jeff Rients (9), Lee Barber (ghosttower.crihitcomics.com, 11,13,14,15,16,17,23,73), Age of Fable (20), Gabor Lux (25,27,30,32,33,36,37), Kelvin Green (26,43,45,52,87), Georges Roux (34), Alex Schröder (39,40,62), Peter Seckler (40), Jason Pierce (jasonpierce.animaldillo.com, 42), M. "Chgowiz" Shorten (44), Peter Schmidt Jensen (44,50), Douglas Cox (45), Frank Farris (51), Tony Dowler (53), Baz Blatt (54), Erin "Taichara" Bisson (55), Keshar (59,61), Carl Brodt/Tita's House of Games (60), Vincent Baker (63,64,65,66), Robert S. Conley (67), Paul "Bliss Infinite" Fini (indieonlycomics.com, 68), David Bowman (70), Anthony Stiller (72), Steve Zieser (74,81), Calithena (75,77), Patrick Farley (76), Kevin Vito (77), Pete Mullen (83), Joseph Browning (84), and Dan Proctor (85). We also used public domain clipart from karenswhimsy.com (3,8,10,29,35,38,42,47,52,86) and wiki-media commons (48,49,56).

Background Professions

character options by Akrasia

Player characters weren't always adventurers. Before they decided to head off into dark mysterious dungeons or ogre-infested wilderlands, they likely started down one or more 'respectable' career paths. In many 'old school' fantasy role-playing games, however, this aspect of a character's early life has no effect on that character's abilities. This optional rule aims to rectify this situation. It also provides a low-impact way to differentiate characters, providing greater depth and personality and giving supporting material for party interactions. For example: Cormac the fighter was once a hunter who was raised near the Highland Forest, hence his skill in tracking prey and moving stealthily in hill and wood. In contrast, his ally Elowyn, also a fighter, was once a scholar in the city of Bookbridge, hence her wide-ranging knowledge of matters esoteric. Elowyn's sage-like lore intimidates the magic-user Alaric, whose own background as a petty noble in the Duke of Briz' court means he knows much of current politics and fashion, but little of ancient eldritch secrets, despite his arcane training. Finally, their holy ally – the rotund Fredigar, priest of Muirgen, Mistress of the Sea – spent years as a merchant and sailor before being called to service by his goddess.

With this optional rule all characters start with at least one 'background profession.' Players may roll either *once* on chart I, or *twice* on chart II below. A character's background profession(s) can enable that character to do or know certain things that other characters cannot do or know. For example, a frontiersman may know whether a kind of wild berry is poisonous or not, or a doctor may know how to treat a particular infection. A character's background profession(s) can also give that character a bonus (typically equivalent to +4 on a d20, or +20% when using other dice) when attempting certain kinds of tasks. For example, a burglar may receive a +4 bonus when attempting to sneak past a guard undetected, and a hunter may receive a +4 bonus when trying to track a monster outdoors. If a character has two professions, any bonuses from those professions are *not* cumulative (so a character with both the 'farmer' and 'frontiersman' background professions, for instance, would *not* gain a +8 bonus to his/her attempts to predict the weather, but only +4).

Ultimately, of course, it is the *Game Master's decision* whether or not a character's background profession confers any special advantage in any particular situation. Similarly, it is up to the GM to determine whether a particular background profession is available to a character. The GM may decide to prohibit certain races from having certain background professions (for instance, the GM may decide that dwarf characters cannot have the frontiersman, hunter, or sailor background professions).

Background Profession Charts:

Chart I (1d10; reroll if character does not meet minima):

1	Alchemist (Intelligence 10+)
2	Aristocrat
3-4	Burglar (Dexterity 12+)
5	Doctor (Intelligence and Wisdom 10+)
6-7	Frontiersman (Constitution 9+)
8-9	Hunter (Dexterity 9+)
10	Scholar (Intelligence 12+)

Chart II (1d20 twice; reroll as above):

1-2	Blacksmith (Strength 10+)
3-4	Brigand (Strength and Dexterity 9+)
5-6	Farmer
7-8	Fisher
9	Fletcher/Bowyer
10	Gambler (Intelligence 9+)
11-12	Leatherworker/Tanner
13	Locksmith
14	Mason
15-16	Merchant (Wisdom 9+)
17	Minstrel (Charisma 12+)
18	Sailor
19-20	Sentinel



It sez: mundane backgrounds can sometimes also be turned into playable character classes. Here's an example from Zack Houghton:

The Scholar: The Scholar is an individual of great learning, often employed by nobility or other wealthy interests. Scholars adventure as translators, researchers, cultural liaisons, or treasure-hunters. They fight, save, rise in level, and gain wound points as thieves. Their prime attribute is Intelligence. They may fight with one-handed sword, bow, club, sling, dagger, staff, or spear, and may wear any lighter armor (padded, leather, or a light mail shirt). They detect secret doors as elves and architectural features and traps as dwarves, and have a similar chance to determine the cultural origin, function, and workings of any object. They are also extremely good with languages. Given 2d4 turns and a successful check, they can decipher writings in unfamiliar languages, messages written in incomplete or archaic forms, and messages written in code. Longer texts will require more time to fully read and digest, of course. The attempt may be made only once per writing per day. A scholar may use this ability to decipher and then use any magical scrolls he or she comes across. (At GM option, the ability to determine how objects work above may be applied to some magic items in similar fashion.) Finally, while all scholars are generally knowledgeable, each also has special areas of intellectual mastery for which she is renowned and in which she functions as a sage. Each scholar should choose one such at 1st level and another at levels 4, 8, etc. Scholars should receive a substantial bonus or automatic success at all queries in areas of mastery.



Background Profession Details

Alchemist: Alchemists are skilled at identifying elixirs, poisons, potions, and so forth. In the field they gain only an ordinary attempt to do this (perhaps with a +1 if Intelligence is 13 or greater). To gain a full 20% bonus they must have access to an alchemy lab – typically only found in towns with populations of 2500+. Using such a lab costs 30 +2d10 gold pieces per day. Characters with the alchemist background profession start with 1+1d3 potions (to be determined randomly or by the GM).

Aristocrat: Aristocrats have knowledge of court etiquette, heraldry, recent history, and politics. They are skilled at difficult riding maneuvers (full bonus) and mounted combat (+1 to hit when on a trained warhorse). Characters from an aristocratic background start the game with an inherited high-quality weapon, shield, or suit of armour (player's choice). Because of its superior quality, this item will have a +1 non-magical bonus to attack or defense (not damage). Aristocrats also start with 2d20 extra gold.

Blacksmith: Blacksmiths can repair metal weapons and armour with proper equipment (costs 10% of 'market' weapon/armour price for supplies and to rent forge; normally takes one day per item). Blacksmiths can also determine the correct value of non-magical weapons and armour within 10%.

Brigand: Characters who spent time as brigands are skilled at hiding, moving silently, and ambushing (full bonus).

Burglar: Characters who once spent time as burglars are skilled at hiding, moving silently, opening locks, finding traps, and disarming traps (full bonus). Characters with the burglar background profession start the game with a set of good lockpicks (+1 on d20, or +5%, non-magical bonus).

Doctor: Doctors can bandage wounded characters with proper equipment. A doctor can heal 1-2 wound points after one turn of treatment. Alternately, a doctor can treat an unconscious character, returning that character to consciousness after applying a bandage or salve and using smelling salts for one turn (the awakened character will have one hp). Doctors can heal a character in this way only once per combat. (A 'medical kit' with 10 bandages, 5 salves, and smelling salts, costs 15 gold pieces; characters with the doctor background profession start with one free kit.) Doctors can also try to draw out poisons and treat many natural diseases (full bonus to such attempts).

Farmer: Characters who were once farmers are skilled at predicting weather and bartering (full bonus).

Fisher: If near a body of water and properly supplied (with a net, etc.), former fisherfolk can capture enough fish to feed 3+1d4 people for a day. Fishers are also skilled at swimming (full bonus).

Kick down the door,
roll for initiative

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Fletcher/Bowyer: Characters who were once fletchers/bowyers can make $d4+1$ scores (40-100) of arrows or bolts per day with proper equipment (costs 10% of normal price). Such characters also are skilled at repairing damaged arrows and bows (full bonus). Fletchers/bowyers can determine the value of non-magical bows within 10%.

Frontiersman: Characters who grew up on the edges of civilization are skilled at wayfinding (they cannot become 'lost'). Frontiersmen also have knowledge of natural herbs and poisons and of regional wildlife and are good at predicting weather (full bonus if roll is required).

Gambler: Characters who made their living by gambling obviously are skilled at such games (full bonus). They may earn (or perhaps lose) $1d100 - 20$ silver pieces per week playing such games in any decent-sized town (population ~2000+), but may not adventure during that period.

Hunter: Characters who were once hunters have good knowledge of regional wildlife (full bonus if roll is required). They are skilled at tracking creatures (any land-based animal, humanoid, or monster) in the wilds and at hiding and moving silently in the outdoors (full bonus if roll is required).

Leatherworker/Tanner: Characters who were once leatherworkers can repair any leather goods, including leather armour, with proper supplies (costs 10% of normal price; normally takes half a day per item). Leatherworkers can also determine the correct value of non-magical leather goods and hides within 10%.

Locksmith: Locksmiths are skilled at repairing, picking, and disabling most mechanical devices, such as locks, mechanical traps, etc. (full bonus).

Mason: Masons receive a bonus to notice unusual stonework, as per dwarves or with full bonus (including secret doors, stone traps, sloping passageways, etc.).

Merchant: Merchants are knowledgeable about the regional economy and current politics, and are good at bartering (full bonus if roll required). Characters with the merchant background profession start the game with extra 'supplies' (player's choice of kind of goods) worth $(d4+2) \times 20$ (i.e., 60-120) gold pieces.

Minstrel: Characters who were minstrels are familiar with regional culture, court etiquette, and current politics. They know how to play various instruments and own one as

well (player's choice, decent quality – worth 20+2d20 gold pieces). Minstrels can earn 2d12 silver/week performing (the character cannot adventure during this time) in any decent-sized town (population 1000+). Minstrels can only earn d12 silver/week in smaller locales.

Sailor: Former sailors are skilled at predicting weather and swimming (full bonus to both).

Scholar: Characters who devoted their pre-adventuring years to study are knowledgeable of a wide range of topics, including culture, geography, history, religion, etc. (full bonus if roll is required). Scholars also know many legends, including those concerning powerful monsters, ancient heroes and villains, powerful relics and magic items, etc. Scholars can try to identify magic items (no bonus except +1 if Intelligence is 13 or greater) if appropriate libraries and/or colleges are available (typically requires a town with population 5000+, takes one week of research per item, and costs 50+1d20 gold pieces).

Sentinel: Sentinel or guard characters are trained to be observant (full bonus to rolls to notice unusual things).

Note on Rolls: There are several ways to check abilities. If you use the d6 method, characters who get the 'full bonus' should probably need 1-3 on 1d6 for success, with a possible additional bonus/penalty for attribute score. Another common method is to roll d20 under an attribute score, with the full bonus (in this case +4) applied before the roll. (A natural 20 should always fail – don't make them roll if you feel their high attribute and background profession qualify them for automatic success.) A third method, which might appeal to those playing the *Swords and Wizardry* system, is to have players make their class-based saving throw to succeed at tasks, adding 4 for relevant background profession and +/- 1 for high/low relevant attribute. This approach has the advantage (for those who prefer such things) of allowing characters to gradually improve at mundane tasks as well as magic and fighting as they go up levels. Regardless of which system is used by a group, the GM should remember to apply relevant modifiers to any task. Very easy (but not automatically successful) tasks might receive a bonus of +10, while extremely difficult (but not impossible) tasks might receive a penalty of -10. Less extreme modifiers should apply to rolls involving tasks of intermediate ease or difficulty.

What about Thieves? Perspicacious readers will note that many of the background professions listed herein give bonuses to abilities commonly associated with the thief. In games without such a class, for which this system is primarily intended, this is a feature. If you play with the thief, however, give thieves with relevant backgrounds a bonus to their abilities (perhaps +10%), and allow non-thieves to use background profession abilities (only!) as a thief at -5%. Characters who roll Burglar in such a system should simply multiclass as thieves and roll again. Ω

The Wuuky!

Labyrinth Lord class by Moritz Mehlem and Frank Ditsche

Requirements: STR 15, CON 13 (Prime Requisites)

Hit Dice: 1d8

Maximum Level: 8

Attack: as Fighters

Saving Throw: as Elves

Wuukys are shy, friendly creatures that dwell in deep forests and hilly regions. Legend has it that they are descended from tree-climbing mammals. They are gentle creatures at heart, though a human meeting with one of these seven foot plus, shaggy reddish-brown muscular humanoids could be forgiven for thinking otherwise. They never wear clothes, but their fur gives them a natural AC of 6. Specially fitted leather armor, the only kind allowed to them by tradition, can raise this to 5. A wuuky must have a Constitution of at least 15 in order to get the +5% bonus to experience. They must have Strength and Constitution of 16 to qualify for +10%.

Wuukys do not use shields, but may use any weapon. They prefer fighting with huge blunt weapons or with their bare hands (which inflict 1d6 + STR bonus). For ranged combat they traditionally use crossbows. More experienced Wuukys will shuffle (see below) before shooting their crossbows. They consider it useful and fashionable to wear a belt around their torso studded with crossbow bolts.

Wuukys are quite adept at learning other languages, but the structure of their vocal cords only allows them to make growling noises. They understand Common, Elvish, and Wuuky. Their growls allow them to communicate on a basic level in Elvish and Common. The Wuuky language consists exclusively of growling noises and, believe it or not, they can talk about anything, even spiritual concepts. Like their language, Wuuky society is more advanced than one would think. Wuukys like creating gadgets and basic machines that are useful in everyday life, like simple irrigation systems and forest harvesting tools. They brew a delightful bark-infused mead which appeals to humans and demi-humans as well. Wuukys like dealing with elves and dwarves, but they have problems dealing with halflings, barely being able to see them so far down. It's in the wuuky's nature to be very loyal to friends and allies. Wuuky are also very protective of their natural surroundings. They will viciously attack anyone who kills animals or destroys plants without a good reason, perhaps giving traveling companions a single warning before commencing with violence.

When a Wuuky reaches level 8, he can build a stronghold. These strongholds will be situated in forests or hilly regions. Wuukys will come from great distances to live with and learn from this exceptionally successful wuuky, who they refer to as "captain".

Wuuky Advancement

Experience	Level	HD (d8)	Special Abilities
0	1	1	
4065	2	2	Shuffle
8125	3	3	
16251	4	4	Find companion
31501	5	5	
65001	6	6	Intimidating growl
130001	7	7	
220001	8	8	Upset Wuuky

Shuffle: After completing a ceremonial shuffle with crossbow in hand, which takes 1 round, a Wuuky may attack twice/round with it for 4 rounds.

Find Companion: Upon reaching level 4, a Wuuky can start looking for a special companion, possibly someone

from his adventuring group. When he has found a worthy person, he begins imitating this person's habits and starts calling him "Hans", which means "soulmate" in Wuuky. When fighting with or for his soulmate, a Wuuky gets +1 to attack rolls and saving throws. If a soulmate is lost a Wuuky mourns for at least a year before choosing another.

Intimidating growl: A Wuuky can growl at a group of opponents with up to 4d10 HD. They must save vs. paralysis or run away for the Wuuky's level in rounds.

Upset Wuuky: If someone upsets a Wuuky, the Wuuky can attack him with his bare hands. A natural 19-20 means that the wuuky has ripped one of his opponent's arms out of its socket and starts beating him to death with his own arm. The arm itself does 1d6, but tearing off an arm inflicts 2d10 and forces a save vs. paralysis or the victim slumps to the floor and is unconscious for 2d4 rounds. Ω



Distinctive Magic

by Zach Houghton, Marco Dörfliger, and Calithena

In this article we present three approaches to diversifying mages. With a little thought and a cooperative GM, you can tweak a class to get just the character you want!

Personalized Spells (Dörfliger): In a game with Alex Schröder, I decided I wanted to play a wizard named Pepe whose enchantments worked on a clown/jester theme. We made up a few extra spells to support the color.

Pepe's Scary Clown (Level 1): A big, scary image of a clown appears. It is the stuff of children's nightmares: sharp claws, long yellow teeth, and blood-red smeary make-up. Creatures with fewer than 6 HD must make a saving throw or become frightened for d4 rounds. Even if they make it, they are shaken (can defend and counterattack but no movement) for 1 round.

Pepe's Piano (Level 2): A grand piano falls from a height of 10ft/caster level (max 100ft), smashing those below it (5' radius) for 1d6/level of damage. A saving throw allows characters to jump out of the way for no damage.

Pepe's Immolation (Level 2): Target creature bursts into flame, taking 1d6 points of damage per round for 4 rounds. Target may spend one full round putting themselves out to extinguish the flames. One additional creature for every four levels beyond 3rd can be affected.

Pepe's Squeaky Hammer (Level 2): A large, colourful squeaky-hammer appears and attacks opponents at a distance as you direct, dealing 1d4 bludgeoning damage +1 per three caster levels, plus an additional 1d4 sonic damage from the loud 'squeak'. Target can be switched at will.



Pepe's Human Cannonball (Level 3): A large, brightly painted cannon is conjured into existence. The cannon is large enough for 1 humanoid creature to fit inside. A string at the back of the cannon fires it, ejecting whatever/whoever is inside at high velocity to anyplace within 100ft + 10ft/level, or to a height of half the distance. This string can be pulled by the person in the cannon, or by a 'helper' who is aiming it. A colourful safety helmet comes with the cannon, which protects the 'human cannonball' from physical harm when landing, although they are unable to act for 1 round afterwards. (The helmet does not protect from additional damage, such as being fired off a high cliff or into a haymaker). If a helper is operating the cannon, the cannon may be aimed and fired at any creature within range, dealing 1d6 damage per caster level (max 10d6). The cannon remains for 1 round/level or until it is fired.

Pepe's Tar & Feathers (Level 4): From one hand a jet of hot tar bursts from the caster's pointed finger, covering one creature with hot, sticky, tar. The hot tar deals 2d8 heat damage + 1/caster level. Using the other hand, the caster throws a handful of feathers toward the creature. A huge gust of fluffy white feathers materializes and strikes the target, covering him from head to toe. The target creature looks so ridiculous he takes a -4 morale penalty to attacks, saving throws, and most other rolls. *Pepe's Tar and Feathers* are extremely sticky, requiring a hot bath and lots of scrubbing to clean off. The demoralization affect lasts until the unlucky target is completely clean.

Unique Spell Lists (Calithena): I have always visualized elvish magic as focused around nature, illusion, and enchantment. This list takes mostly known spells and recombines them for elvish casters.

Elf Spell List

Level 1	Level 2
1. Charm	1. Cure Wounds
2. Dancing Orbs	2. Detect Invisible
3. Detect Magic	3. Hypnotic Pattern
4. Entangling Vines	4. Invisibility
5. Faerie Glow	5. Mind Reading
6. Light	6. Opening Charm
7. Read Languages	7. Phantom Images
8. Speak with Animals	8. Warp Wood
Level 3	Level 4
1. Clairsentience	1. Charm Monster
2. Cure Disease	2. Confuse
3. Haste	3. Dimension Portal
4. Hold Person	4. Forest
5. Lightning Bolt	5. Phantom Terrain
6. Protection from Missiles	6. Plant Growth
7. Suggestion	7. Polymorph Self
8. Tree	8. Speak with Plants

Level 5

1. Animal Growth
2. Commune with Nature
3. Idiot
4. Plague of Insects
5. Telekinesis
6. Transform Rock to Mud

Level 6

1. Command Earth
2. Geas
3. Projected Image
4. True Sight

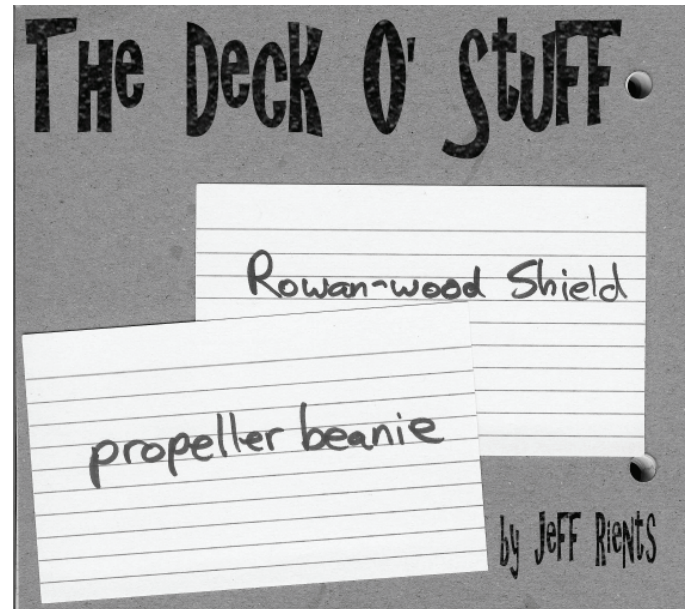
Custom Mechanics (Houghton): Not all mages gain power from spellbooks and complex incantations. Some are born with a more primal, unstable power to manipulate the essence of the universe itself. Sorcerers or “Wild Mages” channel this raw power through their bodies. Their magic is much more flexible than that of ordinary mages, but its effects are much less predictable.

Sorcerers gain spells as ordinary mages do, but may cast any spell they know as long as they have a ‘slot’ of that spell’s level or higher remaining to cast it with. Thus a 5th level sorcerer would know four 1st level, possessing 4-1st level spells, 2-2nd level spells, and 1-3rd level spell as an ordinary mage. She also gains an equivalent number of ‘slots’, each of which may be used to cast any of her spells known of that level or below. So she could cast each of her spells once as a normal mage, or she could cast e.g. a 1st level Mystic Missile 7 times (assuming it was known).

Each time a sorceress casts, however, her player rolls a d20. A result of 1 is a failure, and results in rolling on the Sorcerer Spell Failure Table below. A 20 signifies a critical success, and generally the results of the spell are doubled in some manner (at the discretion of the GM).

Sorcerer Spell Failure Table (d20)

1	Spell forgotten; relearned in d8 hours
2	Forget all spells of level 2+ for d4 rounds
3	All in 30’ radius take d4 fire damage
4	Caster glows brightly (faerie glow) for 2d4 rounds
5	Caster blinded 2d6 rounds
6	Spell casts at half effect – caster falls asleep d10 rds
7	Black smoke fills a 50’ radius for 1d6 minutes
8	All in 30’ radius take 1d6 cold damage
9	Spell does opposite of normal effect
10	Polymorph self to random form (table in <i>FO!</i> 3?)
11	Spell forgotten; relearned in d6 weeks
12	Lose all spell slots of level 2+ for d4 days
13	All food and water within 25’ spoils
14	Seismic event; STR/Open Doors to stay upright
15	All in 30’ radius take 1d6 lightning damage
16	Monster summoned, caster has no control
17	Caster becomes elemental being for 1d4 rounds
18	Cast random spell of +d4 level (or max) instead
19	Hungry infernal being summoned; stays d4 rounds
20	Spell forgotten; relearned in d6 months



In my present campaign and for the past several convention games I have taken to handing out a free random starting item from a deck of index cards. The contents of my Deck O' Stuff change often, as unique items are removed from the deck when drawn and new items are added. Listed below is the current mix of cards in the deck. Note that many items have no mechanics attached and some might seem completely useless. Some referees may balk at one starting PC getting a bag of ashes while another gets a powerful magic item. By my lights the player with the lame item has a golden opportunity to impress everyone at the table by demonstrating a clever use for a dud draw from the deck.

long-stemmed pipe & pouch of pipeweed
small flask of poison
polar bear fur cloak
large jug of potent wine
oracular skull: answers a single yes/no question 1/day
dungeon dog: DC 7, HD 2, well trained, very loyal
2 ninja smokebombs
first aid kit (6 uses)
2 vials of holy water
sprig of wolfsbane
mandolin
5 silver arrows
3 men-at-arms with chain, shield, spear, sword
steel crowbar
2 blessed crossbow bolts
small sack containing 30 fake gp (thin gold plated over lead)
bag containing 12 caltrops
whistle
2 orcs-at-arms with chain, shield, sword, shortbow
henchman: roll up 1st level character as quickly as possible!
75' spider-silk rope & iron grappling hook
11' wooden pole
silver dagger
6 cigars
30' coil of copper wire
12 small candles
small bag of Monster Chow™
partial dungeon map



rowan-wood shield (See "Shields Shall Be Splintered!", *Fight On!* #2)

piece of chalk
 compass
 5' steel pole
 500' ball of string
 tin of moustache wax
 Holy Hand Grenade
 wedge of very stinky cheese
 tiny vial containing 3 angel tears
 shield +2
 iron crowbar
 propeller beanie
 Maroon Sword of Blackmoor (+1, +2 vs. goblins, trolls, balloons; detect invisible 1/day; absorbs 6 spells levels)
 hourglass
 wand of paralyzation (3 charges)
 potion of giant strength
 suit of banded mail
 can of spinach
 lucky rabbit's foot
 magic scroll (floating disc, invisibility, haste)
 squeaky chew toy shaped like a leprechaun
 spray can of Troll-Off™ brand repellant
 monogrammed pewter tankard
 jar of pickles (kosher dill)
 ring of fire resistance
 sword +1, +3 vs. dragons
 potion of heroism
 jar of honey
 waterproof thigh-high swamp boots
 potion of levitation
 chisel & mallet
 yo-yo
 potion of invulnerability
 hip flask full of cheap hooch
 potion of gaseous form
 bagpipes
 a rock
 2-pack of Twinkies
 small bag of ashes
 vial of anti-toxin
 large net
 WWI German army helmet
 small flask of acid
 hand axe +1
 peanut butter & jelly sammich
 small wood saw
 leather armor +1

wicked awesome evil overlord style helmet
 potion of undead control
 potion of fire resistance
 pair of dice, loaded
 chainmail +2
 cool sunglasses
 priest scroll (cure lighter wounds, find traps, dispel magic)
 bottle of whisky
 staff of healing
 potion of climbing
 scroll of protection against magic
 Sword of Shiva (+3, whirlwind as djinni 1/day for d6 rounds)
 suit of rust-proof chainmail
 Black Armor of Set (plate armor, polymorph into snake 1/day for 6 turns)
 small bag of orc jerky
 Dust of Khalil Azim, 5 pinches (See "Artifacts, Adjuncts, & Oddments", *Fight On!* #2)
 potion of clairvoyance
 ring of spell turning (8 charges)
 Common to Trollish phrasebook
 teddy bear
 dog-eared copy of Playelf magazine
 scarab of protection (9 charges)
 scroll of protection against elementals
 small loaf of elf-bread (20 days rations)
 continual light lantern



magic scroll (light, opening charm, hold in place)
 scroll of protection against undead
 scroll of protection against lycanthropes
 small bag of marbles
 realistic orc mask
 Dust of Appearance, 4 pinches
 pretty pink dress
 sling +1
 Charm of Isis vs. Lightning (holder immune to lightning bolts)
 hula hoop
 butterfly net
 magic scroll (fireball, opening charm, ventriloquism)
 3 sticks of dynamite
 Jug of Oozes (See "Artifacts, Adjuncts, & Oddments", *Fight On!* #1)

For dice charts on a similar theme, check out the cool blog posts listed below. They're especially good if you like the general concept of the Deck O' Stuff but think my version is out of control. Ω

<http://d4caltrops.blogspot.com/2009/02/random-impedimenta-d100.html>
<http://dndborderlands.blogspot.com/2009/03/traits-tokens.html>

THE TOMB OF IXTANDRAZ



contest winning adventure by Lee Barber
for 4th-6th level characters

From the Chrysolite Tower of Sages, a guarded scroll was stolen and its secret voiced to a family of knaves. Convinced that the information was invaluable, the criminals made duplicates of the scroll and sold them to anyone willing to part with enough gold to burden an ox. Yet in less than one calendrical rotation, the knowledge began to reach the ears of injudicious folk who spread the news to bordering fiefdoms. Now, a fact once known only to aging hierophants can be heard whispered at tavern tables - that the tomb of the Operose Artificer, the High Mage Ixtandraz has been found!

BACKGROUND: The 350 year old scroll is a coastline map leading to a lost temple mound complex, where the Mage Ixtandraz had been known to reside in his later years. At this wilderness location, the elder wizard began instructing his disciples and continued the work on golems and arcane devices that made him notorious. Tragically, one such device was responsible for any further knowledge of the great Mage to be lost. Within the underground chambers of the ancient mound, Ixtandraz created a network of energy runes that was supposed to draw power from an entity summoned from the Positive Material plane. However, during the ritual, the planar connection reversed, and the creature pulled into the "battery receptacle" was a Xe-Gi from the Plane of Negative Ener-

gy instead! This disastrous switch converted the energy rune- system into a death trap, as many residents were slain by the life-draining radiation. Ixtandraz himself survived by immediately teleporting away. He returned to the complex later, after the imprisoned Xe-Gi had weakened, only to learn that his disciples were now mindless Undead. Enraged by this failure, he blasted the abominations into dust and placed their remains in a magical coffer. Lastly, Ixtandraz commanded his servile Terra Cotta Golem and Earth Elemental to forever guard the place from intruders. Fourteen years later, the wizard finally perished in a battle with an ancient Dragon Turtle.

The scroll was made by a visiting Sage, one that had been a colleague of Ixtandraz during their academy years. The Sage had been there before the system of runes was complete. Aside from providing directions, there is a drawing of Ixtandraz on the paper depicting him with his trademark "Belt of the Moons", in which was always tucked a craftsman's hammer. Other tales of the wizard, recounting his successful campaigns against Giant tribes and Lycanthrope marauders, always include vast amounts of gold. With such a reputation for wealth, the criminals selling their stolen copies of the map found no fewer than nine buyers willing to meet their price.

START: This adventure can begin in a number of ways. If the party is currently in a remote area, they could simply discover the activities of the Lizardfolk tribe living outside the burial mound. Another option would be for the Chrysolite Sages to employ them in a search for the original scroll. Finally, the party could be approached by a merchant wanting to sell one of the duplicate copies. For more experience, the scroll snatchers or a competing group of treasure hunters could be added to the Encounter list. The Tomb can be located in any warm Marsh or Tropical zone, near a winding river. Branching from this river should be a shallow waterway that drains into the Tomb's lower level. In centuries past, this path was a road from the complex to a river wharf.

LIZARDFOLK TRIBE: This primitive group is comprised of four families and one Shaman. Two years ago, they arrived at the Tomb, using the flooded road to bring their netted fish up from the river easily. The tribe elders gathered rubble from the base of the mound, using it for 5 hut foundations. During this process, the large stones protecting the entrance to the complex were torn away, having already been loosened by the seeping water. Inside, the lizardfolk discovered what they eventually decided was an entrance to the spirit world. A pair of their strongest warriors tried to venture further within, but never returned. The Shaman, fearing this action offended underworld deities, prohibits any exploration and routinely leaves offerings at the statue of Ixtandraz (4). If the party acts aggressively towards the Lizardfolk, the males will confront them with nets and spears, while the females climb vines to the top of the mound. A battle will likely go poorly for the creatures, so they will flee if the defenders are slain. Alternately, the party can show the Shaman the drawing of Ixtandraz on the scroll, which will grant them passage. Of course, any character that can speak their tongue will be able to mediate a discussion.

This past summer, an adventure contest was sponsored by



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FIGHT ON!

Our judges included gaming legends Frank Menzer, James M. Ward, and S. John Ross, as well as Richard Scott of Otherworld Miniatures and Ignatius Ümlaut of *Fight On!* Competition was fierce, and we had many great submissions competing for the fabulous Orc Tribe Boxed Set and other prizes generously provided by Otherworld. Eventually the dust settled, leaving the following ten entries standing:

Honorable Mention:

Arcane Vault of the Magic Goddess, by Matthew Riedel

The Haunted Chateau, by James Maliszewski

Badlands of the Bandit Kingdoms, by Robert Lionheart

Beware the Lord of Eyes, by Allan Grohe

A Giant Dilemma, by Frank Farris

First Honorable Mention

The Hobgoblin God's Crown, by James Quigley

Khas Fara, by Jason Morningstar

3rd Prize

The Blocks of Quox, by Tony Rosten

2nd Prize

The Tomb of Ixtandraz, by Lee Barber

1st Prize

Spawning Grounds of the Crab-Men, by D. Bowman

Lee Barber's 2nd place *Ixtandraz* and Frank Farris' *A Giant Dilemma* are both presented herein for your gaming pleasure. Congratulations to all of our winners, and keep looking out for their creations in upcoming issues of *Fight On!*

8 LIZARDFOLK MALES (DC 5; HD 2+1; ATTACKS 1d6+2 spear/1d8 bite; SPD 6; hp 8, 8, 8, 8, 10, 10, 10, 10)

3 LIZARDFOLK FEMALES (DC 7; HD 2; ATTACKS 1d3/1d3 claws/1d6 bite; SPD 6; hp 5, 5, 5)

1 LIZARDFOLK SHAMAN (DC 6; HD 3; ATTACKS 1d6+2 cudgel/1d8 bite; SPD 6; 2-1st priest spells, hp 15)

1) COMMON HALL: Silt-laden water has decayed what furnishings remained in this long hall. Now this location is used by the Lizardfolk to weave their nets, which hang from a corroded chain in the ceiling. The east wall features a 30 foot bas-relief mural. Although its pigment is gone, the design clearly shows Ixtandraz fighting tusked Giants.

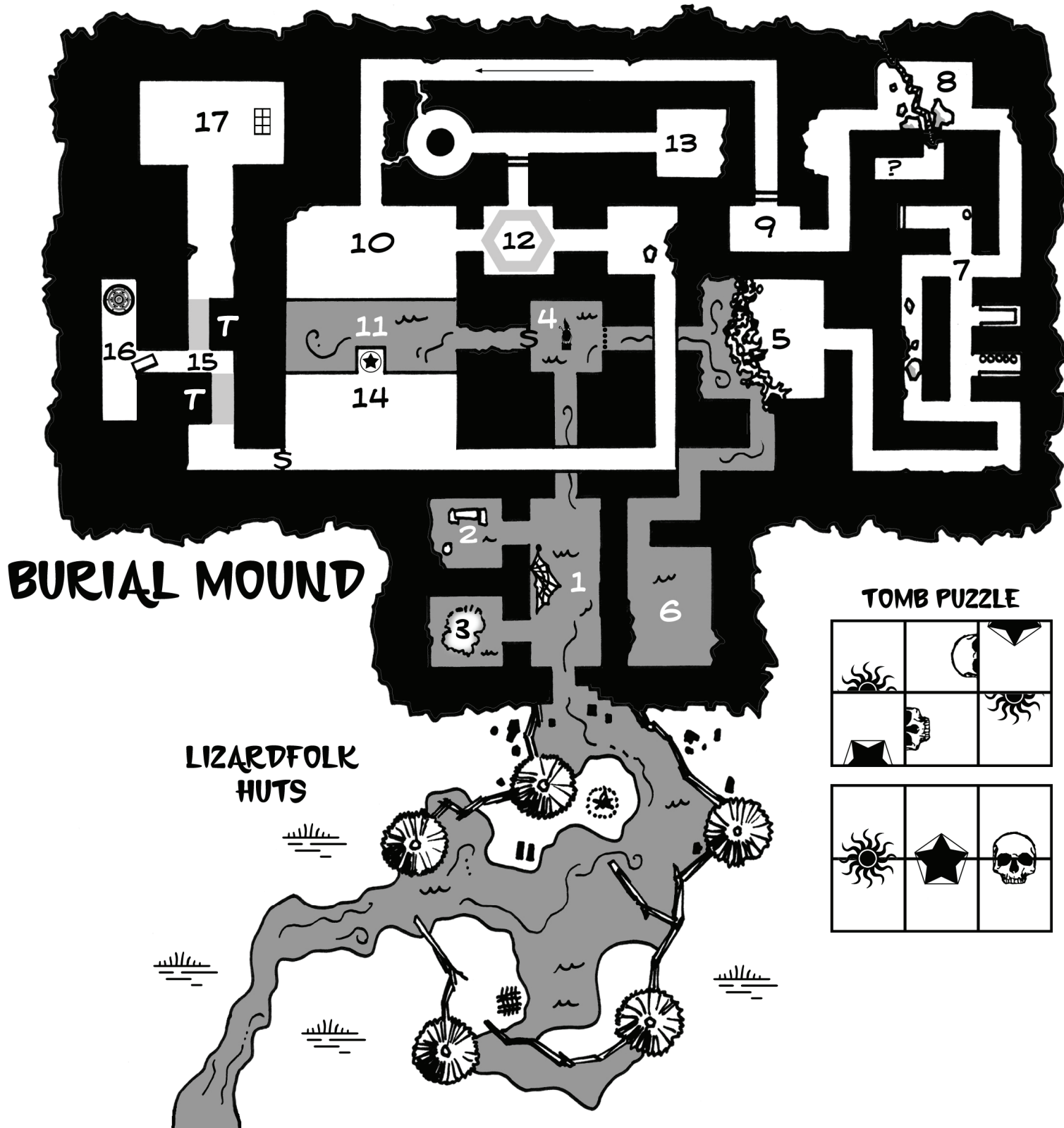
2) SHAMAN'S CHAMBER: Two stone pedestals rest on their sides in the knee-deep water. Stretched across the pedestals is a woven mat, covered with trinkets for sortilege and incense use. The amount of unburned incense is worth 22 GP.

3) HATCHERY: This chamber is constantly occupied by at least one female. Even if the party has the Shaman's permission to enter the mound, they will be attacked if this room is entered. The floor here is buried in reeds and mud; the crest of the stack is roughly 5 feet high, and hides 2 eggs. In the southwest corner is an unlit copper brazier.

4) INNER GATES: Plainly visible here are a stone statue of Ixtandraz in the center of the room and a corroded portcullis sealing an exit in the east wall. Inspection of the latter will reveal that debris in the water is flowing past it, and that oil has been applied to the sides resting in the guide channels. A lift attempt made on the gate will not succeed unless the STR applied totals 36. Then the portcullis will rise only 2 feet, still barring anyone not willing to

swim beneath (this is how the lizardmen went through). The mechanism that actually controls the gate is part of the statue. Sharp-eyed players searching it will discover that the hammer tucked in Ixtandraz's belt can be removed. A second successful search will uncover a hole near the foot of statue, mere inches above the water. The hammer haft fits this socket, and force applied to the mallet end will rotate the statue like a windlass. This procedure will trigger an unseen weight to drop and raise

the gate (and removing the hammer will cause the gate to fall). On the west wall is a secret door sealed behind 3 inches of mortar and the moldy grime that coats everything in contact with the water. Even with the aid of bright light, this door is twice as hard to detect. A spell to open doors/locks will unlock both thresholds, but the secret door must have the plastered cement torn away for access. In another room, there is a magical hammer that will open all the secret doors in the tomb.





5) SHAMBLOR DEN: The water passing beyond the portcullis is contained in this 50 foot square room by a massive berm of rotting organic matter. This dam of pungent garbage is the den of a hungry Shambler. It will attack if the party attempts to climb over the barrier or continue into 6. The floor beneath the water in this room is badly cracked, enabling drainage. Melee fighters in this area suffer a -1 penalty due to the water and split rock. If the party spends at least 20 minutes searching the dam, they will find a bundle of jade chunks worth 400 GP, a length of silver chain worth 50 GP, and a *Scarab of Infravision* (2d10 charges). SHAMBLOR: DC 2; HD 8; ATT 1d10/1d10; SPD 6; suffocation, half damage from elements; hp 40.

6) ZOMBIE LEECHES: There are 2 negative energy Runes in this room, one on the ceiling and one beneath the water. Each Rune radiates magic and will inflict one point of damage per hour to a living creature within a 10 foot radius. After death, a creature will be "re-energized" by the Runes; its hit points as Undead going up by one per hour till its original total is matched. For example, a dead player with 24 HP will return as a Zombie after a full day of exposure. The effect can be temporarily disabled by Dispel Magic or a Protection from Undead scroll. Five undead Leeches are lurking under the water and will swarm the character with the least leg armor. Clerics attempting to Turn these reanimated vermin will not succeed if within the range of the Runes (which are in the center of the ceiling and floor). The Leeches have no treasure. 5 ZOMBIE LEECHES: DC 9; HD 2; ATTACKS 1d4 bite; SPD 3; undead, drain blood; hp 6, 6, 6, 8, 8.

7) CELLAR ALCOVES: Branching off the winding corridor are three alcoves. Two of them are stocked with earthenware jars, draped in dusty cobwebs. Roll a d10 to determine random contents:

1-2	chisels and rusty trowels
3-4	bronze nails and rivets
5	viscous scroll ink
6	tapered candles
7	white naphtha (will explode if exposed to high heat)
8	hundreds of desiccated beetles
9	cloth napkins and dishware
10	bits of charcoal

Glass bottles, presumably wine, are stocked in the remaining alcove. Interspersed among the sour vintages are 2d8 gilded jugs with written labels. These expensive looking brews carry desirable potion names like "Elixir of Undetectable Illusions" and "Secret Libation #222". Ixtandraz planted these containers to sabotage theft by visitors or unruly students. If any of these are unstopped or broken, a burst of magical gas will affect the holder unless he saves vs. magic at -2. Roll d10 for effect:

1	sees everything upside down for 2d10 rounds
2	surrounded by burnt leaf-scented mist for 1d4 hours
3	STR reduced by half for 2d10 rounds
4	becomes dipsophobic, won't drink alcohol, potions, etc
5	cannot speak for one hour
6	forgets everything known about the next person seen
7	polymorphed into snapping turtle for a day
8	has all non-enchanted possessions disintegrated
9	coated in blueberry jelly
0	charmed to guard remaining bottles for 1d4 hours

8) RING FROM BELOW: If the party hesitates before searching this mangled chamber, they will see a deep cleft

in the floor along which a column of jungle ants are navigating. The ants appear to be leaving the tomb, marching from underneath some crumbling blocks to a place beyond the mound. Suddenly, one ant will emerge with a brightly glowing ring in its jaws. The moving light can be seen by anyone looking at the floor. Give the players one chance each to reach for the unusual item. Characters with metal gauntlets won't be able to fit their hands into the miniature valley, although they could try to stab the burdened ant with a narrow blade (-4 to grab, -9 to stab). A smart player can also try to contain the escaping insect by blocking off the ends of the crevice. The nature of the ring is to be decided by the DM; it can be from a deeper level that the party can venture into later.

9) LIZARDMAN GHASTS: After passing through the rubble-filled chamber, the party detects a light emanating from this small room. The glow is from a Rune-covered door, in front of which are two Lizardman Ghosts. These creatures are the reanimated corpses of the warriors that dared to go beyond the portcullis. Overwhelmed by the Shambling Mound, they scrambled past the monster to this iron door, which jolted the remaining life out of them. The *Magelocked* security door has four negative energy Runes on both sides. Touching this barrier with bare skin or conductive metal will result in a single discharge that inflicts 4d4+2 damage (the Runes can't deliver a second shock for 3 days). There is a mechanical lock, but it is invisible unless touched by a Mage. Along the south wall are the pieces of equipment belonging to the lizardmen: a *Spear +1 of Returning*, a 70 GP pearl, and an Ironwood Spiked Club (treat as morning star). **2 LIZARDMAN GHASTS:** DC 4; HD 4; ATT 1d4/1d4 claws, 1d8 bite; SPD 12; undead, paralyzation, stench; hp 22, 20.

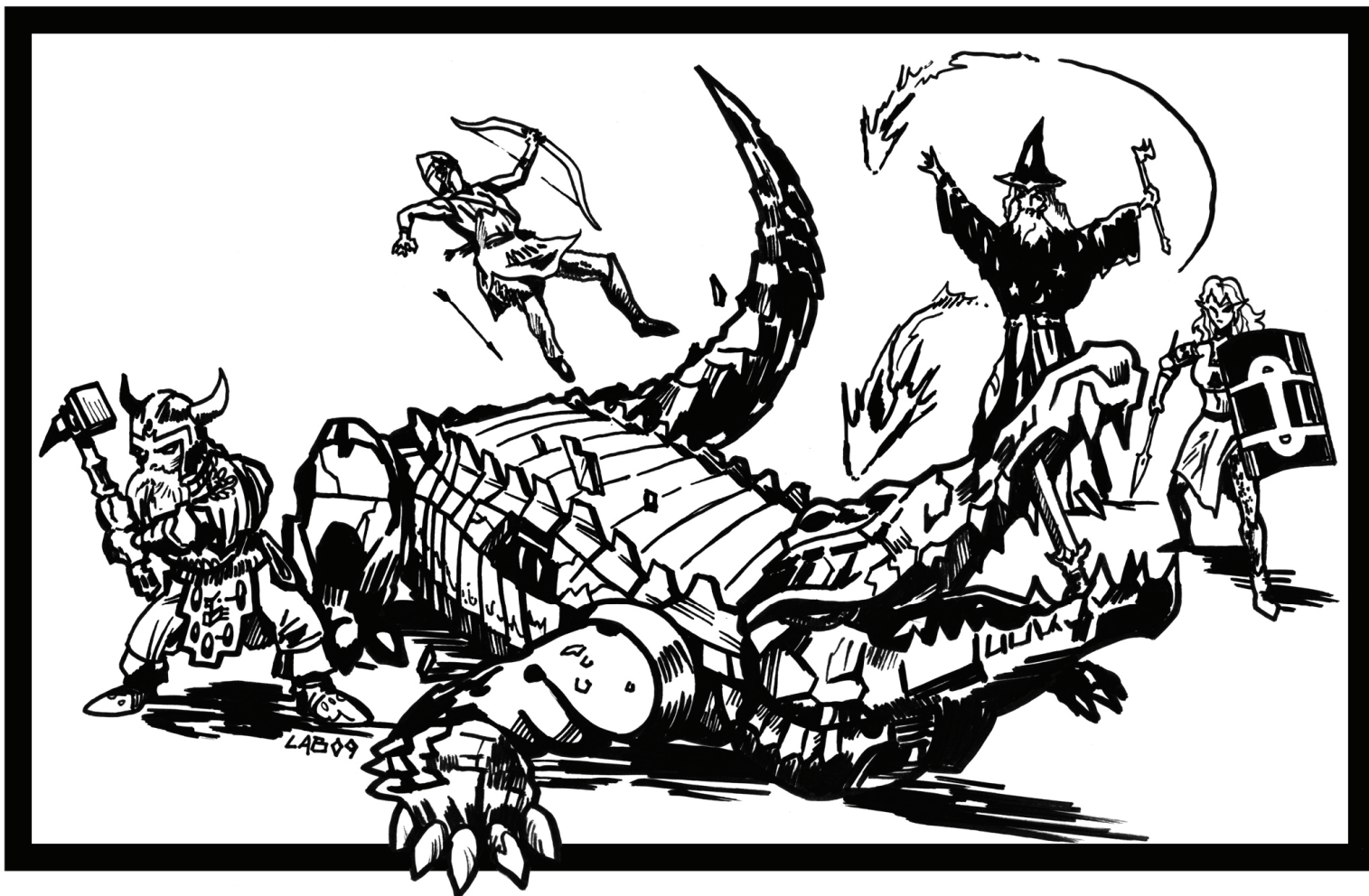
10) LOWER GALLERY: The long tunnel beyond the trapped door is actually a ramp to a higher level. Searching the inside wall will reveal two fissures, impossible for anything larger than a cave locust to enter. Anyone peering into these holes will be noticed by the Greyish Ooze in **12**, which will attack from behind when the party goes beyond the first gallery. This first gallery is empty, but there is a secret door to the east and a gorge-like pit separating the space from a similar gallery to the south. A strong light source will reveal the size of the pit and the "statue" in **13**.

11) EXAMINATION PIT: The flooded floor of the pit is part of the first level. The distance from the bottom to either gallery is 18 feet. The disciples of Ixtandraz practiced with spells and magic items here, occasionally on live, chained monsters. The corridor to the secret door in **4** was used to "short-cut" the longer exit route, and make caged creatures easier to transport. The levitation platforms that operated on both sides of the "statue" in **13** were dispelled by Ixtandraz before he left. A sorcerer's staff, broken during testing, can be found here, with its inset diamond worth 750 GP. If the Ooze is stalking the party, it will attack while they are searching or scaling walls.



12) UNFINISHED GOLEM: A large suit of maroon armor appears to be waiting in this dark chamber for its owner. The terra cotta suit is giant-sized, and missing the helm piece. If the party turns toward the door to **13**, they will see a 2-handed mallet on the ground and a small wood bowl on the floor. Etched near the rim of this bowl is the name "NORBERT". If a player reads the name aloud, he will hear a soft mewling emanating from the armor. Moving the pieces exposes yet another floor Rune, and the bones of Norbert, the unluckiest cat familiar. When the bones are discovered, the sound fades away. However, if the player with the bowl scoops up the bones, a phantasmal cat will immediately appear! The spectral feline will befriend its new "master", a situation which has one benefit and one drawback. The benefit is damage resistance to negative energy (2 points per attack). The problem is that a grotesque ghost cat will follow the character around all the time, visible to everyone (penalty to Charisma-based interaction). Destroying the enchanted bowl with arcane fire is the only way to keep Norbert from materializing and following the player.

13) WELL OF OOZE: The two rooms beyond the pinned oak door were the private quarters of Ixtandraz. The domed chamber to the west was a large bath, connected to a natural well. Years after the evacuation, this well was invaded by a large Greyish Ooze, which "dissolved" nearly all the metal equipment on this level. Although immune to many forms of damage, it has learnt



that the negative-energy runes are unpalatable (2 more Runes are in the abandoned chamber east of the well). **GREYISH OOZE:** DC 12; HD 3+3; ATT 2d6/strike; SPD 1; immune to heat, cold, spells, bludgeoning; hp 20.

14) UPPER GALLERY: On the far side of the pit is a chamber once used as a study hall. Protecting the scholarly campus here is an Earth Elemental "sculpted" to look vaguely like an Oriental Lion statue. This guardian attacks any who try to pass through the secret door into 14. The Elemental will not enter 16 or 4 if the party escapes to either location. Near the base of the "statue" is a square wooden frame that holds a few cracked shards of tinted glass. Glued to the back of the frame is a *Wand of Invisibility* (2 charges). **EARTH ELEMENTAL GUARDIAN:** DC 2; HD 6; ATT 1d10+5/bite; SPD 6; immune to poison, mind spells; hp 50.

15) SPEAR TRAPS: Buried in the two walls indicated on the map are spear-launching mechanisms. They are triggered by sensitive pressure plates on the floor in front of each array. Players positioned within striking range that fail to dodge will be struck for 2d8. There are no safe gaps between the plates or along the bottom corners of the corridor; the plates for each trap extend for twelve feet.

16) RUNE CONTROL LABORATORY: Protected from the scavenging Greyish Ooze, this room is pristine aside from a door that had snapped from its hinges after a small quake. Inside, players will discover stone shelves lined with tomes crumbling from age and humidity. On the north side of the room is a bizarre device unaffected by dormancy; it resembles a short lamp-post, ringed by magic circles of amber. Topping the post is a crystal ball of the deepest imaginable azure. Close inspection of the Rune control apparatus will show that some of the amber rings float above the ground and that the whole thing is very cold. The crystal ball, a prison for the Xe-Gi, is the only element that can be physically removed. This oddity is by far the greatest treasure in the Tomb; worth no less than 2000 gold to an interested buyer (The Sages will try to barter for it with magic scrolls and potions). Naturally, disconnecting the sphere will shut down all the Runes. The sphere won't shatter unless struck by a heavy magic weapon; a rupture will result in the contents exploding in a burst of negative energy dealing 4d6 damage. The magic weapon employed must Save against disintegration.

17) THE CROCODILE CONSTRUCT: In this quiet vault, the last known creation of Ixtandraz awaits tomb robbers. Once the party enters, the frightening golem, a

terra cotta crocodile with obsidian teeth, will first use its breath weapon against them. Fortunately, the poison inside the construct has degraded, and a failed Save will only result in d4 rounds of blindness. The golem will continue to attack with its maw and heavy tail until it is destroyed or the party retreats behind the secret door to **14**. **CROCODILE GOLEM**: DC 6; HD 8; ATT 2d6+4/bite, 1d8+3/tail slap; SPD 6; blinding breath, ½ dam. from edged weapons, immunity to non-earth spells; hp 50. The vault holds only two things aside from the automaton. The first is another large mural on the east wall, depicting Ixtandraz floating between cosmic panoramas. The scene on the Mage's left is full of blazing stars and comets, while the one on the right is a tempest of bramble and human bones. Below this mural is the second object, a large stone coffer topped with 6 carved tiles. Each tile has one half of a symbol that relates to the mural imagery (see map). The three symbols are a Sun, Pentagram, and Skull. If the tiles are repositioned to mirror the relationship in the mural (listed above), then the coffer can be slid along the floor, exposing a hidden niche. Inside are the following treasures:

- The ashes of 4 apprentices in silver urns worth 300GP
- A terra-cotta sculpture resembling a three-eyed kachina – grants a +1 protective blessing that stacks with others.
- 4 signet rings inset with black tourmaline worth 520 GP
- A craftsman's hammer made of electrum that can open all the doors in the complex with 3 taps.
- A magical buckler with a center spike made from a giant's tusk - allows wielder to become giant-sized 3 times
- An unfinished clay tablet carving of an Elven woman with spider webs over her eyes - 50-200 GP to collectors
- A dragonhide pouch of *Ixtandraz's Moon Motes* - these finely ground crystals are useful against lycanthropes, reversing their form and stunning them 1 round if thrown over them or else providing double damage to three weapons against them on their next hit.
- A map to the isle of the Dragon Turtle.



Delvers Delve: Extended Crawling

rules options by David Bowman

Sometimes you just want to spend longer down in the dungeon. Separately or together, these rules will help you do just that, without automatically turning your whole tunnel complex into a sausage grinder. Of course, there is never any substitute for good judgment – as Shakespeare said, the better part of valour is discretion, and players who don't learn to flee, ambush, parley, plot tactics, and exploit weaknesses as well as fight straight up will fall sooner or later no matter what they do. But using these procedures can help increase the strategic challenges of your dungeon delve – and reduce the number of trips back to town. Even referees who let the dice and delver limbs fall where they may might want to take a look at some of these ideas for when an extended crawl is in order. Especially for lower-level characters they can really help make longer-term adventures underground functional without fudging.

The rules options presented here are divided into *Quick Hits*, *Class Options*, and *Dungeon Decrees*. Some of these are variations on house rules found in many games, while others are (as far as I know anyway) new with this article.

I. Quick Hits increase the ability of PCs to cope with damage without increasing their hit point totals.

Fighting Chance: Allowing maximum hits at 1st Level can go a long way to giving greenhorns a fighting chance. Wound points gained later are rolled normally and added to this amount. If referees require rolling all wound dice anew every level, one should be taken out and set to maximum before the roll if this rule is used.

Expert Trainer: Some towns include specialist warriors and athletes who can help toughen delvers up, for a price. Once per level, for a cost of 200 gp per level, a PC can work out with such a trainer and re-roll their hit points, taking the higher of the two rolls.

Catch Breath/Bind Wounds: Immediately after each melee allow characters to pause a full turn and recover 1d3 hits on the spot. This option helps low level characters extend their delving excursions if players remember to exercise the rule before taking other actions after combat. The benefits gained by Catch Breath require the use of salves, ointments, bandages, herbs and snake oils. *Juju Bags* containing these cost 10 gp, weigh 3 lbs and have 12 uses.

Out Cold: A character at exactly zero hp is not yet dead, but rather unconscious. The tales of unconscious characters left to meet their maker by fleeing comrades are the stuff of legend. Better yet are stories detailing how fresh meat served to distract the Monsters just long enough to make good a party's escape. A full day's rest recovers characters to 1 hp.

In the Red: Characters reduced to a negative number of hits are incapacitated, but not necessarily dead. Such unfortunates are considered to be dying from bloodloss and/or shock. Characters in this state will continue to lose one hit per melee turn (round) until they have perished or have been cured to a minimum of zero hits. (Lesser cures lengthen the process but do not stop it.) Once their negative hit total exceeds their level plus their points of Constitution over 12, if any, they are dead.

Liquid Courage: Alcohol can be employed to provide limited healing, with a kick. Characters may take a round to build up their resolve by imbibing ale, mead, wine, grog, whiskey, gin, brandy, and so forth. This option restores 1d3 hits. Each time a character heals this way, however, he must roll under his Constitution on 1d6 cumulative for each attempt. (Thus the fourth slug of sour mash would require the PC to roll under CON on 4d6). Failure means the PC becomes inebriated. Inebriated characters no longer gain hits from alcohol and fight and save at -2 until they have a few hours to sleep it off. Gaining liquid courage requires considerable drinking: half a wineskin, a third of a bottle of liquor. I allow characters to bring a *Jug of the Good Stuff* from town, at a cost of 5 gold. *Underworld Booze*, found with orcs, deodands, and similar creatures, is sometimes found in monster lairs, but it is often bitter, sour or altogether unpalatable to surface dwellers. It carries a greater kick (cumulative d8's for inebriation) but cures 1d6 hits when consumed.

Take 5: Each and every day a character is able to restore up to five wound points through normal rest and recovery, coupled with nourishment. No more than 1 hit may be restored per turn of inactivity, and no more than five hits may be so recovered each day. A character might attempt to rest for five turns, recovering his maximum in one long period of inactivity. The recuperation might be spread out between encounters in smaller amounts as well. Any turn in which there is an encounter will not count as a turn of rest; therefore it is important to remember that the 1 hit is only gained at the end of this turn. Characters using this option will devour an extra portion of rations that day regardless of the amount of hits recovered.

Lucky Token: Character may purchase these minor magic charms in various locales, or even find them during the course of an adventure. Each can only be used once and only one can be used in a given day. Devices such as a Rabbit's Foot, Four-leaf Clover, Lucky Penny or Cricket Shell can be crafted into a *Lucky Token* and sell for 15-20 gold each. The single use token allows the user to roll 1d6 and place the die displaying the roll on top of his or her character sheet. Any damage taken during the next turn will be subtracted from that die before it reduces the character's hit total. If the hits from the die have not been expended in one turn, the die is removed as the character's luck has run out. Unlike other Quick Hits options, Lucky Token can be used during melee.

II. Class Options give characters of particular classes special ways to recover and deal with adversity.

Light a Fuse: Warriors only. When a fellow player character becomes *Out Cold*, *In the Red*, or dies during an encounter, Warriors gain a small amount of resolve for its remainder. Until the end of the battle the Warrior may take the highest of two tries on all attack and damage rolls.

Power Nap: Mages only. With two complete turns of uninterrupted meditation, mages can recover one previously cast 1st level spell. The number of recovered spells increases to two at 5th Level and three at 9th. Only one Power Nap may be taken each day.

Priest Dice: Priests only. In addition to their other spells, Clerics receive a single 1d6 healing spell for each level of experience. This cure requires one melee round and may be used during combat.

III. Dungeon Decrees provide the GM techniques for helping to keep things going now and again without resorting to outright fudging or the railroad.

Throw a Bone: When you feel that the planned course of action might have disastrous results for the player characters, roll to see if they notice something that might give them pause. This is DM Fiat with a dice roll, a 2 in 6 chance that one of the characters pauses or hesitates and points out a detail that just might alter the course of action.

Remember Dak: This is a quote from actual play in one of my dungeons. Dak did something very foolish and paid the ultimate price. When I feel that something glaringly obvious has been missed, I give a 2 in 6 chance to hear an ominous voice from beyond saying simply, "Remember Dak!" You could use a different catchphrase in your game, but the basic idea is to establish a non-specific warning cue so that your players will give matters another thought.

Recalcitrant Helpers: NPCs have minds of their own, and if players try to take them along when haring off on some ill-considered venture they may balk or refuse. If the PC stays calm and discusses things with the NPC they can get additional information which may change their plans. If not, the NPC (and GM) may just have to roll with it.

Hand of Fate: Give each player except the GM a red and a black card at the beginning of the adventure. The black card allows the player to reroll any single die roll and the red card forces the GM to do the same. If desired, more cards can be found as mystical *Cards of Fate* in the underworld, or simply as less tangible encounter rewards. As cards are played, the GM retains them, and the GM may use any two cards of the same color to fudge a die roll of his own choosing. Whether the referee uses these rerolls to benefit or hinder the players is up to him or her.

Cheat Death: When a character is slain, he may attempt to Cheat Death. By some twist of fate, like a comic book or pulp fiction hero, the character has managed to survive his or her sure demise. Give the PC a saving throw vs. death upon 'dying'; if it is made, treat the character as *Out Cold* (or else at 1 hp if you don't play with that rule) instead.

Body Count: Prior to each excursion, the referee checks the dungeon's Body Count threshold by rolling 1d4+1. When this number has been reached via slain PCs, the otherworldly forces in the depths become somewhat sated for the rest of the day. Once the dungeon has had its fill of dead adventurers, Wandering Monsters become much less frequent, only occurring if two checks are made rather than one. If the first check is made and the second missed the GM might allow the party to happen on some useful mundane supplies or potential underworld allies instead. Alternately, reaching the Body Count could bring about a Monster Holiday, as described below.

Monster Holiday: Even the denizens of the underworld have things to celebrate. Spending time with family, being kinder than normal, or throwing parties are all facets of Monster Holidays. The otherworldly force which powers the dungeon and motivates its inhabitants will, from time to time, wane or subside. During a Monster Holiday, the encounters will be smaller, with intelligent creatures looking to avoid a fight if possible. Some monsters will be in the midst of drunken revelry, or recovering from a hangover, and in no mood to fight. Optionally, if you have a dungeon of x levels, simply roll dx at the start of each session, and the result will indicate which level is currently celebrating a Monster Holiday.

One Man's Trash: Simple supplies can often be the finest treasure of all. Be sure to include the mundane supplies left behind by former mortals who have come this way before. Rations, drinks, rope, torches, flasks of oil or even maps that were discarded or lost can spell the difference between stumbling around with no hope of survival and that little bump that extends the gaming session.

Panic Rooms and Study Halls: Remember to include some secret chambers that are either off the beaten path or inaccessible to monsters. These can provide a nice resting point for the adventurers, provided they can find them and take advantage of their relative safety. If the party can realistically cajmp there overnight, these places can also be used for Mages and Priests to regain spells as well.

This concludes the collection of Extended Crawling options. Remember that the intent is not to create a softer environment beneath the surface! I gleefully stuff numerous challenges in even the first few rooms of Level One. Even with many of these house rules, the characters still often find themselves in way over their heads. I enjoy a gaming session without constant interruptions and retreats to town. The players are not only able to realize a



Jena the Bold thief lvl. 3
 STR 8 INT 14 AC 5
 dex 12 wis 14 hp 10
 con 12 cha 18 poisons: 1d4+1

greater feeling of accomplishment, but their expeditions often delve deeper than they should. Rather than pecking away at a large dungeon level and seeing the same rooms numerous times on return trips, the characters are finding new challenges as well as alternate entrances and exits with each excursion. Large, numerous encounters have proved more exciting for my players than small controlled fights spread between retreats to town. Ω

Fight On!'s Big Win!

In March, *Fight On!* won the first-ever lulu author contest for total sales on lulu.com in March. A big thanks to all of our contributors for making this happen! You can read interviews on-line about the contest with Ignatius here:

lulublog.com/2009/04/28/fight-on-the-march-lulucom-sales-contest-winner/

and with Calithena here:

oldguyrpg.blogspot.com/2009/04/interview-with-calithen-of-fight-on.html; oldguyrpg.blogspot.com/2009/04/interview-with-calithena-of-fight-on.html



Effects of Hearing a Swansong (2d3)

(when an actual swan dies and sings nearby)

1	1	Character becomes obsessed with hearing another swansong, otherwise slowly wasting away.
1	2	Character becomes terrified of hearing another swansong, to the point that they may become crippled with fear in the presence of a swan. If they hear another swansong they lose the fear (and must roll again on this table as anyone else would).
1	3	Character gains a spectacularly beautiful (or more beautiful) singing voice, for sad songs only.
2	1	Character gains/improves incredible poetic/compositional skill, for sad poems and songs only.
2	2	Hearer now prone to crippling fits of melancholy.
2	3	Hearer learns identity and location of one true love.
3	1	Character can speak with birds, which are predisposed to think highly of him/her.
3	2	Hearer becomes completely unable to harm or eat any bird, even if they are monstrous/attacking.
3	3	While dying, character sings a swansong of his/her own, causing all who hear to roll on this table.

Effects of Powerful Magic on the Caster (2d6)

1	1	No harm comes to the magician.
1	2	Hands change to resemble opposite sex - very 'masculine' (hairy knuckles) or very 'feminine'.
1	3	Caster's hands change to resemble those of a very old or young person. Old casters receive baby's hands, young casters receive an old

		person's hands, and middle aged casters receive one of each. They age in reverse also.
1	4	Many minor effects make it obvious that magic is being worked in the area: animals panic and can't be calmed, milk sours for no reason, babies have nightmares, etc.
1	5	The magician suffers a -2 penalty to 1-3 random attributes, which slowly heal.
1	6	Roll 4d6. The magician is unable to work any more magic for that many hours.
2	1	The magician suffers a -4 penalty to 1-3 random attributes, which slowly heal.
2	2	The magician lapses into insanity for a week.
2	3	The magician's finger- and toe-nails start growing at a fantastic rate.
2	4	Magician ages 1d6 years.
2	5	Roll 1d6. The magician is unable to work any more magic for that many days.
2	6	The magician is prone to fits of possession or madness lasting 5-30 minutes for 1d6 days. They may babble blasphemies or attack those nearby, even friends, and remember nothing.
3	1	The magician henceforth makes animals (all or single species) nervous/angry when near.
3	2	The magician's hair turns white. If it's already white, it falls out.
3	3	Mage develops incurable wet hacking cough.
3	4	The magician acquires a waxy and pallid complexion and gains a -2 to attacks and saves and doubles casting time in bright sunlight..
3	5	Mage's toes and fingers become webbed.
3	6	An unnatural thing appears through a bleeding rift in space and attempts to eat the magician.
4	1	The magician is cursed with a permanent form of insanity (roll again: 1-2 a phobia 3-4 an obsession with acquiring a particular kind of object 5-6 periodic hallucinations).
4	2	The magician develops a limp in one leg.
4	3	The magician develops a facial tic.
4	4	Sores and boils cover the magician's skin.

4	5	The magician periodically breaks into uncontrollable maniacal laughter.
4	6	The magician's nose begins to rot away.
5	1	The magician loses their sense of (roll again: 1-3 taste 4-6 smell).
5	2	Mage develops an allergy to a common (roll again: 1-2 food, 3-4 animal, 5-6 object).
5	3	The magician's lips crack and bleed.
5	4	The magician's tears will look like blood.
5	5	Mage's eyes (roll again: 1-3 bug out, giving them a frog-like appearance 4-6 sink into their sockets, giving them a skull-like appearance).
5	6	One hand withers until virtually useless.
6	1	The magician suffers a -6 penalty to 1-3 random attributes, which slowly heal.
6	2	The magician is permanently prone to fits of possession or madness lasting 5-30 minutes. They may babble blasphemies or attack those nearby, even friends, and remember nothing
6	3	Magician ages 3d6 years.
6	4	Mage becomes unnaturally thin and hungry-looking, and requires twice normal food.
6	5	Roll on random polymorph/reincarnation chart to determine mage's new form.
6	6	The next time the magician is touched by the light of the Sun, they will melt away forever.

Magic Ships (1d6)

1	Can also fly.
2	Folds up and fits into a pocket.
3	In a bottle – grows to normal size when the bottle is smashed. If a giant bottle can somehow be built around the ship, the ship and bottle will shrink to its original size (with anything on board).
4	Sails as with a fair wind, regardless of weather.
5	All who crew it act as expert sailors, regardless of skill, as if aided by the benevolent spirits of its former crew.
6	Sails where it wants to go rather than as guided, regardless of whether the map says the journey is possible.

Dungeon Motivations (d100)

by Paul Vermeren (with Jeff Rients and Bret Woods)

A while back, Jeff Rients wrote a post titled "What's My Motivation?" for his Gameblog. Tired of players at pickup D&D games asking why their puny first-level character would waltz into a subterranean deathtrap, he devised a random chart on which the players could roll to answer that very question. I wanted more options, so with Bret's help I expanded his original twelve entries to a full 100!

- 01 Obsessed with proving the existence of the Hollow World.
- 02 Questing to retrieve bones of famous adventuring ancestor and re-inter them in family tomb.
- 03 Has terrible but enticing dreams of sitting on the throne of a vast underworld kingdom.
- 04 Owes 1d6 x 10,000 gp to Jabba the Hutt.
- 05 Seeks vengeance against the Troll King.
- 06 Family member afflicted with disease that can only be cured with water from a sacred subterranean spring.
- 07 Haunted by visions of a beautiful witch/drow/princess/goth chick living on an island at the center of a vast underground lake.
- 08 Seeks one segment of the Rod of Many Parts. Must obtain all to save homeland from foretold doom.
- 09 Evil duplicate (twin? simulacrum? clone?) has fled into the dungeon. One must die before both go mad.
- 10 True love has been trapped in amber and is on display in the trophy room of Lord Utterdark.
- 11 Parents imprisoned. Corrupt official will exchange them for the Star Ruby of Umman-Gorash.
- 12 Questing for legendary sword (warrior), archmage's spellbook (mage), or holy relic (priest).
- 13 Is a naturalist studying dungeon-based ecologies.
- 14 From another plane/reality/dimension, looking for a way home.
- 15 A hireling of previous delvers, waiting by entrance & grumbling about back pay when party arrives.
- 16 Seeks the subterranean River Lethe, hoping to forget a shameful past deed.
- 17 Has lost everything they once held dear and has a suicidal death wish.
- 18 Is a member of a tribe that considers surviving the dungeon a rite of passage.
- 19 Outfitted with an unremovable, deadly device that magically transmits their every sensation to a decrepit immortal who craves the thrill of dungeon crawling.
- 20 Was double-dog dared to enter the dungeon.
- 21 Was originally a member of the opposite sex and quests for proper equipment.
- 22 Doing research for an up-and-coming mad wizard who wants to construct the ultimate dungeon.
- 23 Heard dungeon crawling was a growth industry and is in it for the money.
- 24 On the run from the law and figures they won't follow him/her into a dungeon.

- 25 Trying to impress a love interest.
- 26 Quests to restore good name of disgraced noble family.
- 27 Is a criminal sentenced to certain death in the dungeon.
- 28 Is the illegitimate child of a great hero, now intent on proving him/herself to their deadbeat parent.
- 29 Trained from birth by a bizarre cult and sent as an offering to the great gods of the underworld.
- 30 Adores gloomy dungeon ambience.
- 31 Obsessed with proving "Unified Dungeon Theory".
- 32 Crazy old uncle has filled PC's head with glamorous nonsense about dungeon crawling.
- 33 Has terrifying dreams commanding PC to awaken a sleeping god.
- 34 Is the impressionable younger relative of another PC and follows him/her everywhere.
- 35 Is the overprotective older relative of another PC.
- 36 Sent to act as bodyguard to another PC.
- 37 Owed another PC a huge favor.
- 38 Is the indentured servant of another PC.
- 39 Is the slave of another PC. Whether the PC will remain so is another question.
- 40 Is the devoted friend of another PC and didn't want them to go alone.
- 41 Driven to prove him/herself the strongest of all.
- 42 Fanatically collects spores, molds and fungus.
- 43 Seeks blood/tooth/claw/eye of a monster found in the dungeon to sell or complete a ritual or magic potion.
- 44 Wants to completely eradicate one type of monster found in the dungeon from the face of the earth.
- 45 Is an aficionado of ancient wall carvings and wants to add rubbings from this dungeon to collection.
- 46 Lost a wager and must enter the dungeon as a result.
- 47 Beloved pet scampered into the dungeon.
- 48 Bullied/coerced/tricked/seduced into accompanying another PC into the dungeon.
- 49 Is an adrenaline junkie looking for a rush.
- 50 Is a jaded hedonist in search of new thrills.
- 51 Shipwrecked nearby and needs money for repairs.
- 52 Was forced to stop at this backwater world when spaceship ran out of the gems/gold it uses for fuel.
- 53 Must spend a night in the dungeon in order to receive a promised inheritance.
- 54 Has complex legal documents showing dungeon is on his/her property and intends to claim it. Must evict current tenants first.
- 55 Decides to enter the dungeon while extremely drunk.
- 56 Has a thing for "underdark chicks/guys".
- 57 Believes a cryptic journal that claims his/her true family history lies within the bowels of the dungeon.
- 58 Wants to prove that flumphs are not extinct.
- 59 Longs to meet a dragon firsthand.
- 60 Avenging a loved one violated by dungeon monsters.
- 61 An amnesiac, believes key to discovering forgotten identity lies in the dungeon.
- 62 Searching for evidence of a lost race/civilization.
- 63 A tomb robber, pure and simple.
- 64 Loved one kidnapped and taken to be villain's consort, held in the dungeon.
- 65 Realizes that being an adventurer = dungeon crawling in this world and there's no way around it.
- 66 Has been injected with a slow-acting poison, the antidote for which must be made from a lichen that grows only in the dungeon.
- 67 A former henchman of the dungeon's main villain, seeking to overthrow him/her/it.
- 68 Secretly seeks to betray PC party to the dungeon's main villain because villain holds PC's loved one captive.
- 69 Seeks to disprove the existence of the Hollow Earth.
- 70 Feels a need to do what everyone else is doing.
- 71 From peasant stock & determined to raise station, sees dungeon crawling as quick path to fame and fortune.
- 72 Ex-adventurer grandfather's last request was for PC to brave the dungeon.
- 73 Sent on mission into dungeon by liege lord/chieftain.
- 74 Expressly forbidden to enter dungeon by superiors - lives to break rules.
- 75 Was prophesied to undertake journey into the dungeon.
- 76 Received divine communication that he/she was born in the Hollow World, wishes to find way home.
- 77 Commanded to enter dungeon by mentor as a final test.
- 78 Trying to atone for a past misdeed or crime.
- 79 Agoraphobic; dungeon crawling is the most lucrative line of work available to PC.
- 80 Sent to search the dungeon for a missing child.
- 81 Would rather die in the depths of the dungeon than be branded the village coward.
- 82 Never looks before he/she leaps - this sojourn is just the latest in a lengthy list of foolhardy endeavors.
- 83 Is a cartographer of the underdark.
- 84 Is a painter of subterranean landscapes.
- 85 Heard there were lasers down there.
- 86 Is related to the main villain and intends to bring him/her/it to justice.
- 87 Another PC's rival, sees dungeon as game of one-upmanship.
- 88 On holy pilgrimage to dungeon site.
- 89 Has a pathological tendency to underestimate danger.
- 90 Is actually a magically-created organism designed only for dungeon crawling.
- 91 Was told by fortune teller that he/she will die in sunlight, goes underground in attempt to live forever.
- 92 Longs for immortality and scours dungeons in search of sympathetic lich/vampire/wight.
- 93 Faces unwanted arranged marriage, wants to "live a little" before being forced to settle down.
- 94 Fleeing persecution.
- 95 Is a spelunker looking to take hobby to "the next level".
- 96 Simply enjoys killing things and taking their stuff.
- 97 Seeks the missing part that will allow him/her to activate Earthshaker!
- 98 Claims to be "from the future!" and insists he/she is acting to bring about the correct future history.
- 99 Make one up! No rerolls allowed.
- 00 A deity in disguise, visiting the dungeon as a sightseer/to stamp out heresy/reward faithful. Ω

Knights & Knaves

Kristill & Iceniki: a pair of arctic wanderers

by Del L. Beaudry

They make an odd couple, these two. Even here, amid the deadly wonderland of the glacial boundary, where weirdness is the watchword, you don't expect to meet an achingly beautiful snow white swordswoman with an abominable snowman for a chaperone.

No, not a woman. Not yet, anyway. A girl, then. Long in the limbs but narrow-hipped — slender and lovely as a budding rose, graceful as a yearling doe. She has a doe's posture: taut and wary, but innocent of guile. And, like any wild creature, she depends on exquisitely tuned natural instincts to warn against danger. (Her eyes are keen, her hearing superb, and so on.) Valuable tools, no doubt, but scarcely proof against the wide scope of human evil.

Kristill's comrade, Iceniki, offers more robust protection. He (the prodigious testicles permit no ambiguity) is a white-furred primate roughly twice the size of a mountain gorilla. Scholars and collectors may (on a standard roll, or



at the DM's discretion) note that his anatomy resembles a bugbear's (although Iceniki is taller and more robust than your dungeon-variety specimen). They will perhaps conclude that his race is some sort of arctic cousin.

Kristill

5th level Neutral Warrior

S 14 I 10 W 16 C 16 D 17 C 18

DC 3, hp 41, mind points 109/109

Psychic Attacks: PsiBlast, Ego Lash, Insinuation, PsiCrush

Psychic Defenses: PsiBlank, MindShield, Fort of Iron Will

Psychic Powers: Corpal Equilibrium, Corpal Control,

Corpall Weaponry, Cellular Adjustment, Empathy,

Molecule Agitation, Telekinesis

Magic Items: +2 glass-steel longsword (unbreakable save by potent magic, e.g. disintegrate); *Arctic Mantle* (enchanted polar bear pelt offers protection equal to scale mail but weighs no more than crepe paper; provides concealment equal to *Cloak of Blending* in arctic & subarctic environments); *Loviatar's Torc* (a token of the goddess' favor: +2 saves vs. paralysis, poison, death, rod/staff/wand, and spells up to 5th level, add'l +4 vs. pain & cold effects. May also act as a focus permitting Loviatar to manifest herself (DM's discretion))

The nomads of the Polar Fringe are a superstitious folk. Theirs is a world dominated by ghosts, demons and gods. So when the girl, Kristill, inadvertently manifested her latent psychic powers by setting a tent afire, the outcome was predictable: she was a witch and must be cast out, abandoned to eke out a tenuous life on the glacial verge.

The fact that Kristill's gifts were psychic rather than sorcerous was of no consequence from the tribe's point of view: witches are witches. But to the adolescent girl, disowned and abandoned by her people, the rejection was intensely personal. What was her crime, that she should deserve such a fate? Such were her thoughts as she lay dying in the snow, only a few miles from her former home.

Kristill's savior was not of mortal kin. By fate or chance the dark goddess Loviatar, Mistress of Sorrow observed her condition and chose to intervene. Kristill was spared death in exchange for a life in the goddess's service. The same talent that had wrought her exile was seen by Loviatar, a desperate and marginal goddess, as a means to re-establish her cult. That Kristill isn't evil doesn't really matter. Beggars can't be choosers, and anyway Loviatar expects to corrupt her protégé along the way.

Kristill is extraordinarily beautiful. She is tall and lean. Her skin is white, her hair silver and long, worn up under a hat, or in a plait. Her eyes are pale blue. Though young, Kristill has learned the value of caution. Her occasional encounters with other human beings have rarely gone well. Too often, men see her as a prize to be won. Or stolen. Even the smallest sign of fellowship could incite them...

As a consequence, Kristall says little and rarely advertises her emotions. Even under the best circumstances, she does not socialize with other human beings easily. She trusts no one save Iceniki. Even her patron goddess, Loviatar, provokes her skepticism. Kristall's wariness is easy to understand. Her own parents left her to die in the snow. More than once men have tried to rape, enslave or kill her. She holds herself aloof as a rule. Those who desire her friendship must first earn her trust, no easy matter.

When negotiating, Kristall usually defers to Iceniki. When she does speak for herself her remarks are invariably both cordial and succinct. Kristill does not waste time. She decides quickly who is trustworthy and who is not. Friends are treated with the elaborate courtesy of her tribe, while enemies are eliminated by the most efficient means at hand.

Iceniki

5th level Neutral Yeti Barbarian

S 19 (hill giant) I 13 W 15 C 19 D 13 C 6

DC 5, hp 71; attacks with 2 claws or pole axe

Special Abilities: Immune to cold, SPD 15, berserk rage, surprised opponents save vs. paralysis for 3 rounds.

Despite his ferocious appearance, Iceniki is both reasonable and temperate. In fact, he's rather abstracted, even cerebral, and prone to intricate moral and metaphysical speculation. (Yes, the yeti's the brains of the operation, curiously enough.)

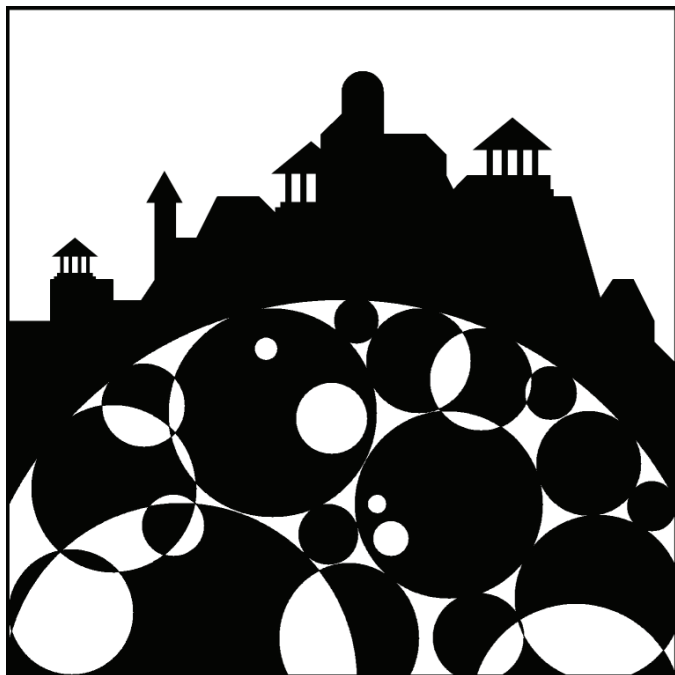
Iceniki 'speaks' only his own tribal language, which is comprised primarily of hand gestures and supplemented by grunts, growls and frightful-looking grimaces. Kristill knows it too, though she is not completely fluent – Iceniki taught it to her during the long arctic winter. He could learn a human sign language very quickly if someone took the time to teach him, though he is unaware of any such.

Iceniki doesn't particularly hate humankind. He appreciates humanity's versatility and cleverness; he's even met a few humans he found quite intriguing. But he knows in his bones that men are dangerous. Their talents for tool-making and prevarication constitute the means for great mischief. So he's learned to be very careful when dealing with them. He's also learned that when he taps them briskly they have a tendency to fall down and not get up. Ω

Oceania

Swords and Sorcery in a Land of Sea and Sky

Coming 2010!



Black Blood

adventure by Gabor Lux

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

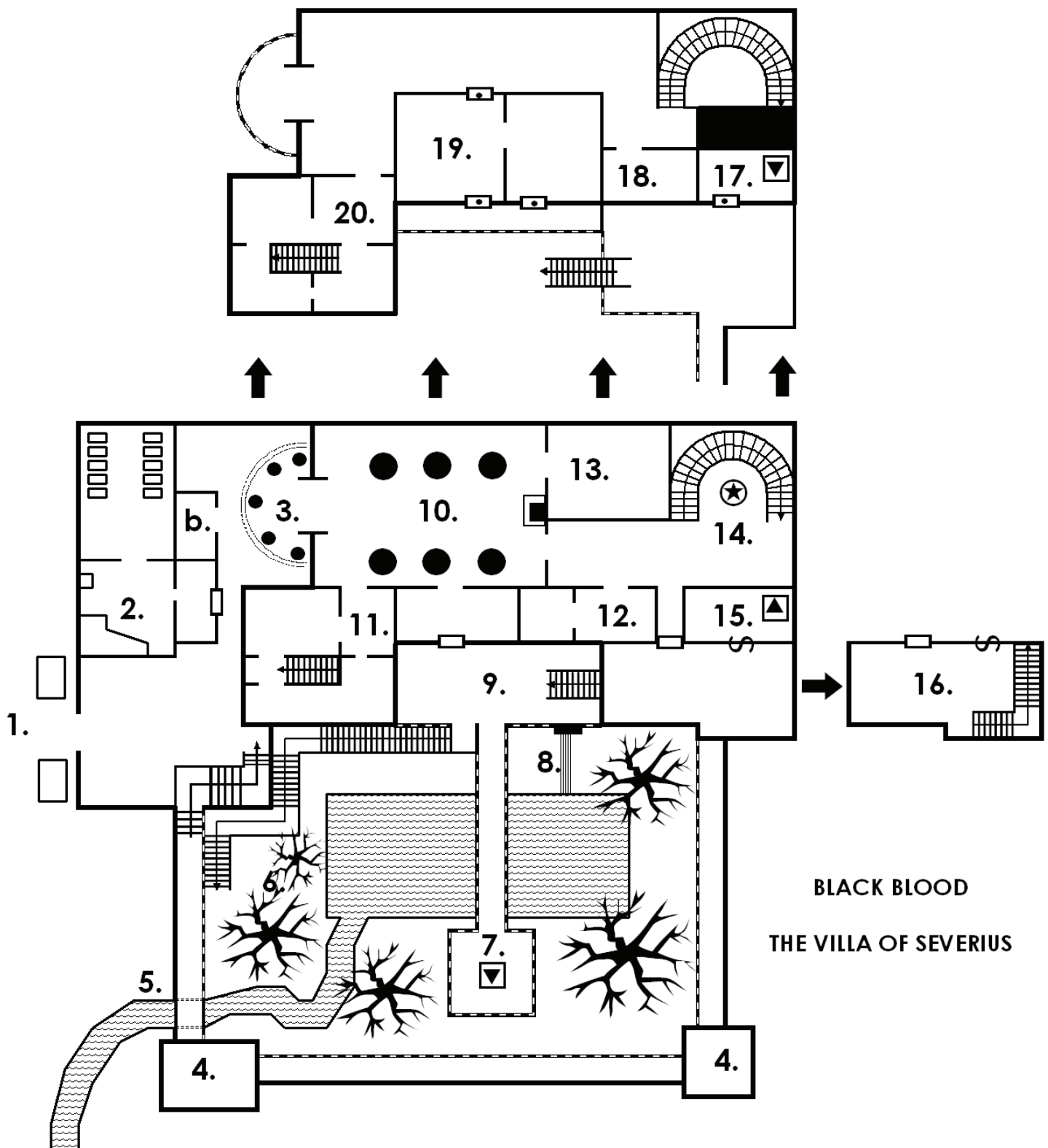


Dalé: Amazon 5; DC 13; Atk dagger 1d4+2; Str 18, Int 10, Wis 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Cha 16, hp 25.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

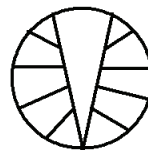
7. Interior tower: In the middle of the garden stands a square tower of equal height to the outer walls, connected to the northern terrace by an arched bridge. The lower entrance was walled up long ago, but there is an iron trapdoor on the flat roof (stuck, bend bars to open). Within the tower, a series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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



healing (x2)



fire bomb (as 5 die fireball)



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



mind reading

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

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

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

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



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

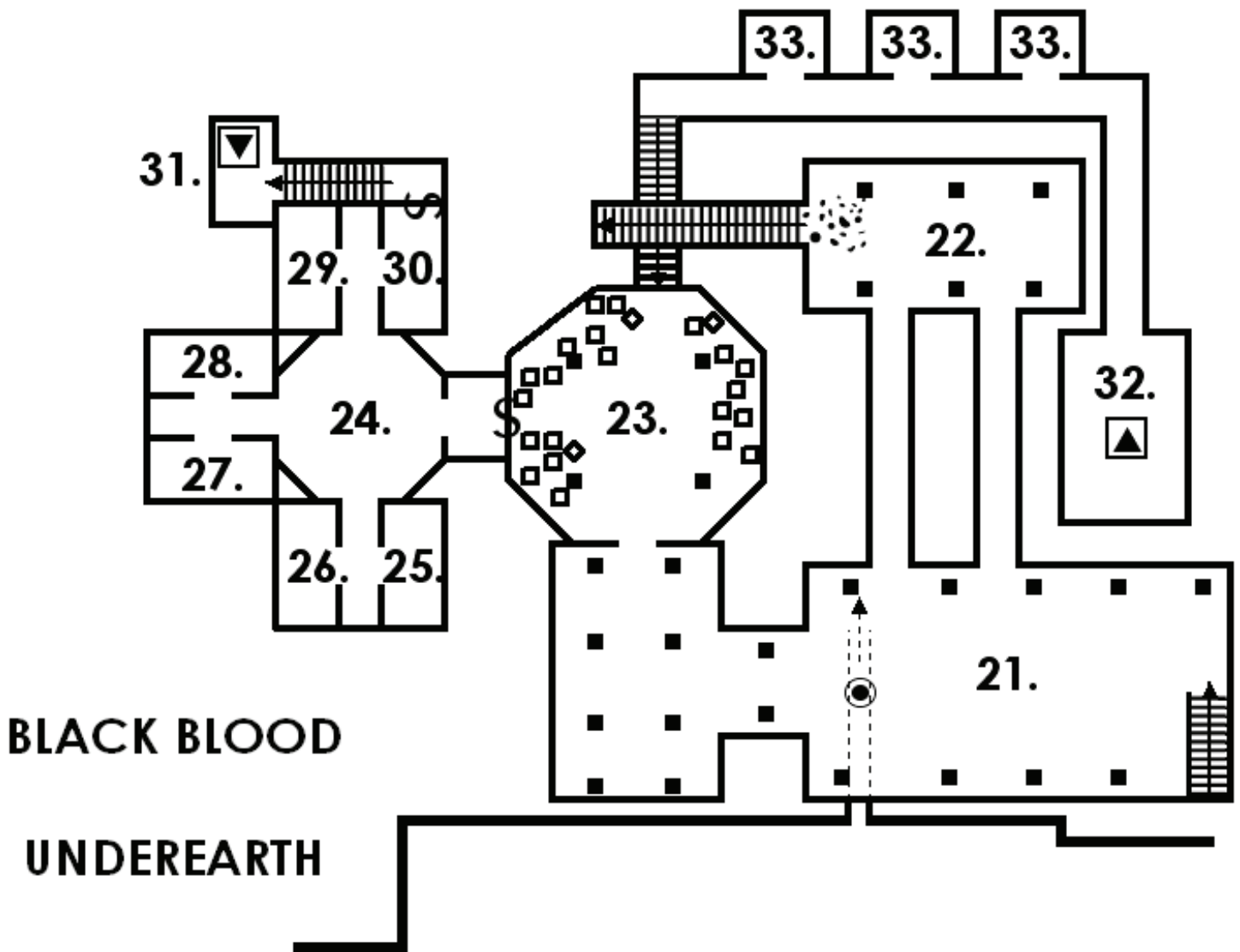
19. Severius's quarters: Two rooms, locked from both directions; formerly in better shape. The western room contains a reading lectern and an X-shaped chair with no back-rest, as well as ink, quill, small scales, and a four-legged bowl. A silver statuette worth 170 gp stands on a pedestal: a bull-headed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

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



Underearth

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

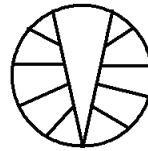
32. The dome of stars: A tall domed chamber painted pitch black, under room **14** and accessible from the secret shaft above or the stairs below. The blackness is punctuated by "stars", dots glowing with a faint luminescence. This is a relatively weak enchantment; however, some of the stars are slowly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

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

FUTILITY
IGNORANCE
INDIFFERENCE

Underearth II

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



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

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

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




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

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

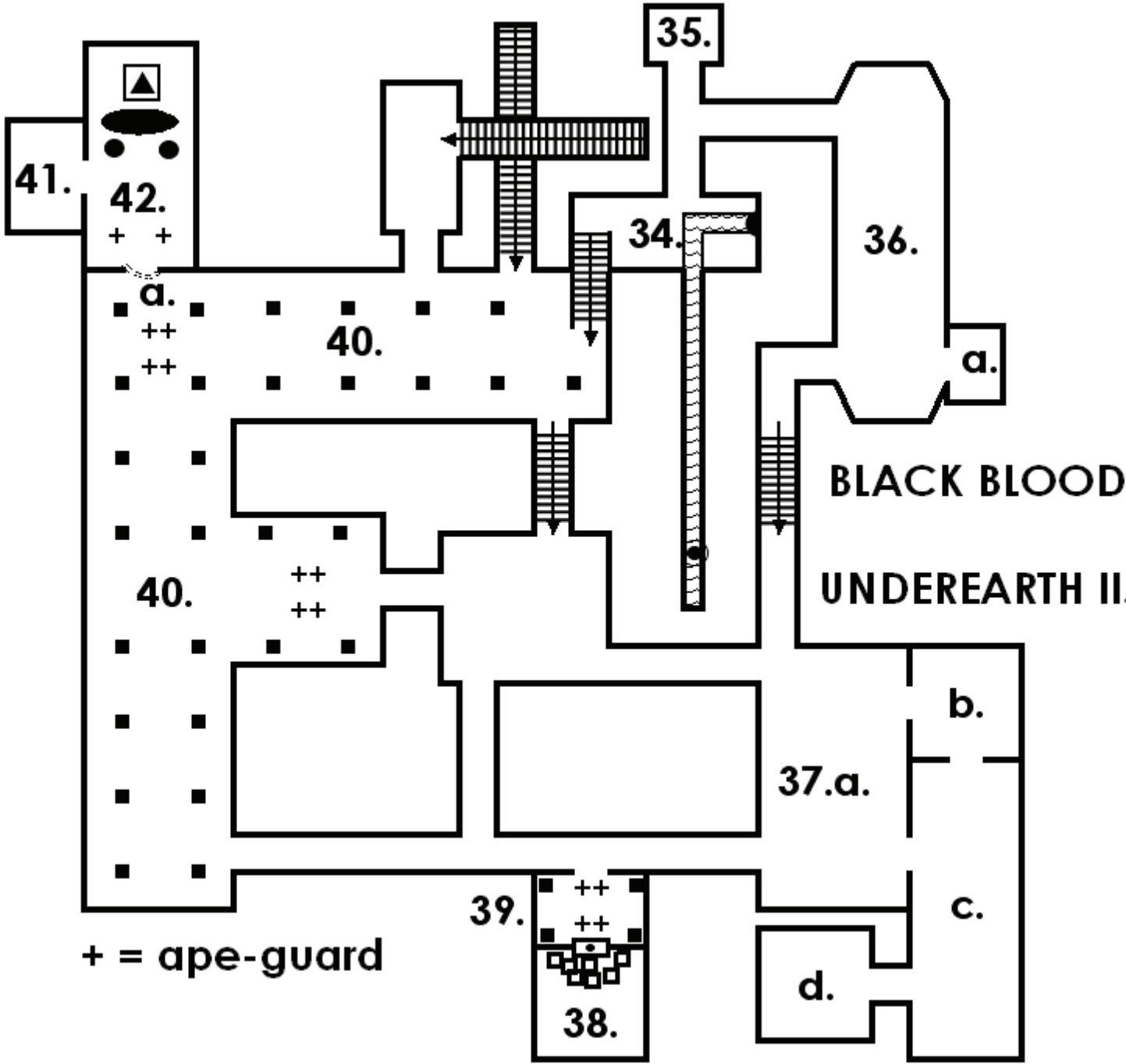
c. Den of cushions and rugs – four rather bulky carpets on the wall are worth 200(x2) and 100(x2) gp. Scented oil

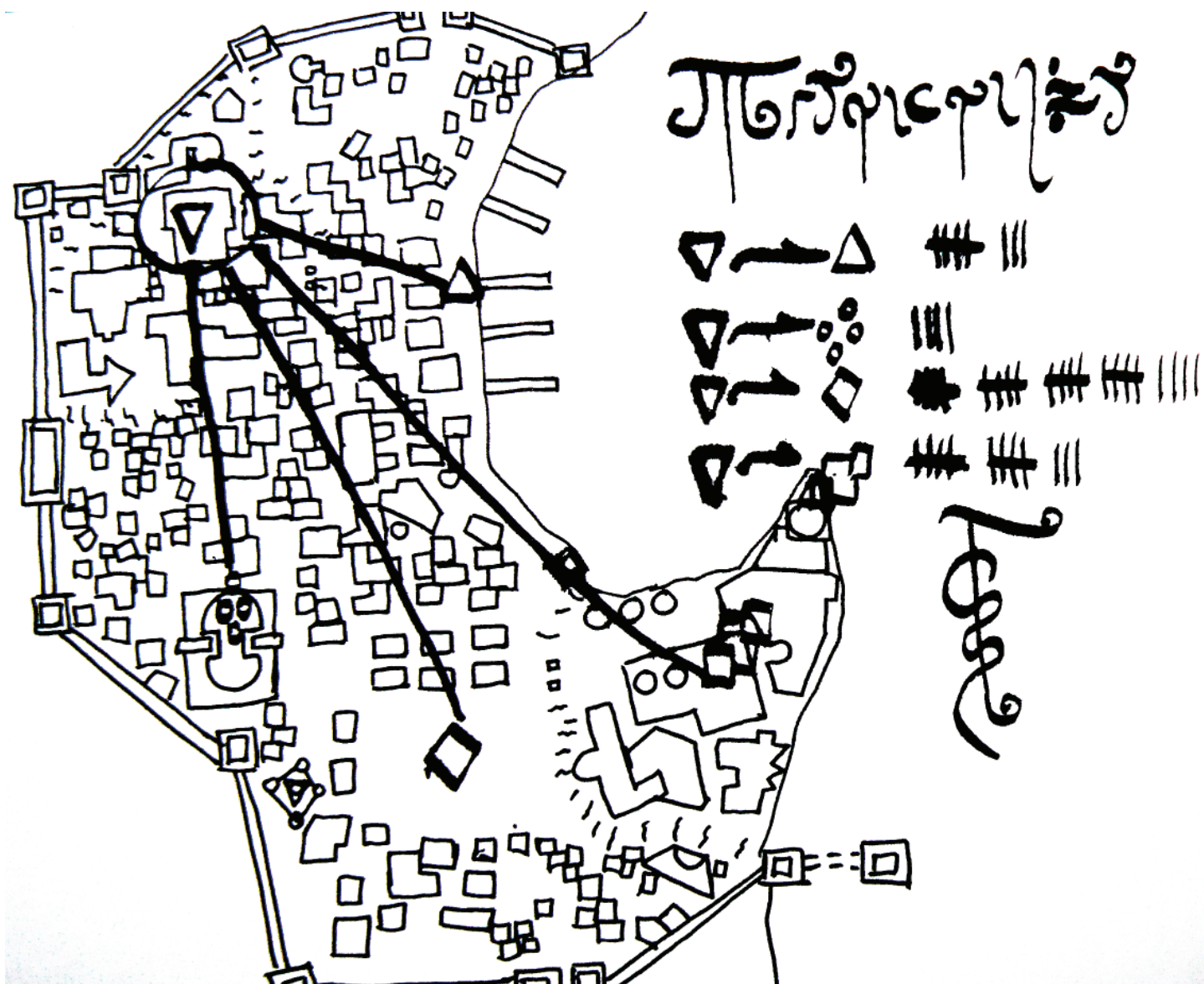
burns in a large bowl, casting a dim haze. The low, circular wooden table is inlaid with ebony and mahogany (500 gp). On the flat surface rest documents, most prominently a map of Pentastadion marked up in indigo ink, with lines from the villa to various locations including the port and the citadel of the Syndic Lords (this image can be photocopied off the facing page for a handout). There is a hidden compartment in the table, opened by sliding off the top. It contains 500 gp, three semi-precious gemstones (30, 50, 10 gp), a 600 gp gold chain with a medallion depicting a lion's head, and five potions labelled thus:


healing (x2)

- 
super-healing
- 
gigantic strength
- 
Levitation

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





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

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

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

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

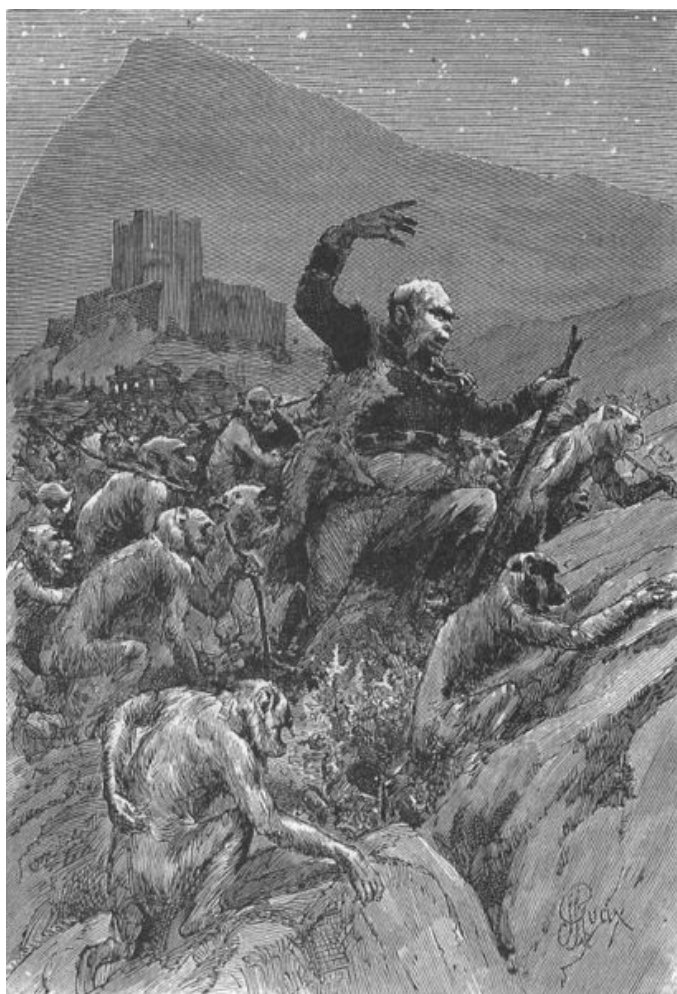
40. Hall of columns: A veritable forest of slender rectangular columns support the clammy black ceiling. The vast space is illuminated by chaotically dancing lights: on bonfires among the columns, human meat is being roasted; chewed-up bones litter the ground while brutish ape-men gobble up half-bloody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

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

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

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

42. The gate: The long chamber is crisscrossed by beams of shadows which no light illuminates. To the north, there is a great circular gate swirling with inky darkness; before the gate, weird flames dance in two crude stone bowls. Toromes, the dark sorcerer stands before the portal to the Underworld. If he sees the characters approach, he flees through the gate and leaves the fight to his two ape-man guards. These freshly created monstrosities are still very unstable: if the characters surprise Toromes, he fails in his concentration and the ape-men immediately disgorporate. **Ape-men (2):** LVL 3; hp 22,15; DC 8; Atk trident 1d8.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

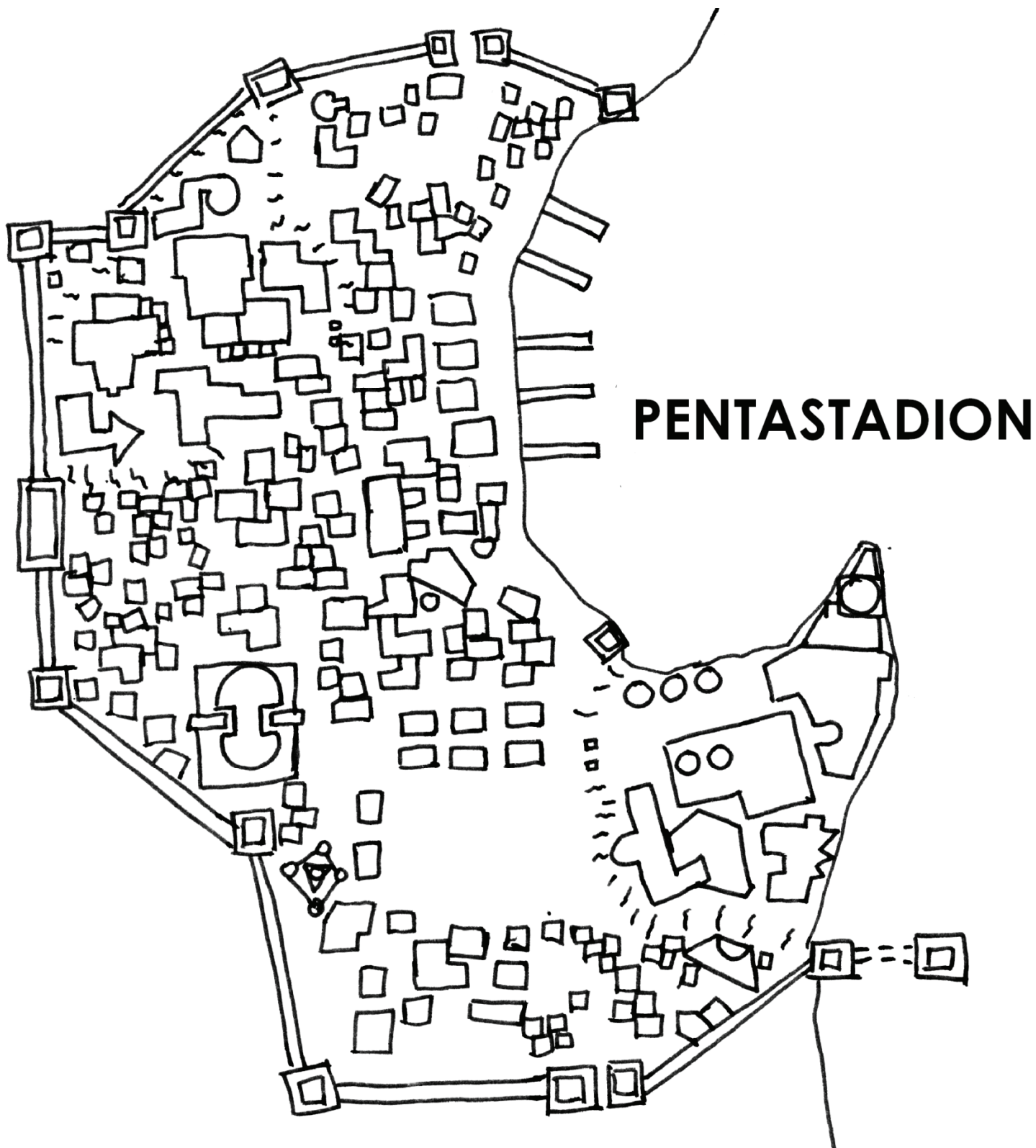
Toromes: Mage 9; hp 29; DC 2 (*bracers*, Dexterity); Atk *dagger* +1 1d4+1; Lawful Evil; Str 12, Int 17, Wis 7, Dex 17, Con 12, Cha 17; *ring of spirits* (in FO! #2, calls spirits for consultation & transport); no spells currently memorised.

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

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

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





city-state by Gabor Lux

On the coast west of the Sea of Mistakes stands the port city of Pentastadion (pop. 3200), a hub of commerce and reputedly the home of Fomalhaut's best seamen. Although its history stretches back a thousand years, the present city was re-established 300 years ago on the ruins of a former settlement, presumed to have been demolished by the Talaiote barbarians. Now the size and power of the city far surpasses that old predecessor, although the Talaiotes re-

main a threat necessitating upkeep of a land army in addition to swift war galleys. The surrounding lands are known for their abundance, and a number of fortified estates have sprung up to protect rural communities during raids.

The rulers of the city, widely known for their boundless avarice, are called the Syndic Lords. This oligarchy of the rich and powerful, currently numbering ten, consists of:

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

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

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

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

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

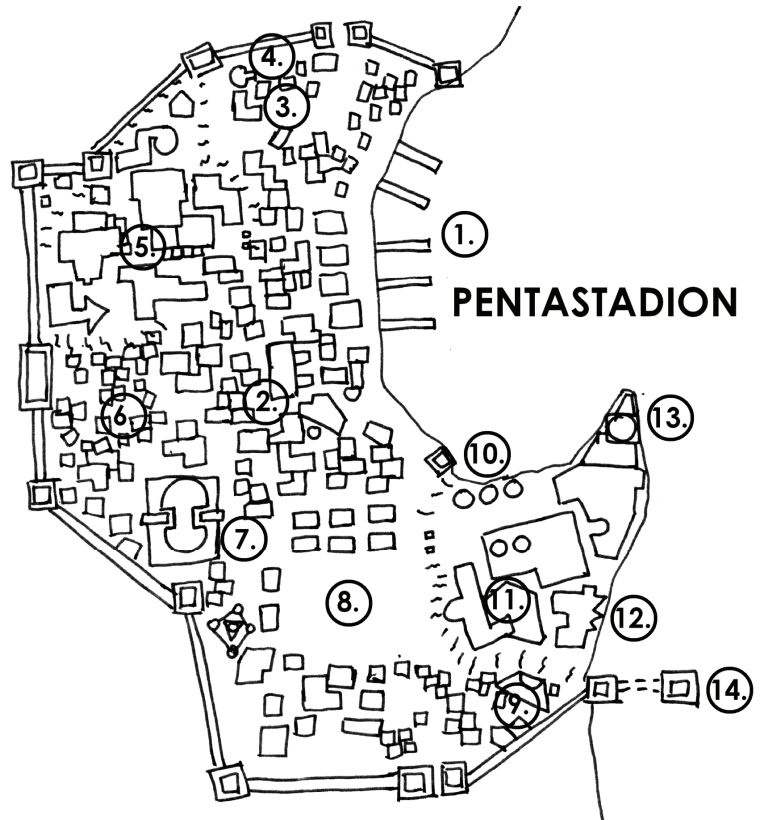
Syndic Eschmer, Archdeacon of Mung (Thf 4), the representative of Mungor City in Pentastadion. He is (sometimes derisively) best known for his devotion to the poor. Eschmer, as is prescribed for an archdeacon of the doctrine, is always willing to discuss his humanitarian mission, omitting his orders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

Syndic Achenobarbus, Sea Lord (War 4), having gathered great riches in marine trade, has turned his gaze on the Head Syndic's throne. An aesthete with connections in Glourm, Achenobarbus delights in elaborate tones produced by musical instruments purchased from obscure sources. Those without appropriate aesthetic inclinations may suffer a horrible death when subjected to their sound.

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

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

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



The following places are especially notable:

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

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

3. Dog Market: Xamander, a mean and thuggish type, maintains an open-air dog market here: basically an area demarcated by strong wooden poles to keep the ugly mutts

in. While the dogs are for the most part worthless, some may be useful for their sheer ferocity. Xamander keeps them in this temper with regular whippings and occasional beating with heavy staves. Pelts, fat and meat are also sold.

4. Abandoned Garden: the walled and overgrown garden hides a mausoleum to Kantarol Oroë, a woman who once took the lives of several young girls and lovers after wasting her inherited wealth on this place. Stoned to death when discovered, her form and those of the victims haunt it. However, the undead and the blood rose are only encountered during evening, when the garden becomes a wholly different world and a death-trap to the incautious.



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

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

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

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

9. The Temple of Tsathoggus: This plain, windowless building extends from the side of the hill. A columned hall admits supplicants to the presence of the priests, who are

overseen by the Metrarch, Thalasnar. Thalasnar's underlings labour to brew foul concoctions, which are sold in the temple for a tidy profit. The Metrarch himself is always in search of capable assassins for lucrative missions.

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

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

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

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

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

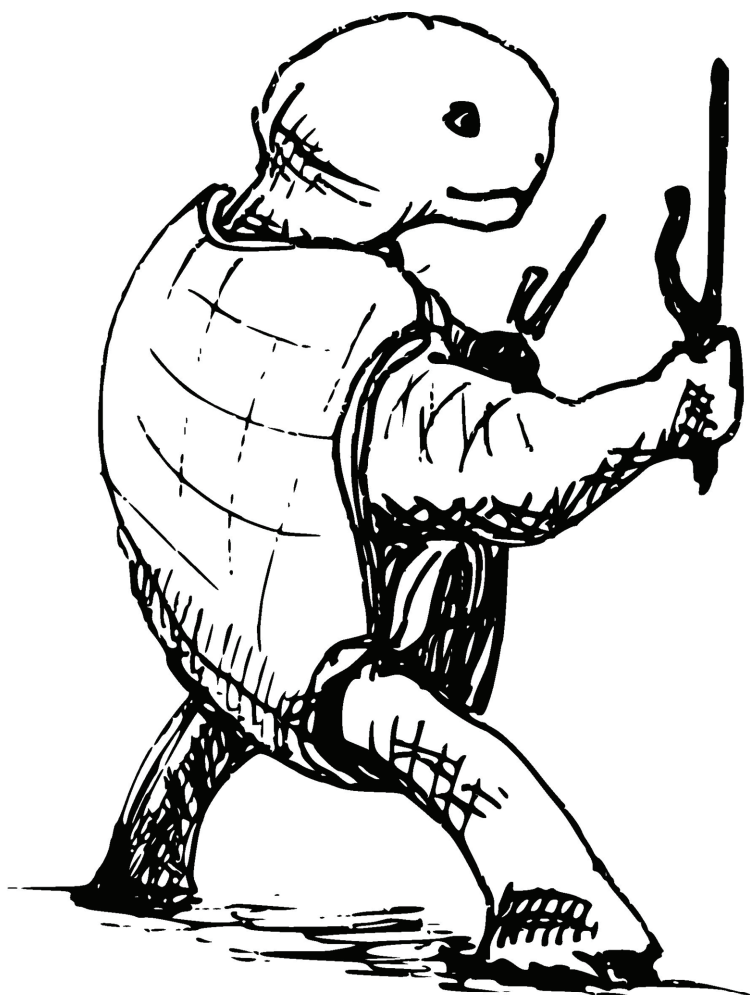
◆ THE END ◆

CREEPIES CRAWLIES

Fight On! is proud to present more new monsters in this issue than ever before. First Alex Schröder treats us to five humanoid monsters from his Kitsunemori campaign; then Wayne Rossi gives us a half-dozen subspecies of lizardman; stalwart Jeff Rients brings us the Servitors of the Loathsome Toad Gods; and finally Terje Nordin brings his own vision of the blasphemous denizens of Carcosa, with an assist at the end from the world's author, Geoff McKinney. Enjoy! - Ig

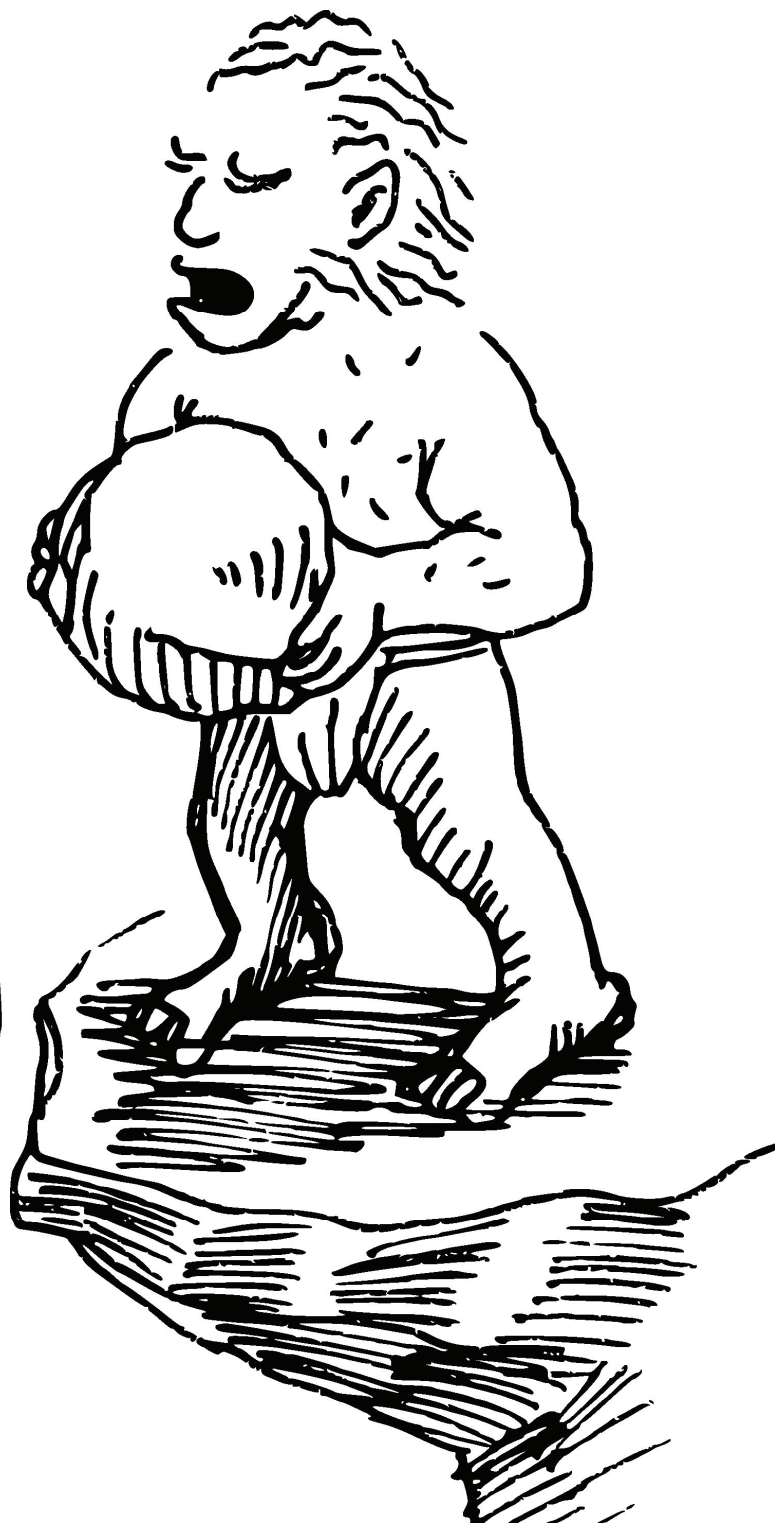
Monsters of the Kitsunemori Campaign

hellacious humanoids by Alex Schröder



Kappa: DC 2 Speed 12 HD 3; heavy armored turtle people; preferred weapons: nunchakus, a pair of tonfa, a pair of sai, or a pair of kama. They live in small family groups of 2-12 individuals.

Kitsune: DC 7 Speed 12 HD 2; fox shape changers; can cast minor illusions and sleep spells; preferred weapons: longbow and quarterstaff. They live in small groups of 1-6 individuals.



Kujo: DC 7 Speed 9 HD 3; hill giants; can throw rocks and bellow (victims are paralyzed for a round). They live in tribes of 5-30 individuals.

Kumo: DC 9 Speed 12 HD 5; female spider shape changers; can charm males; have two claw attacks in spider form and a paralyzing bite. They are solitary.

Tengu: DC 8 Speed 12/24 HD 4; bird men; can fly; sword masters, preferred weapon: katana. They live either alone or in clans of 4-24 individuals.



Lizardmen

scaly sentinels by Wayne S. Rossi

The race of lizardmen results from a long-ago magical crossing of humans with various sorts of lizards. The "standard" lizardman type is in fact a mongrel of different breeds, which has few if any of their special qualities. Purebred lizardmen have preserved their characteristics more strongly, and are named for their lizard progenitors. All of the lizardmen types below regenerate 1 hp per turn.

Iguana Lizardmen

Number: 2-24

Intelligence: moderate to high

Alignment: chaos

Speed: 6 (12 in water)

DC: 5

HD: 2+2

Special: See through magical invisibility, regeneration

Damage: 1-4 (bite) or by weapon

Size: M

Description: These lizardmen have a third eye, which allows them to see through magical invisibility. Iguana lizardmen are typically taller than a man, with a spiny back ridge and tail (used for balance rather than to attack). They typically attack with small or bludgeoning weapons. 25% of the time they will be accompanied by a shaman who is effectively a 2nd level magic-user.

Chameleon Lizardmen

Number: 1-12

Intelligence: moderate to high

Alignment: chaos

Speed: 9 (18 in water)

DC: 6

HD: 2

Special: Grab items/weapons with tongue, regeneration

Damage: 1-4 (bite) or by weapon

Size: M

Description: Like their namesakes, these types can change their skin color to match their surroundings. This is not the same as invisibility, but groups encountering chameleon lizardmen are surprised on 4 in 6 instead of 2 in 6. Chameleon lizardmen have large heads, and may use their tongues to quickly "grab" items when confronted (3 in 6 for items that a character is not holding; 1 in 6 if being held). They are usually found in small hunting packs.

Komodo Lizardmen

Number: 1

Intelligence: moderate

Alignment: chaos

Speed: 6 (12 in water)

DC: 4

HD: 4

Special: Poison, regeneration

Damage: 1-6+Poison (bite) or 1-4/1-4 (claws)

Size: M

Description: Based on komodo dragons, these lizardmen are considerably larger than most of their cousins and have a particular animus against mammalian life forms. Their bite (used on 1-2 in d6) is a powerful slow-acting poison (death in 1d6 turns if not neutralized). They tend to resemble heavy-set men, with tails often longer than the rest of their bodies. Fortunately, Komodo lizardmen are almost always solitary creatures.



Plated Lizardmen

Number: 1-6

Intelligence: low to moderate

Alignment: neutral

Speed: 3 (6 in water)

DC: 3

HD: 3

Special: Poison, regeneration

Damage: 1-8 (Tail) or by weapon +2

Size: L

Description: These massive lizardmen have heavy plate-like scales, which act as tough armor. Their scales are arranged in transverse bands and connect directly to the head, leaving them without major weak points. Plated lizardmen are the least hostile variety to man and the like, and while they are dull in intellect, are in fact much more amenable to negotiation than most of their cousins.

Horned Lizardmen

Number: 2-24

Intelligence: moderate to high

Alignment: chaos

Speed: 6 (12 in water)

DC: 5

HD: 2+1

Special: Spitting, regeneration

Damage: 1-4 (bite) or by weapon

Size: M

Description: Although they more resemble frog-men covered with short, pointed spikes, the defining characteristic of horned lizardmen is their ability to squirt a stream of blood from near their eyes. This is not poisonous or caustic but, if the target fails to make a save versus dragon breath, he is blinded for 1d6 rounds.

Spiny Lizardmen

Number: 2-24

Intelligence: moderate to high

Alignment: chaos

Speed: 9 (18 in water)

DC: 5

HD: 2+1

Special: Walk on walls, regeneration

Damage: 1-4 (bite) or by weapon

Size: M

Description: These lizardmen are light, fast, and walk effortlessly on walls, being closer to lizards in stature. Their bodies are distinguished by short spines that resemble those of horned lizardmen.

Lizardmen as Characters: Most lizardmen should only be allowed to function as warriors, although a game that allows for thieves and their ilk may allow spiny or chameleon varieties to advance in that class. Such characters may be limited to 6th level (8th for plated or komodo men). Iguana lizardmen may advance up to 4th level as Mages. Lizardmen never have an effective Charisma greater than 9 when dealing with humans and generally mammalian type creatures. Higher scores are reduced to 9 for purposes of reaction, loyalty, etc., although the ability retains its true value for dealing with lizardmen and other scaled creatures. Lizardman characters naturally have their normal defensive class, but wearing armor transfers the armor's DC in its place. Ω

Servitors of the Loathsome Toad Gods

by Jeff Rients, with special thanks to Dan Proctor for the inspiration provided by his article "Demons and the Planes in Labyrinth Lord", *Scribe of Orcus* volume 1, issue 2.

Demonic Pollywog

Number: 2d4

Alignment: Chaos

Speed: 12, hops 10' horizontally

DC: 8

HD: 1

Attacks: bite (d6)

Save: Warrior 1

Morale: 11

Description: Rubbery 12" spheres with jagged-tooth maws, hopping frog legs, and whiplike tails. Despite a lack of obvious sensory organs they seem able to locate and track victims quite easily. Should a Demonic Pollywog roll a 20 when saving against any form of magic it immediately matures into one of the other Servitors listed below.

Croaking Demon

Number: 2d4

Alignment: Chaos

Speed: 9 (Swim 6)

DC: 7

HD: 3

Attacks: claw/claw/bite (d4/d4/d6)

Save: Warrior 3

Morale: 10

Description: Croaking Demons are vaguely humanoid wretches slightly smaller than humans but with much wider, froggish heads and wicked claws. These creatures are the most commonly encountered minions of the Toad Gods, serving as transdimensional errand boys and foot soldiers in the armies of Chaos. Once per day any group of three or more Croaking Demons may cause fear (as per spell) by means of their unearthly disharmonic ribbiting.

Shadow Salamander

Number: d6

Alignment: Chaos

Speed: 15 (Climb 9)

DC: 5

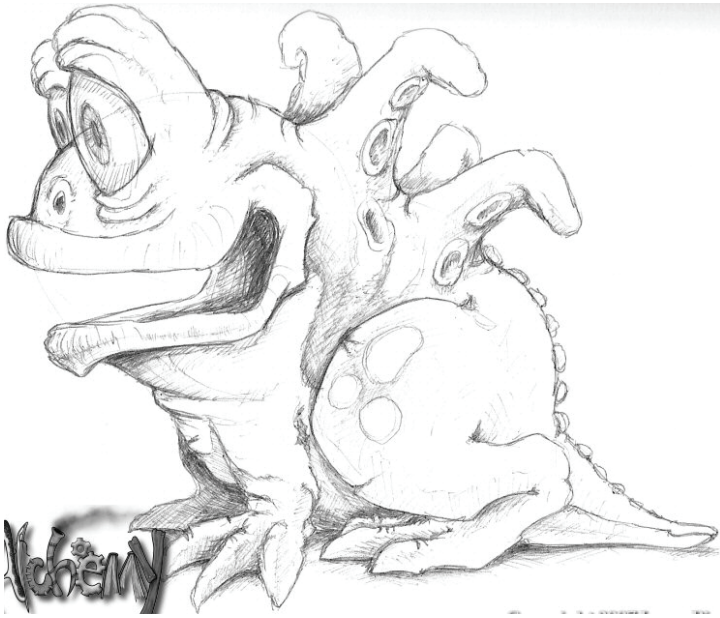
HD: 5

Attacks: bite (d6 plus save vs. poison at -2 or die)

Save: Thief 5

Morale: 9

Description: These assassins from the Unknown Hells have the ability to create darkness, areas of silence, and dimension portals once per day each. Their venomous fangs can poison many creatures not normally susceptible to toxins: undead, elementals, angels, etc. A Shadow Salamander appears much like the inky silhouette of a fire salamander. Only cold iron or weapons that have been enchanted can affect this creature.



Tentacle Toad

Number: d6

Alignment: Chaos

Speed: 9

DC: 3

HD: 7

Attacks: 6 tentacles (d6 plus grab)

Save: Warrior 7

Morale: 11

Description: Tentacle Toads appear as giant toads standing semi-erect on their hind legs, with 3 undulating pseudopods sprouting from each shoulder. Anyone grabbed by one of these creatures will take d6 squeeze damage each round and may only be freed by means of giant strength. Unless disintegrated or otherwise utterly consumed, a dead Tentacle Toad will continue to squeeze for d6-1 rounds. A simple Strength check can free a victim at that point. Three times per day a Tentacle Toad may belch forth a cloud of sleep gas, as per the spell. Only cold iron or weapons that have been enchanted harm this creature.

Slime Frog

Number: d6

Alignment: Chaos

Speed: 6

DC: 7

HD: 8

Attacks: bite (2d6)

Save: Warrior 4

Morale: 12

Description: Melee with one of these mindless elephant-sized behemoths is often a losing proposition. Any successful strike with a slashing weapon causes a Slime Frog to bleed hostile ooze, which immediately attacks. Roll d6 for type: 1-3 Lime Slime, 4 Yellow Jelly (HD 2), 5 Greyish Ooze, 6 Ebon Pudding (HD 2). Puncturing weapons such as arrows and spears have a 1 in 6 chance of releasing ooze. Bludgeoning weapons are safe. If killed by electrical

damage a Slime Frog explodes messily, spewing 2d6 oozes in random directions. Only cold iron or weapons that have been enchanted can affect this creature.

Hopping Machinist

Number: d3

Alignment: Chaos

Speed: 9, hops 10' horizontally

DC: 2

HD: 10

Attacks: by weapon

Save: Mage 10

Morale: 8

Description: The vile genius of these semi-humanoid toad-things is responsible for the creation and upkeep of all the contraptions and devices of the Unknown Hells. They are often armed with a combination of infernal magic items and high-tech devices, but are also capable of casting spells as tenth level mages. Woe unto he who falls into their clutches, as their abominable imaginations are capable of devising tortures undreamt of by human sadists. Only enchanted weapons can affect these creatures.



Amphibitaur

Number: d3

Alignment: Chaos

Speed: 24

DC: 2

HD: 12

Attacks: by weapon x2 or thrown boulder (2d6)

Save: Warrior 12

Morale: 10

Description: These demons take the form of a humanoid/giant toad centaur but with a head resembling a fanged and horned human skull. They possess the strength of giants and usually wield weapons made of superdense diabolic alloys that do double damage owing to their extraordinary mass. These alloys may have other properties as well. Amphibitaur treat any medium as solid ground for purposes of movement. They may hop across ocean waves, lava flows, or even the air just easily as they cross a field. Amphibitaur serve as the shock troops and officers in the armies of the Toad Gods. Only weapons that have been enchanted can affect these creatures. Ω

Monsters and Miscellany in Carcosa

by Terje Nordin, with Geoffrey McKinney

Monster	#	AC	Move	HD	Lair	Treasure
Omniscient Oracle of the Refulgent Maze*	1	9	-	1	100%	10-100 Gems
The Insane God	1	2	20	30	Nil	Nil
Fungus Men	1-30	7	6	1	100%	Nil
Singing Flowers	1-8	6	-	1	100%	B
Spectral Walker (young)	1-4	5	15	5	25%	Nil
Spectral Walker (adult)	1	3	25	10	25%	Nil
Tzaahl Tzalcha	1	3	9	7	70%-100%	B
Bubo and Obub	2	2	12/15	12	Nil	Nil

*AC/HD are for each of 313 mirrors comprising the god.

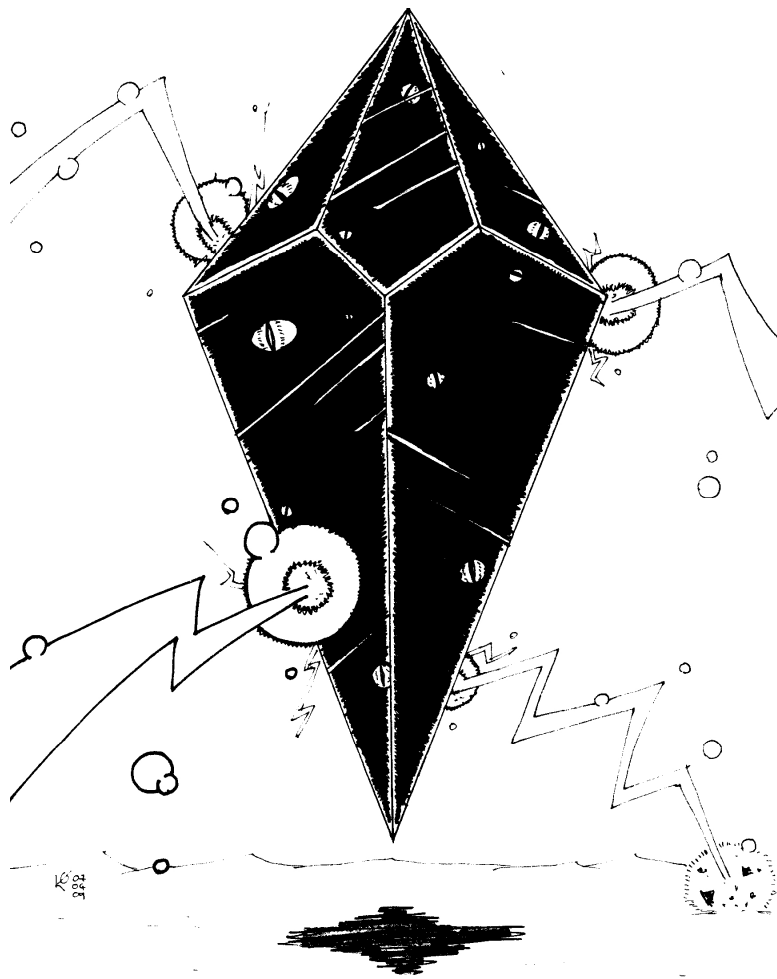
Omniscient Oracle of the Refulgent Maze: In an underground cavern lies a labyrinth of mirrors that are the earthly shape of an otherwise incorporeal intelligence. The entity can use the mirrors as eyes to see anyone that enters the labyrinth, but also as mouths to feed on anyone whose reflection is caught by the mirrors. Each turn all characters in the labyrinth must make a successful saving throw against spells or suffer one die of damage. The god can be killed by destroying all 313 mirrors in the labyrinth. The Omniscient Oracle will teach arcane secrets by showing images in the mirrors, but only if first appeased with the sacrifice of a loved one that is interned in the labyrinth for one whole night. *Psionics:* 1-4 powers up to four times per day. *To Invoke:* Reflections from beyond the Gate of Death.

The Insane God: Across the Carcosan wilderness roams the Insane God, pouring his fury out upon everyone he meets. The god looks like a huge trapezohedron of semi-translucent polished obsidian, 18' high and 6' wide, inside of which one can see eyes staring wildly. The body of the

Reflections from beyond the Gate of Death: This three hour ritual invokes the Omniscient Oracle of the Refulgent Maze. The sorcerer needs three old Black Men for sacrifices. These are strangled within a circle of nine man-sized mirrors where the sorcerer will then hang him- or herself. At the moment of death there is a 50% chance (60% if sorcerer is a Jale Man or Woman) that the sorcerer regains life and returns with answers for any three questions asked to the oracle.

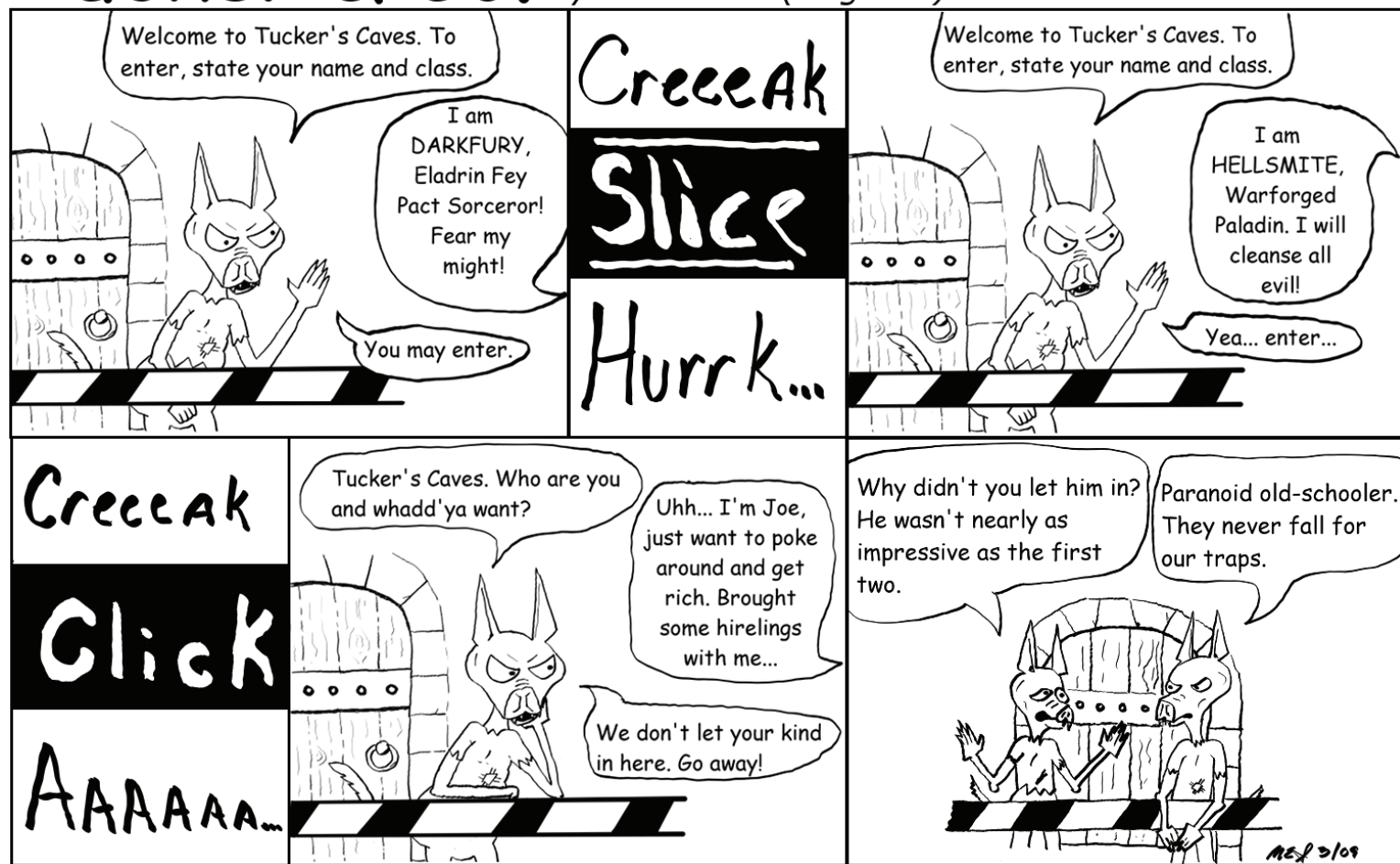
god levitates five meters above the ground surrounded by an electrical aura. Everywhere the god goes it shoots bolts of lightning in all directions; each round anyone within a radius of 60' must make a saving throw against dragon breath or be incinerated. Through the crackling of raw electricity one can hear mad laughter.

Fungus Men: In deep, dark and dank caverns grow huge and obscenely shaped fungi. The meat of the fungi is nourishing but gives strange dreams. The fungi are protected by mobile spore capsules that have humanoid shape but lack intelligence. Each group of fungi will have up to ten mushroom bodies, and each mushroom will spawn 1-3 fungus men. When anyone approaches the fungi the fungus men will come out of fleshy openings at the base of the mushrooms to chase away the intruder. If a fungus man is killed it will release a cloud of poisonous dust, everyone nearby must make a successful saving throw against poison or suffer one die in damage. If a fungus man is brought away from its parent fungi for more than one day it will dissolve and seep into the ground to give birth to new fungi. Rumour says some fungus men are a lot more intelligent than they usually seem.



Singing Flowers: Man-sized, rose-like fleshy buds with sweet fragrances that sing with beautiful voices. Anyone hearing the song of a Flower must make a successful save

Tucker & Co. by M Shorten (Chgowiz)



Bad Hair Day by Peter Schmidt Jensen





And sleeping spells;
To victory,
Fight on!
For more GP,
Fight on!

Fight on
'Til heroes' end;
By trap or spell
Or claws that rend;
We fall, but do not groan
Just roll those three cubed bones;
O fresh PCs,
Fight on!
To victory,
FIGHT ON!!!

Education of a Magic-User:

Part the fourth: Punctuality



FIGHT ON!

an old-school fight song, to the tune of the USC fight song of the same name. New words by Jason Vasché.

Fight on
Through dungeons deep!
Heroes, fight on
Through ruined keeps!
With wielded spell and blade,
Through mountains, swamp,
And forest glade;
To victory,
Fight on!
For those XP,
Fight on!

Fight on
Through monstrous hordes!
Heroes, fight on
With bow and sword!
All wand'ring monsters fell
With tactics bold

vs. spells for each turn spent within 90' of it or become hypnotized and lay down beneath the Flower to sleep. The Flower then extrudes its tongue to drag its victim into the toothy maw hidden beneath its leaves. Unless saved, the victim will be eaten by the Flower. Around the Flowers are scattered the former possessions of their victims.

Spectral Walker: These creatures walk on eight tall, thin spider legs and have a squid-like central body with eight long slender tentacles. Their skin is a pale blue-grey and their bodies are semi-transparent. Young walkers just leaving the nest are 15' tall and hunt in packs of 2-5 individuals. Adult specimens reach 30' and hunt alone.

Tzaahl Tzalcha: This neutrally aligned Spawn of Shub-Niggurath has a body like a scorpion with tentacles instead of legs and a crocodile's head. It lives in an area of marshes and swamps where it wallows in a slimy pit. It is highly intelligent and enjoys engaging in witty discourse about philosophical profundities. There is however a 50% chance that it will be hungry, in which case it will hide beneath the surface and try to drag down anyone entering its territory. *Psionics:* 1-3 powers 1-6 times per day

Bubo and Obub (McKinney): Long ago a wizard, deranged by pathological hatred of magic items ("Real wizards cast spells! We don't need no stinkin' *magic items*."), created Bubo and Obub. These two inseparable monsters are four-legged clockwork owls with turtle shells on their backs and long tails. Their metal feathers and shell are white and their eyes are red. They are 3' long and have a wingspan of 7'. Blood serves as their lubrication, and thus they are continually drenched in it. With every movement they splatter blood. Merely getting within 20' of either of these monsters makes all characters carrying magic items glow brightly (penalizing their armor classes by 2) as long as they stay within 20' and have at least one magic item in their possession. There is only a 1 in 6 chance of surprising them. They are immune to lightning and take only ½ damage from cutting attacks. Although neutral in outlook, Bubo and Obub experience constant, unreasoning hatred of magic items and those who have them. They will always attack any unfortunates who carry them. When one of these monsters successfully bites with its beak, it latches on and does 1-6 points of damage automatically each round thereafter (which also negates the victim's dexterity and shield for AC purposes). In addition, each round each of the monsters can permanently drain a magic item of all its powers merely by looking at it. They use this power on the best magic items first. Bubo and Obub ignore those without magic items unless attacked. Even then, they will tend to flee such opponents rather than waste their time fighting. If unable to flee, Bubo and Obub can each create a stationary barrier of intensely hot fire (60 square feet in area) causing 12-48 points of damage (typically with no save allowed). Those who are in the precise area in which the fire barrier is created do get a saving throw for half damage, though, as they try to leap away. Ω

Mutation Table II (d20)

1	Skin changes colour
2	Whole body covered with fur
3	Head sinks down into torso, leaving face on chest
4	Grows a long tail
5	Grows additional pair of arms
6	Eyes on stalks
7	Height/length shortened by half
8	Height/length doubled
9	Eyes turn into mirrored surfaces
10	Skeleton turns into crystal and grows spikes through skin (can be used as melee weapon)
11	Clear effluvium runs from the pores
12	Skin turns self-luminescent
13	Deformed body, must walk on all fours
14	Mandibles protrude from mouth
15	Body becomes covered in feathers
16	Wounds heal twice as fast
17	One hand turns into a crab claw
18	Grows a second head, which has the opposite alignment as the character
19	Mouth turns into a beak
20	Feet become hooves

Wilderness Encounters:

- A village of 170 Dolm Men ruled by "the Emerald Storm", a cyborg Spawn of Shub-Niggurath.
- A monastery where 40 monks of different colours meditate on the mysteries of Yog-Sothoth.
- The Plains of Whispering Glass, many square miles of multicoloured fluorescent glass. Any psionic character entering this area hears strange voices whispering blasphemous secrets when using telepathy. After listening to them for an entire night the character may experience nothing (50%), have her sanity permanently shattered (40%) or learn one random sorcerous ritual (10%).
- Surrounded by frozen desert is an impact crater in which grows a steaming jungle. At the centre of the crater there is a huge metal orb partially sunk into the ground. This is a crashed Space Alien star ship now inhabited by a Blue female Binder and her three robot servitors.
- A village of 240 mutated White Men ruled by "the Whisperer in the Shadows", a mummy brain.
- A high tower made of a purple material reminiscent of both glass and steel. A faint flutelike wailing can be heard and high up around the top one can see vague and misty images of unknown creatures and vistas.
- A coastal village of 400 Orange Men who worship Cthulhu and are in league with a Deep One community living in the nearby sea.
- A tall black cliff. In a cavern live 15 Mi-Go.
- In a ramshackle hut lives the hermit "Zodraz the undying", a Green Man Superhero.

A Few for the Road

travel encounters by Michael Curtis

He who does not travel does not know the value of men.

— Moorish Proverb.

The Toll and Customs House: This encounter is best placed on a minor road in a settled country or at the edge of a kingdom's border in a place where travelers are common, albeit not in great numbers. As the party rounds a bend in the road or crests the top of a hill, they see a small, crude building erected by the side of the road. The building is constructed of local materials (logs and sod in forested areas or sun-dried mud bricks in an arid land, for example) and an open-air stable of similar materials standing close by, sheltering half a dozen horses from the sun and rain. A long pole or pike rests across the road on two Y-shaped supports, barring passage. Smoke rises from the chimney of the building and the sound of conversation drifts through the open doorway. A solitary figure, dressed in chain mail and leaning on a halberd, stands near the pike and watches the party as they approach.

This building is one of any number of similar posts located throughout the territory. Serving as a barracks for local patrols, a customs house on political borders and a dumping ground for untested or undisciplined soldiers, these installations help maintain the ruling body's control over traffic and trade in far-flung parts of the land. This post is manned by a squad of six men-at-arms (1st level warriors), two corporals (2nd), and a serjeant (3rd). If the post is located on the border of a territory, a customs agent (a normal man) is present as well. In addition, there is a 25% chance that a mounted patrol consisting of 2d6 warriors of levels 1-4 are present as well, resting up or reporting in. In this event, their mounts will be stabled in the open air barn as well and attended to by 1d3 of that patrol's numbers.

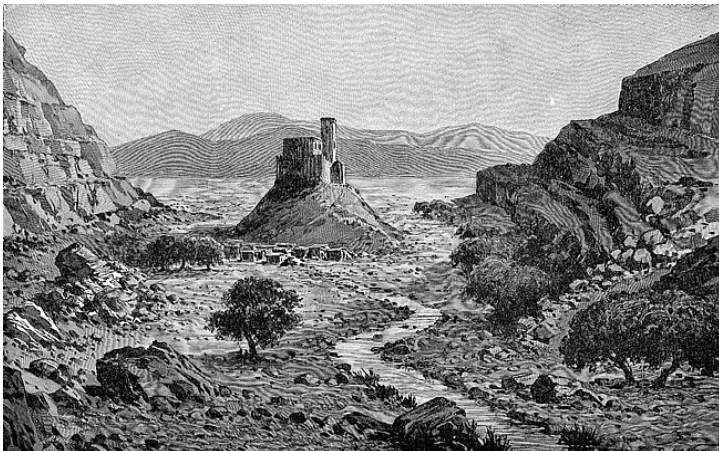
The lone sentry on duty is Corporal Moabdi (2nd level warrior). If the party is small and approaches non-threateningly, he will cheerfully greet them and collect the

toll for the road. While this toll may be determined by the referee based on his own campaign and the party's wealth, a fee of one copper coin for each walking traveler, five copper coins for any mounted individual, and a silver piece for each wagon, cart, or other vehicle in the group is a good rule of thumb. If the post also serves as a customs house, Moabdi will summon the customs agent, who, assisted by two or more of the post's garrison, will inspect the party's goods and possessions for items subject to tax or tariff, as well as any contraband. If the party seeks to avoid the toll house (riding off the road, detouring around the post, or exhibiting other suspicious activities), Corporal Moabdi will blow his watch whistle. This summons the rest of the garrison inside the post, who will mount up and intercept the evaders. If the garrison is forced to pursue the party and run them down, any toll levied upon them will be greatly increased to compensate for this inconvenience. If a customs agent is present, his search of the party's possessions will be extremely thorough, leading to possible incarceration at the post for possession of the mildest of contraband.

If the party is law-abiding and agreeable to this minor hassle, they will discover that Corporal Moabdi is a friendly and gregarious individual. Although stationed at an extremely unglamorous post, he enjoys working in the open air and meeting new people. Given the chance, he will gladly stand and talk with the party for as long as they and other traffic on the road permit. Corporal Moabdi is an excellent, if unconventional, way for the referee to funnel information and rumors to the party. He has little to do but converse with passing travelers and thus he hears a lot of scuttlebutt from numerous sources. He'll be able to provide the party with information about who's been travelling on the roads, rumors of war, plague and other misfortunes, known outlaws and wanted criminals, fluctuations in the local trade market, and tales of other adventuring groups operating in and through the area.

A party that takes the time to warm up to Corporal Moabdi will discover that they have a valuable source of information that might otherwise go unnoticed in the busy gossip circles of larger settlements. A friendship with the easygoing toll guard could also prove to their benefit should they ever need to slip out of the territory clandestinely or smuggle minor contraband across borders. In addition to Corporal Moabdi's role as rumormonger, the referee can use the Toll and Customs House as a starting point for adventures involving hunting down and apprehending local bandits, assisting the garrison in clearing out nearby monster lairs, and anything else that might spring from a small bastion of law and order on the frontier.

The toll house itself consists of a large common room/barracks, a small kitchen and pantry, and a small root cellar with a lockable trapdoor for detaining suspicious characters and outlaws. A stout iron box with lock (the key is with the serjeant) holds the collected toll monies and

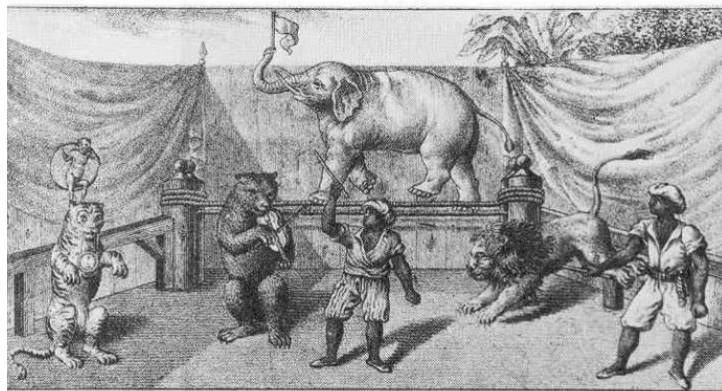


contains 234 copper coins, 36 silver coins, and 4 gold pieces. With the exception of Corporal Moabdi, who will always be a friendly and competent soldier, the rest of the house's garrison consists of either raw recruits or persistent troublemakers who have been stationed here as punishment. Referees needing a quick method to determine the general attitudes and demeanor of these soldiers may roll 1d6. On a result of 1-3, the garrison is efficient but not enthusiastic about their posting. On a 4-5, the garrison is lackadaisical and subject to bribery or other enticements to look the other way, and on a 6, the garrison is hyper-efficient and desperately wishes to impress their higher-ups, if only to be posted in a more glamorous location. In this case, adventurers caught attempting to break the local laws or bribe the garrison will most certainly be subject to arrest.

Harold the Creature Procurer: A motley collection of men, beasts, and wagons clogs the road ahead. In the center of this convoy is a large wagon drawn by a quartet of oxen. The wagon's bed is encased in a framework of stout iron bars and covered with canvas tarpaulins tied down tight. Four other wagons, each drawn by draft horses, proceed and follow this massive vehicle; their loads consist of a more prosaic cargo of boxes, barrels and sundries. More than a score of riders accompany this strange caravan. Many of these riders are dressed in worn, but well maintained, chain and leather armor, with a few individuals wearing the voluminous robes of wizards and the vestments of pious men. At the head of this procession rides a tall man dressed in tooled leathers with an easy smile on the lips of his bearded, dark skinned face. He raises a hand in greeting as the caravan approaches.

This man is Harold Amun Battu (9th level Warrior), commonly known as "Harold the Creature Procurer." Harold and his company eke out a living by providing circuses, fighting arenas, bear pits, menageries, and suppliers to decadent noble animal collectors. Due to the nature of his occupation, he might be on the hunt for lions and hippopotami one week, chimeras and displacer beasts the next. His only stipulation when it comes to capturing prey is that he will not pursue intelligent creatures such as dragons, as this smacks too much of slavery for his tastes.

Harold is very much the "gentlemen adventurer," being equally at home in noble halls, dingy beer gardens, or on the trail. He is a genial and ingratiating man (Charisma 16) and, like all good hunters, is adaptable to his environment, allowing him to be suave and cordial when dealing with nobility and rough and crude when associating with members of lower social classes. Battu follows the tenets of the Balance, seeing the need for both order and chaos in the world, but only as long as neither encroaches upon the rights and freedoms of sentient beings or prevents good from triumphing over evil in the grand scheme of events. He subscribes to many druidic teachings, especially when it comes to the preservation of animals. However, this belief



rests more on the practical need to preserve species for future business opportunities than on genuine spirituality.

Battu possesses a suit of *hunter's leathers* +3 which allows him to pass through overgrown areas without hindrance. He wears a *ring of mammal control* and keeps a *potion of animal control* and a *potion of super-healing* on his belt at all times. In addition, he owns a *potion of dragon control*, which he keeps stored for emergencies amongst his personal belongings on one of the supply wagons. He possesses both a *long-sword* +2 and a *spear* +3, which he uses in deadly combat, but prefers to use lassos, bolas, and a blowpipe with sleep-envenomed darts when he needs to take his quarry alive.

Harold's company is primarily composed of fifteen warriors of level 2-5. In addition, three mages of the 5th, 7th and 9th levels ride with him, assisting with such spells as *fly*, *slow*, *monster charm* and *monster paralysis* in the course of a hunt. To attend to any caravaneer suffering injuries or poisoning during a hunt, two 5th level priests accompany the group, lending their prayers as necessary. The rest of Harold's band is composed of 2d4 normal men possessing skills such as animal handler, teamster, tracker, and so on.

Harold may be used by the referee in a few different ways. He's been known to hire outside assistance on particularly dangerous hunts or when his company is at less than full strength. If the party encounters him during one of these periods, Harold might be willing to take them on for a short duration provided they seem well-experienced and competent. The chance of him offering them employment is significantly higher if the party has rangers, druids or magi-users in its ranks, all of whom possess special skills that help ensure a successful hunt. A base payment of 100 gold coins per person in the party is suggested but the referee may alter this recompense as desired.

Battu's company also serves as a useful source of information concerning indigenous creatures in the region. Harold and his men keep abreast of most rumors of monstrous creatures and frequently run across them during their hunts. Consequently, they can most likely point the party in the direction of what they're looking for. The information can be as specific or vague as the referee desires: "There've been manticores sighted flying above

Privation Ridge”, “We came across a gorgon’s lair in the southern Crowhaunt Forest while tracking an owlbear. It’s in a cave overlooking the big waterfall on Roaring Creek.”

Lastly, Harold provides a way to introduce new monsters to the campaign without necessarily forcing the party to confront them in direct combat. His convoy contains a specially modified wagon for containing and transporting dangerous creatures. A 12’ long x 8’ wide x 10’ high magically augmented steel cage sits in the bed of the large wagon, the suspension of which has been reinforced to carry up to 12,000 lbs. of weight. The magic on the bars not only prevents them from being bent or sundered by brute force less than that of a Storm Giant, but are also 85% resistant to magic and special attacks of a magical nature. Despite these precautions, Harold also relies on natural and magical soporifics to render transported creatures inert and docile. If the referee desires, Harold could be transporting some monster heretofore unknown in the campaign world, allowing the characters to get a glimpse at the beast before fighting it. If the referee is feeling especially kind, Harold might drop some hints as to what special powers these creatures possess, if any, and divulge a few tips on how to defeat them in battle.



The Chain Gang: The sound of labor rings through the air as the party approaches a group of shackled men working along the road. These men are performing general repair or maintenance work (fixing and replacing cobblestones, clearing fallen trees, repairing a bridge that crosses a small rivulet, etc.) and are overseen by a force of 10+d6 soldiers on horseback. The chain gang is composed of 10+1d10 prisoners, predominantly human with a few demi-humans in their ranks as well. Depending on the local form of government and the alignment of its ruler, these prisoners might be trustees in good health or miserable wretches being worked to death. The soldiers are 1st and 2nd level, led by a single 4th level fighting man who serves as overseer. The soldiers are dressed in chain mail or leather armor and equipped with spears, short swords, and clubs. Half of their number are armed with crossbows and 20 quarrels in lieu of spears. The prisoners are mostly normal men with a few 1st level individuals of non-spell casting classes comprising the rest.

The guards keep a close eye on the party as they pass, suspicious of ambushade or jailbreak, but will otherwise not hinder their passing. The prisoners themselves will also be watching the party’s progress through the area, albeit much more surreptitiously, looking to take advantage of anything that might win them their freedom. If the referee wishes, this encounter may end without incident, serving solely to remind players of the reach of the law.

However, if the referee desires, this event can be expanded to provide more action and drama. An obvious elaboration would be a jailbreak that coincides with the characters’ arrival. This is especially suitable if the party encounters the chain gang on a return trip from a previous adventure. Injured, exhausted, and possibly laden down with loot, the party is seen by the prisoners as a source of quick escape via their mounts, as well as a source of fast getaway coin. The particulars of the escape plan are left to the referee but it is sure to involve a diversion and resultant chaotic melee, during which some of the prisoners hope to escape. Even if the escape attempt fails, the party may be held for questioning under the suspicion that they were in on the escape plan and serving as accomplices. The characters might have to do some fast talking or call in some favors to avoid being held under guard or jailed themselves.

Another possibility is to have the party recognize someone amongst the ranks of the prisoners. This individual could either be a friend or an enemy of the party. If the party has previously defeated a foe and turned him over to authorities, this encounter is a great way to reintroduce him to the game. As the party passes by, they are recognized by their defeated foe. He curses them and swears that one day he will have his revenge on them before he is clubbed into submission by the guards. Seething, he watches the party ride on and begins planning for the day that he escapes. Even if the referee never does anything with this character again, it’s a wonderful way to remind the players that the actions of their characters do make a difference on the campaign world.

Should the referee desire to introduce a new plot hook for the adventurers to nibble on, the friend falsely imprisoned is a very old device and the chain gang is a perfect chance to use it. As the party rides past the chain gang, they hear one of the prisoners calling their names. A bedraggled acquaintance of theirs strains against his bonds seeking to reach them. This NPC is someone the party knows quite well to be an upstanding individual but of no great influence or importance. Before being cuffed into quiescence, he extols them to seek out his spouse, son or other relative who can explain how he came to be imprisoned. Once the party locates the mentioned relative, they learn that an unknown enemy of the NPC has had him arrested and convicted on false charges. It is then up to the party to find this hidden enemy and clear the NPC’s name. Ω

A Giant Dilemma

contest winning adventure by Frank Farris

GM's Background: This encounter, for 2nd-4th level characters, can be used in any hilly or mountainous terrain. Several weeks ago, a fire giant emissary left his king's hall with a message for the king's counterpart in the northern territories. After encountering a patrol of human soldiers, he received a wound to his leg which became infected. The wound became septic, and the fire giant began to suffer intermittent periods of delirium. During a lucid phase, he found a cave, inhabited by a family of orcs, and ousted the occupants, thinking to rest and recover. Unbeknownst to the giant, one of the female orcs locked the group's children in a side cave for protection. The orcs are frantic to recover their children; one unsuccessful attempt at parlaying with the giant resulted in two of the orcs being slain. The chamber that the children are in is almost airtight, and they will die 2 hours after the party encounters the orcs. The giant will remain in the cave for 32 hours, slowly weakening, until he dies.

Prior to the orcs the cave was the residence of a group of bandits who had moderate success plundering the area until they encountered an adventuring party which wiped them out. The bandit leader escaped and, sorely wounded, returned to the cave. Unbeknownst to him, the cave had been discovered by the orcs, who promptly butchered him

on his return. A secret door off the pantry holds the bandits' treasure and the orcs have yet to discover it.

The party will see a lone orc standing in the road, with his hands in the air. He has no weapons or armor. He will slowly approach the party, jabbering in Orcish. After a short while, he will switch to slightly broken Common. He will tell the party that he needs help, and will offer the party "lots of treasure" if they will assist. He tells the party that his tribe's cave has been invaded by a red giant that killed his friends, and that the tribe's children are locked inside and in danger. The tribe is hidden in a gully about 300 yards from the cave mouth. It consists of 3 more males and 6 females. None has any treasure, weapons or armor; however, one female has a key which will unlock the door to 5. If the party insists on taking the key, the orc emissary will get it from the female and bring it to the PCs. The orc tribe will not make contact with the party unless it is unavoidable. They will defend themselves if attacked. If the party agrees to help, the orc emissary will lead them to the cave, about 1/8 mile distant. Once the party arrives at the cave, the orc will wait outside, claiming that he must relay the success or failure of the mission to his tribe.

Note to GM: The party is free to turn down the request and/or slay the orcs if so desired; however, the GM may wish to impose a penalty on good-aligned characters who refuse to attempt to rescue the children.



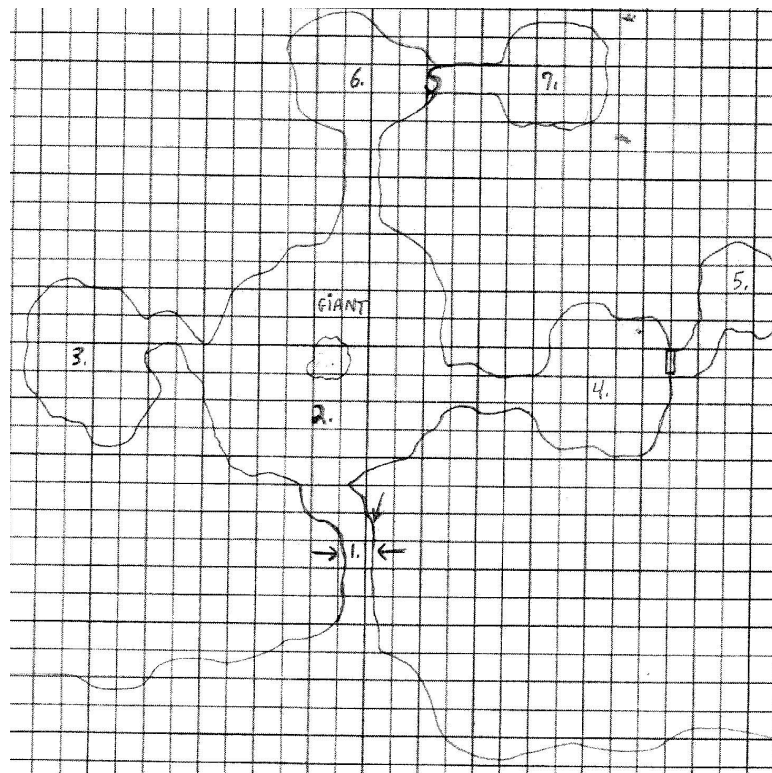
1. Entrance: The cave mouth is roughly 20' by 20', as is the passage to the interior. Light smoke is streaming out of the upper half of the cave, and a glow can be seen down the tunnel. Halfway down the tunnel is a pressure plate which will trigger three spear traps when depressed. There is a 45% chance per person passing through the area of stepping on the plate, unless the individual is specifically staying out of the middle of the tunnel. Two spears will fire from either side of the cave, and one will fire down the length of the tunnel; the spears attack as 8 HD monsters with +2 to hit, and each does 1-6 points of damage. Each spear will strike the first person in its line of fire. The orc will forget to mention this trap to the party unless specifically asked about traps. This was set up by one of the bandits, who was a dwarven engineer. The trap will reset 2 rounds after firing; however, there are only 4 more spears in the trap.

When the party reaches the outside of the cave, roll d6 for the giant's mental state; if the indicated state would generate noise, the party will hear it. Roll a new disposition for the giant every 20 minutes.

Delirious Giant Mental State Table (d6):

1	The giant sits passively, staring at the cave entrance, unless others come within sight. He then attacks until all are slain or flee, at which time reroll.
2	The giant sleeps. Light noise will not awaken him, but loud noise, touching, or attack will cause him to awaken and fight as above.
3	The giant sees all creatures as fellow fire giants from his hall. He speaks to them in Giantish unless someone speaks to him in Common, which he will switch to.
4	The giant wanders around the cave muttering. He will ignore all individuals unless attacked.
5	The giant is devouring the cooked orc (amend the cave description). He will ignore everything unless attacked.
6	The giant is lucid. He will be slightly distrustful of others, but will listen to non-aggressive individuals.

2. Main Area: This is a roughly 90' diameter cave with a 30' ceiling. Three 15' high tunnels lead off from it. A 10' radius pit in the center of the cave is lined with large stones, and a fire is blazing. It is uncomfortably hot and muggy. There is a huge stack of logs next to the fire, and various cooking implements are evident. An iron spit is placed on two Y-shaped logs over the fire. On the spit are the remains of a humanoid (one of the orcs slain by the giant), and a pile of bones is stacked beside the fire. Next to the far wall is a huge oak cask placed under a constantly dripping stream of water, keeping the cask full. The water is clear and slightly metallic-tasting, though safe to drink. At the bottom of the cask is the key to the secret door in **6**, buried under a 1" layer of silt. Also at the bottom of the cask is a golden *Ring of Canine Control*, which can be used to control any one non-magical canine for one hour per use. It functions once every 24 hours and uses no charges. The



command word (*kameeremut*) is inscribed inside the ring. The giant will be at the location indicated on the map when the adventurers enter, in whatever state is dictated by previous rolls. He has removed his armor and thrown it against one wall, but his sword is still sheathed at his waist. A rough bandage is tied around his left leg at mid-thigh, and his leg is swollen and discolored. **Xenarr the Fire Giant:** DC 8, SPD 8, HD 10 (currently attacks as if 7), hp 44, Atk Sword 2-12, carries 32 gp, gold necklace worth 150 gp, and a silver scroll tube with images of fire giant life carved on it worth 100 G.P. in a pouch on his belt. The tube contains an invitation to a feast, written in Giantish.

He will act according to his state. If the adventurers attack, he will fight back, but will not under any circumstances pursue anyone out of the cave. Once he has entered combat, he will be in state 1 for 4 hours. If the party speaks with him while in state 3 or 6, he will respond. His mission has become his obsession, and anything the party offers that will help him in his condition will be accepted. A *Heal Disease* spell, or similar treatment, will nullify his condition, and he will immediately depart on his mission after giving the party gruff thanks.

3. Living Quarters: Several animal skins are strewn across the floor, and various accoutrements of daily orcish life are evident. There are four crude clubs, six stone-headed throwing spears, and a slightly rusted longsword in a pile along the south wall. A large unlocked wooden chest in the center of the room holds 33 cp, 17 sp, and a crushed copper mug worth 2 gp. This is the "treasure" the orc emissary will give the party.



4. Side cave. This cave is empty. There is an heavily rusted, locked iron door on the far wall.

5. Children's Cave: This cave has some sleeping skins and several crude toys on the cave floor. Five young orcs are huddled in the far corner. They will not fight, even if attacked, and will not move or respond in any way unless they see a tribe member. They will only make noise if touched, which will cause them to howl wordlessly until contact is broken.

6. Larder: Hanging from crude iron hooks along the far wall are the remains of a sheep, a deer, and a human (the bandit leader). The deer is fresh and edible; the sheep is rancid and has had several portions removed; and the human has had its legs removed and is in a state of advanced decay.

On the right-hand wall is a secret door which has not been discovered by the orcs. The keyhole is carefully hidden behind a loose rock embedded in the wall (3 in 6 chance per searcher to find). An *Opening Charm*, picking locks, or the proper key will allow it to be opened. Open Doors chances are halved while it is locked.

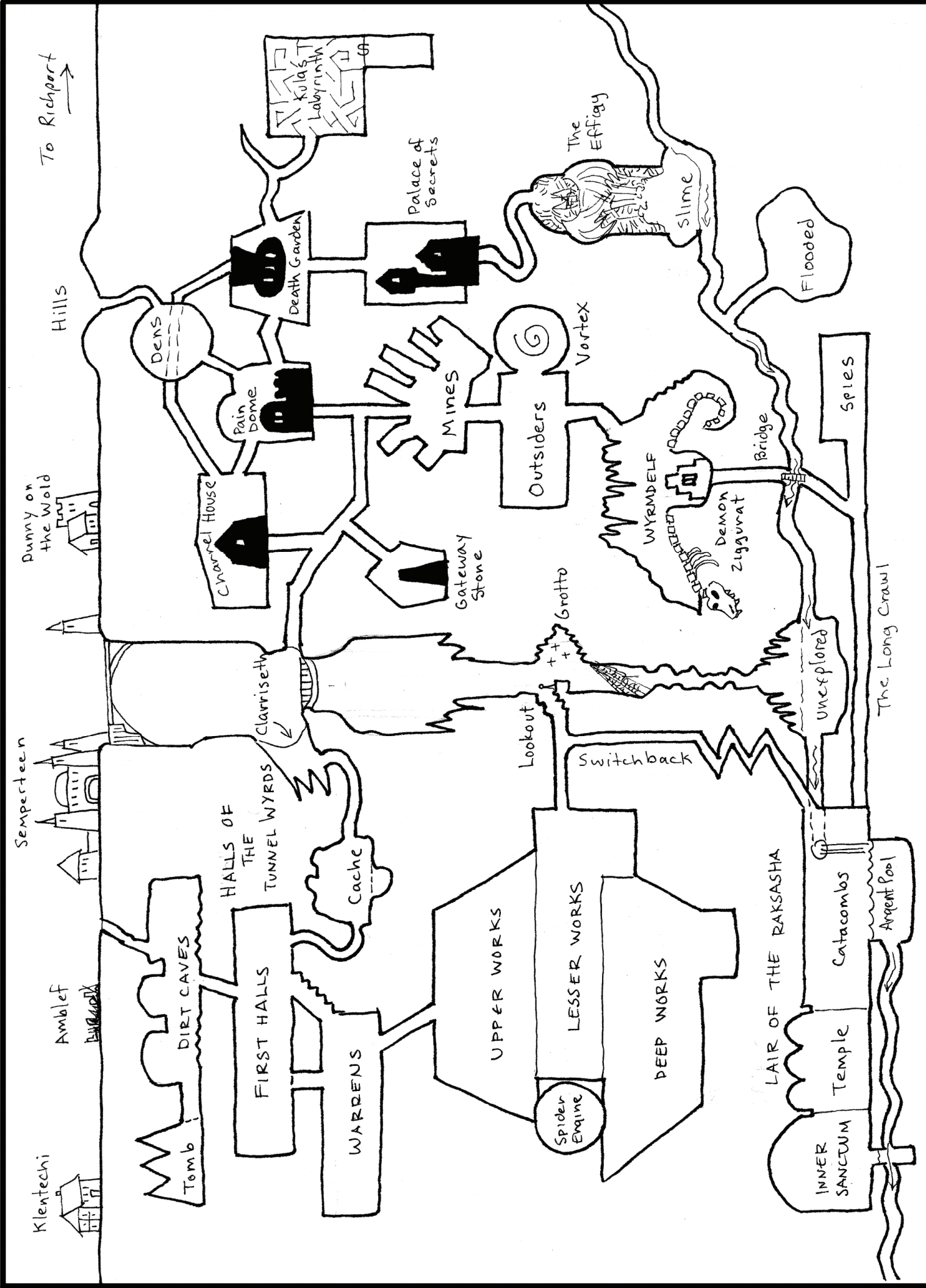
7. Treasure Chamber: This cave is damp. Lying against the right-hand wall is a huge dire wolf, now dead from lack of water. The bandit leader used the ring in the water barrel to capture and control the wolf. Valuables are stacked along the other walls, including:

- 10 bales of extremely fine silk. All are slightly mildewed, but are worth 20 gp each in their current condition. Restored, they would be worth 100 gp each.
- 3 small casks of a fine, slightly sweet white wine, worth 30 gp each
- A large copper basin with tooth marks on it, worth 5 gp
- 3 longswords
- 1 spear
- 3 suits of leather armor
- 2 small shields
- One suit of human-sized plate mail with a 2" hole in the left breast (normal protection except 50% chance of double damage from hits from spears etc. until fixed)
- One large shield with a stylized picture of a burning tree engraved into it
- A mace +1, +2 vs. *spell-users*, which glows faintly
- A silver coffer worth 50 gp, which contains 37 gp, a small tourmaline worth 60 gp, a priestly scroll (level 8) with *Cure Lesser Wounds* and *Light*, and a *Potion of Cure Disease*.

All of the weapons except the mace are slightly rusted, but can be cleaned with a little effort. The last 4 items were taken from a priest who was ambushed by the bandits; the GM may have the shield recognized by local denizens as coming from a particular church in the area if desired.

Conclusion: If the party succeeds in rescuing the children, the orcs will be extremely grateful and will reward the party with the treasure in the chest at **3**. If the party slays or abducts the children, or fails to rescue them, the orcs will not retaliate, being extremely cowardly by nature. Good-aligned characters may be penalized for improper actions. The DM may wish to award an XP bonus to parties who resolve the situation peacefully. The possibility of Xenarr as an ally, or at least contact, among the fire giants also opens up interesting future possibilities. Ω





It used to be a Hobbit Hole...

...until them damn Goblins pitched up. Still, if we can git the bastids out and rescue old Shirriff Deepburrow, things might be turned around...

'Bout ten foot, give or take.



The front garden is covered by two Goblin snipers from the windows. They are lousy shots during daylight hours, but see like gimlets in the dark!

Still some nice cloaks and hoods in the cloakroom. Twenty gold sovereigns in the pockets, and a dwarf's hat with a gold tassell!

Four more Gobboes have a cooking fire inside made of old Deepburrow's furniture and oak panelling off the hall walls. He hain't goin' to be happy.

Might meet a Gobbo or two wandrin' about.
1-2 - One Goblin
3-5 - 1-3 Goblins
6-1-6 Giant Rats

Long hallway here with a tiled floor, watch out for echoes if you are sneaking.

Garden is a mess. They et the potatoes before they was ready.

Chimney to stove.
Too small to get down unless you're a pixy

Kitchen. They say Icko the Chief's missus has Clara Oldbuck chained up in here as a slave.

Deepburrow's pantry. You'll find some nice wine in here, but the gobboes have had all the ale and most of the grub. Just eight giant rats picking over the leftovers.

Well in the corner where Deepburrow stashed his loot - locked chest in the wall with 2000 gold!

Deepburrow's Parlour. Lots of furniture and knicknacks - course the gobboes have broken most of 'em. Eight of the bastids lounge around in here smoking the master's pipeweed and supping his ale like lords o' the manor. Mind they don't spot you through the windows...

More stores. The goblins have dug up the floor in here looking for Deepburrow's alleged loot, but have found nothing 'cept a tunnel belonging to a giant mole! They scarpered and nailed the door shut.

Chief Icko lives in the old Wardrobe. Got a bag full of loot in here.

Silver candlesticks
30 gold, wine glasses
and decanter 20 gold

Parlour fireplace chimney. Comes out up on Thurso Down. Might get down this is the little gits hain't lit the fire.

More rats, four of 'em.

Unfinished extension. Granny Deepburrow was going to move in until the goblins et her, poor soul

Bedroom. Nice tapestries, four poster, now all tore up and used as nests by six filthy Gobboes. Ornate porcelain potty worth 50 gold, wore as a helmet by a Gobbo. Don't break it when you break his head!

Milo Deepburrow.
4th level Halfing.
locked in his own
library by Gobboes.
The disgrace!

Icko has got Deepburrow's +1 Shortsword, +1 Ring of Protection and mithril helmet on. He has Milo's golden belt made by Elves (150gp) and a stash of rings and spare change worth 250 gold.

Baz Blatt
drew this.

The Barrow of Therex

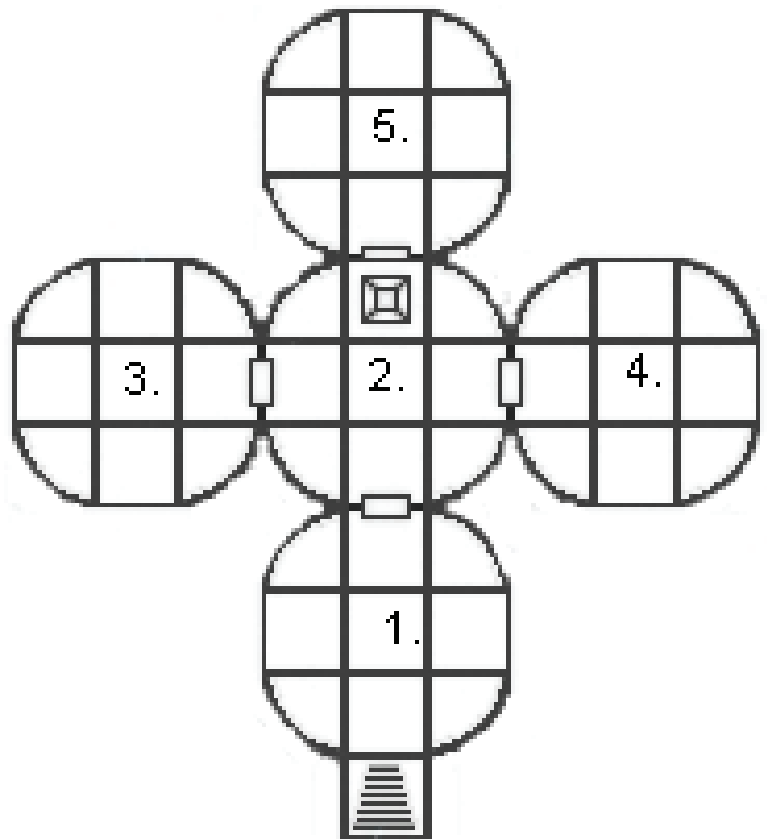
minidungeon by Erin "Taichara" Bisson

This barrow is a great circular tumulus, some 150' in diameter, well overgrown with grasses and small shrubs. Its internal chambers are all 15'x15' with rounded corners. On its southern side the crumbling remnants of a siltstone lintel can be spotted, the stone slab "door" having been unearthed – and broken through -- by enterprising goblins seeking access to the barrow's interior. Immediately beyond the stone cap is a flight of fragile siltstone steps that descend ten feet before opening into another stone lintel and the entrance to the antechamber.

1. Antechamber: Paved with roughly-dressed siltstone slabs, this chamber contains two withered wooden statues depicting warriors in scale mail bearing short swords and spears, their faces obscured by masks depicting some unknown predatory beast. The statues are patched with gilding (worth 12 gp total), currently being scraped away by two of four goblins (DC6; HD 1-1; hp 4, 3, 6, 2; SPD 9; Att spear 1-6). The other two goblins are prying up flagstones along the eastern wall in search of treasure caches. To the north lies an open lintel and archway. The goblins drop their crude tools and attack with short spears when the chamber is entered. Each carries a handful of crudely-hammered electrum coins (2,6,7,5 respectively). After two rounds of combat, they will be joined by the goblins in **2**.

2. Central Chamber: Like the antechamber, this chamber is paved with rough flagstones. Against the northwest and northeast walls rest rotted food offerings and pottery amphorae, remnants of a funeral meal. All three doors of this chamber are of age-weakened wood and not secured in any way. However, opening the northern door will trigger the 10' pit trap (1-6 damage) that rests directly in front of it. A goblin leader and two of his henchgoblins (DC6; HD 1-1; hp 5, 4, 1; SPD 9; Att *dagger* +1 that sheds pale reddish light equivalent to a candle 2-7 or spear 1-6; 12, 10, and 6 ep) are in this chamber planning a raid on the treasure in **4**. They will attack the party in **1** after two rounds, though if the PCs seem too strong the goblin leader will attempt to parley and bribe the party with promises of treasure – and will hope that they get themselves killed by the earth spirit in the process.

3. The Sacrificial Dead: This chamber is roughly shaped, its floor packed earth stained a bright red and ochre. The red of the stained soil contrasts with the shreds of bright clothing and pale bones of over a dozen skeletons that lie scattered and piled atop one another in the chamber. Other than the remnants of their clothing, the skeletons wear copper burial jewelry – bracelets and torcs – worth a total of 200 gp, 400 gp to a collector. Three of the skeletons will animate upon being disturbed (DC7; HD 1;



hp 8, 5, 6; SPD 6; Att claws 1-4) and attack the party, pursuing them unless destroyed or turned.

4. Grave Goods: The door to this chamber has been half hacked away by the goblins. The chamber beyond is floored with earth, the burial hoard of Therex piled along the walls. Much is decayed, such as bolts of once-fine wool cloth, stylized animal figures in bloodwood, and the remains of a two-wheeled chariot. Recoverable from the grave gifts are a set of six cups carved from red-gold amber (60 gp each), three short swords with pommel-nuts and scabbards decorated with tiger's-eye knotwork (42 gp each), and mithril ingots worth 352 gp. Perched on one of the amber cups is the *Gentle Sting of Juren*. Once any of the treasure is disturbed, a Least Earth Spirit (DC 5; HD 1+1; hp 9; SPD 6; Att pummel 1-6 plus save or stunned 1 round; Save Pr2; regenerate 1 hp/round when in contact with unworked earth, immune to non-magic weapons, take one extra point of damage from all elemental sources save earth) in a roughly wolfish shape with softly glowing jade-green eyes rises from the floor and attacks the guilty party.

5. Burial Chamber: This chamber is lined with carved bronzewood pillars and tiled with well-fitted flagstones. Dead centre in the floor is a burial trench in which Therex lies, dressed in rusting scale mail and with copper beast-mask still in place. He clutches *Gryphbane* in his withered hands, and around his neck is a golden twisted-rope torc capped with amber-eyed wolfheads (430 gp). Therex is a Draugr (DC6; HD 3; hp 21; SPD 9; Att Gryphbane

1d8+1/+2 vs. spell-users, plus grave chill that heals Therex of half the damage he deals; Save as War3), a more tautly drawn and feral type of ghoul. He will immediately animate and attack any who disturb him. If he is left alone, he will animate and begin to hunt those who have violated his barrow beginning the next night. Ω

Gentle Sting of Juren. A delicate and ornate magical construct of gold and copper and glass, in the shape of a bee the size of a small human's hand. The Gentle Sting may be used as a scout within a 400' radius, transmitting a simple two or three word description of what it sees. Further, any potion may be loaded into the glassy abdomen of the Sting with the correct command word. A second command word sets a trigger – vocal command, a certain situation, a particular person, after a given amount of time elapses, etc – for the Sting to deliver its dose. When acting on its command the Sting plunges its fine platinum stinger into the target, dispensing the potion within a round. It is conceivable that the Sting may also be used to deliver poisons. The Sting has DC 3, hp 2, and SPD 21.

Gryphbane. A Hammer +1, +2 versus Spell-Users, Gryphbane is an ancient weapon belonging to Therex of the Night-wolf House, famous in song and legend as wielded by that chieftain in his battles against the arcane Neu and their artificial servants. Many of the inhuman spell-wielders had the life crushed from them by the hammer's pitiless blows. A well-balanced weapon, Gryphbane has a spiralling haft of magically-hardened bronze and a grip of blackened iron wrapped in wolfskin. Its head is composed of two stylized predator's heads of bronze, "furred" with gold and silver wirework and eyes inlaid with amber. Out of the gaping, fanged mouths of the beasts protrude the two massive heads of the hammer, cast from iron as strong and polished as fine steel.



The Devil's in the Details: Pygmy Folk

character options for Tékumel by Baz Blatt

The Pygmy Folk are small, averaging a mere 60 cm in height, with sharp-featured faces, grey or black fur, hands with four digits, and a short tail. They have three sexes, males making up 55% of the population, hermaphrodites 35%, and females 15%. They live in an area of northern Yan Kór honeycombed with their subterranean towns and cites, but are found throughout the Five Empires as travellers and merchants. They have excellent hearing and vision and despite their small size they are vicious fighters.

Stereotypes: The Pygmy Folk are infamously avaricious and clever merchants; as the old Tsolyáni proverb has it 'to bargain with the Pygmy Folk is to throw away your purse'. They are also allegedly utterly without any sense of honour as it is understood by the citizens of the Five Empires, stealing anything not nailed down, betraying anyone, even each other, to gain wealth, and are incapable of keeping a promise or vow made under even the most solemn of circumstances and invoking the most dreadful of demons and deities. They are also bad enemies. The Tsolyáni were ambushed by them many times during the recent wars and claim that they tortured captives for sport and ate them alive. The Yan Koryáni say these tales are exaggerated, but admit that they are masters of ambush and do not follow the age-old rituals of honourable and glorious war as known to human nations.

The Reality: The Pygmy Folk have a 'dog eat dog' culture and have little regard for one another's life and property, let alone other species, and cannot comprehend why humans put up with weaklings and fools to the extent that they do. They are self-centred, but will cooperate with others to mutual benefit. Amongst themselves they will argue vehemently over everything, using all kinds of invective and insult, but once an argument is over they quickly forget any harsh words spoken; it is just the way they communicate. They are not so forgiving of slights from other species. Most vaguely understand the concept of politeness, but equate this with oleaginous flattery and crawling and do not realise how utterly transparent they are when they are trying to get something from a human. They are not really kleptomaniacs, but if they are sure they won't get caught then they will help themselves to other people's valuables without an iota of guilt.

Clan and Lineage: No human clan accepts Pygmy Folk members, and no Pygmy Folk could cope with giving up any of their material wealth to such an organisation. The Pygmy Folk organise themselves by burrow, with each complex being ruled (as far as such a thing is possible) by a

council of elder females whose main role is to regulate the cycles of vendetta and personal vengeance arising from the many incidents of violence and theft that occur within the settlement. Females have a social advantage among Pygmy Folk, and are regarded as somewhat more reliable than the males and hermaphrodites.

Religion: The Pygmy Folk have their own religion which involves sacrifice by mob violence. Little else is known for sure by any non-Pygmy Folk observer. Human temples will allow Pygmy Folk to worship if they wish, but always keep a very close eye on them in case they run off with temple valuables and know that any expressions of faith are more than likely a ploy in some kind of scam or plot.

Names: The Pygmy Folk language and names are peculiar hissing screeches with ultrasonic overtones utterly unpronounceable by humans. They usually adopt Yan Koryáni or Tsolyáni names for use among humans, and sometimes mistakenly use ordinary words as names. A Pygmy Folk who tells you his name is Waskhyéautó (filthy thief) is not joking, though the fellow Pygmy who told him it was an honourable Tsolyáni name probably was.

Rules for Classic *Empire of the Petal Throne*: Pygmy Folk can be Warriors or Sorcerers, but not priests; their own religion does not have any hierarchy or temples of the same kind as humans, and no human temple would let a Pygmy Folk join its staff and learn its secrets. High level Pygmy Folk of any profession can be accepted as priests by their own people if they choose an appropriate skill below. Pygmy Folk do not roll for Original Skills as humans do, but roll on the table below for number of skills and again for maximum skill level at first level; this maximum rises by one per level gained. At first level they must choose at least one skill from the Pygmy Folk table, and automatically gain one skill per level with a 50% chance of gaining two. Pygmy Folk are not required to have all the skills in the professional list or their own racial list before they can gain the next higher one; they can pick and choose as they like, and can make more than one choice at a given level if available (so a Pygmy Folk can choose the level 2 skill Wary and the other level 2 skill of Streetwise if he wants). Note that a Pygmy Folk will have two Comeliness scores, one for his own species and another for how he looks to humans and other species.

Pygmy Folk Starting Skills:

% Roll	# of Skills	Max. Skill Level
1-10	2	3
11-30	3	4
31-70	4	5
71-90	5	6
91-100	6	7

Attribute Score Generation:

Str 1d100 x 0.5
Int 1d100
Con 1d100
PsyAb 1d100
Dex (1d100 x 0.8) + 30
Guile (1d100 x 0.5) + 40 (if used)
Com 1d100 (x 0.5 to other species, if applicable at all)

All Pygmy Folk start with:

- 1d100Kt
- -1 HP per HD due to small size
- -1 damage due to size
- +2 AC due to small size
- Can see in near total darkness
- Hear noise 1-3 on d6
- Hard Bargainer: +1d6+4% price on any item sold, -1d6+4% cost on any item bought
- Semi-Literate in own language
- Spot Hidden objects (Int/5)% + 3% per level

Skills:

- 1 Speak Yan Koryáni
Speak Tsolyáni
- 2 Wary: +1 Hear Noise and +10% Spot Hidden
Streetwise* (if lived in Foreign Quarter 1 yr+)
- 3 Potter,
Weaver
Net Maker
Carpenter
Sail Maker
Butcher
Merchant - modifies prices by +/- 2d6+8%
- 4 Stealthy (+2d6 Dex),
Fully Literate in Pygmy Folk and either Yan Koryáni or Tsolyáni
- 5 Sapper (as Warrior skill)
Ship Builder
Fletcher
Bronze Smith
Animal Trainer
Bird Trainer
Slaver
- 6 Evade danger: +2 on all saves
Nosy: +10% Spot Hidden
Use Blowpipe and poison darts (if Warrior)
Tomb Robber (Int+Dex/5)% +3% per level
chance to disable traps and open locks, if Int 50+ AND Dex 80+)

Burglar (Str+Dex/5)% +3% per level chance to climb walls and perform feats of balance if Str 20+ AND Dex 90+)

- 7 Speak 2 additional human languages, including ancient tongues (if Sorcerer)
Fearless - +2 save vs magical fear, never fail morale checks or panic in face of enemy
Jeweller – can smith silver and gold and make Pygmy Folk enamel work, their most attractive and lucrative craft.
- 8 Long Whiskers: +1 Hear Noise and +10% Spot Hidden
Very Stealthy (+2d6 Dex)
- 9 Tracking by Smell
Accepted Alien status – not a clan member but have a license to be out in human areas of cities after dark without instant arrest and impalement
- 10 Any Scholar skill
Alchemist
Convincing Liar – sufficiently knowledgeable about human culture to overcome suspicion of their species, +2d10 Guile if used.
Vengeful - +1 attack if reduced to 50% HP or less
Vicious - +1 damage if attacking a surprised target
- 11 Ways of the Tsuru'úm; 10% chance to know depth and direction underground, +10% spot traps, knowledge of denizens and local geography of home cities' underworld
- 12 Pygmy Folk Priest: can incite a ritual frenzy in a crowd of Pygmy Folk, adding +1 to hit and +2 damage for an hour

Roll on the following tables to personalize Pygmy Folk characters, in any ruleset:

Many Pygmy Folk (roll 1d20 three times):

1. Have very fluffy fur and look 'cute' to humans (+1d10 Com to humans only)
2. Were bullied when young and have torn ears and numerous scars (-2d10 Com to Pygmy Folk)
3. Are female and regarded as slightly more reliable than males and hermaphrodites
4. Have black and brown patterned fur like a tabby cat and are camouflaged in bushes and undergrowth
5. Have served in the Yan Koryáni military as scouts
6. Think humans are incapable of lying
7. Are addicted to gambling
8. Can drink even an N'lüss chieftain under the table
9. Are somewhat agoraphobic
10. Are expert in the use of poisons

11. Are always hungry and eat as much as humans do despite being a third the size
12. Are very friendly towards Hláka, and like their sense of humour
13. Dislike Pé Chói for their snooty and superior ways
14. Have a price on their head in at least one human town for theft
15. Can smell water, and can find it even in a desert
16. Think humans are blind, deaf and stupid and take every chance to prove their own comparative intelligence
17. Are on the run from their home burrow due to a feud
18. Have a deep respect for and often fear of their mothers and/or grandmothers
19. Keep a stash of easily portable loot buried someplace for when they inevitably have to go on the run
20. Think all humans look alike and are always mixing up people's names and, more seriously, their social status

Some Pygmy Folk (roll d16 (d8 w/hi-lo die) once)

1. Have been cursed by Sárku for tomb robbery
2. Carry a secret soul stone. If they lose it, they are convinced they will die
3. Know how to make special silver charms to ensure good luck
4. Never forgive an insult, and will feign friendliness and loyalty to get the chance for revenge
5. Cannot resist the urge to steal at least once a day
6. Eat cats and dogs and cannot understand why this upsets humans
7. Are partisans for Baron Áld of Yan Kór as he treats their species with respect
8. Distrust Baron Áld, and think Pygmy Folk are adopting too many human ways because of his influence
9. Try to be scrupulously honest, thinking that Pygmy Folk unruliness is the reason they have not prospered as much as humans
10. Are seeking revenge on a Pygmy Folk wandering somewhere in human lands
11. Study every other species closely, with an eye to working out how to assassinate them with one dagger thrust or blowpipe dart should the need arise
12. Have fleas they caught from a cat and cannot get rid of them
13. Are paranoid about being abducted by the Temple of Dlamélish for dubious sexual perversions
14. Instinctively know which way is north – they say they can smell it
15. Are too scared of brutal human law enforcement to steal
16. Will eat almost anything, including carrion

Pygmy Folk Sometimes Carry (roll d16 1d3 times prior to buying equipment):

1. A Pygmy Folk blowpipe and 20 darts

2. A specially made bronze helm that leaves their ears and whiskers free
3. A belt with a secret pouch hidden in it
4. A waistcoat-like garment with 1d100 worth of gems sewn into the hem
5. d6 doses of soporific poison effective against humans
6. Kévuk dice (25% chance loaded)
7. A golden earring
8. A stolen bit of jewellery with a human clan insignia
9. A set of scales for weighing small items of treasure
10. A small magnifying glass
11. A lockable enamelled box with mementoes of mother
12. A Yan Koryáni citizenship certificate (50% genuine)
13. 2d6 firecrackers
14. A peaked cap that keeps the sun out of their eyes
15. Grandma's old delicately carved bone fur-comb
16. Good luck charm made of silver

Pygmy Folk sized armour and equipment is not available in any human settlement except Yan Kór City itself, which is the only place with a large enough indigenous community to make selling it commercially viable. In other places Pygmy Folk must have armour and most kinds of weapon specially made, which will cost 2+1d3 times the price of human equivalents. Pygmy Folk can use miniature versions of double handed weapons like war-axes and halberds if they have Str 40+, but instead of +1 damage they merely reduce the standard Pygmy Folk damage penalty to 0.

Playing a Pygmy Folk: Some Tékumel GMs may rule that the psychology and motivation of non-humans is so bizarre that they should not be used as PCs. If Pygmy Folk are allowed I suggest the following as a rough guide to playing them:

- **Every Pygmy for himself!** Pygmy Folk are so greedy and selfish they make Donald Trump look like Mother Theresa. They will always have their eyes on someone else's goods and will be working out a means fair or foul, legal or illegal, to get their paws on them.
- **Honour is for tall people.** You are lost in a world of behemoths at least twice your height. Fortunately they are blind, deaf and stupid and have this peculiar disability called 'honour' which makes them attack everything head on. If you are intend to live long take every possible advantage of this.
- **There is no word for 'Calm Down' in Pygmy Folk.** When Pygmy Folk want to be noticed they are loud, in your face, jokey (not a plus point in Tsolyáni culture) and full of energy. All their emotions and moods are extreme, from joy to anger to depression. This is what makes them bad foes – if they take against you then there is only one possible outcome, their death (or financial ruin which is the same thing to Pygmy) or yours.



Pygmy Folk in Traditional Fantasy Games: There are Halflings in Tékumel – a very depressed one sitting in a cage in Jakállá Zoo after falling through a nexus point – so why not Pygmy Folk in older *D&D* and similar games? Let's face it, Hobbits are annoying, snivelling goody two-shoes: if you are going to have a PC race oriented around thievery, make it one that takes the job seriously! I suggest Pygmy Folk Be allowed as Warriors, Thieves, or Mages. Pygmies always start as 1st level Thieves, though they should be allowed to progress as split Fighter-Thieves as per Dwarves, or Mage-Thieves as per Elves thereafter. They gain the same thief skill bonuses as Halflings and the same AC bonuses against large targets. They gain no bonus with missile weapons, however. If you are using an Assassin class, then Pygmies are ideal candidates, and I would grant them assassination chances as if one level higher. I suggest level limits for Warriors should be 5, for Mages 8, and no limit for Thief or Assassin.

Sample Pygmy Folk NPCs

Gulen the Clam-Hunter

Level I Warrior

Str 33 Int 35 Con 72 Psy Ab 68 Dex 65 Com 24/15

+0 to hit, -2 damage, +1 hit point, AC 5, HD 1, HP 4

Abilities: +2 AC due to small size; can see in near total darkness; hear noise 1-4 on d6; Hard Bargainer +2d6+8% price on any item sold, -2d6+8% cost on any item bought); spot hidden things 20%

Skills: Spear, Speak Milumanayáni, Blowpipe, Wary

Equipment: Spear, leather armour, shield, blowpipe, 20 darts, bone fur-comb

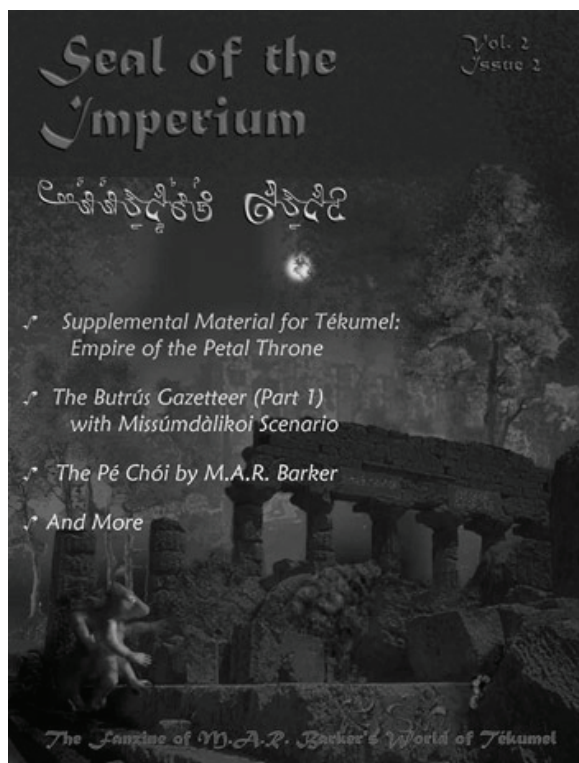
Description: Gulen is that most unfortunate of specimens, a shy Pygmy Folk. (Gulen is a hermaphrodite, but I will use 'he' to avoid awkward sentences). In his youth he was mercilessly bullied by his siblings, and was nearly harried and beaten to death on several occasions. He still shows the scars and the ragged bitten-off ears of his hazing, and even humans will recognise him as a bit of a sorry specimen. Other Pygmy Folk know these are the stigmata of a born victim and take what advantage they can. He joined the Yan Koryáni army as a scout and ended up being left behind in Milumanayá during the war with the Tsolyáni. He joined a human nomad band for a while, but

could not adapt to their "share and share alike" ethos, and left before he could be expelled. He now lives alone on the fringes of the 'civilised' districts near Sunráya where he hunts sand-clams and trades them with the local peasants. Gulen is very good at this: his keen senses of smell and hearing stand him in good stead in locating these tasty morsels buried under the dunes. He will most likely be encountered skulking about in the middle of the night hunting or by day selling sand-clams in a village market, and might even be mistaken for a spy. He is lonely, and might attach himself to a reasonably non-hostile party as a hanger-on, or try to persuade them to hire him as a scout and desert guide. He is not particularly good company, being sullen and silent, and is entirely lacking in the boisterous self-confidence humans expect from Pygmy Folk. Acts of kindness or generosity towards him will result in even greater suspicion and expectation of some dreadful humiliation or a beating. On the other hand he does not steal much for a Pygmy Folk, his services come very cheap, and he may be preferable as a desert guide to the eccentric nomadic tribesmen.

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Tita's House of Games is proud to
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Okh'n the Exhibit

Level III Warrior

Str 22 Int 65 Con 54 Psy Ab 27 Dex 97 Com 43/22

+3 to hit. +0 damage, AC 7, HD 3-3, HP 11

Abilities: +2 AC due to small size; can see in near total darkness; hear noise 1-4 on d6; spot hidden 42%; Hard Bargainer (+1d6+4% price on any item sold, -1d6+4% cost on any item bought)

Skills: Sword, Sling, Crossbow, Speak Tsolyáni, Wary, Streetwise, Butcher, Tomb Robber, Nosy

Equipment: Jacket with 32kt worth of gems sewn into the hem, hidden stash of 240kt cash and 300kt in gems

Description: Okh'n is the kind of Pygmy Folk that earns the rest their bad name. She is currently residing in a cage in Jakálla Zoo, having been bought as an exhibit from the Torúnal Islan, the Jakálla criminal prison, where she was awaiting trial and almost definite impalement for tomb robbery. Her whole gang of seven Pygmy Folk are actively sought by the Tomb Police and the Clan of the Nighted Tower as a result of this nefarious activity. If the authorities knew the whole story – that Okh'n and co didn't just take the goods, but also choice cuts from the fresher bodies to sell to Ahoggyá back in the Foreign Quarter – their lives would not be worth a shirt button – not that anyone wears shirts in Jakálla, or knows what a button is. After an initial settling-in period, during which she flung feces at visitors and screamed obscenities all day and all night, she realised that she could be in worse places, like up a sharpened pole. Her gang have visited to have a laugh at her, and have promised to break her out if she tells them where she buried her share of the takings from the robbery and butchery business. She isn't daft enough to fall for this scam, but being stuck down wind of the Kurukú cage she is getting desperate to get out. She will try

and persuade any humans she can get alone near her cage to help her. She will promise anything, bragging about how much gold she has put by, offering to guide them to the richest tombs in the necropolis (including one with a magic animated Engsvanyáli wall painting), to disclose secrets of the Temple of Sárku, teach spells to repel Mrúr, draw a map of the secret Pygmy Folk tunnels leading throughout the upper layers of the Tsu'urum and beyond the walls, and anything else she can think of. How much of this she can really do is anyone's guess, and of course she has no intention of honouring any deal and will disappear at the first convenient opportunity after release.

'N'Ekh the Marvellous

Level VI Sorcerer

Str 11 Int 84 Con 32 Psy Ab 62 Dex 71 Com 74/44

+1 to hit, +0 damage, AC 7, HD 4-4, HP 12

Abilities: +2 AC due to small size; can see in near total darkness; hear noise 1-3 on d6; Hard Bargainer (+2d6+8% price on any item sold, -2d6+8% cost on any item bought), +2 on all saves; spot hidden 35%

Skills: Illusionist, Clairvoyance, Telekinesis, Medium, Nature Control, Control Person, Merchant, Speak Tsolyáni, Speak Engsvanyáli, Speak Salarvyáni, Scholar: Archaeology, Jeweller, Evade Danger

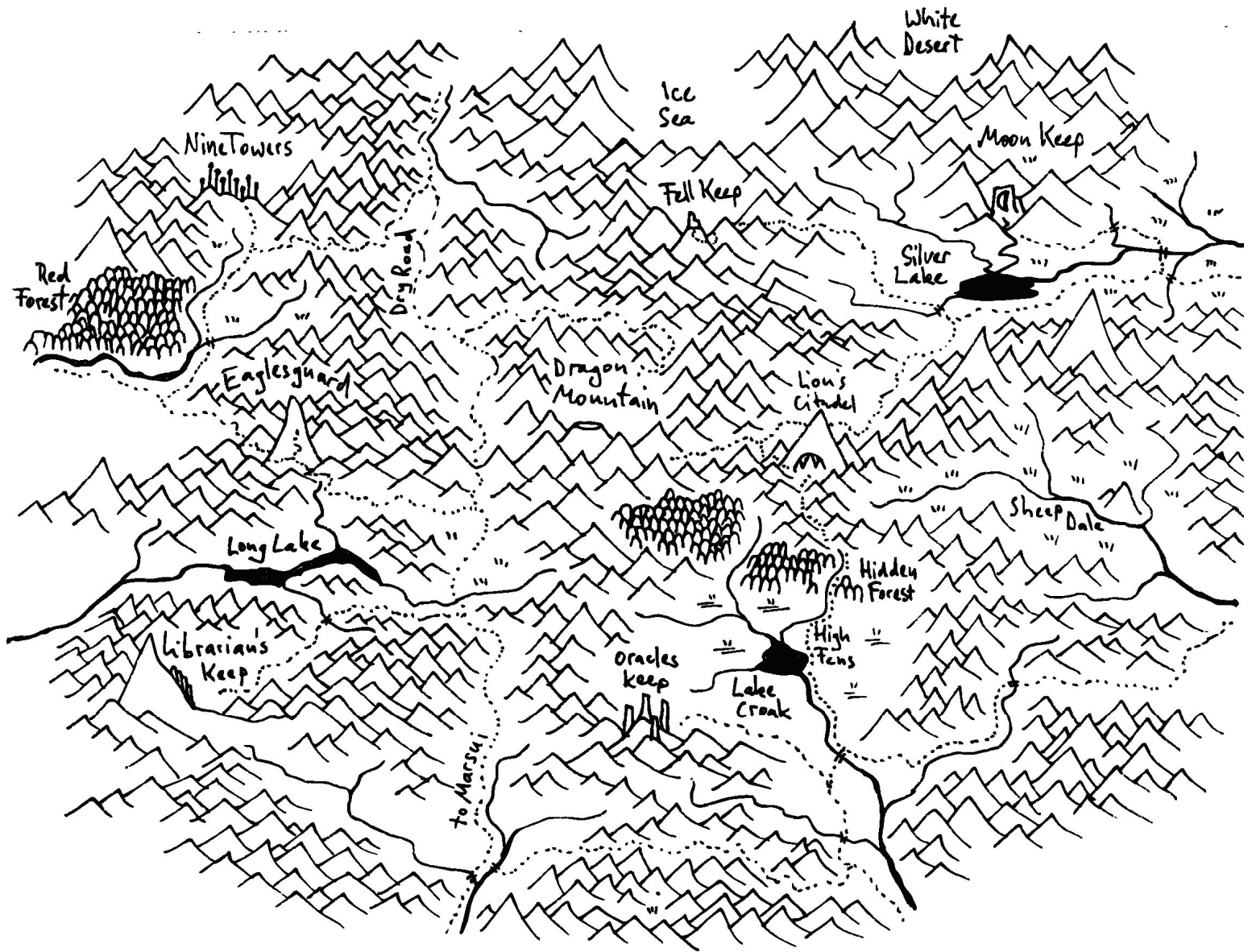
Spells: I Calm, I Locate Gold and Gems, I Light

Equipment: Dagger, 6 doses of poison, 10 firecrackers, magnifying glass, Eye of Opening the Way (26 charges), Amulet of Finding Treasure in the Underworld

Description: 'N'Ekh is an itinerant trader and entertainer. He lives in a magnificent chlen-cart, with a gaudily painted mini-palace built onto the back with two Pygmy Folk sized floors, several rooms and even a 'roof-garden' - a few pots and planters full of sweet herbs - where he lays in his hammock while on the move. He has a human slave cart-driver, Kel, a slow-witted youth who stoically bears his little master's alien ways. People who see them on the road often smile as 'N'Ekh pokes his slave with a miniature chlen prod and the slave passes the message on with a proper prod to their lumbering beast. 'N'Ekh stops in small villages and towns and puts on entertainments of simple conjuring by day and with his magic lantern at night. This is an ancient Engsvanyáli device made of delicately figured brass and carved wood with a crystal lens on the front and an alabaster cylinder in a compartment at the back. One casts a Light spell on the cylinder and it creates a focusable light like a projector. 'N'Ekh uses this with a large linen screen and some beautiful old shadow puppets of Pygmy Folk make to put on presentations of comic folk tales, accompanied by Kel on the drum and croatal. He has some human-made puppets for episodes from the Epic of Hrógga as well, but only does this show when he can get a village elder or epic singer to narrate. His *pièce de résistance*, though, is his presentation of Engsvanyáli magic lantern slides. These are fragile discs of painted glass mounted in Tíu-wood with various little

handles to move them and create the illusion of motion. Village folk think they are magical, and they impress some more sophisticated types as well with their ancient biremes on stormy seas, Sró flapping across the sky, and changing hues of northern forest autumns. 'N'Ekh has had some new ones made on the old pattern as well, but these are not animated. He has a few other curios of great age hidden away in his cart; bits of old porcelain, a heavy bronze dagger with indecipherable Ssú letters on it, a pencil sharpener (a real mystery this, no one has used leaded pencils for millennia), statuettes of Engsvanyáli gods and so forth. This collection is worth several thousand káitars if sold to the right buyer, and he is always on the lookout for more and has sometimes made mini-archaeological digs in areas where such items have been found. Another item of trade is cheap costume jewellery, chlen-hide bracelets and plaques with polished semi-precious stones mounted on them, gaudy and garish. For special customers he has a few gold and ruby rings; however, during the sale he will use sleight of hand to switch the real ring for a plated bronze and glass replica, hoping to leave town before the subterfuge comes to light. Players may come across one of 'N'Ekh's shows and might even trade with him. If they have ancient devices or objects on show he will approach them and make an offer. He may also offer employment for those willing to look in certain graveyards where he suspects ancient Engsvanyáli objects might be hidden, and he sometime gets to see a few heirlooms on display in some temples and clanhouses he cannot afford to acquire by conventional means. Ω





Seven Kings Mountains

setting material by Judd Karlman

The Seven Kings Mountains are in turmoil as the Dragon wages war on the seven dwarven kings, an epic feud that has dragged on for a century since the legendary theft of The First Star. Before the Dragon War began almost one hundred years ago, the 7 Kings mountain range was a place of feuds, kin-strife and bloody oaths. Each king wished to adorn their crown with the First Star, declaring themselves High King of the Earth, First Hammer of the Dwarves. It was Vestmark's seven sons who attempted to steal the gem from the Dragon's tomb, and many legends say they would have made it out too, if they had not bickered and back-stabbed among their own. Many whisper that it was brother killing brother that woke the dragon and the stolen gem that invoked its epic wrath.

I. Vestmark the Silver, King of the Moon Keep: He is an old and crafty king who has carefully chosen which battles he and his Silver Guard take up. He has challenged the dragon to single battle, riddled with guilt after his children awoke the monster, the act that some say directly led to the war at hand. So far the Dragon has not responded to the old king's bravado. Does the Dragon fear Vestmark's legendary weapon, The Gibbous Hammer?

The Moon Keep: This keep is adorned with silver moons of all phases, tarnished and unkempt since the war. The Silver Hall was one of the most beautiful in all the world before Vestmark's grief. Now the hall is covered in dust as craftsmen carve statues of the king's late sons. The Moon Keep is busy with stalwart watch kept up against enemies, as the Silver Guard the busiest dwarven army in the war.

II. Ostergard the Wise, King of the Librarian's Keep:

Ostergard has kept his soldiers close to his holdings, having lost many of his children in the opening days of the war. Dwarves grumble, wondering if he is more worried about his remaining children or the lore in his mountain. Ostergard's messengers are always a welcome sight, often bringing necessary wisdom from scrolls and tomes in the Ostergard holdings.

Agda Ostergard, Revolutionary Heir of the Librarian's Keep:

Agda has her eye on the throne, Dwarven traditions be damned to hell and blood. Her mother used to say that the gods forged men for certain chores and women for others, but even as a child this didn't make sense to her. After a century of war nothing else makes sense either. She is finished mourning her elder brothers and sisters lost in the opening days of the war to the dragon's cunning. Her father's decision to close the doors to the Librarian's Keep is folly, if not cowardice, and she knows it. She sees his isolation for what it is, simple greed. While war rages outside, she gathers power among the Longbeards in order to open the gates and marshal the keep's forces, so the Ostergard War Banners will fly again.

The Librarian's Keep: Dwarven librarians have a saying: "Words worth saving are chiseled into stone." The librarian's keep has books and scrolls, but these are seen as transitory forms of safekeeping. The miners of the keep find new tunnels not only for ore and gem but so that the librarians can transcribe words from vellum onto bare stone wall. Thus, there are no adornments in the traditional sense on the walls of the Librarian's Keep: words cover the walls. The keep has been closed to outsiders since Ostergard's children were killed by Dragon-trained orc in one of the first engagements of the war.

III. Gannol the Brave, King of the 9 Towers Keep:

Gannol was taken prisoner by the dragon over a decade ago, taking the people of the 9 Towers Keep out of the battle. Gannol's princely brother has run the 9 Towers in his absence; when he heard of his brother being taken, he closed the doors and refused to let his soldiers fight against the dragon's army. Some wonder if the prince is truly worried about his brother or was bought off by gold from the dragon's prodigious hoard.

9 Towers Keep: 9 Towers appears to be more of a prison than a proper dwarfhold lately. The nine towers are each dedicated to a vital aspect of dwarven life (axe, hammer, anvil, hearth, braid, rune, furnace, ore, and gem). The vassals and thanes within bristle under the rule of Gannol's brother (whose name shall not profane this fanzine), all wishing to join their dwarven brothers and sisters in their fight against the dragon. Occasionally, young dwarves will sneak like thieves out of a tower where like-minded guards turn a blind eye, so that some young ones from 9 Towers

can join the war effort. That is the only traffic in and out, other than the prince's sorcerous bat spies fluttering about the mountains. Some whisper that Gannol was kidnapped by the dragon at his brother's request.

IV. Wicks the Wicked, King of the Lion Citadel:

Wicks has led the Lion Guard throughout the war, vowing not to sleep in his home citadel until the war is over, leaving the care and operation of the holdings to his capable sister. His army can be found camping in well guarded caverns or in a fellow king's mountains.

Caren Wicks, the Iron Lion, Hearthguard-General of the Lion Citadel:

It is Lady Wicks, the Iron Lion, who not only sees to the citadel's defenses but wages war on the Lion Mountain. The Lady's idea of a good defense is very much rooted in that of a valorous offense, often leading her troops into the surrounding valleys and hills. Already the soldiers who fight under her give her honor as they would a king, leading some to wonder what would happen should her brother return.



Agda Ostergard and Caren Wicks the Iron Lion, depicted here as strong women protecting their keeps, Agda with a lantern representing truth and justice and Caren with her axe and shield representing battle-prowess. Though these dwarven women have not seen one another since the war began, they are shown here together due to their unity of purpose. Notice the dragon looming over them, watching for signs of weakness.



The wedding of Roselle Benvik and Benvik the Griffon-slayer, married by Ostergard the Wise in the days before the war.

The Lion Citadel: The gate is a tremendous lion's head, carved out of the mountainside. The eyes contain lanterns whose lights are always lit, allowing dwarven travelers to find their way to the Lion's hospitality, enemies to its doom. More than any other keep, today the Lion Citadel is well-kept and well-run. When dwarven soldiers are in need of fresh supplies, they often make their way here, not only for the safety of the Citadel's walls but for the Iron Lion's council. Her war-wisdom is said to be unparalleled. Her other nickname is General of the Dwarven Armies.

V. Benvik Griffon-slayer, King of Eaglesguard: Benvik's father, Benvik the Great, was killed in a vicious fight with the Dragon, burned to death before his crossbow could be fired. The young king relies heavily on his uncles and older cousins for counsel, which causes his forces to be slow and plodding in action. Before each order is issued, days and often weeks of arguing typically occur in the Eaglesguard Mountain Council Chambers.

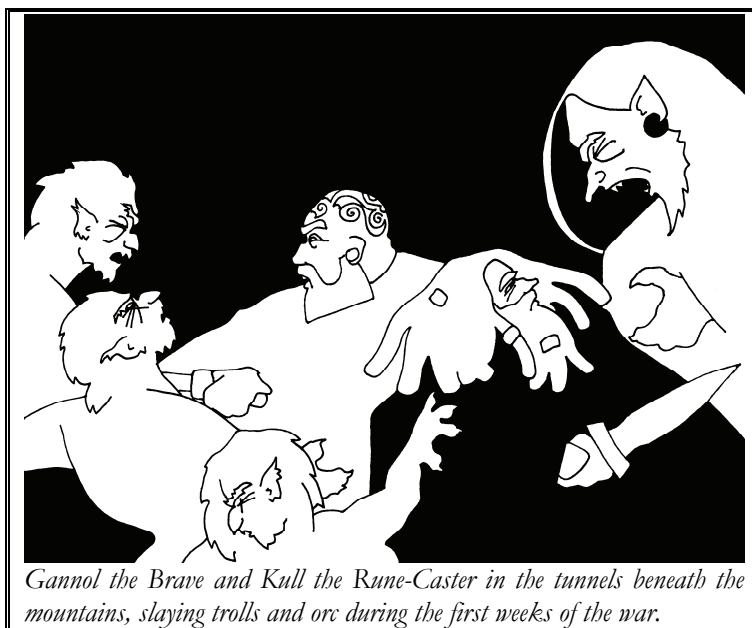
Roselle Benvik, The Wise Bride of Benvik: Roselle was married to the King of the Eaglesguard Mountains for political reasons; the pair neither knew nor loved one another before the betrothal. Now that her husband has gained the

crown, she has seen the council not only tear the kingdom apart but tear him apart as well. Her Wicks blood (she is cousin to Wicks the Wicked and Caren the Iron Lion on her father's side of the family) runs strong in her veins, and she seeks to help the young, barely bearded king set aside his dependence on consensus and to take the throne for his own, with her wisdom at his side.

Eaglesguard: This is the highest mountain in the range, its peak disappearing into the clouds. Without a dwarven eye to guide you, it would be incredibly difficult to tell that dwarves resided there at all. Great Eagles fly among the clouds, keeping watch against Eaglesguard's enemies. Soldiers come and go from the cave-gate midway up the mountain but they are only sent out on rare scouting missions, held at bay due to Benvik's inconsistent rule.

VI. Kull the Rune-Caster, King of the Oracle's Keep: Kull has led his adventuring friends far from the mountains, looking for a dragon-slaying artifact abroad. His mother commands his troops and rules the Oracle's Keep while he is gone. Great Eagles, friends to Kull, will often deliver cryptic missives from the absent king to his powerful mother.

Germund Kull, The 7 King Mountains Oracle: It is Germund's prophecies that have kept the Dwarven mountain holdfasts from falling thus far. She saw the closing of the Librarian Keep's doors and led her son away from the war at hand in order to find some lore that will slay the dragon. In the meantime, the Kull War Banners are often found at the right mountain pass at the right time due to her oracular vision. During these troop movements, the Oracle will be found with the troops, as she is never one to force others to risk their lives for a reading of the bones that she herself won't risk with her own blood.



Gannol the Brave and Kull the Rune-Caster in the tunnels beneath the mountains, slaying trolls and orcs during the first weeks of the war.

Oracle's Keep: This keep is surrounded by standing stones that keep track of dwarven festivals and remembrance days. Within the keep itself, dwarves lead as close to normal lives as can be had in the mountains these days, with full faith that their king will return with the lore to kill the dragon and that in the meantime their oracle (dare some say – “queen?”) will lead them with wisdom and deep lore. When soldiers move in and out of the keep, they move quickly and with a purpose, often following the oracles' arcane prophecy or sly intelligence; her generals rarely know which is which.

VII. Helson the Berserk, King of the Fell Keep: The Fell Keep was a dire place before the war; Helson has turned it into a butcher's block. For the first 50 years of the war, Helson's father, Helson the Wrathful, led his soldiers in every battle he and his host could reach. His son has continued the tradition, grinding his forces down to a few scarred souls.

Frideborg Helsdotter, Hearthguard General of the Fell Keep: Frideborg has recently unearthed an ancient cursed axe that is said to gain vicious and bloody powers when it is covered in a kin's blood. She is holding the Fell Keep with a skeleton force of soldiers while her brother grinds their forces into blood and dust, just as their father did. As the war rages on and the Fell Keep repels the Dragon's forces by a thinner and thinner margin, the Hearthguard-General of the Fell Keep has difficult choices in her future. Is it kinslaying and taking control of the mountain herself, leading them not to some ideal of suicidal glory but to valorous victory, or the abandonment of the ancestral home to draconic forces, the first of the dwarven mountains to fall?

The Fell Keep: The Fell Keep was originally home to an ancient Troll King, and little has changed in the keep since the troll and his orcs spawn were slaughtered in its halls by Hel the Kingslayer. There are regular sightings of ghosts, from old Hel himself to the Troll King to victims of kinslaying and greed-driven suicides. Once inside the keep, its cold rough-hewn walls and brackish well water offer scant comfort to guests.

The Dragon: Ancient and awake after centuries of slumber underground, it awoke amidst dwarven thieves arguing and killing each other with daggers over its finest treasure. Rather than rampaging through their halls to eventually be ambushed, the dragon stole a pack of orc from the nearby Broken Mountains and trained them. The Dragon, or – as it prefers to be called – Lord Dragon, sent a trifling portion of its treasure to the southern city of Marsui, and Dragonsworn vassals purchased mercenaries. When the promise of dragon treasure made its way through the human city-states, the path from Marsui's gates to the north became the Dragon Road.

Is it male or female? Do dragons even have notions of such things? Is it an ancient creature that was born when the earth was still cooling, or is it merely an ancient dwarf, maybe the High King himself, transformed by its own epic greed? The Lord Dragon isn't answering those questions.

Dragon Mountain (formerly, in ancient times, High King's Mountain, home of the Mythril Anvil, Hearth-home, Resting Place of the First Star): The Dragon Mountain was once the hall of the highest of the Dwarven Kings, before this creature knocked down the gate and incinerated all within. This was during a former age of the world, a time so long ago that no currently living dwarf could possibly remember (though some ancient elves still do). The Dragon ended that age and on that day the mountain became Dragon Mountain. Ripped tapestries still adorn some walls and some hallways still smell like burnt flesh and hair. The Dragon squats in the vault, rising up through the center of the mountain when its mighty presence has to be announced to the world. There is a steady stream of mercenaries from all over the world, provisions, and money coming in from Marsui.



The three greatest warriors of the Dwarven Kings, Vestmark the Silver, Wicks the Wicked and Helson the Berserker, all fending off the Dragon's Breath during the first engagement, the Battle of the Charred Valley.

Note: I have used this setting twice, once for a standard fantasy group in *D&D* and once for an all-orc party in *Burning Wheel*. (Things didn't go so well for the dwarves in that game, and even worse for the dragon!) Rob Bohl, several online forum commenters, and Luke Crane deserve special thanks for elements of this setting. The dwarven lifepaths and the idea of a dragon being a dwarf transformed by greed in *Burning Wheel* both helped shape the Seven Kings Mountains. If the Kings make their way into your game, please drop me a line at judd.karlman@gmail.com and let me know how it goes!



that they have a ritual that allows them to gain the powers of those they devour. Oddly, a few of them have begun to speak draconic and dwarvish.

Dwarves (1d8)

1. This is a ragged band of Dwarven deserters, sick of the war and what it has done to their people. They are throwing down their axes and shaving their beards, marking themselves as cowards and oath-breakers.
2. This is Kull the Rune-Caster and his adventuring party. Kull is the least kingly of the seven kings and has spent the past decades adventuring throughout the world, seeking a magic item that will help his people slay the dragon. The party around Kull should behave like a slightly more jaded version of the PCs.
3. The Librarian of Ostergard and his honor guard are making their way to a gathering of dwarven kings to contribute wisdom and lore. This dwarf is considered a living treasure and is protected heavily by his wardens, but if the players can gain his attention and convince him of their need, he could be a fine person to ask questions the players want answering.
4. A cursed dwarf – he turns into a wereboar whenever there is a horned moon – who has hidden himself away from his clan, family, and loved ones in order to not afflict them with his curse.
5. Grey Bearded Guilders, newly arrived from the treasure vaults in the south, have arrived with a battalion of Vault-guard crossbowmen and gold enough to fund another year's worth of war.
6. A group of young, barely bearded youths, recently escaped from Nine Towers, are making their way to the Lion Citadel to join in the war against the dragon.
7. Soldiers from the Oracle Keep are making a brutal march to Goblin Skull Pass; their oracle has told them that if they are not there to back up Wicks the Wicked and his honor guard, the war will be lost.
8. Ragged, haunted, near-suicidal soldiers from the Fell Keep are returning from a battle, having lost most of their regiment against human mercenaries backed up by griffon-riders.

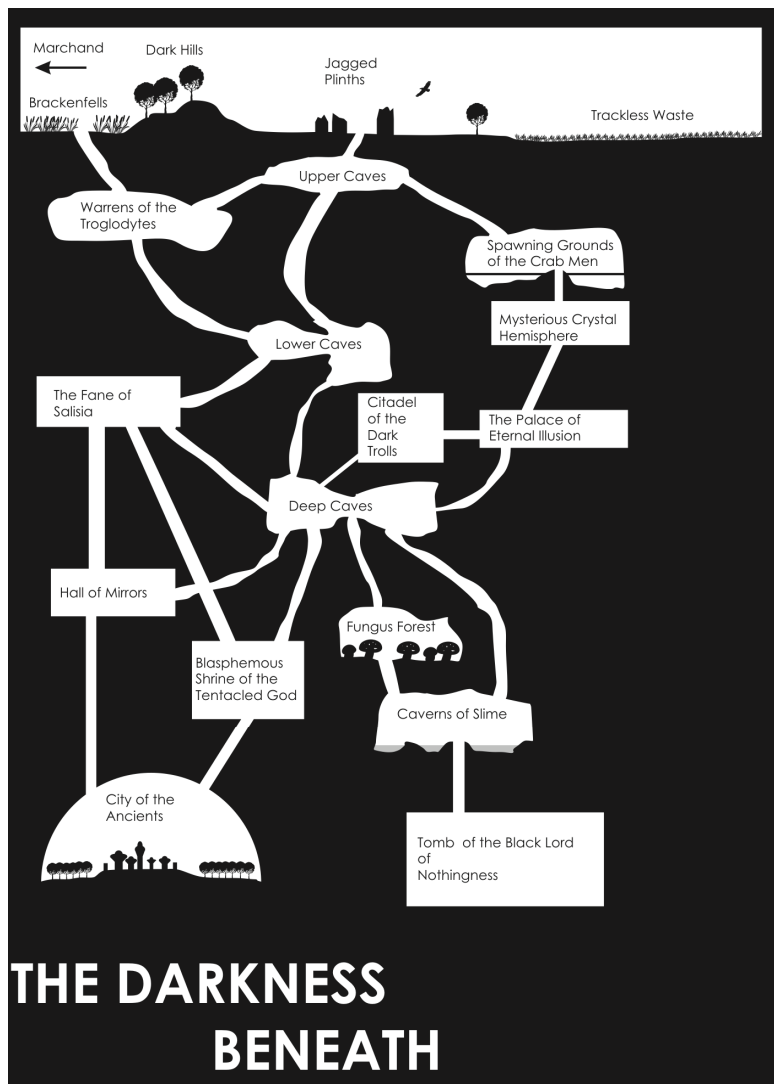
Others (1d4)

1. A party of elven griffon-riders who are studying how the dragon and dwarves make war, in case they should ever turn their greedy eyes to the south.
2. A vampire lord from the barren lands north of here, come to see how the war has progressed in the past hundred years. He claims to have been here when the war first started.
3. A necromancer and her retinue of mongrel-man servants, gathering dead bodies and stowing them in a nearby abandoned cave for future nefarious purposes.
4. A badly burned great eagle with a broken wing, whose brothers and sisters all died fighting the dragon in a recent battle. Ω

Random Encounter Tables: Use these tables as inspiration, and whenever possible link the ideas here to the character's backstory, family and character concept. Results may be interpreted associatively rather than literally, especially if it helps move the story along. For example, a second '3' rolled on the 'others' table might be with a death knight who stalks the necromancer, or the leftover remnants of one of her rituals containing a vital clue.

Goblinoids (1d6)

1. A goblin slave whose dwarven masters were killed by the Dragon, still half-scorched and in shock but also tasting freedom for the first time in its short, brutal life.
2. A proud and cunning orc who has made a living off killing those wounded in battle and selling the corpse's belongings down south.
3. Ten goblins chained to a dead dwarf from the Fell Keep.
4. A group of orc scouts, worshipping at a makeshift altar of the Dragon.
5. A group of hobgoblin mercenaries, hoping to hire out their services to dwarf or dragon, whichever will pay them better wages.
6. This is a group of gnoll carrion eaters, who have come to the mountains in order to eat the dead. They claim



war against crab-men and dark trolls elsewhere in the dungeon and with humans from the surface world. Treaty with them is basically impossible, though this is not necessarily true of other monsters on the level. These trogs come in several appealing mutant varieties which should provide entertainment in battle. They will respond in an intelligent and coordinated fashion to adventuring parties once they become aware of them, and will be very tough to beat if fully aroused; several hiding places can be found in the dungeon by canny players to avoid the worst fates.

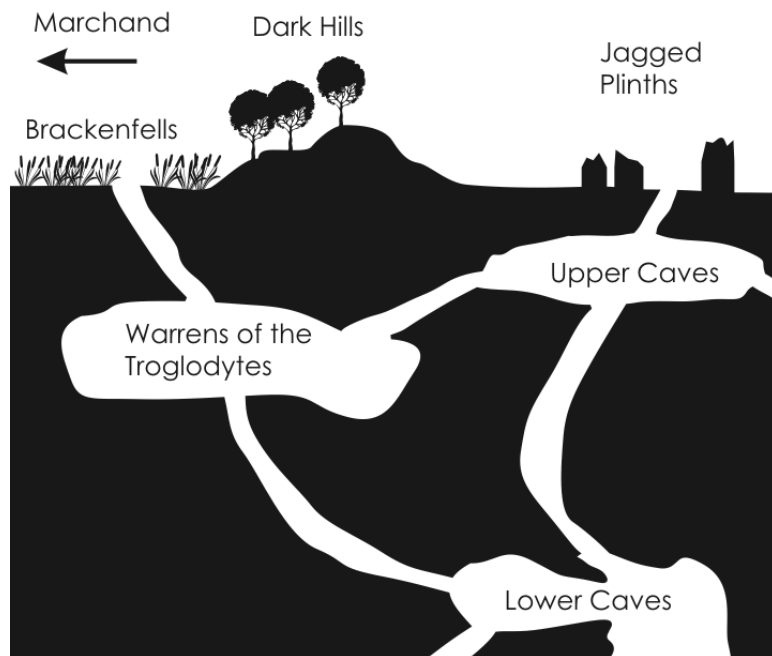
Motivation: If your players are the sort of wan, *fin-de-siècle* aesthetes who need a reason to risk their characters' lives in a dark, slimy cavern complex filled with murderous monstrosities or if they have access to the local rumor mill they may learn that a merchant caravan laden with gold bars bound for Marchand was ambushed in the swamp, never to arrive. Also, these trogs regularly capture and eat human stragglers from Marchand who get lost in the swamp after dark, so rescue, revenge, and hygiene also present themselves as plausible cause for dungeoneering.

The Mole-Men: In addition to the troglodytes, a diminutive race of mole-men calls these caverns home. They inhabit a separate set of tunnels which interlace the trog warrens between **3** and **17** and between **29** and **40**. Of neutral, even kindly outlook, mole-men (HD 1/2, hp 2, DC 8, SPD 6/burrow 3, Atk bite or pointy stick 1-2, 5 in 6 chance to move silently or hide, never surprised) live off tasty swamp plants and cavern fungi and mostly keep to themselves. Their largest tunnels are big enough for a hobbit to function at -2 across the board, but all other races must crawl at SPD 2 and can only attack the square in front of them at -4 for 1/4 damage. Mole-men will burrow around attackers and/or collapse tunnels on them; the troglodytes will never crawl into their warrens.

Warrens of the Troglydtes

dungeon level by Calithena, w/help from D. Bowman

Introduction: This mazy troglodyte den can be played on its own, plugged into your dungeons, or used as level 2 of *The Darkness Beneath*, *Fight On!*'s community megadungeon. In *The Darkness Beneath* level 2 connects to levels 1 (detailed in *Fight On!* #2 – Iq) and 5 through areas **1** and **A6** and to the surface world through **27**, **28**, and several sinkholes near **30** and **33**. These connections are shown in the accompanying schematics and may be adjusted to suit your needs. Players making their way up or down through the dungeons may have random encounters as the GM wishes, possibly using the Upper Caverns table if such are desired. Players coming directly from the Brackenfells (or surface swamp of your choice) should only rarely experience normal swamp encounters on the way in if they come or go by day, but night journeys are lethal: there is a 75% chance of running into an ambush force of d10+5 trog warriors (with special types at GM option). It should be common knowledge that trogs are nocturnal in the swamps, but up to the PCs to plan accordingly. The troglodytes in these warrens have a bunker mentality. They are constantly at



It would be unfortunate if players battled the mole-men, because their ideal role is to provide a safe haven for rest and secret pathways between the Upper and Lower Caverns. There are several low-ceilinged 10' diameter rooms in their burrows where PCs can recuperate and plan assaults. The mole-men can generally find or dig cramped but passable tunnels to within d3-1 rooms of any location that the PCs describe to them within their range. They are primarily motivated by food, but greatly dislike the troglodytes, and will happily assist the PCs by letting them use their tunnels (though none will risk themselves in battle). Mole-man tunnels show up through the random encounter tables, and softer GMs who like to see their PCs succeed (you know who you are!) may locate additional tunnels as a lifeline when the going gets tough.

Character Level: I prefer to run this adventure for 1st-3rd level characters, but if your players are *Diablo* types you may be looking at levels 3-5 for a good chance to survive.

1. Warning Poles: The tunnel spiraling down (from levels 1 to 5 in *TDB*) opens here into a wider cavern. Several wood and metal poles are planted along the western wall, festooned with human skulls, giant crabshell segments, yawning, half-rotten lizard maws, and various other animal parts. Beyond these decorations two passages lead west.

2. The Blind Troll: This cavern is home to a blind dark troll named Eustace (HD 6, hp 17, DC 4, SPD 6, Atk claw

or bite 1d6, -4 to hit and 50% miss chance, regenerates 3 hp/rd). If he is murdered, dark troll warriors from the deeper dungeons may take revenge at some point. If befriended Eustace can give limited information about the dungeons, trog types, blast spores, etc. He has a small pile of treasure (77 sp, 26 gp, and 3 bottles of Erebinthian brandy) which he plays with and will try to defend.

Punji Pits: "X"s in the two tunnels between 1 and 3 and many places elsewhere on the map, mark 2'-5' deep crudely camouflaged pits with sharpened stones and stakes on the bottom. If not spotted adventurers passing by have a 2 in 6 chance to fall in and take 0-3 points damage. If hurt, speed is also reduced by 1 for that character until healed. Speed reductions are cumulative with each pit wound.

3. Guard Outpost: Four trogs armed with tridents (HD 1+1; hp 7,6,3,[2]; DC 7; SPD 9,[15]; Screech (henchmen within 60' must make morale check or flee)) wait here to alert their fellows in 10, 11, and/or 16 about interlopers. The smallest is a small mutant trog with froglike legs that can move very quickly in the dungeon passages. They can be surprised by quiet adventurers, as normal.

4. Stable: Extra iguana-mounts (HD 3, DC 6, SPD 6/climb 4, Atk Tongue Lash (save v. wands or entangled and drawn to mouth subsequent round for 1d6/rd automatic biting, open doors to escape), Torpid (2 in 6 chance each round not to fight)) are kept here for Troglo-



knight patrols. There will be 0-4 (d6-2) such mounts here. They will not fight at all unless attacked or goaded by trogs (such goading replaces a normal attack for any but a mounted trogl-knight). If present, one has a saddlebag with dried (human) jerky, a potion of healing, and 50' of hemp rope with an iron grappling hook attached.

5. Spore Cavern: There have obviously been many attempts to block the top of the rough pebble-slide going down into this cavern with rubble, but none have completely succeeded – there are currently several boulder-sized breaks and it would be easy to push out bigger holes. Keeping your footing going down the rockslide is difficult, but falling incurs no difficulty other than embarrassment. Floating within the room below are 3 Blast Spores (hp 1,1,1; DC 8; SPD float 6; 5d6 fire explosion 15' radius if punctured (100%) or bashed/disturbed (50%)).

6. The Spore Fungus: Filling the entire back two legs of this cavern and about a 10' radius out into the room is a giant yellow-brown fungus (HD 6, hp 36, DC 7, immune to fire). It normally produces a new blast spore every few days, but if it is damaged it will start firing one per melee round at its attackers (roll to hit as with a missile attack, which then has a 50% chance to explode). If it is cleaned out completely with shovels etc. an ancient stone idol of a squat rhino-headed humanoid with a missing horn can be obtained from underneath it. The silver horn found in **24** fits it and will activate it as a *Stone Servitor* (HD 4, DC 1, immune to all elemental effects, SPD 6, Atk horn 2-7, can carry as much as four men if a large back-basket is provided, serves its activator loyally until destroyed).

7. Mystic Mists: The trogs avoid this room, which is usually full of swirling white fog. If characters pause and relax here and breathe deeply, they should make a save vs. spells. Failure means falling asleep for 2d6 hours or until dragged and woken outside the room. Success means one PC (preference to mages and/or random, others making save have no effect) may perform clairvoyance as a wandering disembodied viewpoint for 4d6 minutes. Second attempts on the same day will automatically cause slumber. The mists drive trogs to berserk insanity.

8. The Chasm: This room is in trog territory but they do not generally garrison it. A deep cleft here goes down 30' below the chamber floor into a smaller cavern. If that lower cavern is searched thoroughly there is a 10% chance of finding a *Ring of Rapid Healing* (character gains back 1 hp every ten minutes of game time) in a crevasse.

9. Antecavern: Three long stalactites hang from the low ceiling, tightening transit through the center of this room. There are large piles of human(oid) skulls and bones of various underworld creatures in the corners, but no monsters or treasure.

The Upper Caverns – Random Encounters (d20)
(Roll on this table between **3** and **17, 19, & 20** as appropriate, once every 10 minutes of game time or so.)

1-10	No Encounter
11-13	Troglodytes (d8+1)
14	Trogl-knights on Iguana Mounts (d3)
15-16	Mole-Man Tunnel
17	Blast Spore
18	Giant Badger (from 14 , reduce # there if slain)
19	Human(oid) Band (d6+1)
20	Moon Slime

Troglodytes: HD 1+1, DC 7, SPD 9, Screech (henchmen within 60' must make morale check or flee)

Trogl-knights: HD 2+1, DC 5 (tortoise shield), SPD 9 (6 on mounts), Atk Barbed Lance (1d6, or 3d6 vs. large creatures moving to attack them), Screech

Iguana Mounts: HD 3, DC 6, SPD 6/climb 4, Atk Tongue Lash (save v. wands or entangled and drawn to mouth subsequent round for 1d6/rd automatic biting, open doors to escape), Torpid (2 in 6 chance each round not to fight)

Mole-Man Tunnel: Roll to detect if desired. Entered at PC option; mole-men present at GM option (though they will be encountered soon if tunnels are entered).

Blast Spore: hp 1, DC 8, SPD float 6, 5d6 fire explosion 15' radius if punctured (100%) or bashed/disturbed (50%)

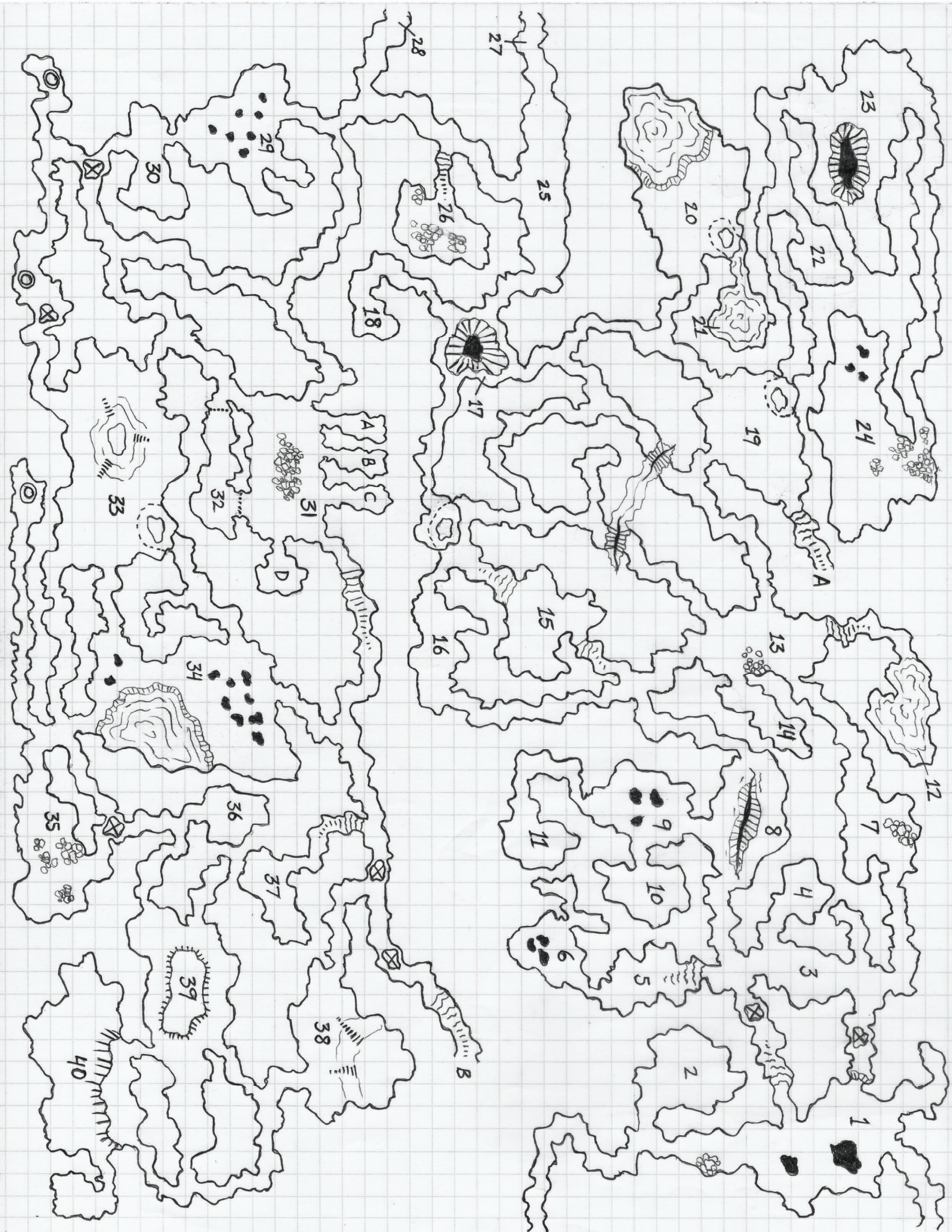
Human(oid) Band: Humans, crab-men, hobgoblins, and kobolds are all good candidates. They will be armed to the teeth and looking for a fight; all are possible allies.

Moon Slime: Stationary, if touched does d6 and destroys one piece of equipment per round until scraped (d3 rds, destroys scraper)/burned (instant, d6 damage) away.

10. Barracks: Six troglodytes lair here (HD 1+1; hp 6,5,4, 3,3,3; DC 7; SPD 9; Screech (henchmen within 60' must make morale check or flee), four armed with tridents (Atk 1d6) and two armed with spiked nets (Atk 1d2, entangled for half movement and -2 to hit until open doors check made to break free, additional 1d2 damage on each failed attempt to break free). When interrupted they are playing a game/conducting a religious ritual with 22 small shards of a translucent smoky white quartz, worth d20 silver each.

11. Hunters' Meditation Room: This crystalline cavern is covered wall to wall with translucent smoky white quartz. With time and tools this can be harvested; every ten minutes another pound or so, worth 10 gp, can be obtained. Short-term, however, the single relaxing Trogl-knight (HD 2+1, hp 9, DC 5 (tortoise shield), Atk Macana 1d6, Screech) and his three trained Leaping Lizard pets (HD ¼; hp 1,1,1; DC 8; SPD 15 leap, Atk bite 1 hp) must be contended with.

12. Cool Lake: The well-trodden stairs from **13** descend to an underground lake. The water in it moves slightly, and there appear to be abundant fish here. It goes down some ways through subterranean rivers and lakes and connects



to the lake in **21**, although water breathing and extensive exploration would be necessary to find the path. Other aquatic discoveries are of course possible as well...

13. Crossroads: This room is obviously very well-travelled and has seen many battles as well. There are numerous broken troglodyte weapons and bones here. If people investigate carefully they will also note large claw-marks, bits of coarse animal fur, and burn-marks on the upper walls, but noisy investigation or strong food smells will bring dangerous attention from **14**.

14. Badger Den: 3 giant badgers lair here, seven to ten feet long each (HD 3; hp 17, 14, 12; DC 7; SPD 12; Atk bite 1-6, with automatic damage until slain each rnd after hitting due to locked jaw). If some badgers have been fought as random encounters reduce the total accordingly; there is an 80% chance that all surviving badgers are there when PCs arrive, all less one otherwise. These monsters are heavily scarred from multiple battles with the trogs, and attack anything they see except blast spores and mole-men. Among the gnawed bones in their warren is a satchel with 22 pp, a limestone scroll case containing a single scroll with a *Heal Disease* spell, and a *Potion of Discord* which detects as a healing philter (but the player of the PC who drinks it must argue vociferously for a different course of action than the majority favors in every party decision for the next hour of game time, 1 argument minimum).

15. Swamplight: Steps rise to this cavern from two directions, and during the day one can see faint shafts of sunlight through several moist rooty apertures. The trogs almost never come here unless in direct pursuit of a party.

16. Way Station: Numerous pallets of straw and swamp-grass are here, as well as nine troglodytes (HD 1+1; hp 7,6,6,6,5,4,3,2,2; DC 7, SPD 9, Screech (henchmen within 60' must check morale or flee)) armed with tridents or clubs. Similar to **11**, the walls are lined with glittering quartz that reflects lantern-light dazzlingly and which can be mined.

17. Terrene Tendrils: There is a slight chance that clumsy characters peering over the edge of this sinkhole will fall in, taking 1d6 damage and coming to a rest 30' below the surface of the room – they must be lifted out with magic or rope. More serious though is the elemental creature of living rock yet deeper in the hole, a sort of land-squid with six rocky tentacles protruding from its maw (HD 5, hp 21, DC 2, SPD 7, Atk 1-6 tendril bashes d6 each, bite 1d6 if creatures get close, immune to acid and cold, half damage from fire, regenerate 1 hp per melee round while in contact with earth). If any gold, quartz fragments, or other metal or rock items of value are tossed into the pit when this room is passed, there will be no trouble; but if PCs simply pass by (or dally in the room without sacrificing) the creature will be waiting for them next time through. It will however stop fighting as soon as a sacrifice is made to

it, heading back into the depths even if it has taken substantial damage. If a party could somehow travel hundreds of feet down below the sinkhole, they would find a horde of tens of thousands of minor gems and coins accumulated over thousands of years, as well as a few minor magic and technological items, but retrieving it from the cramped spaces and narrow crevasses would be even more unlikely than getting there in the first place.

18. Moonslime: Everyone entering the last 20' of this room/corridor steps into a room filled to the top with pale lime-tinted softly luminescent slime. It does 1d6 damage and destroys one piece of equipment each round until scraped or burned off; scraping takes d3 rounds and destroys the scraping implement as well as any other equipment, while burning rids one of it instantly but does 1d6 more damage from fire. Characters may note still air or similar towards the end of the corridor; the slime is hard to detect from a distance (roll, with appropriate bonuses).

- There are no random encounters between areas **19**, **22**, and **24** -

19. Lizard Guardians: On chains in front of the sinkhole in the northern end of the room are two large (12') lizards with red and white mottled scaling and large acid-dripping jaws (HD 3+1; hp 19, 16; DC 5; SPD 6 and limited to 40' from their chain-points; Atk bite 1-6 plus save vs. poison or 2-8 additional; immune to fire). They are chained to either side of the sinkhole-passage in the northwest corner. The eastern staircase goes down to sub-level A.

20. Water Dragon's Demesne: A small (18' or so), swimming water dragon makes the pool here its lair. 30% of the time it will be gone, 30% of the time it will be sleeping, and 40% of the time it will be awake and alert and will check on interlopers (HD 6, hp 30, DC 2, SPD 12/swim 18, breathe caustic gas for 30 points/save to 15 once every d3 rounds, otherwise Atk 2 claws + bite for 1d6 each, immune to acid, breathes water or air). It can speak most human tongues and is extremely intelligent, and if PCs attempt to parley it will offer quite extensive information about the Warrens and other topics of the GM's choosing, exchanged 1 for 1 for valuable treasures. Its pool here is not connected to any others, but it knows the water-caverns beneath **21** and **12** well and often fishes and explores them. (At GM option, there may even be alternate routes here to lower dungeon levels!) It is a neutral creature and will also sell what it knows to the troglodytes, though it finds them distasteful. Its hoard consists of 3500 sp, 800 gp, 3 tourmalines worth 500 gp each, a majestic star sapphire worth 2500 gp, a +2 *shield*, a +1 *helmet of armor enhancement*, a *potion of fish control*, and a watertight copper coffer, verdigrised to near-worthlessness, which contains 8 oil paper packets of *sneezing powder* (living targets seize up with uncontrollable sneezes for d6 rounds when blown on them, no other actions possible).

21. Sunken Lake: Similar to **12**, except the water is quieter and the slippery path down from the sinkhole gives anyone trying to go down a 50% chance of slipping and sliding all the way into the deep lake below – taking anyone below on the path with them! Special precautions may blunt or avert this fate, and there is no danger in the water below save the usual chances of drowning in armor.

22. Black Troglodyte Assassins: This room is small, dark, and nondescript, whereas fungal light and eerie chanting are clearly audible down the westward corridor. The three mute black assassin troglodytes within (HD 2; hp 11,7,6; DC 8; SPD 12; +1 chances of surprise; 5 in 6 to move silently or hide; Atk barbed dagger 1d6, x2 if delivered stealthily from behind) will stalk the party from behind and assault them just as they enter **23** if they are not dealt with first. They will also defend themselves if cornered, of course – possibly with surprise.



23. Antechamber of the Gibbering Fungus God: In this well-lit room, currently occupied by no fewer than 18 troglodytes and 4 iguana-mounts, a bizarre ritual is taking place. Seven of the troglodytes are playing crude musical instruments, while three robed priests with red-white mottled scales similar to those of the lizards in **19** appear to be leading some kind of service around the gigantic sinkhole. If the party does not attack, the ritual will go on for twenty minutes before concluding; a small and quiet group could even carefully slip around the northwest wall and make their way on to **24**. Even if the trogs in **22** attack a watching party from behind, there is only a 50% chance that the four troglo-knights and their mounts will notice and join the fray. None of the other trogs in the room will act unless some are attacked, in which case the ritual is disrupted and general melee will ensue. If the ritual is completed, the Gibbering Fungus God will rise from the

sinkhole, whereupon the troglodytes present will start eating various small fungi off his gigantic, misshapen, eyeless torso. At this point party members must all save v. fear or run screaming in random directions for 1d6 turns – not necessarily staying together (roll at each intersection) – but if they hold the trogs will be lost in ecstasy and will no longer defend themselves if attacked. The Fungus God will ignore most attacks, but if any single hit does more than 20 points of damage he will strike lazily out at that attacker, grabbing him and swallowing him whole on a successful hit. The Fungus God will descend again into his pit d20+10 minutes after rising up. **11 Troglodytes:** HD 1+1; hp 7,7,6,5,5,5,5,4,2,2 DC 7, SPD 9, Screech (henchmen within 60' must make morale check or flee). **4 Troglo-knights:** HD 2+1; hp 13,11,9,6; DC 5 (tortoise shield), SPD 9 (6 on mounts), Atk Barbed Lance (1d6, or 3d6 vs. large creatures moving to attack them), Screech. **4 Iguana Mounts:** HD 3; hp 16,14,9,4; DC 6; SPD 6/climb 4; Atk Tongue Lash (save v. wands or entangled and drawn to mouth subsequent round for 1d6/rd automatic biting, open doors to escape), Torpid (2 in 6 chance each round not to fight). **2 Fire Trog Acolytes:** HD 1; hp 5,2; DC 8; SPD 9; Atk fire fungus spore x2 ranged 1d8, then claw-fu 1d4; immune to fire. **1 Fire Trog High Priest:** HD 4; hp 13; DC 5; SPD 9; Atk fire fungus spore x 5 ranged 3d4, claw-fu 1d10; can cast *faerie glow* (1d6 adventurers glow red for 1d6 turns, stealth impossible and +1 to hit them), *dancing flames* (a 5'x5' hypnotic pattern, all looking at it must save each round or stand immobile), and *flame gazing* (any flame may be used as crystal ball) once per day each; immune to fire. **Gibbering Fungus God:** HD 25; hp 150; DC 3; SPD 3; giant-sized; Atk lazily grab and swallow, save or die; regenerates 3 points damage each melee round; immune to charm and mind control and mental contact with it causes save vs. insanity, with no other effect; immune to cold and acid. The troglo-knights have 200 sp, 54 gp, and a +2 *dagger* in their iguana-mounts' packs (these could be rifled during the ritual), while the three priests each have gold necklaces worth 100 gp, and the leader has a fire opal pendant worth 500 gp.

24. Throne Room of the Troglodyte King: Here the current ruler of the troglodytes, a four-armed mutant, rests with his harem of disgusting, bloated trogwives, each a scaly mass of pudding the size of a small water buffalo. **Trog King:** HD 4; hp 15; DC 3; SPD 9; Atk 2 macana and one lion-shield bite for 1d6 each; Sonic Screech (3d6 damage in 30' cone, save for half). **3 Trogwives:** HD 5; hp 18 each; DC 8; SPD 3; Atk bear hug 2d4; slow (only act every other round, do 1 the first and 2 the second). The King's +2 *Lion Shield* is a beautiful brass construct which not only improves defense but attacks once per round as well, with a metallic lion bite. His throne is a beautiful teak chair inlaid with gold, ivory, and rubies; stripped it is worth only 750 gp but if the party could somehow get it out intact it could fetch 2000 gp. A massive pile of coin contains 2275 cp, 398 sp, 67 ep, 452 gp, and 9 pp mixed



together, as well as 22 normal weapons and 9 suits of metal armor. A scroll of three mage spells (*Create Web*, *Turn Invisible*, and *Levitate*) in an ivory tube worth 50 gp is also in this pile, as is a fragile censer which can call forth air elementals (20% to break each time used, takes 10 minutes to set up or break down) and a cut crystal vial (20 gp value) containing a *Potion of Misty Form*. The king wears an elaborate gold and ruby necklace worth 1000 gp as well.

25. Ready Room: This is where the troglodytes prepare for their hunting forays into the swamp. Roll d8+5 on the Lower Caverns Random Encounter Table (next page) each time the room is entered to see if trogs are present. The room is well-stocked with human, rat, and swamp buffalo jerky and 'edible' fungus (to trogs, it will nourish others but save vs. poison or -2 on everything for d8 hours), as well as tridents, spiked nets (see 10), macanas, and barbed lances. There is also a large, roughly built cage with 6 leaping lizards, who attack if freed unless charmed or the like. (HD ¼; hp 1,1,1; DC 8; SPD 15 leap, Atk bite 1 hp).

26. Refuse Pit: A horrible stench can be smelled coming up from below, even at the top of the stairs. All manner of rotting vegetable and animal matter can be found streaking the descending stairway and filling the cave below. An amber ooze (HD 3; hp 12; DC 6; SPD 6; Atk engulf 1d6 and

then 2d6 to engulfed foe each rd after; immune to acid, cold, and mental; ½ damage from non-magic weapons) can be found here at all times, but only fights in self-defense or to finish off engulfed foes, and will not pursue. Truly desperate parties might find shelter or a stray minor magic item here, but sometimes garbage is just garbage.

27-8. Swamp Tunnels: These long tunnels diverge away from one another north and south and come out in different parts of the Brackenfells. Parties entering from the surface will come in through one of these the first time, though if they discover the sinkholes south of 30 and 33 they may use those to enter on subsequent visits.

29. Death From Above: Sharp-eyed parties note that all the troglodyte tracks through this room go around the perimeter. If not, the seven stalacsins hanging from the ceiling (HD 1; hp 6,4,4,3,3,2,1; DC 3; SPD 1; Atk piercing drop for 1-6, then drink one point of blood per round (if hit) or else crawl slowly and impotently back to ceiling) will drop on party members proceeding straight through.

30. Sentry Outpost: Eight trogs armed with tridents (HD 1+1; hp 6,6,6,5,3,[2,2]; DC 7; SPD 9,[15]; Screech (henchmen within 60' must make morale check or flee)) wait here to alert their fellows in 25, 33, or even 22 about

The Lower Caverns – Random Encounters (d20)*(Roll on this table between 25 and 40 every 10 minutes or so)*

1-10	No Encounter
11-12	Troglodytes (d8+1)
13	Trogl-knights on Iguana Mounts (d3)
14-15	Mole-Man Tunnel
16	Amber Ooze
17	Manticore (from 34, reduce # there if slain)
18	Ogre (from 36, that room empty if slain)
19	Skeletons (d6+1)
20	Swamp Elemental

Troglodytes: HD 1+1, DC 7, SPD 9, Screech (henchmen within 60' must make morale check or flee)

Trogl-knights: HD 2+1, DC 5 (tortoise shield), SPD 9 (6 on mounts), Atk Barbed Lance (1d6, or 3d6 vs. large creatures moving to attack them), Screech

Iguana Mounts: HD 3, DC 6, SPD 6/climb 4, Atk Tongue Lash (save v. wands or entangled and drawn to mouth subsequent round for 1d6/rd automatic biting, open doors to escape), Torpid (2 in 6 chance each round not to fight)

Mole-Man Tunnel: Roll to detect if desired. Entered at PC option; mole-men present at GM option (though they will be encountered soon if tunnels are entered).

Amber Ooze: HD 3, DC 6, SPD 6, Atk engulf 1d6 and then 2d6 to engulfed foe each rd after, immune to acid, cold, and mental, ½ damage from non-magic weapons

Skeletons: HD 1, DC 7, SPD 9, Atk weapon, undead, ½ dmg from cutting weapons, 1 pt. from thrusting weapons

Swamp Elemental: HD 6, DC 5, SPD 6, Atk smash and tendrils 1d6 each, will leave PCs alone if left alone, half damage from all energy attacks

interlopers. The smallest two are small mutant trogs with froglike legs that can move very quickly in the dungeon. All can be surprised by quiet adventurers, as normal.

31. Gaol: This large, well-webbed cabin is the haunt of a giant spider (HD 4, hp 19, DC 6, SPD 9, Atk bite 1d6 + save vs. paralysis) who serves the trogs as gaoler, though she would betray them if the wraith in **B4** commanded. PCs in the room only move at SPD 3; the webs will burn but do not combust. The iron portcullis barring **32** is obvious, but **31A-D** appear only as webbed-over wall sections unless webs are cut or burned away.

A: Contains Janna, a beautiful hobbit priestess (Pr 3, hp 15, Wis 15, Cha 16, down one first level spell but otherwise at full strength, no equipment but robes). She is lawful and will happily join up with any party freeing her.

B: Two skeletons inhabit this cell. If they are substantially disturbed, one will shed a white fungus which causes a wasting disease (sv or lose 1 Con/day until cured or dead).

C: Empty.

D: Within the room is Dav, a werewolf warrior in human form who was part of the slain caravan (War 2, hp 12, Atk sword +1, +3 vs. *archosaurs*, immune to non-silver & non-magic weapons). He can tell that the treasure was taken by

undead. He is not aware of his werewolf form and is neutral in human form, but becomes a fully evil wolf-man at night (+2 hp) and will attack parties that rescue him.

32. Iron Chamber: This cave is closed off with two iron portcullis. It is dark within, but a huge enchanted black panther (HD 5, hp 22 (currently 14), DC 5, SPD 18, 50% invisible in darkness (-4 to hit), -1 damage from non-silver, non-magic weapons) squats silently in the middle of the south wall (only 50% chance to see shining light within, though light spells cast within the room will reveal it). This creature might be charmed or treated with by magic, but otherwise he is insanely hungry, and will attack parties releasing him unless they heal him first somehow, in which case he will pad off to eat a half-dozen trogs instead.

33. The Southern Frontier: A raised dais with a crude idol of the Gibbering Fungus God is in the center of the room. Three hard-bitten trogl-knights (HD 2+1; hp 11,10,8; DC 5 (tortoise shield); SPD 9 (6 on mounts); Atk Barbed Lance (1d6, or 3d6 vs. large creatures moving to attack them), Screech) and their iguana mounts (HD 3; hp 12,9,8; DC 6; SPD 6/climb 4; Atk Tongue Lash (save v. wands or entangled and drawn to mouth subsequent round for 1d6/rd automatic biting, open doors to escape), Torpid (2 in 6 chance each round not to fight)) keep a watch here for interlopers and lower cavern foemen.

34. Manticore Cavern: Two monstrous manticores (HD 7; hp 28,26; DC 4; SPD 12 (fly 18); Atk head butt 1d6 or volley of 6 (out of 24) tail-spikes for 1d4 each) dwell here amidst the stalagmites and stalactites, keeping tight control over the waters of the pool. They can squeeze through the passage to **35** for fungus and down the opposing hall and sinkhole to hunt in the swamp, but the passages to **33** and northward are too tight for them. They crave manflesh. Just north of the pool is their treasure, a pile of golden cups and plates (worth 600 gp in all), a *baldrick of armor enhancement +1*, a *wand of polymorph* (random shape) with 19



charges, and a *potion of super-healing*. The pool itself is blessed and detects as good, and gives a full day's nourishment (food and drink) to all who partake of its waters, as well as healing 1d6 hit points once/day. This blessing emanates from the temple in **A7** below, but the aura has not softened these incorrigible creatures.

35. Fungus Farm: This room is full of the 'edible' fungus eaten by many of the monsters, which can nourish humans but requires a save vs. poison to avoid being -2 on everything for d8 hours afterwards.

36. Ogre Cave: Zsilam the ogre dwells here (HD 4+1, hp 11, DC 5, SPD 9, Atk monstrous bardiche 2d6). He is evil and anthropophagic, but also greedy for more treasure, as he currently possesses only a cave lion skin, 22 gp, 19 sp, and a chest with a poison-needle lock (4d6, saave +2 for ½) containing valuable silks worth 300 gp. He has the key.

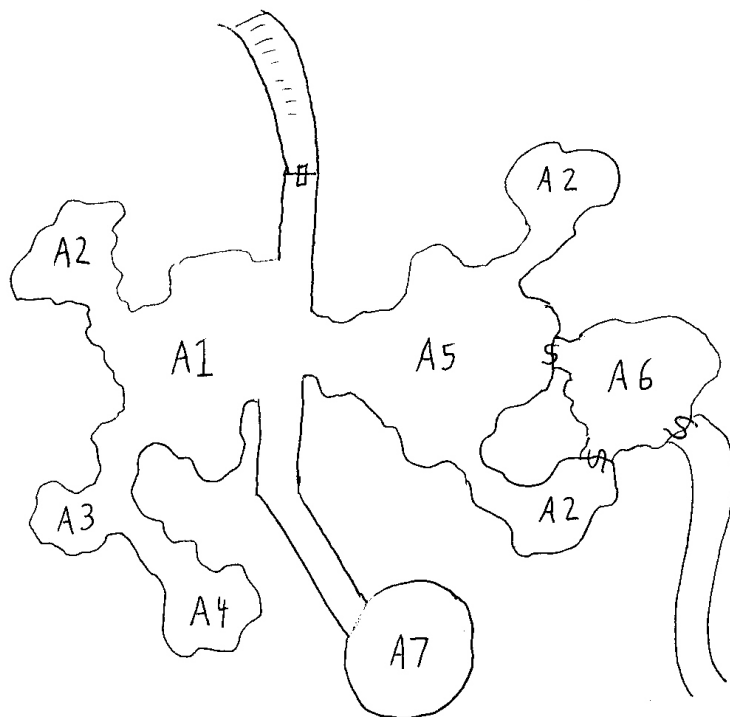
37. Meat Locker: 9 zombies (HD 2, hp 12,11,9,9,7,6,5,3, 2), DC 8, SPD 6, Atk weapon 1d6, slow (only act every other round: 4 go first round, 5 second) stand in stasis in the rooms below. They are dressed in gaudy but tattered Solaran silks, the survivors of the murdered caravan. They will not defend themselves unless attacked or turned, even if they are prodded or their treasures are removed (except weapons). One has a +1 *spear*, one has emerald earrings worth 75 gp, four have pouches totaling 68 sp, and one wears an elaborately brocaded goldcloth shirt that acts as leather armor (even for mages) and is worth 150 gp. If the skeletons in **B2** are defeated these will animate and head down to sub-level B, to help defend the wraith in **B4**.

38. The Rock Whale: A shimmering curtain of silver, stretched out between what looks vaguely like a carved mouth, occupies the northeast portion of this cavern. The silvery baleen are very sharp (d6 damage and possible extremity severing if PCs insist on pushing against it with flesh) but can be separated with metal objects, revealing a stony chamber with what looks like a tongue of solid rock leading up to a descending passage beyond. If party members disturb the rock substantially, or if all enter, the mouth snaps shut – for so indeed this is – and the party is taken for a ride deep beneath the planet in the belly of a rock whale, a huge cousin of the fabled zorn. Where they wind up is entirely up to GM discretion.

39. Ruined Robotics: The sunken area in the larger cavern (numbered) contains several incomprehensible devices of metal and crystal, shattered and resting in the room's center. If magic detection or similar is used here, three of the crystals detect as spell storing devices (2-1st, 1-2nd). PCs crossing the line of the western tunnels between **38** and **40** or coming down the eastern tunnel towards **40** will be shot at with a red ray coming from **40**.

40. Ancient Artifacts: An ancient, broken battle robot with the inscription "Zulgyan-47D" rests here. It is DC 2 and attacks and saves as a 10th level Warrior, but it cannot move and any single hit doing 5 or more points of damage will destroy it. Every other melee round it will fire its ruby ray (6d4, but those with polished plate mail, shields, or similar get a save to negate) at the closest moving target it has line of sight to. The complicated machinery here is also breaking down, but one can still experiment with it. Save vs. magic if you try: failure means rolling on a random mutation chart (see pg. 46). Success for mages gains 500 xp, while all others gain an automatic ability to detect magic for the next 4d6 hours (they just see it as auras). There is a 10% cumulative chance for each manipulation that this machinery too meets its end.

Sub-Level A: The Sons of the Flame. The fiery priests of the Gibbering Fungus God keep their fane here. Note that all loud battles will be heard in adjacent caverns.



A1. Meditation Area: After passing through the only normal door in the dungeon, iron-wrought (roll to open), a well-hewn passage of white stone collapses into caverns on either side. Currently a fire trog priest (HD 2, hp 9, DC 7, SPD 9, Atk fire fungus spore x3 ranged 1d10, then claw-fu 1d6; can cast *faerie glow* (1d6 adventurers glow red for 1d6 turns, stealth impossible and +1 to hit them) once/day; immune to fire) and two fire trog acolytes: HD 1; hp 6,1; DC 8; SPD 9; Atk fire fungus spore x2 ranged 1d8, then claw-fu 1d4; immune to fire) practice martial meditations here. The walls of this room and **A5** are covered with small white fungi used to prepare the fungus spore bombs.

A2. Acolyte Cells: These three rooms each contain two resting fire trog acolytes, though there are 'nests' for four.

A3. Fungus Preparation Area: This cavern is full of crude bubbling vats (1d6 damage as flaming oil on contact), small flames, and piles of the white fungus. A fire trog priest (HD 2, hp 7, DC 7, SPD 9, Atk fire fungus spore x3 ranged 1d10, then claw-fu 1d6; can cast *faerie glow* (1d6 adventurers glow red for 1d6 turns, stealth impossible and +1 to hit them) once/day; immune to fire) and acolyte: HD 1; hp 4; DC 8; SPD 9; Atk fire fungus spore x2 ranged 1d8, then claw-fu 1d4; immune to fire) labor here at making more fungus-bombs, 2d4 of which may be retrieved from this area by victorious parties.

A4. Senior Priests' Quarters: A fire trog vicar (HD 3; hp 14; DC 6; SPD 9; Atk fire fungus spore x 4 ranged 1d12, claw-fu 1d8; can cast *faerie glow* (1d6 adventurers glow red for 1d6 turns, stealth impossible and +1 to hit them) and *dancing flames* (a 5'x5' hypnotic pattern, all looking at it must save each round or stand immobile) once per day each; immune to fire) and two priests (currently in **A1** and **A3**) reside here. If the vicar is not surprised he will produce a *Scroll of Paralyze Person* and read from it before turning to his other weapons. The vicar wears a golden pendant with a fire opal worth 250 gp, and there are a dozen ceremonial gold necklaces worth 100 gp each here as well.

A5. The Shrine of Flame: A giant bonfire rages around the clock in this room, filling it with sweltering heat. This is where the high priest *flame gazes* if he escapes **23**.

A6. The High Priest's Quarters: This secret chamber is haphazardly furnished with copper and brass, and the high priest will attempt to escape here when badly wounded.



The secret passage slopes slowly downward into the depths; in *The Darkness Beneath* it eventually connects to another secret door opening into the tunnel from outside **1** to level 5, The Lower Caves. Two locked brass chests contain 1000 gp each, and a gold-and-ruby brazier worth a like amount holds 20 gems of randomly determined value. A *Staff of Weather Control* (10 charges; each charge can create a serious thunderstorm in about an hour, or focus the lightning from an existing storm on a single spot (8d6 every few minutes from a new bolt) leans against one wall. There is also a *Potion of Human Control* here, which the priest will retrieve to combat interlopers eventually, and a silvery suit of elven chainmail which protects at +1 and imposes no penalties to movement, stealth, swimming, etc. A +2 *Mace* stylized with a lion's head rounds out the loot.

A7. The Temple of Shalia: A shimmering white curtain bars any further progress down the white marble central corridor. Only female characters of female players or any character (male or female) which is priest, paladin, or otherwise deeply sworn to a goddess may pass, though each such may lead one other character in by the hand. This room is a simple marble shrine to the goddess of love and healing, with a statue of her at its center, and a small pool of waters with the power to fully nourish and heal 1-6 damage from those drinking each day. A party could theoretically rest here as long as it wished, so long as it did not incur the goddess' disfavor. A black leather +1 *whip* which does 1 point regular damage and 1d8 shock damage on a hit lies on the floor here, for reasons unknown.

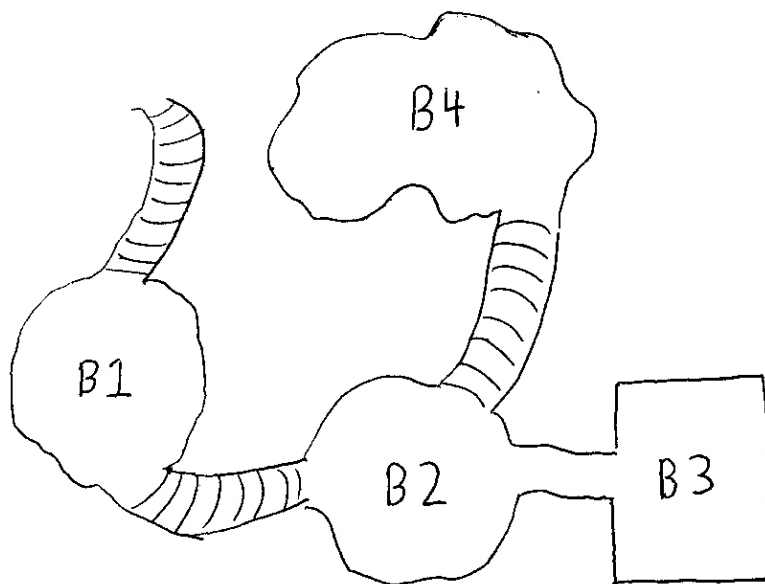
Sub-Level B: The Mage-Wraith. The trogs are not the only malevolent power in the swamp, or these caverns.

B1. Skeletal Phalanx: Two ranks of five skeletons each armed with spears (HD 1; hp 5,5,5,4,3,3,2,1,1,1; DC 7, SPD 9; undead; ½ dmg from cutting weapons, 1 pt. from thrusting weapons) stand eternally vigilant here, protecting the depths below.

B2. Bone Archers: If the skeletons in **B1** have been defeated, these will be completely aware of the party before they even come into sight, and they will be ready to fire their bone bows and arrows (3 each, magical +1) as soon as PCs enter the chamber. They will fire three times and then wade into battle with their bony claws (HD 1; hp 6,6,5,4,4,3,3,1; DC 7; SPD 9; Atk bone bow 1d6+1 or claws 1d4; undead; ½ dmg from cutting weapons, 1 pt. from thrusting weapons). Remaining arrows can be claimed as treasure by victorious PCs.

B3. The False Mausoleum: At the center of this bone-strewn room is a massive black sarcophagus, locked with a heavy iron padlock. If the sarcophagus is open, chlorine gas pours out, doing 3d6 damage to everyone in the room (save for half). There is a palpable aura of darkness here.

B4. Tomb of the Mage-Wraith: This room is constantly at a freezing temperature, filling those who enter with numb and dread (and causing 1 point of damage every three rounds). Gold bars are stacked here, 9600 gp worth in all, the lost caravan's remaining treasure. There are other treasures as well: a silver coffer (50 gp value) with 50 mithril elven coins within (each worth 20 gold), a wand which will detect secret portals, trapdoors, traps, and the like (10 charges), a book with the spells *Circle of Protection* and *Summon Bel, Slayer of Men* (a 6th level demon summoning ritual – not to be trifled with), and a wicked, slender black dagger which does triple damage to elves and similar beings. Guarding all this is a 5th level Mage-Wraith (turns as specter) who uses *Clairvoyance* to keep track of the dungeons but has other magic ready to go: HD 5, hp 23, DC 3, SPD 12 (fly 24), Atk touch (drains energy level), only struck by magical weapons, spells (*mystic missile* x2, *sleep*, *invisibility*, *silence*). Play him to the tactical hilt, and don't forget about the zombies in **37** if they're still around. ♀



Congratulations Winners! The

EROL OTUS

Art Challenge has concluded. **Our champions:**

First Place, Color: Mark Allen

First Place, Black & White: Mikko Torvinen

Second Place, Color: Raven Daegmorgan

Second Place, Black & White: Steve Robertson

Third Place, Color: Stefan Poag

Third Place, Black & White: Steve Zieser

First Honorable Mention, Color: Peter Mullen

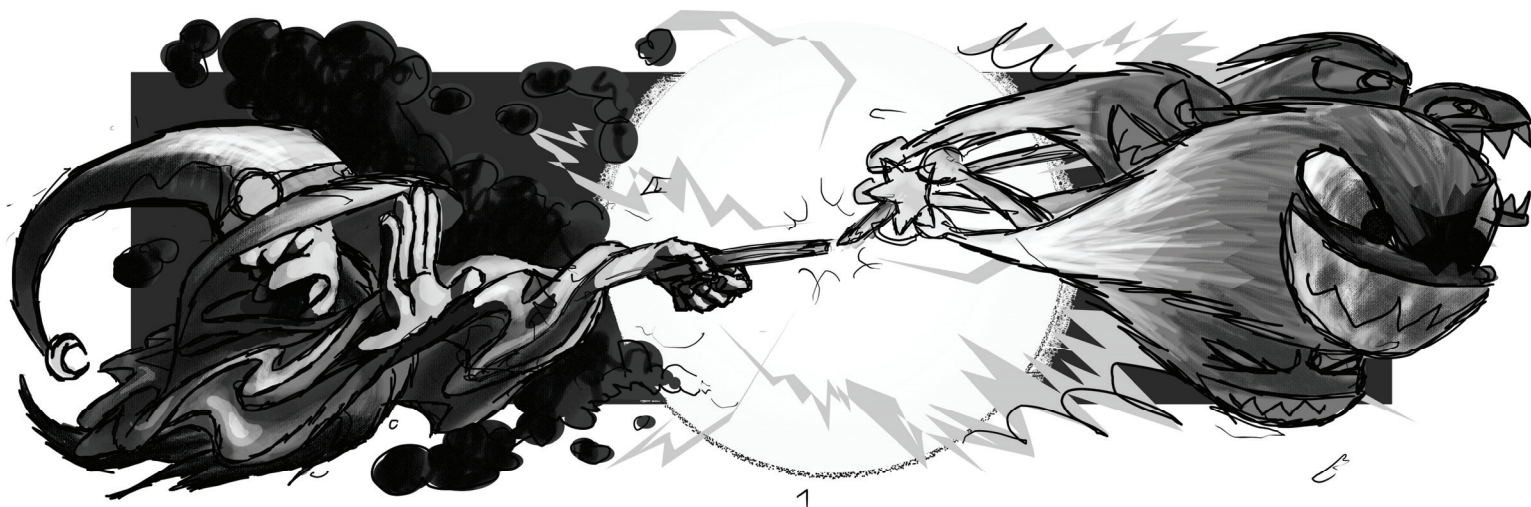
First Honorable Mention, Black & White: Lee Barber

Honorable Mention, Color: Brad Ingle, Kevin Mayle, Alex Schröder, Andy "Atom" Taylor, Simon Turnbull, and Kevin Vito

Honorable Mention, B&W: Bat, Paul "Bliss Infinite" Fini, Kelvin Green, Kesher, Samuel Kisko, Anthony Stiller, and Jennifer Weigel

(highest award only listed)

Many, many thanks to Erol and to our fine contestants, whose work will be seen gracing the covers and interior pages of upcoming issues of *Fight On! - Ignatius*



The Tower of Thalen Garh

fiction by John Hitchens

It was late on the fourth day of Summereve when Dr'ivn noc Kthath rode into Moonfall with his retinue of killers. The crags in the distance cast long purple shadows, obscuring the viridian tower built into the surrounding limestone cliff. Dr'ivn raised his hand and the six of them reined in as he accosted the first remaining villager.

"You there! We seek the tower of the sorcerous Thalen Garh. Quickly now: is it near?" With a shaking hand, the peasant pointed far into the distance at the tower three leagues hence, which legend whispered held the piceless topaz of Zakarab. Dr'ivn flipped him a coin, then snapped, "Let's ride. We should get there just as darkness falls."

Over the plain they thundered, steadily nearing the marbled green and white edifice jutting blasphemously into the gloomy sky. A half-league before their destination, Dr'ivn led them down a brush-choked ravine. "If that fat fool in the tavern last week spoke true, there should be an underground entrance we can use. We strike silently before the sorcerer learns of our presence."

It was Rnath'la who discovered the hidden passage as they came up to the rough limestone cliff, within arrow shot of the sorcerer's abode. "There's an opening," the slender, leather clad beauty said. "We'll have to leave the horses". They dismounted and approached a low tunnel dug into the earth, parallel to the cliff. It was there that Ranke, the scarlet-clad warrior-monk, was eaten alive. He shrieked hideously as before their eyes skin and flesh were stripped from his body until bone sloughed free. Vrinny the Blue was the first to act, fire flashing from his hand to envelop the unfortunate. Azure flames shrivelled away the thousands of invisible insects feeding on their comrade. The spooked horses bolted; Ranke's corpse fell to the ground.

"We're wasting time," barked Dr'ivn. "Into the tunnel. Quickly." The five remaining reavers fled into the tunnel. In stride, Vrinny muttered a complex series of syllables, and the tip of his slender wand shed iridescent blue, revealing a damp earthy ceiling not a hand's space above broad-shouldered Dr'ivn's head. They ran down the passage, fleet-footed Filomel of the One Eye in the lead, opting for speed over caution. Thus did the luckless rogue save the others from death, as the ground dropped away below him and he disappeared howling into the bowels of the earth. The others slowed, and Dr'ivn lit a torch and dropped it into the gaping hole where Filomel had disappeared. It fell interminably, eventually disappearing from sight.

"A pit with no end," said Dr'ivn. "He's beyond our help." The four of them gingerly skirted the deadly trap and soon came to a massive wooden door. Dr'ivn launched himself

at it, and with a strength that awed even his companions, shouldered it off its hinges. The others rushed in behind.

The shaggy, bear-like humanoids were caught by surprise. Dr'ivn's long blade gleamed in a whirring crescendo of death, cleaving arms and dividing skulls. Four of the guards had been cut down before they organized themselves, but almost a score remained.

It was then that Bren the Butcher displayed the prowess that had made him the most feared fighter in the Three Kingdoms. Wielding a giant two-handed axe, he clove into the centre of his foes, howling a berserk war cry as he slew. Rnath'la unslung her bow of elven yew and deadly arrows pierced the fringes of the melee. Vrinny watched the top of the stairs opposite for reinforcements. Dr'ivn had killed three more and was now backed into a corner, fending off two huge specimens; but Bren was still hacking, blood trickling from several wounds beneath his metal armor. He downed a half-score of the bear-men before one desperate foe landed a lucky strike, driving his spear point through Bren's right eyesocket and into his brain. The last few half-men exulted momentarily, but the distraction gave Rnath'la's arrows and Dr'ivn's quick blade time to finish their bloody work.

"Just a set of stairs and riches await!" said Dr'ivn. "Hurry!" Ignoring their uneasiness, Rnath'la and Vrinny scampered after the climbing Dr'ivn. Water trickled from damp limestone onto the slippery steps, which wound up and out of view. As fit as she was, even Rnath'la, the famous huntress of the Trackless Waste, was relieved when Dr'ivn called a halt just before two doors flanking the landing at the top.

"221 steps, just as he said. But is it left or right?" Dr'ivn strode over to the right-hand door and opened it, revealing a vast circular chamber with sloping wet limestone sides. A brilliant yellow object as large as his head undulated in the middle of the room, and the floor was shallowly covered with a watery liquid.

"The legendary topaz of Zakarab!" said Rnath'la. "Long have I coveted it!" She sloshed through ankle-deep water towards the gem, driven by greed and heedless of Dr'ivn's warning cries. As she neared the yellow globe, its bulk swelled up from below. She turned to run, but it enveloped her, and acid began to boil up through the floor.

Vrinny, from outside the door, was the first to realize what it was. "It's a giant egg! Run, Rnath'la!"

It was too late for the comely elf. Never again would she stride through enchanted forests and quaff orange wine through the long silvery afternoon. She was trapped, slowly dissolving in the giant amoeba, and the onlookers could do nothing to help. Shuddering, Dr'ivn slammed the

door while Vrinny sobbed. Rnath'la's screaming lasted another 30 heartbeats before abruptly ceasing.

Dr'ivn shook himself. "We've come too far to turn back now". The two of them entered the leftward room. It, too, was a vast circular chamber, this one draped with green and golden tapestries. On a basalt plinth in the center of the room was the real topaz of Zakarab, as big as a man's fist and sparkling in torchlight. Negligently leaning against the display was a hook-nosed man in a rich green velvet tunic with scarlet hose.

"Welcome, thieves," he said. "Welcome to the doom that awaits all who try to steal from Thalen Garh!" Flame leapt from the floor between them and then cleared, revealing a gigantic monster from the abyss, larger even than a Nibian mantichora, with seven serpent heads hissing as one. Vrinny the Blue started a counter spell as Thalen Garh chanted syllables in a hissing tongue. Dr'ivn, drawing on shadowy knowledge passed down through the generations, closed his eyes, ignoring the conjured beast as he stalked towards Thalen Garh. He did not see the battle of green and blue flame as he walked unharmed through the illusion. And he could not see Vrinny's head implode from the green fire of the stronger sorcerer. But the sorcerer's cry of triumph was nearby, and Dr'ivn thrust out with his blade, turning Thalen Garh's victory cry into a death gurgle. He opened his eyes and saw that the beast had gone, a mere shadowy figment of the dead sorcerer's will.

The tower started to shake; Dr'ivn grabbed the brilliant topaz and stashed it in his pouch. He noticed jewellery's glint on the dead sorcerer's body, and wrenched away the amulet that Thalen Garh had been wearing. Two heartbeats later, the tower exploded; hot magma swept up its length and blasted through the roof, vast elemental forces no longer held at bay with the sorcerer's death.

Dr'ivn rode a mighty stream of lava down the cliff and over the plain, caught up in its flood, all the time wondering why he could feel no heat. Realization came at last - the dweomer on the amulet was protecting him! He waded against the current until he finally rolled from the abating lava flow. Looking back, he realized there was no longer any tower above the plain. He turned and trudged the last mile into town.

Dr'ivn searched his belongings for coin, but he had lost it all in that wild ride. All he had left was a topaz the size of his fist and a magical amulet. Shrugging, he traded the amulet at the inn for a stout steed, saddlebags, and provisions. He had lost five companions, but escaped with a princely gem.

Late in the evening on the fourth day of Summereve, Dr'ivn noc Kthath rode out of Moonfall towards his next adventure. Ω

Oceanian Legends

Gelidia, Part II

Del L. Beaudry – continued from *FO! #4*

Sterrex: By the standards of its sophisticated neighbors – Eblor to the north and Berasah to the south – Sterrex is a sleepy backwater. There are no cities to speak of, and only a few towns. The Urgel populace lives as it always has, in villages and hamlets scattered amid the vales and heaths: raising sheep and goats, farming (where the boggy soil permits), and stealing from one another.

It is a poor land, grey and unfruitful. A line of steep ridges bisect the isle, dividing one valley from the next. The hillsides are slick with clay; narrow defiles bristle with thorn and poison sumac. Ocean winds drape the lowlands in sticky fog year-round.

People here live a hardscrabble existence. In lean times, many go hungry. Yet they are blessed in one respect, at least: on Sterrex all men are free. There are no serfs; even the homeliest peasant labors for his own bread. Of course this protection is not absolute. The law permits tenant farming under certain conditions, but the practice is frowned upon. Even the greediest landlord must think twice before engaging "scab corns" – that is, wage laborers.

Egalitarian values likewise govern politics. Home rule is the norm. Each village sees to its own affairs. Major landholders field outriders to guard against brigands, for which security the villages pay annual tithe. A circuit court sees to property disputes, moving from vale to vale. Otherwise folks like to handle business in-house, and briskly. Troublesome outlanders are subject to harsh measures. An unpleasant braggart might awaken naked in a ditch, leagues from the nearest village, while outright criminals are simply hanged without ceremony.

The history of Sterrex is largely devoid of drama. For centuries it has enjoyed a dull if secure position as nominal vassal to Eblor, its larger neighbor. The latter maintains several forts along the northern coast (at Jegulassa, Photis, and Bern), which benefit both parties as they serve to deter reaver attacks in the Kholendren Straits. The Sterrex also pay a modest annual tribute. In return they receive the privilege of being left alone. A succession of Eblori governments have affirmed this arrangement because it is easy, remunerative, and circumvents the difficulties of annexation.

Until quite recently Sterrex had no trained military and no central government to speak of. Matters altered for a time following the overthrow of the tyrant Hydragenis, who ruled Eblor from 1206 to 1214 CY. A group of important landholders took advantage of the subsequent chaos to seize power. They overran the Eblori forts, slaughtered the garrison, and declared Sterrex to be an independent nation.

This new state was short-lived. In a few years the alliance had dissolved in a flurry of wife-stealing, knife duels, and arguments over goat pasturage. By 1221, Eblor's new rulers, the Council of Nine, had settled affairs at home in bloody fashion and now saw fit to deal with their rebellious vassals. That spring an expeditionary force of 6000 marines landed at Karev Korst, girded for war. Instead, they beheld a citizenry decimated by famine and plague. Arson and banditry had ruined the crops. People lay dying in their fallow plots.

The Eblori commandant, Kraven, was a shrewd man. At once he grasped the new situation and adjusted his tactics to advantage. From atop an empty cider cask¹ he addressed the surging mob. Help is here at last, he declared. The government of Eblor stands side by side with Sterrex's abused masses in their hour of need; and to achieve your deliverance no effort or resource will be spared.

Kraven was as good as his word. He dispatched a letter by falcon-post to the Council and a full-scale relief operation was underway within days, distributing food, medicines and potable water. It took barely a week for the Eblori to complete their transformation from foreign invaders to beloved liberators. Not one arrow was fired.

With the help of local scouts, the remnants of the landholder alliance were soon routed. For the ringleaders, justice came swiftly – village posses hanged them on the spot. Thus ended the Sterrex experiment with independence. It has been a content vassal ever since.

Berasah: The island of Berasah seems an unlikely choice for a great university. Its location is remote – four hundred leagues west of the Archipelago – and its scholarly tradition is (to put it generously) slight. Before the Lyceum was established, Berasah was best known for its sheep. (The indigenous wild rams – “tar heels” in local parlance – make noble game for wealthy sportsmen. The island's dairies also produce a variety of tasty sheep's milk cheeses prized by Archipelagan gourmands.)

It was quite a sensation, therefore, when Kormander Khorealis, the so-called Orphan Mage, announced Berasah

as the site of his ballyhooed eldritch academy. While the broader public was enthusiastic, sorcery's *éminences grises* clucked and scoffed. Such a thing was impossible! What sensible person would travel all the way to Gelidia just to study magic? Who would teach? The notion was absurd. When Kormander's grand project encountered the inevitable setbacks and delays, the naysayers were quick to pronounce failure. Wags called it Kormander's Folly. Popular interest waned. The whole undertaking seemed no more substantial than a castle built on clouds.

There were sound reasons for skepticism. The Great Colleges enjoyed every advantage: proud and ancient pedigrees, fantastic wealth and colossal libraries. Their alumni served as court wizards to sultans and potentates across Oceania. They had commanded the heights for millennia, had seen challengers come and go. This time would be no different, they were sure. They were mistaken. They had badly underestimated their opponent.

The Story of Kormander: Being taken lightly was nothing new for Kormander Khorealis. When he was still a lad, his first master called him a dunce and sent him packing before he learned a single cantrap. His second post – at the Red Girja, on Zarabor – went only a little better: over two years of strenuous labor Kormander advanced only from potboy to sorcerer's apprentice. He was, in the words of his esteemed instructor, the theophanist Dhelvin of Kholz, “gifted, but feckless;” his life would “amount to nothing beyond a few measures of mischief.” Scant months later, Kormander was discharged for plagiarism. He was not yet fifteen.

In the years that followed Kormander came to appreciate the advantages of discredit. If folk belittled your talent, mocked your opinions, ignored your achievements, what of it? That only made them easier to outwit. Being known as a pretender and fraud was, he recognized, actually a very useful thing. So he made up his mind to do his part to encourage the charade.

Kormander had never lacked flair. He was handsome, voluble, charismatic. But now he dressed the part, affecting a turban of turquoise silk and peaked boots in the Kabar style; but his conduct was more remarkable still. He christened himself the Orphan Mage and for ten years wandered the Archipelago, performing marvels.

(to be continued...)

Correction: In *FO! #4* we estimated Eblor's surface area at 2,000,000 square nauts. That is incorrect. The correct figure is 200,000. The fantasy cartographer's league apologizes for the mistake, and assures *Fight On!*'s readers that a singularly efficacious tentacled servitor of the fourth octant will be dispatched to punish the perpetrators.

¹ To this day when someone tries to win his case by lofty oratory he is said to be “high on the cider”; the phrase means something like our “up on a soapbox.”



Three Little Booklets in a Funny Brown Box

guest editorial by Tim Kask. ©2009 Celtic Studios.

(Fight On! is thrilled to welcome this contribution from Tim Kask, the legendary first editor of The Dragon, to our pages. Tim wrote this as a history of his approach to publishing TSR's famous magazine in the early days, but we chose to publish it as an editorial because it shares his view of what a fantasy roleplaying magazine should try to accomplish so clearly – a view we largely share. We're delighted to give you the opportunity to read it from the horse's mouth – one of the principal people we got it from! - Ig)

In the beginning, three little booklets were all that we DMs had in common. What the very early DMs did not have was an “idea bank”; how each individual campaign took shape was purely a product of whatever fantasy background the DM had, coupled with his unique perspective. Before I first played, I already knew that Gary Gygax and I enjoyed a lot of the same authors because we had talked about them at some length. Even so, that first adventure at

GenCon '74 was not like anything I had conceived. Over the next year, we talked about that issue a lot.

We used to gleefully and cheerfully admit to “lifting” ideas from wherever we found them to flesh out our adventures, campaigns, worlds, and stories. Some favored Tolkien-esque settings, others Vance or Moorcock. It all hinged upon what you had read and the ability to stretch, filch, imagine and adapt.

We had discussed how we might address this situation of providing background grist for the campaign mills. Gary started to address it in the pages of *The Strategic Review* (SR) when he listed books to read for ideas. Keep in mind one very important philosophical difference in effect then: what was in those 112 pages of original *D&D* manuals were meant to be *guidelines*, not rules. We saw it as our mission to give those pioneering DM's more ideas to build on. We wanted them to “think outside the box”, literally, long before that became a catchphrase.

When I joined TSR when it was formed in 1975, there were two “slick” (clay content paper) wargaming magazines on the market, *The General* (TG) and *Strategy & Tactics* (S&T), published by Avalon Hill and SPI respectively. In addition there were *Wargamer's Digest* and *The Courier*. The former was B&W and seemed to publish a preponderance of articles about recreating WWII with Roco Models, although the publisher, Gene McCoy, did print other things when he could get them. The magazine didn't get the respect and market it deserved, in my opinion. The latter started out as a group newsletter and did not enjoy wide circulation beyond die-hard game stores and had a spotty publication history. Gary had published three *Strategic Reviews*; all the copy was about games published by Tactical Studies Rules. In other words, it was a “house organ” just like TG and S&T, touting only the publisher's products. Why not? They were both doing well and serving their core client base; I felt that S&T had the edge with a game in every issue, even when the game sucked.

(Author's Note: Please understand that when I use Gary's name, I am not trying to “name-drop”, nor am I trying to “bask in the memory of his presence”. Gary Gygax hired me; he was the Publisher and I was his Editor. Between the two of us, we formulated a Mission Statement that we intended to apply first to SR, and later The Dragon. We were good friends with some common visions of a future for RPGs and TSR. We also had some conflicting views, but more often than not Gary told me to go ahead and do something my way, as he had hired me for what we did share and trusted in my judgment. In other words, about as good a Publisher as any Editor could hope to work for.)

I told Gary and Brian that I didn't think that setting out to be a house-organ was the course we wanted to take. We also agreed that the best thing we could do for the emerging fantasy hobby was to provide ideas for DMs. If the

DMs, who were the driving engine of the early growth, ran out of ideas, their players would grow bored and disenchanted and quit playing. We recognized that giving DMs the wherewithal to keep their campaigns fresh and exciting was a top priority for us. We were a company and companies need to sell product to stay alive. But working in a brand-new field meant that we had to feel our way along.

Gary had invented his Greyhawk campaign as he went along, while he was designing and developing the game. The rest of us poor schmoes had to dive in at the deep end and whip up a complete story-setting in one fell swoop. Gary was intimately familiar with what I had gone through in establishing my campaign at college because I had kept him posted all along the way. (Looking back on it, mine could have been called a “Petri Dish campaign” for all the experimenting that went on.) And, to be brutally frank, not everyone that had the potential be a good DM had the creative ability to see outside the box. We were all flying by the seat of our pants, learning as we went along. We saw one of our jobs as providing help in that learning process.

Again I have to stress the profound philosophical dichotomy between what is now called *OD&D* and what has come since. We were not publishing RULES; we were publishing *guidelines*. “D&D was meant to be a free-wheeling game, only loosely bound by the parameters of the rules”: that modern-day apostasy was the prevalent ethos of the time. I wrote that in the Foreword to *Eldritch Wizardry* in 1976; I meant it then, and still live by that credo today.

So, having established that, we decided to provide new ideas in every issue to keep people thinking and growing as DMs. That explains why I included fiction pieces—grist for the mill.

The decision to cover other games and products was a no-brainer for me, and Gary immediately embraced the logic I used. Fantasy gaming was a growing niche in a small dollar market – war games and gaming. We were all selling product. Board games were booming and RPG’s were taking off. The outlook was rosy. My thinking was to “grow the pie”; I’ll need to explain that. If the whole gaming market was a pie, each company was fighting for a slice, hopefully a bigger slice than the other guy came away with. My decision to cover other games and take ads from potential competitors was all about making the pie bigger, not our slice. Suppose your slice represents 15% of a 10-inch pie. Rather than elbowing the guy next to you to get a little wider slice, what if you could make the pie bigger? 15% of a 13-inch pie was a lot more pie. I saw us as having a chance to grow the whole market at a time when we had no idea that *D&D* and FRPG’s, and SFRPG’s and fantasy miniatures (there were none when *D&D* was first published) would soon command the lion’s share of the whole market. We were still in the “hoping” stage.

Another benefit I pointed out was using the other guy’s money, which appealed to us all.

Part of the motivation for licensing other companies such as *Judges’ Guild* to make modular adventures was to keep the idea pipeline full at a time when we didn’t have the time or HR to do it ourselves. After all, it kept the market/pie growing and enabled the DM engine of growth to keep chugging along. It was my job to check the stuff for approval to make sure it didn’t completely veer away from the game system, but not to stifle new ideas. I still rank *The City-State of the Invincible Overlord* as one of the best modules ever conceived and published. In one swoop they showed how to do city adventures and provide a campaign base, and spurred insights in countless DMs about how to take their campaigns to the next level.

As to what was actually published during my tenure, I can only say that I valued good ideas wherever I found them. A lot of good articles came from staffers and “frequent faces” around TSR. A good deal more came in “over the transom” (an old publishing term for unsolicited manuscripts, referencing old door design). Some authors I went after. I found a few good ones toiling away underappreciated in the pages of fanzines such as *Alarums & Excursions* (the only decent one of that ilk during that time, in my opinion).

I feel incredibly privileged to have met and published Fritz Leiber, Gar Fox and Harry Fischer. All of their fiction was published for the purpose of furnishing ideas and providing more grist for the mills. That’s not to say I may not have blown one or two calls. I got a couple of huge manuscripts (way too big for me to use) from a young lady that was just trying to break into the field. There was a noticeable improvement in the second when compared to the first, but I still rejected her submission. I always tried to be very polite in rejections. I always responded to every article submitted and tried to be kind, putting myself in their place. Apparently she got even better because some years later I saw her name again on a paperback she had written: Janny Wurts.

I dearly loved finding good artists. When you go back and look at the early stuff we did as a company, art-wise, keep in mind that we used the best we had to hand. Imagine, if you will, the stuff we didn’t use. I’m especially proud that I was able to give a lot of really good artists their big break by publishing their work and giving them that exposure. Some of the covers we did were certainly out of the ordinary, run-of-the-mill fantasy genre; a couple of them were abstract. They didn’t always go over really well, but I was undeterred as I felt my readership would only benefit from the exposure. Finding J.D. Webster, creator of Finieous Fingers, and Dave Trampier, father of Wormy, were the two most fun discoveries. I knew Tom Wham from college, but getting his stuff into *TD* was great as well.

I was often asked back then, and yet again more recently, if the influence or “power” I wielded through the pages of the magazine was an incentive, if being in a position of telling so many people what to do or how to do it was gratifying. My answer then is the same as it would be now: no. I did not publish in *TD* for the purpose of telling the readers what to do or how to do something. My gratification, what gave me that warm glow of satisfaction, was having made people *think*. My “rush” came from the knowledge that every issue enabled me to reach into tens of thousands of heads and just *massage* that grey matter ever so gently. I once had a reader write a brilliant five page letter to the editor on why a certain article was a piece of *dreck*. I couldn’t have been happier; his well-reasoned arguments clearly showed that he had put a lot of thought into the topic. I won! He won too, when I published him.

Back then, as well as now, I was all about having fun. Don’t like my world or the way it works? OK, I’m not offended. Feel free to find another DM, and no hard feelings. It works that way because I say it does.

Now, as DM you need to worry about keeping good players happy so they stay in your campaign. That synergy that happens when you get a working *team* of players trying to outwit and out-think the DM is a rare and precious thing. I saw my role as providing DMs with the necessary tools to keep their games fresh. I fed fuel into the DM-driven engine of growth, and we all know how well that worked. Ω

Merlin’s Mystical Mirror

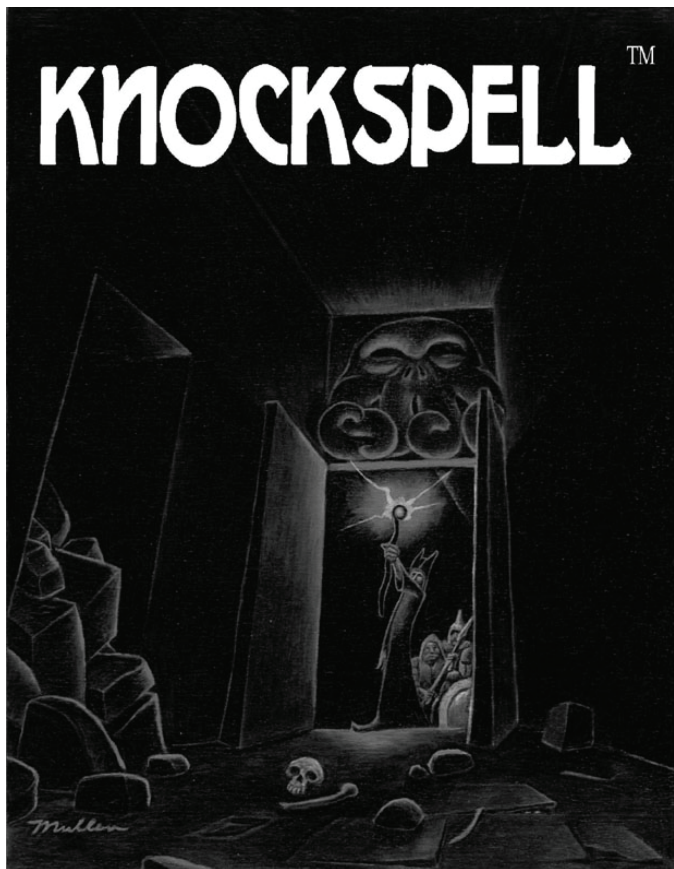
reviews by Jeff Rients

Knockspell #1: It’s about time we got some healthy competition around here! Matt Finch’s Mythmere Games ups the ante with the first issue of *Knockspell* magazine. From the publisher’s and writer’s point of view *Knockspell* fills a slightly different niche than our own *Fight On!* by serving as an Open Game License vehicle for retro-clones such as *Labyrinth Lord*, *OSRIC*, and *Swords & Wizardry*. (*Fight On! welcomes contributions compatible with all of these games as well, of course, but we do not use the OGL – Ig.*) For regular gamers just looking for cool stuff to drop into your own game, *Knockspell* #1 delivers the goods. Starting with the awesome Otus-esque cover by Pete Mullen, the whole issue is one big rollercoaster of gaming fun.

A few folks have rankled at Tim Kask’s somewhat belligerent editorial, “Who sucked the fun out of RPG-ing?” Personally I feel we need to hear more from the man who, as TSR’s first full time hire and the first editor of *The Dragon*, was present for the transition of D&D from garage band to recording industry venture. (*Your wish is our command, Jeff. - Ig*) Let the man have his say! My only problem with the piece is that the editing could’ve been tighter. For example, “Bitd” should have been spelled out as “Back in the day”. This is a respectable magazine, not an internet message board! That nitpick aside, I sincerely hope that future issues contain more grumblings from Mr. Kask and/or other luminaries from the good ol’ days.

Next up is Allan “grodog” Grohe’s article on One-Way Doors, Variable Stairs, and the Accessibility of Sub-Levels. Grodog demonstrates how he seamlessly blends respect for the history of the hobby with a practical focus on how that history can usefully inform play nowadays. May his “From Kuroth’s Quill” column runs for many installments! Three articles on new classes follow. I must admit that I rolled my eyes at the prospect of yet another Necromancer variant, but Scot Hoover’s take on the class is one of the juiciest to date. Mr. Hoover exerts great effort to make his Necromancer into an excellent choice for your archvillain of the month, including supplying you with some nasty necromantic magic items. Great stuff.

James “Pope of Old School” Maliszewski’s Paladin and Monk offerings are not *quite* straight adaptations from AD&D to *Swords & Wizardry*. Like James, I’m not a fan of Paladin that use “cleric lite” spellcasting charts. This particular design opts for a few pre-selected miraculous class abilities. Truth be told, I’m not a big fan of Paladins at all, but Mr. Maliszewski supplies a version of the class that I would tolerate in my campaign. Jamie Mal’s monk may be the first I’ve encountered that was less useful than the AD&D version, leaving me to wonder how much



chop socky dedication it would take for a player to actually use this variant. (I'd give it a try, but I occasionally play mechanically useless characters out of sheer orneriness.) The most glaring omission is a class ability that at some level makes the monk's attacks 'magical' for purposes of beating up beasts immune to conventional attacks. No doubt that was intentional, but I personally feel there is little point in playing a kung fu master if you can't kick a gargoyle right in the kisser.

Speaking of mechanically useless classes, David Bowman's Thrall class is totally up my alley. A single player running a group of pathetic cannon fodder goes back at least as far as the "grogs" in *Ars Magica*, but this is the first time I've seen a good implantation of the concept for My Favorite Game. I'm tempted to roll up a three-pack of Thralls to use as (almost certainly doomed) GMPCs.

I've printed out copies of page 22, James Carl Boney's "Three Principles of Adventuring Success", to hand out at my next session. In just a few paragraphs Mr. Boney strikes a pitch-perfect chord for the proper mental state for serious dungeoneering. Although not intended as such, "The Dungeon Alphabet" by Michael "Amityville Mike" Curtis serves as an excellent companion piece to Boney's article. Just as "Three Principles" works as a primer for old school adventuring, "The Dungeon Alphabet" would be a great article to share with anyone refereeing an old school game for the first time, or after a long hiatus.

Issue #1 also contains two excellent adventures. Gabor Lux's "Isles on an Emerald Sea" is up to his usual standards, which is to say better than nearly anyone else. ("Isles" suffers from one slight editing flaw: the PDF version of *Knockspell* #1 that I purchased made use of a draft of the adventure that was marked up with a couple of notes from the editor obviously directed to the author.) That "Charnel Crypt of the Sightless Serpent" by Castle Zagyg's Jeff Talanian stands proudly next to the mighty Lux's offering is a testament to Mr. Talanian's powers outside the long shadow of collaborating with Gygax. One common thread running between "Isles" and "Charnel Crypt" is that haunting sword & sorcery vibe born less of blood and thunder and more of ancient otherworldliness. Both locales are going right into my own personal sandbox.

The rest of the articles are the sort of short, punchy affairs that are the backbone of this sort of magazine. Mike Davison introduces his katanas & sorcery project, *Ruins & Ronin*, with pre-publication designer's notes. Akrasia's "Fighters with Flair" and "Class-Based Weapon Damage" are great drop-in variants that can enhance your game with little work needed to make them fit. Any campaign that uses cheap NPC cannon fodder needs Robert Lionheart's "Random Hiring Generator". And Matt Finch's "How in the Hell Do You Open this Thing?!" is a great example of

enhancing your game with a crazy random die chart. In the entire magazine the only article I find wanting is the column "Masterminds and their Minions", in which Salvatore Macri's monstrous Shadow-kin are described. Other than the article being too wordy, I don't have anything against the Shadow-kin. I could get some use out of this material, even with the overabundance of Shadow-this and Gloom-that peppering the piece. But it just didn't light my imagination like so much of the rest of the issue, owing at least partially to my preference for short monster write-ups like those found in the *Arduin Grimoires*.

One less-than-thrilling article out of sixteen is still an excellent amount of gaming material for the price, especially when large portions can be dropped into your home campaign with no difficulty. I wholeheartedly recommend *Knockspell* #1 to anyone who has enjoyed issues of *Fight On!* They're brothers-in-arms in the same great cause. I originally purchased the PDF but I plan on getting the print version in my next lulu.com shipment. Get your own copy of *Knockspell* #1 at [stores.lulu.com/mythmere!](http://stores.lulu.com/mythmere)

Old-School Gazette

Number 1: August 23, 2006

Contributor: Joseph Browning Artists: V. Shane, Jason Walton

This Old-School Gazette gives you all the statistics you need to pit goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, ogres and orcs against your players. Also, there are 4 new OSRIC compatible magic items associated with these common foes. So enjoy this first Old-School Gazette and look forward to many more! Issue 2 of the Old-School Gazette will contain 4 brand-new OSRIC compatible monsters and 4 new magic items associated with these enemies.

The below two paragraphs are a legal disclaimer that's not only important, but contains useful information for a change, so don't skip reading it just because of the legalese:

This product uses the OSRIC™ System (Old-School System Reference and Index Compilation™). The OSRIC™ system text may be found at <http://www.knightsofknives.com/osric>.

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Some of you may be unaware of OSRIC™. Go and download the product from the above link and then come back. As you can see from the above, OSRIC™ is a freely available, OSR role-playing system that pays homage to the style of role-playing games we grew up playing. The Old-School Gazette is designed to support the OSRIC™ system by releasing compatible material, not only to players and Game Masters, but to other publishers as well.

We're very excited to start the Old-School Gazette. We plan on featuring monsters, magic items, spells, and anything else you can think of relating to old-school gaming via the OSRIC system. Have any ideas? Send an e-mail to josephbrowning@gmail.com and let us know your thoughts!

Goblin

Size: Small
Move: 30 ft.
Armor Class: 5
Hit Dice: 1d6-1 (minimum 1 hp)
Attacks: 1
Damage: By weapon (usually 1d6)
Special Attacks: None
Special Defenses: None
Magic Resistance: Standard
Rarity: Uncommon
No. Encountered: 40-400
Lair Probability: 40%
Treasure: Individual: 3-15 sp; In Lair: 1-12k gp (20%), 1-6k sp (50%), 1-4k ep (10%), 1-d gem (25%), 1-3 Jewelry (20%), 2 magic items or maps (10%)
Intelligence: Low to average
Alignment: Lawful Evil
Level/XP: 1 / 10 = 1/1hp

General Information: Goblin society is divided into tribes, with the tribes being further subdivided into clans. Each tribe has a chief and these chiefs often fight one another for prestige and gain. It is said that



Old-School Gazette, issues 1-11: Published by Expeditious Retreat Press, *Old-School Gazette* is a 7 page PDF 'zine devoted to short articles for OSRIC, the 1st edition AD&D retro-clone system. Taking Open Game License legalese and advertisements into account, each installment clocks in at just under five pages of actual

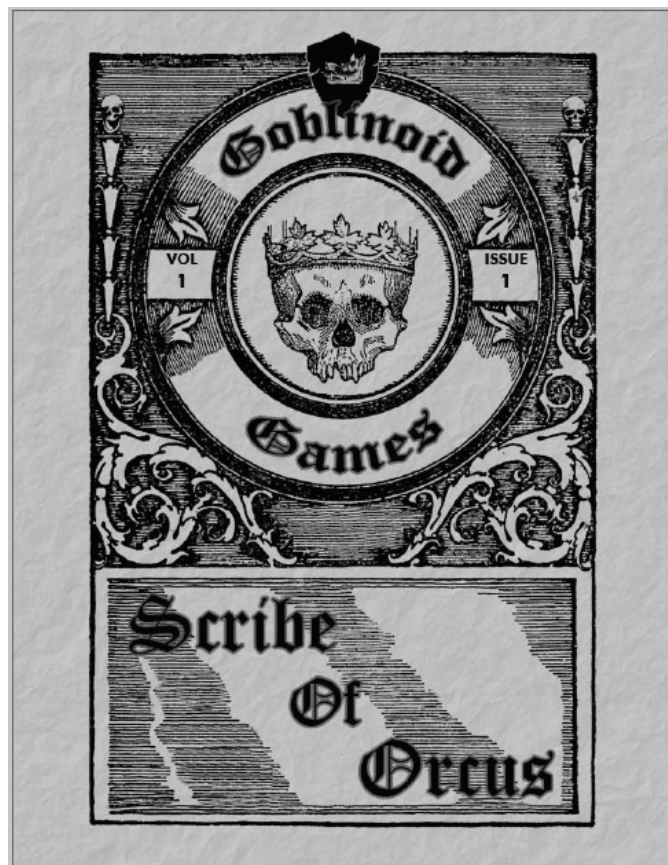
content. Much of the material presented is credited to Joseph Browning. Matt Finch of Mythmere Games also contributes a bunch of stuff, along with a few articles by other parties.

With the exception of Stuart Marshall's advice for wandering monsters in issue #10, everything in every installment of OSG is meat-and-potatoes stuff designed to be dropped into your next game with minimal hassle. I particularly like the numerous monsters, magic items and tricks/traps. If like me you often come up short when looking for new dungeon goodies, then I heartily recommend issues five through eleven. All of them contain at least 3 tricks/traps.

If you'd like some fully-fleshed out NPCs, issue #7 details a heartbroken wizardess and her unique spells. The following issue focuses on a couple of warriors, a fighting man and a paladin. All three characters are done in a "three stage" format, with stats and personal history for low, medium, and high level incarnations. Issue two has four new undead and five undead-themed magic items. And who doesn't like more undead creeping up their campaign? The third issue is devoted to rules for spellbooks, particularly how to protect them against theft or damage, while issue four focuses on the finer things in life: food, drink and pipe tobacco. OSG #5 has a cursed spittoon. You've got to respect that.

Really, the only weak issue in the lot is #1. Most of the issue is allocated towards providing OSRIC write-ups for kobolds, goblins, orcs, hobgoblins and ogres. I really like the six new humanoid-inspired magic items that follow the monster entries, but another statblock for perfectly ordinary orcs has to be the single most redundant thing I've ever bought in a gaming supplement. But it was a free promotional issue, so I can hardly complain. The rest of the run of *Old-School Gazette* seems well worth the \$1.65 or \$1.75 that the issues cost. Not that there's any need to take my word for it. The very excellent issue #10 is also a free promotional item which you can snag at www.yourgamesnow.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=1042.

Scribe of Orcus volume 1, issues 1-4: *Scribe of Orcus* is the Goblinoid Games electronic zine devoted to old school gaming, in particular supporting their Basic/Expert retro-clone *Labyrinth Lord* and LL's pseudo-gamma post-apocalyptic sister game, *Mutant Future*. Each issue costs \$1.50 and consists of 1 to 3 short articles comprising nine to eleven pages in total. The first two pages of each issue are the full color cover and black & white interior cover, while the last two pages are devoted to an ad and a copy of the open game license, so actual content only clocks in at five to seven pages of material. Most of the articles are written by Daniel Proctor, the evil genius



behind the vast corporate conglomerate that is Goblinoid Games (i.e. it's run out of his garage).

Issue #1's sole article, "The Pumpkin Lord of Shady Hollow", is a cool little low level Halloweenish adventure involving a haunted pumpkin patch. The nearby village comes with just enough detail to make the adventure work and no more. That's good enough for me, though given the horror movie theme I would have preferred if a couple of the detailed NPCs were busty young maidens waiting to be menaced by the monsters. That's how monster flicks work, right? The meat of the adventure is the dungeon of the Pumpkin Lord. The individual encounter areas of the adventure are all extremely creative and I especially like the fact that it would be very easy for the party to mistakenly think they've destroyed the pumpkiny menace. Their error would only be discovered the next spring as a new harvest of gourd-menaces threaten the region. THE END...? One complaint is that most of the the dungeon map is laid out with very few avenues of exploration. For example, on level two once the party has reached room 18 the only place for them to go is to room 19, and from there to room 20, then 21, 22, and 23. I don't consider that a deal-breaker for this short an adventure, but just one or two more side corridors would give the adventurers more choice. Despite the mapping issue, I felt like I got my money's worth with "The Pumpkin Lord of Shady Hollow" and look forward to running this adventure in my *Labyrinth Lord* campaign or adapting it to *Mutant Future* or *Encounter Critical*. One final

note: David "grubman" Bezio provided the interior illustrations, and his pumpkin monster on page 7 is an extremely effective piece. That guy should get more work drawing monsters.

The second issue's feature, called "Demons and the Planes in Labyrinth Lord," is really two separate but related articles. In the first part Proctor attempts to fit Gygax's cosmology to the three-fold alignment used in LL. I think he does an excellent job. Mr. Proctor's suggestion of the Positive Material plane as the most dangerous inner plane for visitors is intriguing. And I'd like to know more about the outer plane he calls the Plane of Beasts. While I enjoyed this part of the issue, some old hands with Gygax's planar system may find that there's not enough new stuff here to be worth their time. The second part of the article provides some straightforward guidelines and fun random charts for generating demons. Four sample demons are provided. Even if you don't need the stuff on the planes, how can you pass up random demon charts? The article ends with a *Labyrinth Lord* version of the Gate spell.

Issue #3 is the first one with two unrelated articles. Ryan Denison provides the first *Mutant Future* article for *Scribe of Orcus*, entitled "Factions I: Bringers of Light". The Bringers of Light are a small cult who worship an ancient artifact. It's pretty standard post-apoc stuff, really, but it's certainly the kind of thing I wouldn't hesitate to use in a *Mutant Future* campaign. Only a small portion of the article involves any game statistics, so you could easily adapt the Bringers to another system. The second article, "Breaking Up Can Be So Hard," provides a system for splitting race and class in *Labyrinth Lord* (like the original Basic/Expert game, under the LL system Elf, Dwarf, and Halfling are classes). I can't spot anything inherently wrong with the straightforward system Mr. Proctor proposes, but I don't find it particularly exciting either. However, the inclusion of LL rules for Half-Elves and Half-Orcs is much appreciated. That I can use.

The fourth issue of *Scribe of Orcus* features three articles. Ryan Denison provides a second installment of *Mutant Future* factions with "The Luds". Again the concept is a no-brainer: an ideology opposed to ancient technology. But this time the execution is much more interesting, as Mr. Denison provides two very different examples of Lud communities. One group is a hippie commune where plant and animal lifeforms co-exist in peace and the other is a band of tech-smashing terrorists. Both groups are ready to drop into your own gonzo post-apoc campaign. The other two articles in issue #4 were a bit of a letdown, as both provide straight *Labyrinth Lord* conversions of readily available material. If you've already got the OD&D or AD&D rules for the assassin class then "The Assassins: A New Class for Labyrinth Lord" is largely redundant. Similarly, there just isn't enough difference between the AD&D poison chart and "Wicked Brew: Poisons in

Labyrinth Lord" to merit my attention. But if you don't have those musty old materials, then I'm sure you could get some use out of this stuff.

Overall, I highly recommend the first two issues of *Scribe of Orcus*. I have more reservations about the second two, but as a fan of *Mutant Future* I felt they were worth the meager price even though the frpg material was less impressive. To buy downloads of *Scribe of Orcus* and other great Goblinoid Games items, visit www.yourgamesnow.com/index.php?main_page=index&manufacturers_id=71. Ω



Artifacts, Adjuncts, & Oddments

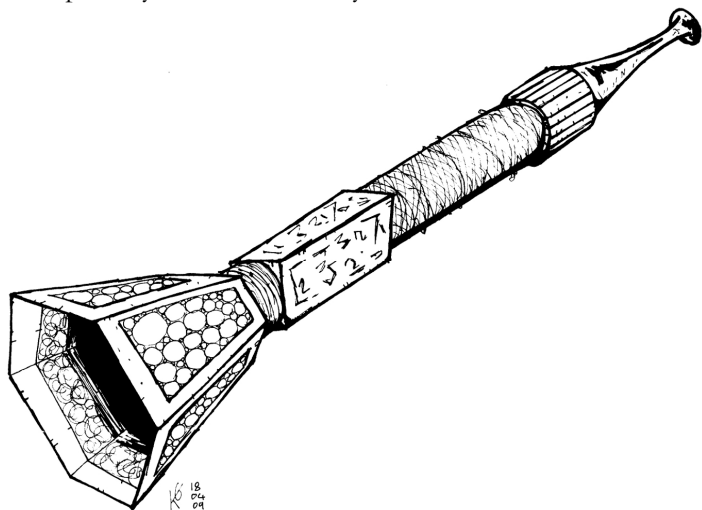
marvelous magic by Backus, Nordin, Rients, & Calithena

Baffling Scroll (Mieszko): This item is a sheet of paper, parchment, clay tablet, etc. on which a mage may write any spell he/she knows. The *Baffling Scroll* may be used as an ordinary magical scroll, but when the scroll is opened “in the field” the inscribed spell may have changed. This can be beneficial or disastrous; however, it is possible to learn the changed spell from the scroll if it is not already known, making the *Baffling Scroll* useful as a research tool. Roll d6:

1-2	No change, original spell inscribed still on scroll
3	Spell reversed if applicable, else original spell
4-5	Spell replaced w/random spell of same level/type
6	No spell on scroll at all, may be re-inscribed

Barnaby’s Trumpet of Distress (Rients): The runes decorating this otherwise plain tin bugle are only visible when magic is detected. When blown outside, the Trumpet can be heard from miles away (i.e. anywhere within the same wilderness hexagon); when underground it will echo throughout a dungeon level. Most importantly, only allies of the trumpeter will hear the call. Barnaby’s Trumpet may be sounded but once a day.

Cloak of the Black Gate (Calithena): This cloak is a gateway to extradimensional worlds. Its swirling, hypnotic aspect gives it a power similar to that of a *Displacing Cloak* (1 in 3 attacks miss any wearer). Mages may reach into the cloak and pull forth lesser demons to aid in battle. The first attempt has a 5 in 6 chance of success, with a -1 cumulative penalty each subsequent try. A mage wearing the cloak may also allow *other* persons to climb in, where they will encounter *Dr. Strange*-like dimensions populated with terrible demons and bizarre landscapes, from which desperately needed items may sometimes be recovered.



Cyborg Transformation Unit (Nordin): This Space Alien artifact is a levitating robot, shaped like a 21’ diameter orb, with multiple arms that can be folded out from its body. It is made to perform augmentations of biological organisms by surgically inserting cybernetic implants into their bodies. It carries a wide range of implants within its body and is capable of producing new implants out of metal junk. An operator that understands the artifact can specify which implant that is requested. However, when encountering the Cyborg Transformation Unit there is a 40% risk that it will initiate an operation automatically. In that case the machine will give its victim 1d6 random implants (choose or roll – the Random Robot Generator in *Carcosa* will work nicely). Every time it is used there is a 20% risk that its patient will be lobotomized into a mindless servitor drone.

Eye of Greed (Calithena): This item will store any single item of up to 64 cubic inches per 1000 gp value in size, putting it in stasis within its extradimensional chamber when pointed at such an item within 60’. Living targets cannot be stored this way unless they are somehow ‘inside’ the item of value stored. Whatever item is in the Eye when it is used will appear in place of the one absorbed. It thus always contains some item of value or other.

The **Infra-Incubator** (Rients): This device takes the form of a coppery metallic cylinder, 20 inches tall and 10 in diameter. One of the faces of the cylinder has an iris-door that will only open to accept an egg. If a fresh, fertilized egg of any type is placed within the door will close, reopening d6 turns later to vomit forth a fully grown creature of the egg's type. If the egg has not been fertilized the device will instead produce a hardboiled egg suitable for consumption. The *Infra-Incubator* will be drained after 1d6 uses.

Mage's Throne (Calithena): This throne, especially useful to mages with some locomotive impediment, continually levitates between 1 and 12 feet above the ground, moving vertically at SPD 3 according to its owner's mental command. If it moves off a ledge higher than 12' it will descend slowly and safely to that height. The occupant is immune to non-magical missiles while sitting in the *Throne*.

Perverse Chalk (Rients): Woe be unto he who would use this stick of chalk! Any message written with it will magically rewrite itself so as to cause maximum woe to the user as soon as s/he is out of sight, and any pictures drawn will transform into obscene illustrations. If the *Perverse Chalk* is discarded haphazardly it will itself write one last malevolent message, which will appear to be signed by the previous owner. *Cancel curse* will remove this final effect.

Phase Gloves (Calithena): These smartly tailored long leather gloves can reach through solids (1' or so). The wearer's fingertips retain sensation and can materialize without the intervening wrist, etc. to manipulate objects, open doors from the other side, or pluck gems from cases.

Princess Serianna's Teacup (Rients): This dainty drinking vessel is decorated with depictions of lovely little flowers. If used as a bludgeon it strikes at +2 to-hit for 2d6 points of damage! If the wielder inflicts the maximum result (12 points), the teacup shatters.

Rejuvenating Bath (Nordin): This artifact of the Primordial Ones consists of a large chamber full of biomechanical machinery, at the centre of which is a vat filled with jale slime. A damaged character put in the vat will heal two hit dice for each turn spent in the slime. A recently dead character that is put in the vat for three turns will either be revived and restored to 1 HD (70%) or turned into a Diseased Guardian (30%). For each turn a character spends in the Rejuvenating Bath there is a 10% risk of being mutated. If someone uses the machine without a proper understanding of how to operate it the patient in the vat will be dissolved into slime.

Reliquary of Naks (Mieszko): A fragile pentagonal reliquary with a brass handle-top and base. One panel has three small brass hinges and a knob. All of the panels have three small holes just above the lip of the base. The interior contains wool batting and some finger bone fragments.

When the reliquary is jostled, dust falls from the holes. The reliquary can be shaken more vigorously to release more dust. In a calm environment it will fall 3'/10 seconds and have different effects depending on what it encounters on its downward drift. If the dust meets a solid surface, it hisses and sublimates into a light olive-green gas which is considerably lighter than air (one such 'dusting' fills a 10' radius the round after it starts). If not influenced otherwise (by breezes, fans, etc) the gas will remain in place and potent for 3-6 minutes. This gas induces fear (save allowed). If the dust meets a liquid surface, it hisses and sublimates into a thin bright yellow gas. Anyone within 5' can spend that round inhaling the gas. Those who inhale this gain a magical boon: any spells cast for the next hour will have x2 duration. If there is a scrying device/spell in effect beneath the reliquary, all of the dust will glom onto it, bypassing any effects listed above. It will instead double the duration/effect of the spell/item's scrying and grant the viewer invisibility to scrying for the same period. It should be noted that the finger bone fragments must be in the reliquary for any falling dust to have an effect, but one need not 'add dust' to it. And it's really fragile.

Shield of Spellcatching (Calithena): A warrior armed with this *shield* +1 may use it to 'catch' one spell/day. However, the shield releases the spell caught next round regardless of what the warrior does, so s/he must use that round to direct the spell or it will release randomly.

Silver Bell of Armagius (Rients): When rung, this bell immediately conjures up all demons, elementals, etc. that the user has summoned to the material plane but not dismissed. This device does not bring forth such beings from their home realms, only from one distant terrestrial locale to another. Poorly worded pacts with guardian demons might be broken by use of the *Silver Bell*.

Smadgett's Special Snuff (Rients): 1d4 rounds after nasal inhalation, the user of *Smadgett's Snuff* will sneeze a bolt of fire 10' long doing 2d6 damage, save versus dragon breath for half. Any wooden furniture, doors, etc., in the line of attack will be blown to pieces. *Smadgett's Special Snuff* is normally found in small metal boxes containing 2d6 doses.

Twig Talisman (Calithena): This elven creation raises its wearer's base DC to 6 and allows the wearer to animate grasses, sticks, branches, etc. in his or her vicinity three times each day. These may entangle others' feet and legs, slowing or stopping their movement; turn sticks or branches into animated foes as a spell which turned sticks into snakes might; disable hafted items by reducing the rigidity of the wood in the haft; or other similar effects.

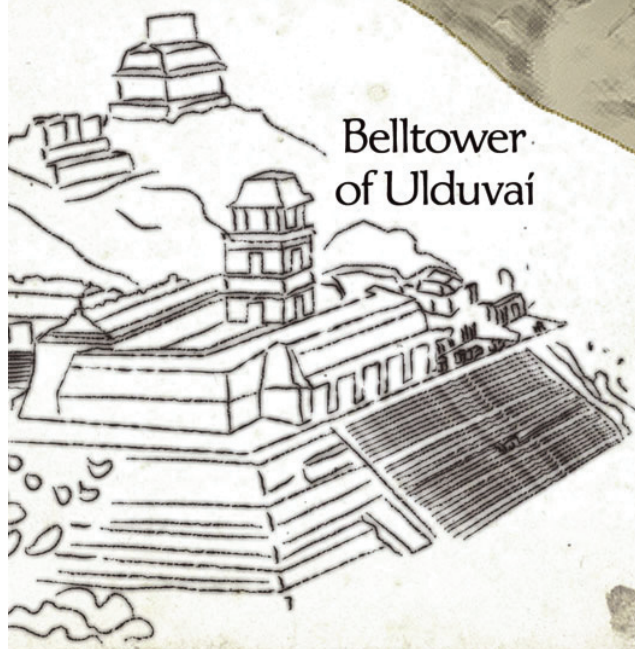
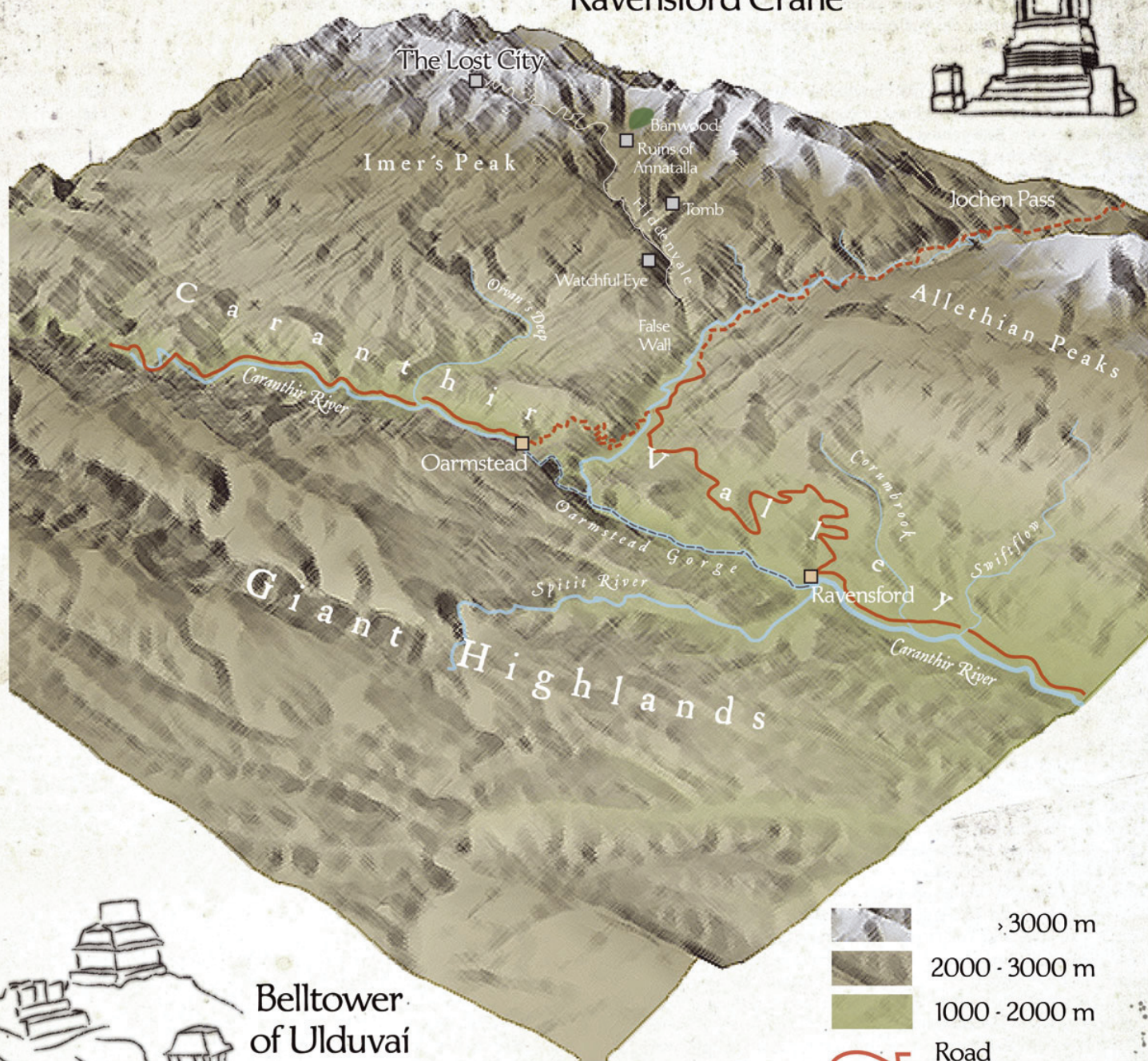
Ulfire Lotus Powder (Nordin): The victim must make a save vs. poison or suffer either howling insanity (60%) or a painful death (40%). Anyone that makes the saving throw receives the boon of psionic powers for 1d6 days. Ω

The Lost City of Ulduvaí



Ravensford Crane

Tower of the Watchful Eye



Belltower of Ulduvaí



Haldefast's Tomb