

# FIGHT ON!

ISSUE #8

WINTER 2010



**A FANZINE FOR THE OLD SCHOOL RENAISSANCE**

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

Dedicated to Erol Otus,  
High Magister of the Weird and Wondrous



.I find that many Otus drawings catch my attention, and stick in my mind far longer than other early rolegame artists do. His style evokes the exotic and the macabre in a way that few other artists can match.

- Matt Stevens, "Brilliance & Doss in RPG Artwork", *Imagine* #37

Things that are present in my mind when executing/planning art:

1. That the rules the piece itself brings into being are followed.
2. Entertain myself. (The best way to entertain other viewers I think.)
3. At least try to make something that would never otherwise have been made.

For me these all apply to both fine art painting and illustrations. Any creative activity really.

- Erol Otus, Interview with Matt Staggs, [tinyurl.com/d2tjtb](http://tinyurl.com/d2tjtb)

The thing from the pit lurched upwards. Its thousand grinning eyes, dripping mouths, and groping tentacles probed and fondled the cold stone. Somewhere, down the tunnel which did not disgorge, was *food*...

Tasia heard its oozing scrape over slimy rock and sheathed her steel. It came slowly; nonetheless, it had her. Her mother had died here, for mating with her elvish father, as had eleven local maidens before her, sacrifices to the thing from the pit. Unlucky number thirteen; but she would be the last. With a methodical urgency she emptied her pack of oil-flasks, pouring, then breaking them all over herself, her gear, the cavern floor around her. She had strained under the weight of the pack, laden down with bottles and skins of alchemist's fire, the burning fuel of a hundred burghers' lamps, hoping to catch the monster unawares and burn it out.

And now it was over. The thing bubbled up her leg, thrusting paralytic tendrils inwards, drinking her blood. As her eyes glazed over, she dropped her torch, and the dim cave flared up like the noonday sun. The monster twisted and cracked; its unearthly howl eclipsed Tasia's dying scream. In blood and fire it was no more.

The thing from the pit never bothered the village again.

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*Fight On!* is here again, charging back into action with a jam-packed issue full of art, adventures, and agreeable insanity to keep your campaign on track! We would like to thank our dedicatee, Erol Otus, for judging our art contest and for his wonderful cover and interview; also Dan Proctor for permission to publish material for *Mutant Future*. Please look out for our first fantasy fiction anthology, *Weird Enclaves & Black Pits*, due to hit the stands this summer! Our abbreviations should be broadly recognizable to lovers of old-school fantasy games; we use DC for Defense Class. 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 perpetuity. Authors and artists own all other rights and may re-use and resell their work as they see fit. If you want to contact our authors or artists, drop us a line and we'll put you in touch (or just contact them directly if you know how).

*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 game. And you're welcome to join us.

-Ignatius Ümlaut, Publisher and Editor

## Table of Contents:

Mercenaries A to Z (Simon Bull).....	3
Arendt's Old Peculiar (Antti Hulkkonen).....	6

Experience for Exploration (Jeff Rients).....	8
Supersize Me! (Daniel R. Collins).....	10
Insectaurs and Masterminds (Tim "Sniderman" Snider).....	11
The Soothsayer (Ragnorakk).....	13
I Thirst (Gabor Lux).....	15
Knights & Knaves (Steve Robertson & Alfred J. Dalziel).....	20
Creepies & Crawlies (Geoff McKinney & Sam Kisko).....	23
Groggnard's Grimoire (Calithena).....	25
Red Heart Fortress (Alex Schröder).....	26
Tables for Fables (Age of Fable).....	27
Hidden Traits (Zak S.).....	28
Let's Scrounge Up Some Wheels (Tim Snider).....	30
Post-Apocalyptic Stormfront Table ("Sniderman").....	31
The Howling Emptiness (Ramsey Dow).....	34
Education of a Magic User (Douglas Cox).....	44
Mooning Ixtandraz (Peter Schmidt Jensen).....	45
Smallweed's Ride (Baz Blatt).....	46
The Village of Pindle (Zachary Houghton).....	48
Welcome to the Microdungeon (Tony Dowler).....	49
The Understudy (Erin "Taichara" Bisson).....	50
Badlands of the Bandit Kings (Robert Lionheart).....	51
Oceanian Legends: The Gods of Eá (Del L. Beaudry).....	59
Random's Assortment (Random, Big Jack Brass, Ciryll).....	66
Dungeon Modules (Geoffrey O. Dale).....	68
Sites to Seek (Michael Curtis).....	72
The Darkness Beneath (Calithena).....	74
Interview with Erol Otus (Erol Otus & Jeff Rients).....	77
Random Events Make You Say Yes (Tavis Allison).....	80
Merlyn's Mystical Mirror (various).....	82
Artifacts, Adjuncts, & Oddments (Dalziel & Dow).....	88

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## Mercenaries A to Z

hard-thewed henchmen by Simon Bull

We have seen many colourful characters presented in the *Knights & Knaves* column here in *Fight On!*, but there does seem to be a significant bias toward “Knights” – powerful or industrious individuals of noteworthy accomplishment. What of the Knaves? To rectify this imbalance, I present herein 26 ordinary, red-shirted 1<sup>st</sup> level fighting men and women to flesh out your front ranks. These warriors – available for hire in a campaign world near you! – were generated in classic style, with three six-sided dice.

### A is for Aldred of the Azure Legion:

DC 6, hp 4, SPD 12; S 11, I 16, W 10, D 7, C 12, Ch 11  
Aldred is a middle aged fighting man who once served with the Azure Legion. He is exceptionally clever, and will take any opportunity to demonstrate his acumen. He speaks Vothic, Tresse, and Barshee, and can even read the Archaic script. Aldred is equipped with ring mail, shield, and spear, and carries a hand-axe as backup. No one really knows why he is no longer with the Legion.

### B is for Brandon the Blade:

DC 4, hp 7, SPD 9; S 11, I 10, W 7, D 10, C 13, Ch 12

Brandon is an affable young fellow and competent fighter whose only flaw is his lack of common sense. His bravado usually exceeds his ability, except perhaps with the tavern wenches. Brandon is equipped with chainmail, helm, and shield, and fights left-handed with a fanatically polished sword which he believes to be mithril. In fact, it is ordinary steel. He also carries a dagger at his right hip.

### C is for Clifford:

DC 6, hp 8, SPD 12; S 17, I 8, W 6, D 13, C 10, Ch 8  
Clifford is a great hairy ox of a man, with a bushy ginger beard and long plaited hair. He wears a great horned helmet and a shabby ringmail hauberk, which he took from the body of soldier who called him a lackwit. A pair of throwing axes hang from his belt, but it is the giant two-handed war-hammer he carries which gives him the look of a Norse legend.

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you are not alone!**



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**TARGA Announces International Traditional Gaming Week 2010 – March 21-27!** Kicking things off at GaryCon 2 in Lake Geneva and winding up with a Dave Arneson tribute in NYC!

## **D** is for “Devil Eyes” Denelle :

DC 8, hp 4, SPD 12; S 5, I 15, W 8, D 7, C 6, Ch 13

Denelle is a slender woman, scarcely larger than a child, and wholly unsuited to the ranks of warriors. She has pale skin, long dark hair, and striking amber eyes – some claim she can enchant a man with her stare alone. Though this is untrue, Denelle is in fact a scribe under the influence of a terrible Geas to serve as a foot soldier until she has slain one hundred foes. She is fluent in the Vothic, Tresse, and Sylvian tongues, but cannot utter a word about her curse. Her poor strength enables her to wear only a leather carapace and helm, and although she is not particularly gifted with either, Denelle carries a light crossbow & 12 bolts and a light weight pick.

## **E** is for Edmund of Easterwick:

DC 2, hp 6, SPD 6; S 15, I 7, W 11, D 13, C 11, Ch 11

Edmund is the fourth son of a distant rural Lord who has fallen into poverty. He is blunt rather than honest and practical rather than munificent. He lacks the wit for politics. He takes contests of arms very seriously, how-

ever, believing that one day his valour will win back his family fortune. Edmund wears an old but well-maintained suit of full plate armour with a matching visored helm, and carries a shield bearing his family crest (a Bison's mantle). All are the last heirlooms of his estate. He wields an ordinary sword, having lost his father's more than a year ago.

## **F** is for Franklin Fourund:

DC 3, hp 6, SPD 6; S 16, I 10, W 12, D 5, C 7, Ch 11

Franklin is a tree-sized giant getting into his middle years. Despite his age, Franklin is still strong as a bull, but his eyesight is much diminished and he suffers from coughs and sore joints (but would never admit it), especially in cold weather. He is a reliable but pragmatic old soldier, perfectly willing to let eager young men rush out to prove themselves while he holds the line. Franklin has campaigned for many seasons to earn his plate armour, helm and shield, which he wears and maintains proudly. He carries a sword and dagger, although both seem to spend more time in the scabbard than out.



## **G** is for Garrick the Garrote:

DC 7, hp 5, SPD 12; S 14, I 12, W 12, D 12, C 6, Ch 7  
Garrick is a squint-eyed, greasy haired lazy brute who enjoys bullying “weaklings”. He is large and strong but also obese, and tires quickly of any physical work. He will huff, wheeze and complain after climbing a single flight of stairs, and would far rather send a “weakling” to climb them for him. Garrick wears a sweat-stained leather jack whose lacing is stretched to bursting across the girth of his belly and a grubby steel helmet which he is wont to remove at every opportunity, for it is too tight. A thick-hafted mace hangs from a strap at his belt, which conceals his eponymous garrote.

## **H** is for Haeden of Harrenshire:

DC 4, hp 5, SPD 9; S 11, I 14, W 10, D 13, C 11, Ch 14  
Haeden is tall, straight-backed, and well-liked among his peers. He keeps his blonde curls clear of his steady grey eyes with a leather band. He is a charismatic leader and a clever logistician besides. Haeden is rather proud of his literacy and likes to write lyrics and compose poems – which he doesn't mind reading for general amusement. He speaks Tresse and Barshee and reads Archaic. Haeden wears a chainmail shirt over a black leather hauberk and a tall, well polished helm. He carries a kite shield into battle and arms himself with a straight-edged sword. He also carries a light crossbow and a case of bolts.

## **I** is for Isolde the Irresistible:

DC 9, hp 6, SPD 12; S 13, I 11, W 5, D 7, C 17, Ch 17  
Isolde is a green-eyed, raven-tressed goddess who recklessly flaunts her stunning beauty and good health. She eschews armour in favour of outrageously revealing attire, for the mere sight of her figure is enough to give pause to sober and enraged men alike. She is a competent fighter but doesn't hesitate to call upon men (who will do almost anything to attract her favour) in a tight spot. Isolde wears only a helmet to battle. She carries a large round shield and a straight single-edged sword, and in each of her high black boots she conceals a dagger.

## **J** is for Jage the Jackal:

DC 2, hp 9, SPD 9; S 14, I 13, W 12, D 15, C 14, Ch 9  
Jage is a paragon of soldierhood who is alarmingly good at everything. This is in no small part due to the excellent training his wealthy merchant family provided him. As a result, Jage is strong, fit and quick, and nobody's fool besides. He has a cautious nature and an almost paranoid need to plan everything. His comrades laughingly call him “the Jackal”, for he is supposed to have singlehandedly prevented a pack of hungry jackals from despoiling the company camp a few months back while the rest of the men were busy whoring. However, unknown even to himself, Jage carries a dreaded lycan-

STEP INTO THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF THE DUNGEON  
SUPPLEMENT VI

# The Majestic Wilderlands



BY ROBERT CONLEY  
A RULES SUPPLEMENT FOR  
*Swords & Wizardry*  
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thropy from the incident which will soon begin to play out its perilous game. He wears banded mail, full helm, and shield, and favors his sword over his mace.

## **K** is for Keanton the Kite Hawk:

DC 5, hp 5, SPD 9; S 13, I 9, W 9, D 12, C 15, Ch 13  
Keanton is a hale young fellow blessed with as fair a measure of grace and muscle as any man might want. He is easygoing and generous, and makes friends quickly. However, his great fascination is with birds of prey, and he is always on the lookout for signs of such. It is his hope one day to assume a role at the Royal Aviaries. Keaton wears a chain shirt over brigandine, and fights with sword in his right hand, and a hand-axe in his left.

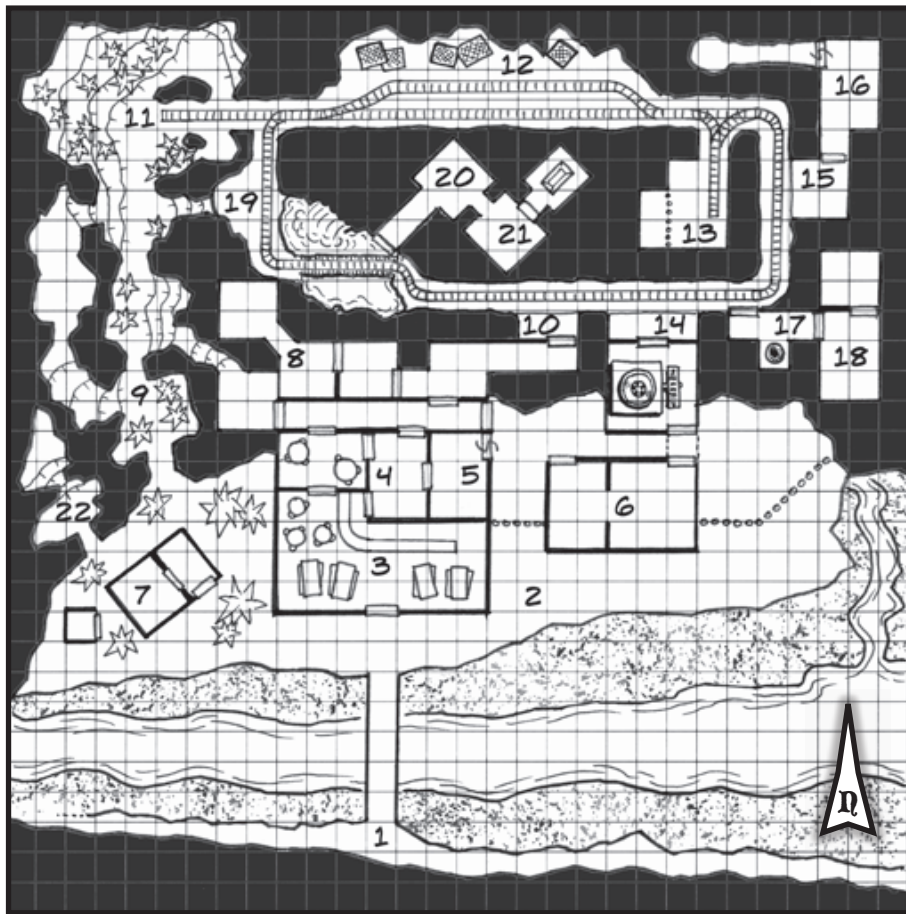
## **L** is for Lynelle of Linwest:

DC 2, hp 6, SPD 6; S 10, I 9, W 6, D 9, C 13, Ch 14  
Lynelle is an affable trickster, always trying some ribald prank to keep herself and present company amused. She can be entirely inappropriate, but is popular nonetheless, and generally good for company morale. She is also a strong believer in luck and the will of the Gods, and is prone to paying great heed to signs – especially those expressed through gambling and games (*continued page 86*)

# Arendt's Old Peculiar



– Because you really can't survive on water and rations alone –  
(Dedicated to all those players who'd rather squirrel away their hard-earned gold in hollow tree stumps than treat their characters to something nice every now and then... and a bunch of others, I guess.)



For many, Venerable Arendt was a saint. He led a simple life in a cave in Blackwater Gorge, a deep, narrow fissure in the hills, yet many people made the arduous journey to visit him. His underground garden was a wonder, his magnificent railway a mechanical marvel unheard of outside the grandest dwarven mines. What made him legendary, however, was the sublime, invigorating drink he brewed from the aromatic *kurá* beans in his garden. Arendt's hot *kurá* was bliss in a cup, a delicacy without peer. But alas, Venerable Arendt is no more.

Decades after his passing, a band of goblins took over Arendt's caves. Led by Boss Hog, a smart (for a goblin) and industrious individual, the band discovered some of Arendt's secrets and opened an establishment for selling *kurá* – at exorbitant prices. While their version is a mere shadow of what Arendt brewed, many patrons have become thralls to the addictive drink... and

## Boss Hog Gob's Hot Slop Shop

(as it is now called) has become a lucrative (if seedy) business.

### Random patrons:

- 1 2d4 kobolds
  - 2 2d4 goblins
  - 3 1d6 orcs
  - 4 1d4 ogres
  - 5 1d3 trolls
  - 6 An NPC party
- (Note: The patrons tolerate each other – anything for *kurá*!)

### Misc. encounters:

- 1 Assorted vermin
- 2 Boss Hog + 1d6 goblin workers
- 3 1d4 escaped giant rats
- 4 An NPC party on a spying mission
- 5 A runaway cart
- 6 1d6 giant bats

### Brew of the day:

- 1 *Abdo's Black Bile*: Belch acid for about an hour.
- 2 *Lord Hastings' House Blend*: 2x speed, 10 min.
- 3 *Egnoran's Bliss*: Become lethargic for 1-2 hours.

Note on style: While not dead serious, "Arendt's Old Peculiar" is by no means a comedy dungeon. Attempting to loot or trash the place should lead to disaster for the PCs. The patrons and employees may tolerate a well-behaved PC party, but troublemakers will be dealt with... brutally.

Note on treasure: There's very little gold and just a few magic items in the dungeon, but clever PCs could make a killing with *kurá* – it is a valuable commodity if they manage to cart it to civilization.

1 Blackwater Gorge: A narrow ledge descends from the surface. Halfway to the bottom, a bridge spans the chasm. Most of the time, 2d6 patrons loiter on the bridge in a semi-orderly queue, waiting to be admitted in to the *kurá* shop (#3).

2 The Yard: A covered ledge cut into the cliff face. The larger buildings reach the ceiling, some 30' above. The W end is overgrown with *kurá* plants. In the E end is a storage area, separated by a 10' tall wooden fence.

3 The Common Room: A smoky, dimly lit hall strewn with crude tables, stools and benches. Gorra the troll bouncer guards the front door and maintains order, while 3 goblins serve bowls of *kurá* to the patrons. The place is usually packed. The small private room at the back is reserved for important (or potentially dangerous) guests.

4 The Kitchen: A crude fireplace with several pots of boiling water; copper kettles for brewing drinks; open kegs of the latest batch from the warehouse; piles of mismatched earthenware bowls for serving hot *kurá*.

5 The Office: Boss Hog the goblin proprietor keeps his ledgers here (the entries are gibberish – he can't write). A stone block on the E wall can be pushed aside, opening a crawlway out. A bag of coins is hidden under a loose flagstone in the NW corner.

6 The Warehouse: Sacks of beans and kegs of ground *kurá*. The NE door opens under the arch of a gateway connecting the house to the one on the north.

7 The Huts: The stench of unwashed goblin workers hangs heavy in these ramshackle sleeping huts. Straw, trash, and animal hides cover the floors.

8 Side Chambers: These small rooms, carved by idle hands suffering from a severe caffeine rush, serve no practical purpose. They are full of trash and vermin. Lazy goblins hide here when they're in the mood for shirking their duties.

9 The Caverns: Natural caves with an uneven, rocky floor. Some *kurá* plants try to thrive in the dim light trickling in from both north and south.

10 The Platform: A small, raised alcove opens into the main railway tunnel. Boss Hog leaves for his frequent inspection tours from here.

11 The Plantation Cave: A large cave lit by a single, huge, glowing mushroom in the centre. The best *kurá* plants grow here. A gargantuan toad – too large and lazy to leave – eats the *kurá* berries, then regurgitates the beans and spews them out. A troop of goblins scurry about, picking the beans from the pools of bile (and sometimes end up on the toad's menu, to the amusement of their co-workers).

12 The Roastery: Rahra the troll roasts the beans (carted from #11) on mesh grilles set over jets of hot, volcanic gas on the floor. He is always sweaty and irate.

13 The Workshop: The Glorious Order of Engineers (really just a group of self-

important goblins) work and live here. They run and maintain the carts and care for the giant rats used for pulling them. The rats are kept in a pen at the back.

14 The Grindery: A platform strewn with empty sacks leads to a room housing a giant *kurá* grinder. It is powered by a treadmill run by a hamster – grown to enormous size by a Girdle of Gigantism it wears as a collar. The 20' animal is quite timid, but if let loose, its panicked scrabbling can be quite devastating. Garn the troll, who operates the machine, feeds the hamster *kurá* beans to keep it energetic.

15 The Junkyard: This disused platform serves as a scrapyard for the engineers (#13). Someone has recently cleared a hidden path to the N door.

16 The Secret Room: An unknown party has managed to ferry some sacks of beans to this room. They smuggle them out through a vertical shaft accessible via a secret tunnel at the back of the room. (Note: The PCs could also enter through here.)

17 The Well: A circular shaft leads to the underground stream (from #19).

18 The Alchemy Shop: Sly Eyes, Boss Hog's brother, studies alchemy here. He tries to recreate Arendt's *Perfect Cuppa* with his foul chemicals. Boss Hog shows him with gold from the bar, but it keeps turning into lead (or so he claims – he actually smuggles it out through the well in #17).

19 The Waterfall Cave: Cold, clear water rushes out of fissures in the ceiling to form a deep pool. The railway crosses the pool on a creaking, dilapidated bridge. The nearby "S" bend on the tracks, together with the engineers' penchant for speeding, results in spectacular crashes here every now and then. Near the water on the NE wall, shadowed by the bridge and obscured by spray and moss, is the door to Arendt's crypt, which the goblins haven't found yet. There's also a small opening on the W wall, some 10' above the cave floor.

20 The Antechamber: The first chamber of Arendt's crypt houses his collection of fine china. Several valuable *kurá* services are displayed on niches cut to the walls.

21 The Crypt: Venerable Arendt left his diary here for the edification of those who came after him. The book of recipes and instructions lies on an ornate bookstand. Behind a stone door to the NE lies his stone coffin – on top of which is a simple copper *kurá* pot, *The Blessed Pot of Brewing*. (It is the secret of Arendt's *Perfect Cuppa*: It produces a smooth, inimitable flavour – with no annoying magical properties.)

22 The Hermit's Cave: Ancient Melith, Arendt's last apprentice, lives here. He is reduced to begging and appears to be quite mad. While old and somewhat disoriented, Melith could act as a guide – but he claims he really needs his morning *kurá* first... Spare some gold for a cuppa, kind sirs?

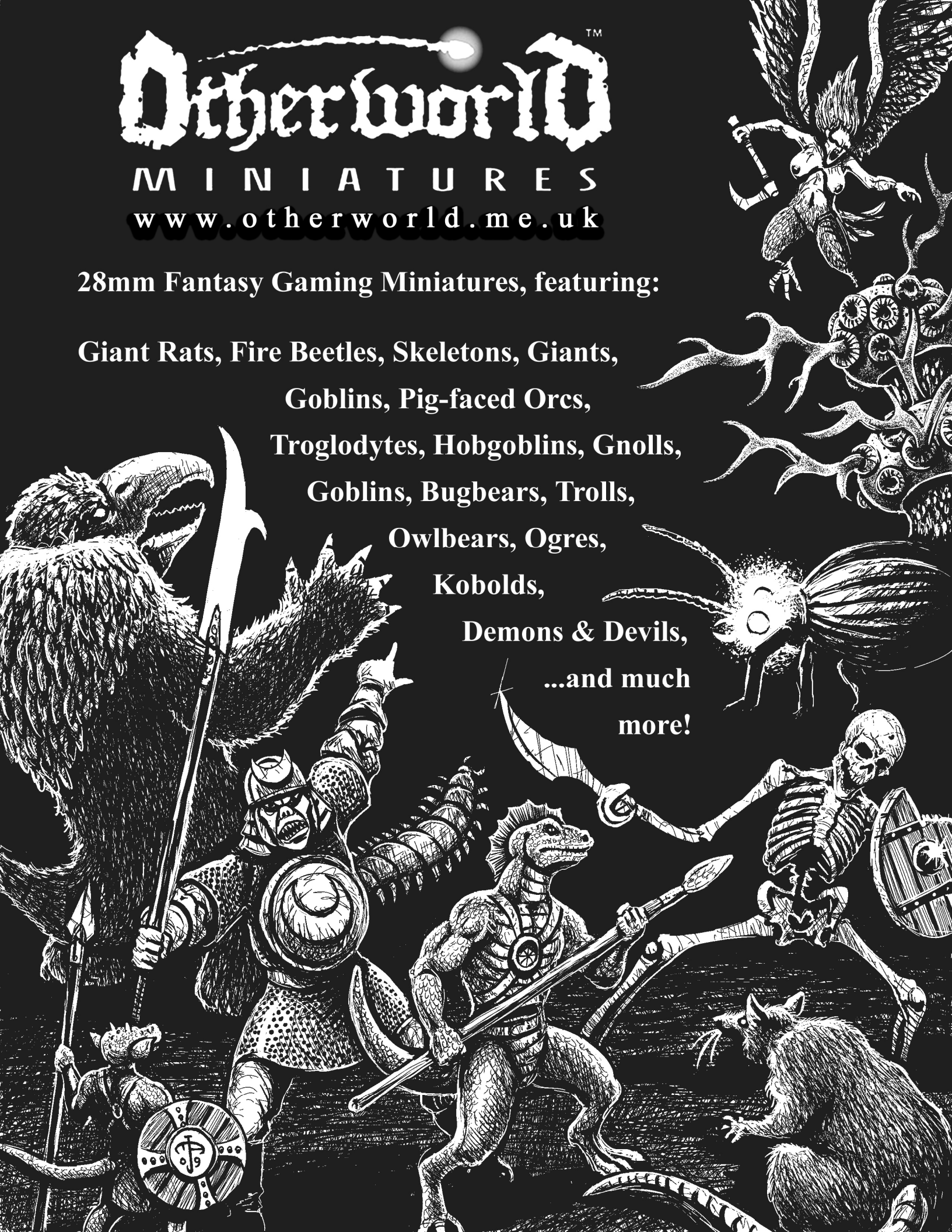
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more!



# Experience for Exploration

rules options by Jeff Rients

*I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die.*  
– Roy Batty, Blade Runner

A good adventure isn't just a corpse count and a treasure tally. Part of an adventurer's soul is wrapped up in the places they've been and the wonders they've beheld. *Role-Master* posits a rule whereby you earn 1 experience point for every mile travelled. Since it takes 10,000 xp to make level 2 in that system, travel isn't the most efficient way to make your sorcerer's apprentice into the next Gandalf, but it could be done. Although a flat amount per mile seems a somewhat blunt instrument, I like the idea of XP earned for visiting new and exciting places.

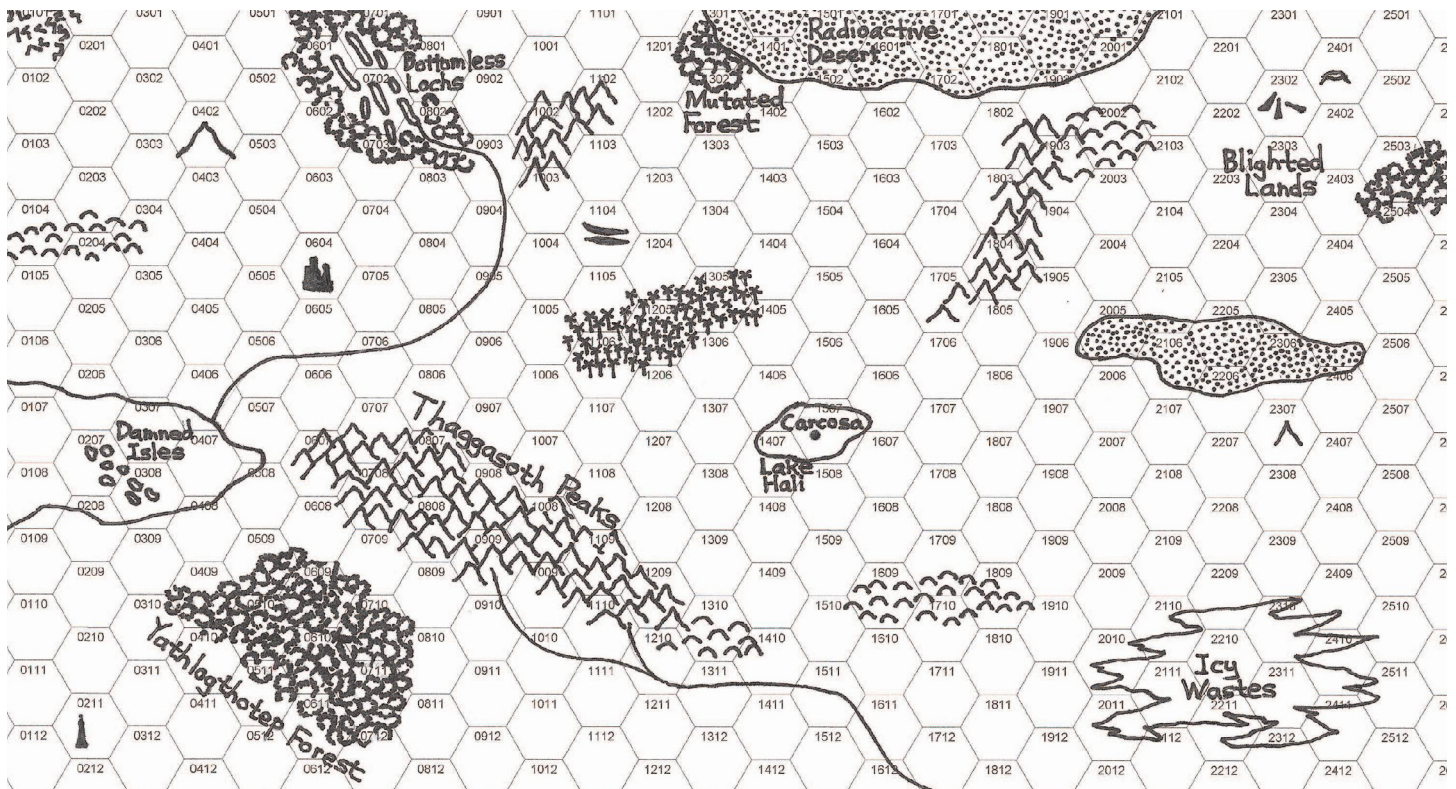
Get out your campaign world map (and key if you've got one). If you need don't already have a campaign world to set your fantasy adventures in, I recommend starting with Goodman Games' *Points of Light* and/or *Points of Light II*, but this method should work with any campaign setting. Okay, you've got the map in front of you. Now imagine which places on the map are coolest to visit. What places are breathtakingly beautiful? Which locations are desolate beyond imagining? What spots on the map hath no mortal seen for generations? What places surge with magical energies or reek of unholiness? Take your ideas and make a list of places in order of awesomeosity. As an example, I'll

give a quick look-over to the hexmap in the center of Geoffrey McKinney's mind-rending *Carcosa*. The following places strike me as particularly nifty:

- Carcosa (the haunted city in hex 1507 from which the setting derives its name)
- Mount Voormith'adreth (Shub-Niggurath's lair in hex 0402)
- Crystal City of the Space Aliens (hex 0604)
- The Shards in the Blighted Lands (hex 2303)
- Lake Hali
- Damned Isles
- Thaggasoth Peaks
- Yaglogthotep Forest
- Icy Wastes

There are plenty of other interesting places; Mr. McKinney positively crams *Carcosa* full of eldritch doom. But for a small map, I think 6 to 12 places is probably sufficient. A larger map (like one of the *Wilderlands of High Fantasy* maps) could maybe squeeze in 20 or 30 wondrous places, while a large campaign map (e.g. Darlene's *World of Greyhawk* map) could easily hold a hundred.

Next think about how much you want to award pure exploration in your campaign. I find these sorts of decisions hard to make in the abstract, so here's a line of thinking that might help: if a newly minted PC decides to cross the campaign map to visit the top item on your list, how close should they be to 2nd level after such an achievement? Set aside any thought as to encounters along the way, we're talking here strictly about the effect of the experience of



visiting the location. How changed will the PC be on their return from this fey place? If I were to run *Carcosa* I definitely would want visiting the city of Carcosa itself to be a life-changing experience, so let's say I go overboard and establish an award of 2,000xp for visiting it. Once you have the top item set, you can eyeball the rest of the list:

- Carcosa City: 2,000xp
- Mount Voormith'adareth: 1,500xp
- Crystal City: 1,000xp
- The Shards: 500xp
- Lake Hali: 250xp
- Damned Isles: 200xp
- Thaggasoth Peaks: 150xp
- Yaglogthotep Forest: 100xp
- Icy Wastes: 50xp

Obviously those numbers are completely arbitrary. If you want to keep the PCs focused on killing things and taking stuff, then by all means cut all those awards down to more reasonable amounts. But assuming you like the idea of PCs climbing mountains just "because it's there" then I feel you should offer XP awards comparable to standard murder and pillage. If you really enjoy this concept of offering experience for exploration then a simple chart could be expanded with special rules for some of the items:

- Carcosa City: 2,000xp but must spend one night in city
- Mount Voormith'adareth: 1,500xp for the **first** human to climb to the peak, 50xp thereafter
- Crystal City: 1,000xp but must enter the Dome
- The Shards: 500xp
- Lake Hali: 250xp if Carcosa is viewed in the moonlight
- Damned Isles: 200xp for first island visited, 100xp per island thereafter
- Thaggasoth Peaks: 150xp if mountains crossed, double if it takes two hexes to get across
- Yaglogthotep Forest: 100xp
- Icy Wastes: 50xp but 200xp for crossing hex 2210, "The Frigid Heart of the Wastes"

You can also write up special rules like "dwarves earn triple XP for any ocean voyage" or "followers of St. Salamander earn 1,000xp extra for praying at each of his Seven Sequestered Shrines". In a similar vein, one could establish once-in-a-lifetime experience awards for non-location-based wonders:

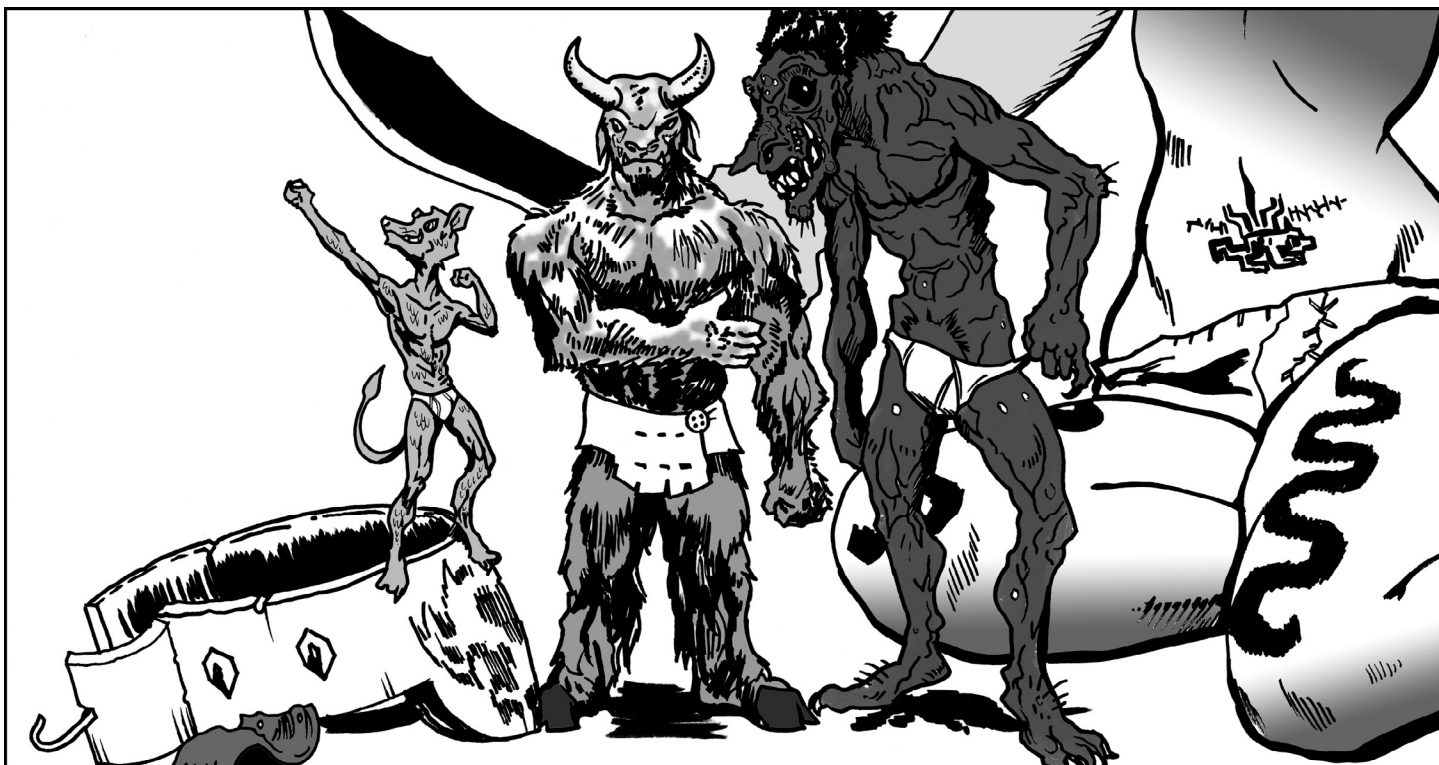
- See a dragon fly overhead: 100xp (but 0 if pooped on)
- Ride a dragon: 500xp the first time
- Dance with the fairies: 300xp
- Watch a city burn: 150xp
- Shipwrecked: 100xp (but 0 if you sabotage the vessel)

In order to successfully implement these ideas and get the players to buy in, you need to keep in mind two things. First, you have to share at least some items on this list with



your player group. You can't create a feedback loop of action/encouragement if the players don't know what's going on. You may want to bring your players in on the ground floor by soliciting the players for possible experience awards. If you're using a well-known setting enterprising players will be happy to suggest ideas. Creative ones will make stuff up you hadn't considered, to the betterment of your campaign. Second, when the players accomplish one of these goals, sell it as a big deal. Break out your over-the-top poetic voice and use those fifty cent words. Have tales of the PCs' exploits circulate in the broader world, with peasants in the street whispering "There goes Lucas of the Amber Blade, he's the only man to ever cross the Shimmering Desert and return!" Most players eat that stuff up. Ω

(Find out more about Points of Light I and II at [goodman-games.com/standaloneRPG.html](http://goodman-games.com/standaloneRPG.html), about Carcosa at [carcosa-geoffrey.blogspot.com](http://carcosa-geoffrey.blogspot.com), and about how to apply this article to Greyhawk at [tinyurl.com/yk4eycd](http://tinyurl.com/yk4eycd). – Jeff & Ignatius)



# Supersize Me!

rules options by Daniel R. Collins

What follows is a simple and surprisingly accurate system for "baseline" humanoid and giant-class characters. It assumes that Strength and Constitution rise indefinitely, and that each give a +1 modifier for every 3 points over 10 (Strength modifying melee damage, Constitution hit-points-per-die; if you have different assumptions in your game, adjust accordingly.) At any time, you may opt to convert modifiers of +3 into added d6 dice. For example, using this system, a Troll, with 20 Strength and 25 Consti-

tution, has 3d6+15 hit dice (each die +5) and does d6+3 damage – the equivalent of 7 HD and 2d6 damage. (This assumes fairly crude weapons like claws or a club; we increase the die type for more advanced weapons.) If you wish to roll Str and Con, convert the scores below to modifiers by subtracting 10 (Example: An Ogre can roll Str 3d6+8 and Con 3d6+13). It's recommended that these types be allowed to enter the game as a warrior with level equal to their equivalent Hit Dice, for the purpose of experience point gains. Finally, the 'fat index' gives you a ratio of species girth relative to humans (1.0); note that according to this analysis, Trolls should be the most grossly fat creatures in the game! Ω

Monster	Base HD	Avg. Con	Avg. Str	Mod. HD	HD Equiv.	Damage	Height	Fat Index
Kobold	1	5	5	1-2	½	1d6-2	3	1.7
Goblin	1	7	7	1-1	1-1	1d6-1	4	1.6
Orc	1	10	10	1	1	1d6	6	1.0
Hobgoblin	1	13	12	1+1	1+1	1d6	6.5	1.1
Gnoll	1	16	14	1+2	2	1d6+1	7	1.2
Bugbear	2	20	16	2+6	3+1	1d6+2	7	2.7
Ogre	2	23	18	2+8	4+1	1d6+2	9	1.9
Purple Ogre	2	28	20	2+12	5+2	1d6+3	10.5	1.8
Troll	3	25	20	3+15	6+3	1d6+3	9	3.2
Scrub Giant	3	30	25	3+18	8	1d6+5	12	2.0
Rock Giant	3	32	30	3+21	9	1d6+6	15	1.4
Ice Giant	3	34	33	3+24	10+1	1d6+7	18	1.1
Cloud Giant	4	36	36	4+32	12+2	1d6+8	20	1.2
Storm Giant	4	40	43	4+40	15	1d6+11	24	1.0

# Insectaurs and Masterminds

rules for *Mutant Future* by Tim “Sniderman” Snider

## Mastermind

**Hit Dice:** 1d4 per point of CON

**Mutations:** 1d4 + 2 mental, no physical

**Description:** Masterminds are the mysterious intellectuals of the *Mutant Future*. They feel that only education and knowledge can resurrect the civilizations of The Ancients. It's fairly easy to identify a Mastermind. They appear as Pure Strain Humans except for an enlarged, bald cranium housing their overdeveloped brains. They can be aloof, egotistical, and haughty, though they are not malicious. They often feel that they know the correct course of action in any situation, though they may overanalyze potential outcomes to the point of near inaction. One interesting characteristic of Masterminds is that they do not speak. Rather, they communicate through an innate *Neural Telepathy* ability, which is not to be counted as one of the Mastermind's mental mutations. Masterminds are usually a fairly isolated race, preferring to form small communities called “Think Tanks” where they silently commune with each other and try to formulate a plan for reviving the civilizations of Old Earth. However, a Mastermind may be sent out into the world to gather data, do research, and interact with the denizens of the world.

Masterminds are physically weak and frail. They have a penalty of -2 when rolling for STR. They also roll 1d4 per point of CON for their hit point total instead of the usual 1d6. However, due to their advanced mental capacities Masterminds receive a +2 bonus when rolling for their INT and WIL scores. Though weak, Masterminds can thrive in the *Mutant Future* due to their highly developed brains, which have unlocked powerful psychic abilities. Masterminds begin with 1d4 + 2 mental mutations. If any mutation is rolled twice, the Mutant Lord is encouraged to “supercharge” the ability by doubling its range, increasing its damage potential, or otherwise improving on the mutation in some way. Masterminds will never possess any physical mutations (except for, you know, the big head). When advancing in level, a Mastermind has a 10% cumulative chance of developing a new mental mutation. For example, when advancing from level 1 to 2, a Mastermind has a 10% chance. If the roll fails, the Mastermind has a 20% chance when advancing to level 3, a 30% chance when advancing to level 4, and so on. Upon a successful mutation roll, this cumulative chance drops back to the initial 10% whereby the process begins again.

## Insectaur

**Hit Dice:** 1d6 per point of CON

**Mutations:** 2 insectaur, 1d6 human/animal

**Description:** Insectaurs are a mutant hybrid of man and insect. Most Insectaurs have the size and general build of a

basic humanoid (5-6 feet in height, two arms/legs, stands upright, etc.) with the general features of an insect (multifaceted eyes, hard exoskeleton shell, antennae, etc.). It is assumed that the Insectaur has a rudimentary human-like intelligence enabling it to function in *Mutant Future* society. Insectaurs gather in small clusters known as “hives” or “colonies.” Within these colonies, Insectaurs are usually assigned a role such as worker, drone, soldier, etc., answering to a Queen who acts as ruler of the colony. The PC should initially roll on the *Insectaur Species Table* (below, middle column) to determine what insect the PC resembles. This may also help in determining appropriate mutations. All Insectaurs should then roll 2 mutations on the *Insectaur Mutations Table* (below, right) and an additional 1d6 standard human/animal mutations divided between Physical and Mental. Insectaurs have the ability to communicate with other insect/humanoid hybrids such as mants, cockroachoids, and mansquitoes, receiving a -3 CHA Reaction Adjustment when dealing with these creatures.

### Insectaur Species and Mutation Tables

d100	Species	Mutation
01-04	Ant	360° Vision
05-08	Bee	Acidic Saliva
09-12	Beetle	Camouflage
13-16	Butterfly	Complete Wing Development
17-20	Centipede	Flatten Body
21-24	Cockroach	Hard Outer Shell/Carapace
25-28	Cricket	Insect Communication
29-32	Dragonfly	Leaping
33-36	Dung beetle	Multifaceted Eyes
37-40	Firefly	Multiple Limbs
41-44	Flea	Natural Insect Weapons
45-48	Fly	Pheromone Trail
49-52	Grasshopper	Quill Throwing
53-56	Hornet	Sonic Song
57-60	Ladybug	Stench Gland
61-64	Locust	Tar Saliva
65-68	Mosquito	Vampiric Proboscis
69-72	Moth	Venomous Stinger
73-76	Preying mantis	Wall Crawling
77-80	Scorpion	Webbing
81-84	Spider	<i>Diminutive/Actual Size</i>
85-88	Stinkbug	<i>Instinctual Overload</i>
89-92	Termite	<i>Phobia</i>
93-96	Tick	<i>Sensitivity</i>
97-00	Wasp	<i>Small-Brained</i>

### Mutation Descriptions:

**360° Vision:** The Insectaur's multifaceted eyes, antennae, or other sensory organs can “see” in a 360-degree arc around itself. The Insectaur is only surprised on a 1 in 6.



**Acidic Saliva:** The PC's saliva is a caustic goo that can eat through most materials. It does 3d6 damage every round to creatures which come into contact with it.

**Camouflage:** The PC's skin can change colors, blending in with its surroundings like a chameleon. The change is instantaneous. The ML should assign a chance the PC will not be noticed when camouflaged this way: 95% hidden in a dark forest vs. 50% in a brightly lit empty room.

**Complete Wing Development:** As per the *Complete Wing Development* mutation on page 23 of the MF rulebook.

**Flatten Body:** The PC can literally squeeze his/her body to fit through a crack no more than 1 inch high. This mutation is useful for slipping under doors, behind cabinets, or through tight openings. The character's other dimensions remain the same, so squeezing through a pipe or similar small opening is not possible.

**Hard Outer Shell/Carapace:** As per the *Natural Armor* mutation on page 25 of the MF rulebook.

**Insect Communication:** The PC can communicate freely with all forms of insect life, mutant or otherwise. It is left to the ML to determine intelligence for such creatures. Insects may be coerced into following simple commands as well.

**Leaping:** The Insectaur's legs enable it to leap to great heights and distances. A PC can leap up to a height of 100 feet and they can leap a distance of 200 feet.

**Multifaceted Eyes:** The Insectaur can see in all known light spectrum ranges, including infrared and ultraviolet. Treat as having both *Thermal Vision* and *Ultraviolet Vision* mutations on page 26 of the MF rulebook.

**Multiple Limbs:** The PC has 1d4 extra arms on his torso. Each extra arm gives the PC an extra attack per round.

**Natural Insect Weapons:** The PC has an insect-like natural weapon. It is left to the PC and ML to determine its nature (ie, grasping pincers, mandibles, horns) as well as its damage potential. It is suggested that poisoned weapons not be allowed with this particular mutation.

**Pheromone Trail:** The PC can leave a scent trail that he can follow without question. The trail will be detectable for 4 months before fading. This ability is useful when it's time for the PC to find his way back while exploring.

**Quill Throwing:** The PC has a set of spiny quills that it can fire as deadly projectiles. The range is that of a thrown dagger and each quill does 1d4 damage. A PC can throw 6 quills per day and must "regrow" spent quills overnight.

**Sonic Song:** The Insectaur can sound off with a high-pitched buzzing or "trilling" that causes hypnosis in creatures who hear it. Once a day, the PC can "sing", forcing up to 6 HD of creatures (or any one creature with less than 10 HD or 10 CON) to save versus poison. If the save fails, the creature(s) will fall into a trance for 2d4 rounds. Victims can be commanded to perform any non-suicidal act, including attacking their own allies.

**Stench Gland:** Twice a day, the Insectaur can release a pungent odor from a gland that causes all creatures within 15 feet to save versus poison or be rendered incapacitated with nausea for 1d6 rounds.

**Tar Saliva:** The PC can "spit" a gluey wad of goo that acts as a powerful adhesive. This substance can immobilize any creature of human-size or smaller. The glue will dry out in 10 minutes, crumbling into dust and releasing its bond.

**Vampiric Proboscis:** The PC has a long, tube-like appendage that it can use to feed from victims. If a successful hit is made, the PC drains 1d4 hp per round from the victim. The PC will gain these hit points up to (but not over) his original starting hit point total.

**Venomous Stinger:** The PC has a toxic poison that it can inject through a hidden stinger. A PC can use this as an attack each round. The class of poison should be determined randomly.

**Wall Crawling:** The Insectaur can cling to any surface, scuttling over walls and ceilings as if they were floors. It can support its own weight and carry up to their CON x 10 pounds, but if it goes over its weight limit it will fall.

**Webbing:** The PC can spin webs like a spider, though she cannot "throw" them like a zip line. The webbing can adhere to any surface and each line can support 500 pounds before snapping. Webs can be used to secure items as well as to cocoon those the PC wishes to keep safe.

**Diminutive/Actual size:** The PC is the actual size of the insect species his or her player rolled up. Characters still have the same stats and hit point totals, but are no bigger than a common insect of their species.

**Instinctual Overload:** The Insectaur is barely able to hang onto what human-like intelligence it has. It has a 10% cumulative chance of reverting back to a primal insect-like state whenever the PC is hit in a given combat. (The first hit gives a 10% chance, the second 20%, and so on.) If this percentage is hit, the PC will fly into a berserk rage and attack the nearest creature (be it friend or foe). The PC will be unable (or unwilling) to communicate. This overload lasts until combat has ended, at which time the PC's personality will reassert itself.

**Phobia:** The PC has a paralyzing fear. Whenever it comes face-to-face with the object of its fear, it will flee in the opposite direction for 1d4 rounds. Roll 1d6 to determine phobia: 1-2 Fire, 3-4 Water, 5-6 Smoke.

**Sensitivity:** The Insectaur is extremely susceptible to damage from a specific source. Attacks with this source will deal double damage to the PC. Roll 1d4 to determine sensitivity: 1 Sonic, 2 Light/Laser, 3 Fire, 4 Cold.

**Small-Brained:** The PC is sub-evolved and remains at a lower level of human intelligence. Divide the PC's INT score in half, rounding up. Ω



# The Soothsayer

new character class by Ragnorakk

Soothsayers are a sub-class of mage, though they share qualities with illusionists and priests as well. To be a soothsayer a character must have a minimum Intelligence of 12, Wisdom 9, Dexterity 11, and Charisma 9. Soothsayers do not gain bonuses to earned experience by dint of high ability scores. Soothsayers may be of any alignment, and may or may not be affiliated with a religious organization, cult, or church, but in any case should not be considered as a priestly representative of this organization.

Soothsayers gain levels and spells as illusionists (or regular mages if you don't have illusionists in your game). Hit dice are d6. Soothsayers can wear no armor heavier than leather and cannot use a shield. They may arm themselves as per mages/illusionists as well, but may also use or become proficient with a short sword or a mace (not both). Soothsayers attack and save as priests. They may use magic items available to mages, illusionists, and priests (though some deities/religious organizations might disallow the functions of clerical items for a particular Soothsayer whose alignment, outlook or purpose is antithetical).

## Spells available to soothsayers:

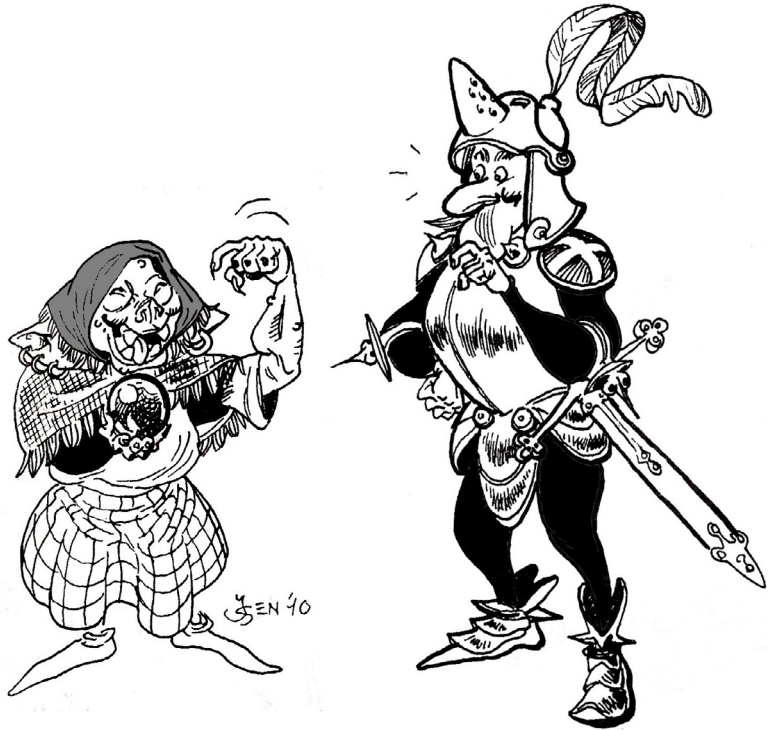
	Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four
1	Change Self	Augur	Blink	Charm Monster
2	Charm Humanoid	Detect Charm	Clair-audience	Confusion
3	Command	ESP	Clair-voyance	Contact Plane
4	Comprehend Languages	Find Traps	Dispel Magic	Cure Major Wounds
5	Cure Minor Wounds	Forget	Illusory Script	Detect Lie
6	Detect Evil	Hold Person	Non-detection	Divination
7	Detect Illusion	Hypnotic Pattern	Remove Curse	Emotion
8	Detect Magic	Speak to Animals	Slow	Exorcise
9	Hypnotism	Im.Phant. Force	Speak with Dead	Phantasmal Killer
10	Identify	Know Alignment	Spectral Force	Polymorph Self
11	Phantasmal Force	Locate Object	Suggestion	Wizard's Eye
12	Sonic Illusion	Misdirect	Tongues	Plane Shift

	Level Five	Level Six	Level Seven
1	Atonement	Find the Path	Astral Spell
2	Chaos	Legend Lore	Earthquake
3	Commune	Mass Suggest	Cacodemon
4	Feeblemind	Recall Word	Instant Summons
5	Magic Jar	Reincarnation	Mind Blank
6	Maze	Repulsion	Trap the Soul
7	Polymorph	Spiritwrack	Mass Charm
8	Speak w/ Monsters	Unseen Stalker	Heal
9	Quest	Veil	Antipathy/Sympathy
10	True Seeing	Vision	Alter Reality

Soothsayers are more inclined toward information gathering and influence than acts of grandiose magic. They are more likely found as fortune tellers, hermetic seers, advisors, adventurers, iconoclasts, zealots, charlatans, and/or mountebanks than as leaders of a flock, crusaders or academic thaumaturges. Many cultivate an aura of mystery about themselves. Some soothsayers are stoic about the future, while others actively attempt to influence and even change what they have seen before it comes to pass.

In addition to their other abilities, the particular methods of soothsayers allow them to *Read Magic* once per day for

each level they have attained. Should they find magic items involving decks of cards or dice, they may roll or draw twice when using them, keeping the better of the two results. Finally, soothsayers may cast the reversed form of any spell currently memorized, where applicable. Ω



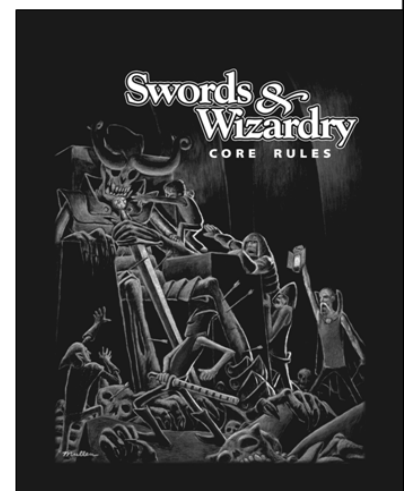
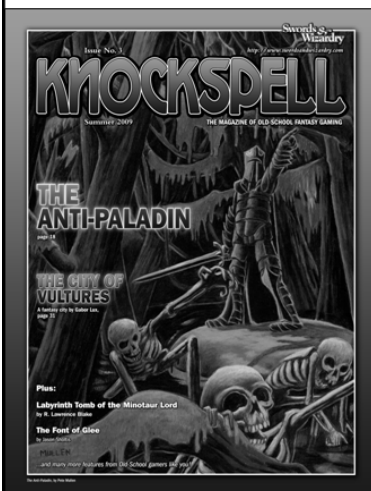
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# I Thirst

mind-bending adventure by Gabor Lux

**Playtesters:** 1<sup>st</sup> party Akos Barta (Zorlan, Son of Odbuj, Archer 3), Laszlo Simonits (Tio Blackbird, War 3), Gyorgy Gergovatz (Hagdor Ordur, Priest 3), Marcell Pap (Habbar al'Hadr, Thief 3); 2<sup>nd</sup> party Gabor Acs (Hawk the Etunian, Archer 2/Thief 2), Laszlo Feher (Licar del Avellos, Mage 5), Gyorgy L'Aune (Gorulga Heimdull, Barbarian 3)

**Background:** In the wastelands, in the barren hills and dust and rubble-choked gorges, there is no life: no grass, no trees and no water. Even spells which draw water from the land are ineffective, and the gods are deaf to prayer. These are the lands of Alvan Vorodan. Vorodan's great dream was unmade by the gods, and he was stripped of his mind and imprisoned in depths of stone, never again to walk his ruined empire. His servants met a similar fate.

Yet dreams have a habit of never completely dying. The powers of the mirage occasionally enthrall those travellers who go too far without food and water, those who deviate from the major routes, or those whose only fault was coming here without a caravan. And sometimes not even caravan followers are safe: taking a walk outside the evening encampment, following a deadly rival, an elusive girl, or a thief, or just inspecting an interesting outcropping of rock, they disappear and are seen no more.

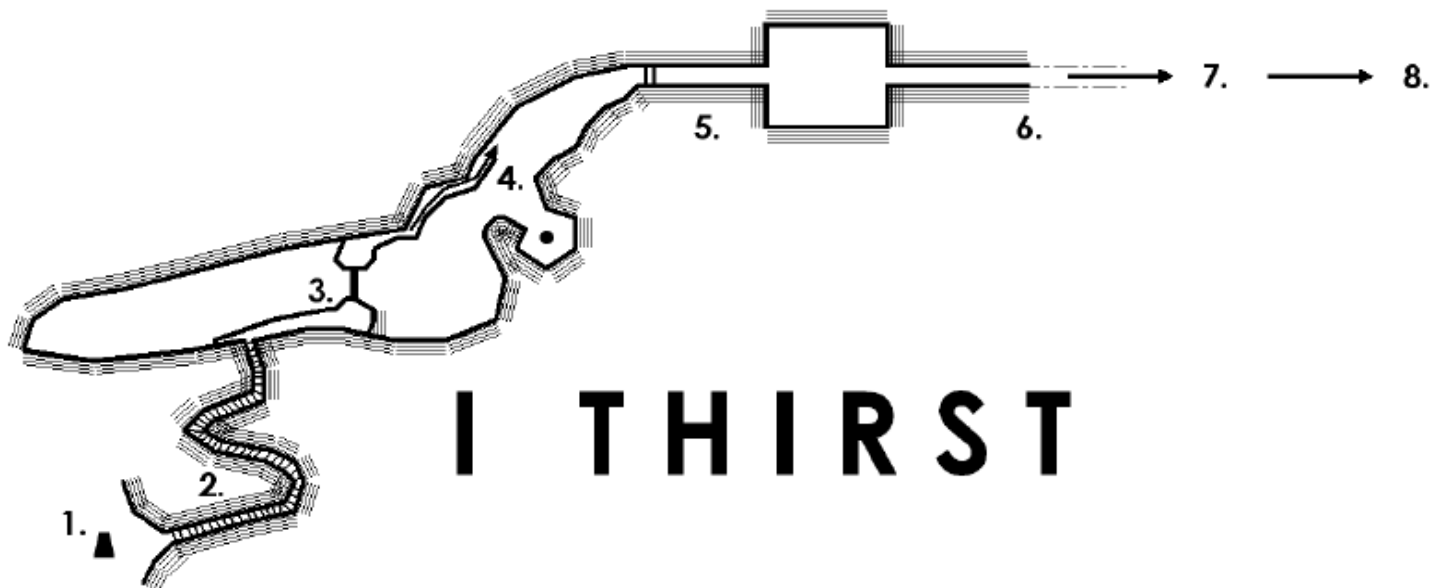
**Lost:** The adventure begins with the PCs lost in the wastes without water. The reasons and exact circumstances are immaterial – the characters of the first party were exiles given minimal gear to survive, while those of the second were brought to this no-man's-land by a teleportation gate. Effective survival techniques – improvised defence against the power of the desert sun, the creative use of equipment – are needed to avoid a penalty of -1 or -2 to all rolls over the course of this module (Referee's discretion based on player ingenuity). However, it should be clear to all that even the shrewdest ideas will only forestall the inevitable. The Referee may make mention of lazily circling vultures just out of reach, and even let the characters dig a dusty wooden crate from underneath a regular stone mound (which holds jars of olive oil stoppered with beeswax). Priestly magic has no results: *create water* produces a handful of bitter liquid, and prayers for new spells fall on deaf ears.

In the evening, the characters find a wind-sheltered place half-encircled by tall rock formations. The shelter is apparently popular with other travellers: a circle of stones has

been built to form a crude fire pit, with remains of ashes, charcoal and a few large blackened bones (the remains of a horse) within. Amidst some thorny bushes nearby someone has even left a large flap of oilskin. Bone-dry wadis, defiles and stream beds snake up into the dark hills.

Settling in, a wind arises; dust races through the wastes and a weird haze falls over the land. The ashes and charcoal in the fire pit begin to dance and the horse bones rise into the air, spinning in spiral motion towards the sky. The oilskin flutters like a torn flag, almost as if it were alive. There is a deafening clap, and then the whole thing subsides: the winds die, the ashes fall back, the bones drop to the ground with the thud of dry wood. Over the pit, there stands a feeble and gray apparition: humanoid, with unnaturally large eyes, sunken face and emaciated body. In a hollow voice, almost in a whisper, he speaks: *"I thirst... You have been lost in the wastes just as I... you know not yet this torment... I am Tevik Algorn, follower of Alvan Vorodan and a spirit of the desert... my mouth is choked with dry sand and my eyes don't see the sun... yet if you can help me, so I can help you... give me to drink from the blood of your body and I will give you to drink from the waters of the wastes..."*

**The Mirage:** By the time of Tevik Algorn's manifestation, the characters are no longer in their own world. Like so many before, they were taken by the Mirage, a gestalt of images, uncertain and disordered thoughts, and the madness of thirst. In its basic appearance and operations, the Mirage mimics reality: yet the deeper someone wanders into it, the more unreal and less coherent it becomes – and also the more dangerous. The unfolding irrationality of the Mirage is, however, governed by hidden principles that are somewhat consistent: first, its motifs and elements repeat themselves and blur into each other; like a dream, everything follows logically from something but nothing is permanent. Second, the prison of the Mirage can also be systematically demolished if its authenticity and power are openly questioned. As with "progression" (towards more irrational and more hazardous forms), "regression" (towards reality) is gradual and step-by-step; but unlike the former, its effects are always dramatic: immovable gates are thrown open and demolished and enemies are reduced to dry heaps of bone before one who denies the Mirage and speaks Truth. Unlike some illusions, the Mirage cannot be dispersed in the blink of an eye, and it is always real in a given moment; therefore, its effects don't disappear with it (e.g. someone who hurls himself into an abyss will die and stay dead). It is impossible to just awaken from it, or to really escape – it is either defeated by the characters or is victorious over them. Therefore, the (unknown) objective of the characters will be to recognise the existence and nature of the Mirage and then to escape from it. The



objectives of Tevik Algorn are less complicated: as with his previous victims, he intends to lure the characters into the deepest portions of the Mirage, where they will either perish or have to face him at the height of his power, and then to kill them and drink their blood.

This text cannot anticipate all of the moves the characters might make nor all potential forms of the Mirage. Therefore the Referee should respond to unexpected actions with improvisation and, instead of forcing the players onto a pre-determined route should follow the logic and atmosphere of the described dream-places to devise newer and newer dangers. The key to successfully using the adventure is *adaptivity*: on the two occasions it has been run, the events and resolution were widely different as they were moulded by player actions. Everything that follows is a springboard, not a tight script to follow.



**Beyond the Stone That Sees:** Tevik Algorn, the desert spirit, makes the characters an offer: if they ease his thirst with blood he will help them find water. His behaviour is tense and nervous, with the longing of opium-eaters deprived of their due. If refused, he is overwhelmed by impotent rage, pleading and cursing, but unable to hurt PCs in incorporeal form. If the characters don't change their mind, he leaves eventually, swearing that they will not leave this land alive. In this event, unless they follow the right direction by chance, the characters will find themselves trapped in an uncertain world devoid of life or water – the means of their escape up to the Referee to determine. If they accept the pact and pour a little bit of blood (1d3 hp) into the ashes, Algorn's tension decreases, and before fading away into nothingness he advises the characters to climb one of the gorges until they reach a bare plateau. Here, *"if The Stone That Sees no longer beholds the*

*gate in the rocks"*, they can find what they are looking for – if they are able to get it. (Note: from this point, all locations are described in multiple possible forms. When the characters arrive for the first time, use paragraph **a**. Returning to the same place – from any direction – use paragraph **b**, then **c**, etc. It is irrelevant where characters are in the "real" world: what matters is how far they have descended into the falsehood of the Mirage.)

### 1. The Stone That Sees

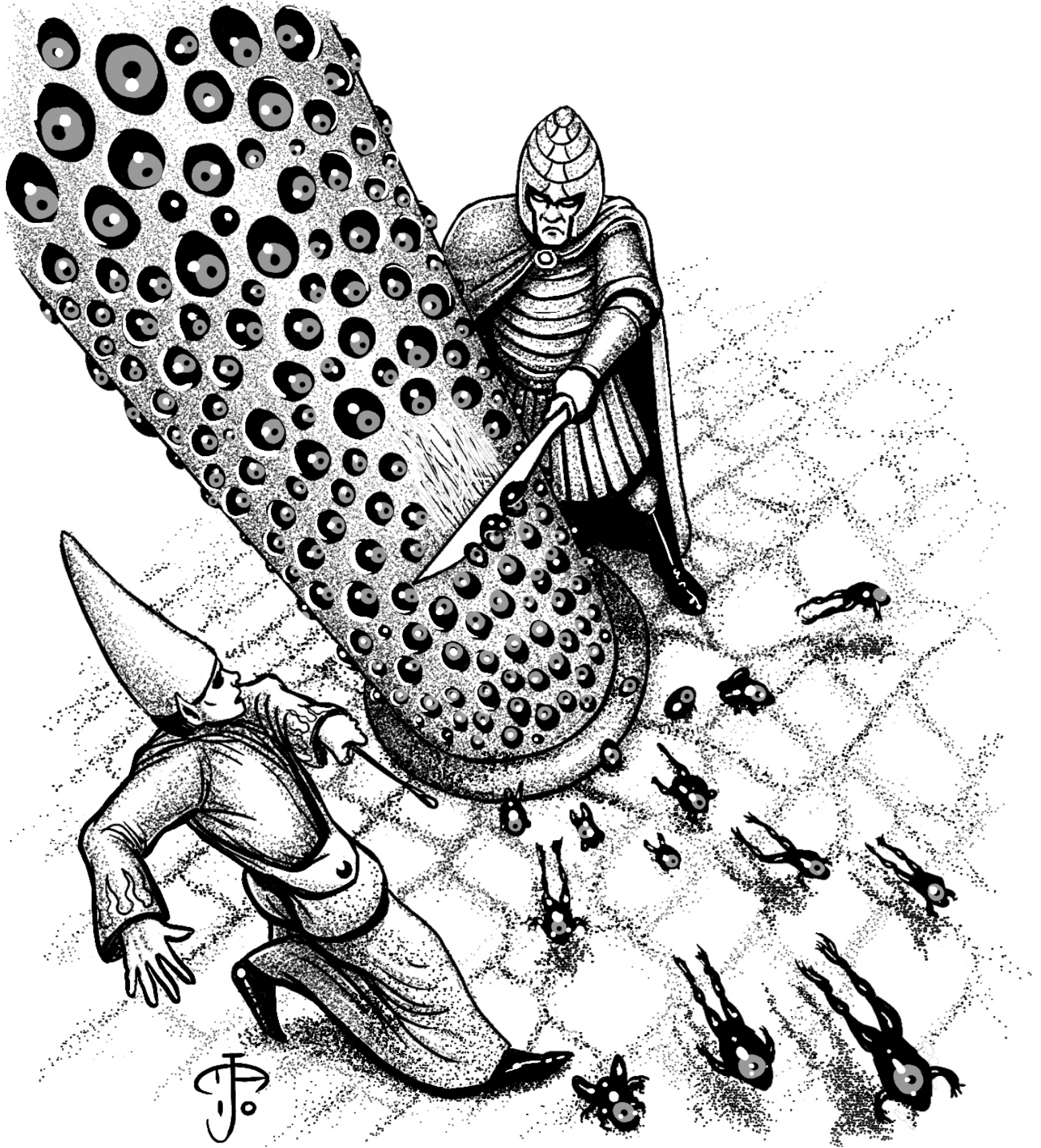
**a.** At the spot revealed by the spirit, on a plateau covered by ancient, cracked stone slabs, stands the Stone That Sees. The Stone is a rough pillar approximately the height of a man, its surface covered in a mass of round warts like a toad's back. Upon approach the warts turn out to be hundreds of slimy eyes, which pop open and watch the characters. These eyes also peer at the rock face to the back where, between two pillars, there stands an ancient stone slab with an iron ring. As long as the pillars' eyes gaze upon the slab, it is absolutely immovable. Their gaze may be diverted by mechanical means (e.g. covering it with a tarpaulin or blanket, building an obstruction, etc.), appropriate spells (e.g. *sleep*, mind control or illusions) or otherwise, but if the characters try to scrape off the eyes, they will first roll down like peas, then turn into 5d4 murderous killer frogs while the bloody remains sprout new eyes in place of the old. The potential number of frogs is effectively limitless. **Killer Frogs (5d4):** HD 1; DC 8; bite 1d6; jump +2 to first attack; hp 6, 1, 6, 2, 3, 1, 7, 8, 2, 8, 7, 6, 2, 2, 1, 6, 1, 2, 5, 9, 6, 2, 4, 2, 4, 6, 3, 4, 6, 9.

**b.** On the second approach, a dust storm rages across the plateau, hurling red dust into the characters' faces. The pillar remains as it was, the hundreds of small frog-eyes measuring the party with unmasked hatred. The gate lies wide open. The dust storm brings faraway voices, distant singing in a Gregorian-like chanting: *"So-o-ooo will ri-ii-se the e-e-e-eem-pire-eee of A-alva-an Voroda-aaaannnn..."*

c. On the third approach the stone pillar is lifeless, the stone eyes inert and uncomprehending. The gate is open.

d. On the fourth occasion, the pillar is as before, but broken stone statues half-buried in dust and rubble stand

around it in various poses. If the characters don't declare that they proceed through the open slab at once, they must roll two saving throws vs. charm or join the statues forever (if only one save is failed, the character may be dragged away from the scene by his companions).



## 2. The cavern

a. Beyond the stone slab, a crudely carved zigzagging passage descends into the depths. The air is humid and the walls glisten with wetness: from a distance, the roar of falling water may be heard. The stairway eventually leads to a ledge in the side of a great underground cavern; above and below, the walls are lost in darkness (40' up, 60' down). To the east, the ledge descends towards the sound and mist of the waterfall.

b. On the second and subsequent occasions, if the characters arrive from outside the stairs are half-covered with a fine dust that trickles down with every step. The air is dry and in the depths there is only silence. If the characters ascend from below, they will find the stone slab closed; it will not budge at any effort.

## 3. The bridge

a. The ledge widens into a small flat area. Beyond it, water falls in a roar from a gap in the wall. A rope bridge on the left leads to the other side of the cavern and a ledge descending even further. Before the bridge stands a massive, misshapen form: it is the desert spirit, but this time in physical form and much stronger than before. Wearing only a red loincloth, his dark skin glistens with an oily-metallic sheen, and he looks upon the intruders with evident scorn. In a booming voice ("*bo-bo-bo*"), the spirit declares that the water the characters wanted is here, but to obtain it, a new deal must be struck. He offers it in exchange for a party member to devour, but will agree to a test of strength against a single champion: if the chosen one can wrestle him to the ground, he will allow everyone to drink – if he can't, there is always the first option.



To simulate wrestling the scale above may be used: wrestlers should roll opposed attacks, and whoever wins by at least 5 points gets a degree closer to winning. Start at the middle, and once the triangular marker is off the scale victory is declared. If this goes badly for the party and the sacrifice is still refused, the spirit offers a horrible bargain as an act of mercy: he wants blood, and lots of it. The donor permanently loses 1d3+1 points of Constitution. Naturally, it is possible that the party will just attack the dark shape. In this case, Tevik Algorn utters a maddened cry ("*Lo, so will rise the empire of Alvan Vorodan!*") and fights with all his might, using his powers of levitation if needed. If defeated, he disappears with a booming laugh. **Tevik Algorn:** HD 5+10; DC 5; bare hands 2d4+2; Str 18, levitation at will, +1 or better to hit (non-magical damage decreased by 5 points), magic resistance 40%, immune to mind-affecting spells; hp 31.

The waters of the fall are abundant and cool, their scent temptation embodied. But swallowed, even drunk without

restraint, they do not slake thirst: though seemingly liquid they are dry as dust. Anyone who has drunk feels their lungs fill and begins choking – but then, cavern and waterfall disappear and the characters awaken at their camp site, with dried-out mouths and the dust storm raging around them. The storm is uncontrollably violent, tossing rocks with its sheer might. Unless they depart, the characters must start to make periodic saving throws to avoid taking first 2d4, then 3d4 damage from flying debris. The falsehood of the waterfall can be discovered with some experimentation: although the wall behind it is wet, items submerged into it don't become so. Moreover, the water disappears before hitting the cavern floor.

b. On a second visit the place is silent – only the slow trickle of sand from the ledge's side is audible. There are no traces of the waterfall, and the boards of the rope bridge are bone-dry – if stepped on, they snap with a sickening crunch (save or fall – only 3d6 damage due to the sand-covered cavern floor).

c. On the third and subsequent visits, there is no bridge, and the ledge itself is close to collapse. Unless the characters think of a safe method to descend, they cause an avalanche and suffer 6d6 damage from falling rocks.

## 4. The chamber and the gate

a. Here the stone ledge descends to the cavern floor. In a side chamber, the walls are covered in polished black stone. In the centre, there is an empty pedestal with a ram's-head motif. Further on, the cavern narrows until it terminates in a tall bronze gate with the inscription, "LO, HERE IS TEVIK ALGORN, FAITHFUL SERVANT OF ALVAN VORODAN". The bronze sheets are decorated with grotesque reliefs of giant frogs. The gates are heavy, but open with some effort.

b. On the second visit the walls of the side chamber are rough. Heaps of bones and dusty, snaking iron chains lie on the floor. The bones are human, but the skulls are from asses. The frogs on the gate are in a noticeably different configuration, tearing small human shapes to shreds.

c. On the third occasion, the rock ledge does not descend to the floor, but merely ends; the bottom is much further down (60') than before. Like 3c, it is hazardous to navigate. The side chamber resembles its previous state, but the heaps of bones – the remains of Tevik Algorn's previous victims – animate as skeletons and attack with their paws while swinging their chains and braying infernally. The gate, or what remains of it, is a collapsed heap of bent brass. **Accursed Victims (12):** HD 3; DC 5; claws & chains 2d4 plus entanglement (save vs. paralysis); hp 18, 9, 16, 12, 13, 16, 19, 13, 14, 11, 11, 11.

## 5. The realm of the frogs

a. The walls of the corridor are covered by beaten bronze sheets decorated with patterns of amorphous, liquescent frog-like shapes blurring into each other. The grotesque beings are shown in copulation, devouring tiny man-like figures, defiling women and performing other depraved acts. Examined more closely, the murals have an unpleasant liquid aspect, as if they were slowly morphing. The corridor terminates in a rectangular hall, with walls, floor and ceiling again covered in bronze sheets, this time showing the image of a ram's head. At the slightest touch, the sheets reverberate audibly. Unless precautions are taken while traversing the place, this ringing increases until it grows to a deafening peal, a cacophony of mad sound that inflicts 1d6 to 4d6 damage to listeners (Referee's choice based on the amount of noise being made).

b. The second time this location is visited, fattened man-frog hybrids crouch on the bronze walls. A faint wind dances in the great hall, eliciting an uncertain resonance.

c. On the third occasion, the situation is as before, but it is as if a group of maddened dancers were afoot. Someone who does not make absolutely certain to preserve himself before crossing will take 4d6 damage.

d. On later visits, there is nothing but silence: the bronze sheets have cracked and fallen and all is covered in dust.



## 6. The road in the sky

a. The corridor from the bronze-covered hall is painted in white-blue tones. The stucco is a lifelike depiction of the sky, as if the characters were walking on thin air. This illusion becomes increasingly realistic the further one goes, and even a gentle breeze can be felt. Finally the sky is real: the characters are walking on nothingness. Far below them stretch the broken wastes under a merciless sun; on a winding road, tired figures are dragging themselves towards a hill range – the characters themselves! As the winds grow the corridor fades and becomes less real. Someone who proceeds will fall and die, as will someone who hurls himself downwards; but a more careful plan to reach the surface by any other means, no matter how desperate, will be successful. Even a short rope reaches the distant surface, and a character carefully lowered experiences only a short fall and minimal damage.

b. On the second occasion, the sky is disturbed: there are clouds, an approaching storm, and dull tension in the air.

c. On the third occasion, the storm is at full power, a chaotic, violent swirl of dust and air. It is almost impossible to see, and if someone does not fall to his hands and knees to find the way and employ the utmost caution to descend he will surely meet an unpleasant end.

7. **Down on the barren earth.** If the characters have successfully gone beyond the road in the sky and descended to the ground, there are two possible options:

a. If they have not yet become too deeply entangled in the Mirage – for example, they have recognised the false waterfall and didn't have to travel through the caverns multiple times – they arrive before the Stone That Sees, and may continue their adventure from that point.

b. If, on the other hand, a longer time has passed since meeting Tevik Algorn a second time, and the characters have not yet tried to consciously break free from their enchantment, they are now in the utmost depths of the Mirage, from which there is no way out but to recognise Truth and loudly declare it. The characters once more find themselves next to their former resting place; around the fire, they see the figures they observed from the sky. Their simulacra, squatting in a circle, are now but huddled bags of bones in close-drawn cloaks, textiles ripping and bones collapsing at the lightest touch. The following events then unfold in full kaleidoscopic horror. First, in the distance a wind-borne Gregorian chant sounds across the waste: "*So-o-ooo will ri-ii-se the e-e-e-eem-pire-eee of A-alva-an Voroda-aaaannnn...*" Then, on the road, a procession of cowed pilgrims approach singing and bearing old ceremonial flags. The procession is slow but their arrival is as inevitable as the dust storm that comes at their heels. The pilgrims are skeletal monstrosities with clawed hands and the skulls of an ass. They are statistically identical to those

at **4c.**, but there are so many that they will eventually encircle even the most careful, dragging them down and tearing them into shreds. Second, shortly after the appearance of the procession, the winds become so strong that they begin to tear the land apart. Gigantic boulders are ripped from jagged cliffs and hurled at the campsite; those who don't avoid them (save vs. paralysis with increasing regularity) will be crushed to a pulp. From beyond the winds comes demented, all-encompassing laughter. The third and final sign of the end will be the appearance of yet more skeletal pilgrims coming from the road, the gorges, and behind the rocks, in uncountable multitudes. And if even that is not enough, wilder and more disjointed events occur and a curious madness sets in until all is finished.

**8. On the edge of the Mirage.** If the characters recognise the Truth and declare the world that surrounds them false, they will come to the edge of the Mirage, where Tevik Algorn may be defeated and the characters may return to the world of the living. No matter where the PCs were before, the scene fades and they find themselves in a low octagonal chamber of dark marble. Everywhere, there are mounds of riches – copper and gold, silver and jewellery. The sinister form of Tevik Algorn, sitting on a decorative golden cushion, drinks foaming human blood from a golden chalice. With contempt, but also a hint of hysteria, he cries out: *“So are you! I have sated myself with you, know who you are and know what you could do against me! And now – I will finally kill and devour you!”* **LO, SO WILL RISE THE EMPIRE OF ALVAN VORODAN!** With a mighty leap he then attacks in unbridled fury. The fight is merciless and unequal. Tevik Algorn's statistics are as described at **3a.**, but after the first uttered spell he becomes immune to magic, and after the fifth strike, weapons will bounce off his skin or break (50%). The only method of defeating Tevik Algorn here is not to take him seriously. If the characters deny his abilities and use the Truth against his unreal nature, they can gradually break his confidence: the physical form of the dark juggernaut becomes less and less formidable, even weak and impotent. Degraded, he can only crawl on the ground and try to latch onto someone to exsanguinate – and then the Mirage is dispersed and only a pitiful, dust-dried cadaver remains. With a single hit and an awful crunch, the corpse breaks like a dry twig and the treasure-room, like Tevik Algorn, is no more.



**Beyond the Mirage:** Upon escape the characters find themselves once again by the fire pit, probably wounded and with weapons in hand. The dust storm slowly fades, and from the sky, in fat drops, rain begins to fall. Probably, from far away, an echo of a strange Gregorian chant is heard: *“So-o-ooo will ri-ii-se the e-e-e-eem-pire-eee of A-alva-an Voroda-aaaannnn...”* And who knows yet, how long is the road. Ω



image by Steve Robertson, text by Alfred John Dalziel

*Alfred, inspired by Steve's prizewinning picture from the Erol Otus Art Challenge, came up with a backstory for this trio of terror. -Ig*

## Leynaflemma

Chaotic Elf Warrior 4/Mage 4

S 11 I 13 W 9 C 10 D 13 Ch 16; Speed 9, DC 2, hp 16

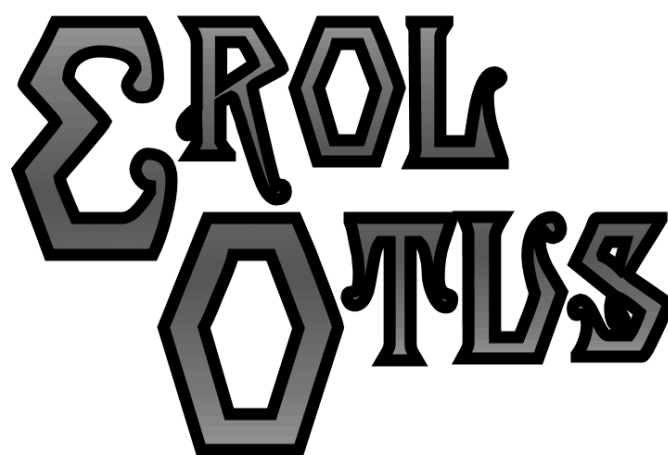
Spells: Charm Person x 3, Sleep; Invisibility, Phantasms

Magic Items: Platinum Plate Mail +1, Wand of Fireballs,

Potion of Undead Control

Description: Native to the snowy pine forest on the inland side of Hell Fog Spine, Leynaflemma was less reclusive than others of her Svartalf tribe and grew up making mischief among the Northmen. One spring night she happened across a pair of wounded dwarves, Stegga and

## Congratulations Winners! The



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:** B. Ingle, K. Mayle, Atom, A. Schröder, S. Turnbull, and K. Vito

**Honorable Mention, B&W:** Bat, P. Fini, K. Green, Keshner, S. Kisko, A. Stiller, and J. Weigel

Many, many thanks to Erol and to our fine contestants!



Sturla by name. Instead of slaying them outright, she listened to their tale. Stegga and Sturla were survivors of the massacre of their clan in Helthokahryggir (the dwarvish name for Hell Fog Spine). They described the coming of the Sorceror Thas Esarduk with his trolls, and Thas Esarduk's desire for the dwarf clan's vein of platinum. Leynaflemma's avarice was aroused, and her cunning mind concocted a plan. She allowed the dwarves to drink a healing draught and they led her to their clan-hall. There she seduced Thas Esarduk and charmed him, forthwith leading him alone to a mountain grove where he was slain by dwarven ambush. Leynaflemma made herself invisible, then coaxed the trolls away from the hall and over the side of a crag by means of illusion. Stegga and Sturla met her at the mouth of the clan-hall, and having retrieved Thas Esarduk's Wand of Fire the trolls were quickly dispatched. From their precious platinum the dwarves forged her a suit of plate mail, casting the helm from the skull of one of the slain trolls. Sorcerors seldom remain dead, and Thas Esarduk returned as a wraith with the winter; Leynaflem-

ma fled south. Leynaflemma delights in betrayal, but she can easily keep temptation in check if she senses profit. She often recruits human henchmen to use as dungeon-fodder in her never-ending quest for magical power.

### Hargon

Chaotic Warrior 3 in a Thelidu body (see *FO!* #4)

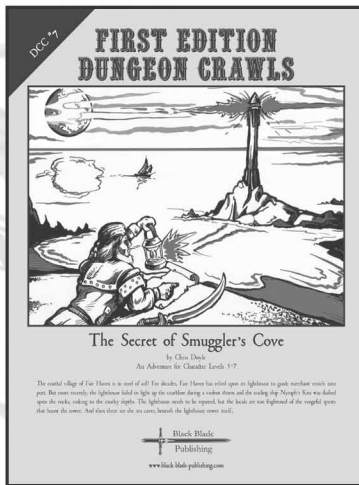
S 13 I 8 W 9 C 14 D 10 Ch 12; Speed 13, DC 5, hp 27

(In human form: Speed 12, DC 9, hp 12.)

Description: Once known as Hargon the Pig, he led brigands until he was captured by adventurers and bribed into accompanying an expedition to the Citadel of Shast-Tok-Sar. There he found Leynaflemma in a Mirror of Life-Trapping and, entranced by her beauty, smashed the mirror. Upon expressing his ardour to Leynaflemma, she charmed him and promptly quit the dungeon in his company. Learning of Hargon's brigands, Leynaflemma convinced him to bring his followers on a return expedition to Shast-Tok-Sar. An elevator passage separated Hargon and a pair of his stalwarts from Leynaflemma and

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the rest of the band. Fiendish traps took the lives of Hargon's companions, and then deep within the catacombs he was surprised by one of the dread Thelidu. Luck was with Hargon for once, perhaps, and he fled blindly with the hungry Thelidu giving chase. Beneath a magic arch they ran and their minds were swapped. In confusion and rage Hargon devoured the brain of his former body. Stronger than before, he found his way up through the dungeon and back to his beloved Leynaflem-ma. Hargon desires to have a handsome human body again, and towards this end he directed Leynaflemma to the Warlock Gomdaolos.

## Gomdaolos

Chaotic Human Mage 8

S 6 I 14 W 7 C 9 D 13 Ch 11; Speed 12, DC 9, hp 18

Spells: Sleep, Charm Person, Protection from Good, Detect Magic; ESP, Magelock, Locate; Dispel, Lightning, Protection from Missiles; Mass Morph to Trees, Dimension Door

Description: Discovered by a Judge to have committed the crime of slaying a serpent while pronouncing the name of a high-level bureaucrat, Gomdaolos was exiled from magocratic Sansuul. He flew his magic carpet across the Serpent Sea and took up residence in a nearly ruined tower on the border of Izalm and Shathpa. Using his spells, he has consolidated several bands of hill-man brigands into an alliance. Gomdaolos has hopes of carving out a small state where he is the supreme ruler, never again to be trampled

by another's ego. With Leynaflemma and Hargon to protect him, Gomdaolos now has more time to research and craft magic items. Everburning braziers stationed at the base of his lair give the illusion of an upright tower surrounded by a beautiful grove. If he expects trouble, his brigand guards will be under the influence of a Mass Morph to Trees spell, appearing to be nothing more than garden shrubbery until the signal is given. He greatly desires Leynaflemma to be his consort, and she dallies with him while Hargon hunts for brains. Gomdaolos believes himself to be safe from Hargon, and at Leynaflemma's suggestion he has repeatedly and purposely failed to polymorph Hargon back into human form. From his own researches and collaboration with Leynaflemma, Gomdaolos is aware of several potent treasures within the dungeon beneath nearby Shast-Tok-Sar. Ω

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# CREEPIES CRAWLIES

by Cal (inspired by Samuel Kisko) & Geoffrey McKinney

## Blue Snail

Number: usually 1 (1 in 100 chance for 2)

Size: Humongous (~5d4x100 feet in diameter)

HD: 50-200 (1 for each 10' diameter)

Speed: 1

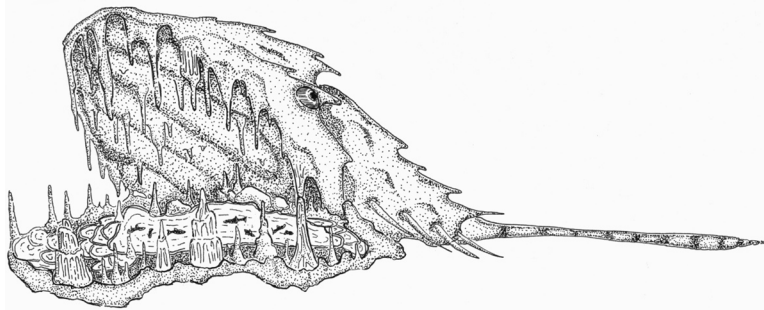
DC: Shell invulnerable, soft parts 2

Attacks: none (unless you let it roll over you: 1 for 10d6)

Description: The verdant, flourishing Valley of Blue Snails is a legendary source for rare and magical plants and the hides of fantastic predators. The valley floor is too thick

and dangerous for settlement, but the lure of wealth has led to an unconventional method of habitation. Gigantic and mostly placid blue snails roam the valley from end to end, and on their backs men have erected towns, with foundations carefully set into the snails' thick shells. There are about a dozen such villages in the valley, most on decent terms with one another. Many are ruled by an informal council of the wealthiest traders, but nobles in exile, zealous priests, and even a powerful mage hold sway over a few. Adult snails are only dangerous to those lying directly in their path, but the young (about 10 HD) are carnivorous (DC 0/5, Spd 2, Bite 2d6 + save vs. wands or 2d6 acid) and relentlessly though slowly track men as prey. On the rare occasions when a male and female adult snail encounter one another, they will mate, which typically destroys most of the villages atop each during the mounting process, and the inhabitants of the blue snails must scatter and try to survive for 2d12 hours on the forest floor until they can once again climb up and rebuild.





## Molletuesk

Number: 1

Size: Cavernous (mouth 20'-80' across)

HD: 10-40 (1 for each 2' diameter of mouth)

Speed: N/A (inches per hour)

DC: 2 within/-2 without

Attacks: Mouth slamming shut does 1d6 initially (4d6 to large prey) and then 1 point per round (no resistance) until victim is digested, escapes, or slays the Molletuesk.

Description: In the corner of the cavern, a pool of brightly colored fish attracts the party's attention. Those who proceed cautiously might note a row of sharp stalactites and stalagmites outside the pool, and magical detection of life or danger will reveal something in the vicinity, but infravision, heat detection, tracking, etc. reveal nothing odd. The fish might be normal or magical (GM option - they might even know a spell to help the PCs escape, in exchange for a certain service...), but either way, as soon as all (or most) of the party come close, the jaws snap shut. Once inside, ingenuity (or a lot of damage dealt quickly) will be necessary to escape. If in doubt whether a PC was in the mouth area or not, the GM should have the PC caught normally if there is no complaint, or take 4d6 but be left outside if he throws a hissyfit. With its mouth closed, the Molletuesk is obviously a monster, and can be attacked by those inside and outside it. In this situation it will attempt to defend itself by biting its assailants; it can do this every other round, attacking as a mere 4 HD monster but doing 4d6 to its target and 1d6 to all in its mouth if it succeeds (instead of the normal 1 hp/round from grinding). PCs inside the Molletuesk who hold an action to run out the mouth when it bites can do this, and need only save vs. petrification to avoid taking 4d6 as they cross the threshold.

## Terror Crane (McKinney)

Number: 1 (unique)

Size: Skyscapearean

HD: 6d12

Speed: 60 ft., 80 ft. (fly)

DC: 10

Attacks: Nil

Special: Ice Barrier, Charm, Incorporeal

Saves: as Priest

Alignment: Neutral

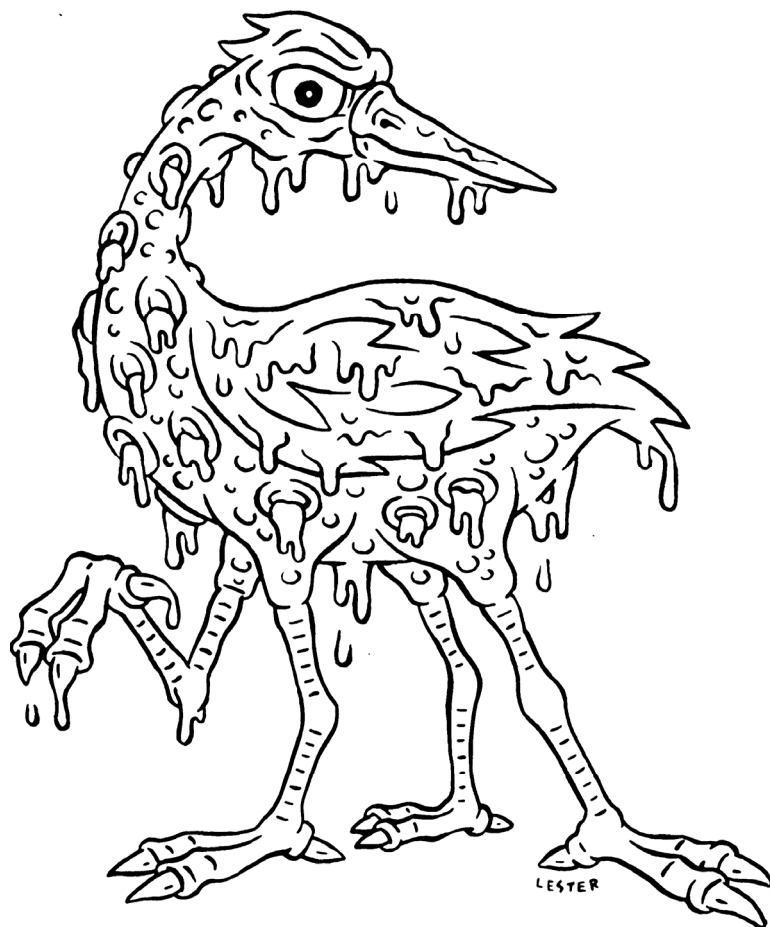
Description: This bizarre entity is an incorporeal, four-legged crane standing 150' tall. It is covered with (corpor-

eal!) slime, pus, and foul goop streaming from open sores on its incorporeal body. This monster's incorporeal body makes it unable to physically attack. It feeds on fear, and will not attack those who feel no fear in its presence. Those who do feel fear, however, the creature will attempt to target using its special abilities. It prefers to attack spellcasters (mages and illusionists before priests and druids). If no spellcasters are present and afraid, then its target will be determined randomly each round.

*Ice Barrier:* The creature is able to make a 6" thick barrier of solid ice of 150 square feet, in any shape desired. The creature may create such a barrier once per turn. In most respects it resembles the wall of ice spell.

*Charm:* Anyone coming into contact with the ooze streaming from the monster's body must make a charisma saving throw or come under the control of the creature. Since the creature is not intelligent, for the most part this control will manifest either as a compulsion to defend the terror crane from harm (including attacking fellow party members to defend it) or committing suicide (second save to break the charm if it comes to this).

*Incorporeal:* The monster's body is permanently nonphysical. Only magical attacks (and attacks with magical weapons) affect it, and it can not physically attack others. Ω



# Grognard's Grimoire

insidious incantations from C. Gildenclaw

**Animate Statue** (Level 4): This spell animates any statue of metal (DC 0), stone (DC 1), or wood (DC 4) to move (SPD = creature that the statue represents - 3) and fight (HD = 3 to 20, depending on size and material) for a number of rounds equal to the caster's level. Animated statues are controlled verbally and will generally keep doing what they were doing before until told to do otherwise. In general one may assume that such statues are substantially stronger than the beings they represent and are thus useful for carrying things, banging down doors, etc. if their form permits it. Damage by size.

**Cannibal Charm** (Level 2): This diabolical glamour affects a single living being. If the target misses its save, it is afflicted with extreme hunger and, if there is another member of its own species present, immediately goes berserk (+2 to hit) and attacks that being until it is dead or the charm is broken. If there are multiple members of one's own species present the caster of the spell is always last chosen, but other than that the charmed character can take his or her pick, if desired. If a PC could sensibly be thought to have an extreme ethical revulsion towards cannibalism (e.g. Lawful from an appropriate culture) then a second save may be made before dining commences.

**Incantation of the Eyebeast** (Level 7\*): This intricate ritual (45 min) summons an intelligent protoplasm with thousands of eyes bubbling up from a central mass of jelly (HD 10, DC 4, SPD 9, Atk engulf 2-12 acid) for d6 hours. The Lord of Eyes can slip through cracks only an inch wide, make itself invisible until it attacks, and communicate all it sees telepathically with its summoner.

**Invert Dungeon** (Level 9\*): This spell, cast at the entrance to any dungeon level, will immediately suck it and d4-1 dungeon levels below it out of the ground, causing a hail of wind, rock, and earth to knock everyone (including the wizard) within 100' of the entrance prone. All monsters and treasure within the dungeon will be deposited randomly within this same area, likewise prone and temporarily disoriented but otherwise unharmed. Dungeon levels below those inverted may simply be detached from the surface, or a narrow rock passage leading down to them may still exist. This spell may not work on extraplanar dungeons or those created or protected by a potent supernatural enemy (GM option).

**Magda's Halcyon Mantle** (Level 2): Cast on any single person, this creates a self-contained environment with fresh air and a temperature ranging between 35-75 F in all environments, including underwater, outer space, and Hell. Toxic gasses do seep in gradually but the *Mantle*-wearer



gets d3 rounds to dispel or prepare for the fumes ere a saving throw must be made. Things like hellfire blasts still do damage; the mantle resets its temperature moments later but cannot keep out sudden spikes in heat, cold, etc.

**Rend the Veil** (Level 9\*): - This spell tears the fabric of reality asunder over a d6x5' swath. Creatures in the path who miss a save are halved and instantly slain (magic resistance does not apply, with this spell the save represents getting out of the way in time). The tear allows glimpses of other realities until it gradually closes over 4d12 hours. Those entering the torn area during this time roll d100:

01-08	Rent asunder, as per the spell
09-27	Sucked into the empty void between worlds
28-53	Transported to pocket dimension of mad godling
54-84	Delivered to an alternate physical reality
85-92	Taken to a metaphysical 'outer plane'
93-00	Randomly teleported within this world

**Squirrel Charm** (aka *Nutkin's Efficacious Sequester* – Level 1): This cantrap, an elided *Forlorn Encystment*, may be cast on anything touched the size of a human fist or smaller. That object is immediately transported to a cool, preserving pocket one foot below the caster's feet. It may be dug up normally or called back to hand by a reversed version of this spell cast within 30' of the cyst. Ω

*\*If spells in your game only go up to level 6, treat these as level 6.*

Plans Forshadow the eye tyrant, provide extra-plans in metal for magic weapons, allow for

as proxy within the fortress, cool paranoid dwarf culture, allow sneaking around, befriend guards, get involved in Mordor's plots

Heart Fortress

upper fort


traps

upper market

lower market

a long stair connects upper fort with upper and lower market

rammery, great hall - but a network of secret passages - many of them trapped dead ends - connect the



Various parts.  
Cathartus Erythraei

sent by Vashikan the  
holder to rule the  
diverses. Acts as  
council for the chain  
devil.

the eye  
the eye  
also known as  
devil

- half finished Ajax Triplecursed  
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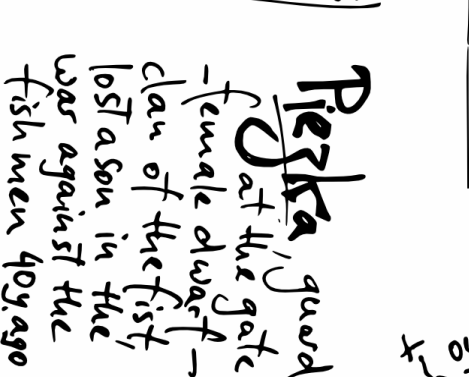
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rose to power with  
y/green, can fight w/ change

Remember! whip  
slave over seas dwarf,  
rose to power with  
Yagreen, can fight w/ changing

Remember! whip  
slave overseas dwarf,  
rose to power with  
Yoruba, can fight w/ changing

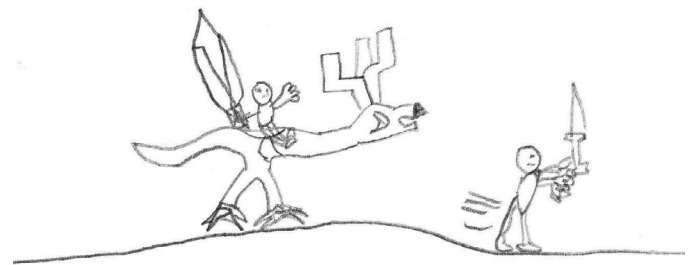




### Unusual City Locations (d20):

1	Flies on the back of a giant animal.
2	Flies by magic.
3	Flies by mechanical means.
4	On an island in the middle of a river or lake.
5	Is a series of ships or rafts linked together.
6	Was originally a tomb that was colonised until it became a city (1-3 a single giant tomb, 4-6 a necropolis).
7	Was originally a craft from another world, and was turned into a city (1-2 the inhabitants are descendents of the craft's crew, 3-4 the inhabitants are from the normal game world, 5 descendents of locals and aliens both live in the city, 6 most inhabitants of the city are descended from both aliens and locals).
8	Under the sea (optionally 1-3 the inhabitants are sea creatures such as mermaids, 4 the inhabitants are biologically land-dwellers - the city is protected from the sea by a dome, 5 as 4 but the city is a giant mechanical construction like a submarine, 6 as 4&5 but the city is in the belly of a giant sea creature).
9	In the belly of a giant land creature (1-3 the creature is stationary, 4-6 it moves around frequently).
10	Is the 'head' of a giant mechanical creature (1-3 creature is stationary, 4-6 it moves around frequently).
11	On the back of a giant sea creature, which cruises just below the surface so that the city is above the waves.
12	In a hollowed out mountain. However the inhabitants aren't dwarves or other subterranean folk, but surface-dwellers attempting to hide.

13	Is the size of a human fist, and may only be entered or exited by magical means.
14	What looks like a painting of the city is actually the city's only entrance.
15	What looks like a book about the city is actually the city's only entrance.
16	What looks like a map of the city is actually the city's only entrance.
17	A failed magical experiment causes the city to disappear from one location and appear at another, apparently randomly.
18	Underground, beneath a more standard city above it, separately ruled with its own laws, customs, etc.
19	Is concealed as a largely self-contained parallel city within another city, only accessible through certain portals and odd alleys, with its own rule, customs, etc.
20	Any door in the world may be an entrance to the city.



### Hireling Flaws (d10 - *when good help is hard to find*):

1	Too noisy - will attract hostile attention.
2	Greedy - eats twice normal rations.
3	Steals from the party.
4	Gets into arguments with party members.
5	Overly fearful, and contagiously so, so that his or her cowardice will gradually spread to other hirelings.
6	Cursed, and will bring bad luck on the whole party.
7	Treacherous, and plans to betray PCs to monsters or other foes at first good opportunity.
8	Physically feeble.
9	Mentally feeble.
10	Roll twice more, ignoring and re-rolling this result.

## Hidden Trait Of NPC You Didn't Realize Was Going To Be Important Until You Actually Started Playing (d100 – Zak S.):

1	Is a random PC's mom, in disguise.
2	Despises all life and is a secret sociopath, but drinks too much to get very far with it
3	Wants badly to be a druid, isn't working out well yet.
4	Wants to help the PCs because s/he's smitten with one of them. Possibly views other PCs as rivals.
5	Has Machiavellian scheme of which every single event thus far in the campaign is a part. Secret aim of scheme is something unimaginably petty.
6	Is actually high functioning neutral undead.
7	Helpful, frightened, likes fried food.
8	Terrified of water. 4th level thief.
9	Fantastic barber. Doesn't know it.
10	Poet. Knows it.
11	Is some totally bizarre thing from another game like Rifts or Shadowrun or Monopoly or something.
12	Expert: local knowledge on some place the PCs haven't been yet but will probably get to before the end of the campaign. Suspicious but bribeable.
13	Desperately trying to sell some real estate: tavern, inn, weapons shop. Will accept ominously low price.
14	Warrior 2: terrible, communicable skin condition.
15	Is a professional witchfinder. Probably somebody in the party qualifies as a witch.
16	3rd level warrior and <i>hilarious!</i> If PCs end up in a drunken brawl in which the NPC takes part (on either side), s/he will make quips. Roll save to avoid laughing uncontrollably for d4 rounds.
17	Secret pervert. I'll leave the details up to you.
18	Not-so-secret prude. Will berate and shun anyone who appears to be having fun.
19	Gambler. A pretty good one actually. If the PCs can get on his/her good side they may catch some run-off from his/her post winning spending sprees.
20	Scholar. Expert on first subject PCs happen to need information about while in his/her presence. Impatient and easily offended, however.
21	Inordinately fond of Hobbit pipeweed. Annoying. Wears sandals.
22	Inventor. Capable of coming up with mildly anachronistic technology. Sleeps too much.
23	Paranoid lycanthrophobe. Talks to no one at night. Locks self up on full moons.
24	Has an entirely undeserved reputation as a lout in nearest city. Is actually quite charming.
25	Owns unusually well-maintained set of dollhouses.
26	Carves chess pieces when nervous. Isn't very good at

	chess. Will play for money, though.
27	Reformed crazy wizard. (15th level). No longer casts spells. If the truth comes out and the PCs are very, <i>very</i> nice and reassuring, they may be able to persuade him/her to cast a spell, but each time has a 10% chance of pushing him/her over the edge.
28	Is William Shakespeare, or nearest racial equivalent.
29	Has bizarre fungus colony growing in stomach. Knows it, and sings to it each night before going to bed. If slain, the colony will escape.
30	Has constant, unaccountable, <i>faux</i> -European accent drift: German one second, French the next, etc.
31	Proud. Hungry for glory. Inept.
32	Is nicknamed "The Hyena". The reason for this is, thus far, unclear...
33	Radical democrat. Constantly trying to draw PCs into various regicidal schemes.
34	Gourmet cook/chef/baker. Constantly trading or searching for exotic ingredients.
35	Extremely accommodating. Creepily accommodat-ing. Will let the PCs stable their horses in his/her living room. Talks like Dracula. Totally harmless.
36	Ex-court jester. Not that funny. 1st level wizard.
37	Always wants to help. Is kind of useless, though. Has a really nice magic sword.
38	Carpenter. Claims to be the son of local deity. Isn't.
39	Was possessed once by a greater demon. Doesn't like talking about it. Blames self.
40	Excellent hunter. Can find, kill, skin and gut a bulette in 12 seconds. Dislikes fighting otherwise.
41	Is actually kind of sweet.
42	Boring. Will talk until credibly threatened.
43	Is in with the in crowd. Knows where to get the good lotus powder, has friends in all the thieves' guilds, all the local dancers owe him/her favors.
44	Fiercely devoted to random local deity. Was fiercely devoted to rival local deity until fairly recently.
45	Totally Metal. Likes axes, mead, and fire.
46	Is exactly like your favorite character from your favorite book only the opposite gender.
47	Unappreciated medieval art genius. Can do perspective and everything.
48	Amateur doctor. Takes strong interest in all diseases.
49	Likes eating eggs. Has terrible asthma.
50	Knows far more languages than anyone else. (Why?)
51	Str 18/00. Has lice.
52	Extremely insecure, addictive personality; whatever s/he's doing, wishes it were something else.
53	Totally self-deluded, thinks s/he's all that and a bag of chips and that the PCs are totally impressed.
54	Feels no remorse. Has never seen the ocean.

55	Painfully stupid. Good natured though. Always pretends like s/he knows what the PCs are talking about, but never does.
56	Has fascinating theories about animal and monster behavior and something called "evolutionne threwe natural selectionne".
57	Can't read but likes to pretend s/he can.
58	Is from a far more sophisticated culture far to the (east, south, whatever) and is sort of appalled and disgusted every time something medieval happens.
59	Acts like Sherlock Holmes (d6: 1-3 Basil Rathbone, 4-5 Robert Downey Jr., 6 John Cleese).
60	Depressed, depressing, and pessimistic, but eerily lucky in all endeavors.
61	Nervous. Knows secret weakness of important monster, but is too suspicious to tell anyone.
62	Angry amateur astrologer.
63	Alcoholic idiot savant thief.
64	Is creeped out by magic. Is trying to grow a beard (or trying to decide whether to shave it).
65	Has a personal vendetta against most powerful NPC in campaign. Right handed.
66	Committed to racial harmony: calls humans, elves, dwarves, etc. "demi-orcs". Has a wooden eye.
67	Vomits a lot. No reason.
68	Forgetful. Narcoleptic. Handy.
69	A total bureaucratic tool and busybody. Secretly writes down information about everybody s/he's met.
70	Has an obscure ceremonial obligation to do some strange but subtle ritual each dusk. May or may not actually prevent genuine dire mystical consequences.
71	Never answers a question directly. If pressed, cries.
72	Loves his/her job. Jolly and enthusiastic about it. May have Asperger's syndrome.
73	Charisma 18. Terribly charming. Enthusiastic for tales of adventure. Will trade information if the PCs tell him/her what they've been up to.
74	Locked in a Melvillean struggle with some monster/beast a la Bill Murray in Caddyshack.
75	Master spy. Has entirely opposite personality as s/he appears to have.
76	Vegetarian. Fears the sight of blood. Has many foes.
77	Complains about minor physical ailments constant-ly. If seriously injured, insulted, or aggrieved, will not mention it at all and will go back to complaining about bursitis and toothaches almost immediately.
78	Eminently gullible and convincible: does whatever anyone tells him/her to do.
79	Plays practical jokes. Lives with parents.
80	OCD. Often feels uncontrollable urge to touch dangerous NPCs and monsters on the nose.

81	Knows the languages of animals. (Not that they particularly like him/her.)
82	Has serious body image issues. Keeps asking if s/he looks good in this?
83	Addicted to opium. Thinks PCs are a whole other group of PCs from a different campaign.
84	Secretly carrying on a torrid love affair with another major NPC in the game.
85	Swears constantly. Good at math.
86	Loves cat more than spouse.
87	Secretly sells familiars on the black market.
88	Ferociously impatient. Interrupts others constantly.
89	Common isn't native language; always says "What is the word?...ahhhh..." Likes travelling.
90	Extremely superstitious. Constantly examines omens, signs, and luck charms. Some actually work.
91	Terrible with names. Makes up nicknames for everyone, forgets them, then makes up new ones.
92	Has 25 children. Experiments with gunpowder.
93	Has a pet that isn't actually what s/he thinks it is.
94	Never misses a chance to go to the theatre. Is often thrown out for brawling.
95	Will betray anyone who trusts him/her, then confess and beg for mercy. Enjoys beekeeping and horticulture.
96	Has same tattoo as PC. If PCs lack tattoos, has same father.
97	Has extensive war wounds. Hears things wrong a lot due to ear injury. Hilarity or disaster ensues.
98	Believes that crows despise him/her. Flees from them on sight. Ambidextrous.
99	Acts like Gandalf but is wrong all the time.
00	Amateur shrink constantly trying to psychoanalyze the PCs whenever they meet. Fears pirates.



## Let's Scrounge Up Some Wheels (d100)

radioactive rides by Tim "Sniderman" Snider

At some point during an adventure in the *Mutant Future*, PCs are going to want to try to secure some transportation

beyond walking. Purchasing any kind of transport is expensive, if it's even available at all. For those cases where players try to scavenge something to ride while they're "on the road," I've created the following tables:

### TYPE OF VEHICLE DISCOVERED (Based on type of location searched)

LOCATION: Urban	LOCATION: Suburban	LOCATION: Rural	LOCATION: Wilderness	RESULT	EXAMPLES
01-25	01-25	01-30	01-50	Nothing found	No transportation is found in the area
_____	_____	31-40	51-60	Beast of burden (horse, oxen, etc.)	Any mountable creature
_____	_____	41-45	61-65	Beast and drawn cart	Creature and cart/buggy
26-40	26-45	46-50	66-70	Bicycle	Typical pedal-powered bike
41-50	46-55	51-55	71-75	Motorcycle	From a minibike to a Harley
51-60	56-65	56-70	76-80	Small Motorized Vehicle	Riding mower, ATV
_____	_____	71-80	81-85	Tractor	Large farm-based vehicle
61-70	66-85	81-90	86-90	Automobile	Road-worthy, four-wheeled vehicle
71-80	86-90	91-95	91-95	Small Truck	Van, pickup, mail truck
81-90	91-95	96-00	96-00	Large Truck	Semi truck, schoolbus
91-95	96-00	_____	_____	One-person "futuristic"	Small hovercraft, anti-grav car, etc.
96-00	_____	_____	_____	Multi-person "futuristic"	Large hovercraft, anti-grav truck, etc.

### CONDITION OF VEHICLE (Only for mechanical transports)

ROLL	CONDITION	NOTES
01-20	Destroyed	Will never run again; unrepairable.
21-35	Heavily Damaged	Missing important parts (like an engine or wheels) or requires specialized tools to fix
36-50	Moderately Damaged	Several minor parts are broken/missing.
51-65	Damaged	Something minor is broken/missing; vehicle could possibly start/run without it.
66-80	Poor	Vehicle runs, but poorly/sporadically.
81-90	Fair	Vehicle runs without issue.
91-00	Good	Vehicle runs better than expected.

### CHARGE/FUEL REMAINING

Roll on d00, and treat the roll as the percentage of remaining fuel/power left in the vehicle. For example, a roll of "33" would mean that the power cells are at 33% or that a gas tank is about one-third full. Roll for Charge/Fuel Remaining even on damaged/destroyed vehicles since the fuel/power cells can be scavenged by resourceful PCs. (Roll only for powered vehicles, of course)

## Post-apocalyptic Stormfront Table (d100)

bad weather for *Mutant Future* by Tim “Sniderman” Snider

During the final days of the End of the World, the same catastrophic explosions that destroyed the land ejected a host of material into the atmosphere. Over time, these have combined with each other and with the clouds to create a number of unusual stormfronts that may be encountered in the *Mutant Future*. If the Mutant Lord wants to give the players an environmental challenge, they should roll 1d100 and refer to the following table:

**1-2. Abrasion Storm** – Coarse sand and grit are carried on gale-force winds, acting as airborne sandpaper. This shreds clothes, strips paint from vehicles and buildings, and even erodes armor (permanent -1 AC). Also may cause blindness to unprotected eyes. Minor injuries (1d4) possible.

**3-4. Acid Storm** – Pollution and ash mix with moisture in the clouds to create a corrosive liquid rain. Roll 1d6 for acidity level, with 1 = slight irritant (lemon juice) through 6 = dangerously corrosive (battery acid).

**5-6. Amnesia Storm** – Unexplained shifts in the planet’s magnetic field create a memory-wiping effect on intelligent creatures. PCs and NPCs may not remember who they are, what they are, or what they can do. This effect may or may not affect artificial intelligence (i.e., robots, androids, and the like). The amnesia wears off after the storm passes.

**7-8. Antigrav Storm** – The gravitational field in the area drops to  $\frac{1}{4}$  its normal level. Everything weighs  $\frac{1}{4}$  its current weight. PCs can leap four times farther and higher than normal. Travel is faster since everything is lighter. (But watch out when the gravity returns!)

**9-10. Ash Storm** – Volcanic ash and cinders that have drifted in the atmosphere for years finally fall, covering the area with 1d4 inches of dirty soot. Comparatively harmless, but may play havoc with fragile technology.

**11-12. Blood Storm** – Microscopic rusting iron particles have combined with moisture in the air to create a thick red rain that smells of iron. Exposed/untreated metal items exposed to a blood storm rust at an accelerated rate.

**13-14. Bone Storm** – During the Ancient Wars, a major population center was bombed into oblivion. Victims who weren’t vaporized had their skeletal remains thrown into the lower atmosphere. Eventually, those bits and pieces will come falling down. More disturbing than dangerous.

**15-16. Boulder Storm** – Large rocks ranging from 1 to 10 feet across start crashing down throughout the area, dealing 1d6 to 10d6 hit points of damage (depending on size) if they strike. This may initially be mistaken for a series of

meteorites, but it’s actually the remnants of a long-ago-blasted mountain chain.

**17-18. Chill Storm** – A driving storm of near-freezing water is encountered. Exposure to a chill storm will deal 1d4 hit points of damage per round to plant-based characters and may give other mutants a bad cold/flu.

**19-20. Concrete Storm** – Miscellaneous gritty mineral flotsam in the atmosphere combines with water to create actual concrete. This pasty material begins splattering down, covering everything. If allowed to harden, it will. Huts could collapse under the weight; villagers could find themselves sealed in and trapped within their shelters.

**21-22. Critter Storm** – A small tornado or waterspout picks up creatures from one area and drops them elsewhere when the funnel cloud dissipates. A large quantity of frogs, locusts, fish, or other small animals will begin falling on the PCs. Occasional scorpions, poisonous spiders, or rot grubs can keep things interesting here.

**23-24. Dark Storm** – A massive cloud of ash and debris blocks out all natural light, throwing the area into absolute darkness. No sunlight, moonlight, or starlight is visible. Nocturnal and light-sensitive creatures will come out to hunt. Due to the size of the cloud (from horizon to horizon), the darkness could last for weeks.

**25-26. Dead Storm** – Bizarre radiation causes the dead to reanimate. After a strange red glow of light blankets the area, the PCs will encounter 3d10 of the Walking Dead clawing their way out of the ground (*MF* 101). Treat as a one-time encounter rather than an on-going stormfront.

**27-28. Deafness Storm** – Changes in air pressure cause sound waves to increase in frequency and pitch, rendering them undetectable by those with “normal” hearing. However, those with special hearing (i.e., many animals or mutants with *increased hearing*) will be able to hear normally. All others will be effectively deaf until the storm passes.

**29-30. Deluge Storm** – Huge raindrops begin to fall, as if the area was being pelted with water balloons. Because an incredible amount of water is falling in a short period of time, dangerous flash floods and river swells are assured. PCs could be swept away by a sudden wave of water appearing out of nowhere.

**31-32. Disease Storm** – Biowarfare agents have mixed with natural rainwater to create a virus-laden “soup” that coats everything. Characters exposed for a lengthy period have a 65% chance of contracting the Superflu (*MF* 48).

**33-34. Fire Storm** – Bits of phosphorus debris have somehow remained inactive and dormant in the atmosphere until just now, flaring up at more than 250 degrees

and burning through anything they land on. PCs will take 2d6 hit points of damage per round of exposure.

**35-36. Funnel Storm** – A series of tornadoes sweeps through the area, destroying buildings, uprooting trees, and hurling massive items through the air. PCs caught in the open may be crushed by debris or, worse, whisked a half-mile up into the air and then dropped.

**37-38. Fusion Storm** – Named for the effect it has on biological tissue, a fusion storm fuses two creatures into one. When this storm passes through, any creatures in contact with each other will find themselves melded together. For example, a man on a horse would warp into a centaur-like creature, and two humans would warp into a two-headed, four armed mutant. Allow PCs to save versus energy attacks to avoid this fate.

**39-40. Glue Storm** – Chemicals in the atmosphere have combined into a thick mucilage. When it rains down, this sticky green goo will act as a powerful adhesive. If allowed to dry, this glue will bond almost any two surfaces (though not glass, oddly enough). Acid or fire dissolve the glue's bond. If bottled, it may fetch a good price with a trader.

**41-42. Hook Storm** – A violent windstorm with barbed bits of metal and wire whips through the region, shredding anything softer than AC 7. Exposed characters suffer 1d4 damage per round, and may need to see a medic to have any remaining barbed materials removed from their flesh.

**43-44. Infrared Storm** – Sunlight refraction causes the infrared light spectrum to become visible. Everything with any degree of warmth has a reddish-orange glow to it. This effect is barely noticeable during the day, but at night, treat everyone as having the mutation of *thermal vision*.

**45-46. Junk Storm** – The remnants of a research satellite or orbiting science platform begin crashing to the surface. Once the hazard of falling refuse has ended, allow the PCs the chance to scavenge the debris field. (45% chance of finding 1d4 working gizmos, *MF* 109).

**47-48. Light Storm** – A massive cloud of light-reflecting chaff unnaturally bends sunlight so that it's as constantly

bright as noon on a 24-hour cycle even when the sun's on the other side of the planet. Creatures with light sensitivity will be in agony. Due to the size of the cloud (from horizon to horizon), the light could last for weeks.

**49-50. Lightning Storm** – No precipitation, but bolts of lightning strike the area regularly. The chance of a PC being struck is only 5% (10% if robotic or in metallic armor). Being hit by lightning does 4d10 hit points of damage (save versus energy attack for half damage).

**51-52. Magnetic Storm** – Somehow, the clouds are emitting a low-level electromagnetic pulse. During the storm, any Ancient electronic technology will malfunction and/or be inactive. Robotic PCs will deactivate but will not suffer damage. Once the storm passes, all tech works as normal.

**53-54. Micro Storm** – Microwave radiation bathes the region. Roll 1d6 for danger level, with 1 = no effect, slight warming sensation on the skin through 6 = dangerously high, third-degree burns occur instantaneously.

**55-56. Mind Storm** – A strange wave of mental energy descends on the area, granting all intelligent creatures the mental mutation of *metaconcert*. All creatures are mentally linked, thoughts are shared, and secrets are laid bare. Fortunately the storm only lasts for 1d4 hours at most.

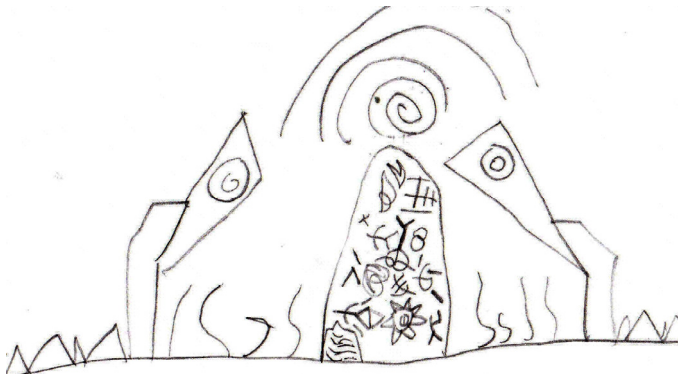
**57-58. Mold Storm** – Mold spores coat everything in a blanket of grey. Within hours, this mold will have rooted and grown to the point where everything appears covered in grey fuzz. Foods are spoiled, and plant-based creatures suffer 1d4 per turn unless treated with fungicide. There is a 10% chance that the storm drops yellow mold (*MF* 103).

**59-60. Mutie Storm** – A blast of energy explodes overhead, scrambling the DNA of all exposed mutants. PCs should completely reroll their mutations (*MF* 21). A mutie storm has no effect on Pure Humans or other characters without mutations.

**61-62. Nuke Storm** – Radioactive fallout from the Ancient Wars begins to drift down. Mutant Lords should roll on the Radiation Class Table (*MF* 51) to determine the level of radiation exposure and its lethality.

**63-64. Oil Storm** – A viscous, petroleum-based liquid covers everything in a thin, slippery coating. This oil makes everything hard to hold onto, and surfaces are treacherous to cross. Land vehicles are impossible to drive without careening into obstacles. Have PCs constantly roll DEX checks to keep from slipping and falling.

**65-66. Parasite Storm** – Although this appears to be a standard rainfall, the water contains millions of deadly, dangerous living organisms. These parasites will invade a host organism where they will begin to feed and grow. The



nature and effect of and cure for these parasites is left to the Mutant Lord to determine.

**67-68. Pheromone Storm** – Naturally occurring pheromones are carried in on the winds, playing havoc with the emotions and sex drive of those exposed. Depending on sexual preferences, intelligent creatures will find each other undeniably attractive. Long-time enemies may hook up and/or find one another completely trustworthy. (But steer clear of the clichéd “Everybody humps each other” scenario.) The effect wears off within 24-48 hours.

**69-70. Poison Storm** – The toxins that fall are poisonous to all living creatures. Mutant Lords should roll on the Poison Class Table (MF 50) to determine the kind and level of the poison and its lethality.

**71-72. Razor Storm** – Metallic and glass shards left in orbit by long-destroyed satellites and missiles starts to rain down. These razor-sharp bits slice through anything exposed like a knife. Fortunately they do not penetrate anything over AC 6, but those with lower AC will be cut to ribbons (1d6 hit points of damage per round of exposure).

**73-74. Shatter Storm** – A wave of pure sonic force explodes overhead, causing anything brittle to shatter. Fragile technology could be rendered useless. Small animals could be injured, and plants could be harmed. PCs should roll a save versus stun attacks or become stunned for 2d10 turns due to the sudden blast of force.

**75-76. Sleep Storm** – A cloud of anesthetic gas washes over everything. All air-breathing creatures will be rendered unconscious. Any PC exposed to the gas should save versus CON or drop into a deep sleep for 3d10 turns.

**77-78. Slime Storm** – Thick, gooey material splatters down, coating the area in a slimy mess. This is usually disgusting and worrisome, but harmless. However, there is a 5% chance that the slime storm is actually dropping small green slime creatures (MF 74).

**79-80. Smoke Storm** – A suffocatingly dense cloud of black smoke moves through the area. Breathing is difficult while in the acrid smoke, but it's not dangerous unless the Mutant Lord wishes it to be. Eyes and lungs will burn. Sight is cut to a distance of 3-5 feet at best and visual mutations like *thermal vision* are rendered useless.

**81-82. Smother Storm** – The barometric pressure fluctuates wildly, increasing to a crushing level. Until the storm passes, breathing is labored as everyone feels the weight of the air compressing upon them. Physical effort is difficult at best. Characters may find themselves temporarily deaf. Flight is impossible for airborne creatures.

**83-84. Sonic Storm** – An ear-piercing shriek of sound splits the air. Those with uncovered or unprotected ears

suffer 1d4 points of damage due to agonizing pain. If they possess *echolocation* or other sonic/hearing mutations they will suffer an additional 1d4/round until they take cover.

**85-86. Splinter Storm** – Similar to a hook storm, a violent surge of splinters and shards whips through the region. These toothpick-sized wooden barbs puncture exposed skin for 1d2 points of damage. Characters should be able to remove any remaining splinters from their skin by themselves.

**87-88. Spore/Germination Storm** – A super-fertilized rain sweeps down, watering all plant life with a strange quick-grow formula. All vegetation in the area will triple in size within the hour. Vines entangle everything; trees grow to monstrous heights; and grass and weeds grow to several feet. Plant-based PCs should be allowed to roll for one new plant-based mutation (MF 22).

**89-90. Static Storm** – A low-level static electrical charge fills the air. Hair stands on end and teeth are set on edge. Contact with ungrounded objects causes a painful discharge to occur. Items may cling to one another. Computers and sensitive electronic equipment won't work and may become damaged.

**91-92. Steam Storm** – Similar to a chill storm, this is a driving rainstorm with water just below the boiling point. A thick hot fog covers the area, making it almost tropical. Plant-based characters will actually thrive in this weather (have them heal twice as fast) but other mutants will find the moisture and heat unbearable.

**93-94. Stench Storm** – A wave of the foulest, most wretched odor imaginable washes through the region. One whiff of this disgusting aroma will cause uncontrollable retching in anyone who smells it. PCs should save versus death (yes, death) to keep their cookies down. Failure means they throw up uncontrollably for 2d10 rounds.

**95-96. Thunder Storm** – Huge crashes of thunder rumble through the area while threatening black clouds gather overhead. No rain, wind, or lightning is encountered – just ominous thunder echoing everywhere. And that's it. Just a lot of noise. Nothing to fear. Really.

**97-98. Vertigo Storm** – A sudden shift in the planet's magnetic field plays havoc with the sense of balance of all intelligent creatures. Everyone feels as if they were drunk while wearing the wrong eyeglasses. A creature's innate sense of perspectives is thrown out of kilter, and the world seems to spin. PCs should have to save versus DEX to do anything more complex than standing up.

**99-100.** Roll THREE TIMES on this table, combine the results, and have the PCs hang on for their lives! Ω

# The Howling Emptiness

by Ramsey Dow

*with thanks to Erol Otus for excellent feedback, which improved it!*

*The Howling Emptiness* is a desert sandbox suitable for 5-10 characters of level 6+. Parties comprised of lower level PCs will need to bolster their numbers to survive. Moreover, the desert is unforgiving. Adequate precaution must be taken at all times. Dehydration and hyperthermia will take their toll on the foolish – GMs take note!

Why would anyone want to spend time in this sandy hell-hole? After all, there is more excitement to be had in the heady brothels of the spired cities. Here are some pretexts if the natural flow of play does not lead PCs here:

- The characters have come into possession of a treasure map that leads somewhere within the wastes.
- The characters, in pursuit of some dastardly villain, have tracked their quarry to this desolate landscape.
- The adventurers, down on their luck, have teamed up with tomb robbers. Ancient tombs are plentiful here, ripe for the plundering: “*Alls we gotta do is find ‘em!*”
- A sorcerer of some repute has hired the adventurers to obtain a rare spell component, perhaps an uncommon strain of psychoactive cactus that grows in this area.
- Increasing raids from desert nomads (or foul humanoids) have raised the ire of local authorities, and a new bounty has been proclaimed...
- The assassin’s guild has caught wind of legends of an unnatural myriapod—one said to be especially virulent. Find it and return its poison and a reward shall be yours!

Aside from the usual tales of horrible monsters, there are a number of legends associated with *The Howling Emptiness*.

## 2d6 Legend or Rumor

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 2  | A great centipede standing 10’ tall haunts the desert. It has the power to mesmerize those who gaze at it. |
| 3  | The desert is haunted by demons. (F)   |
| 4  | There are expanses of dry quicksand that have swallowed up entire caravans.                                |
| 5  | There is a dwarven mine lost deep within the arid wastelands, brimming with gold and jewels. (F)           |
| 6  | Beware the violent sandstorms!   |
| 7  | Somewhere within the Howling Emptiness is a gateway to another dimension.                                  |
| 8  | Attacks by hyena-men are on the rise.  |
| 9  | Deep within the shifting sands is the fabled Obsidian City, wherein lie untold riches! (F)                 |
| 10 | Beware the desert nomads, for they do not appreciate trespass in their lands.                              |
| 11 | Beneath a great statue bubbles a magical pool, but beware the skeletal legion that guards it!              |
| 12 | The desert is riddled with tombs from a kingdom of a bygone era.   |

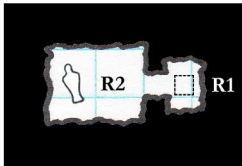
Anyone who spends any time wandering the dusty bazaars or staggering between uproarious taverns in the desert cities is sure to pick up 1d3. False information is denoted with (F). Feel free to alter or supplement this table any way you see fit, even making false legends true if whim strikes.

**The Desert:** *The Howling Emptiness* is an inhospitable desert. It is named after the high velocity sandstorms that plague the land. Covering an expanse of 200 by 300 miles, the desert is vast. The landscape consists primarily of outcroppings of exposed bedrock, playas, and extensive, dusty plains. Less than 30% of the area is covered with traditional sand seas. The remainder is a mixture of sandy dirt and pebbles. Badlands and other rough, rocky areas occur frequently. The desert heat is oppressive. The place has a hot, dry climate, with temperatures reaching as high as 122° Fahrenheit during the summer months. The average temperature in January is 70°. Temperatures between day and night can vary by as much as 100°. The extreme heat of this place frequently causes water to vaporize. Small oases and mud flats can completely dry out, leaving expansive crusts of salt. Both precipitation and vegetation are sparse here. It only rains during the winter months, and even then, rainfall is limited to just a few inches. Similarly, plant life is restricted to hardier breeds. Cacti are predominant, although other types of plants—desert shrubs and grasses—manage to eke out an existence here.

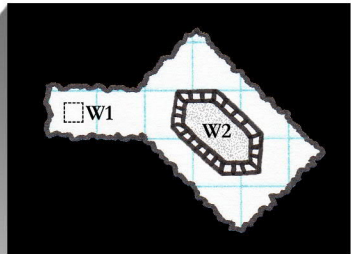
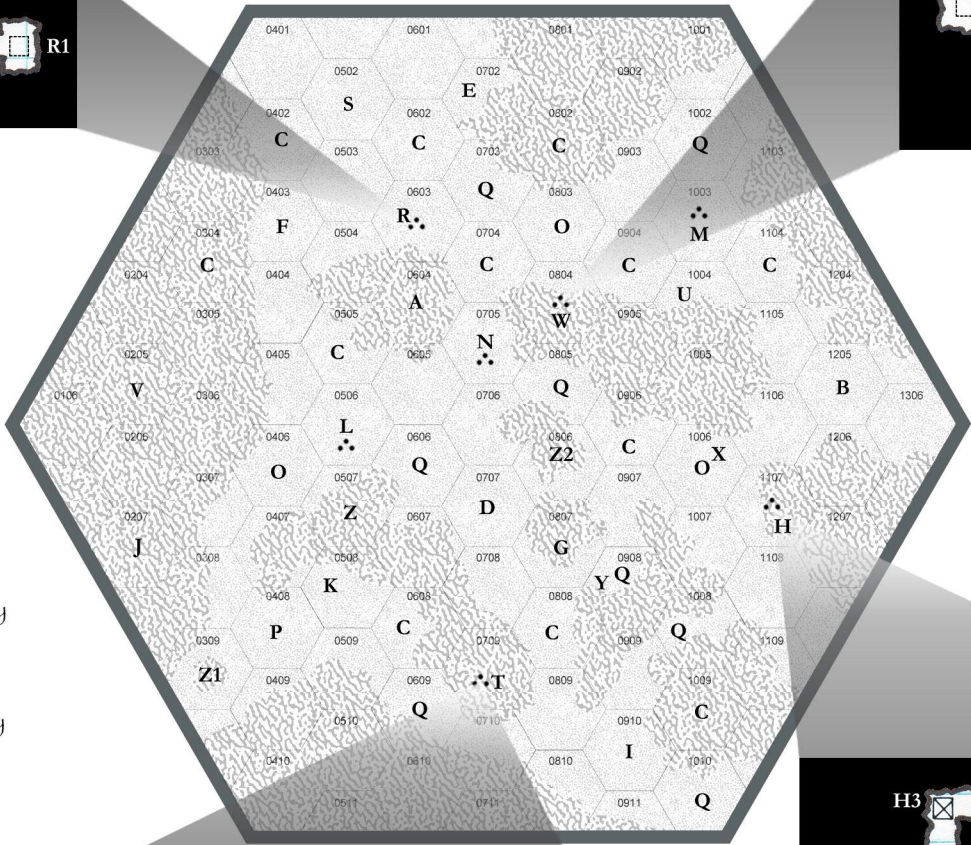
**Notes for the Referee:** Movement through the desert will occur at a rate of 5 hexes (15 miles) per day. This assumes a brisk pace, allowing only a 1 in 6 chance of detecting any particular detail of a given hex. Should characters wish to perform a more extensive search, movement will be reduced to 1 hex (3 miles) per day. This will yield a 4 in 6 chance of detecting details within the hex. Assuming good visibility conditions, characters will typically be able to see into the immediately neighboring hexes. This will allow them to detect the presence of nearby badlands, oases, and the like. The presence of high dunes, sandstorms, and so forth will, of course, limit such visibility.

The desert is a hostile environment. Adequate water is a must for all travelers. For every day that a character goes without water in the desert, they will lose 3 constitution points. They will be unable to walk when their constitution score drops below 3. They will die when it reaches 0. A character will regain constitution at a rate of 2 points per day that sufficient amounts of water are consumed. In addition to dehydration, hyperthermia is also a concern in this environment. Smart players will limit their characters’ travel to the nighttime hours. Otherwise, when the temperature exceeds 100°, travelers need to make a daily saving throw versus breath weapons, modified by their Constitution score (*table next page*). Should they fail, they will come down with heat sickness. Affected characters suffer from headaches, dizziness, and nausea, causing them

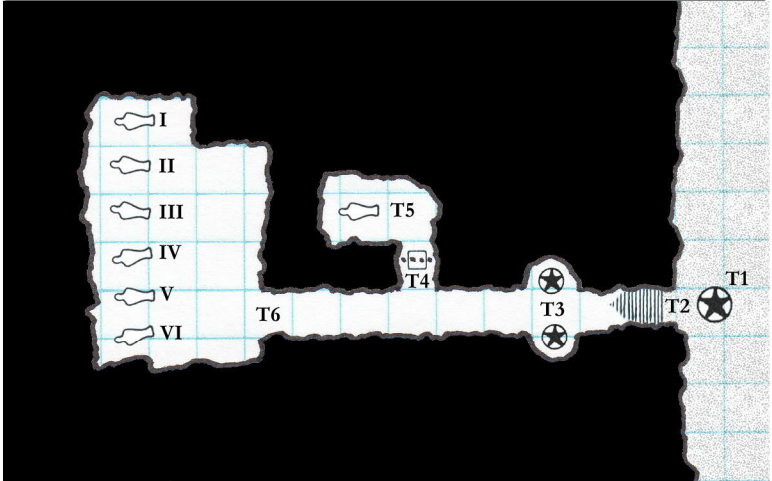
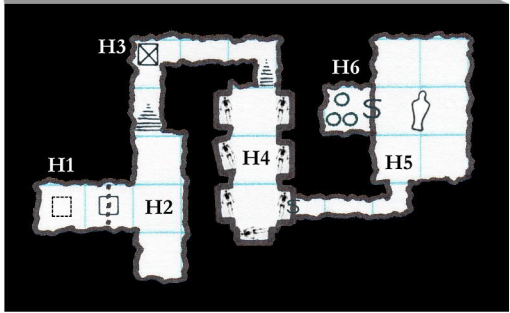
# THE HOWLING EMPTINESS













Scale: 1 Hex = 3 Miles



Scale: 1  = 10 Feet



	Sarcophagus		Shaft
	Statue		Stairs Down
	Urns		Gate
	Remains		Secret Door
	Low Wall		Pit Trap

Constitution Score	Saving Throw Adjustment
3	-4
4	-3
5	-2
6	-1
7-14	No adjustment
15	+1
16	+2
17	+3
18	+4

to suffer a -2 penalty to hit. Likewise, monsters gain a +2 bonus attacking stricken characters. Effects last until the end of the day unless *cure disease* is used to remove them.

**Random Desert Encounters:** Random encounters in *The Howling Emptiness* occur 1 in 10. Check thrice per day: once in the morning, once in the evening, and once at night. Lair percentages dictate whether the characters have stumbled on the creature in its lair; if so, dice for treasure!

2d6	Vast Desert
2	Doppelgangers
3	Men
4	Giant Wasps
5	Weather Event
6	Giant Lizards
7	Ichor Hawks
8	Desert Diatrymas
9	Wild Camels
10	Hyena-Men
11	Giant Scorpions
12	Purple Worms

**Desert Diatrymas** (1-6): DC 6; SPD 18; HD 3; Atk 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8; Size L; Lair nil; Treasure nil.

**Doppelgangers** (3-12): DC 5; SPD 9; HD 4; Atk 1; Dmg 1-12; SA surprise on 1-4; SD immune to *sleep* and *charm*; Size M; Lair 20%; Treasure E. Masquerading as travelers (specifically, the dead ones at **B**), these creatures are slowly making their way across the desert. They are encountered only once; consider all subsequent results of Doppelgangers to be 'free passes' for the characters.

**Giant Lizards** (2-12): DC 5; SPD 15; HD 3+1; Atk 1; Dmg 1-8; SA nat. 20 causes double damage; Size L; Lair nil; Treasure nil.

**Giant Scorpions** (1-4): DC 3; SPD 15; HD 5+5; Atk 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/1-4; SA poison sting; Size M; Lair 50%; Treasure D.

**Giant Wasps** (1-8): DC 4; SPD 6/21; HD 4; Atk 2; Dmg 2-8/1-4; SA poison; Size M; Lair 25%; Treasure Q x20.

**Hyena-Men** (2-24): DC 5; SPD 12; HD 2+3; Atk 1; Dmg 1-6 or 1-4; SA disarm; Size M; Lair 20%; Treasure A.

**Ichor Hawks** (4-15): DC 7; SPD 24; HD 1+1; Atk 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6; Size S; Lair 25%; Treasure Q x2.

**Men** are either nomads (75%) or tomb robbers (25%). They are always hostile, regardless. **Nomads** (2-12): DC 7; SPD 12; HD 1; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise 1-4 due to affinity with the desert. Nomads wear leather armor under their flowing robes and arm themselves with scimitars and short bows. **Tomb Robbers** (2-8): DC 6; SPD 12; HD 1+1; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type. Tomb robbers wear studded leather armor and are armed with scimitars, daggers, and short bows.

**Purple Worms** (1-2): DC 6; SPD 9; HD 15; Atk 1 and 1; Dmg 2-24 or 2-8; SA poison, any hit 4 or more over the required number indicates prey swallowed whole; Size L; Lair 30%; Treasure B, Q x5, X.

**Weather Event:** This result is either a sandstorm (50%) or a mirage (50%). In the case of a **sandstorm**, characters will be able to see dark clouds gathering on the horizon. Propelled by howling winds, the clouds will reach the characters within 1-4 hours. The sandstorm will last for 1-6 hours, during which time movement and visibility will be cut in half. In the case of a **mirage**, roll 1d8, 1d10, and 1d20 to determine the direction, nature, and distance in miles of the mirage, respectively. No matter how far the characters travel toward the mirage, it will continue to appear in the distance. The mirage will continue to travel until it leaves the characters' field of vision. Witless characters may well follow a mirage to their dusty doom.

d8	Direction	d10	Nature
1	North	1	Citadel
2	Northeast	2	Desert riders
3	East	3	Giant statue
4	Southeast	4	Lake
5	South	5	Oasis
6	Southwest	6	Oasis with palm trees
7	West	7	Pillars
8	Northwest	8	Pyramid
		9	Tower
		10	Walled town

**Wild Camels** (1-12): DC 7; SPD 21; HD 3; Atk 1; Dmg 1-4; SA spitting; Size L. Wild camels are skittish and will stampede away if approached within 200 feet.



## Fixed Desert Encounters

**A. AMICABLE NOMADS:** The characters chance upon a camp of friendly desert dwellers. The nomads invite the adventurers to share their camp, an impeccable circle of lavish tents and decoration situated amidst the desolate rocky highlands. They will insist upon a feast, replete with food, wine, and dancing girls. Continuing into the wee hours of the night, the celebrations are seemingly without end. During the festivities, the nomads will ply the characters with drugged wine. While the characters are passed out, the nomads will steal practically everything, leaving them for dead. **Nomads, normal men** (23): DC 7; SPD 12; HD 1; 1 x2, 2 x7, 3 x2, 4 x4, 5 x2, 6 x2, 7 x2, 8 x2; Atk 1, Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise on a 1-4 due to affinity with the desert; they wear leather armor and wield scimitars. In addition to 3d6 sp per nomad, they are carrying a chest containing 574 gp.

**B. BODIES:** Seven Ichor Hawks are feasting on the sun-dried remains of a band of ill-fated travelers. The actual number of carcasses on the ground is indeterminate due to the ravenous hunger of the hawks. They will squawk threateningly at the sight of the characters, but will not

make a move from their gory feast. The Ichor Hawks will attack any who dare approach. **Ichor Hawks** (7): DC 7; SPD 24; HD 1+1; hp 4, 5 x2, 6, 8, 9 x2 Atk 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6; Size S. The carcasses have no treasure, valuables, or discernable gear of any sort. They have been 'picked clean.'

**C. CACTI:** An extensive patch of small, globular cacti grows here. The cacti are either succulent (01-50%) or psychoactive (51-00%). Succulent cacti patches yield enough tasty pears to sustain six humans for two days. After that, the cacti will need time to grow new pads, a process which could take months. Psychoactive cacti, on the other hand, will produce hallucinations of the most impressive (and fearsome) sort. Roll 2d20 to determine how many minutes it takes for the hallucinations to begin. Roll 1d6+4 to determine the number of hours that the hallucinations persist for. A character will be helpless during a hallucinatory episode, wracked with terrifying visions of cosmic grandeur. There is a 50% chance that a hallucinating character will injure themselves for 1d10 points of damage. This chance can be reduced or negated if the character is closely monitored or bound for their protection.

**D. DEATH DOGS:** A pack of death dogs has claimed this area as their hunting ground. Preternaturally ferocious, they will attack the characters on sight. They will pursue fleeing characters for several miles before breaking off. **Death Dogs** (28): DC 7; SPD 12; HD 2+1; Atk 2; Dmg 1-10/1-10; SA disease, a score of 19 or 20 on its "to hit" roll indicates that it has knocked its opponent down; Size M.

**E. EXPLORERS:** Two adventurers are here, lost and wandering...They initially came to *The Howling Emptiness* in search of tombs to plunder. They are both suffering from the initial effects of dehydration, having run out of water yesterday. They are weak, but stumbling along. They will be genuinely happy to see fellow adventurers and deeply appreciative of any aid given. **Ahsmek the Mesmerist**, 4<sup>th</sup> level human mage DC 8; SPD 12; HD 4; hp 9; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA spells; Size M; S 10; I 16; W 12; D 12; C 11; Ch 10; Spells: 1<sup>st</sup> – *charm, light, mystic missile, throw voice*; 2<sup>nd</sup> – *mirror images, web*. Ahsmek carries a **dagger +1**, wears a **protective ring +1**, and wields a **wand of fear** (6 charges). His belt pouch contains three agates worth 50 gp apiece. He is a helpful, yet reckless, magic-user. He seeks to become a sorcerer of repute; this frequently gets Ahsmek in trouble. **Belboz**, 2<sup>nd</sup> level elf warrior: DC 4; SPD 12; HD 3; hp 10; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA spells; Size M; S 16; I 17; W 11; D 13; C 10; Ch 14. Belboz wears an **elfin chain mail shirt +1** and wields a long sword. In addition, he carries a pouch containing 5 applications of **disappearance dust**. He wears a silver ring set with a moonstone worth 150 gp. He is an atypical elf, eschewing missile weapons. He fights bravely with his sword. Domineering, he is loyal to a T. He has adventured with Ahsmek for some time now. He's out for honor—and a good time. Assuming they are well treated, the two would

be happy to team up with PCs—assuming they get a fair shake. If treated poorly or denied their fair share of loot, the two will slink off into night, never to be seen again. Although weakened from lack of water, the duo is not stupid. If attacked, Ahsmek will use his **wand of fear** on the attackers, while Belboz sprinkles **disappearance dust** on them. The two will then flee.

**F. HYENA-MAN ENCAMPMENT:** A small band of Hyena-Man have made their camp here. They are traveling across the desert, fleeing persecution from the larger, stronger humanoid tribes to the north. The band consists of males and females, who fight as males. Oddly, there are no young. **Hyena-Men** (22): DC 5; SPD 12; HD 2+3; hp 6, 7, 8, 10 x4, 11 x3, 12, 13, 14 x4, 15, 16, 17 x2, 18 x2; Atk 1; Dmg 1-6 or 1-4; SA disarming; Size M. Their treasure consists of 3,200 cp, 1,100 sp, and 900 gp in four wooden chests. In addition, their leader is armed with a **spear +2**.

**G. GLOOMY CAVES:** The arid desert plain here gives way to a low outcropping of bedrock. It is rough, pitted by millennia of merciless desert winds. A handful of caves dot the base of the outcropping. Interconnected, these caves are home to a large number of bats. The bats are harmless but easily startled. Noisy PCs will attract the giant slugs that dwell deeper within the caves, causing the bats to flee en masse, creating quite the sight. **Giant Slugs** (3): DC 8; SPD 6; HD 12; Atk 1; Dmg 1-12; SA spit acid; SD unaffected by blunt weapons; Size L. The caves beyond the warrens of the giant slugs continue to wind their way deeper into the earth. Where they lead is up to the GM.

**H. HAUNTED TOMB:** The only indication that a tomb lies beneath the surface is a cairn of stones. Large and intricately placed, the stones conceal a 4-foot wide shaft. It will take several hours to remove the stones and reveal the shaft leading down into the ground. Feel free to roll an additional wandering monster check or two while characters spend time unearthing the shaft. Key (map page 35):

**H1. Shaft Terminus:** The shaft descends 40 feet, exiting into a 10-foot wide passageway with rough walls. The floor consists of paved stone flags. The passageway is blocked by a rusty iron gate, beyond which can be seen a strange hall with pictures on the wall. The gate is locked and there is no key. Either the gate's lock must be picked or the bars bent in order to move forward.

**H2. Gallery of Frescoes:** The walls of this 10-foot by 30-foot hall are completely covered with frescoes. Faded and peeling, the subject matter of the frescoes is difficult to discern. Apparently funerary in nature, undamaged glimpses reveal processions of robed figures, burial scenes, and so forth. Although a number of rocks have fallen from the ceiling, the room seems stable.

**H3. Concealed Pit Trap:** Those traversing this narrow passageway have a 4 in 6 chance of triggering the pit trap concealed at the corner. The pit is 20 feet deep and spiked. Those unfortunate enough to fall in take 3d6.

**H4. Burial Chamber:** This 10-foot wide by 30-foot long hall has an angular arched ceiling that is 20-feet high at its apex. Seven burial niches line the walls; each contains a mail-clad skeleton. They wear conical helmets with horns, wings, and other antique adornments. The hall is otherwise empty and nondescript. When the center of the room is reached, the skeletons will rise and attack with great fervor. They fight with scimitars. **Berserking Skeletons** (7): DC 7; SPD 12; HD 2+2; hp 6, 9, 10 x2, 11 x2, 13; Atk 1; Dmg 1-6; SA +2 "to hit" and damage; SD edged weapons cause half damage, unaffected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and *cold*-based spells; Size M. The skeletons have no treasure, but there is a secret door located along the rear wall of one of the niches. Alas, the secret door is trapped. If the hidden stud is depressed without first disarming the trap, a needle will strike. Injected with a potent respiratory agent, the victim must make a saving throw versus poison. If successful, he takes 1d6 points of damage. Otherwise, 2d6 points of damage are inflicted and he will be incapacitated for 1d6+1d4 hours.

**H5. Rubble-Strewn Chamber:** This 20-foot by 30-foot chamber appears to have been hewn directly from the surrounding stone. Readily apparent is the great, stone sarcophagus at the center. Aside from rubble strewn liberally about the floor, the place is otherwise empty. The sarcophagus is nondescript. It bears no carvings or symbols anywhere along its smooth surface. If checked, it does not radiate magic, although it does radiate a strong aura of evil. Opening the sarcophagus will reveal a jumble of bones. Closer inspection will reveal scratch marks all along the interior of the sarcophagus. The bones are the remains of an ancient prince, buried alive by a jealous brother. His will to live ensured that he would haunt this chamber for eternity and he does so as a poltergeist. Within moments of opening the sarcophagus, the bones fly upward in a fury. The poltergeist, free at long last, will fly about the room, invisible. Enraged, it will attack using the various rocks lying about the floor as weapons, striking 1d6 characters per round for 1d4 each. **Poltergeist** (1): DC 9; SPD 6; HD attacks as a 5 HD creature; hp 1; Atk telekinesis; SA fear; SD invisibility, silver or magic weapons required to hit; Size M. The poltergeist will not leave this room. It will continue attacking everyone until it is either destroyed or turned.

**H6. Treasure Vault:** Other than three large, stone urns, this 10 foot square room is empty. Lidless, these urns contain numerous coins: 2,000 sp, 2,000 ep, and 2,000 gp, respectively. In addition, there is a bone scroll tube containing naught but dust. The scroll tube is intricately

carved, however, and will fetch upwards of 250 gp from the right merchant.

**I. INVISIBLE TOWER:** There is a circular depression of sand some 30 feet in diameter here. An invisible tower broods upon this lonely, sandy plain. No one knows what lies within, for nothing can be seen or heard. If only the door could be found...but in point of fact, there is no door. Climbing to the roof, 60' up, also proves fruitless, for there is only a gently sloping dome of invisible rock. It is left to the GM to determine what the true nature of this unusual edifice is – and what horrors it might contain.

**J. JADE HEADS** – The way for 300 yards is marked with huge heads, fashioned from green stone. Although not actually jade, the stone is close in color. Adorned with helms and other strange headgear, the heads are all between 8 and 12 feet high. Toppled this way and that, they look forlorn in their antiquity. Giant scorpions frequent this place, and from 1-6 will be encountered every hundred yards traveled. **Giant Scorpions** (1-6): DC 3; SPD 15; HD 5+5; Atk 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/1-4; SA poison sting; Size M; Lair 50%; Treasure D.

**K. KAFKAESQUE TROLL:** A particularly nasty two-headed troll is on the rampage in this area. It recently found the **Cursed Crown of Prince Ibn** while plundering a long-forgotten tomb. Displaying a weird fashion sense, it donned the crown as an arm band; unfortunately that was enough to trigger the crown's curse. The crown has the effect of polymorphing the wearer into a giant cockroach. Once donned, it cannot be easily removed. In fact, it will actively resist any such attempts, regardless of who tries, and *remove curse* will be required to remove the crown. The crown clouds the wearer's mind, rendering him or her in a state of permanent *confusion*, as per the spell. The polymorphed two-headed troll will either stand around doing nothing or attack the characters, with a 50% chance for either in any given round. **Giant Cockroach (Really Two-Headed Troll)** (1): DC 4; SPD 12; HD 10; hp 54; Atk 2 (4 as troll); Dmg 2-12/2-12 (1-6/1-6/1-10/1-10 as troll); SD regeneration; Size L. Once slain, the two-headed troll's true form will be revealed. The cursed crown will glint seductively in the harsh sunlight. The body, if searched, will reveal a stained leather pouch secreted within the folds of its nasty furs. The pouch contains four rubies, each worth 1,000 gp. The troll's camp is located nearby and can be found if characters mount a determined search. The camp is fairly nondescript, consisting simply of a fire pit and a large boulder. If the boulder is removed (requiring a combined strength of 18+), a hole containing the troll's treasure will be revealed. Secreted within the hole are two large sacks containing 3,600 gp and 3,100 gp respectively.

**L. LONELY PILLARS:** Three giant columns, each 10 feet in diameter, rise at oblique angles from the sandy desert floor. The columns are all between 30' and 60' tall.

Although there is nothing strikingly wrong with this place, it bears a heavy atmosphere of loneliness. Perhaps this is why a feydevil has chosen to temporarily take up residence here. As is typical of its kind, the feydevil attacks on sight. **Feydevil** (1): DC 2; SPD 9; HD 3; hp 18; Atk 2; Dmg 1-4/1-4; SA heat metal; Size M. As soon as it slays someone it breaks off its attack, wailing in utter despair. It will offer its services as a way of penance. However, this period of penance will not last long. Such is the way of the feydevil.

**M. MAUSOLEUMS:** A cluster of freestanding structures, ancient monuments to the dead, breaks the monotony of the lone and level sands. The structures are obviously quite old and must have been falling to ruin centuries ago, even as they are today. Closer inspection reveals that the place has fallen prey to serious defacement. Monuments have been toppled this way and that, and stone surfaces everywhere are pitted with ghastly claw marks. All of the mausoleums have been broken into, their contents rent asunder and apparently consumed in some sort of ghastly orgy of destruction. There is apparently no treasure to be had in this dreadful place. Linger overlong here is dangerous and will invite additional wandering monster checks (likelihood raised to 1 in 3). At night, ghouls and ghosts haunt the surrounding area. Their horrific ululations can be heard echoing across the sandy plains for miles in all directions. Refer to **U** for more details.



**N. NEBULOUS STATUE:** A great statue broods here. Its form is unknown, as it has been disfigured beyond recognition by timeless desert winds. It is obviously of great antiquity. There are no markings on the statue, nor does it radiate magic or any other unusual aura. There is a secret door located on the left hand side of the statue's 'neck.' A narrow spiral staircase occupies the space behind the secret door. It descends for 200 feet into the cool darkness. The walls become slicker with dampness the further one descends. The stair terminates in a narrow passage, which continues for some 20 feet before opening up into a large, natural cavern. The cavern is 50 feet by 80 feet in size and has a natural barrel vault ceiling. A great number of stalactites hang from the ceiling. At the cavern's center is a natural pool which radiates light of an unnatural azure hue. Surrounding the pool in various states of distress are 40 mail-clad skeletons. They appear to be long-dead warriors of some sort. The skeletons wear rusty mail corselets and conical helms. They wield spears (50%) and scimitars (50%). As soon as anyone approaches within 10' of the pool, the skeletons will animate and attack. They will fight until destroyed. **Skeletons** (40): DC 7; SPD 12; HD 1; hp 1 x9, 2 x3, 3 x7, 4, 5 x3 6 x8, 7 x3, 8 x6; Atk 1; Dmg 1-6; SD edged weapons cause half damage, unaffected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and *cold*-based spells; Size M. The pool has supernatural curative properties. All damage will be healed if its waters are drunk. The water, should it be carried away from this place, will lose its magical properties, however, becoming normal water.

**O. OASIS:** This area is the site of a naturally occurring spring. It feeds a pond that is between 70 and 120 (1d6+6) feet across. The land in the immediate vicinity of the pond is moist and rife with vegetation. Palm trees and other vegetation are lush next to the water's edge, but sparse only 100 feet away. Due to the presence of water, wandering monsters are much more likely to occur here: 1 chance in 4. You might consider increasing the regularity of checks as well, depending on your mood.

**P. PYRAMID:** The ruined remains of a pyramid loom here. Fashioned from titanic blocks of pitted basalt, the ruin is obviously ancient. Although this place may simply be an innocuous ruin, its true nature is left to the GM. Perhaps there is an entrance to some mysterious, subterranean realm somewhere in the pyramid's upper reaches?

**Q. QUICKSAND:** Covered by a thin crust, the powder-like sand in these areas acts very much like quicksand. Unless prodded, the crust is indistinguishable from the surrounding desert soils. Those unfortunate enough to set foot on the thin crust will find themselves breaking through and falling into the dry quicksand. Roll 1d20 to determine its depth. A character will sink at a rate of 1' per round, double that if they struggle. Most people will be fully submerged after 6 rounds. Others nearby can easily rescue a character in trouble. Prior to being fully sub-

merged, a character mired in sand can escape to safety *sans* help by passing a successful dexterity check at -6. Once fully submerged, however, a character will be helpless and must depend on the goodwill of others. Once one's head is buried characters will begin to choke, taking 1-4 points of damage per round. Anyone still alive after 8 rounds will die of suffocation. It is much more likely that wandering monsters will appear while characters are having misadventures in and around patches of dry quicksand: encounter chances increase to 1 in 4 during these times.

**R. RUINED TOMB:** A narrow shaft about 6' square provides entrance to this tomb. It is carved into the base of a low, rocky hill, leading straight down into darkness:

**R1. Shaft Terminus:** The shaft descends for 30 feet into a 5-foot by 7-foot rough-hewn room. A 5-foot wide passageway leads westward into darkness.

**R2. Burial Chamber:** This chamber measures 20' by 15' and has a 12' high ceiling. The floor of the tomb is filled to a depth of about 1' with human and animal bones. There is a single, lidless sarcophagus at the western end of the room. Upon closer inspection, it will be seen to be empty. However, crossing to the sarcophagus will disturb the residents of this place: fourteen amps, all of which bound furiously toward the interlopers. **Amps** (14): DC 3; SPD 6; HD 2+1; hp 4, 5, 7 x4, 8, 9, 10, 12 x3, 13 x2; Atk 1 and 1; Dmg 1-4 and 2-12 (electrical); SD immune to electrical attacks; Size S. Although the amps have no treasure, there is a loose stone in the northern wall of the tomb. Characters will have normal chances to detect it if the chamber is searched for secret doors. Behind the stone is a small compartment that contains 400 ep scattered loose on the floor. In addition, there is a small iron chest and a small bone coffer, containing 300 gp and 8-100 gp gems respectively.

**S. SHIFTING SANDS:** This region is marked by fine sand, shepherded by the unending caress of the desert wind into undulating dunes. These dunes stretch for miles, rising in some cases to heights in excess of 900 feet. This place is a haven for sandmen. For each mile traveled, there is a 1 in 4 chance of encountering these creatures. **Sandmen** (1-6): DC 3; SPD 9; HD 4; Atk nil; SA sleep; SD protection from normal missiles; Size M; Lair 20%; Treasure 100-2,000 gp.

**T. TOMB ROBBERS!** This tomb's entrance is located in the eastern cliffs of a small, rocky valley, high in the uplands. Shazilar and his ragged band of robbers are currently plundering it. They are working feverishly in order to quit this accursed place as soon as possible. They are currently in **T4** and **T6**, with most working to open the various sarcophagi located within. They will fight, but not to the death, preferring to cut and run as soon as they start taking significant losses.

**T1. Ruined Statue:** The remains of a statue lie at the valley's end. It is broken beyond recognition. All that remains are a leg, a partially buried torso, and a toppled head, cracked in half, its face worn away by the years. The surrounding rubble might once have been the remainder of the statue, but that is simply conjecture. Eight camels are tethered to the various ruined pieces of the statue. There is no sight of anyone, however, and no guards seem to be posted. Multiple sets of footprints lead to a cleft in the rocky cliff.

**T2. Tomb Entrance:** A cleft in the rocky cliffs widens into steps, which descend into the gloom.

**T3. Stone Statues:** Two stone statues of ancient warriors stand at attention in the rounded alcoves that flank the passage. Other than kilt-shaped loincloths and featureless, oval masks, devoid of even eye slits, these warriors are unremarkable. They have sickle-shaped swords hanging at their sides. Light can be seen flickering further down the dusty corridor.

**T4. Gate:** A barred gate prevents entry into the chamber beyond. Two men are working by lantern light to pick the lock. They have not yet succeeded in their task. In fact, they are so involved in their work that they are more likely to be surprised (3 in 6 chance). Reinforcements from **T6** will arrive within 1 round should fighting break out. **Tomb Robbers** (3): DC 6; SPD 12; HD 1+1; hp 6, 8 x2; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type. These tomb robbers wear studded leather armor under their black robes. They are armed with scimitars and daggers. Each carries 2d6 sp in a drawstring pouch kept at their belt. The lock is rusted so badly that it is inoperable, leaving brute strength the only way into the chamber beyond. Normal chances for bending bars applies.

**T5. Side Chamber:** This irregularly shaped room measures 15 feet by 20 feet. It is empty save for a large, centrally located sarcophagus. If opened, the sarcophagus will reveal naught but bones. If searched, however, a small philter will be found. It contains a single draught of **potion of gaseous form**.

**T6. Burial Chamber:** This odd-shaped room is roughly 35' by 55' in dimension. Six sarcophagi are arrayed along the far western wall. There are five men in here working on opening the two middle sarcophagi. The two northernmost sarcophagi have been opened and plundered, while the two to the south remain unopened. **Tomb Robbers** (5): DC 6; SPD 12; HD 1+1; hp 7x2, 8x2, 9; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type. These tomb robbers wear studded leather armor under their black robes. They are armed with scimitars and daggers. Each carries 2d6 sp in a drawstring pouch kept at their belt. In addition, Shazilar (9 hp) wears a **ring of delusion**, which he believes is a **ring of shooting stars**. Shazilar carries 18

pp in his pouch. Finally, his dagger's blade is treated with poison of the save or die variety. The application is good for one stabbing. Thus far, the robbers have removed 450 gp, 1,020 ep, and 1,980 sp, all of which has been deposited into leather sacks located at the center of this chamber. The remaining treasure is contained within the remaining unopened sarcophagi. Collectively, the first three contain 250 gp, 617 ep, 1,420 sp, and a silver dagger with a ruby (worth 500 gp) set in its pommel. The southernmost contains 400 gp, 923 ep, 2,403 sp, a **necklace of missiles** (7 missile variety), and a small coffer. The coffer is protected by a poison needle trap (save or die) and contains six brilliant sapphires worth 500 gp apiece. In addition to all this treasure, there is a sickness skeleton entrapped within. It attacks immediately once freed. **Sickness Skeleton** (1): DC 3; SPD 9; HD 2; hp 12; Atk 1; Dmg 1-6; SA atk causes disease; SD hit only by silver or magical weapons; Size M.

**U. UNDEAD:** Here a narrow cave is situated on the southern cliff face. This is the lair of the ghouls and ghosts that haunt the nearby mausoleums. The air of this place is so foul that those entering must make a constitution check once each round to avoid becoming sick. Those who fail their check will find themselves overpowered by nausea. Careful adventurers who cover their mouths and noses with cloth receive a +4 bonus. The cave winds inward for several hundred feet before emerging into a great cavern. Filled with stalactites and stalagmites, this dismal place is littered with gnawed bones, offal, and other filth. The ghouls and ghosts will instantly become alerted to the presence of intruders, and attack in an unholy frenzy. **Ghouls** (18): DC 6; SPD 9; HD 2; hp 4, 5 x2, 6, 7, 8 x5, 9 x3, 10 x2, 12, 13 x2; Atk 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA paralyzation; SD unaffected by mind-controlling spells; Size M. **Ghosts** (6): DC 4; SPD 15; HD 4; hp 7, 14 x2, 16, 17, 25; Atk 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; SA carrion stench; SD unaffected by mind-controlling spells; cold iron weapons cause double damage; Size M. The treasure of these creatures is scattered amidst the filth littering the deeper reaches of the cavern. It will take some effort to locate and retrieve it all. How long that takes will depend on the strategy employed by the players. In addition to being backbreaking work, digging through the filth is highly dangerous. In addition to increased opportunities for contracting disease, a periodic check must be made to determine if any rot slugs are encountered. Check every other round, 1 in 10. **Rot Slugs** (5-20): DC 9; SPD 1; HD 1 hp each; Atk 0; Dmg nil; SA burrowing; Size S. In total, the treasure consists of 7,200 cp, 4,700 sp, 2,911 gp, two tourmalines worth 100 gp each, 5 potions in metal flasks (two each of **healing** and **invulnerability** and one of **plant control**), and 3 scrolls (Prx2: *prayer, speak with dead*; Mgx7: *protection from missiles, water breathing, rope trick, suggest, firewall, dimension portal, monster charm*; and a curse scroll which causes the reader to rot away within 3 turns unless he or she receives a *cure disease* spell).



one's peripheral vision. There is a hexagonally shaped well in the center of the room. The well is 20 feet long and 15 feet wide and is surrounded by a 2 foot high, 3 foot deep lip of rough-hewn stone blocks. The well appears to be bottomless, for all that can be seen within is infinite, inky darkness. If stared at long enough this darkness seems to move in slow whorls. Although this chamber is underground, there is a barely perceptible draft here that carries with it the chill of death. There is something *wrong* with this place; such is readily apparent to all who stand here. This is the fabled **Well of Shadows**, and from it emerges the very stuff of shadow. Any who linger here too long (1-4 rounds) will be attacked by 1-6 shadows emerging from the Well. Moreover, the Well serves as a gateway to the Shadowlands. Those brave enough to leap in will find themselves transported to a dangerous land of effervescent darkness and shadow. Adventures abound in this place, although getting home might prove difficult (GMs take note!) **Shadows** (1-6): DC 7; SPD 12; HD 3+3; hp 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25; Atk 1; Dmg 2-5; SA strength drain; SD magic weapons required to hit; Size M. Once slain, the shadows dissolve back into the chamber's never ending gloom. Nothing will happen for 1-4 rounds, after which another 1-6 shadows will emerge from the Well and attack. This cycle can and will repeat endlessly. There is no treasure to be had in this fell place.

**V. VICIOUS MYRIAPOD:** A horrific cyclopede has taken up residence in this narrow, rocky valley. It lives in a filthy cave at the end of the valley. Always hungry, it will relentlessly attack any who enter the valley. **Cyclopede** (1): DC 2; SPD 12; HD 10; hp 53; Atk 3; D 1-4/1-4/2-18; SA hypnotic gaze, poison; SD surprised only on a 1; Size L. Although the creature has no treasure of its own, the skeletal remains of a bugbear can be found secreted within a nearby fissure. The wretch crawled in here to escape the cyclopede, only to die from its wounds. Amidst its bones can be found two amethysts worth 500 gp and a gold necklace worth 2,400 gp.

**W. WELL OF SHADOWS:** The entrance to this place consists of a heavy, hewn stone slab resting atop a low wall fashioned from stone blocks. Covered with strange, untranslatable carvings, the slab requires a combined strength of 20 to heft out of the way. Once the slab is removed, a 5-foot square shaft will be seen descending into the gloom:

**W1. Shaft Terminus:** The shaft descends 75 feet before terminating in a 10 foot passageway. The walls are rough; apparently this place was hewn directly from the stone of the surrounding rock. The floor is hard, compacted clay. The passageway continues east, opening into the corner of a rectangular room some 25 feet by 40 feet in size.

**W2. Chamber of Shadow:** This chamber seems unnaturally dark. Light does not shed very far within this place. Shadows abound and seem to dance about in

**Cyclopedia:** Said to be the result of horrible breeding experiments conducted long ages past by the dread wizard Siolu, the cyclopede is a cross between a giant centipede and a cyclops. The creature is huge, averaging 20 to 30 feet in length. It frequents desolate climes, preferring a solitary existence. The cyclopede is drab in color, consisting primarily of mottled shades of red and brown, although other colors have been reported. It has no less than 20 pairs of legs and sports a singular, milky white eye directly above its mouth. It uses a pair of long, flexible mandibles to feel and manipulate prey into its gaping maw. Although possessed of poor eyesight, the creature can use its baleful eye to deliver a hypnotic gaze attack, typically rearing up on its hind legs to do so. The gaze has a range of 60 feet. Those who catch this gaze must save versus paralyzation or be mesmerized. The effect is similar to a *hold* spell, although 2-8 persons can be affected. Mesmerized prey will be rushed, encircled, clawed, and bitten. The creature's front legs end in sharp claws connected to poison glands. If the cyclopede successfully hits prey with both claws, they will lock into place and inject venom. The venom is extremely potent, requiring a save versus poison at -4. Failure indicates that the prey will go into anaphylactic shock within 1-3 melee rounds and die 1-6 melee rounds later. The rearmost pair of legs is twice as long as the rest. They serve as tertiary sense organs, rendering the creature exceptionally difficult to sneak up on. As a result, the cyclopede is only surprised 1 chance in 6.

**X. XENOPHOBIC NOMADS:** A tribe of 75 nomads are camped around a great oasis (see **O** for details). The area is filled with their colorful tents. Although relatively quiet during daylight hours, they frequently carouse at night. They have guards posted at all times and will attack intruders without mercy. At any given time there is a 50% chance that 3-30 nomads are away on a mission. In such cases, roll 4d12 to determine how many hours will pass before this force returns. The force will consist of normal men, joined by the subcommander 50% of the time. The guards and leader will never be in one of these expeditionary forces. **Nomads, normal men** (61): DC 7; SPD 12; HD 1; 1 x9, 2 x9, 3 x8, 4 x13, 5 x10, 6 x12; Atk 1, Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise on a 1-4 due to affinity with the desert; leather armor and scimitar. **Nomad Guards, 2nd level fighting-men** (12): DC 6; SPD 12; HD 2; hp 4, 6 x3, 7 x2, 10, 11, 13 x2, 15 x2; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise on a 1-4 due to affinity with the desert; studded leather hauberk and scimitar. **Nomad subcommander, 6th level fighting-man** (1): DC 5; SPD 9; HD 6; hp 27; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise on a 1-4 due to affinity with the desert; chain mail corselet and scimitar. **Nomad leader, 8th level fighting-man** (1): DC 3, SPD 9; HD 8; hp 40; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise on a 1-4 due to affinity with the desert; chain mail corselet, **shield +1**, and **scimitar +1**. The nomads' treasure consists of 3,100 sp in half a dozen leather sacks, 513 pp in a small, wooden chest, and 30 gems (25 worth 100 gp and 5 worth 500 gp) contained in a small, brass coffer. They also have a scroll of **protection from undead**.

**Y. YELLOW LIGHTS:** This desolate, rocky ravine is home to a Will-O'-Wisp. It will seek to lure adventurers into the dry quicksand at the ravine's end. (See **Q** for details of the quicksand.) **Will-O'-Wisp** (1): DC -8; SPD 18; HD 9; hp 43; Atk 1; Dmg 2-16; SA hits cause electrical damage; SD invisibility, unaffected by most spells; Size S. If reduced to 5 or fewer hit points, the Will-O'-Wisp will give up, revealing its lair in a nearby treacherous cave. In such cases it will allow its pile of treasure to be taken. The pile consists of 1,000 sp, 3,000 ep, 300 pp, 40 gems worth 100 gp apiece, a **shield +1**, a **scroll of protection from elementals**, and a **ring of shooting stars**.

**Z. ZEOLITE SHRINE:** A squat building sits amidst the rocky outcroppings of this high plain. Unadorned, it is square with a low dome. The building has a single archway but no windows. The place is constructed from blocks of strange, porous rock, possibly volcanic in nature. This is a remote shrine operated by Incantra, a lovely human woman of middle years. She will welcome visitors, freely stating that she is a priest and that her god is Omanan, Lord of the Upper Air. If asked, she will claim to have retreated to this place a number of years ago in order to work through the more esoteric tenets of her religion. She is very welcoming and will offer food and a place to rest. If necessary, she will provide healing as well, but in the form

of potions (see below), not spells. In truth, there is more to Incantra than meets the eye. In fact, she is dead, or rather, undead. In life, Incantra was a 4<sup>th</sup> level priestess. Alas, fate had cruelty in store for her and she is now a Penanggalan, an insidiously evil form of vampire. Although evil, spells that detect alignment will show her to be neutral while she is in human form. She is supremely evil while in undead form, however. Ultimately, she will seek to join with the adventurers. If anything, she will claim that she tires of her solitude within the desert. She has achieved that which she needed and wishes steadfastly to rejoin the world. Who could deny such a beautiful and articulate woman? She has an uncanny knowledge of the surrounding environs, and can capably lead the party to treasure. She can also help them avoid the various dangers that abound throughout this land. However, she will purposefully mislead the party from time to time in order to maintain an air of believability. In such cases, she will lead the party directly into danger, allowing them to do the bulk of the fighting. When night falls she retreats into darkness, returning to



# Education of a Magic-User:

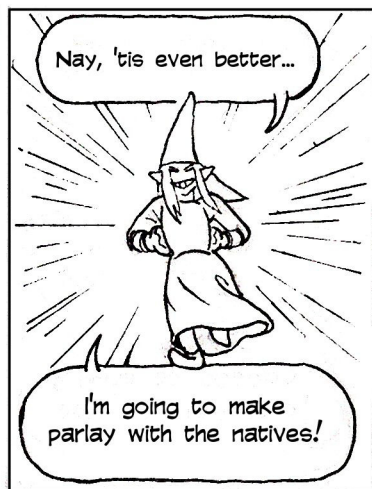
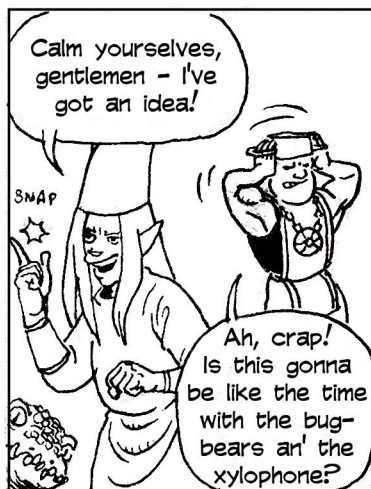
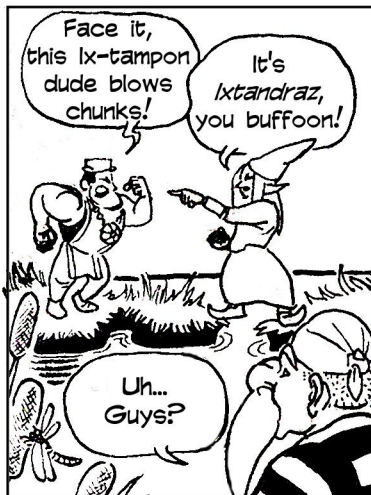
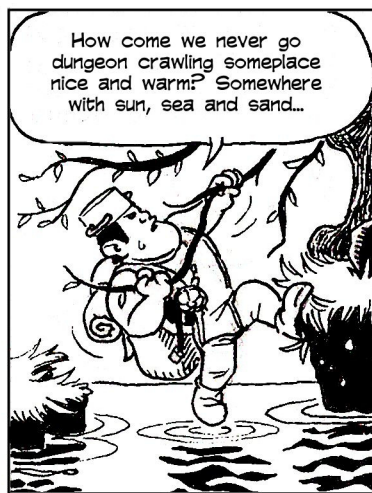
## Part the Sixth: Planning



one of her two secret lairs (**Z1** and **Z2**, below). She will detach her head from her body before returning to camp in order to feed upon her chosen victim. She will keep up this ruse for as long as possible. **Incantra**, 4th level human priest: DC 3; SPD 12; HD 4; hp 17; Atk 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA spells; SD cannot be turned; Size M; S 9; I 10; W 17; D 13; C 8; Ch 15; Spells: 1st - *cause lighter wounds, decay food & water*; 2nd - *curse*. Incantra wears a **chain mail corselet +2** and fights with a black, wrought iron mace. She also has a **Staff of Striking** (42 charges remaining) and 3 **healing potions**. **Penanggalan**: DC 8; SPD 12; HD 4; hp 23; Atk 1; Dmg 1-6 or by weapon type; SA blood drain, fear; SD unaffected by *sleep, charm, hold*, and *cold*-based spells; Size M.

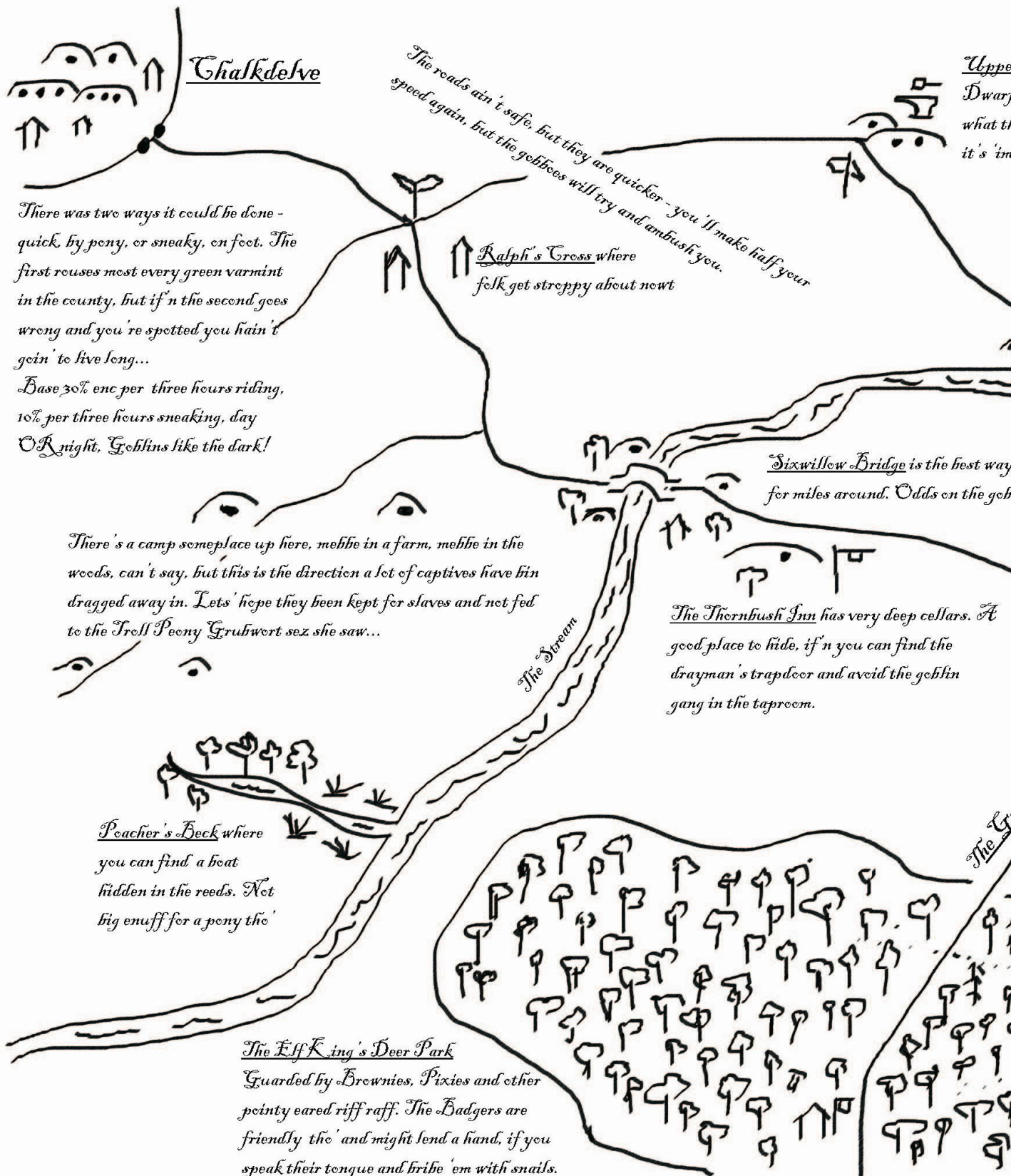
**Z1/Z2. Secret Lairs:** These are the Penanggalan's secret lairs, each a deep and twisting cave cut into the surrounding rocky outcroppings. The caves, although not large or special in any way, carry a strong odor of vinegar. This odor is caused by the presence of large stone urns, one per cave, which are filled to the brim with vinegar. There is a cache of treasure in **Z1** that consists of: 178 pp, 10 gems worth 20 gp apiece, 20 gems worth 50 gp, 10 gems worth 1,000 gp, and a **potion of treasure finding**. The treasure is contained within a stone chest. There is also a cache of treasure in **Z2** that consists of: 124 pp, 10 gems worth 20 gp, 20 gems worth 50 gp, 10 gems worth 1,000 gp, and a **potion of fire giant strength**. The treasure is contained within an antique bronze urn, itself worth 150 gp. Ω

# Mooning Ixtandraz Peter Schmidt Jensen



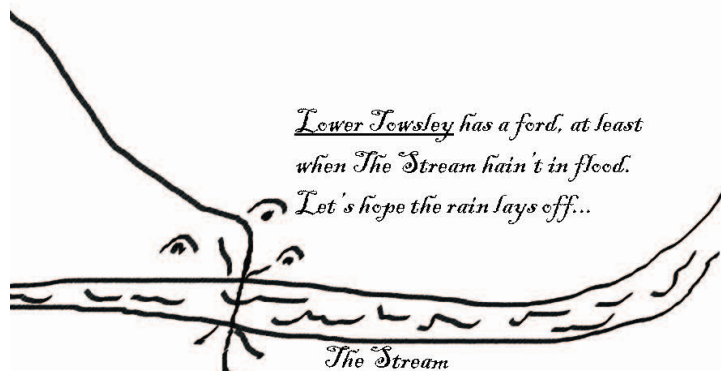
# Smallweed's Ride...

was 'bout the bravest thing a Hobbit ever done! The Great Goblin and his scabby horde were all over Thistledown County and Chalkdelve was pretty much surrounded. Ode Smallweed and a few of his mates took off across land acrawlin' with the vicious little gets to get help off'n the Elvenking - well what had we bin payin' our bloody taxes for after all! - This is how he did it...



County and  
with the vicious  
he did it...

Upper Tewsley where Oin Longbeard the  
Dwarf had a Smithy. Dread to think  
what the goblins have done to 'im, or maybe  
it's 'im that's done it to them...



Lower Tewsley has a ford, at least  
when The Stream hain't in flood.  
Let's hope the rain lays off...

is the best way over The Stream  
Odds on the gobbies are guarding

deep cellars. A  
find the  
the goblin



Market Dafton where  
folk hain't too bright

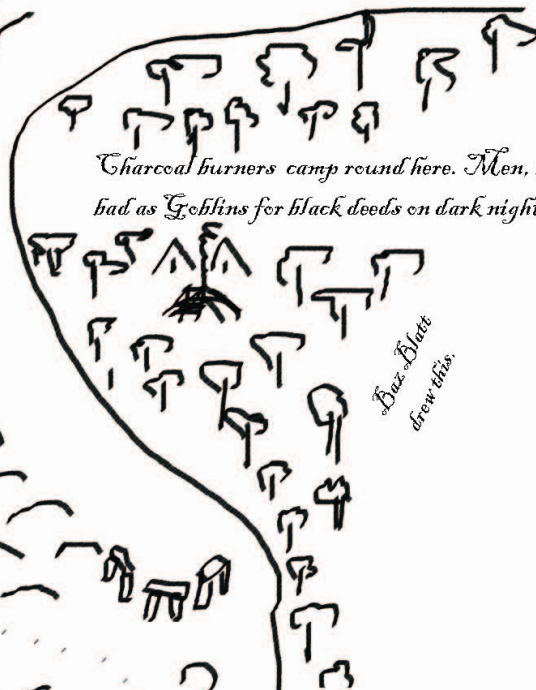


Shanks's End, where the Hobbit  
Roads end and the Elf Paths begin.  
Easy to get lost in the magic woods  
unless you have your wits about you  
and know the Waymarks. Ask Old  
Bery Mugwort, if he's still alive.

All kinds o' critters loose in Thistledown county nowadays...

- 1 = An ill wind that blows no-one any good...
  - 2 = Suspicious scuffling in the bushes, nothing to be seen...
  - 3 = Hairs on the back of yer neck raise for no reason...
  - 4-6 = Gang of 2-5 goblins, lootin' and pillagin'
  - 7 = Hapless hobbit peasant trying to hide from the above
  - 8 = 1-3 Goblins riding wolves, patrolling
  - 9 = 3-10 Goblins, half with bows and crooked knives, half with  
spears and axes and such, may have a captive or two
  - 10 = Giant spider, after the sheep
  - 11-12 = Crows and ravens eatin' dead folk, and spying out the living  
for the Great Goblin, or so they say. By night encounter bats.
  - 13 = Pack of 2-12 wolves
  - 14 = 2-7 Goblins riding wolves looking for you!
  - 15 = 4-24 Feet goblins as & above, plus 1-2 snet-goblins as niffin' out  
your trail
- Roll 1d10, and add +1 per previous encounter where a gobbie escaped  
to raise the alarm

Charcoal burners camp round here. Men, but as  
bad as Goblins for black deeds on dark nights



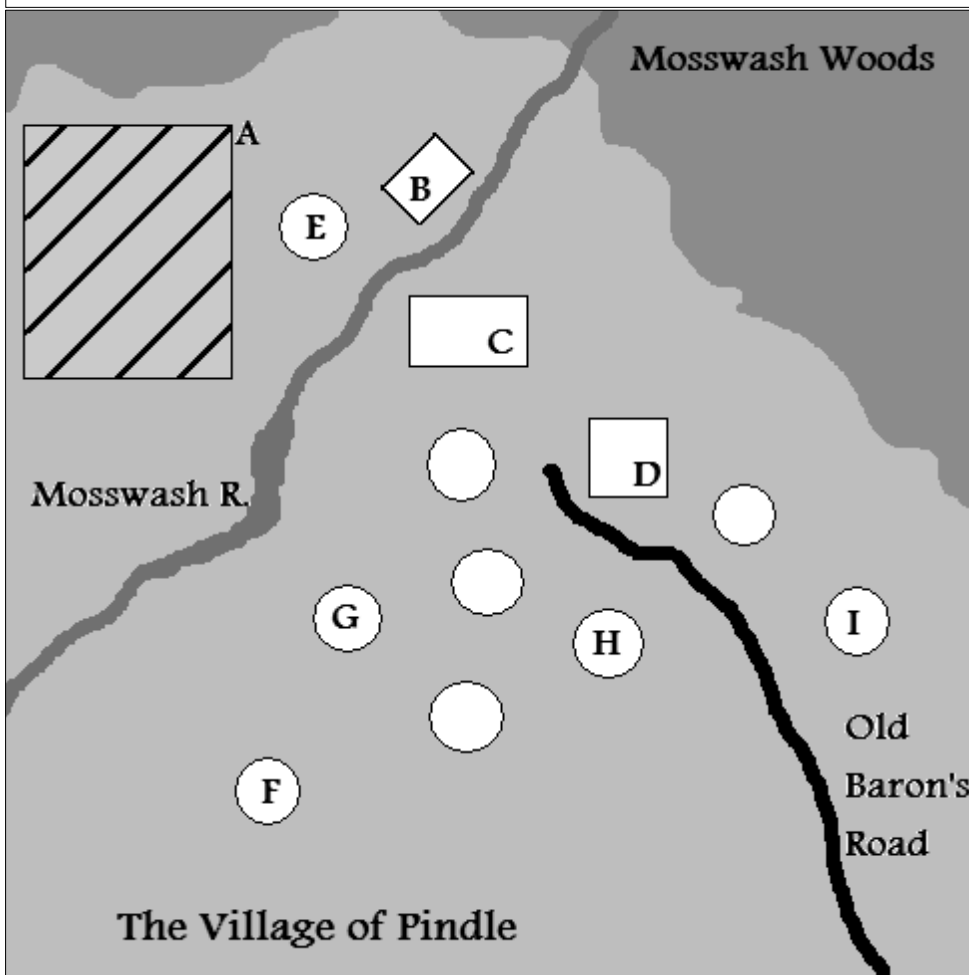
Bar Blot  
drew this.

The Elf Gate

Can be reached in four days if  
everything goes right



# The Village of Pindle



Nestled on the border of the wild Mosswash Woods, the village of Pindle is built on the ruins of a settlement destroyed by a raid some 50 years ago. The current settlement is nearing 3 decades old, and is small enough to avoid most attention from the feuding Marcher Lords to the west.

Zachar Pindle is the son of old Eben Pindle, the man who first built the mill on this stretch of the Mosswash River. The few farmers in the region rely extensively on this mill to grind their grain.

Most of the village's population (26, as of last harvest) is made up of farmers who work the outlying fields and have banded together for protection. Barter is the most common form of financial transaction here; there are few coins.

Adventurers headed in the the Mosswash Woods occasionally pass through this town, but other visitors are few and far between. The Old Baron's Road is largely disused, and fraught these days with brigands more concerned with the rich trade towns of the south.

Game Masters can drop Pindle into their own campaigns as a wilderness settlement, or as a reminder that not every village or town is a sparkling place with an armorer, temple, and robust town guard.

## Village Key

**A) Field:** Generally planted with grain, or left fallow in a rotational cycle with the other fields (not shown) outside the village.

**B) Pindle's Mill:** This small mill uses the steady and reliable flow of the Mosswash River to grind up farmers' grain.

**C) The Village House:** This stout log structure is used for storage and as a meeting place for the village. The villagers also often gather here in the evening to drink and tell stories.

**D) Widow Ellu:** The widow Ellu's husband was a fairly well-to-do farmer. She leases their claim to neighboring farmers for part of the crop, and with the only proper house in town, doubles as a place for visitors to stay. Two coppers (four if wanting fed), or a full day's labor.

**E) Pindle's Cottage:** This small thatch cottage is unimpressive. Pindle never married, and spends nearly all of his time in his mill.

**F) Flinders Flint:** The rundown cottage belonging to Flint, a former famed scout turned drunk. He knows the Mosswash Forest better than anyone, but lives now for trapping furs that he can trade for a farmer's moonshine.

**G) Willam Clane:** Clane is an indifferent farmer, but has some smithy tools and a makeshift bellows set up. His smithy skills are laughable, but are all this community offers.

**H) Colteris:** This man came from the south ten years ago, and has quietly farmed a modest plot ever since. Some speculate he was a hero in the last war, but if he was, he doesn't want to talk about it.

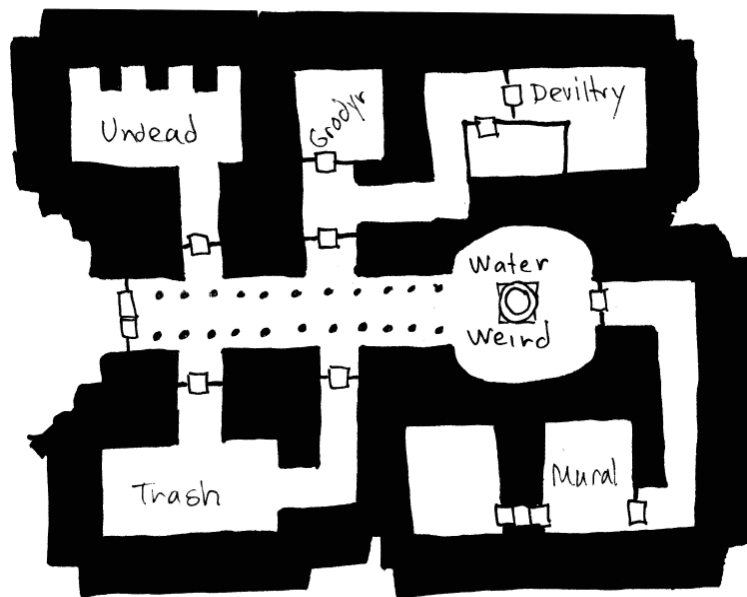
**I) Iv Burman:** The farmer and his three sons are all well over 6 feet tall, and have scared away more than one troublemaker. The elder Burman keeps a fearsome battleaxe from his days as a conscript (some whisper bandit, but not too loudly).

# Welcome to the Microdungeon

design delights from Tony Dowler

**What is a Microdungeon?** A microdungeon is a small dungeon, usually about 5-10 rooms. By nature it is more focused than a full-length module or sprawling megadungeon. A microdungeon might easily be completed in a single gaming session, which makes it ideal for a one-shot or for a campaign where some players can't make it to every game.

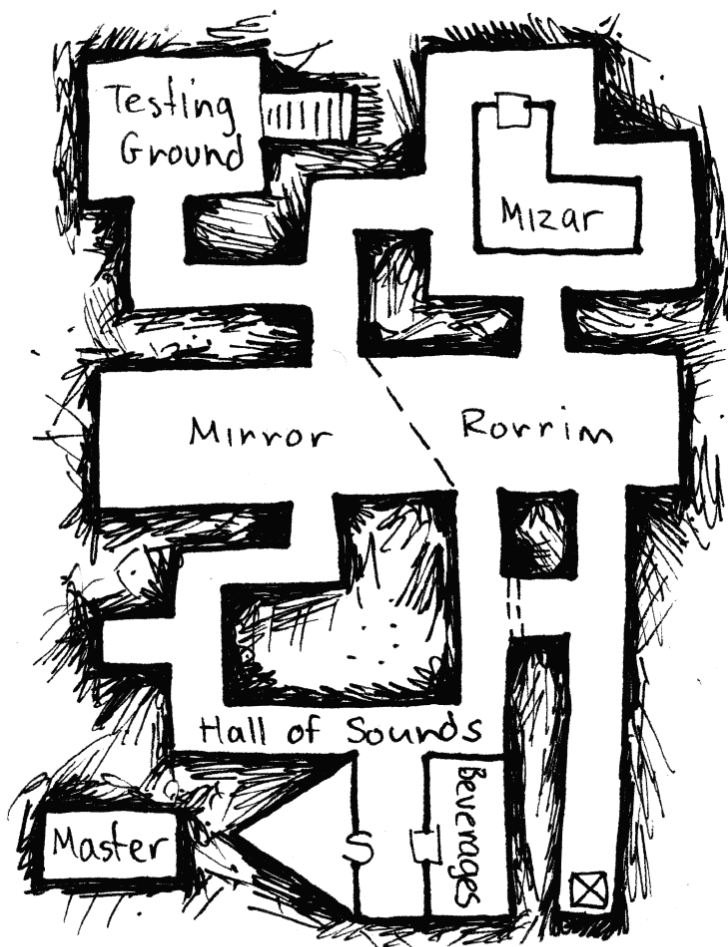
A typical microdungeon could be a single large lair, revolving around one important monster or group of monsters. Or it could serve a specific purpose, like a small temple, mine, or fortress. Or it could surround a single important landmark, like a dimensional gateway, treasure vault, or tomb.



## Hall of the Water Weird

A group of local youths have discovered a doorway hidden in a nearby cave. They came back to town with a handful of antique coins and a tale of unexplored corridors and the walking dead. There's bound to be more loot for the taking deeper inside. This is a great adventure for a quick introductory dungeon crawl; several people have already run adventures using it.

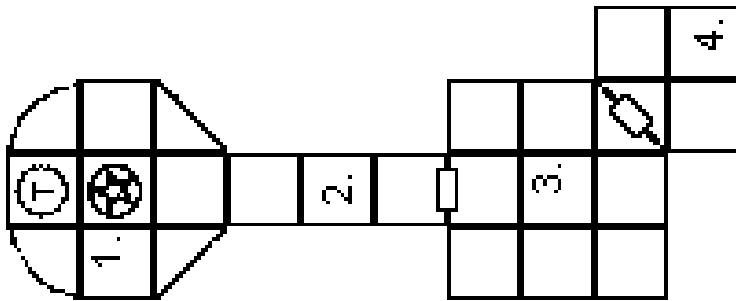
Here are a couple of microdungeons. They don't include stats. Instead, I've provided a simple map and some hints to flesh it out to fit your own game. For more, see my dungeon blog: [blog.microdungeons.com](http://blog.microdungeons.com).



GUILD HALL OF THE ILLUSIONIST CULT

## Guildhall of the Illusionist Cult

Monsters trained to use powerful illusionist magic have started turning up in local dungeon and wilderness locations. An obscure cult of illusion, mystery, and dream has set up a lair nearby, trading magic for treasure and influence. If someone doesn't deal with this sect soon, it's going to become a very serious problem.



# The Understudy

mysterious microdungeon by Erin "Taichara" Bisson

In the original game *The Understudy* was placed under the shattered ruins of a recently-destroyed Magic-User's tower at the edge of a small village. (The tower was destroyed by a spectacular pink-and-green explosion.) The PC was asked to investigate after one of the locals was poking around and was attacked by the brass dragonflies. It could be placed just about anywhere, even as a lone poke-hole somewhere in the mountains or as a "getaway" accessible only by magic. Map scale is one square = 10'.

**0. The Access.** In the original a 100' spiral staircase, accessed through a trapdoor, with the usual trick stairs and other unpleasantness scattered along its length, gave ingress to *The Understudy*. The end of the stairwell is marked with a "trapdoor" icon on the map. Collapsing or heaving stairs require a successful Dexterity check to keep from falling down the next dozen or so steps, inflicting 1-4 points of damage.

**1. Foyer.** This irregularly-shaped chamber is paved with white granite and the walls are decorated with (rather tasteless) bright murals of humans hunting magical beasts. In the centre of the southern wall is an open passageway. Attempting to cross the chamber will trigger two **brass dragonflies** (DC3; HD 1/2; hp 2, 3; SPD 36 (flying); Att 1 bite + scorch; Dam 1 + 1-2 fire; Morale 11) to be released from small hatches in the ceiling. A brass dragonfly is a one-foot-long brass and glass sculpture of the insect is it named for, intricately crafted and magically animated for quick flight and coal-hot crystal mandibles. In the centre of the chamber stands a lifesized bloodwood statue of a female human in elaborate robes and carefully-detailed jewelry. The **statue** is **animated** (DC7; HD 2+2; hp 12; SPD 12; Att 1 fist; Dam 1-8; Morale 12; -1 init.; double damage from flame; immune to nonmagical weapons); however, it will not betray its enchantment or attack unless a living being enters the final chamber and then attempts to leave the complex.

**2. Corridor.** The floors here are still granite, but the walls are unadorned dressed stone. The door at the end of the corridor is of oak bound in iron; though the door is

unlocked touching it will trigger another **brass dragonfly** (hp 4) to drop from a ceiling hatch and attack.

**3. Study.** A strangely homey chamber, with dusty rag-rugs scattered on the floor, faded tapestries hung on the walls, and well-worn furniture. Against the eastern wall is a sturdy oak desk scattered with books (the most notable of which are a seven-volume set entitled *Being an Omnibus of the Behaviour and Habits of Wyrms*); against the western wall rests a small cot, a stout wooden chest and the remains of a large shattered mirror. A screen of multicoloured glass beads curtains a doorway in the southeast corner of the chamber. The chest contains, in addition to many random trinkets: a satchel containing 37sp, 92ep, 85gp, and 30pp; and a tiny round box carved from slices of an alicorn, its lid decorated with knotwork (100gp). The box contains a gold ring inlaid around the band with garnet flames and jade leaves (400gp). Disturbing the cot will unearth a hungry **ivory scarab** (DC4; HD 1; hp 5; SPD 9 (burrow 6); Att bite; Dam 1-3 + drain; Morale 8) tucked amongst the rumpled bedclothes. Once an ivory scarab makes a successful attack, it attaches to its victim and plunges its proboscis into the victim's flesh, draining 1 hp per round until dead or removed (requiring a successful Strength check). Every two rounds an ivory scarab remains attached

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# Badlands of the Bandit Kings

adventure for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> level PCs by Robert Lionheart

*(This delve won an honorable mention in our very first contest here at Fight On!, an adventure competition judged by Frank Mentzer, James Ward, S. John Ross, Richard Scott, and myself. – Ig.)*

**My Tribute to Gary Gygax:** This adventure was rolled randomly using some very famous tables designed by EGG. Every map, monster, trap, treasure, unexplained sound, and weird noise was rolled by hand with no cheats. At first, the results appeared odd and disjointed. But as I sat with the randomness, strange patterns emerged which wrought this dark and dangerous tale. Enjoy!

Recent trade agreements between two distant city states have provided plenty of work guarding caravans along the Long Road carving through the ogre-infested Badlands. This rise in trade also increased raids by ever-more greedy attackers. The Merchant's Guild calls upon our heroes to deal with troublesome brigands led by murderous twin brothers. The bandits have settled into a ruin atop a plateau that gives them a tremendous view of the caravan road. The Guild will pay 300 gold for each of the brothers' heads and have provided a map of the Badlands. The heroes have just finished buying supplies in the last settlement before the day's journey to the plateau ruin.

Each player may attempt an Intelligence roll for their hero to remember some Ancient Lore about the ruin and a Charisma roll to hear some Local Gossip about the bandits. Each successful roll gains one random fact.

## Ancient Lore (d4)

1. The ruins have been haven to bandits before. A century ago, two Bandit Kings built a fortress deep within the plateau and held off a siege for many months. The besiegers failed to breach their defense but collapsed the entrances to starve the raiders. Oddly, their mercenaries were not permitted to unearth the ruins and loot the remains.

2. The Bandit Kings wore enchanted armor that made them nearly invulnerable in battle. Their most audacious assault involved capturing a princess on her way to another city-state for her wedding. Stories say they cut off her hand along with a huge engagement ring of legendary worth.

3. Years after the Bandit Kings were slain, the ruins became home to an insane cult of rat worshippers who bred vermin the size of war hounds. Thankfully, the cult was devoured by their foul creations. Campfire stories tell of giant rats roaming the Badlands who hunt ogres for sport.

the mild venom in its bite dulls the victim's reactions and inflicts a -1 penalty to all rolls.

**4. The ... dearly departed?** Floored in granite, the walls paneled in golden oak, this chamber has a single feature – a low bier in the middle of the floor. On the bier rests the dusty and skeletal remains of a human: possibly female, as the skull is surrounded by a cloud of long, dark hair. Examination of the remains reveals a few anomalies. Though clothing has decayed to rags and dust, the bones of the skeleton are perfectly cleaned with no sign of decaying flesh. Stranger still, the hair proves to be a wig... Around the shoulders of the skeleton rests a perfectly-preserved red silk shawl shot through with gold; this is *Nasri's burning grace*. Ω

**Nasri's Burning Grace:** This magical item is a large, sumptuous shawl or scarf of deep red and heavy silk. It is finished along all of its edges with red and golden silk tassels, and is embroidered with outlines of stylized flames in golden thread. The shawl, when worn, may be used to cast rays of brilliant flame at a target up to 30' distant; or, draped across a chosen target may be used to heal with a surge of warmth. *Nasri's burning grace* can produce 2d6 points of flame or healing per day, divided up by dice (1d6 of flame and 1d6 of healing, or 2d6 of one or the other).

4. Long before the Bandit Kings, a powerful arch-magus devoted his life to searching the Badlands for a mythical portal to other worlds. His apprentices claimed he vanished for years, only to suddenly return with strange artifacts certainly not forged on this earth.

**Local Gossip (d4)**

- 1. August and Banyan Bloodletter, sons of a merchant prince, were denied their birthright and now lead the marauders against the guild caravans. Their father is the patron offering the reward for their heads. They seek the ancestral armor of kings who ruled the Long Road before the city states lost contact with each other.
- 2. Barkeepers and brazen strumpets claim the bandits complained of horrible dreams about vicious rats gnawing out their guts. A few deserters were so terrified they fled into the night. The blacksmith says that although their weapons and armor were brand new, the bandits are a scraggly lot of the most meretricious sort.
- 3. Two beautiful witches and their pig-faced orcs are leaving a path of mayhem along the Long Road. The tavern smartly turned them away, even when they claimed to be hunting the Bloodletters. Sadly, an incautious farmer fell for their charms and only this morning his bloody bones were found. No doubt the witches are more depraved than their vile orc servitors!
- 4. Local soothsayers tell that a chunk of the moon was hurled down by the gods to cover something terrible out in the Badlands. They warn to never unearth what the gods themselves have buried.

The Badlands are rough terrain and the plateau ruins are 10 miles from the last settlement along the Long Road.

d6	Badlands Encounter
1-2	Ogre Hunting Party
3	Wild Horses
4	Giant Weasels
5	Giant Rats
6	Ram Sphinx

**Ogre Hunting Party:** The ogres are hunting rats, but rarely enter the ruins. They wear crude ratskin hides and carry a throwing spear and a stone greatclub each. The chaotic ogres are lead by Noksnott, and unless the party looks like easy prey he focuses on collecting rats as he has already lost two friends this hunt. Their spears are surprisingly well crafted and each worth 7 gold. **Noksnott:** DC 3, HD 7, hp 32, L, Dam 2d6 spear or stone club. **Ogres (10):** DC 5, HD 4, hp 17 each, L, Dam d10 spear or club.

**Wild Horses;** They are very wild, and only one looks even possibly worth taming. Unless threatened, the horses keep

their distance and flee at the first hint of danger. **Horses (12):** DC 7, HD 2, hp 10 each, L, Dam d3 hooves.

**Giant Weasels:** Eight psychotic giant weasels have been secretly following the heroes for weeks. Is this when they make their move? Their pelts are valuable, each worth d6 x 1000 gold if intact, much less if hacked to bits. **Weasels (8):** DC 6, HD 3, hp 14 ea, M, Dam 2d6, SA on a hit they latch on and drain 2d6 of blood each round until slain.

**Giant Rats:** These rats are aggressive pack hunters. They swarm their prey, sending 8 rats after a medium target and 16 against large foes to gain bonuses for flank and rear attacks, bypass shields, and render longer weapons almost useless. **Rats (24):** DC 7, HD ½, hp 2 each, S, Dam d3. Even these rats fear fire.

**Ram Sphinx:** Moglox the Ram Sphinx is a greedy monster lustily seeking a new mate. He looks like a large winged lion with an oversized ram's head. He wears a heavy neck pouch with 16 large gems (500 gold each), a necklace of silver and gold (800 gold), and two huge black opals (1000 gold each) in hopes this will impress a female sphinx, most of which detest his ugliness. Moglox will attempt to extort the heroes for safe passage, looking for a hefty bribe. He knows two random bits of Ancient Lore. **Moglox:** DC 0, HD 10, hp 46, L, Dam 2d8x2 claw/claw or 3d6 horn smash, flies.

**The Plateau** stands tall in the stark wasteland of scrub and broken hills. The megalith rises fifty feet upward and several hundred yards across. Indulge the players' fears that the bandits will see them coming for miles, even though the bandits currently have bigger problems. A crude path curls up the side of the plateau, too uncertain for horses but workable for a careful man with a heavy pack. The crumbly rock makes the plateau a poor choice for climbing. Dwarves may notice that the rubble around the base of the plateau is excavated rock and the plateau is made of a strange crumbly stone unlike any other mineral formation in the Badlands. In fact, the stone is so porous it looks like cheese.

**The Ruins** of the original fortress are nearly unrecognizable, but a minute of searching reveals the staircase leading down into the plateau itself. Also, they will find the 30' x 30' chimney hole (16) that opens from the plateau surface down to the second level. A fall from here would do a nasty 3d6 damage. If they peer downwards there is a 1 in 6 chance to spot a pig-faced orc looking around the cistern (17). Successfully searching atop the plateau discovers shiny new scraps of metal: iron bands for shields, studs for armor, and several spear heads. No sign of struggle or blood or bones are found.

**Dungeon Factions:** There are several conflicting factions in the dungeon. *The Bandits* are trying to settle into their

newly claimed fortress, but their leaders got trapped and their guards outside have vanished. *The Witch Lovers* and their pig-faced Orcs are using the confusion to their advantage as they seek the ancient secret. *The Rats* have the same plan for all who enter...death by gnashing teeth!

**Weird Dungeon Features:** A rich earthy smell pervades the entire dungeon, since all chambers were dug from the moon rock. Sudden currents of frigid air flow upward from deep below. Scratching and scrabbling noises from inside walls break any prolonged silence.

**The First Level:** Unless noted, the doors are weak wood, barely attached to their frames, but with a 1 in 6 to be firmly barred. The bottom foot of almost every door has been chewed away. Unless noted, all corridors are 10 feet wide and all ceilings 10 feet high.

Wandering Monsters on the level include (d6): 1-2 – 2 **Boring Beetles**, 3-4 – 16 **Bandits**, 5-6 – 5 **Giant Rats**. **Boring Beetles:** DC 3, HD 5, hp 22 ea., L, Dam 5d4 mandibles. **Bandits:** DC 7, HD 1, hp 1 ea., Dam 1d6 weapon. Bandits encountered are weary, wounded, probably lost, and deeply afraid of the Witch Lovers. They have 3 gold each in a small pouch. **Giant Rats:** DC 7, HD ½, hp 2 ea, S, Dam 1d3 bite.

**1. Entry Area (30' x 50'):** Once an armory, this room has seen many last stands - the most recent just a few minutes ago - but there is no trace of trouble. If the players dilly-dally too long and act more like mice than men, the Piccolo Clown tumbles down the stairs and joins the adventure. The Clown is a giggling gnome dressed in a bloodstained jester's suit, complete with slipper bells and pointy hat. He dances, tumbles and clowns, but never speaks. He carries a piccolo and plays whenever the heroes move through the dungeon. This doubles Wandering Monster chances, but no monster will dare touch him. **Piccolo Clown:** DC 10, HD 1, hp 1, S. Upon his death, a **Spiked Devil** possessing him is released: DC 0, HD 8, hp 41, Dam 2d4/2d4/3d4 claw/claw/tail; SA each hit causes fear; SD immune to fire and fear, never surprised; Magic: charm, suggest, illusion, infravision, teleport, detect alignment, animate undead, pyrotechnics, create flame, paralyze person, summon spiked devil (30% chance).

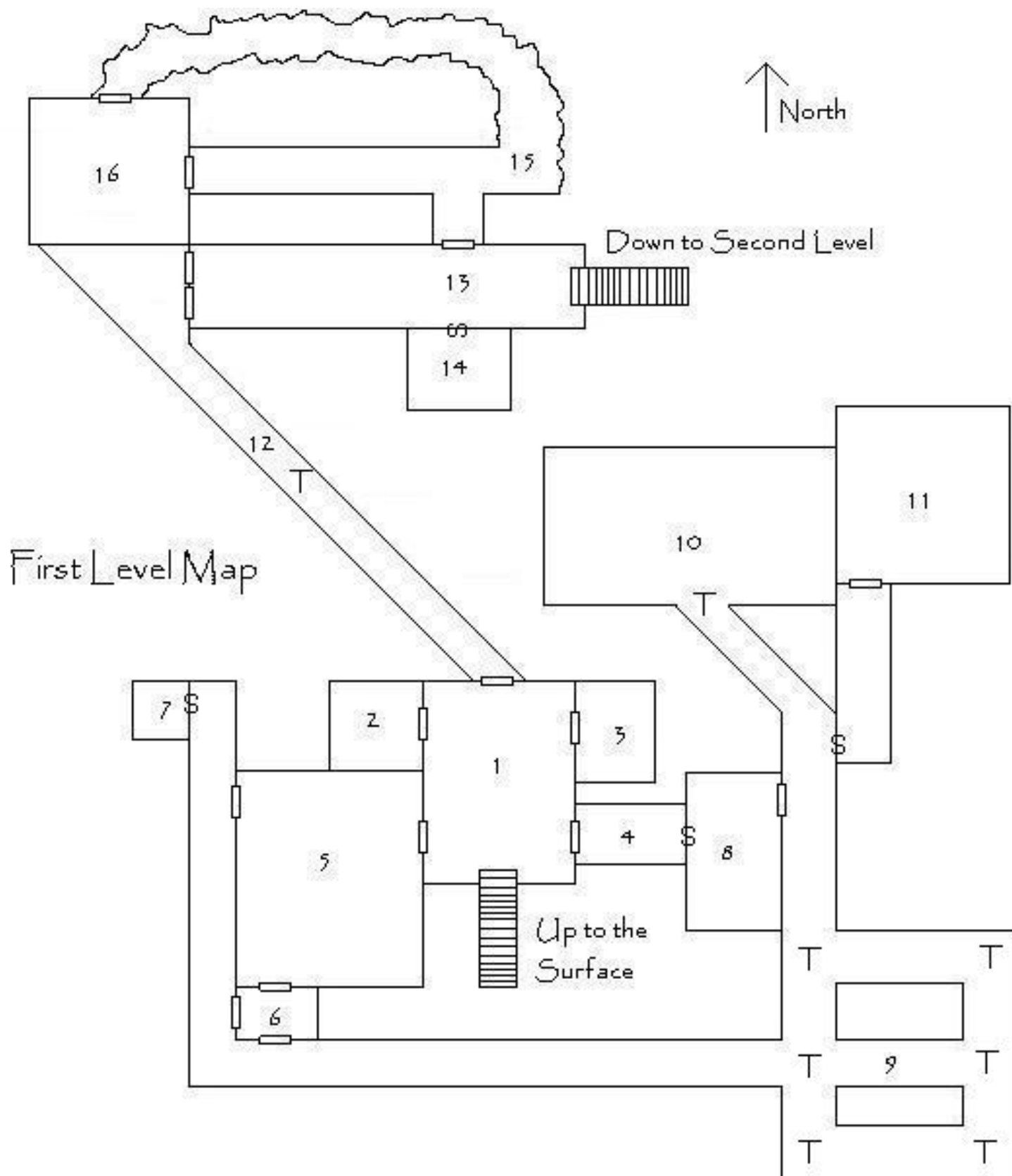
**2. Oddities (10' x 10'):** Here are a small table, a bench and a furnace gone cold. On the table are a convex glass lens broken into 8 pieces and a woman's scarf, forgotten by the Red Witch.

**3. Empty Room (10' x 15').** Quite empty, in fact.

**4. Dried Wood (10' x 15'):** Tall stacks of long-dried wood. If the wood stacks are pulled away, the large hole burrowed to the Unholy Altar (8) will be obvious.

**5. Barracks (60' x 60'):** Fourteen human bandits have barricaded themselves in their barracks. All doors are barred, with crates shoved at door bottoms to prevent anything sneaking through. Today they lost their leaders, were threatened by the Witch Lovers, and heard the death screams of the topside guards. They managed to capture a Glow Beetle which they have tied up and are now using for light. Other than their fancy new weapons and leathers, each bandit has 3 gold (their upfront payment). A warrior or thief may see the marks of the penal legion on them all. The Bloodletters did not have enough coin or credit to





hire real mercenaries. **Bandits (14):** DC7, HD 1, hp 3 ea., Dam 1d6 weapon. **Glow Beetle:** (DC 6, HD 1, hp 4, Dam 2d4 mandibles. If removed, the beetle's brain shines like a torch for 1d6 days.

**6. Biting Mosaic (10' x 10'):** This tiny room is covered with a frightening mosaic of a thousand crimson eyes and sharp white teeth in the darkness. Anyone (except rats or rat worshippers) entering suffers 1d3 bite damage and an additional 1d6 each full round they stay within.

**11. Hidden Laboratory (30' x 30'):** This chamber was never found by either the Bandit Kings or the Rat Cultists, because the secret door is covered by a very powerful illusion that even fools touch. Unlike other room doors, this is of heavy wood inscribed with arcane runes equal to a *Seal Portal* spell. Three dissecting tables are within, with iron clamps, hooks, and racks of weirdly blown glass bottles. Mummified remains of bizarre daemons hang on the heavy hooks throughout the room. One particularly long vial full of vaporous green liquid draws attention. If drunk, this liquid can be seen coursing through the victim's body. The quaffer must make a save versus Poison or die horribly. If she survives, she now regenerates like a troll (3 hp per round), but each hit point thus regenerated permanently adds a pound of green tumors to her body weight. Worse,

just seeing the mummified remains hanging here curses the heroes with a powerful *Geas* to return them to life...the same geas that doomed the arch-magus.

**12. Weak Ceiling** (10' x 10'): Unbeknownst to even the rats, the ceiling above the Trapezoid Chamber (18) on the second level is about to collapse. Whenever any medium or large creature passes over this part of the hallway, roll 1d6. On a 1, a 10' x 10' patch falls down into the chamber below. The fall does 1d6 damage and everyone in the Trapezoid below the patch suffers 1d6 as well.

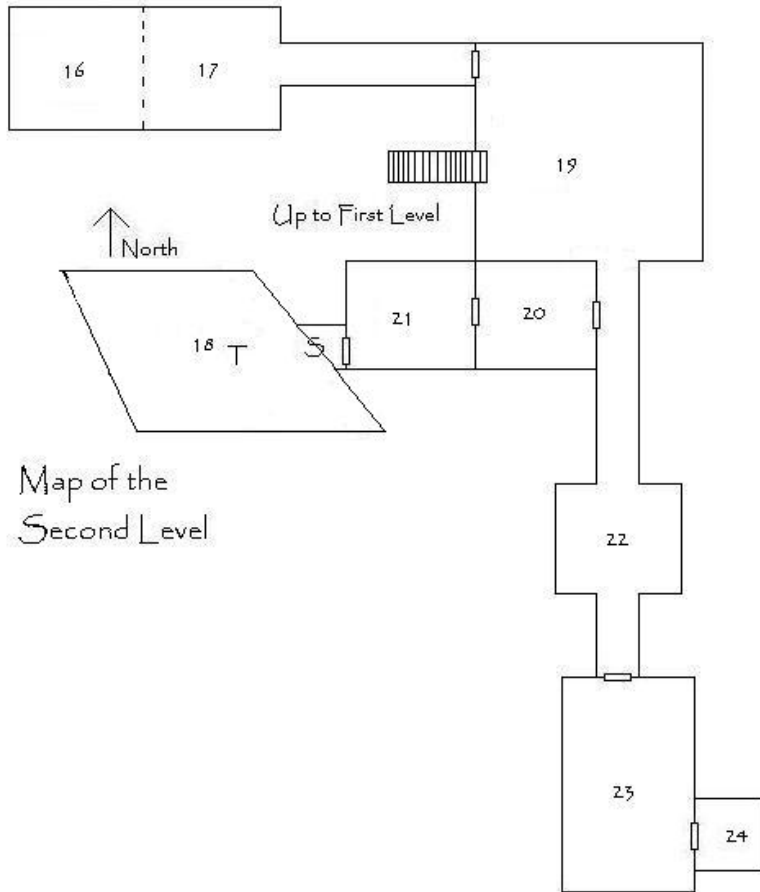
**13. Strength Gas** (20' x 40'): A slightly opaque gas smelling of fine wine clouds the eastern half of the double-wide corridor. For humans, the gas adds 1d6 damage to their attacks for the next d10 hours. Others gain no bonus.

**14. Weird Toad** (10' x 10'): Beyond the illusionary wall, a Weird Toad is chained to the floor and walls, keeping it somewhat restrained. The giant frog-thing seems content exhaling the Strength Gas from its massive pores. It speaks an incomprehensible language while rolling its huge eyes. The toad patiently awaits the return of either the arch-magus or the Bandit Kings. If attacked, the Weird Toad instantly breaks free from its bonds. **Weird Toad:** DC 4, HD 5, hp 21, L, Dam 3d4 tongue lash, SA blasts 10' radius with 3d6 otherworldly energy damage every other melee round in addition to tongue lash.



**15. Disturbing Excavation:** Unlike other corridors, this one was never finished and is left as raw, jagged rock. Every few yards, a dagger hilt sticks out of the wall. Warriors may notice that although they are obviously dagger hilts, they are forged for inhuman hands. They cannot be pulled from the wall. Touching them causes the puller to scream out in agony. The other hilts then echo the scream. If this occurs, roll for Wandering Monsters.

**16. Chimney Hole (30' x 30'):** The Chimney Hole is open from the plateau surface down to the Second Level. A fall from here would do 1d6 damage. There is a 2 in 6 chance to spot a pig-faced orc looking around the Cistern (17).



Map of the  
Second Level

**The Second Level:** Doors, walls and ceilings are the same as the first. The weird dungeon features are more intense here. Wandering Monsters on the level include (d6): 1-2 – **1 Devouring Ooze**, 3-4 – **1 Giant Constrictor Snake**, 5-6 – **16 Giant Rats**. **Devouring Ooze:** DC 8, HD 4, hp 17, L, Dam 2d4 acid plus paralysis (save or 3d6 rounds, ooze devours first paralyzed target until dissolved), SA surprise 1-3, SD immune to all magic except fire. **Giant Constrictor Snake:** DC 6, HD 6, hp 21, L, Dam 1d4/2d4 bite/squeeze. **Giant Rats:** DC 7, HD 1/2, hp 2 ea, Dam d3 bite.

**17. Cistern (30' x 30'):** In olden days, the original bandits and later cultists rolled wheeled heavy barrels into the Chimney to collect rainwater during storms. Now, seven pig-faced orcs and their two wicked mistresses are searching the area for clues. They have three Glow Beetles for

illumination. The witch lovers are chaotic in their evil, depraved cannibals, and achingly beautiful thanks to foul pacts with the netherworld. They are brilliant and devoted to each other with fiery temperaments. They are the Red Witch and the Gold Witch, identified by the color of their scant, wispy robes. Their first action will be to cast *Shield*. **Red Witch:** DC 8, HD 2, hp 11, Dam d4 dagger, Spells *Charm*, *Shield*, Items *Scroll of Protection from Magic* (she will read this if she spots an enemy mage), *Potion of Human Control*, *Potion of Levitation*. **Gold Witch:** DC 8, HD 2, hp 9, Dam d4 dagger, Spells *Sleep*, *Shield*, Items *Ring of Glow Beetle Control*, *Potion of Healing*, *Potion of Giant Strength*. **Glow Beetles (3):** DC 4, HD 1, hp 3 ea, Dam 2d4 mandibles, Special if brain removed shines like a torch for 1d6 days. **Pig-Faced Bow Orcs (4):** DC 6, HD 1, hp 7 ea, Dam 1d6 bow or 2d6 heavy crossbow (2 each). **Pig-Faced Orc Warriors (2):** DC 6, HD 2, hp 7 ea, Dam 2d6 bardiche or 2d6 two-handed flail (1 each). **Pig-Faced Orc Assassin:** DC 6, HD 2, hp 12, Dam 1d6 Scimitar, good at sneaking/hiding in shadows, can backstab with +4 for double damage. The witch lovers have 5 pieces of silver jewelry worth 400 gold total and money pouches with 20 gold. The orcs carry 6 gold each. If the witches' heads are brought back to the settlement, the barkeep will break out the expensive dwarven ales and elven brandies.

**18. Trapezoid Chamber (40' x 40'):** This unusually shaped room is the main breeding pit for the Giant Rats. There are thirty-one fighting rats and several dozen blind baby rats and fat sows. They have adopted two giant toads, presumably some adolescent version of the gas-passing Weird Toad from the upper level. The door is only secret because a minor quake collapsed the east wall and the rock pile obscures the hallway. Dried human skins hang like banners and flags on the walls. Many have faded writing on the skins. Ink pans and quills are nearby. A mage may realize these skins were voluntarily removed and hung here as badges of great honor. Two rusted metal trunks are full of viscous fluids and alchemical ichors. A mage or priest may identify the fluid as being in fact a melted demon. There are 8000 electrum coins suspended in the demon goo. Anyone who touches the fluids must make a save versus possession or become wickedly chaotic evil. **Giant Rats (31):** DC 7, HD 1/2, hp 4 ea, S Dam 1d3. **Giant Toads (2):** DC 6, HD 2, hp 14 ea, M, Dam 2d4 tongue lash, SA swallow on nat 20, belly acid does 2d4 per round.

**19. Hidden Treasure (50' x 50'):** Stairs lead up to the first level. There are eight more water cisterns here, but they have broken wheels. There are 2000 silver coins hidden in 3 metal urns stashed behind the cisterns. Ten more urns can be found, but those were looted long ago by cultists.

**20. Haunted Loom (20' x 20'):** A loom sits beside the remains of a couch. Threadbare cloaks with the crest of the Bandit Kings hang on the walls. The loom creaks and spins whenever someone leaves the room.



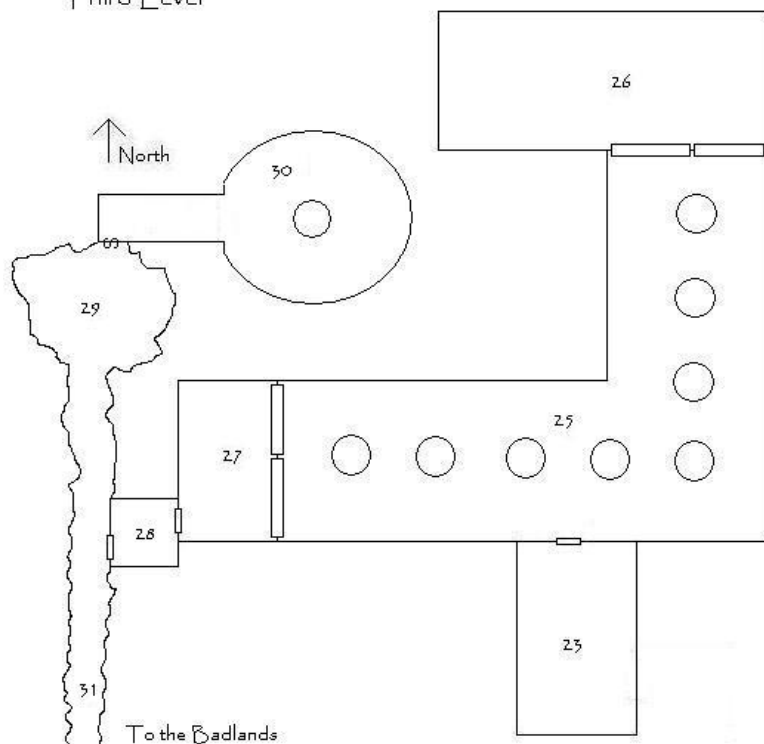
**21. Rat Idols** (20' x 30'): Unholy symbols line walls notched with small alcoves. Carved idols are displayed in each niche. 16 giant rats act as brood guardians, either leaping to defend the Trapezoid Chamber (18) or holding intruders back through this worship chamber. Unlike other rats which flee losing battles, these fight to the death. **Giant Rats (16)**: DC 7, HD ½, hp 4 ea, Dam 1d3 bite. Hidden underneath the floor are three large trunks that appear empty. This is an illusion; inside are more melted demons. Beneath the foul fluid, four chests are found in secret compartments with 1000 silver coins each. A dwarf may recognize the silver as absolutely pure and showing no sign of smelting or minting. On some other world, these rare coins are worth 1000 gold each. Here, they are an oddity worth perhaps one gold coin each to a collector.

**22. Quiet Alcoves** (20' x 20'): A dry fountain and a glass carafe sit beside a cauldron with tongs and tub of chalk.

**23. Elevator Down** (30' x 60'): Instead of a floor, there is a huge levitating carpet across the entire room. An Elf may recognize the style of weaving as a very old (and lost) technique of his ancestors. The magic carpet responds to the words "Up" and "Down" when spoken in Elvish. It can only descend to the third level and rise to the second.

**24. Another Empty Room** (10' x 10'): Also quite empty.

Map of the  
Third Level



**The Third Level:** Walls and ceilings are the same as on upper levels, but the doors are quite different (see descriptions). Rats do not venture down here, so no scratching noises will be heard. However, frigid blasts are more likely,

especially in the Round Cavern (30). Wandering Monsters on the level include (d6): 1-2 – **2 Boring Beetles**, 3-4 – **1 Purple Fungus**, 5-6 – **1 Lost Ogre**. **Boring Beetles**: DC 3, HD 5, hp 29 ea., L, Dam 5d4 mandibles. **Purple Fungus**: DC 7, HD 3, hp 11, M, Dam tentacle lash - save vs. poison or flesh begins to rot, *Heal Disease* in d10 rounds or melt into purple puddle of gore. **Lost Ogre**: DC 5, HD 4, hp 18, L, Dam 1d10 spear or club.

**25. Chamber of Pillars** (100' x 40'): A dwarf may recognize that these 10' diameter pillars are placed to provide structural support for the entire level. The massive, twenty-foot-long doors on both ends of the L-shaped chamber are massive constructions of heavy oak reinforced with steel and decorated with silver and bronze.

**26. Showdown & Statues** (80' x 20'): For many years, the Bandit Kings used a *Wand of Petrification* on followers who failed them. Their tortured and contorted stone forms were kept in this room. The room also has a nasty trick: the doors only open one way. If the doors close, they lock into place. This is how August and Banyan Bloodletter got trapped here hours ago, with seven henchmen. After failing every feat of brains and brawn, they settled in to await rescue by the bandits above. They have no interest in dying or surrendering, but neither is bright or charismatic: both are bold, angry cutthroats. **August Bloodletter**: DC -1, HD 3, hp 13, Dam d8 sword & shield, Items +4 *Splint Mail*, *Potion of Healing*. **Banyan Bloodletter**: DC 1, HD 3, hp 16, Dam d8+1 axe, Items Plate Mail, +1 *Battle Axe*, *Scroll of Protection from Demons*, *Potion of Climbing*. **Bandits (7)**: DC 7, HD 1, hp 1 ea, Dam 1d6 sword or spear, 3 gold each in small pouch.

**27. False Hopes** (40' x 20'): The huge double doors (each 20' wide) here are locked and barred. Notable feats of strength and/or ingenuity will be needed to open them. Sadly, the room beyond is completely empty, except for a chipped flagon, a broken mirror, an ancient book, and a brittle leather pouch full of half-burnt candles in the NW corner. The book crumbles into fine blue dust if touched.

**28. Confused Ogre** (10' x 10'): There used to be two one-way locking doors in this tiny room, but a wandering ogre from Noksnor's tribe got caught and smashed his way to freedom. But now he is confused which way to go, and has been debating the options with himself for two days now. He's hungry, but not suicidal. **Confused Ogre**: DC 5, HD 4, hp 18, Dam d10 club, sack of 50 gold coins.

**29. Round Cavern** (30' x 30'): This cave is empty, except for some gnawed bones. The secret door is a complex illusion that even fools tactile probing. However, there is a glitch in the magic. Holding up a mirror to the wall instantly reveals the illusion.

**30. The Well of Unknown Worlds.** A 10 foot wide pool of silvery water (or blue liquid mercury?) dominates this domed chamber. Four floating wererats are caught in a dream, bobbing and swirling over the pool, constantly changing between their human and rat forms. If disturbed, they awaken and fall into the “water”, vanishing in a burst of powerful magic. Beside the pool are seven iron coffers filled with 11,000 coppers, 1000 silvers and one locked box. Inside the box is a desiccated human female hand wearing a massive gem-encrusted gold ring, worthy of a royal engagement. The ring is worth 5000 gold, or maybe more to her noble descendants, since it bears her family crest. Obviously, this is no ordinary water well: it is the legendary *Well of Unknown Worlds* that can open portals to anywhere if you know how to control its magic. Otherwise, stepping into the waters can take you literally anywhere, determined at random. No wonder the gods dropped a small mountain on it!

**31. The Way Out.** The end of a long cavern corridor is a permanent illusionary wall, and beyond that is the base of the plateau leading out onto the rough plains of the Badlands. Ω



## Oceanian Legends: The Gods of Eá

The deities of the Isles are nothing if not numerous; they would seem also to be ubiquitous. So far as is known, no place lacks for gods. Drop anchor at the dullest backwater port or tramp into remotest mountain village and you are all but guaranteed to encounter a bewildering jumble of beliefs, new to your experience. That is to say nothing of more civilized lands! On Kustenaan's Temple Street, shrines swarm the cobblestones thick as flies on pigglop, and as avidly.

A fly's span is brief – perhaps only a single day –and therefore we reckon it of small account – after all, how can something so fleeting properly command our interest? Gods, likewise, are often indifferent to mortal tragedy because it is beneath their notice: “As the fly is to man, so man to the god,” writes Koor the Orthodox in *The Six-Fold Commonplace*. Yet it would be wrong to imagine divinity as something static. Yes, gods may be immortal, but immortality is no guarantee of volition. Nor relevance. Indeed, the career arc of your garden-variety god is not so different from that of a mortal celebrity. A sudden blaze of fame – over almost before it begins – followed by a long, ugly slide toward inconsequence and anonymity, interrupted here and there by a string of ever-more-embarrassing comeback attempts. Some fare better. They are canny (or lucky) enough to attain a spot in what we might call a ‘divine canon’ – ‘pantheon’ implies too much contiguity – which attracts worshippers over the long term. Over the eons such gods will wax and wane, but are rarely extinguished. Still, the old gods are usually weaker than the young, having been forced to make concessions in order to survive. Only a very few come down through the ages with all their majesty intact.

The gods described below are grouped by geography. Many are worshipped mostly [or only] within that specific region. Others are more widespread. Some few – Azurella and Elnire chief among them – are honored everywhere.

### The Inner Sea

#### **Ancestor Spirits/Heroes/City Gods**

**Allegiance:** Variable

**Domains:** Ghostworld or terrestrial

**Description:** Class of deities beholden to certain places and peoples. Most cities and even many old towns have civic deities to attend to their needs. Their power ranges from trifling to substantial. Most of these are culture heroes, so the categories are fairly amorphous. Ancestor spirits are common to the less civilized folk of Equatoria and Gelidia, while Heroes and City Gods are frequent in

the Archipelago. They represent the collective power of a tribe's honored dead, extant as spiritual force, and can be of formidable power.

### **Azurella**

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Solar

**Description:** The Blue Lady. Solar goddess of the Azure. Sentinel of Ea and celestial intercessionary. Goddess of Enchantment, patron of Blue Magicians. Beloved throughout the Isles.

### **Decedion**

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** The Bright One, Bright Lord. Illion god of light, truth, duty, and justice. Worship originated in Nara-bin but now popular in much of Inner Sea due to Jereni Saberson's conquests. State religion of Commonwealth.

### **Elnire**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Solar & abyssal

**Description:** The Red Lord. Solar god of the Vermilion. Scourge of Ea. Lord of Fire and fiery creatures. King of the salamanders. Patron of Red Magicians. Worshipped by a thousand names throughout the Isles.

### **Ephrosinia**

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Celestial

**Description:** Traditional Valenite goddess of fair play and skill at arms. Goddess of wisdom and learning. She is patron of shield-maidens and charioteers. Associated with the silvery moon Challix, Ephrosinia rides an enchanted chariot (or dirigible) and pursues the spider-god Velehaine across the sky in a perpetual quest for vengeance. Known as **Phoebe** among the Atlanteans.

### **Eventella**

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Celestial

**Description:** Tutelary deity of the elves. Eventella is held to have wrought elvinkind from silver and starlight when the world was young. Associated with the small moon Cyanta, which the elves call Solicst. ("Throne of Eventella"). Served by an array of demiurges and intercessionary spirits. The elves are by all accounts monotheists, and do not regard any of the other beings on this list as truly divine.

### **Gilharn**

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** The Silver Knight. Demigod of duty, loyalty, chivalry. Lieutenant to Decedion.

### **Kess**

**Allegiance:** Darkness

**Domain:** Cthonic

**Description:** Darkcloak, Lord of Shadows. Ancient Uman god of hidden places, shadow, deception, eloquence, oratory, the unknown. Popular with adventurers, for he is said to know the answers to all mysteries, though his tongue is forked and he loves to foment strife. A trickster deity that mixes benign and malefic aspects. His myths often involve the theft of precious items from the demoniac realms.

### **Kore**

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Chief of the Grain Maidens. Patron of the harvest. Conceived as friendly, pleasure-loving young woman. Revered especially in Lokad and Norvar.

### **Nemesis**

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Celestial

**Description:** Sword of Heaven. Goddess of Retribution and divine judgment. Nemesis serves Ephrosinia as stern right arm, meting out justice with unrelenting zeal. Patron of questers and oath-swearing.

### **Skandra**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Outer Dark

**Description:** Selidarkan war-god; general of the gods; rides through heaven on his war-chariot (the Red Planet) drawn by dragons. A god of leaders, not common soldiers.

### **Velehaine**

**Allegiance:** Darkness

**Domain:** Celestial

**Description:** Spider god and Lord of Traitors. Associated with the moon of the same name.

### **Xond**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** The Black Tempest. Demigod of Scorn. Selidarkan deity, conceived as the embodiment of contempt. Culture hero, famed for his journeys through the Farther Lands. Worshipped by an elite cabal of sorcerer-priests who retain great influence.

### **Dragon Cays**

**Drax and Hyeliss**

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Celestial

The principal deities of the dragons. They are the First, Brood-Mother and Exalted Sire, progenitors of the race. Though the dragons have other heroes and deities that figure in the tales of the Dawn Times, this pair is supreme.

## **Gelidia**

### **Aelwon**

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Singer of Heaven. Demigod of wit, eloquence, song. Son of **Nix** and **Shalia**.

### **Breck**

**Allegiance:** None

**Domain:** Cthonic

**Description:** Demigod of thieves, liars, gamblers. Patron of oath-breakers. A trickster figure in the sagas who despite his many adventures and seductions comes at last to a bad end at the hands of Fell.

### **Evni**

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Lady of Frost. Embodiment of cold.

### **Fell and Moira**

**Allegiance:** Law (Fell) & Chaos (Moira)

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** The personifications of Fate and Chance, portrayed as husband and wife. They play an eternal game for the spirits of men, sometimes resembling chess, sometimes dice. So powerful and inscrutable is this pair that even the other gods appease them and consult them for guidance, though they often depart desultory after their contradictory and obscure pronouncements.

### **Hecate**

**Allegiance:** Darkness

**Domain:** Lunar

**Description:** Patron of witches, night creatures, shape-shifters, doppelgangers. Goddess of Lune. A potent and ancient goddess, whose worship is commonplace throughout the wildlands.

### **Jude**

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Lord Jude. Prince of Battles, War-hammer. Culture hero and god of warriors, sea-faring; lord of the thunderbolt. Revered as the first navigator, who guided the Urgelds south from the Lands of Ice. He wields his mighty spear, Sparn, which blots out the sun and summons lightning. He is the illegitimate son of Moira, by a mortal king, for which he will perish at Worlds End. The most popular god among Urgel freemen.

### **Moiras Bones**

**Allegiance:** Non

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Usually represented as conjoined twins, these two demigoddesses are one and the same deity in

opposing aspects. Named Shan (Lady Luck) and Belle (the Maid of Desolation), they are personifications of the Dice of Chance (Moiras Bones). Their faces decide the destinies of men, handing out good fortune or dismal loss according to some inscrutable calculus.

### **Mara**

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Cthonic

**Description:** Never referred to by name, this deity is usually called Lady Death, Her Nibs, Two Face or the like. The personification of death, it is her charge (or, more accurately, geas) to deal out death in the world of Eá. According to folk-tale, this is not a permanent position. If the current Lady Death can persuade another to take her place, she is free. Supposedly this has in fact happened from time to time. Applicants will find that Lady Death can offer a variety of inducements: chiefly she is able to restore anyone to life, regardless of circumstances. The stories do not say whether the applicant must be female, but Mara is always depicted as a woman, so evidently any new Death must hold to that shape. Mara is said to be especially fond of poets.

### **Neblia**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Pelagic

**Description:** The Ravager, Bitch Queen. Gelidian goddess of the sea and the drowned. Said to pull ships to their doom with her barnacled hands. Placated by the Araki and certain other barbaric tribes by human sacrifice. Though renowned for her cruelty, the drowned who dwell in her halls are surprisingly well treated, feasting on lobster, abalone and other delicacies.

### **Nix**

**Allegiance:** None

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** God of the Crossroads. A traditional trickster figure—possibly Hielic in origin—whose worship has spread across Gelidia. Widely propitiated for his importance in travel. Also associated with destiny and decision. The son of Fell and Moira.

### **Ourorboros (The Great Wyrn)**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Abyssal

**Description:** The serpent that gnaws the pith of the world, causing earthquake and avalanche. Spawn of Kur but now her rival. His tunnels riddle the world, draining the oceans and drawing magma to the surface. A doombringer.

### **Roon**

**Allegiance:** Darkness

**Domain:** Ghostworlds & terrestrial

**Description:** The Bloodletter. Demigod of berserk fury,



blood-lust, blood, slaughter, wild beasts. Conceived of as a huge, monstrous weretusk. Called the Hound of Hecate, he serves as courser in her Wild Hunts. Worshipped by shapeshifters and barbarians.

### **Sarni**

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Ghostworlds

**Description:** Lady of Fire. Embodiment of fire.

### **Shalia**

**Allegiance:** Darkness

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Lady of Secrets; goddess of hidden knowledge, the forgotten and obscure; patron of oracles and seers. Oft portrayed as the shrewish, scheming wife of Nix.

### **Lorath-Kabar**

#### **Ahvanna**

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Celestial

**Description:** Chief god of the Hielics. Lord of the aerial realms, heaven, sky, weather, justice, temperance, virtue.

### **Iblis**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Outer Dark

**Description:** Alleged to be a terrible demon of the Outer Dark. Propitiated by the Hielic emperors due to an ancient pact. Credulous foreigners are the preferred offering.

### **Io**

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Nil (Io is conceived as a being of pure thought)

**Description:** The preexistent progenitor deity of the Hielics. Regarded more as First Cause than as a god in an anthropomorphic sense.

### **Kudru**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Abyssal

**Description:** The mother of all nagas; alternatively revered and despised depending on caste affiliation.

### **Qui'tala**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Cthonic

**Description:** Black Earth Mother. Primeval goddess of birth, death and regeneration. Worshipped in a thousand different aspects.

### **Rahu**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Lunar

**Description:** Lorath-Kabar god of celestial events: meteors, eclipses, etc. Perhaps not a true deity, but rather some sort of celestial titan. Said to make his home on the Red Moon, arising periodically to hurl meteors at Eá and generally trouble mankind.

### **Sesha**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Abyssal

**Description:** King of the nagas. Sometimes associated with Ouroboros, this mighty creature lurks somewhere deep in the earth. His shakings cause earthquakes and volcanoes. He is depicted with a thousand heads. His massive body supports the world and the Patalas (hells). Husband of Kudru. His holy color is purple.

### **Xyri**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Ghostworlds

**Description:** Alternatively viewed as female or male (as a male he is called Xyrin), this deity is god of deception, patron of illusionists and liars. Diplomats, orators, and sophists also do him honor. Known as **Siren** in the Archipelago, where she is typically regarded as female.

### **Kalentine**

#### **Alcar**

**Allegiance:** Darkness

**Domain:** Cthonic

**Description:** Lord of Mazes. An ancient Mu-ish deity of uncertain portfolio, though clearly associated with the Black Adepts. His worship still persists in the Atlantean hinterlands and the most remote outposts of Equatoria. As with all Mu-ish gods, he has a thoroughly gruesome reputation.

## Falling Gods

**Allegiance:** Darkness(?)

**Domain:** Celestial & chthonic

**Description:** A group of obscure and ancient deities of uncertain origin and provenance. Typically associated with the Mu and Mu-ish sites in the Archipelago and Quills; held to have fallen from to Eá from the sky, or perhaps were expelled from the heavens.

## Kern

**Allegiance:** Darkness

**Domain:** Cthonic

**Description:** Much-feared Mu-ish god of the pit. Prince of Worms, Lord of Rot. Ruler of the Wakeful Dead, Prince of the Tattered Host. Thankfully, his worship is banned in Atlantis and the Archipelago.

## Qui'ella

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Ghostworlds

**Description:** The Dream Spider is ancient and obscure deity, little worshipped but much placated. It is she who knots the cords of sleep and weaves the woof of dreams, wrapping unconsciousness in luxuriant splendor or utmost dread as she will. She is patron to the outlaw coven of adepts known as the Dream Weavers, a sect often and incorrectly pronounced extinct by more traditional magi.



Qui'ella's motivations are orphic; her works are beneficent one evening and baneful the next.

## Resheph

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Outer Dark

**Description:** The Ravager. Horrid vulture deity, perhaps of Mu-ish extraction. God of war, plague, pestilence, murder. His worship is banned in much of the Archipelago but persists in the Slaver Isles and parts of Equatoria (Saryor-Kun, Losgoth, etc.).

## Atlantis

**Astar/Astarte**

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Celestial

**Description:** God/Goddess of the Morning and Evening Star; Herald of Heaven; alternately male and female: male in the dawn, woman in the dusk. Generally regarded as benign towards humanity. Goddess of love, war, rebirth, sorcery. Handmaiden or herald of **Azurella**. Wife/husband of **Ceylonis** and **Tammuz**

## Ceylonis

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Celestial

**Description:** Chief deity of the Atlanteans. Known as the Sky Painter. King of the djinn (by conquest, and the djinn hate him for it.) God of the air and clouds, of weather, wisdom and lore, and the arts. Patron of the Atlanteans emperors. Husband of Astar/Astarte.

## Coral

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Goddess of sensual pleasure. Patron of courtesans and hetaeras. Advocates sexuality for joy rather than reproduction. Conceived by her cultists as a positive, Tantric force with no connection to notions of sin. Her foe is **Jahi**, goddess of carnality, who twists healthy indulgence into a net of perversion and exploitation. Cynics



suggest there is really no **Jahi**— that’s just how Coral acts on her bad days. This view is not popular on the Street of Silken Veils...

### **Naya**

**Allegiance:** Darkness

**Domain:** Ghostworlds

**Description:** Goddess of night, darkness, sleep, dreams. Ruler of Dreamland. Said to maintain an avatar who walks the earth each night, sowing mischief, love and woe.

### **Tammuz**

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Cthonic

**Description:** The Dying God. God of grain, wine, and sacrifice. This ancient deity was the husband of Astarte/ Astar until banished to the underworld by Ceylonis, who claimed Astar for himself. But in his absence, the world sickened and crops would not grow. Finally Tammuz is rescued from the Dry Lands by Astarte’s grace and Ceylonis permits him to serve as Astarte’s consort for a portion of the year. Yet Tammuz remains stricken by his time below and grows sicker as autumn lengthens, perishing during winter. He is reborn with the spring.

### **Umar**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Outer Dark

**Description:** Lord of the Stygian Depth. Potentate of the Outer Dark. Permitted by pact to visit the Isles once every five hundred years, always to the great sorrow of mortal nations. This visitation is known as The Bend Sinister.

### **Ziz**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Outer Dark

**Description:** Much feared giant bird or roc of Atlantean mythology. Reputed to nest in the heights of Lokaloka (the mountains that ring the world). The “Depredations of Ziz” form a convoluted myth cycle that chronicle this awful creature’s irregular rampages upon the Exalted Isle.

## **The Quills**

### **Gibbon**

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Though **Wasp** is chief goddess of warfare, she is rarely invoked, for she is entirely without mercy, suitable only in those rare times where all-out war must be waged. Most Kabar prefer to honor Gibbon, god of raiding and tracking, craft and spying. He is associated with fruit and with the sense of smell. A clever, calculating god, Gibbon leads the troops of the gods in lightning raids on the forces of the nats.

### **Koki**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** The Praying Mantis. Much scorned wife of **Spider**. Goddess of breadfruit, insects, plagues, disease, vengeance. Viewed alternatively as fierce protector and awful avenger.

### **Moko**

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** King of the Lizards. Kabar god of wisdom, kingship, weather. Potent but aloof. Viewed as titular ruler of the Kabar pantheon, though mostly supplanted by his children **Spider**, **Wasp** and **Gibbon**.

### **Ratri**

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Patron of robbers, particularly brigands, and monkeys. Popular in the Slaver Isles and the Quills. Of unknown provenance.

### **Spider**

**Allegiance:** Non

**Domain:** Celestial

**Allegiance:** Trickster god of the Quills. Known for his vicious pranks, cowardice and vanity. Considered patron of journeys, gift-giving and profligacy.

## Wasp

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Terrestrial

**Description:** Daughter (by way of **Ki**, the earth) and wife of **Moko**. Her worship is much more popular than his. Wasp represents the power of gestation. She is goddess of both human and animal fertility (as opposed to vegetative fertility, the province of **Koki**), sexuality, wealth and warfare. She is regarded as beneficent and generous, but also easily offended

## Equatoria

### Eel

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Tidal

**Description:** Sea god of the Kelvans. Unlike **Kur**, who rules the deep oceans and despises humanity for winning the islands from her grip, Eel is a benevolent deity of the shallows who aids mankind by sending fish into nets, revealing clam beds and warding off sickness and infertility. Sacrifices are made to him before the first net is cast.

## The Founders (the Euxine)

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Ghostworlds

**Description:** The First Men, who taught man's wolfing ancestors the noble arts of fire, building, poetry and song.

## Jahi

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Outer Dark

**Description:** Goddess of Lust and carnal pleasure; demoniac in aspect. Worshipped in the southern Archipelago as **Xaviera**.

## Ki

**Allegiance:** The Balance

**Domain:** Cthonic

**Description:** Primeval earth-goddess, whose body is the jungle, providing all water and nourishment. Her worship is largely vanished from the Archipelago but she is still revered under many names in Equatoria.

## Kur (Leviathan)

**Allegiance:** Chaos

**Domain:** Pelagic

**Description:** The primaeval monster, she who dwells in the depths; a monstrous being from whose maw (womb?) the isles were snatched.

## Oannes

**Allegiance:** Light

**Domain:** Pelagic

**Description:** The wise old fish god of Equatoria. Probably originally Kelvan but popular in the Slaver Isles and the Quills as well. Conceived of as both ancient fish and

ancient man simultaneously, sharing the best qualities and lore of each. Teacher and friend to humanity. Lord of currents, fishing, bounty.

## Old Man Tortoise

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Tidal

**Description:** An ancient Kelvan nature deity associated with wisdom, wealth and fecundity.

## Speaker/Eá

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Ghostworlds

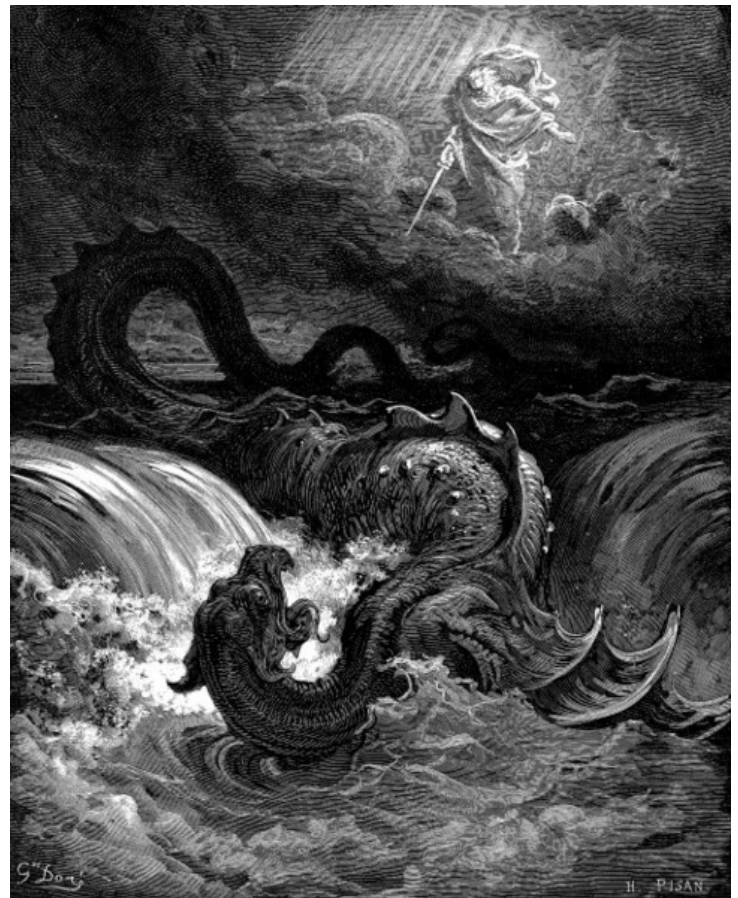
**Description:** The First Man. Chief of the Founders, who taught men the noble arts of fire, building, poetry and song. Fished the Isles from the belly of the sea and earned Kur's undying enmity. Often regarded as the first human sorcerer.

## Tane

**Allegiance:** Law

**Domain:** Celestial

**Description:** Creator deity of the Kelvan. Tane is responsible for the creation of the greater universe. He fathered sea, sky, firmament etc. upon **Ki** (earth). Ancestor of all life. Tane is god of knowledge and lore, the physical universe and especially procreation. A kind and benevolent deity, if sometimes also touchy and proud. Ω



# Random's Assortment

tricks and traps by Random, Big Jack Brass, and Cirył

**Circlet of Invulnerability (BJB):** The delvers find a circlet of finely woven rare metals. When worn on the head it makes the wearer unable to feel pain (and the PC suffers no negative effects therefrom). It also shrinks gradually when wet, such as when soaked in sweat during combat, and will continue to contract until it is the size of a wedding ring. The wearer, of course, won't feel a thing.

**Helm of the Children's Crusade (BJB):** A crusader-style full helm, covering the whole face except for eyeslits and breathing holes. It is quite plain but of excellent quality. Very close examination reveals a thin, transparent film inside. Anyone putting the helmet on hears a soft click and quickly discovers difficulty breathing. The helmet contains a plastic bag with a rubber band around the opening which is released when the inside of the top is pressed, snapping closed around the neck. If you want to make it potentially deadly instead of annoying, then have the helmet remain attached to the bag, or worse make the bag glue itself to the face of the victim.

**Ladwarp's Decanter (Random):** A *decanter of endless water* seems to be a welcome boon, until after extended use it is discovered that local water supplies are drying up.

**Endless Pit (Random):** A large pit which is also a teleporter leading to mid-air above the pit, causing characters to fall repeatedly until rescued (or starvation sets in).

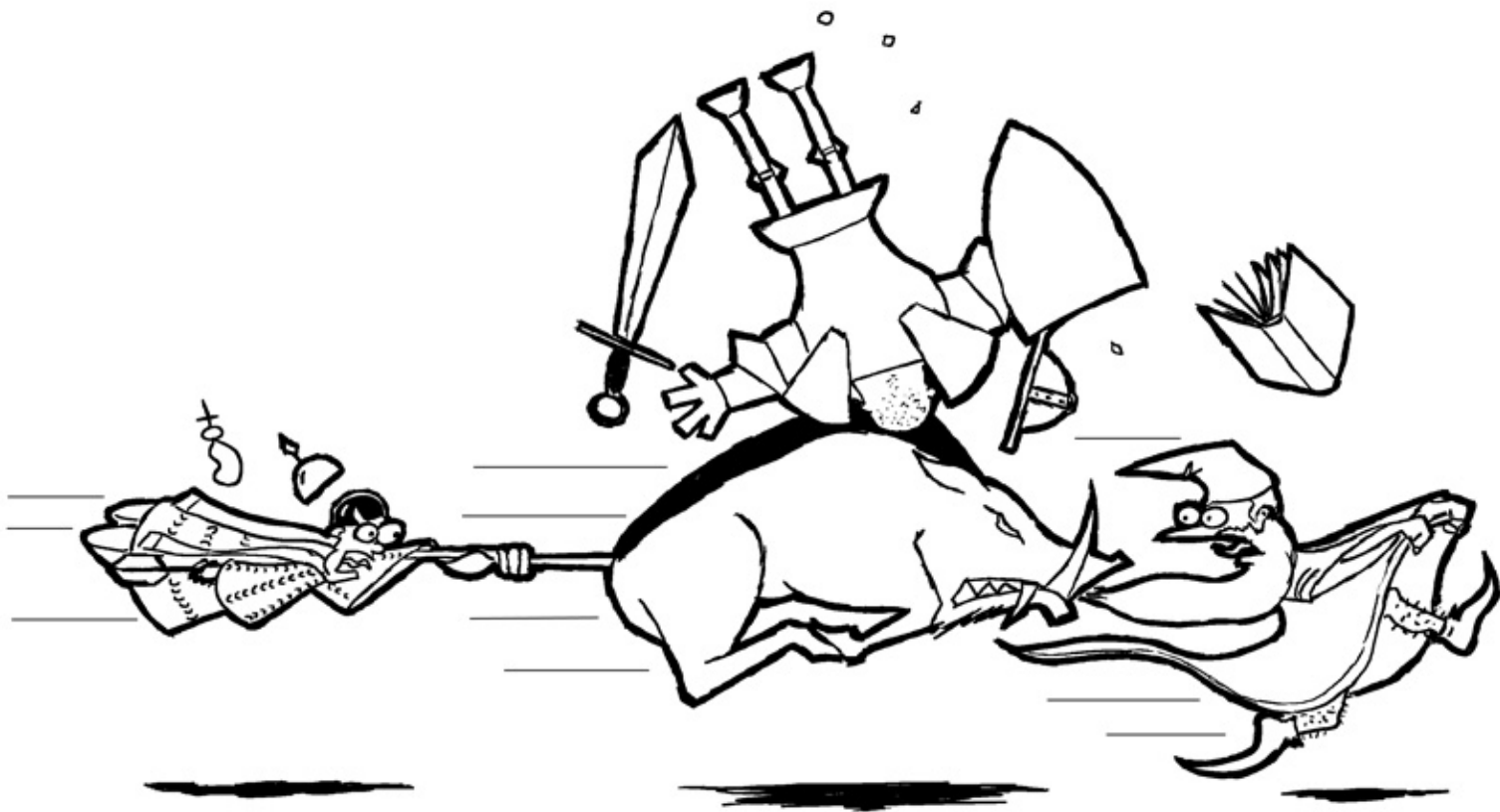


**Golden Golem (Random):** A powerful golem made from solid gold is trapped behind a stone brick wall. It can be detected using a *potion of treasure finding* or similar magic, but unfortunately it will spring to attack any creature so unlucky as to tear through the wall and free it.

**Greater Grease Gate (Random):** A large demonic face appears on a wall, open-mouthed and resembling a doorway. A very dark room is visible through it, a clever illusion. In reality, there is simply a grease-covered wall in the demon's mouth. The grease explodes violently, sending flaming bits of sticky gunk flying outward, if fire (a torch perhaps) is brought too close.

**Portable Piehole (Random):** A massive stone face has a dark mouth which is actually a portable hole. It can be stripped off, rolled up, and used later.





**Hog Wild (Random):** A crazed razorback runs rampant through the dungeon, unable to be caught no matter how fast the pursuer. Successfully mounting it mid-run will result in the rider being carried swiftly to the lowest of dungeon levels and dumped in an excessively dangerous location.

**Extradimensional Closet (Random):** A strange six foot diameter round door appears in the center of a wall (or floor, etc.). It opens into a small dark tunnel, ending abruptly after ten feet. The doorway actually opens into a small dimension similar to that of a *portable hole*, spelling potential disaster if entered by the owner of a *bag of holding*.

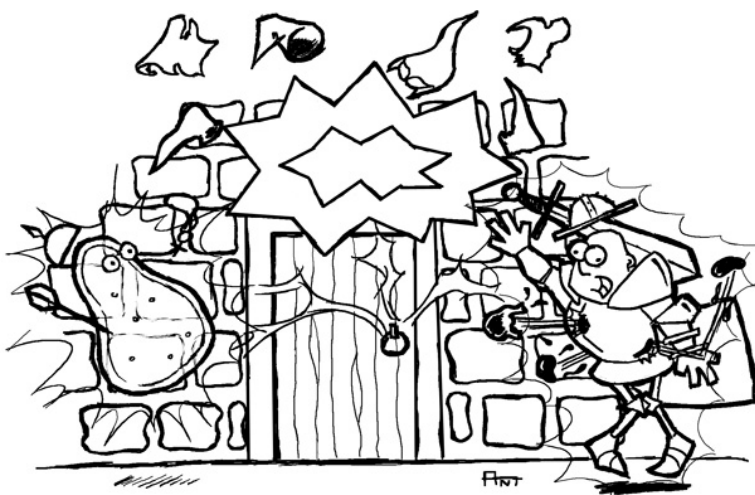
**Curious Corpse (Random):** A corpse is found to look exactly like one of the adventurers present. *Raising* the fallen creature will result in the living look-alike falling dead. The new body will be an exact copy of the slain PC, and even be controlled by the appropriate player. *Raising* the original will result in a similar death experience for the new body.

**Transforming Tapestry (Ciry!):** This tapestry is large and obviously conceals a door or passageway. The tapestry is affixed to the wall at ceiling and the floor. It depicts something fierce: ogre, troll, phalanx of orcs, lions, dinosaur, etc. If the party takes care and removes the tapestry nothing happens with the exception of getting a fine yet large tapestry. If a mage *detects magic*, the tapestry will radiate a magic aura. The wall covering can be sold for a good price (DM's discretion). On the other hand, if a party member decides to do things the quick way and slash the tapestry or violently rip it down, roll for initiative – they have just freed the creature or creatures depicted upon it, and they are ready for battle!

**Credulous Callout (Random):** As the adventurers are exploring, they are startled by the intense voice of a magic mouth, which shouts "SAVE OR DIE!!!" If the players roll dice, they really must save or die. Clever players may instead shout "SAVE!" which allows them safe passage.

**Perilous Portal (Random):** An evilly crafted magical doorway jolts adventurers with terrifying results; roll 1d6!

d6	Result
1	Attached to door frame as stone grotesque.
2	Transmogrified into steaming jelly.
3	Violently and very loudly exploded.
4	Instantly killed by annihilation of internal organs.
5	Aged beyond natural years.
6	Allowed to pass with no ill effects, whatsoever!



# Dungeon Modules:

## Wizard's Work Room

plug-in underground encounters by Geoffrey O. Dale

**Entrance:** Along an ornate hallway lined with wood panels and statues of nymphs and satyrs are double doors made of dark cherry wood, having platinum hinges, handles and keyholes (-45% to pick). These doors are *invisible*, *silenced*, do not burn, are proof against acid, are magically-strengthened (hp 180), and resist all spells unless the caster rolls 24+ on d20+level. When the doors are opened, two **Unseen Servants** (DC 5; HD 2; hp 11,9; Dam 1d6+1 str-angle) attempt to prevent entry by pushing intruders out.

**Main Room:** A rectangular room 35' by 50' by 15' high, with wood paneling, wainscoting, green marble veneer on the upper wall, and a ceiling painted dark red. The floor is covered in worn old dark wood planks. Two brass chandeliers (each with ten glass globes enchanted with *permanent light*) hang from the ceiling by brass metal chains. Wooden doors are located in the left (**Summoning Room**) and right (**Simulacrum Room**) walls, a wooden door is located on the left (**Ingredient Closet**) of the facing wall, and stairs lead up to the right (**Scrying Room**). A 2' diameter pentagram is inscribed in silver inside a circle on the floor in the rear left corner; a similar pentagram and circle are drawn in gold on the floor in the rear right corner. (These are permanent inbound and outbound teleportation landing pads, respectively; they take one person at a time with a 5 second delay to a locale of the Judge's choosing.) The room is furnished with a large rolltop desk and wheeled chair, a carved hickory bookstand, two ornate large willow wood rectangular tables, a black circular table, an old settee in a flower print, a green leather-covered stuffed chair with matching footstool, a large blackboard on wheels (inscribed with partial directions for a ritual to copy memories into a crystal ball), three wood tubs or vats, an empty copper cauldron, and two large black wood chests. The desk and stuffed chair sit on a huge bearskin rug (459 gp). On the room's walls hang a poster chart of the Zodiac constellations (9 gp + 3 sp), a poster chart of spell and ritual ingredients (172 gp), an oil painting of a beautiful elfin maiden set in a birch frame (388 gp, frame 1d20+50 sp), a simple child's drawing of a dragon, a small oil painting of a wizard summoning a Djinn (famous artist, 2604 gp, frame 300 sp), an ornate silver-bladed scimitar inlaid with ruby, bloodstone, and pearl (14,043 gp), and an anatomical chart of a Cloud Giant (418 gp). An empty rectangular wire cage is on the floor; a red leather collar is in the cage with a silver tag engraved with the word, 'Rorygler' along with an empty shallow wood bowl. Behind the ingredient poster is a hidden wall niche containing a black leather book with the rituals necessary to become a Liche; the book is *invisible*. Scattered around the room are a

bronze telescope stand, a crystal ball (not enchanted), some small ebony cubes, a broken wand, a parchment with a diagram of a water clock, a cracked glass prism, a model of a fully-rigged sailing ship, a flute, a chart of the constellation 'Etin', a brass hourglass, some dried chicken leg-bones and feet, an eagle's beak, several black silk cloths, and a dissected frog pinned to a piece of wood.

The desk is open and contains a variety of simple office supplies, as well as 40 sheets of vellum parchment, a 10-power magnifying glass, two history books, an ivory hair-brush (1 gp), a golden hearing aid (40 gp), a pewter inkwell, a long-stemmed wood pipe, 2 pouches of high-quality pipeweed (each 60 gp), a silver hand mirror (23 gp), an ordinary wand, a cloth bag holding 22 diamonds (each 1d20\*1d20\*1d6 gp), a cloth bag holding 87 gp, 114 sp, & 27 cp, an ivory-silk hand fan (73 sp), a black eye-patch, and a brass harmonica. The first black wooden chest has a platinum combination lock (20 digits) and a brass key-type padlock, both found locked; -70% to pick the combination (L14-R04-L01-R11) and -25% to pick the padlock. If this chest is opened with-out passing one's hand four times across the top, a soft chime sounds from the silver enchanted circle and the illusion of a **Medusa** appears in the circle (and, if PCs fail to disbelieve, they must save or be turned to stone). Inside the chest are five spell books: The first contains *beacon*, *boulder toss*, *detect hidden doors*, *fool's gold*, *harden muck*, *ore find*, *poison touch*, *remove paralysis*, *see true location*, *slippery surfaces*, *straw to gold*, *traceless movement*, and *transmute*; the second *anti-vision wall*, *command fires*, *detect diseased creatures*, *daylight*, *double-vision*, *greater exploding rune*, *eye-on-the-wall*, *hide object*, *hotfoot*, *night vision*, *permanent blindness*, *permanent illusion*, *remove invisibility*, and *reveal tracks*; the third *command person*, *detect poisons*, *dispel enchantment*, *instant drench*, *instant freeze*, *levitate/float object*, *maze trail*, *protective wards*, *slow movement*, *summon undine*, *walk on clouds*, *wall of ice*, and *water road*; the fourth *blinding cloud*, *cause sleep*, *chain lightning*, *choke*, *foul wings*, *hail blast*, *heart squeeze*, *lesser explode object*, *lesser fireball*, *magic grenade*, *poison fume cloud*, and *remove air*; and finally a book of rituals: *verdant harvest*, *summon person*, *bubbling spring*, *summon unseen servant*, *greater wards*, *call tornado*, and *sicken area*. The second chest sits on a worn piece of carpeting; it has only a simple brass latch and is found open. It contains a bolt of black silk cloth (35 gp), a stained green winter cloak, 4 golden goblets (each 6 gp), a platinum sandglass (3 hours, 903 gp), a small alembic (20 gp), 3 vials of perfume (each 2d20+200 gp), a set of ten surgical scalpels (30 gp), a winter bedroll, a lodestone compass, a leather leash, six empty leather scroll tubes, a 30 FT coil of half-inch rope, a pair of arctic spectacles (45 gp), a folding light timber saw, a mechanical chess timer (Dwarven, 629 gp), bagpipes wrapped in oilskin, a mandolin without strings, a pouch of Hysop leaves (11 gp), a pair of black silk gloves, an oak dowsing rod, and a set of adamantite lock picks (+2/10%, +4/20% against Dwarf-made locks). If the chest is moved and the carpet pulled up, a rectangular hole is readily revealed; in the hole is a

folded *Magic Bag* which contains a cloth bag with 418 gp & 92 sp, a leather bag with 10 pink pearls (each 1d100\*1d12\*10 gp), a *Damage Absorbing Cloak* (hp 200), *Greater Spell Damage Bracers*, *Hell Walking Boots*, *Weapon Proficiency Gloves* (morning star), a platinum *Ring (Strength Enhancing)*, a silver *Locket of Mage Energy*, a copper *Charm* (Hag's), *Gorgosh's Dragon Bridle*, a *Peace-Making Pipe*, a *Lantern of Daylight*, a *Missile Targeting Wand*, a *Wand of Mage Arrow Volley* (42 charges), a *Geas-Breaking Codicil*, the *Handbook of Life's Experiences* (xp 1d100\*1d20\*1d6), *Life Restoring Salve*, *Giant Insect Repellent* (salve), *Elven Death Dust* (powder), *Pipeweed of Mental Rejuvenation*, a *Potion of Cloud Giant's Strength*, a *Cordial of Health*, *Paralyzing Potion*, and some *Elixir of Truth*. On the tables are found the following items: a wicker basket holding moldy apples (poisonous, save -5), a silver candle-holder (7 gp + 1 sp) with the nub of an unlit blue candle, an alcohol burner set under a heating stand (empty glass flask), a windup metronome (Dwarven, 337 gp), a tuning fork for low-C, a pewter chalice, two pewter plates, a large ceramic stein, dried roses in a crystal vase (15 gp), a Dwarven drinking horn inlaid with gold and amber (77 gp), and a glass beaker holding a wood funnel.

While adventurers are in the wizard's complex, Oellee Karlsgunson (Human Mag 8, hp 33, DC 6, age 61), his familiar Kaskee (male Dwarf Raven, HD 3, hp 17, DC 5, peck 1d4, talons 1d6+3, SA cast *Confuse*, *Babel Tongue*, and/or *Sleep* 4x/day), and the dog Rorygler (HD 4, hp 23, DC 4, bite 1d6+1, foreclaws 1d3 x2, SD enchanted collar 25% magic resistance) have a 5% chance to teleport into the Main Room checked every round (or little while). Oellee carries a mage's staff and a silver-bladed dirk and wears a *Displacing Cloak*, *Spider-Walking Boots*, *Web Casting Bracers*, a golden *Ring of Chameleon Power*, a silver and emerald *Ring of Missile Shielding*, a platinum *Pendant of Discord*, a *Wand of Fire and Smoke*, *Alchemical Dust of Illusion*, *Goggles of Night- Seeing*, and potions of *Flying*, *Shapeshift to Hill Giant*, and *Super-Healing* x2.

**Summoning Room:** The door to this room has a silver handle and keyhole, is magically strengthened (hp 225), and is found locked (-35% to pick). The room is circular, 32' diameter by 16' tall. The floor is polished green marble and the walls are white marble tiles intermixed with purple and black; the ceiling is covered by a thin sheet of silver. Silver brackets shaped as lions (each 2d20+250 sp) are set into the walls 9' off the ground at the cardinal direction points, from which hang blue-tinted glass lanterns (*permanent light*). Inscribed in gold and centered on the floor is a 20' diameter circle with an embedded pentagram; at each vertex stands a silver column 30" high by 3" across, each one supporting a partially burned red candle. A small silver key is found on the floor near the center of the circle. A golden net hangs 2' from the ceiling directly above the pentagram. An oak lectern stands to the southeast, outside the circle, with a leather book cover holding burnt pages. Narrow cherry-wood tables (6' by 10" wide, 4' high) inlaid

with silver are against the walls below the west, north, and east lanterns. An oval quicksilver mirror, set in a mithril frame (13,000 gp; detects as magic but no powers), hangs on the wall in the northwest. On the tables are found a silver censer (quarter filled with incense valued at 30 gp), a ceremonial silver-and-emerald dagger (670 gp), three shallow brass bowls (one with a dried red-ochre substance), two silver handbells, a small (bongo) drum, four small crystal prisms (each 3d100+1200 gp), and a rolled vellum parchment tied with a black ribbon (diagram of Outer Planes, 330 gp). The dagger has an aura of good on 1d20 rolls 01-03, of evil on rolls 15-20, and no aura otherwise. The third prism is a *Prism of Discovery* (+35% to identify secret doors and hidden traps when used to search, range 15'). When the circle is entered a very large **Chimera** (HD 8, hp 51, DC 0, bite 1d10 x3, fore claws 1d8, tail 1d6, rear kick 1d12+4, trample 4d8+2, one bite has snake venom save -3, one head can breathe for 4d8 at a range of 25') is summoned, appearing after 1d12 rounds; the Chimera is not bound to the circle. If adventurers leave before the Chimera appears, the door to the Main Room does not latch (breaks) as they leave, and the door drifts open. The net release has a 50% to misfire and the Chimera can spit venom and breathe fire through the net regardless, though other attacks are at -4 to hit. (The Chimera has a 1 in 6 chance each round to shred the net with its claws while its other attacks proceed at normal/-4, if it chooses.)

**Simulacrum Room:** The door (hp 60) to this room has brass fixtures and keyhole and is found open (-10% to pick when locked). The room is a 28' long by 15' wide by 10' high rectangle. The floor is plain black clay tile, the walls are painted ochre, and the ceiling is covered in beige stucco. The room has a distinct aroma of formaldehyde. The room holds three rectangular black wood vats, a rough wood table and bench, two empty barrels, a barrel partly filled with a putrid but harmless gel, a barrel of purified alcohol, a barrel of diluted rubber sap, a barrel filled with moldy arm and leg bones (varies sizes and species), six cloth sacks of plaster mix, and five copper moulds for humanoid figures (from 3' to 7' tall; three are found closed). The first closed mould is empty, the second contains a **Green Ooze** (HD 3, DC 5, Atk 1d8 pseudopods for 1d4 each, envelop one target for 1d6/round, resists fire, sensitive to electrical attack), and the third contains a gelatinous (rubber) humanoid golem which is not animate. In one corner are three 6' wood poles with tips stained red, green, and purple, along with a long-handled paddle, a scoop attached to a pole, a hoe, a metal corkscrew attached to a pole, a carved wooden (left) hand, and two wood buckets. A wood shelf against the back wall holds glass jars with a variety of pickled ears, eyes, hearts, gills, gonads, hooves, intestines, kidneys, livers, lungs, spleens, stingers, tentacles, tongues, and (small) wings; on the shelf are also ten one-gallon mason jars of blood (unidentified species). An ordinary (if dusty) articulated orc's skeleton hangs from a wood stand on the right side.

**Ingredient Closet:** The door to this room is magically strengthened adamantine (hp 475) with two silver keyholes (found locked, each -60% to pick). A Leyden jar trap is attached to the door; a small stud attached to the lower hinges, delivering 1d10 electrical damage if not detected and disarmed. The entire room interior is covered by a thin sheet of lead. A wood structure of 24 wood drawers wide by 20 drawers high completely fills the left wall, while the opposite and right walls have five continuous wood shelves. A yellow lantern hangs from a hook in the ceiling (*permanent daylight*). The following spell and ritual ingredients are found in the room (small amounts of liquid are kept in corked glass vials, larger amounts in jars or jugs):

- *Acids:* Acetic, Black Dragon, Blister Beetle, Dungeon Cube, Fulminating, Giant Spitting Caterpillar, Hydro-fluoric, Mold, Nitric, Spitting Bird

- *Blood:* Basilisk, Bugbear, Calygreyhound, Catoblepas, Chameleon, Chimera, Cyclops, Death Beetle, Dragon (green, red), Djinn, Elf, Giant (hill, sea, storm), Gorgon, Grizzly Bear, Hell Hound, Hippocampus, Hydra, Medusa, Mermaid, Minotaur, Roc, Sea Serpent, Human Virgin, Whale, Witch, Wyvern, Vampire Bat
- *Body Parts:* Albatross' Feather, Angel's Feather, Ant Lion Hairs, Anteater Tongue, Baboon's Hair, Basilisk Eye, Basilisk Scale, Bat's Fur, Bat's Wing, Bear Claw, Boar's Bristles, Camel's Hair, Cat's Fur, Chicken's Feather, Dragon's Talon, Dragon's Tears, Eagle's Eye, [type] Fish's Scale, Ghoul's Claw, Giant Spider's Silk, Harpy's Feather, Hell Hound's Fur, Horse's Hair, Humming- bird's Feather, Mammoth's Hair, Manticore's Spines, Mermaid's Hair, Mermaid Scales (virgin), Newt's Eye, Octopus Tentacle, Ogre's Hair, Pegasus Feather, Phoenix's Talon, Phoenix's Tears, Piranha's Teeth, Shark's Teeth, Skunk's Teeth, Snake's Fangs, Snake's Scales, Roc's Feather, Troll's Eye, Wyvern's Scale



- **Chemicals:** Antimony, Aqua Tofami, Bitumen, Blue Vitriol, Brine, Calx, Calomel, Charcoal, Cinnibar, Dia-metaceous Earth, Fulminating Silver, Gum Arabic, Iron (shavings), Mercury, Natron, Phosphorus, Potash, Pyrite, Quicklime, Sal Ammoniac, Salt (refined), Soda Ash, Sulphur, Talc, Verdigris
- **Liquids:** Alcohol (purified), Aloe Sap, Ammonia, Camel's Fat (rendered), Crocodile's Tears, Cobra Spit, Coral Snake Venom, Dog's Saliva (rabid), Ectoplasm, Ether, Giant Bee Venom, Giant Frog Musk, Golden Beetle's Musk, Honey, Ink, Kerosine, Milk Vetch Sap, Milkweed Juice, Musk Ox Musk, Octopus Ink, Peroxide, Pickling Solution, Rubber Sap, Saline, Scorpion Venom, Skunk Musk, Skunk Saliva (rabid), Spitting Aphid Venon, Stinkbug Musk, Turpentine, Widow Spider Venom
- **Plants (dried):** Anger Flowers, Aster Stems, Arrowhead Vine berries, Baneberries, Belledonna Leaf, Bittersweet berries, Cannabis Leaf, Dead Man's Hand Leaf, Death Angel berries, Donkeytail Leaf, Forget Flowers, Foxglove Leaf, Giant Kelp, Hanging Fungus, Juniper berries, Lambkill Stems, Laurel Petals, Leadwort Leaf, Maleberry, Mistletoe berries, Oleander Leaf, Rhubarb Leaf, Rose Petals, Sleep Flower, Tobacco Leaf, Water Hemlock Leaf, Yew berries
- **Powders (crushed):** Aconite Seed, Acorn, Alligator's Teeth, Alum, Antelope Horn, Bat's Dung, Belladonna Root, Bison Horn, Blood Root, Box Thorn, Brimstone, Buckeye, Bull's Dung, Burning Bush Root, Cat's Eye, Castor Bean, Centaur Hoof, Clam's Shell, Curse Root, Devil's Snuff Box (pollen), Dogsbane Root, Dragon's Bone, Duck's Beak, Egg Shell, Emerald, Fire Cherry, Ghost Wind (pollen), Giant's Bone, Giant Crab's Shell, Hellebore Root, Hemlock Root, Mammoth's Tusk, Mayapple, Mescal, Mica, Monkshood Root, Moonstone, Mummy's Bone, Mustard Seed, Narwhale's Horn, Nightshade Root, Pearl, Pepper Plant Seeds, Pigments (black, blue, orange, white), Pixie Dust, Poison Ivy Root, Poppy Seed, Quartz, Ruby, Rhino Horn, Sea Anemone, Skeleton Bone, Starfish, Tortoise Shell, Trance Root, Tree Fungus, Unicorn's Horn, Vampire's Bone, Vampire's Grave Earth, Wisteria Seed

If this room is exposed to fire it may burst into flame (25% ordinary, 50% magical) and in 1d10 rounds a terrible toxic cloud will be produced, causing unconsciousness and

then death unless saves are made and eventually spreading to the main room and the whole complex unless stopped.

**Scrying Room:** Stone stairs (tops covered by teak wood planks) lead up from the Main Room to an arched hall 22' long, which ends at a silver door. The hall has dark blue carpet, blue-white tiles on the wall, and silver inlaid in the ceiling; at the midpoint a silver lantern (*permanent daylight*) hangs from the ceiling on a silver chain. The door has adamantine keyhole (locked, -40% to pick), hinges, and hardware, and has been magically strengthened (hp 300). The room is five-sided with the door in the base and the point facing opposite. The floor is red tile with a large red rug in the center, the walls are wainscoted with cherry wood panels below and light red paint above the wainscot. The ceiling is covered in white gypsum tiling (sounds are suppressed in the chamber). The room has a strong aroma of rose petals. Hanging in a silver frame (58 gp) on the left wall is an oil portrait of an aged dark-skinned man in formal wizard's robes. Hanging from a wood rod on the right wall is a tapestry (482 gp) of a unicorn running through a mountain meadow. Silver brackets (each 110 sp) centered in each wall hold unlit torches. Centered on the rug is an ornate circular table, with three carved ironwood chairs. A light green tablecloth covers the table, the design of a pentagram inscribed in a circle is embroidered in the tablecloth in gold thread. A wide shallow circular brass dish filled with water is centered on the table, and it continuously shows the image of a village of humans burning at night. Also on the table is a small rosewood box (3 gp) holding an artistically superior tarot card deck (28 gp), a leather bag holding rune pieces (each rune engraved on bear bone, set value 184 gp), and a cloth bag of ivory dominoes (1d20+80 sp). 1d4 **Psychic Shadows** (HD 2, DC 8, gold or silver weapons to hit, incorporeal, touch drains 1 Wisdom for 1d100 hours with save at -4 – death if WIS becomes 0, 4/day – mental blast 15' radius for 1-12) appear in this room 1d20 rounds after adventurers look into the brass dish.



Featuring the Inferno line, a reimagining of  
the classic module by Geoffery O. Dale



as a landmark for travelers crossing the moors and it is from this use that its name is derived. Travelers often camp for the night at the menhir's base due to its commanding view of the often-dangerous moors.

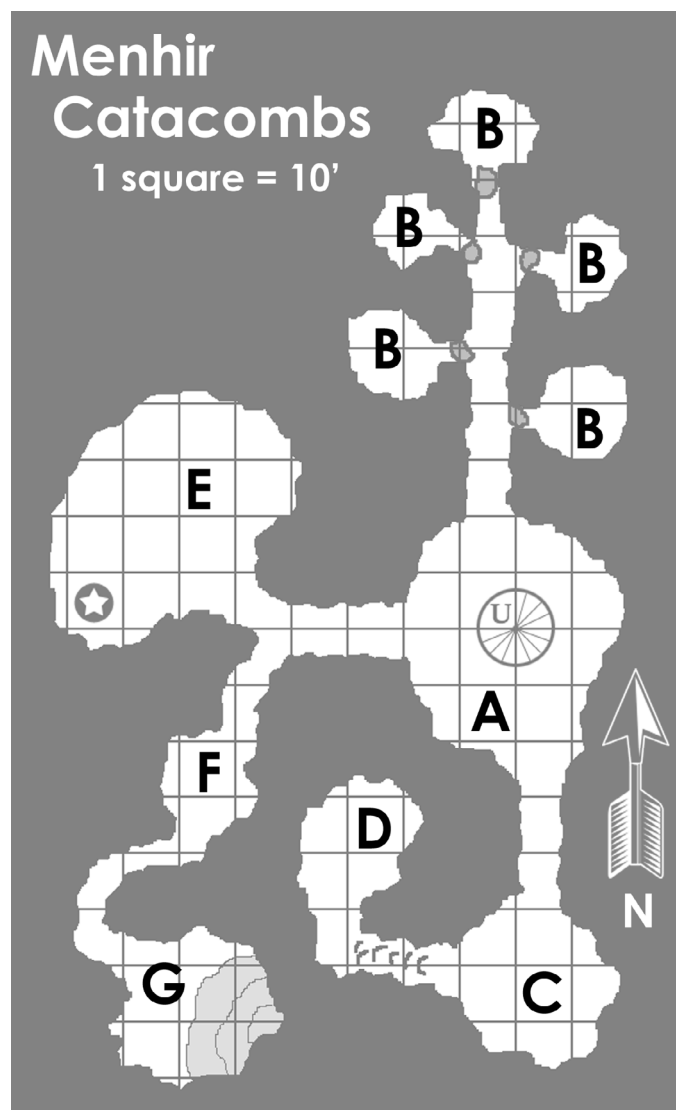
The hillock itself is pocked with shallow holes. These depressions are the result of countless excavations undertaken by adventuring bands convinced that the menhir marks the location of buried treasure or the lost barrow of an ancient king. These diggings have yet to turn up any treasure or crypts, but treasure seekers remain undeterred. A few verdigris-coated bronze trinkets have been unearthed, hinting that something does lie here waiting to be discovered. It is unsurprising that several legends have spread concerning the Journey Stone. In addition to tales of lost barrows and hidden treasure, the Journey Stone is rumored to be haunted by the ghost of a barbarian princess who carries off travelers in the night. Another tale speaks of the stone being used by lycanthropes who gather at its base when the full moon rides high in the night. Some point to the eye carved upon the menhir as proof that this is where Odin's missing eye is hidden.

## Sites to Seek

by Michael Curtis

Not every special feature on your campaign's hex map need be a dungeon or monster's lair. An unusual landmark or crumbling artifact from a bygone age can breathe life into your world in ways that larger adventuring locales often can't. This article presents two such sites suitable for inclusion in any fantasy role-playing campaign.

**The Journey Stone:** On a grassy hillock overlooking an otherwise featureless moor stands the Journey Stone. This menhir is a 25' tall slab of crudely hewn Moor Grit Conglomerate weighing 40 tons. Its base is 15' square and the stone tapers slightly as it rises to a rounded point. A stylized eye composed of a circle flanked by chevrons is carved into the menhir at a point 20' above the ground and faces due east. At the stone's base, rank weeds grow and a fire ring of large stones has been laid out. Ashes and charred wood fill the ring and the occasional piece of discarded equipment lies nearby. On account of its elevation and the barren moor which surrounds it, the Journey Stone is visible from up to ten miles away. The original purpose of the menhir is unknown. Sages postulate that it was once used in religious rites by humanoid or barbarian tribes, but these erectors remain unidentified and are seemingly long vanished. Today, the Journey Stone serves



The Journey Stone indeed conceals the entrance to an ancient site, but gaining entrance to it is not as simple as digging one's way in. On certain nights during the year, heavenly bodies align in proper sequence and it is on these nights that the Journey Stone becomes insubstantial, taking on a hazy, ghostlike appearance. While in this state, it is possible to step into the menhir itself and discover the stone stairway that lies beneath it. This hewn stairwell descends 100' feet into the earth and a series of excavated catacombs lies at the bottom of the niter-encrusted steps. These catacombs served as a place of worship and internment by the menhir's builders. Untouched for thousands of years, the secrets contained within are left for the GM to determine. A brief map and overview of the catacombs is provided below to help get the referee started.

**A. Entrance Hall:** The spiral stone stairs terminates in a low (10") ceilinged cave. The stone here bears tool marks, indicating it was hand-carved. The walls are decorated with faded pictograms and spiral whorls of red and ochre paint.

**B. Barrows:** Each of these chambers holds the mortal remains of a high priest. The entrance to each barrow is sealed by a large rock plug. In addition to the corpses, various tools, treasures, and funeral accoutrements lie within.

**C. Preservation Chamber:** Stone biers and jars occupy this room. Niches in the wall hold tools and religious artifacts used in the preservation of dead bodies. The jars hold crumbling herbs, ancient powders, and dried paint. A stairway carved from the surrounding stone leads down to **D**.

**D. Cold Storage:** The walls of this chamber are damp and the temperature here is much cooler than in the other catacombs. Bodies were once stored here while waiting to be preserved and interred.

**E. Temple:** A stone statue of a humanoid male with antlers atop his head stands in the southwest corner of this cave. The floor before him is stained with old blood and ash. Bronze cressets hang on the walls; the stone around and above them blackened by soot.

**F. Ossuary:** Niches along the walls of this chamber contain the skeletal remains of minor priests and tribesmen of high status. The bones are arranged so that the skull of each body rests atop its crossed hands.

**G. Purification Pool:** A pool of clear water 8' deep dominates this cave. Worshippers and priests cleansed themselves in this pool before ceremonies. The waters may have mystical properties as well.

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**The Storm Lord's Anvil:** Amongst the rocky foothills of the great mountains lies an unusual stone outcropping,



distinct for both its coloration and what lies atop it. Although the surrounding exposed rock is pale granite, this outcrop is black-grey in color and striated veins of maroon iron ore snake across its face. The top of the outcrop has been shaped by intelligent hands – a portion of the stone is carved into the shape of an anvil, and the remaining stone is chiseled flat to form a platform surrounding it. A set of steep stairs is carved along one side of the outcrop, its course rising a third of the way along the outcrop's circumference before reaching the top. Sparse grass and moss cling to rock's surface, ruffling in the mountain winds. The anvil itself stands 11.5 feet long by 5 feet wide by 6.5 feet tall; its horn points due north. Its rocky surface is cracked and scorched by lightning strikes and the grass around its base is blackened. Faint marks which suggest writing run along the edges of the stone anvil, but time and the elements have rendered them illegible. When thunderstorms roll down from the mountains, the high iron content of this outcrop attracts lightning that hammers down upon the anvil, giving the landmark its name.

Though many assume otherwise, the Storm Lord's Anvil is not a dwarven artifact but one dating to an earlier period of humanity's development. Legend tells that it was on this site that the gods imparted the secret of iron to mankind and that it was here that the great weapons of prehistory were forged. Indeed, some blacksmith craft societies require journeymen to take a pilgrimage to this place before assuming the rank of master.

The maroon hematite that meanders through the exposed stone is special and bears a spark of divine power. Using

this ore, a master smith can create weapons and armor that bear a +1 enchantment vs. undead and demonic creatures. The cost for a wizard to creature a magical item against these same creatures is half normal if this ore is used in its construction. Any ore removed from the outcrop is replaced by new deposits which appear overnight. However, before this hematite can be mined, permission from the gods must be granted. This is accomplished by a priest communing with the appropriate deity on behalf of the one wishing to collect the ore. Once permission is given, the hematite can be collected, but only in the amount required to produce one item. Hematite collected from the outcrop only provides the benefits noted above to the individual allowed to collect it. In the hands of the third party, it is normal iron ore. If hematite is collected from this site without asking prior permission or more than the needed amount of ore is taken, the offending party is struck by the *steel-curse*.

The steel-curse is a simple yet deadly form of divine retribution. Anytime the cursed individual misuses an item that contains steel or iron (a missed attack with a sword, an iron wand whose effect is negated, a missed ability check when using a tool, etc.), the individual must make a saving throw vs. spells or suffer damage from the item. A warrior would be struck by his own sword, a mage blasted by his own wand, and a craftsman would injury himself with his tool. Although the wound taken is seldom fatal, the gradual attrition the cursed party suffers from these injuries eventually leads to their demise. The steel-curse can only be removed by a Patriarch of the offended god, who usually requires the cursed to perform a quest or other method of atonement beforehand. Ω



# THE DARKNESS BENEATH

## Level 10: The Hall of Mirrors

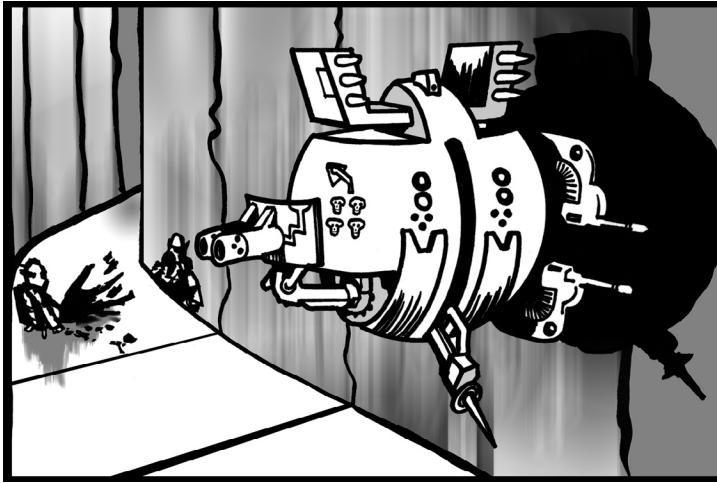
megadungeon installment by Calithena

**Introduction:** *The Hall of Mirrors* is a brutal deathtrap that may be plugged into just about any dungeon. Faced with a single high-tech monstrosity, a battle droid armed with lasers and missiles and protected by a force field in a symmetrical maze of reflecting mirrors, it will probably take all the ingenuity of even higher-level parties to survive. In *The Darkness Beneath*, the Hall of Mirrors can only be accessed from Level 6, *The Fane of Salicia* (in FO! #7 – Ig), and offers the only way down to the fabulous treasures and terrible technomonsters of Level 14, *The City of the Ancients*. It might serve well as a similar bottleneck in a megadungeon of your own devising.

**The Hall:** The walls, ceiling, and floors of this 280' square maze are all perfectly polished mirrors, made strong as adamant by technological manipulation. Corridor width and height are 20', with corners slightly cut off. These surfaces are utterly impervious to energy attacks, including magical ones, though a single physical strike doing more than 100 points of damage will shatter a 5' x 5' square. *Pass Through Walls*-type magic will work on them so long as it does not actually break them, however. (Some forms of this magic may actually create additional mirrored passageways; GM option.) From the PCs' point of view, there are no flaws in this scheme at the outset; the three secret doors can only be detected close at hand by an elf, thief, magic spell, or similar. All beings in the hall can be seen by all other beings in the hall at all times, regardless of location. Once a general sense for the structure of the hall has been arrived at (INT% per round if trying, or normally through mapping etc.), it is possible for highly intelligent entities to roughly pinpoint locations by guesswork; (INT-14)<sup>20</sup>% chance of success at this each round.

Such guesswork is not only important for teleporting. The battle droid in the maze is armed with lasers, which it can fire at the PCs every round from anywhere in the maze by using its targeting system to bounce its laser off mirrors (normal hit rolls only, no % roll required). Though *Ball of Fire* and *Mystic Missile* only work with line of sight here, *Lightningstrike* and perhaps some similar spells can hit the droid from long distances using the same technique.

**The Situation:** On the first full round that any PCs are in the corridor after opening the door at 7, they will come under a barrage of laser fire. This will continue until the droid is destroyed or disabled or living PCs exit the maze,



in which case the droid will not pursue. If somehow the party comes up through the secret floor hatch at **8**, the same thing will happen, but only on the third full round after it opens (unless PCs use the delay to attack the droid, in which case reprisal will come instantly, as if the droid had specified in advance that it would attack as soon as the PCs did).

What happens when a laser, *lightningstrike*, or other similar attack misses its mark? It keeps going around the maze, of course! Each time this happens, roll on the following table:

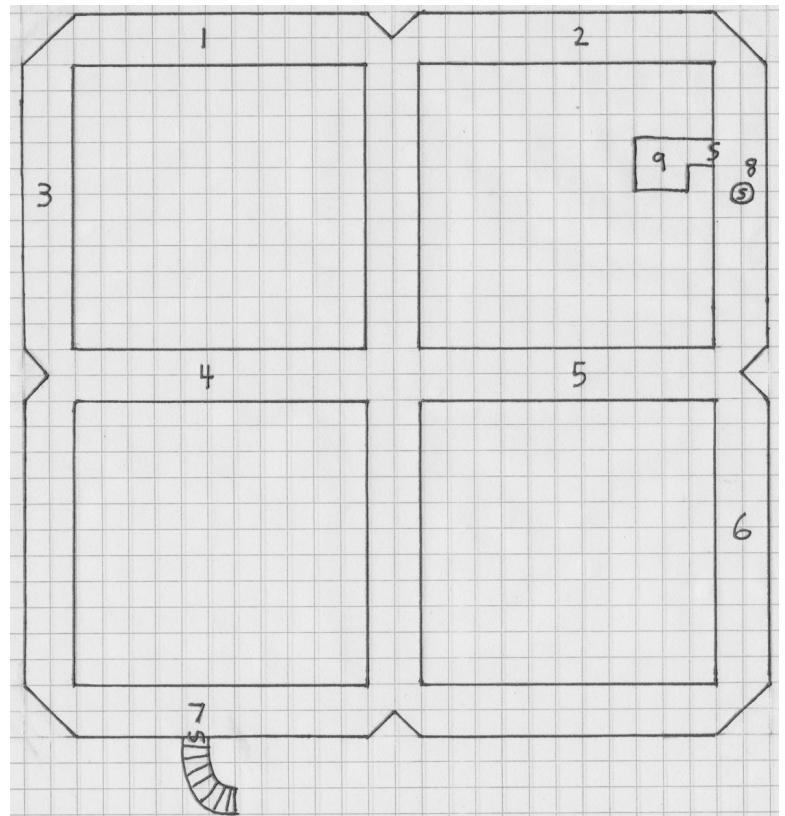
d12	Energy Carom Result
1-3	Diffuses in corners/gets trapped in bounce pattern, no harm done
4	Comes around and strikes originator of energy
5-7	Strikes random target in maze (roll, including originator and original target)
8	Comes around to strike original target anyway
9-12	Still bouncing, roll for it again next round

Characters struck in this way may make saving throws against the normal effects of the attack. If there is no save, they take half damage, with no hit rolls etc. required.

**The Droid:** The party's nemesis in this maze is an Ancient Battle Droid, a floating, spherical robot guardian. It has DC 0, HD 10, hp 50, and SPD 6, floating on anti-grav units about the maze. It has a **laser cannon** which it may fire every round, which does 4d6 damage (no save) and has no range modifier. Very highly polished shields, knightly plate armor (GM option), mirrors, and/or *Reflection* spells may divert this laser, creating a carom effect as above; some roll should be required for the PC to effect this, though it may not be difficult in some cases (e.g. the large polished mirror shield). Otherwise, the laser rolls to hit at the droid's HD 10 and only needs to hit a DC based on magical protection, dexterity, and shields, with a +1 to defense for plate mail and its ilk only. If targets come into line of sight, it can also launch 2 **missiles** each melee

round (20 total), which do 3d6 on a direct hit (roll normally) but which also blow up as 8d6 non-magical *Balls of Fire* when they get near their targets whether they strike them or not. Saving throws are allowed for half damage; PCs in the blast radius of both missiles make one save against 12d6 rather than two separate ones. The droid is of course totally immune to poison, charm, mind control, death magic, and similar. Its sensors work in the normal spectrum, infrared, ultraviolet, and across various 5<sup>th</sup>-dimensional information pathways, meaning that all forms of invisibility, etc. are completely useless against it, though it cannot actually see into other planes of existence.

As if all that was not bad enough, the droid is also protected by a **force field** which is almost always up (though the computer takes it down in front of the laser cannon and missile tubes only just before they fire). This force field means that the droid makes its saves against all magic on a 2+, regardless of source; is only hit by physical weapons on a natural 20, regardless of their or their bearer's prowess; and only takes 1 point of damage from magic attack spells, or 2 if they are electricity-based. Even spells such as *Disintegration* will almost always be stopped by the force field. It is impossible to adjudicate all possible attacks and strategies against this force field, but it cannot be brought down by magic short of *Wishes* and the like, and in general it should eliminate, severely blunt, or make nearly impossible to pull off all attacks against the droid, except the most truly ingenious or genuinely warranted (e.g. if the party has obtained an anti-droid electric pulse gun on a previous foray into the dungeon).



The Ancient Battle Droid's only real weakness is that each time it actually takes damage there is a % chance equal to the number of hit points it takes that its circuits will go haywire. In this case it will start acting confused, as per your favorite confusion table or spell, and perhaps its semi-random behavior from that point onwards will give the PCs time to defeat it or find an exit. The droid is self-repairing, albeit slowly. It regains 1 hp per hour it is left alone, up to its maximum, and confused circuits will reset themselves as soon as 1 hp has been healed in this manner.

## **The Hall**

**1-6. Droid Starting Locations:** Each time the PCs enter or re-enter the hall, roll 1d6 to determine which of these areas it starts in. If the PCs do this very quickly it will be moving from its prior location to the number rolled instead. Remember, with the mirrored hallways and targeting computers it can start firing its laser at PCs every round from anywhere in the hall.

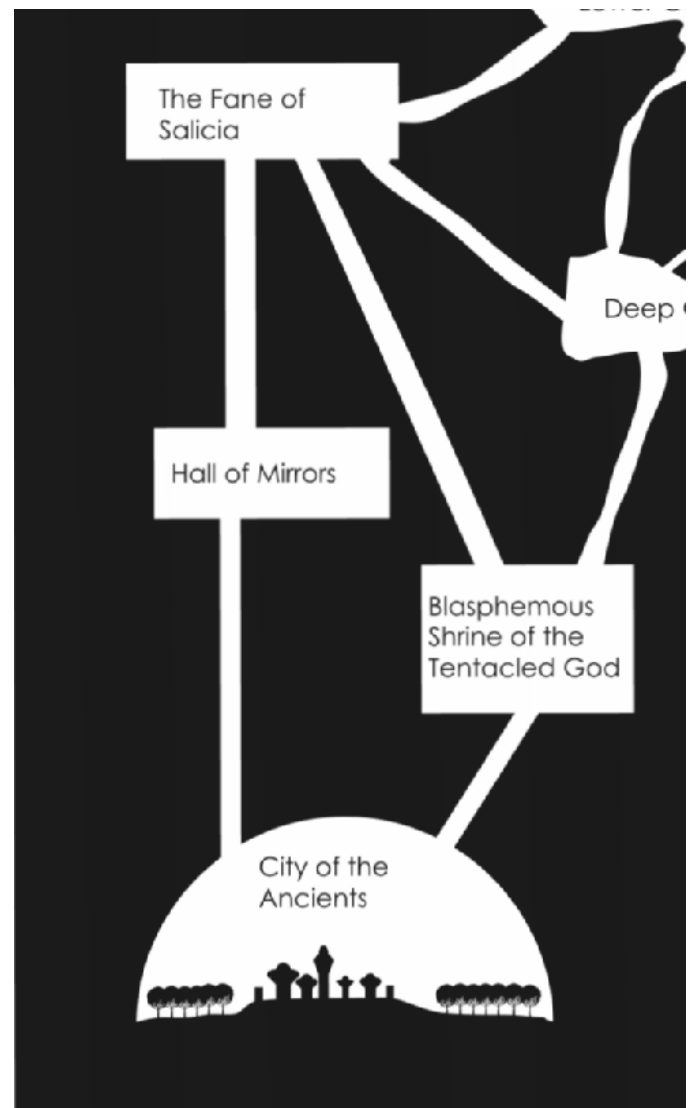
**7. Hidden Entry:** In *The Darkness Beneath*, the stair outside this door comes down from Salicia's fane. The lamia who rules that dread temple knows of the robot guardian here, though the likelihood she will communicate this knowledge to PCs is practically nil. From outside the Hall the door is not secret; it is, rather, ancient metal with curious glyphs and a circular vault-type wheel in its center. From inside, however, it is perfectly flush with the wall itself, and it does slowly swing shut if left alone. Opening the secret door from inside requires a flat hand to exert pressure on the wall at the right point. If someone has done this or seen it done they can do it again without trouble; a thief, elf, or hobbit who knows where the door is has a 50% chance to do it right each round, a mage or dwarf 20%, and any other PC only 10%. If PCs let the door close and run around the maze they will almost assuredly not recall its exact location, in which case they must search for it from this side normally.

**8. Hidden Exits:** In this section of the maze there are two secret doors, one a ground-hatch and the other a wall door. Both are detected and opened in the same manner as that at 7; both are likewise completely flush with the wall and indiscernible to normal sight. The mirrors also have an odd distortion effect here: spells which detect exits, stairs, hatches, secret doors, etc. reveal this general location but not the precise location of either of these exits. They will have to be searched for...The floor hatch leads down to a wondrous City of the Ancients in *The Darkness Beneath*; in your game it should probably lead to some similar location of wonder and intrigue, as you see fit.

**9. Supply, Maintenance, and Control Chamber:** This hidden room does not have mirrored walls. It contains video monitors showing the entire maze both in schematic form and through surveillance cameras embedded in the

mirrors. A large and obvious yellow button will shut the robot down for one hour, but beyond that no control can be taken over the droid from here. There are also 21 full crates of 20 missiles each, though they cannot be fired without telekinesis or appropriate device (a mechanician of sufficient level might be able to rig a ballista...), and four empty crates which used to contain the same. The battle droid can command this and the other doors in the Hall to open, but will never do so when any intruders are present. PCs highly intent on vandalism can eventually wipe out the computer here, but this has no effect on the droid, alas. If any PCs make it into this area while the droid is aware, it will immediately make their incapacitation its top priority.

**Afterword:** When the Ancients long ago departed from the lands above to occupy their underground city, they left this guardian behind to ensure that they would not be followed. In the millennia that came since, none have succeeded in doing so. The City was breached from a different direction, however, by the dread tentacled servitors of Thuul; but that way is perhaps even more terrible than this, and will be detailed on another occasion. Ω





## Interview with Erol Otus

conducted by Jeff Rients

**JR:** What was your first-ever session of D&D like?

**EO:** We had tried a bit of battling with the Chainmail rules, then a friend bought the boxed set of three pamphlets. It was immediately obvious that this was something excellent. It was in the basement, on a large table. In our first session we somehow became fixated on "hirelings", you know the guys you can get based on your charisma. We were just two players with 1 character each and we used the hirelings to walk in front of us two ranks deep probing the ground ahead with 10 foot poles. Many eventually died. We spent a lot of time loading up with gear, spikes, oil, food, torches etc.. We finally got to the dungeon and fought some small humanoids, kobolds I believe. Mapping as we proceeded was very important. We used chits for the characters and monsters marking them with pencil for identification. Later we became huge lead miniature users and painters.

**JR:** I understand that you played some in Dave Hargrave's games. What was it like playing in his Arduin games? How did your early gaming experiences there differ from the kinds of games you played at TSR (if at all), when you went to work for them?

**EO:** I would describe Dave as a passionate game master. You could tell there was deep story behind many things. I played in his games with some folks who had been playing with him a long time, so at first I felt very greenhorn since there was so much knowledge the long-time players had. Overall his world felt extremely magical, I mean in a literal sense, not the way "magical" is used in movie trailers. The

games we played at TSR were never in worlds as rich as Dave's, though please note I never had the pleasure of playing in a game with Gary as DM. Though I did DM for him, Jim Ward, and Brian Blume during a GenCon DM contest. We would usually be test playing modules rather than play in ongoing campaigns. We did play a cool brand of miniature battle we dubbed "The Interplanar Melee". Players would make up any and all the powers they wished for their army (under some basic guidelines) and submit them to the game master. The GM then had the very formidable task of balancing the two armies. Each army would consist of multiple players fielding many creatures. The opposing players had zero clue regarding the powers of their foes – it was truly insane. Essentially the game before the game was the most important, trying to outwit the GM and come to the table with devastating firepower. I believe it was during the first Interplanar that Tom Moldvay, upon suffering heavy losses, stormed out of the room in a door-slamming rage. Good times!

**JR:** Can you tell us stories about games in which things from *Necromancer* and *Booty & the Beasts* were used in play?

**EO:** Some of the most fun was just starting fresh magic users and rolling up their Personal Energy Attack, a spell which varies quite a bit in power per magic user. You roll on tables to determine damage per level, size, color. You only get one chance per character. For some magic users it will end up being a fine attack, for others not so good. Recently I started running a 4<sup>th</sup> edition game to check it out. The players eventually captured an airship and went exploring encountering, among other things, a Sky Fungus. Luckily they exhibited extreme caution and no lives were lost. Lots of those treasures were big favorites, can not go wrong with a *Ring Of Gumbos!*

**JR:** Do you have any favorite fellow artists from your days at TSR? Any works of theirs you particularly enjoy?

**EO:** My favorite D&D artist is Trampier, though he had just quit before I got there. In fact I believe that was the reason they were looking for an artist at the time. But that's not why he is my favorite. :) His black and white work is fantastic. I can't pick one piece – there are too many of equal excellence. But I would say that his illustrations in the *Monster Manual* are the ones I enjoy the most.

**JR:** Tell us about your influences: artists, authors, traditions (substances?). What helped shape your particular artistic vision?

**EO:** Frazetta, Vance, Wrightson, Tolkein, Seuss, Howard, Kandinski, Burroughs, Miro, Moorcock, Corben, Lieber, and Lovecraft. One Halloween night ('73?) I attended a reading of a Lovecraft short story by Fritz Leiber, "The Statement of Randolph Carter". It was chilling and very inspiring.

"Substances?" You know its funny, I get this now and then. Most likely many artists do. When people ask me if I was on drugs when I created, then I must inform that I never was. Its not that I don't like substances, but I've never been interested in seeing what they did to my artwork. Or maybe I'm afraid to see...

**JR:** Can you tell us anything about the fiasco surrounding module B3, *Palace of the Silver Princess*?

**EO:** From the perspective of the artists: We were given the module to read to get ideas for illustrations, and we could see there was some strange stuff in there. There was some hubbub from the designers and editors who let it be known that they thought it was odd and sub-par but was being fast-tracked through without the usual level of editorial control. Cool, we had at the unusual material! The module made it all the way through a print run, then there was some furious activity and most of them were destroyed. At the time I didn't think much of it.

**JR:** How did your own experiences in high school influence the work you did for the game Alma Mater?

**EO:** Directly, either observed or experienced.

**JR:** What happened to keep you from the (non-computer) gaming world for so long? Did something in the industry change, or was it simply a personal choice to pursue other interests or careers?

**EO:** Simply a personal choice to pursue other interests or careers. I returned to university and studied painting, then illustration at a commercial art college. Then I worked for a software developer which was making paint and publishing systems as an artist and g.u.i. designer. During that period I did the occasional freelance art project for computer and traditional gaming, though most of my free time was spent playing music (keyboards) or tennis. After this I started working full time in computer games, which I've been doing now for the last 17 years.

**JR:** What's the story on the two Lord Weird Slough Feg covers you did? Have you done other album covers?

**EO:** The lead man in Slough Feg was a *D&D* player and fan of my work. I enjoyed working with him: all he did was give me the album title, we talked a little and I went from there. The *Down Among the Dead Men* cover is one of my all time favorites. Yes, I also did a black and white cover for End Of A Year. They made a very nice T-shirt out of the back cover: [tinyurl.com/ydrd2sz](http://tinyurl.com/ydrd2sz). The record has a cool concept behind it, I'll let you figure out what it is. :)

**JR:** What do you like likes in current fantasy? (any genre: RPG, computer games, novels, music, whatever..)

**EO:** I've particularly enjoyed several books in recent times, though they were not recently published. The first three books of the Black Company were great, I really like the way magic is described and treated. The characters are very appealing to me, gritty and desperate. Somehow I lost interest during *The Books Of The South* when it switched to the different protagonists, but I intend to pick it up again with *The Books of the Glittering Stone*. *Voyage of the Shadow Moon* is another, a fine mix of cataclysmic seriousness and small-scale whimsy. It has just a few too many characters for me, but that's probably a matter of personal taste. *Blood Meridian*, although not exactly fantasy, is very good. Good and bloody, epically bloody. It crosses over into an area which fantasy fans would enjoy. *Last Stand of the Tin Can Soldiers* is the story of part of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, a really amazing part, told very well. Any wargamer is going to love this. Well music... now I can't think of any "fantasy" music. But here are some favorite selected songs from the past several years that are sticking with me. I hesitate to pick favorite bands because often I only like a narrow portion of their offerings: Couple of songs on this excellent record by The Billy Nayer Show: Track 3 "Day of the Lie" and Track 10 "Caesar and Barry", Deerhoof from the great "Friend Opportunity": 1. "Perfect Me" and 9. "Matchbook Seeks Maniac." From The Fall's "The Unutterable": 5. "Dr. Bucks' Letter". Genius. The little snippet previews on Amazon etc. really wreck songs imo. Got to listen to them whole, from the start. Loud.

**JR:** Do you play any role-playing games now?

**EO:** I've been playing in a 1<sup>st</sup> edition *AD&D* campaign ongoing now for about 6 years, we only play about 6-8 times a year though. I've got two characters, a Magic-User and Cleric, both 9<sup>th</sup> level. It appears now that Emoglorgon is really Demogorgon and may well be enslaved by an unknown figure (seen only in visions while dead) who is behind the upheaval, war, and foul corruption of nature spreading across the lands. Last year I started DMing a 4e game when it came out. We've only played it a few times so far. It is kind of strange, everyone healing themselves, so many powers for 1<sup>st</sup> levelers. Might end up converting this back to 1e, but we will give it a few more tries.

**JR:** Do you pursue any other hobbies? I'm told you once competed in a darts league.

**EO:** Shuffleboard (the wooden table kind), not darts. It's quite an excellent game when the rules are properly followed. We had a local bar where I played for 14 years or so. We got very good and ended up winning many tournaments there. Took the plunge and went to the North American Shuffleboard Championships in Reno. Found out we were living in a small pond - got spanked! But we practiced, went back a few times, and won Division 3 doubles in 2001.



**JR:** Any plans for things like a book collecting your artwork or a gallery showing? Or the possibility of reprints of *Booby & The Beasts* or *Necromancer*?

**EO:** Someday for a book of collected artwork. I need to create several more pieces that I am completely happy with (rare). No plans for a gallery show currently. Reprinting those books is a good idea, and one we have bandied about now and then. Maybe update them a little in some appropriate ways.

**JR:** What pieces of your are you completely happy with?

**EO:** In terms of classic FRP stuff there is “Shub-Niggurath” (*Deities & Demigods* 1<sup>st</sup> printing, 43); “Cthulhu” (ibid., 47); “3 Wizards Dividing Treasure” (1981 *D&D* Basic Rules, B47); the cover for A4, *In The Dungeons of the Slave Lords*; the cover for S4, *Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*; “Myconid Alchemist” in A4; “Gibbering Mouther” in S3, *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*; the frontispiece for GW1, *Legion of Gold*; the cover of *Dragon* magazine #55; “Grinning Drow” (this was supposed to be a *Dragon* magazine cover but the embryo earrings bumped it to an interior); the center spread for *Revolt on Antares*; and the cover of *Booby & the Beasts*. From my computer game art I’d point to “Humna-Humnas Bartering”, “Reproductive Ceremony of Ng-Kher-Arla”, “Tandelou”, and “Gorzek” in *Starflight* 2, and then “Myconid”, “Zoq-Fot-Pik”, “Urquan ‘Pet’”, and “Pkunk” in *Star Control 2*. The record covers for *Twilight of the Idols* and *Down Among the Deadmen* by Lord Weird Slough Feg and *End of a Year* by End of a Year. There’s also some cool stuff that people mostly haven’t seen, from a series of abstract paintings I did and from a series of conceptual illustrations for the *Minions* computer game.

In terms of my more recent FRP work I like the *Dungeon-crawl Classics* covers for #10, *The Sunless Garden*; #25, *Dread Crypt of Sribog*; and #34, *Cage of Delirium*; “A is for Altar” in Michael Curtis’ *The Dungeon Alphabet*; and the frontispiece and the “Pit Fiend & Friends” internal illustration (*reproduced above!* – Ig) for Goodman Games’ *Castle White Rock*. This *Fight On!* cover may be one, but it’s a little early to tell.

**JR:** I noticed you didn’t list the ‘81 *D&D* Basic cover, undoubtedly your best known work, or the self-homage to it on the cover of *HackMaster* Basic. Why not?

**EO:** I like both of those quite a bit and think they are successful. But everything can’t be a favorite. I might just be a bit burnt seeing them so much and working on 3 pieces of that composition. Actually of the three I think my favorite is the cover for *Knights of the Dinner Table* #134.

**JR:** Do you work in 3D? Some of us would be very interested in EO miniatures or full size replicas of some of your awesome helmet designs.

**EO:** I don’t really. I’ve done a few figure customizations (e.g. the stink jelly and maw jelly at [minipainting-guild.net/eo/eomini.html](http://minipainting-guild.net/eo/eomini.html)) and when I was wee some ceramics. But lately nada.

**JR:** What conventions appearances do you have planned?

**EO:** I usually show up at Dundracon, but it’s more to play than an appearance. I’ll be there this year playtesting Joseph Goodman’s new *Dungeon Crawl Classics Role Playing Game*. I do have a plan to “officially” appear at the 2011 North Texas RPG Convention. Ω

## Random Events Make You Say Yes

food for thought from Tavis Allison

How is the *D&D* I played as a kid different from the same game I play today? Respect for the dice. Back in the day, we had none. Instead, there was an aesthetic of cheating. It was tacky to show up at the table with a character whose ability scores were all 18's, and it felt wrong to just make up the numbers, so we'd justify rolling to get the scores we wanted. I know for sure that we faked dice rolls at war-games, as it was considered less dishonorable than losing. I don't remember doing it in RPGs, which just means I must have taken fudging for granted. There's no other way that the death of my low-level PCs could have been such a memorable and infrequent event.

Nowadays I'm a much more skilled and cautious player, and yet my characters die almost as fast as I can roll them up. What's changed is that we let the dice fall as they may and embrace the consequences. The old school renaissance and twenty additional years of maturity taught me what I didn't know back then: Play can be more fun when the dice tell the story without interference. Respect for the dice creates good gaming because playing this way enforces and supports your use of the techniques that actors and comedians have developed to do long-form improv. In this article I'll sketch out that idea, in the hopes that understanding how improv relates to a certain kind of old-school play will lead to better gaming. That's certainly been true for me – my characters die just as often, but I have more fun along the way.

### 3 Improv Techniques for Fantasy Roleplaying:

- Always say yes. Accepting that the dice have spoken is very useful training in this. Instead of rolling a random encounter/treasure/etc. and rejecting it as nonsensical, find a way to make it fit. Instead of fudging to make the players succeed, say yes to the possibility of failure and see what the next step in the story is.
- Don't plan in advance. Having random event tables goes a long way to making me feel comfortable with this. Using raw dice rolls to determine things like morale checks and NPC reactions that can have a huge impact on how a situation plays out forces me to be open to the unexpected. The first time I started using these old-school techniques it was extremely liberating to have a dice roll say to the players and myself "look, I'm not invested in any particular way this encounter might turn out, there's no wrong answer, let's all see together where this is going to go."
- Hold ideas lightly. It's OK to do some pre-planning if you accept that your plan might never happen. For me, making my own table of random events is one of the easiest and most potent kinds of old-school world-building, and it's a great exercise in coming up with a bunch of ideas that might be used in any given session – or not.

### Improv techniques make for a fun play experience:

Three years ago at Gen Con I caught up with an old friend, Bob Karcher. One of the things he'd been doing was improv workshops with the Second City troupe. I'd always envied Bob's gift for roleplaying character voices and dialogue, so I could see how that background would make him good at improv. This year I got to play in one of Bob's Gen Con games and experience first-hand how his improv training makes him a good GM. The scenario was a mystery, which I've always found hard to make work without leading the players by the nose to the next clue. I was impressed when our investigations led the PCs to seek out Smiling Pete, so named because a flesh-eating disease from outer space had left him with a skeletal grin. We learned some information from Smiling Pete that seemed worth pursuing, but then things rapidly went south and we wound up knocking him out. That kind of unexpected turn of events – if the term can justly be applied to any situation involving violence and player characters – would make me sweat if I were the GM, but Bob took it in stride. As we chose another thread to follow, he showed no anxiety about how he was going to re-introduce the information we were supposed to learn from that scene.

Talking to him later, Bob said that he invented the character of Smiling Pete, complete with the fixed grin and lipless slur that he used to roleplay him, on the spot. His planning for the scenario consisted of three broad ideas, one of which was that the radiation from the crashed flying saucer had previously produced ill effects on the townspeople. Using this loose framework, he could fluidly incorporate the players' unpredictable ideas about how to uncover the hidden mystery with on-the-spot reactions of his own about how to reveal it to them. I admired this approach as much as I doubted I could do it myself.

**Play Unsafe, by Graham Walmsley:** On the flight home, a chance meeting turned me on to a book devoted to this same topic. The title "Play Unsafe" refers to Walmsley's goal of making roleplaying games unpredictable. His advice encourages a style of gaming in which no outcome is guaranteed, creativity by both players and GMs is at a premium, and both failure and success are accepted as steps toward the next unexpected event in the perpetually unfolding story. This is gaming as a constant process of invention, unconstrained by anyone's preconception of what happens next and likely to veer into rewarding but unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable territory. When I play in this style, I accept and enjoy that what happens next is unpredictable. I give up my ideas of who I'm going to be and instead see what I can make out of 3d6 in order. Whatever concept emerges is likely to be revised at the next turn of the die, when I may be killed or petrified by a wandering monster or have my alignment or gender reversed by a cursed item rolled up as part of its treasure horde. When I GM an old-school game, I relish the feeling of not being in control. Watching the players and the dice

run wild with the situation I present makes me feel like a fellow participant in a journey of discovery instead of a stage manager trying to get an anarchic group of improv actors to hit the cues for the next scene I've painted the scenery for. The source of the randomness is the key difference between Walmsley's approach (which he credits in turn to Keith Johnstone and his book *Improv*) and that of the old school. *Play Unsafe* focuses on the kind of randomness that Eric Wujick famously said is introduced into any situation as soon as the players arrive. Old-school randomness comes from throwing the dice and creatively making sense of the result. It flowers most fully in games that give randomness a major role in all aspects of a character's lifetime, from creation to "save or die", and is least supported by contemporary systems that are concerned with reducing "swinginess" and enabling adventure designers to predict the outcome of planned encounters.

### What the founding fathers knew about improv:

Personally, I'm not sure I could invent Smiling Pete from wholecloth. Give me a copy of the original *Dungeon Master's Guide* or *Ready Ref Sheets*, though, and he's only a few rolls away. Perhaps it's not surprising that I find this approach easier, since my experience of old-school play has been teaching me to do improv based on the input of the dice as surely as Bob's Second City experience has taught him how to riff off the input of the other actors/players. Were Arneson, Gygas, Bledsaw, and Hargrave aware of improv techniques when they stuffed their early work chock-full with just the kind of random tables that make dice-driven invention shine? Could be. In talking about about his early 70's Braunstein games and the evolution of *D&D*, Dave Wesely points out that "role-playing" already described several other kinds of games. One is an improv exercise in which two actors each assume a character and try to force the other into a pre-agreed defeat. In Monty Python's cheese shop sketch, John Cleese wins when Palin says "yes, sir" twice in a row. We don't have to posit that Wesely's awareness of improv techniques was widespread or in the forefront of anyone's consciousness when *D&D* was taking shape. What we do know people were thinking about, from Wesely's revisions of the Braunstein scoring system to rein in the chaos to Arneson's development of the dungeon, was the problem of how to allow players free action without overwhelming the referee's preparation. Dice-based improv is a powerful and uniquely gameable solution. What happens when the players go off the map? I don't know, but the random tables hold the answer. Let's consult them and discover the unknown together!

**Randomness for players:** Kesher wisely wrote: "The constraint of randomness demands creative interaction. Of course, it's usually coming mostly from the GM's side of the screen, but then it almost makes the GM more like a player, who also have to respond to the consequences of random rolls." It's true that most of the obvious ways that creativity drives randomness in a old-school RPGs happen

behind the GM's screen. But one of the things I admire most about *Play Unsafe* is that its techniques are useful both for players and GMs, as both are actors in the improv process. Here are some of its principles that can help the dice tell a player's story.

- Do things you don't want to do. The randomness in character creation pushes you to play characters you normally wouldn't. Embrace that and discover roleplaying experiences that go beyond your comfort zone. Try playing a character whose ability scores are ill-suited for their class. Roll for things you'd normally choose about your PC, like their gender or name.
- Build on ideas. Random charts that give your character an unusual starting item make an inspirational seed around which an entire PC concept can crystallize. Convince your GM to use one that could give you something super-cool, like Jeff Rients' (*in FO! #5 – Ig*), or roll yourself to find an item on the equipment list and decide why it has special meaning to you. Was that silver mirror an heirloom, or are you adventuring to get the coin you need to reclaim it from the pawnshop?
- Tell stories. Some people like a GM to plan stories specifically designed to incorporate their character. When I GM, I find it hard to get these stories started according to plan, and when I play I often find such stories less satisfying than ordinary dungeon-crawling, where I can do whatever I want and not worry about bumping up against what the GM has planned for me. As a player in a dice-driven old-school improv, your GM is going to be constantly making up stories to explain weird random results. You can make these stories about your character by giving the GM lots of interesting ideas to build on. If you were kidnapped by hobbits and raised as one of them, make sure to establish that in the story so that you and the GM can trade riffs the next time the dice decree a hobbit encounter. Give your GM lots of interesting questions to say "yes" to: Does anyone from my background know rumors about this magic sword?
- Take risks. The extreme lethality of old-school play can foster cautious and paranoid player behavior. Personally, I love to worry about ways to cover every possible contingency, but it's easy to forget that the point of playing is to have fun, not to ensure the survival of this particular PC. You can and should try to figure out the odds and make sure they're in your favor, but sooner or later you just have to roll the dice. The glory of old-school play is that neither death nor glory is certain. Go ahead and try to do the impossible; there's always some chance that fortune will smile upon you, and a spectacular failure contributes more to a memorable gaming experience than a stodgy and over-cautious success.

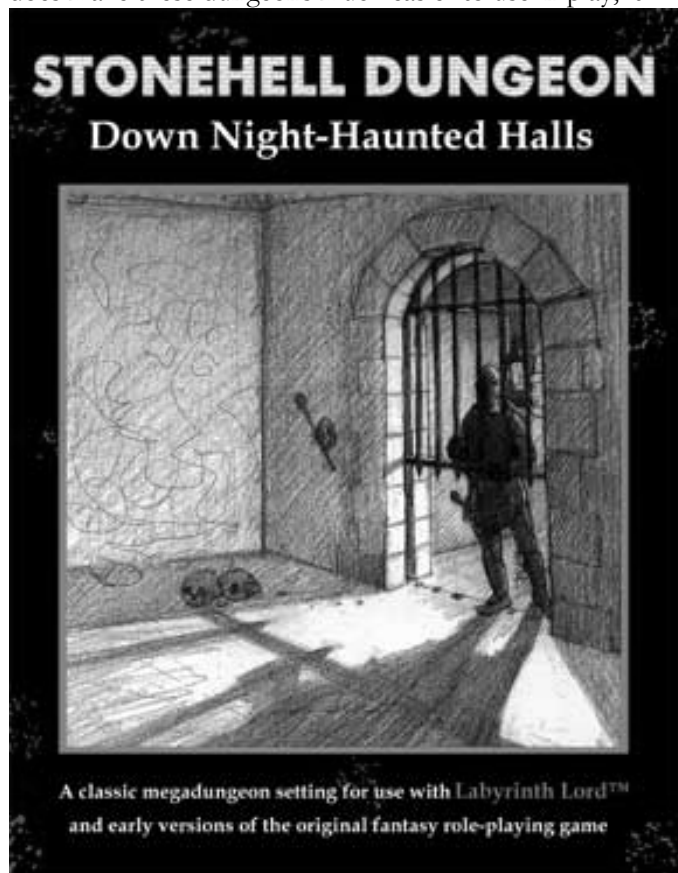
Don't just take my word for it! Check out Michael "Chgowiz" Shorten's take on the internet here: [oldguyrpg.blogspot.com/2009/08/od-solo-game-wwife-dice-story-telling.html](http://oldguyrpg.blogspot.com/2009/08/od-solo-game-wwife-dice-story-telling.html). Ω

# Merlyn's Mystical Mirror

by James Maliszewski, Zachary Houghton, and Pookie

**Stonehell Dungeon:** For some time now the old school community has been obsessed with the twin pillars of early gaming: sandboxes and megadungeons. It's not uncommon to see discussions of both cornerstones of the Old Ways in parts of the FRP world philosophically and stylistically far removed from our own. That's a testament not just to our enthusiasm but to the power of these concepts. 35 years after *OD&D* burst onto the scene, both sandboxes and megadungeons remain viable, enjoyable ways to experience fantasy roleplaying. Published megadungeons are a rare breed, but now Michael Curtis has released *Stonehell Dungeon: Down Night-Haunted Halls*. Written for *Labyrinth Lord*, *Stonehell* is 134 pages, available in softcover for \$13 and PDF for \$6.50.

Let me cut to the chase at the outset and say that *Stonehell* is very good. *Stonehell* consists of five dungeon levels, which we are told is but a portion of the huge underground complex. A later product will include yet more levels. As it is, these five levels consist of more than 700 individual rooms, more than enough to keep players busy for a long time. Each level is conveniently divided into quarters, each quarter using the One-Page Dungeon format originated by David "Sham" Bowman. That convenience is a double-edged sword, because, while it does make these dungeons much easier to use in play, it



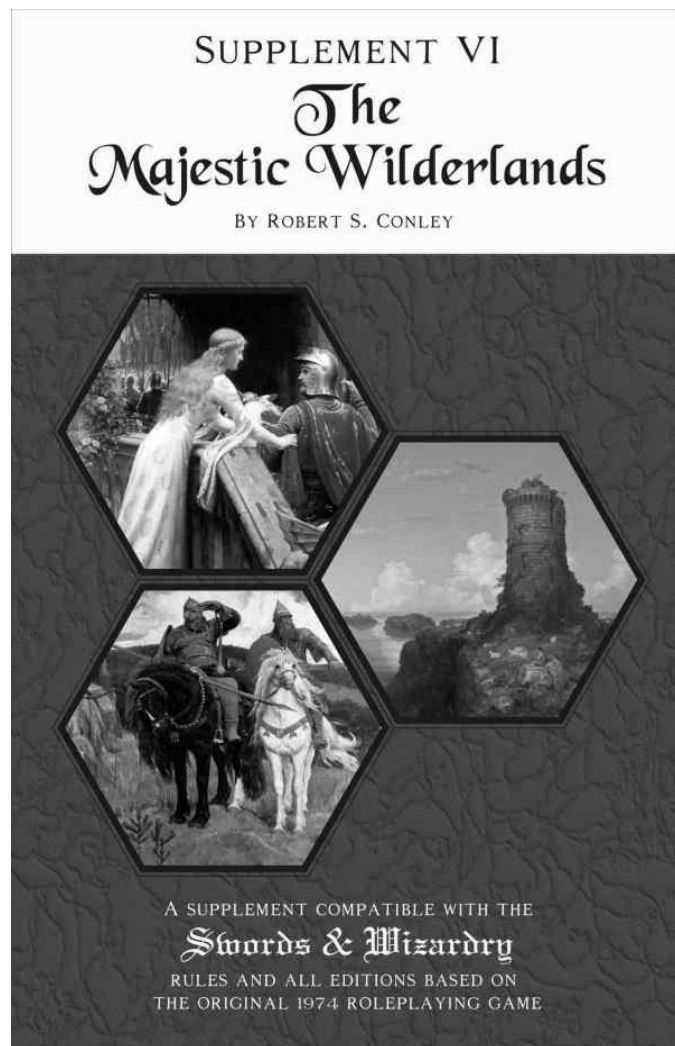
also tends to make each level feel less organic. Within each quadrant, the maps are often quite cleverly done, with many different possible paths of exploration – a key feature of old school dungeons. However, the bridges between the various quadrants are typically quite limited, often with just a single connection between them. Likewise, there are very few sub-areas that straddle more than one quadrant, which gives an unfortunately self-contained feel to each of section that undermines any sense of level cohesion. At the same time, the One-Page Dungeon format has the advantage of keeping each room description short and sweet – a sentence or three at most. I found myself reminded more of the spare presentation of Castle Blackmoor in *The First Fantasy Campaign* than the expansive one of *Castle Zagyg*, and that's a plus in my opinion. Such a spartan presentation pretty demands that a referee has to add his own ideas to the mix, if only to provide flavor and context. Again, this is a good thing and goes a long way toward ensuring *Stonehell* doesn't feel too "canned," which is to say, a pre-programmed adventure lacking room for the creative sparks that differentiate a megadungeon from a mere one-off dungeon lair. Indeed, Michael Curtis helpfully points out in his introduction many areas where the referee can inject his own ideas into *Stonehell*, another way in which this product differs from nearly every previous attempt at putting a megadungeon into print.

It's difficult to do full justice to *Stonehell*, because of just how much is included within its covers. In addition to the levels themselves, there are dozens of new monsters, spells and magic items. There are also tables for rumors and wandering monsters, dungeon background information, advice on customizing the whole thing, and adventure seeds. In combination, it's a pretty impressive piece of work, made all the more impressive by how compact it is. There's quite simply *a lot* of ideas here and I'd wager that, even if one doesn't use *Stonehell* whole, there's a profusion of material that's easily adaptable to other circumstances. I have already swiped stuff from *Stonehell* for my Dwintermount megadungeon and I suspect I will do so again now that I have more material from which to choose. In the end, *Stonehell Dungeon: Down Night-Haunted Halls* is probably the best megadungeon published to date in any form and certainly the best to come out of the old school renaissance (although Stefan Poag's *The Mines of Khunmar* certainly bears serious consideration, if only for its maps). It's chock full of good ideas and, if nothing else, should provide a good model and inspiration for those looking to create their own megadungeon. I certainly hope that's the case anyway, because, while *Stonehell* is remarkably open-ended and flexible, it is nevertheless a very particular kind of megadungeon rather than an example of what all megadungeons are or ought to be. Michael Curtis makes no such claims, of course, but part of the reason why I believe the megadungeon resists easy publication is its idiosyncratic nature. Megadungeons, much like the term "old school" itself, defy easy definition and attempts to jam

them into a single mold (or group of molds) do them a grave disservice. There's no one-size-fits-all formula for producing or presenting a megadungeon, and *Stonehell* is but one example of how a referee might do it. It's a rather good one, admittedly, but it still has its weaknesses, chiefly the rather artificial structure of its maps, which are too rational and compartmentalized for my taste. I prefer megadungeons to be a lot more wild and woolly, with lots of sub-levels, side levels, chutes, and elevators rather than a neat stack of levels descending infinitely into the depths. If I could sum up this product's weaknesses in one word, it'd be "caged" -- as if there's a wild, raging animal of creativity shackled by too strict an adherence a schematized format. What I'd like to see in follow-ups to *Stonehell* is a breaking of those shackles, if not wholly casting aside the artificiality of the One-Page Dungeon, at least a loosening up of its structure so that not all levels are made of the same number of pieces and stack neatly one top of one another. Michael Curtis demonstrates repeatedly in this product that he has a superb imagination; I'd love to see what he's capable of when he's freed from any constraints. Whether he can do that will, I think, say a lot about whether a megadungeon truly does defy easy publication. - JM

**The Majestic Wilderlands:** The material released by Judges Guild has delighted generations of gamers; for many it was an integral part of their gaming childhood. The Wilderlands setting has long stood as a monument to the joys of hex-based exploration. Now comes *Supplement VI: The Majestic Wilderlands*, wherein Rob Conley (author of *Points of Light* and other works with a decidedly classic bent) shares his 30-year home campaign and stats it for use with *Swords & Wizardry*. Conley gained the permission of Judges Guild to release his version of the Wilderlands, and the end result does not disappoint. With 3 decades of adventuring in the Wilderlands, Conley has definitely had time to put his own mark on the setting.

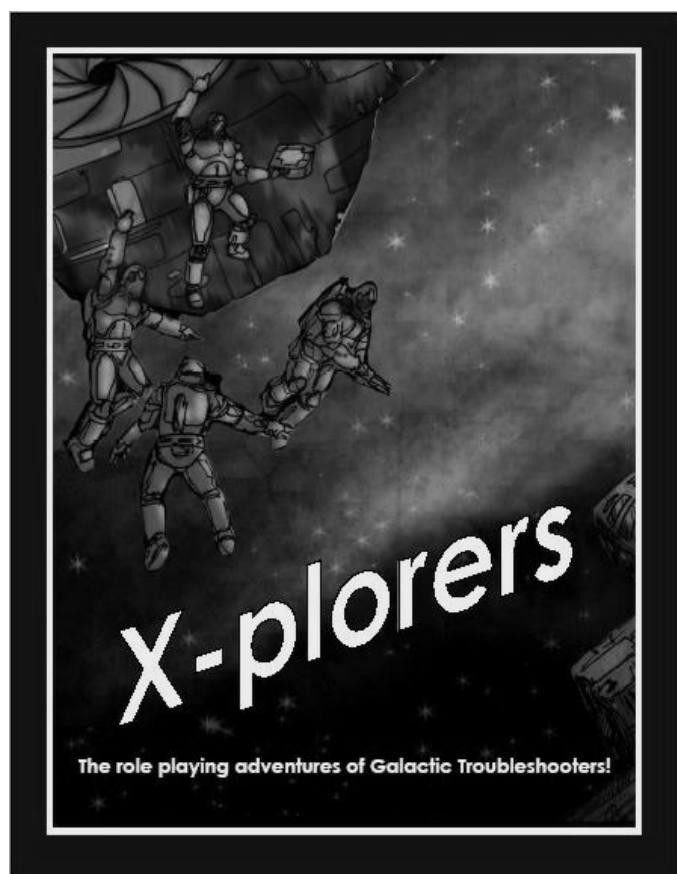
Not only full of a goodly amount of setting overview, the 140-page *Majestic Wilderlands* also crams in plenty of new optional *Swords & Wizardry* sub-classes & skills. The reader will likely "mix n' match" amongst the sub-classes, with entries such as the Myrmidons of Set, Berserkers, and Rune-Casters among the most entertaining. The religions of the Wilderlands also offer the opportunity of specialty priests, something Conley implements well. The skill add-on rules are brief and to the point. Although they may not be utilized by many players of *Swords & Wizardry*, they are short and familiar (utilizing a 1d20+ability bonus+class bonus vs. Target Number of 15). People wanting to keep the simplicity of *Swords & Wizardry* while adding a basic skill system could do far worse. The second section in the book deals with treasure and monsters, and is perhaps the weakest point, but still manages to introduce a few new baddies and items for use. This is the one section I wish had been fleshed out just a bit more. The largest portion of



the book is the third section, and Conley goes into loving detail here describing his Wilderlands. More than just a geographical primer, Conley manages to really impart the flavor of the races and cultures. Never dull or uneven, Conley expertly guides us through a whirlwind of cultures, religions, peoples, and entities that turn the Wilderlands from a static place to a dynamic, living one.

If anything, knowing Conley's excellent cartography, I would have preferred to see a few more maps included in the book. Despite this, he manages to make you feel immersed in what feels to be a well-worn, comfortable setting. It's almost as if we've been invited in to have a cup of tea in his personal campaign, and the effect is a pleasant one. All in all, *The Majestic Wilderlands* compares favorably to other Wilderlands efforts, such as those from James Mishler's Adventure Games Publishing. (Sadly, AGP is now defunct. We wish James the best in all his future endeavors -- Ig.) Users of this book should find a high degree of compatibility with both AGP works and the original Wilderlands. Perhaps the biggest difference is in tone, with Conley's Wilderlands not exactly a somber place, but one with a bit more of a serious edge. This is not a bad thing, however; Conley's setting is all the more vibrant and engaging for the scholarly and attentive tone of the writing.

The print copy of *Majestic Wilderlands* retails for \$12, and comes either with a more colorful cover or a brown “original supplement” look. The PDF is \$7 and is easy to read due to the single-column layout. For the amount of gaming material presented, either is a good value. It should be easily adaptable to any classical or neoclassical RPG and probably a few outlier systems to boot. This is definitely recommended to anyone looking for inspiration for their campaign or for an example of what quality worldbuilding can produce. One can only hope Mr. Conley decides to open the vault to his gaming archives a bit further! - ZH



System lie the Reaches, a dense star cluster home to numerous habitable worlds ripe for colonisation by the U.C.N., the various corporations that make it up, or a myriad of political or religious groups. With opportunity for exploitation comes also opportunity aplenty for corruption, and the U.C.N. Police can only do so much. Into this situation come the Troubleshooters (a.k.a. PCs), employed by the U.C.N. or other organization to undertake all manner of jobs, from cargo runs and anti-piracy patrols to exploration and investigation. This is about as detailed as the setting for the game gets, providing more theme than detail.

Characters in *X-pplorers* are all assumed to be human – the one thing that the game lacks is rules for creating player character aliens – and are created by rolling three six-sided dice for four attributes: Agility, Intelligence, Physique, and Presence. This can be done in any order and provides a modifier that ranges from -2 to +2 applied to the appropriate Skill Throws and Saving Throws as necessary. The Agility modifier is also used in ranged combat and the Physique modifier is used in melee combat, while the Intelligence modifier is used with nearly every skill bar the Agility modifier. Of the four attributes, Presence will probably be used the least, primarily because social interaction is not addressed in the rules. Unsurprisingly, *X-pplorers* is a Class and Level system, though it only comes with four classes, these being Scientist, Soldier, Scout, and Technician. While there is no difference between the classes in terms of Hit Dice, Base Hit Bonuses, and Saving Throws – their being the same at each level for all four Classes – what separate each Class from another are its skills. The Scientist knows Computers, Medicine, Science, and Sociology; the Scout knows Pilot, Security, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth; and the Technician knows Computers, Mechanics, Pilot, and Robotics. The Soldier class is slightly different in that he knows Demolition and Survival, he also knows Martial Arts, which improves his damage in hand-to-hand combat, and Weapons Specialist, which increases his Base Hit Bonus. The skills work in a fashion similar to Saving Throws or this case, Skill Throws, all done with the traditional twenty-sided die. At each level a class provides Skill Throw target for each skill, which will fall as a character rises in level. Roll against the Skill Throw target with modifiers from the appropriate attribute. For example, the Intelligence modifier is used for Computers and Security and the Agility modifier for Sleight of Hand. The system so far is clean and easy, the lack of alien player character races and the similar class frameworks keeping the game balanced. The effect of this is to make *X-pplorers* a very skills-focused game, already pushing it away from the focus on abilities to be found in early *Dungeons & Dragons*. It does allow multi-classing though, enabling characters to cross train and so gain the skills that their primary class lacks. This is an expensive option though. Anyway, a typical character looks like Greg:

**X-Pplorers:** If I have a complaint about the Old School Renaissance, it is that it tends almost exclusively to refer back to the *Dungeons & Dragons* of 1974 to 1981. This is not to deny that many of the titles published under the Old School banner are really very good; but in any case *X-pplorers: The role playing adventures of Galactic Troubleshooters!* addresses this concern quite nicely. Published by Grey Area Games and written by David “Grubman” Bezio, the conceit underpinning this RPG is one big “What If?” That is, what if the creators of the first RPG back in 1974 drew on the science fiction of Heinlein, Asimov, Niven, and Anderson rather than the fantasy of Tolkien, Vance, Leiber, and Moorcock to create their groundbreaking game of the imagination? Instead of a realm of magic, the setting for *X-pplorers* is the year 2222 A.D. Earth along with the terraformed worlds of Mars and Venus are governed by the United Corporate Nations. Far beyond the Solar

**Gregor “Greg” Ward****Level 1 Scientist**

Male, 26, 1.65 m, 75 kg

**Ag1** 12 (+0); **Int** 18 (+2); **Phy** 5 (-1); **Pre** 13 (+1)

BHB -1; Saving Throw 15+; Hit Points 4; Armor Class 10

**Class Abilities** (+2 to all skills for Int): Computers: 13+;

Medicine: 15+; Science: 13+; Sociology: 16+

Each character receives 3d6 Credits to spend on equipment. Most of it is built into toolkits, such as Base Camp Kit or Sensor/Survey Kit. The equipment chapter includes robots, each simply defined by AC, hp, Saving Throw, Movement, and the number of programs it can run. These programs simulate Class skills and enable a robot to fill a position not held by a PC or to back another character up. Any player looking to use his robot as some kind of combat machine will be disappointed: robots in *X-plores* are under a “First Directive” that prevents them from doing harm to humans. Of course, most characters are going to want arms and armour, but they are expensive given how little starting money a character begins with. This is at odds with the suggestion that the most commonly carried weapon by Troubleshooter teams is the laser pistol, which costs 600 Credits! Even an Automatic Pistol costs 200 Credits!! What this means is that the Troubleshooters are going to undertake their first assignments armed with medieval weapons. I thought the point of *X-plores* was that it was not doing *Dungeons & Dragons*?

Combat is as easy as the rest of the game, but it is deadly. The loss of Hit Points for an NPC or a creature means its death, while a Troubleshooter has to roll on a Critical Table that can result in no effect, an adrenaline surge, being knocked unconscious, or a fatal wound or instant death at worst. Starships and starship combat are built around character roles aboard ship. Scientists are good navigators; Scouts make good pilots; Technicians good pilots or engineers; and Soldiers are gunners. Starship combat is a matter of attempting to gain range upon an opponent or to escape his range, with each round broken down into four phases. In the Navigation Phase, the navigator makes a Computer Skill Throw to either determine the range of all nearby ships (granting a +1 bonus to all subsequent rolls in the round) or to plot a multi-vector to act against one or more ships – attacking or escaping. A successful Mechanics Skill Throw in the Engineering Phase will repair the ship, enhance its shields and Armour Class, or boot the engines for another +1 bonus for the pilot. Similarly, a successful Pilot Skill Throw will enhance the ship’s shields and Armour Class through evasive manoeuvres, increase the range between other ships, or bestow a better attack position on the enemy and grant a +1 bonus to the gunner. No surprises for what the gunner is rolling for in his phase...Just as with ground combat, fights between starships are deadly, but the rules do keep everyone involved and the likelihood is that any fight will be a fraught affair.

For the GM, *X-plores* provides some advice on running the game –probably more than would have appeared if the game had been published in 1974 – and a guide to creating interesting NPCs as well as all manner of strange alien critters, the latter supported with all manner of weird and wonderful beasts. The advice on creating planets and sentient alien species is arguably a little light, suggesting that the GM opt for what is playable. Lastly, there is a set of readymade Troubleshooters to get a game going, plus a little secret about the background. The rulebook is rounded out with the scenario *Cleopatra Station*. Designed for a single session, it has the Troubleshooters employed to determine why contact has been lost with Cleopatra Station, a small wheel space station orbiting Phobos, Mars’ moon, aboard which Ra Industries operates a research lab. Primarily this adventure echoes the feel of the *Alien* films – the obvious nod being that one of the NPCs is named Ripley – with the characters having to fight off strange beasts as they progress through the station. The adventure also echoes “Death Station,” one half of *Traveller Double Adventure 3*, in which the PCs must board a silent laboratory ship (which just happens to be wheel shaped). While “Cleopatra Station” is far from being a sophisticated affair, being more of a “dungeon bash” in space, it serves well as an introductory scenario.

At just sixty pages, *X-plores* is a relatively slim rulebook. The black and white interior is for the most part clean and tidy, with a variety of illustrations, some good, others a little too scratchy. Some of this artwork suffers from having too grey a background, often a problem with inexperienced publishers. The best of this artwork, though, echoes the style of *Classic Traveller*. Barring the range of sample critters, *X-plores* takes its cue from the aforementioned *Traveller* in not being Pulp Sci-Fi in tone. Although its Science Fiction is dry in tone, it is not hard SF, nor is it Imperial in flavour, as in *Traveller* or *Thousand Suns*, or post-Imperial, as in VSCA Publishing’s *Diaspora*. This is not to say that *X-plores* could not be run in any one of these flavours, and that is one of the game’s strengths: the GM is free to use its rules to make the game his own. Another is its simplicity of rules, which are undeniably easy to pick up and play or run, while one more is its fundamental yet pleasing shift from an emphasis on abilities and powers to skills, that is, from what a character can do to what he knows and what he can do. If there is a real problem with the game, it is that as written it does not equip the characters with the gear that they need. Others might gripe at its lack of non-human character races and the lack of rules for creating alien races and alien worlds, but with the latter, the author’s aim is to grant the GM the freedom to use his imagination to create his own. And that is the point of the game, because in going back to 1974 and re-imagining roleplaying in an entirely different genre, *X-plores: The role playing adventures of Galactic Troubleshooters!* gives us a charmingly simple approach to playing Science Fiction once again. – P

(continued from page 5) of chance. Lynelle wears an ill-fitted suit of field plate which must have been made for a teenaged boy, and carries a spear and shield to battle. She also wears a dagger on her belt.

#### **M is for Maddox :**

DC 3, SPD 6, hp 7; S 14, I 9, W 12, D 11, C 13, Ch 12  
Maddox is a thick-necked, gritty fighting man with blue eyes, a bald head, and a bristling Walrus moustache. His heart is as fierce as his arm is strong, and once set upon a task, he is all but unstoppable. Maddox is as intimidating a soldier as one is likely to meet in his gothic full plate armour and sheer, visored helm. The ancient two-handed sword he carries completes the picture – it is crafted from infernal iron and graven with unknowable runes of the Latter Days.

#### **N is for Nilson the Naysayer :**

DC 5, SPD 12, hp 7; S 10, I 11, W 11, D 11, C 12, Ch 7  
Nilson is a bleak fellow, with a negative remark for every occasion and a mean streak a mile wide. He has dark eyes, acne-scarred skin, and greying black hair. He is staunch enough in a tight spot, but he doesn't have many friends and is accustomed to relying only upon himself. Nilson wears a tough black gambeson fashioned from Dialmasauris hide, a scruffy old helmet, and carries a battered square shield. He arms himself with a single bladed axe, and wears a hand-axe at his belt.

#### **O is for Oakes the Oracle:**

DC 4, SPD 9, hp 3; S 12, I 6, W 6, D 11, C 9, Ch 11  
Oakes is a village idiot whose harebrained notions have earned him the nickname "Oracle". He cannot count, read, or follow long sentences or complicated strategies. That aside, he is an honest, hard-working fellow who does his best to please. He is loyal to anyone who shows him any degree of kindness or respect. Oakes wears an old chainmail habergeon and a dented helmet, and carries a shield and spear. He also has a hand-axe at his belt.

#### **P is for Paige the Picket:**

DC 5, SPD 9, hp 5; S 8, I 7, W 9, D 14, C 11, Ch 12  
Paige is a serious-looking young woman with auburn curls and grey eyes. She is friendly but gets defensive about her trouble with letters and numbers. She wears a well cared for ringmail hauberk and helm and carries a beautifully crafted longbow, which she believes to be of Elf make. Her shoulder quiver is full of white-flighted arrows and she carries a hand axe for close encounters.

#### **Q is for Quarrel Fierce:**

DC 5, SPD 9, hp 6; S 9, I 9, W 11, D 14, C 12, Ch 8  
Quarrel is quick rather than strong, and rather too proud and short-tempered for his own good. He is especially intolerant of religion, clergy, and theology, for he has

cast aside religion after losing his family to an inexplicable flooding in high summer. His fearlessness stems from his eagerness to confront the Gods over his loss. Quarrel wears a light ringmail coat and helm, and fights with a short-sword in his right hand and a dagger in his left. Across his chest is a belt of three daggers, which he is wont to cast at his foes.

#### **R is for Roger of Ringwold:**

DC 7, SPD 12, hp 4; S 9, I 9, W 7, D 12, C 7, Ch 14  
Roger is a slim young man with a poignant sense of right and wrong and a healthy sense of humour. He is fair to the eyes and generous to the point of foolishness. He is exactly the sort to take from the rich to give to the poor – an attitude which makes him popular among the common folk, especially young ladies. Roger wears a finely stitched leather gambeson and a voluminous hooded cloak. He prefers guerrilla tactics over a stand-up fight, and is armed with short bow and throwing axe. Only if cornered will he resort to his finely polished shortsword.

#### **S is for Sawyer the Steer:**

DC 6, SPD 9, hp 7; S 12, I 12, W 10, D 11, C 14, Ch 8  
Sawyer is an unrepentant rogue, and has been a cattle thief, professional thug, and debt collector in his time. He wears a mean smirk over a grin missing several teeth, but is a hardy fighter when it comes to it. He has few loyalties, and won't hesitate to take more than his fair share if he thinks he can get away with it. Sawyer is on the run from several authorities, and will take care to stay out of sight in any town or city. Sawyer wears a battered ringmail habergeon and a dirty, horned helmet. He fights with an notched axe and a dinged shield.

#### **T is for Tarrent Thatchwood:**

DC 6, SPD 12, hp 4; S 6, I 11, W 15, D 14, C 10, Ch 5  
Tarrent is a wiry, black haired scruff who has lost most of his teeth to a bout of the Wasting Plague. This still causes him to spit bloody saliva frequently. Despite his foul breath, continual muttering, and faded strength, Tarrent is a keen shot with a bow, and is rumoured to have something of a knack for woodcraft. Tarrent wears only a grubby leather gambeson and a light pot helm for protection, for although he would not admit it, he would struggle to bear heavier armour. He carries a dagger, a longbow and a quiver of arrows.

#### **U is for Uldolf the Prosperous Wolf :**

DC 8, SPD 12, hp 8; S 10, I 13, W 10, D 10, C 15, Ch 5  
Uldolf is a wild hunter of the forests and plains who rarely visits towns. His brown hair and beard are knotted in dreadlocks and decorated with feathers and twigs, while his amber eyes burn like a wolf's. He is smelly, coarse, and offensive, but said to be a wily guide and hunter as well as a savage fighter. Uldolf is conversant in

the Barshee, Sylvian and Doggeral tongues. He wears a heavy cloak of wolf pelts over a cuirass of tough hides, and carries an axe and a belt of knives. About his neck hangs a leather thong decorated with fangs and claws. Strangely, he chooses to travel bare-foot.

#### **V is for Vord:**

DC 7, SPD 12, hp 8; S 15, I 9, W 12, D 7, C 17, Ch 14  
Vord is fit, strong, and capable, and assumes a position of leadership. He can be harsh and conniving, and will always use his natural charisma to vie for dominance in any group. It is rumoured that those who oppose his leadership for too long are prone to falling ill. Vord wears a harness of gleaming black and gold scale armour and a matching helm which is surmounted by a miniature dragon. He carries a nasty looking pole-axe with a serrated blade, and wears a dagger at his belt. Vord also carries a vial of lethal poison hidden inside a silver amulet that he wears on a neck chain, with but a few drops remaining.



#### **W is for Wimar:**

DC 5, SPD 12, hp 4; S 10, I 10, W 16, D 9, C 7, Ch 8  
Wimar is a competent fighter considering her advancing years – evidenced by several telling scars and the grey streaks in her plaited brown hair. While she is not particularly forthcoming, the wisdom of her years is at least as valuable as her mace-arm, and she is rumoured to be knowledgeable in the healer's arts. In truth Wimar

is better versed in the smoking of pipe-weed than in any true herb lore, and is tired of the fighting life. She is after one last treasure trove to see her comfortably into retirement. Wimar wears a mismatched carapace of scale armour and carries a reinforced wooden shield. She fights left-handed with a spiked mace fashioned from black iron, but is more often seen with pipe in hand. She also carries a dagger and a pouch of pipe-weed.

#### **X is for Xeonne of Xanadu:**

DC 5, SPD 12, hp 4; S 11, I 8, W 7, D 10, C 7, Ch 12  
Xeonne is a clearly a foreigner. Men naturally claim that she is of "Xanadu" – the name attributed to any faraway land. She is slim and ebony-coloured, but her short-cropped, spiky hair is nearly white and her eyes are beguiling pitch-dark wells. She wears a dozen thin gold torcs about her neck and similarly jangling bangles and earrings. She speaks oddly accented Common and her own bizarre tongue. Her strange appearance is only accentuated by her obsession with fortune-telling from the deck of pictured cards she carries. She follows the edicts of her cards without question. Xeonne wears an ornate harness of ivory and green scales fashioned from the hide of some unknowable reptile and a tall, matching helm. She wields an equally alien double sword, which has a blade at each end and a grasp in its centre.

#### **Y is for Yates the Gate Keeper:**

DC 5, SPD 9, hp 7; S 15, I 9, W 12, D 11, C 12, Ch 8  
Yates is a bald-headed, barrel-chested man with a thick black beard and a patch over his left eye. He has little sense of humour and takes security very seriously. His one passion seems to be locks and keys: he wears an antique copper key on a silver neck chain and a score of other keys on a large metal ring that jangles at his belt. No one knows what these keys unlock, but rumour has it that he was once the Chief Jailer at the infamous Maelemord Redoubt. Yates wears a grubby coat of chain mail, complete with a coif to cover his pate. He carries a black-bladed pole-axe and a mace hangs at his belt.

#### **Z is for Zarion:**

DC 6, SPD 12, hp 5; S 6, I 14, W 15, D 12, C 8, Ch 6  
Zarion would have been an axiom of Thuul's Templars, had she not offended the Arch Lecter thrice. Her inappropriate manner saw her dismissed to the common infantry, where she has languished ever since. Her faith in Thuul remains unshaken, but her opinion of the Temple hierarchy is exceedingly bleak. She speaks the Vothic and Tresse tongues, and can read both the Archaic and Celestial scripts. Zarion is a fierce believer in order and planning and a clever tactician. Unfortunately she lacks both the muscle to carry out her plans and the influence to rouse others to do so. Zarion is armoured in a white leather carapace and helmet, and carries a shield embossed with Thuul's Flame. She wields a morning-star. Ω

# Artifacts, Adjuncts, & Oddments

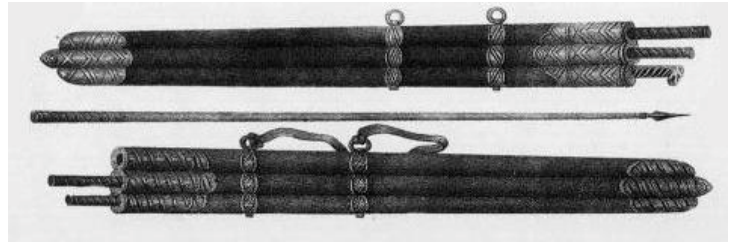
by Alfred John Dalziel and Ramsey Dow

**Bag of Rats (RD):** This non-descript bag appears to be empty. Soft, furry lumps will be felt when one reaches within. These furry lumps are moving, and may be brought forth from the bag, whereupon it will transform into a giant rat. Only one such furry lump may be brought forth at any given time. Although there is no limit to the number of rats that the Bag of Rats may produce, only a handful (1-12) may be drawn in any given day. There is nothing to prohibit one from drawing forth in succession as many rats as allowed in any given day, however. Rats produced from the Bag of Rats, although unintelligent, have a certain awareness. If possible, rats will attack the drawer's enemies. If there are no enemies present to attack then rats will either leave or do rat things (sniff at and eat any food that is present, explore interesting places, flee from cats, et al.), and then leave. Additional control can be levied upon the rats if this item is used in conjunction with certain other items (e.g. *Sewer Pipes*).

**Chimes of Monster Summoning (RD):** There are seven varieties of this magical chime, made of bronze, brass, copper, silver, electrum, gold, and platinum respectively. When struck, they emit a melodious ringing sound that has the same effect as one of seven corresponding monster summoning spells, rising in power from weakest (bronze) to strongest (platinum). Ringing the chime triggers the spell; the chime may be used once per week. There are legends of cursed chimes where the monster attacks the summoner instead...

**Crown of the Lunar Moth (AJD):** This circlet of platinum has a pair of jacinths inset at the front and two sizable moth wings inlaid with mother of pearl. If the crown is worn while the moon is in the sky, the wearer is aware of the precise time, his exact bearing, and the distance to any sighted landmark. Once per week the wearer may summon a giant moth (DC 6, SPD 6/21). If called in daylight or underground this giant moth will serve for one hour, while if invoked above ground and after dark the moth will serve the wearer until dawn. The moth may carry up to 3,000 coins of weight in flight; it may scout and report to the wearer of the crown telepathically. The moth may also flap its wings to create a cloud of dust 5 yards in diameter. Visibility in the cloud of dust is poor (3 feet) and anyone inside it or passing through it must Save vs Dragon Breath or be affected by a Slow spell for 1-6 turns.

**Dolgarukii's Dzhid (AJD):** This bronze case with a strap of owlbear hide may hold three javelins and is easily worn



while mounted. Any non-magical javelin placed in the case is disintegrated. If a gem of sufficiently small diameter and great enough value (worth 100 or more gold) is dropped into a slot, a magic javelin appears in the case. The type of javelin depends on the gem inserted. A diamond gets a 6 die javelin of lighting (bolt), while a ruby or fire opal gets a similar javelin of fire (ball); an emerald gets a javelin of man-slaying (save or die, otherwise normal damage), and an opal, jacinth, or sapphire earns a +2 bonus to hit and damage. Any javelin created by Dolgarukii's Dzhid loses its enchantment the round after it is thrown. The javelins so created may be passed into the hands of others for casting and may be returned to the dzhid without disintegration, providing they have not yet been thrown. Dolgarukii's Dzhid may already contain javelins when it is found....

**The Horn Vargskjalf (AJD):** Carved from the thigh bone of a frost giant, this carnyx is wolf-headed and three feet high. Vargskjalf may be wielded as a club +1. When Vargskjalf is blown, 2-8 dire wolves arrive in 1-4 rounds to aid the user for 6 turns. If Vargskjalf is blown more than once per day the dire wolves appear, but they are hostile to the blower and will give chase for up to 6 turns. Any human wielder of Vargskjalf who is slain with the horn in hand rises on the next full moon as a werewolf.



