

Fight on!

#12



Dedicated to James M. Ward:
may the Starship Warden fly ever on!



In the games I run, I don't kill characters, the players kill their characters.

- James M. Ward

Stormbringer and Mournblade had no enthusiasm for slaying android sorcerers, but they were effective enough at the job, and with Hrunax's giant electric bardiche keeping the battle-titans at bay down below and Mason's incendiary grenades clearing out a path ahead, Glodeen thought they might escape this infernal dungeon yet.

"Is that lock picked yet, hobbit?" Stormbringer clove through a two-headed robot with weird crab-like pincers as Glodeen's magical wards buckled under another dozen meteor swarms. Mason futzed with the strange machine extruding rods into the door, and its red light turned green.

"Through! Now!" Paladin, barbarian, and thief crashed through the widening portal. After battling science and super-sorcery, mutants and monsters, they had finally come to what the sage of Belodeck had foretold to be the final room of the dungeon. They crossed the threshold...

and found wide screens showing nothing but stars. There was no exit to be had.

"This is no dungeon!" swore Hrunax. "This be a starship of old – and we be lost!"

"Mason!" Glodeen fixed the hobbit in his gaze. "What –"

The halfling shrugged. "Guess I didn't defuse that teleporter trap back on level 13 after all. We'll have to fight our way back to the engine rooms, I'm afraid."

The three adventurers took deep breaths, drank their healing potions, and turned back towards the bridge doors, ready to give battle once more.

Welcome to *Fight On!* #12! This issue is dedicated to James M. Ward, whose contributions to the original *D&D* rules and authorship of METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA and *Gamma World* make him one of the great pioneers of our hobby – still creating and running games today! Our abbreviations should be recognizable to lovers of dodecahedron-driven dungeoneering; 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 continue to own their submission and all other rights to it 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 yourself). If you have other questions please contact Ignatius by email at iggyumlaut@gmail.com or write him at 1122 Pearl Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48197 USA for other options. Typed, printed, or hand-written article submissions can also be sent to this address. *Labyrinth Lord* and *Mutant Future* are trademarks of Daniel Proctor.

Fight On! is a journal of shared fantasy. We who read and write for this magazine are a community of role-playing enthusiasts unified by our love of the freewheeling, do-it-yourself approach that birthed this hobby back in the 1970's. We are wargamers who write our own rules and

fantasists who build our own worlds, weekend warriors sharing dreams of glory, and authors collaborating on tales of heroism and valor. We talk, paint, draw, write, act, costume, build and roll dice in service of our visions. We game. And you're welcome to join us.

- Ignatius Ümlaut, Publisher and Editor

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Champions of ZED

reinvisioned roleplaying by Daniel Boggs

Introduction: *Champions of ZED* is a fantasy adventure role playing game wherein players create characters engaged in the ancient war between Law and Chaos. One person takes the role of Referee, and sets up adventures for the other players to resolve through the actions of their characters. Play usually takes place around a table and provides hours of fun, social interaction, and collective puzzle solving.

Example of Play: A Referee and three players have imagined a small group of Lawful adventurers. They are the fighter Darghast, an Elf focused on using magic named Miragel, and Friar Hetchabu, a human cleric. These three are exploring the ruins of an old tavern said to have become a secret lair for forces of Chaos planning to invade the area. The players each have dice and a character record sheet with their character's basic information. The Referee has this rule book, dice, a scratchpad, and notes for the adventure prepared ahead of time. Play commences thus...

Referee (looking at her notes): "As you approach the cellar door, you notice that it is locked, and the rusted hinges have recently been oiled."

Darghast: "I'm going to bust it open."

Miragel: "Wait, you clod! Let me listen first." Miragel puts her ear to the door to listen for sounds coming from inside"

Referee: (rolls dice to see what Miragel hears – assuming there is anything there!): "You hear nothing."

Miragel: "Can I pick the lock?"

Referee: (rolls dice) "Hmm, you fumble around a bit but seem to be getting nowhere."

Friar Hetchabu: "Let me try."

Miragel: "Okay."

Referee: "There is a definite chill in the air now, and you notice a mist rising and a fine rain starting to fall."

Friar Hetchabu: "I step forward and smash the lock with my mace!"

Miragel: "Hey!"

Referee: "It breaks, and the door swings open with the force of the blow. You see a short stone-lined corridor with a dirt floor, going in about 10'. You can't see past that, partly because the only light comes from a candle in a niche in the left wall, and partly due to the two armored Goblins blocking the passage. It looks like you may have

just woken them. 'Who are you?' one of them asks as he draws a scimitar from a sheath at his waist."

Darghast: "It's okay. Captain Harchar sent us."

Referee (flips to the Reaction table in the rule book): "What is Darghast's Charisma score?"

Darghast (looks at character sheet): "Uh...ten."

Referee (rolls dice): "The Goblins glance at each other and charge, weapons raised to strike and screaming 'intruders!' Quick, what do you do?"

At this point a fight begins...

Age Level: 12 years and older.

Number of Players: At minimum, one referee and one player. Three to ten players are recommended.

Equipment: Dice - 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 20-sided; Graph Paper; Hex Map; Paper and Pencils.

Foreword: Enthusiasts of Role Playing Adventure have many games to choose from, many of which are very well done. *Champions of ZED* supports an exploratory, world building style found as a core aspect of the first published RPG, yet almost entirely neglected in later games. *Champions of ZED* is thus designed to serve as a pathway to a different and neglected style of gaming fun.

The Worlds of Adventure: Imagine a barren and jagged landscape; a long-abandoned fortress on a dusty hill; a steaming jungle with vine-covered temples concealing ancient mysteries. Imagine passages deep underground, carved by a people so ancient their very name is forgotten. Imagine a dragon's den, filled with gleaming treasures. *Champions of ZED* is a game of exploration, battle, and high magic set in such imaginary realms. Deserts, jungles, monster-infested mountains, deadly paleolithic tundra, even alien planets across the universe – the scope of *CoZ* is as unlimited as you dare imagine.

Developing a World: Play in *Champions of ZED* does not take place on Earth – at least not as we know it. Before play begins, the Referee and players must have some idea of the kind of world they are going to game in. This can be as vague or detailed as desired. A simple idea like 'Medieval Europe' or 'Late Roman Arabia' is enough to get the game going; alternatively, whole new worlds and cultures can be imagined in detail or borrowed from fantasy fiction authors like George R.R. Martin, William Le Queux, or Jane Louise Curry. If the design be new, much thought needs to be put into questions like social structure, geography, mythology, etc., just as an author would when writing a fantasy novel. The amount of effort put into world design can be as small or great as one likes, but the rewards of a colorful and unique setting can be very satisfying.



Adventures

Hex Maps: Adventures begin with a map. Once the general nature of the world setting has been determined, the referee must place the Player Characters somewhere in it. That somewhere is where the game map must begin. The world maps, as with maps of specific castles, cities, the Underworld and so forth, may simply be drawn from the imagination or borrowed from some other source, but for game purposes it is often most fun and easiest to begin with a blank sheet divided into a hexagon grid.

Scale: The greatest distance across any given hex is assumed to be 5 miles. If you wish to use a different scale, numbers should be adjusted accordingly.

Random Map Generation: The extent of the starting map is a matter of preference. For most games it is best to start in small stages (say 5 to 50 hexes at a time) and leave the rest for later expansion and exploration. Follow the system below to generate your map:

Step 1 – Physiographics. First, choose a biome or roll for it randomly:

1	Arid
2	Tropical
3	Sub Tropical
4	Temperate
5	Sub Arctic
6	Arctic

Biomes should extend from a minimum of 40 miles to a maximum of about 2500 miles, as a general rule. Next, determine the general characteristics of each five mile hex:

Subtable 1: Arid

d10	The hex has..
1-2	Hills
3-6	Hills and Canyons
7-8	Open Country
9-10	a deep Canyon

Roll again for chance of water in each Arid hex - the chance depends on how dry the desert is, but as a default use 1d10 again with a 1 indicating the presence of a well or oasis. Otherwise, there is no source of water.

Subtable 2: Arctic/Tundra

d10	The hex has..
1-2	Elevated Terrain
3-6	Elevated Terrain and Lakes or Glaciers
7	Open Country
8	Open Country with lakes
9-10	a mirey Swamp

Subtable 3: Sub Arctic, Temperate, Sub Tropical, or Tropical

d10	The hex has..
1-2	Wooded
3-4	Elevated Terrain
5-6	Elevated Terrain and Woods
7-9	Open Country with few trees or hills
10	a ghastly Swamp

Elevated Terrain Subtable

d12	Elevation Type
1-6	Hills varying between 25 and 500 vertical feet
6-8	Mountains between 500 and 3000 vertical feet
9-10	Tall Mountains of 3000 to 5000 vertical feet
11-12	Grand Peaks of 5000 + vertical feet

Once the general character of the hex has been determined, it needs to be filled out. If the hex is wooded, how extensive are the woods and what are they like? Percentile dice can be used to resolve this (20%, 50% etc.) or creative judgment can be used. Similarly, how long are any hills or canyons, and how deep are the canyons or how tall are the hills? Again, one may simply decide, or roll e.g. 1d4 and use the result as the length of the canyon in miles. Virtually any feature of the terrain can be generated this way. Additional detailed terrain tables can be created, or terrain tables from published sources, such as Judges Guild's *Ready Ref Sheets* or "The Wilderness Architect" in *FO!* #2 and #3, can be used, but it is usually best to generate the general character with dice using the system above and create the specific detail by imagination. For example, suppose several heavily wooded hexes are generated near each other. The referee may decide the area is a great Elven Wood and arbitrarily fill in a number of adjacent hexes with woods – as many as seems good - and then continue the map randomly beyond it.

Players and Mapmaking: It has been assumed up to this point that the referee will be preparing the map ahead of time for game play, but there is no reason the players themselves can't be involved in the mapmaking process.

Everyone can sit down together and use their collective imagination to flesh out the immediate surroundings of the game. The key is just to have fun! It is best though that the players not know too many details about the great world beyond so they maintain a sense of discovery.

Players and World Building: As play progresses, key developments and ideas should be incorporated into the geography and history of the world. In fact this is how almost all the original FRP campaign settings were developed. Should a Lawful Player Character turn traitor to the forces of Chaos, for example, he or she might be rewarded with a castle and territory within some Chaotic land, which must then be named, populated and managed as that PC sees fit. Elements of character backstory can also be crucial to filling in geographical detail. When a player creates a fire worshipping barbarian Cleric who hails from the Goblin Highlands, perhaps those nameless hills to the west can become this barbarian homeland. The important point here is that not only does world building not have to be the sole job of the Referee, it is usually better if it is not; player contribution and collaboration can be fun and engaging for everyone, and give the Referee a little less work. Such participation has the further benefit of investing players more deeply in play.

Off the Map: When players travel beyond the existing map, the referee has two options:

- 1) draw more map
- 2) reuse the existing map board

To reuse the existing map board when someone ventures beyond its edge, simply have them re-enter on the opposite side – i.e. if the character exited the map traveling south they then re-enter on the north edge; traveling east, re-enter on the west, etc. It is possible to traverse the same board 3 or 4 times on long expeditions this way!

Step 2 – Population: Second, you should determine for each hex whether it is populated and with what. The tables below refer to the dominant intelligent species in the area – whether it is human or even humanoid depends entirely on your campaign world!

Arid, Subarctic, Arctic: all terrain has a 1 in 20 chance of containing a population center.

Temperate, Tropical, Subtropical: chance of center

- Wooded: 3 in 10
- Elevated Terrain: 2 in 10
- Elevated Terrain and Woods: 1 in 10
- Open Country: 6 in 10
- Swamp: 1 in 20

Population Centers: When a square is populated, roll on the table below to determine the type of settlement:

d6	Settlement	Features
1	Walled City of 10,000 – 20,000 people	1d10 – 1-6 Hex has a Keep, 7 has no keep, 8-10 has two Keeps 1d6 – 1-2 Hex includes a castle with retainers, 3 includes two castles, 4-6 includes no castles 1d6 – 1-3, Hex has an equal mix of 4-40 hamlets and villages, 4-5 has 4-40 hamlets and scattered farmsteads, 6 has 20-80 scattered farmsteads
2	Walled City of 1,000 – 10,000 People	1d12 – 1-4 Hex has a Keep, 5-10 hex has a Wall 1d4 – 1-2 Hex has 4-40 hamlets 1d4 – 1 Hex has castle w/ retainers
3-4	2-10 Villages of 100 – 1000 people each	1d12 – 1-4 Hex has a Keep, 5-8 Hex has a Wall, 9-10 Hex has Wall and Keep, 11-12 Open 1d6 – 1-2 Hex includes 1 castle with retainers
5	4-40 open Hamlets of 10-100 people each	1d6 – 1-3 Hex includes 1 castle with retainers
6	10 – 60 scattered isolated Farmsteads of 1-20 people each	1d6 : 1-2 Hex has 1-3 locked and uninhabited Blockhouses stocked with provisions

Places of less than 200 people will have only a few basic shops. Larger settlements will have much more varied stores: a dragon market for selling valuable living catches, hireling guilds, magic shops, libraries and so forth.

After determining the general character of several hexes, placing any population centers and so forth, roads, streams and rivers (if any) need to be added. These are simply drawn on the map as seems logical. Roads will run out of population centers of 500 or more and may also exist at industrial and trade locations. Areas with smaller populations may have small paths and marked trails, but these will rarely extend for any appreciable distance and those that do may well be nearly impossible to follow for those who don't know the landmarks. Of course, ancient roadways may exist in even the most overgrown wilderness.

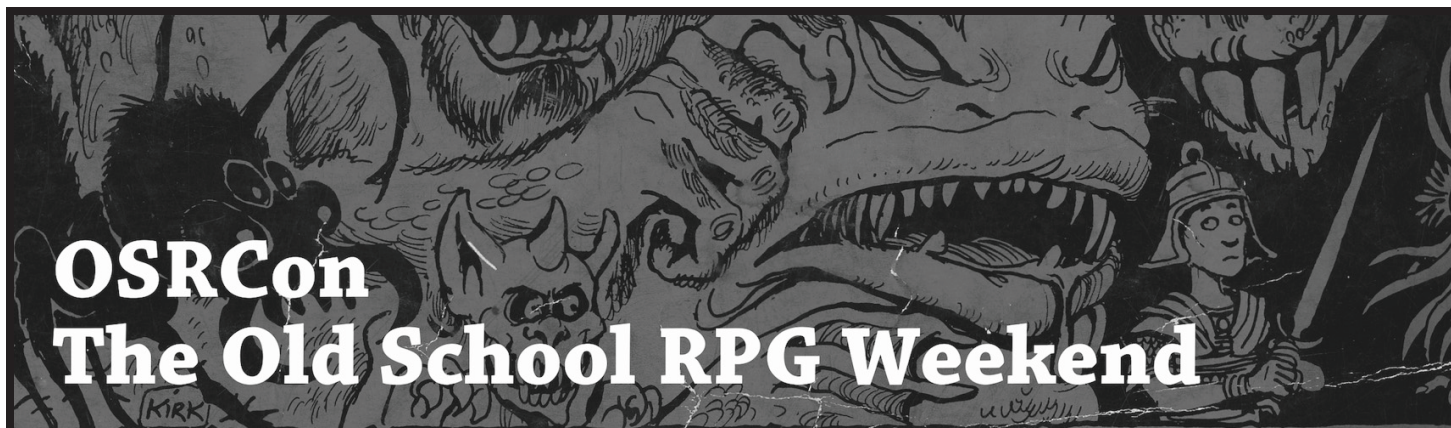
Step 3 – Adventure Encounters:

Arid, Subarctic, Ocean, Airborne: each 6th 5 mile hex has a chance for adventure

Arctic: each 5 mile hex has a 1 in 10 chance of adventure

Temperate, Tropical, Subtropical: each 5 mile hex has 1-3 adventure encounters

First determine the type of creatures present. If the chances of encountering a particular creature type do not suit the flavour of your campaign, alter the table as needed.



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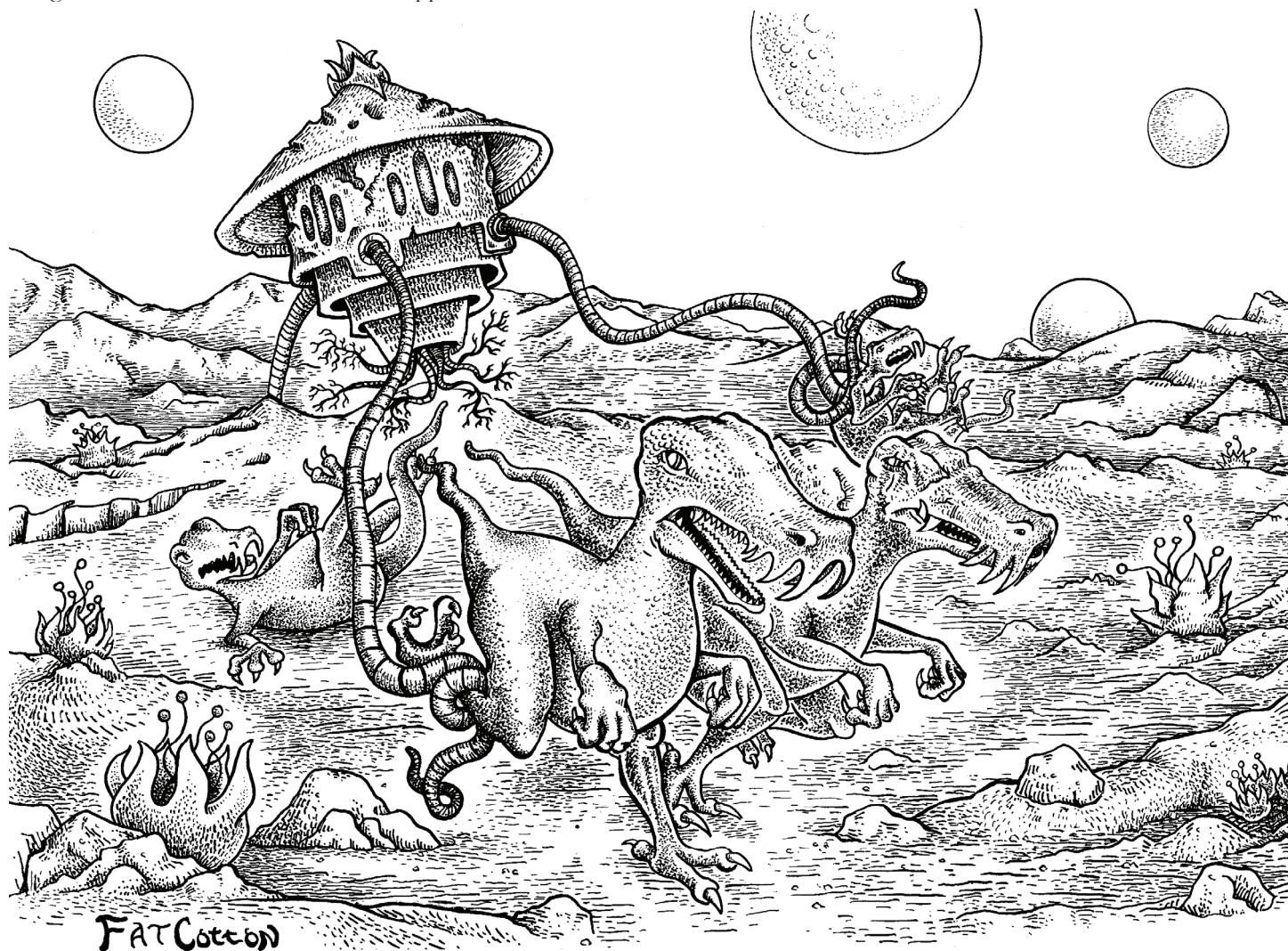
d8	Open Land	Forest	Lakes and Rivers	Swamps	Mountains	Deserts	Ocean	Cities
1	Humanoid	Human	Human	Human	Human	Human	Human	Human
2	Fantastic	Fantastic	Fantastic	Fantastic	Fantastic	Fantastic	Fantastic	Undead
3	Humanoid	Humanoid	Humanoid	Humanoid	Humanoid	Humanoid	Humanoid	Undead
4	Lycanthropes	Lycanthropes	Lycanthropes	Lycanthropes	Lycanthropes	Human	Undead	Human
5	Normal	Lycanthropes	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	-
6	Human	Human	Fantastic	Undead	Humanoid	Dragon	-	-
7	Normal	Normal	Normal	Undead	Dragon	-	-	-
8	Dragon	Dragon	Dragon	Dragon	Dragon	-	-	-

In hexes where creature(s) encountered could be aquatic, assign an appropriate chance (e.g. 50%) and roll to see which table – standard or oceans/lakes & rivers – to use.

Creature tables: Once the general type of creature in the Adventure Encounter has been determined (i.e. Undead, Normal, etc.), roll on a table listing each type of creature which might appear. Separate tables should be made for aquatic and terrestrial creatures. Avian creatures can be mixed into each. These tables are best when made by an individual Referee to fit the flora and fauna of his or her own game world. Some examples are provided below using creatures detailed in the monster appendix:

Humanoid Table (d10):

1	Dwarves
2	Elves
3	Giants
4	Goblins
5	Halflings
6	Hobgoblins
7	Kobolds
8	Ogres
9	Orcs, Giant
10	Orcs, Tribal



Human Table (d8):

1-2	Bandits
3	Rebels
4-6	Retainers
7	Angry Mob
8	Nomads

Fantastic Table (d12):

1	Basilisks
2	Centaur
3	Cockatrices
4	Dragon
5	Elemental, Air
6	Elemental, Earth
7	Elemental, Fire
8	Elemental, Water
9	Ent
10	Troll
11	True Troll
12	Unicorn

Undead Table (d6):

1	Ghouls
2	Sarcophagus Skeleton
3	Wights
4	Wraiths
5	Vampire
6	Zombies

Lycanthrope Table (d6):

1-2	Werewolves
3-4	Werbears
5-6	Werelions/tigers

Normal Creatures Table (d8):

1	Ape
2	Giant Eagle
3	Giant Rats
4	Giant Wolves
5	Roc
6	Tarn, Cargo
7	Tarn, Racing
8	Tarn, War

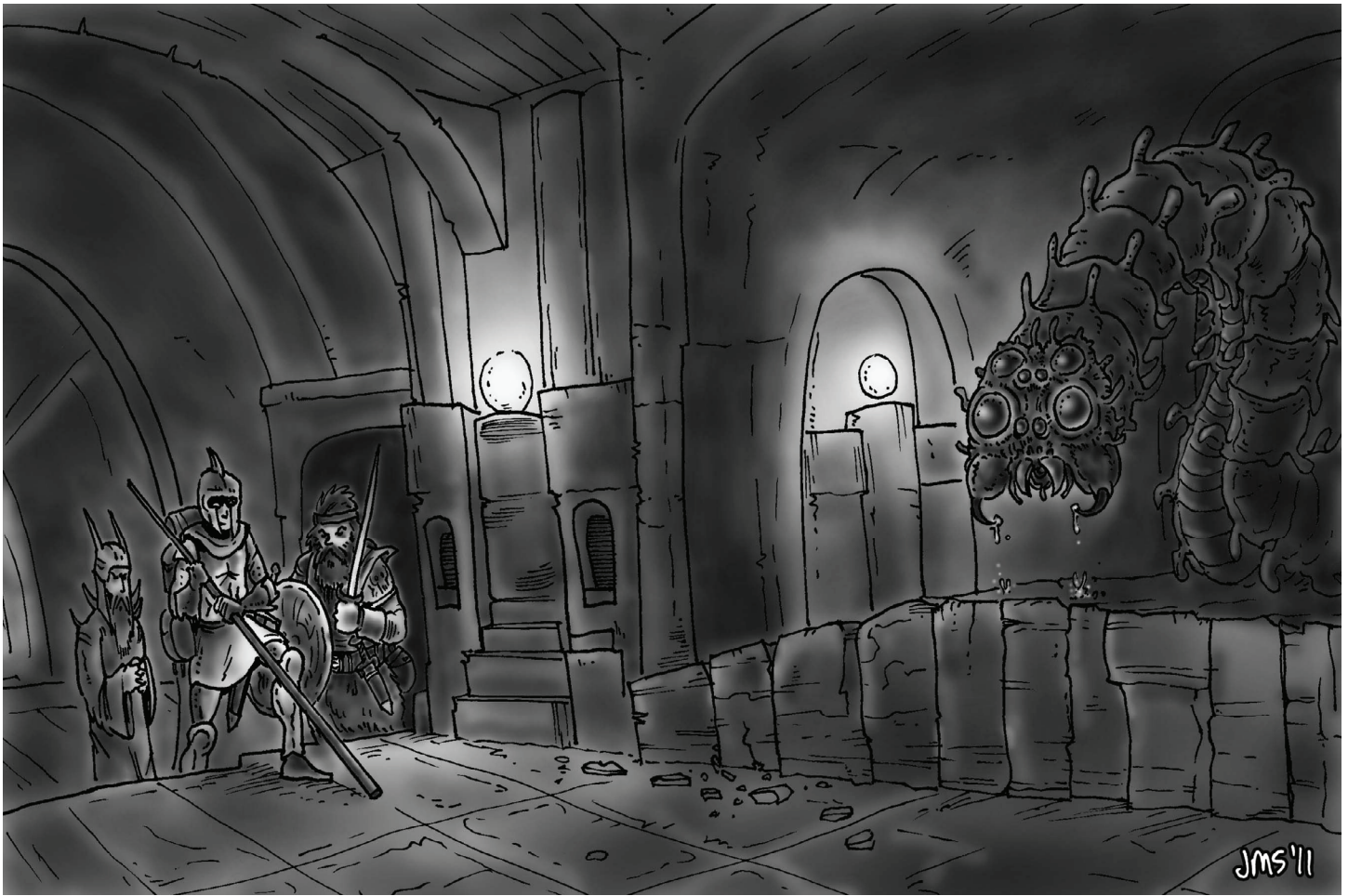
Number Appearing: Once the creature type is determined, look to the creature's description for details like number appearing in hex, treasure type, etc. Note that general treasure types refer to treasures found in the lair.

Lair Determination:

d8	Structure	Details
1	Industrial/Commercial Buildings	2 -12 Structures of 1 - 6 Rooms each, with 1 - 12 Passages on 1-2 Underground Levels (sawmill, mine, smelting works, pottery, glassblowing, saltworks, quarry, tavern, fairgrounds, trading post etc., at Referee's discretion)
2	Temple	2 - 24 Rooms on 1-3 Stories, with 1 - 6 Passages on 1 - 4 Underground Levels
3	Cave	3 - 30 Passages on 1 -4 Levels
4	Castle (not previously known)	4-24 Rooms plus 1 - 6 Towers on 1 - 6 stories; 2 - 12 Passages on 1 - 4 Underground Levels
5	Farm	1 - 6 Buildings of 1 - 6 Rooms and 1-2 Stories Each, 0 - 3 Passages on 1 Underground Level
6	Magic-user's Tower	3-18 Rooms on 2 - 7 Stories; 3 - 30 Passages on 0 - 3 Underground Levels
7	For Undead only, a roll of 7 indicates a burial ground	1-100 Graves; 1-12 Passages on 1-3 Underground Levels
(7-) 8	A combination of the above...	1d6: 1-2 two above, 3-4 three above, 5-6 four above. When the same type of lair is indicated more than once, the #s of structures, rooms and underground levels is added together.

When the lair indicated is not appropriate to the creature type inhabiting it, it should be considered either abandoned or in ruins, otherwise whether intact or abandoned is at Referee discretion. As an example, suppose the rolls indicate a Dragon as the creature type for the adventure and a Farm as the lair. The Referee must then imagine how such a thing came to be. Perhaps a young dragon discovered the farm and promptly ate the farmer and livestock. Appetite sated, the large stone barn, nestled securely in the hillside, offered a comfortable den...Such is how a few random dice rolls lead to active adventure design!

Chance of Adventure While Traveling: Once an adventure location has been determined, it remains to be seen if the Player Characters discover it. The information may be passed on to the players by any number of means if they are actively inquiring into the local situation, but if they are



simply passing through or are otherwise unaware of the possible encounters in the area, they may randomly encounter the inhabitant(s) of the lair as they travel through the hex.

1. First it must be determined if the PCs have found the Lair itself. The chance of randomly finding a lair are given as part of the creature's description as the % *in lair* (percent chance the PCs have found the creature in its lair). So, if the Referee has determined that a group of Elves, 25% in Lair, for example – comprise the adventure in question then the adventurers have a 25% chance of stumbling on the elven village/city/cave. Note that this is a *typical* chance that may be subject to modification depending on circumstances. For instance, the lair of a band of trolls guarding a narrow mountain pass will be discovered 100% of the time anyone passes through.
2. Whether or not the adventuring group has discovered the creature's lair, it must next be determined how many are present in it, or - if it is a solitary creature - whether it is present at all. Unless otherwise specified, this is always 40% to 60%. Roll a six sided die; a 4 or less = 40%, 5 = 50%, 6 = 60%. So, if in our previous example the Referee had determined that there were 100 elves in the hex, with 50% present (a 5 on the d6), then 50 of them would be present in the elven lair. If this were a solitary

creature – a dragon perhaps – then there would be a 50% chance that it is in its den and not out hunting.

3. Unless there is only one creature, the next step is to roll a d6 to see how many groups those outside the lair are split into. A 1-4 indicate they are all together, a 5 or 6 indicates two equal sized groups and requires another roll. If a 5 or 6 comes up again, one of the two split groups is split again, and so forth, until no 5 or 6 comes up or no more splits are possible. So to follow our example, a roll of 5, a second roll of 6, and a third roll of 1 indicates the 50 elves outside their lair are split into three groups, one of 25, one of 12 and one of 13 elves.
4. If the Referee wishes to determine the direction the groups of creatures are away from their lair and distance from the lair randomly, further die rolls can be used - consulting the random direction chart and rolling another 1d6 to determine miles distant (possibly into the next hex away).

Out of Lair Encounters: If the characters did not manage to find the lair, there is still a very good chance they will encounter some of its inhabitants. Once the number and size of all the groups that are present in the hex have been determined, the Chance of Discovery column on the table below should be rolled for each group to see if they

come into contact with the Player Characters. Chance of discovery merely indicates that the two (or more!) groups have come into sight (or hearing or smell) of one another and could potentially become aware of each other. The direction any NPC's are coming from will usually be that of their lair unless something else makes sense. Whether both groups are moving or one is stationary or other specific details must be determined by the Referee.

# of Player Characters (mounted or on foot)	Number of NPC's Encountered Out of Lair	Chance of Discovery	Chance of Evasion
1-3	30+	50%	50%
	16-30	30%	70%
	1-15	10%	90%
4-9	30+	70%	30%
	16-30	50%	50%
	1-15	30%	70%
10-24	30+	90%	10%
	16-30	70%	30%
	1-15	50%	50%
25+	30+	95%	5%
	16-30	85%	15%
	1-15	75%	25%

- Woods subtract 10% to 25% from Chances of Discovery and add 10% to 25 % to Chances of Evasion; they also allow a 10% chance of evasion even when surprised.
- Mountainous terrain subtracts 20% from Chances of Discovery and adds 20 % to Chances of Evasion.
- Swamps and cities subtract 5% to Chances of Discovery and add 5 % to Chances of Evasion
- Travel on roads adds 20% to Chances of Discovery and subtracts 20% from chances of evasion.

Chance of Adventure While Resting: When the Player Characters stop to make camp or find some other accommodations at the end of their travels each day, an additional roll is made. If the Player Characters are taking an entire day of rest or otherwise staying in one location, check twice per day. Roll 1d6 and consult the table below:

Hex Terrain	Encounter Occurs
Swamp, Mountains	4-6
Forest, Desert, Rivers & Lakes, Airborne	5-6
Ocean, City/Village, Open Landscape	6

When an encounter is indicated using this method, it will be entirely up to the referee to decide what time of day (or night) the encounter takes place. Further the creatures encountered could be one of the individuals or groups present in the hex, at the Referee's discretion, but in most

cases will be a "Wandering Monster" rolled for randomly using the tables. The number appearing should be determined exactly as is done in underworld encounters. Surprise (see below) applies as normal except sleeping groups without guards are automatically surprised.

Surprise: When the dice results indicate that an encounter of some sort has occurred, surprise must be rolled to determine who becomes aware of whom first. Player Characters get the first roll – one per group. Surprise is indicated by a result of 1 or 2. If the PC's are not surprised, roll next for the NPC's to see if they are surprised. If neither side is surprised then they become aware of each other simultaneously. Player characters surprised by a group of NPC's may well be surrounded (at the discretion of the Referee).

Either side may attempt to avoid the encounter if they are not surprised. To do so they must make a successful roll on the Chance for Evasion column. If the chance of evasion fails, they have been spotted and the sides are mutually aware of each other.

Sighting Distance: Roll 2d4 for the distance (2"- 8") unsurprised characters will first become aware of any other person or groups in the area. Surprised characters roll 1d4.

Castle Encounters

Tolls and Fees: A toll/travel tax will be expected by any castle forces the Player Characters encounter but do not immediately engage in combat, unless the PCs have a pass or are otherwise allied to the inhabitants of the Castle. The toll may vary based on leader type, with Fighters and Clerics typically demanding 1d6*100 gold pieces per group and Magic-users usually expecting an equivalent amount of gold and additional magic items. On occasion, the Castle leader may demand the recovery of an item or some other quest as payment for passage. Some leaders may accept a bet or challenge to a competition of some sort to resolve the toll. Failure to pay will result in attempts to capture the PCs for sale in the slave market, as mercenaries, etc. Ω

(Champions of ZED will continue in FO! #13 – Ig)



Fast Company II

character detail tables by Alex Schroeder & Adrian Shieh

Once you've generated your elf, dwarf, or hobbit character, roll on this table to determine basic equipment and some background details. Add 2d6x10 gp to buy the rest, or roll on the bonus tables in "Fast Company," FO! #10.

d8	Elf	Dwarf	Hobbit
1	you are a woodland hunter ; you own an elven longbow with twenty arrows and a curved dagger decorated with silver runes; the lore masters have taught you the <i>sleep</i> spell to keep you safe while alone in the wilderness	you are a miner but it was dangerous work for little gain; you own a canary bird in a wooden cage, a small pony to carry your load, a lantern, studded leather armor and a heavy pick	you are a shepherd ; you own a sling, a club, a dagger, a woolen cloak and a ferocious wolf dog that will defend you in combat
2	you are a student of ancient lore ; you own a ceremonial elven longsword in the old tradition and a set of chain mail; the lore masters have taught you the spell <i>read languages</i> to help your studies	you are a gem cutter by trade but decided to go looking for the real thing; you own gleaming chain mail, a beautiful two-handed sword and a jewel-encrusted girdle handed down to you from your father	you are a gardener ; you own a hammer and a sling and some ill-fitting goblin leather armor; you know how to arrange flowers, brew tea and cut a hedge; you have no idea what you are doing on an adventure like this
3	you are a spell singer ; you own an elegant elven longsword, dagger, leathers, wooden shield, lyre and silver flute; you have learned the spell <i>charm</i> to keep you safe in human lands	you are a berserker with warding tattoos covering every inch of your skin; you own a two-handed dwarven battle axe inscribed with ancient runes of death and destruction and battered scale armor	you are a scout and have traveled the wilderness; you own leather armor, a shield, a short sword, and a sling
4	you are a fae knight ; you own a white horse, white steel plate armor, a shield, a lance, a long sword, and a mace; your master taught you the spell <i>protection from evil</i> before sending you out into the world	you are a rune warrior and a defender of the realm; you own the finest dwarven plate armor, a heavy shield engraved with runes of protection, and an axe	you are a bored landowner but left your siblings in charge of it all; you own a short sword, a shield, light dwarven chain mail, and a sling
5	you are a sea elf ; you own a trident, a net, a longbow and a longsword; the captain of your first ship has taught you the <i>sleep</i> spell	you are a grizzled campaigner from the goblin wars; you own plate mail, an iron hat, a polearm (halberd), a hand axe, and a dagger	you are a crazy naked halfling cannibal ; you own a dagger, a femur bone usable as a club, and a lot of blue body paint
6	you are a moon elf and belong to the wild hunt; you own a horse, a horn, a longbow, a scimitar, a silver dagger and a wolfhound companion that will attack anything that flees; the lore masters have taught you the spell <i>detect magic</i> to aid you in your raids	you are an armor smith ; you made your own suit of plate mail including a dwarven dread helm and a spiked shield; you own a hammer, 100 gp and a single gem worth 1000 gp which your last client paid you	you are an escaped slave , broken by years spent in the darkness deep in a kobold mine; you own a pick axe, ill-fitting goblin armor, a serrated goblin dagger, and a wooden shield
7	you are a shadow elf from a far realm with a fist-sized spider companion; you own a billowing shadowy cloak, studded leathers, black shield, scimitar and curved dagger; you have studied the spell <i>hold portal</i>	you are a surface merchant ; you own a suit of chain mail armor, a shield, a hammer, a donkey, a cart, 200 gp in trade goods, and three gems worth 50 gp each	you are a halfling hero , having stopped a raging bull with a blow of your fist and killed a charging boar with your spear; everybody loves you; you own chain mail, a spear, an axe, and a very big helmet
8	you are a dark elf from under the mountain and a member of the winter court; you own elegant robes, a silver diadem worth 100 gp and a scimitar engraved with silver runes of banishment; you have studied the <i>light</i> spell	you are a dwarf outlaw that fled to the surface; they cut off your beard if you had one, shaved your head, and branded your face; you own lousy human leather armor, a hatchet, knuckle dusters, and a dagger	you are a clever goblin masterfully disguised as an ugly halfling; you own sturdy studded leather armor made by goblins, a sling stolen from a halfling shepherd and an elven short sword with incomprehensible silver runes



It's All in the Cards

placarding personalities by Michael Curtis

One of the advantages that classic role-playing games have over their more recent counterparts is that character creation is usually a short process, allowing the players to get right down to having fun instead of spending time crunching numbers and allotting points. Player characters start as blank slates, the details of their existence determined by the events that occur in actual play, rather than through extensive and often extraneous backstory. Nevertheless, there are times when both the player and the game master desire to know a little something about the lives of their characters before they met that mysterious stranger in the tavern and embarked on their epic quest.

As a student of the old school, I'm biased towards keeping these character pre-histories as short and simple as possible while still getting the most out of them. It was with this goal in mind that I developed the following system for determining a PC's background prior to play. This system not only determines what the PC did prior to becoming an adventurer, but also decides his social rank, his connections with other PCs, and, if necessary, provides him with a reason for beginning a hazardous career as a freelance treasure hunter. All that is required to use this system is something you probably already have around the house: a deck of playing cards.

Using the Card Method of Background Generation:

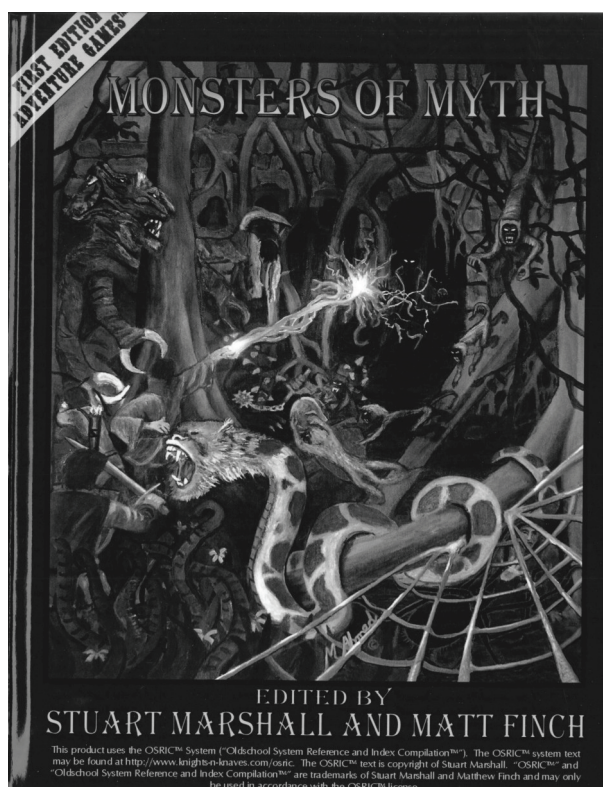
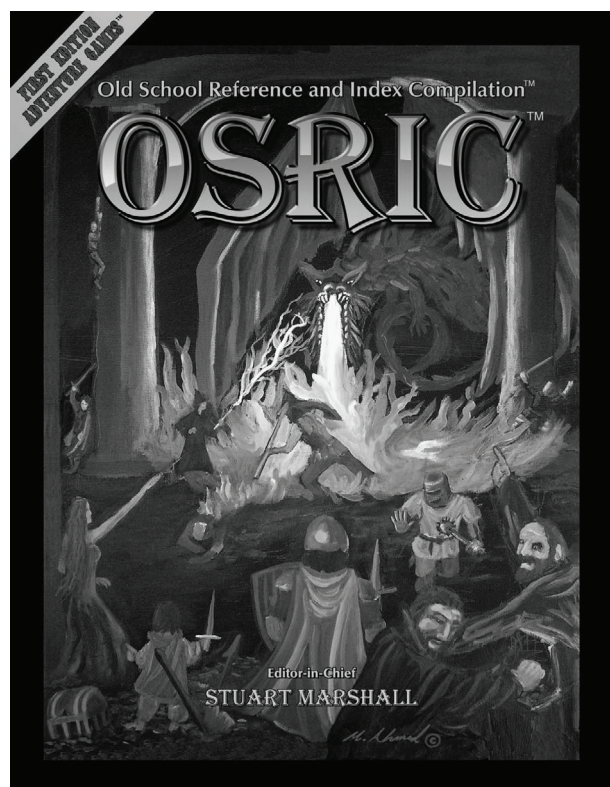
Have your players determine their characters' attributes as normal for the system you are using. Once this is done, each player draws a card from the shuffled deck, making a note of the card chosen on their sheet before replacing it. If the GM wishes to increase the probability of each PC starting with a different profession, he should have the players all draw one at a time and retain their chosen card until everyone has made their choice instead. Once the player has chosen a card, consult the tables below to determine their character's previous career and class.

If the result of the draw is something that completely clashes with the character's class (such as a scrawny mage having a former career as a soldier, or an illiterate barbarian having once been a scribe), the GM may allow them to draw again. However, this should not be done unless there is no possible way to reconcile the character's class and previous profession. A little imagination applied to seemingly contradictory results often leads to very interesting and memorable characters. In the example above, for instance, perhaps the mage suffered grievous wounds in combat that permanently handicapped her strength and health, forcing her to take up magical study in order to secure her future. The barbarian scribe might be a singing skald, able to recite his tribe's history and legends by memory rather than relying on the written word.

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Card/ Suit	Previous Occupation	Social Class
K♠	Knight's Squire	Upper Upper Class
Q♠	Alchemist's Assistant	Middle Upper Class
J♠	Scribe	Lower Upper Class
10♠	Smith's Apprentice	Upper Middle Class
9♠	Herbalist's Apprentice	Middle Middle Class
8♠	Carpenter's Apprentice	Lower Middle Class
7♠	Cook	Lower Middle Class
6♠	Farmer	Upper Lower Class
5♠	Farmer	Upper Lower Class
4♠	Shepherd	Middle Lower Class
3♠	Fisherman or Hunter	Middle Lower Class
2♠	Bondsman or Serf	Lower Lower Class
A♠	Slave	Lower Lower Class
Card/ Suit	Previous Occupation	Social Class
K♦	Entrepreneur/ Moneylender	Upper Upper Class
Q♦	Jeweler's Apprentice	Middle Upper Class
J♦	Goldsmith's Apprentice	Lower Upper Class
10♦	Merchant	Upper Middle Class
9♦	Trader's Assistant	Middle Middle Class
8♦	Gambler	Lower Middle Class
7♦	Miner	Lower Middle Class
6♦	Thief or Blackmailer	Upper Lower Class
5♦	Fisherman or Hunter	Upper Lower Class
4♦	Farmer	Middle Lower Class
3♦	Shepherd	Middle Lower Class
2♦	Freed Slave	Lower Lower Class
A♦	Outlaw	Lower Lower Class
Card/ Suit	Previous Occupation	Social Class
K♣	Military Officer	Upper Upper Class
Q♣	Aide-de-camp	Middle Upper Class
J♣	Cavalry Soldier	Lower Upper Class
10♣	Armorer's Apprentice	Upper Middle Class
9♣	Weaponsmith's Apprentice	Middle Middle Class
8♣	Undertaker's Apprentice	Lower Middle Class
7♣	Scout or Forrester	Lower Middle Class
6♣	Soldier	Upper Lower Class
5♣	Sailor	Upper Lower Class
4♣	Messenger	Middle Lower Class
3♣	Army Camp Follower	Middle Lower Class
2♣	Drafted Soldier	Lower Lower Class
A♣	Slave	Lower Lower Class

Card/ Suit	Previous Occupation	Social Class
K♥	Disowned Noble	Upper Upper Class
Q♥	Moneychanger's Apprentice	Middle Upper Class
J♥	Antiquarian's Aide	Lower Upper Class
10♥	Acolyte/ Mage's Apprentice	Upper Middle Class
9♥	Brewer's Assistant	Middle Middle Class
8♥	Bowyer's Apprentice	Lower Middle Class
7♥	Barber's Apprentice	Lower Middle Class
6♥	Horse-breaker/ Wrangler	Upper Lower Class
5♥	Painter's Apprentice	Upper Lower Class
4♥	Innkeeper's Helper	Middle Lower Class
3♥	Animal Trainer	Middle Lower Class
2♥	Poet/Musician/Actor	Lower Lower Class
A♥	Harlot/Gigolo	Lower Lower Class

In class-based roleplaying games, the character's previous profession will help resolve questions as to what skills and knowledge the character has if this becomes an issue during the campaign. Referees running games that utilize a skill system may either require the PC to purchase skills applicable to his previous profession or gift PCs with one "free" skill that would be useful to practice that trade.

Social class may influence the reaction of NPCs when characters interact with them. In general, NPCs are more likely to treat those of superior station with greater respect (granting a +1/+5% bonus on any reaction rolls) and less likely to accommodate the whims of lower class individuals (-1/-5% penalty to reaction). In games that use a random dice roll to determine starting money, the game master might consider adjusting the number of dice thrown based on social class. For example, if players normally roll 3d6x10 for starting cash, a Lower Class PC might only throw 2d6x10, while Upper Class characters could roll 4 or even 5d6 for beginning money.

Joker's Wild: The game master may either remove the Jokers from the deck before having the players draw or leave them in and use them to determine if the fickle finger of Fate has graced a character with its touch. Those characters that draw a Joker begin play with an unusual or rare background in addition to their normal starting professions and social status. When a Joker is drawn, roll a d10 to determine what rare background the character enjoys and consult the table below. Then draw a new card from the deck to establish the character's previous career and social class as normal, ignoring a second Joker. Jokers should almost certainly be replaced in the deck after being drawn whether or not other cards are, since players generally like having a chance at special circumstances.

Joker's Wild Table	
D10	Special Background
1	Illegitimate Noble
2	Eldritch Blood
3	Mixed Heritage
4	Strange Destiny
5	High Weirdness
6	Lucky Stiff
7	Starting Gift
8	Owed a Favor
9	On the Run
10	Dual Classed

Illegitimate Noble: One of your parents had noble blood, making you a possible heir to title and/or lands. Of course, there are likely to be other relatives more worthy of that position who'd resent anyone laying claim to it. And even if you do have a stronger claim to the title, that only makes you a bigger target for those who'd like to permanently remove you from the line of succession. The GM is encouraged to make the character's life interesting regardless of whether he chooses to pursue his claim.

Eldritch Blood: You are descended from someone not quite mortal, and this heritage manifests itself in some strange way. It might be the tiny horns that you hide under your hat, or cat-like eyes that unnerve potential hirelings. Your tainted blood could be especially potent, granting you powers far beyond those of the average adventurer. The article "The Dragon-Blooded" in *FO! #2* shows one possible way of implementing this special background.

Mixed Heritage: You might look like an average human, dwarf, elf, or what have you, but there's another race in your family woodpile and you bear the gifts of that heritage as well. Your character enjoys one special ability of a race other than her own. You might be a human who finds secret doors like an elf, a dwarf who hides like a halfling, or an elf capable of detecting sloping passages. The GM has the final say as to what racial abilities can be chosen.

Strange Destiny: Weird portents accompanied your birth, indicating that the Powers That Be have some ineffable purpose for you. Of course, that purpose could be to die horribly on the fifth level of Stonehell Dungeon, so don't get too cocky. If the game master has some prophecy in effect in the campaign world, chances are you have a role to play in it. This background requires the most work on the part of the game master, and the details of how to implement it in the campaign are left in his hands.

High Weirdness: "Why does this stuff always happen to me?" is your constant refrain. When airships from other dimensions choose to crash, they always land on your house. When the ocean coughs up spirit bottles and genie

lamps, you're the one that finds them. In short, if anything strange or unlikely needs to happen in the campaign, it will most certainly happen to you. This is both a boon and a curse, and hopefully the player and game master will get a lot of enjoyment out of this background.

Lucky Stiff: The gods watch over idiots, drunks, small children, animals, and you. Once each game session, you may reroll a die and take either result.

Starting Gift: This character begins play with a special heirloom. A minor magical item, treasure map, or other such gift is suggested, typically one with a finite amount of uses rather than an enchanted sword or armor. The gift is up to the game master.

Owed a Favor: Someone of some importance owes the character a boon. This could be the local potentate, a powerful sorcerer, or an influential cleric. This person is willing to provide any assistance within his or her ability to the character one time. After that, the debt is paid. Alternately, the GM can leave the debtor's identity unknown and allow the player to use this as a "get out of jail free" card (literally?) once when he desperately needs help. Perhaps they know the executioner poised to behead them, or maybe their childhood playmate now runs the assassin's guild.

On the Run: The character has made a powerful enemy, one who would very much like to get his (or its) hands on her. Perhaps the PC owes the local crime lord 25,000 gold pieces, or maybe he overheard that crazy Archmage's true name. In any case, he can expect bounty hunters, magical assassins, and other inconveniences if he doesn't keep a

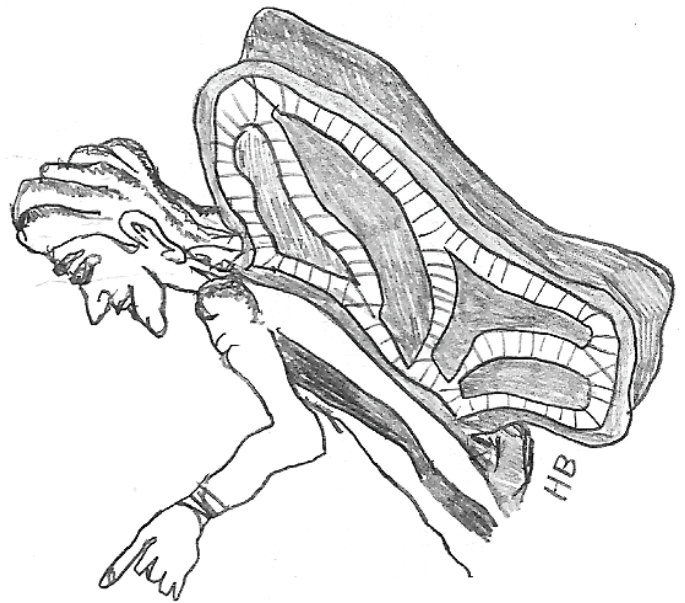


low profile. On the plus side, those with their own axes to grind against the character's enemy will readily jump to his aid should he need it – and it's likely that he will.

Dual Classed: The character has been down the adventuring road once before and acquired some ability in another class. This former class should never be higher than 2nd level for a starting PC, but the PC does get all the abilities of that class including spell use, special skills, saving throws, and hit points. Whether the character can again advance in this class is left to the GM's discretion.

Character Connections: The game master might wish to establish intra-party relationships prior to the start of the campaign, and the card method of background generation allows this to be easily done. Simply deem that the characters of any players drawing the same suit are somehow connected. Thus all spades might be relatives, students under the same master, lovers, friends, or even rivals. The player should also make a note of what suit was drawn on her character record sheet. This way, when PC fatalities or additional players requires the introduction of new characters to the campaign, the GM can easily determine who these newcomers know amongst the established party, and thereby give them an entry into the oftentimes closed and paranoid ranks of professional adventurers.

“What’s My Motivation?” Many players will accept whatever adventure hook the GM feeds them, no matter how slight. The knowledge that a dangerous ruin filled with riches is just outside of town is enough to get most characters started. However, it is not unknown for some players to desire a deeper explanation for why their characters are risking life and limb as adventurers. Luckily, the card method also makes allowances for that. The player need only consult his suit to find out what inspires him:



- **Spades** are drawn to adventure to earn power or respect. They may wish to become a noble, uncover forgotten secrets, or prove themselves to their families.
- **Diamonds** adventure for material wealth. Some may wish to become fabulously rich, others are fascinated by gemstones, and some just want to roll around naked in a huge pile of gold coins.
- **Clubs** seek power, usually either magical or military. Some may wish to acquire a powerful enchanted sword or staff; others want the ability to lead or destroy armies.
- **Hearts** adventure for personal reasons. They might wish to become famous, to win the love of an unattainable man or woman, or to gain incredible wisdom. Although money is nice, it is not their primary reason for risking their life.

This facet of the system and the suggested motivations are completely optional and neither the player nor game master is required to utilize this aspect of the random method if they do not wish to. It is offered to merely give the players and referee a starting point if they yearn for a purpose more than “get rich or die trying” for their PCs.

The above method has been used by the author with much success in both one-shot games and in his ongoing campaign. The virtue of this method of background determination is that it provides a wealth of material for the players and GM to build upon without extending the character creation process. It is also suitable for hirelings, henchmen, and other NPCs as well as player characters. With that in mind, make sure you slide a deck of cards into your game bag the next time you're ready to kick off a new campaign, and may the cards fall in your favor! Ω

The Tomb of Kaman-Doh Rey'd

space opera sci-fi adventure by David Coleman
dedicated to the Bob Squad: John ("Evil Eddie"), Sam ("Shazam"), and Barney ("Commander Bob")

Briefing: Five centuries ago, the infamous Unzuttel General Kaman-Doh Rey'd ran wild throughout the Corporate Sector, conquering world after world until he and his species died out from hyperspace motion sickness. Just recently, a privately employed space scout found the warlord's final resting place on the backwater planet of Zatsalfolks. The scout was employed by the Imperial Emporium, an interstellar defense contractor, whose local manager wants to salvage and market any Unzuttel war technology that might remain. To that end, he has hired the PCs to break into the Tomb. He will give each adventurer 50,000 credits worth of equipment for the job and pay them 500,000 credits each if they enter the Tomb and bring something marketable out of it. Zatsalfolks is a cold, foggy, gloomy planet with a single large continent surrounded by ocean; it has a breathable oxygen-based atmosphere. Only a few hermits live here.

The Entrance: Set into the base of a cliff, this is a 3x4 meter rectangle recessed half a meter into the rock. Inscribed in its center are the Unzuttel words:

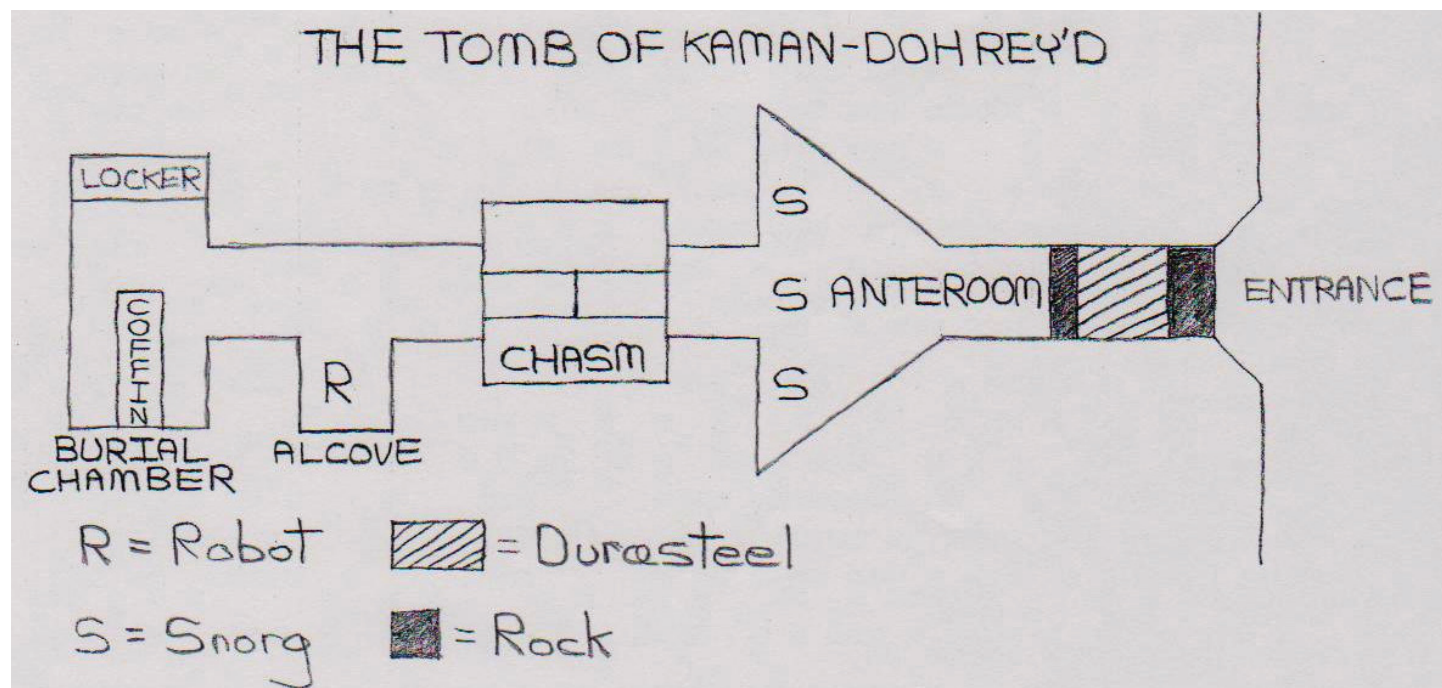
HERE LIES KAMAN-DOH REY'D. AWESOME.

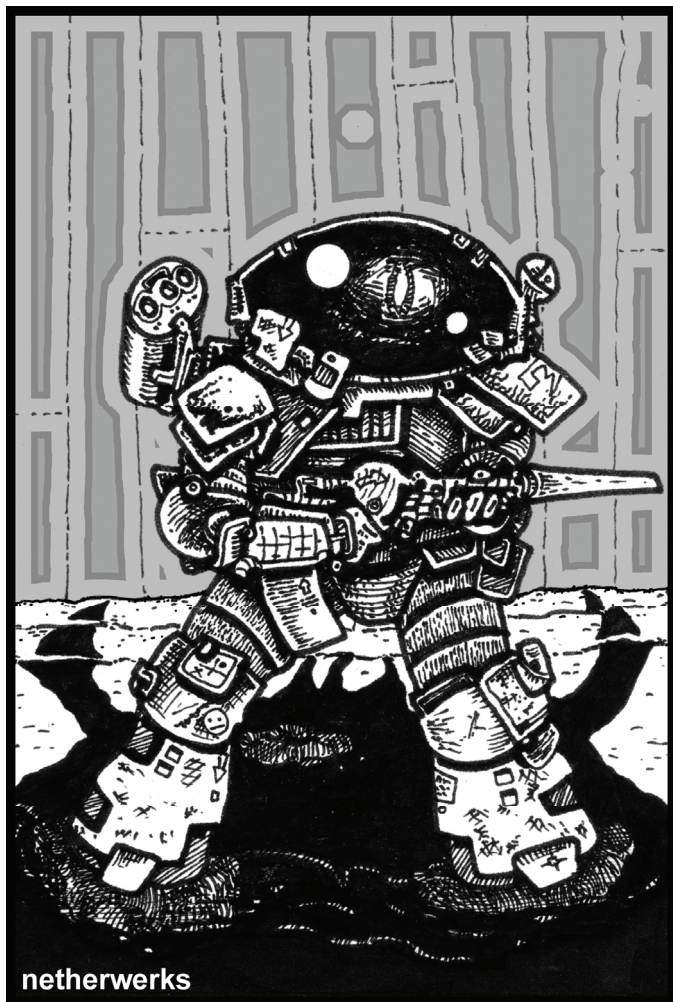
Behind the inscription are three walls. The first is a one-meter rock barrier which requires 200 points of damage to

destroy. This can be done with digging tools, hand weapons, or explosives, or with a single shot from a hovertank's main gun or a spaceship-mounted energy weapon. The next wall is durasteel which requires 5000 points of damage to cut through using explosives or energy weapons, or five shots from a tank gun or spaceship gun. The third, final barrier is rock and only takes 50 points of damage to destroy; if the PCs fire a tank gun or spaceship gun at it, one shot will destroy it – and travel in a straight path down the center of the Tomb, destroying everything in its path, including Kaman-Doh Rey'd's stasis coffin and storage locker (see map below).

The Anteroom: This triangular room contains three statues of beasts resembling green, three-eyed, eight-legged panthers. These are snorgs, predator animals from the Unzuttel homeland. After the PCs have been in the anteroom for half a minute the statues will sparkle, as if electric current is playing over them. Then they start to move. (The statues are actually live snorgs kept in a stasis field, which deactivates once the room is entered.) The snorgs look up at the PCs questioningly, pause, and then spring at the intruders. The animals pause because they've been trained to wait for a command before attacking; they will curl up and go to sleep if someone says "Down" in Unzuttel. **3 Guardian Snorgs:** Str 15, Spd 18, hp 15, *Armor*: 2-point skin, *Weapons* 1 Bite (1d10+2), 2 Claws (1d6+1).

The Chasm: This chamber has no floor, only a straight drop to the planetary bedrock 1 kilometer below. An eight-meter-long, two-meter-wide bridge made of flexible duraplasic spans the gap; it has handrails at a height of 1.5 meters. At the halfway point is a link that, if stepped on, will cause the bridge to split into two halves (make a Luck





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roll for each PC who walks across the bridge; if they fail, they step on the center link). Should the bridge separate, each character must make a Speed roll in order to grab on to the bridge's rails swiftly enough to avoid falling into the chasm. Since both sections of the bridge will swing down and strike the walls of the chasm below after separating, each PC clinging to a section of bridge will take 1d6+1 damage when it hits. From that point, the PCs must make a Climbing roll to reach the top of the shaft. A character who falls into the chasm is dead unless he or she has a jet pack, antigravity belt, or similar flying device.

The Alcove: This room is occupied by a guardian robot who will instantly attack anyone who walks into view and doesn't give the proper command phrase – "Hold your fire!" in the Unzuttel speech. (This is the only order it knows.) The robot somewhat resembles an adult male Unzutt – 2.5 meters tall, large-headed, humanoid, with scaly skin, claws, and a tail. The robot's body is polished to a mirror brightness. Its right arm is much wider than its left and houses a 50 shot machine gun. The barrel is located in the heel of its palm. The robot will open fire on intruders with its machine gun first and close for a claw attack once the magazine is empty. **Guardian Robot:** Strength 20, Speed 10, hp 25, *Armor* 10-point plating,

mirror surface reflects lasers and energy beams, *Weapons* 1 Machine Gun (3d6), 2 Claws (2d6+1).

The Burial Chamber: This rectangular room contains a coffin enclosed in a stasis field like the one surrounding the snorgs in the Anteroom. A storage locker holds some of Kaman-Doh Rey'd's personal effects. The Unzuttel warlord did not die 500 years ago; one of the first of his species to suffer from hyperspace motion sickness, he was diagnosed as suffering from an unknown terminal disease by his physicians, and arranged to be placed in stasis until a cure could be found. Once Kaman-Doh was out of the way, however, his chief lieutenant declared himself warlord and seized control of the empire. The Tomb's security system will revive the warlord as soon as the three barriers at the Entrance are breached. He will have gotten up, dressed, and armed himself by the time the PCs reach the Burial Chamber (assuming they haven't blown it up). He has a suit of reflective armor that deflects lasers, a blaster pistol, and a chainsword (this is a 1-meter-long metal slat surrounded by a rotating belt of diamond-edged spikes; the slat is attached to a sword hilt. The sword is a two-handed weapon.) Kaman-Doh is a telepath and has the skill of



Telepathic Paralysis; he can command a person to freeze motionless if he makes a successful IQ roll against his target. He can only do this to one person at a time, however; if he tries to paralyze a second person, the first person regains the power of movement. Kaman-Doh will paralyze the first person to enter the Burial Chamber and then interrogate him or her telepath-ically, trying to find out what these small soft-skinned aliens are doing in his Tomb. He will attack anyone who shoots at him or threatens him. Kaman-Doh will want to restore his race (perhaps by cloning himself) and resume his career of conquest as soon as possible. The warlord will be willing to spare the PCs if they surrender to him and agree to serve him. However, he still suffers from his disease and is unaware of its nature. If the Unzutt undergoes a hyperspace transit he will die immediately; otherwise, he will die in 15 days, losing 1 hp and 1 Strength and Speed point per day until his hp reach 0. The only way to prevent this is by placing him in stasis again. **Kaman-Doh Rey'd:** Str 18, Speed 12, IQ 18, hp 15, *Armor* 8-point bodysuit, reflects lasers and energy beams, *Weapons* 1 Blaster (4d6), 1 Chainsword (5d6 to flesh or organic matter, 2d6 to metal armor), 2 Claws (1d6-1), Telepathic Paralysis, *Skills* Aircraft Pilot, Computer Operation, Leadership, Starship Pilot, Strategy, Tactics.

Loot: If the PCs manage to defeat the various defenses of the Tomb without destroying everything in the process, there are several things of value to be found. Obvious treasures are Kaman-Doh's armor and weapons. Some less obvious items are the guardian robot, if it can be dismantled, the stasis coffin (anything that can keep a creature alive for half a millennium is certainly worth researching), the snorgs (most species on the Unzuttel homeworld were wiped out when their subject races rose up in rebellion), and Kaman-Doh Rey'd himself (a potentially rich source of information on history and Unzuttel science and technology). All told, no less than fifteen million credits in immediately saleable items can be removed from the Tomb. These items would be worth *hundreds* of millions to any respectable R&D lab.

Just in case the PCs are less than honest and decide to grab everything for themselves, the Imperial Emporium has taken the precaution of hiring mercenary muscle to insure

against breach of contract. Four soldiers in an armored hovercar will be waiting outside the tomb if the PCs emerge: **Skipper** (the Captain), Strength 12, Speed 10, IQ 15, hp 12, *Armor* 12-point combat suit, *Weapons* Blaster Pistol (3d6), Blaster Rifle (4d6), Knife (1d6+1), Machine Pistol (3d6), *Skills* Blaster Pistol, Blaster Rifle, Leadership; **Chip** (the Hovercar Pilot), Strength 10, Speed 12, IQ 8, hp 10, *Armor* 6-point combat suit, *Weapons* Blaster Pistol (3d6), *Skills* Blaster Pistol, Electronics, Hovercar Mechanic, Hovercar Pilot; **Gunny** (Hovercar Gunner): Strength 13, Speed 12, IQ 7, hp 11, *Armor* 10-point combat suit, *Weapons* Blaster Rifle (4d6), Hovercar Main Gun (10d6),

Skills Hovercar Gunnery, Hovercar Pilot; and **Cutter** (Demolitions Specialist), Str 10, Speed 15, IQ 12, hp 10, *Armor* 16-point combat suit, *Weapons* Bazooka (5d6), Grenade (4d6), *Skills* Bazooka, Demolitions, Disarm Explosives, Grenade.

End Notes: This tongue-in-cheek scenario was written in the '80s, partly in a naïve attempt to teach some seriously out-of-control, shoot-everything-that-moves gamers a lesson in restraint. It didn't work – the players used their

ship's lasers to blow right through the middle of the tomb and destroyed everything except the guardian robot and two snorgs. They shot down the snorgs and then found the guardian robot on the other side of the chasm; it opened fire immediately. One PC was killed and one seriously wounded in the ensuing firefight, as they all used lasers to no effect. The unwounded member of the group waited until the robot's machine-gun magazine went dry and then threw several grenades, blowing the robot to shreds. The four Emporium mercenaries, who had been waiting patiently outside, had to medevac the survivors to a hospital offworld. After they'd recovered, the wrathful regional manager said they'd ruined everything of value in the Tomb and swore he'd make them pay off their now-astronomical debt to the corporation even if he had to clone an army of janitors from their DNA. The PCs took the manager hostage, hijacked his personal space yacht, and ran for it. Suffice it to say they were glad they spent all their 150,000 credits' worth of free equipment on weapons and explosives; they needed it when the Emporium's enforcers finally caught up to them in the next sector. To the trigger-happy, bloodthirsty Bob Squad, wrecking worlds for mere entertainment: keep away from me! Ω



Going Ape In



Introducing the Apen

variant race by Andrew “The Venomous Pao” Trent

Among its other lessons, the 1968 film *Planet of the Apes* reminds us that not all apocalypses result in three-armed teleporting onion-dogs and fiendish spidergoats roaming the streets of the future. This article presents an ape-based civilization for use in *Mutant Future*.

Meet the Apen: In some corners of the world you'll find a species of “evolved” or “uplifted” apes, known as the Apen. The term Apen is really just a collective term for three different sub-races of apes who live and work together: the Gorillas, the Orangutans, and the Chimpanzees. Each variety of Apen tends towards certain behaviors and personality type, though “playing against type” is not entirely unknown. The Gorillas tend to be aggressive and warlike, while the Orangutans are somewhat resigned and pensive, and the Chimpanzees hopeful and curious. All Apen, regardless of sub-race, are bipedal, possessed of human intelligence, and speak the common tongue fluently.

Apen society is divided into three distinct castes, each of which is occupied near-exclusively by a particular variety of Apen. These castes mirror, to a large degree, the personalities of the sub-races of Apen. The specific breakdown of Apen society dictates that:

- Gorillas serve as the military, police and hunters
- Orangutans serve as the politicians, leaders and philosophers
- Chimpanzees serve as the scientists and intellectuals

On the whole Apen tend to be insular, shunning outsiders of all types and focusing instead on the advancement and betterment of their fellow Apen. Some rare communities may be found that will welcome humans or even mutants, but these will be the exception rather than the rule. In general Apen are distrustful of non-ape species, sometimes keeping other races as slaves. Apen society is known for its well-defined set of laws, laid out in the Sacred Scrolls passed down through the generations from the very hand of the Apen known as The Lawgiver. Though the implementation of these may vary, the one constant tenet of Apen culture is that “Ape Shall Never Kill Ape.” Those who break this law are dealt with harshly and swiftly.

Although Apen communities are not typically treasure-troves of technological items, they tend to have a fair number of primitive firearms – specifically carbines and

automatic rifles – at their disposal. Additionally, the Gorilla militias and armies are often supplemented with war-horses to speed their travel and increase their range. In general Apen will be encountered wearing heavy cloth (AC 8) or leather (AC 7) armor. Gorillas will almost always have carbines and special lead-filled truncheons (1d6). Orangutans and Chimpanzees are less likely to be equipped with weapons, but if found outside of their settlements without the benefit of a Gorilla escort they will have some method of protecting themselves, whether ordinary Apen weapons or more powerful artifacts of the ancients.

Game Information: Apen make good enemies and excellent heroes. Guidelines for creating Apen characters are presented below.

Hit Dice: 1d8 per point of CON

Mutations: None

Apen characters must specify a sub-race immediately. Each of the Apen sub-races receives ability bonuses as follows:

Gorillas receive +3 to STR, DEX, and CON

Orangutans receive +3 to WIL, CHA and CON

Chimpanzees receive +3 to DEX, INT and CON

These modifiers may only raise CON to 18 and all other attributes to a maximum of 21. Like Pure Humans, Apen have evolved an immunity to the mutating effects of radiation, therefore no mutations are found in Apen characters. Apen and mutants don't get along terribly well (+3/+3/+3 for all mutant types on the Charisma & Racial Modifier table, *MF* p. 11) and are often suspicious of and cool towards Pure Humans (+2/+2/+2 on same table).

Non-Player Characters: Below are three sample Apen characters who live in a well-developed community known as Ape City.

Dr. Gaius - The Politician

7th Level Apen (Orangutan)

STR 12	INT 16
DEX 11	WIS 15
CON 14	CHA 14
hp 79	AC 8

Dr. Gaius is the civilian and spiritual leader of the Apen community known as Ape City. Dr. Gaius sees humans and mutants as trouble-makers who will disrupt the order of his community – the order that keeps him comfortably in power – if they are not dealt with harshly when encountered. Intelligent and learned in the ways of the ancients, Dr. Gaius knows well that the more ambitious of the Gorillas will eventually chafe at his imposed isolationism and will do their best to find a reason to begin wars with whatever enemy can be identified and presented as a threat to the future of Ape City.

General Gursus - The Soldier

7th Level Apen (Gorilla)

STR 19	INT 10
DEX 16	WIS 9
CON 18	CHA 12
hp 87	AC 7

General Gursus is the military leader of Ape City. Gursus has no love of humans or mutants and struggles constantly against the foolish isolationism dictated by Dr. Gaius and the other Orangutans' interpretation of the Words of the Law Giver. Gursus' loyal Gorilla soldiers in the army of Ape City are prepared to follow him to the ends of the earth, and most will show no hesitation if their leader commands them to defy the rules imposed by Dr. Gaius. Even now Gursus plots to use a manufactured "food shortage" as a reason to declare war on nearby settlements.

Dr. Gira - The Scientist

5th Level Apen (Chimpanzee)

STR 7	INT 19
DEX 14	WIS 15
CON 13	CHA 12
hp 62	AC 8

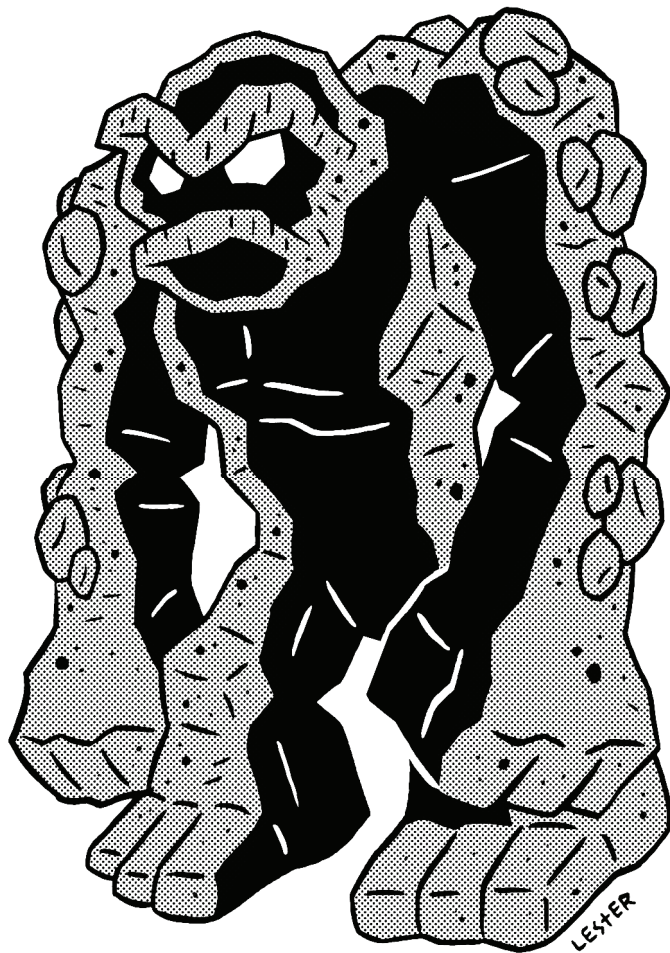
Dr. Gira, along with her husband Dr. Gornelius, stands at the forefront of Ape City's scientific community. Gira, who has a deeply compassionate nature, is profoundly disturbed by the naked aggression of the Gorillas - especially General Gursus. Gira firmly believes that the future of Ape City depends on scientific advancement and peaceful interactions with the humans and mutants found in nearby communities.

Other Group Members: Apen City teems with interesting personalities, from rowdy Gorilla soldiers to milling and murmuring Orangutan philosophers to young, idealistic Chimpanzees who organize sit-ins and picket lines in protest of the militaristic ambitions of General Gursus. Perhaps even more interesting are the Apen who don't quite fit their stereotypes, such as young Ghade, the Chimpanzee who dreams of applying his twisted intellect to warfare in ways that would make the hardest Gorilla veteran blanch, or Geneca, the retired Gorilla senator who seeks to establish a larger community that is inclusive of humans and mutants as well as the Apen.

Damn Dirty Apen? Or Just Another Group Of Freaks?

Apen can be used in many ways in a *Mutant Future* campaign, from running a straight *Planet of the Apes* game to simply incorporating them into a more traditional gonzo-gamma setting, where they can supplement or replace the Apeman entry in the Monsters section of the *Mutant Future* rulebook. No matter how you use them, though, they should make things interesting for your players. At least until those damnable mutant telepaths manage to detonate their "Divine Bomb," that is. Ω





Geologians

more mayhem for *Mutant Future* by Tim Snider

Hit Dice: 1d8 per point of CON

Mutations: 1d3 Geologian, 1d2 mental

Description: Geologians are a mysterious and seldom-encountered race of mineral-based creatures who seem to be constructed of living rock. Geologians are usually of roughly humanoid shape (two arms/legs, upright, etc.) although they are a bit taller, averaging 6-7 feet in height, as well as being much heavier than normal humanoids – nearing half a ton for some specimens. Geologians may have some metallic isotopes and minerals within their structure, but not enough to be considered made of metal. Geologians gain +2 when rolling for both Strength and Constitution. Because of their rocky structure, Geologians roll 1d8 per point of Constitution for their hit point totals.

It is unknown how (or if) Geologians are actually alive, as organic materials are not found in their chemical makeup. Some theorize that Geologians are comprised of some sort of silicon-based DNA, rather than the carbon-based life usually found in the *Mutant Future*. Others assume that Geologians are actually made up of billions of microscopic

robotic nanites who have bound themselves to sand and stone and then to each other to form a colony-like sentient being. And others just shrug and don't bother asking such questions in a world of bizarre things such as spidergoats. Regardless, Geologians require air, food, and water just like any other living creature.

Geologians are usually encountered in large barren rock-strewn locations – large blast craters, Ancient abandoned quarries, deep underground caverns, anyplace with massive amounts of exposed stone and little animal/plant life. Geologians do not seem to have a social structure or settlements, as each one encountered is alone and on its own. Geologians do not have parents and, if asked, will simply say that it has always been the way it is now for as long as it can recall. Many Geologians have no formal name, as they have no need for self-monikers due to their solitude. They will, however, give themselves a name for others to call them, usually using whatever stone makes up a majority of their composition: “Flint,” “Granite,” “Gypsum,” and so on. Geologians are never found wearing clothes (nothing to hide, really) and rarely wear armor, feeling that their own body structure is armor enough. However one drawback to their physical structure is that a Geologian cannot be healed through artificial means, as most normal healing supplies are for carbon-based creatures. (It is left to the Mutant Lord's discretion whether he wishes to allow concrete or other stone-based compounds to serve as Geologian healing agents).

A player bases his Geologian's physical make-up and structure based on Mohs Scale of Mineral Hardness. The scale runs from 1 to 10, with 1 being the softest naturally-found minerals such as talc and graphite, and 10 being boron and diamond. If desired, have the player roll 1d10, or 3d4-2. The result is his hardness as found on the scale. He can then determine a matching stone to describe his Geologian's primary mineral makeup. His starting AC will be found on a reverse sliding scale of Mohs 1 = AC 10; Mohs 2 = AC 9; through Mohs 10 = AC 1.

Geologian Mutations Table (d100)

Beneficial

1-5. Geothermal Emissions: The PC's “blood” is actually molten magma. Due to increased core temperature, the PC can generate a ray of heat every three rounds that does 4d6 hit points of damage to a target within 50 feet.

6-9. Gigantism: Treat as per the *Gigantism* mutation on page 24 of the *MF* rulebook.

10-15. Diamond Hardness: The PC's rock-like outer surface is denser than typical stone, giving the PC an additional -3 AC modifier.

16-19. Hyperburrowing: The PC can move through dirt and earth as easily as others swim through water. When

hyperburrowing, the PC can move through the ground at one-third his above-ground movement rate. The mutation cannot be used for excavation purposes, as the ground closes up behind the *hyperburrowing* PC.

20-25. Fossilizing Touch: The PC can mineralize flesh and plant material with a touch. Unless the target makes a save vs. death, his cellular structure will crystallize into stone, killing the target instantly. A successful save means the target takes 1d8 damage from cellular disruption. Regardless of outcome, this attack drains the PC's fortitude, and he will be unable to use it again for 2d10 rounds

26-29. Spiked Projectiles: The PC can fire off sharp, stony bits of himself as deadly projectiles. The distance is that of a dagger and each spike does 1d4 hit points of damage. A PC can throw 6 spikes a day and must "regenerate" fired spikes during a night's rest.

30-34. Environmental Immunity: The PC's metabolism does not require air to function. He can stay underground, underwater, or in an airless vacuum forever without harmful effects. The PC is also immune to airborne hazards such as poisons, parasites, and disease.

35-38. Seismic Tremor: A powerful localized earthquake occurs in a 50-foot radius from the PC's location. All standing within the area of effect must make a DEX check or topple to the ground, taking 1d4 hit points of damage. Fragile or unsafe structures could collapse in the area. If in a cave or cavern, a cave-in could occur. It is left to the Mutant Lord to determine the effect to surrounding structures and landmarks.

39-43. Lodestone: The PC's structure generates a strong magnetic field under his control. Using this field, he can attract and repel metallic objects with a maximum weight manipulated up to his normal carrying capacity. This ability has a range of 50 feet.

44-47. Increased Physical Attribute: One of the PC's physical attributes is increased. Roll 1d6 to determine the specific effects: 1-3 = Increased Strength: The character receives an additional 1d10 points added to his STR score. 3-6 = Increased Constitution: The character receives an additional 1d10 points added to his CON score.

48-52. Light Refraction: Small flecks of crystallized materials coat the PC's outer surface, making him immune to all light- and laser-based attacks. If attacked, the Mutant Lord should roll to see if the reflected beam strikes another target or the attacker himself.

53-56. Ice/Fire Immunity: The PC is immune to all heat- and cold-based attacks. He is also able to withstand near-absolute zero temperatures as well as heat up to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit (just below the melting point of rock).

57-61. Fissure Sense: The PC is able to sense the naturally occurring stress points and weaknesses in any object. This gives the PC an additional 1d6 damage bonus

in combat. This ability extends to being able to detect and identify any mutational drawbacks an NPC has.

62-65. Radioactive Emissions: Radioactive isotopes make up part of the PC's internal structure. The PC can generate a ray of radiation every three rounds that does 4d6 hit points of damage to those within 50 feet.

66-70. Earth Mover: Up to 60 cubic feet of loose earth can be moved per turn at the will of the PC. Neither solid stone nor large boulders can be moved in this way, however.

71-74. Stone Wall: The PC can cause loose stones and gravel to rise from the earth, creating a wall in any form the PC desires, up to 1,000 cubic feet. The wall can only be called up from bare earth and not indoors. The wall cannot appear directly where another object or character stands, and it must rest on a solid surface.

75-79. Mineral Dissolve: The PC can cause the molecular cohesion of rock and stone to dissolve with a touch. When it dissolves, it forms a grainy, gritty mud-like substance. Up to 1,000 square feet of rock can be destroyed in this manner.

80-83. Vibrational Sense: The PC can feel vibrations in the earth from up to 200 yards away. The PC can use this sense like radar, "feeling" the approximate position of nearby characters and objects. This sense only works when the target is moving along the ground. Still objects cannot be "felt."

Drawbacks

84-88. Mute - The PC is completely incapable of speech and can only communicate through pantomime or writing (if the PC has learned how to write).

89-92. Slow Mutant: Treat as per the *Slow Mutant* drawback on page 28 of the *MF* rulebook.

93-96. Reduced Mental Attribute: One of the PC's mental attributes is decreased. Roll 1d4 to determine the specific effects: 1-3 = Decreased Intelligence: The character loses 1d6 points from his INT score. 3-6 = Decreased Willpower: The character loses 1d6 points from his WIL score.

97-00. Pain Insensitivity: Treat as per the *Pain Insensitivity* drawback on page 27 of the *MF* rulebook. Ω

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The Witch Doctor

variant class by Scott Moberly

Witch Doctors are cunning, superstitious men or women who traditionally serve the roles of both spiritual healer and powerful sorcerer. They are mysterious and shadowy by nature, alternately seen as simple folk healers and allegories for the more barbaric elements of human nature. Their knowledge of the arcane arts is acquired through their close relationships with animal and plant spirits, as well as their worship of the Elemental Gods. They shun all but the most primitive weapons, and can only wear armor made from the bones of animals. Witch Doctors can only be human or half-orc (if your campaign allows them; Cannibal Halflings may also take this class if included).

Requirements: DEX 12, CHR 12, WIS 12

Hit Dice: 1d4

Maximum Level: 10

Attack/Save: As Priest

Alignment: Typically Neutral, but may vary with setting

Armor: May wear Bone Armor (AC7, 10 gp)

Weapons: Club, Staff, Spear, Javelin, Dagger, Blowgun*

Witch Doctor Level Progression Chart

Experience	Level	Hit Dice (d4)
0	1	1
1,825	2	2
3,650	3	3
7,300	4	4
14,600	5	5
29,200	6	6
55,001	7	7
110,001	8	8
230,001	9	9
340,001	10	10

Blowguns: A blowgun dart does 1d2 damage. The Witch Doctor can also concoct 2 types of poison for the darts:

Poison #1: A type of Nerve Toxin made from various plant root and animal (monster) sources. This takes 1d4 weeks to prepare and costs 1d4x10gp to make 2d6+2 doses. The toxin can cause paralysis for 1d12 rounds, with a saving throw at +0 to +5 (roll d6-1 to determine modifier).

Poison#2: A painful and possibly deadly poison made from various poisonous plant and animal venoms. Cost and preparation as above; the poison causes an additional 1d6+1 damage to creatures not immune to poison.

Witch Doctor Spells & Spell Like Abilities:

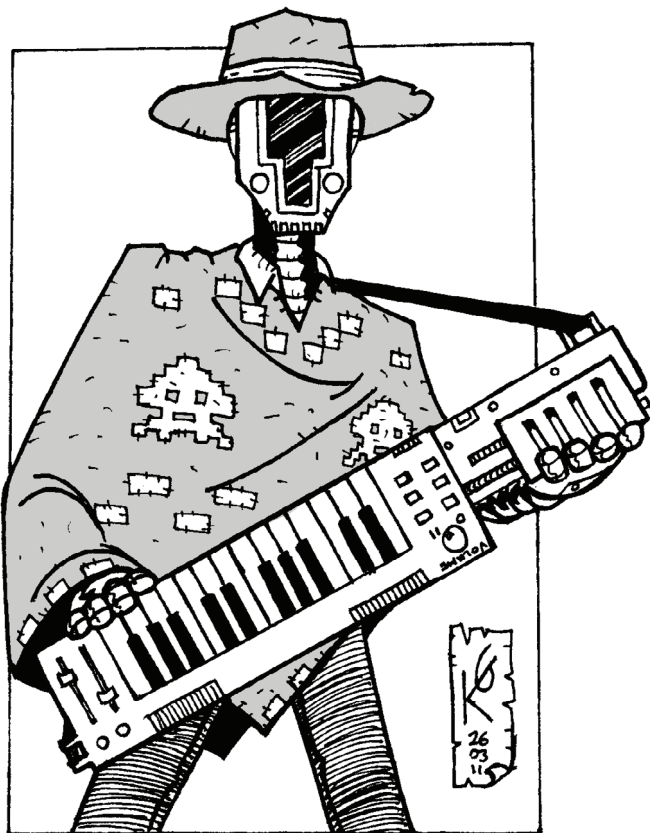
Level	Effect
1	Hex*, Cure Light Wounds, Cause/Remove Fear
2	Feign Death, Hypnotism
3	Charm Person, Speak w/ Animals
4	Holy Chant, Create Voodoo Doll*
5	Exorcise, Speak w/ Dead
6	Shadow Evocation, Cure Serious Wounds
7	Summon Shadow, Insect Plague
8	Control Winds, Spectral Force
9	Cloudkill, Transmute Rock to Mud
10	Grasping Hand, Summon Demon

Each Witch Doctor ability possessed may be used once per day.

Hex, similar to a curse, effects all individuals within a 10' radius. Such creatures receive -2 to attack and saving rolls.

Create Voodoo Doll: The doll must made in advance for a specific known foe. It takes 1d4 weeks and 1d6x10 gp in components to prepare. The doll acts as a *Bestow Curse*, but can be used at any range and does not require line of sight. Save vs. spells is allowed. Ω





Knights & Knaves

by Lee Barber, Kelvin Green, Jeff Rients, and Calithena

The Electropop Cowboy

7th Level Robot Bard

S 10 I 17 W 6* C 9 D 15 Ch 10; hp 33, DC 1

*Robots have low wisdom due to being overly rational rather than due to being irrational.

Abilities: Immune to Charm, Illusion, and Healing/Harm spells, Solve Math Problem/Estimate Treasure Hoard 104%, Save vs. Death or Short Circuit (= dead) whenever takes 2x level or greater in electrical damage; Charm 34% (49%), Legend Lore 20%, Pick Pocket 50%, Move Silently 40%, Hide 36%, Hear Noise 30%, Read Languages 25%, Raise Morale, Inspire Ferocity, Negate Songs

Solos: Feyfire, Predict Weather, Detect Anomalous Particle Fields, Feign Death, Trip, Warp Wood, Pyrotechnics

Possessions: Ring of Protection +1, Rang-Dang-Diggedy-Dang-Di-Dang Synthitaur (+15% charm, *Hypnotizing Pattern* and *Knockspell* once/day, *Become Invisible*, *Fly*, and *Levitate* 2 turns/day), Brooch of Electro-Shielding (absorbs mystic missile and electrical damage, 60 pts left), 3 potions of Heal Heavy Wounds (for Sawbear)

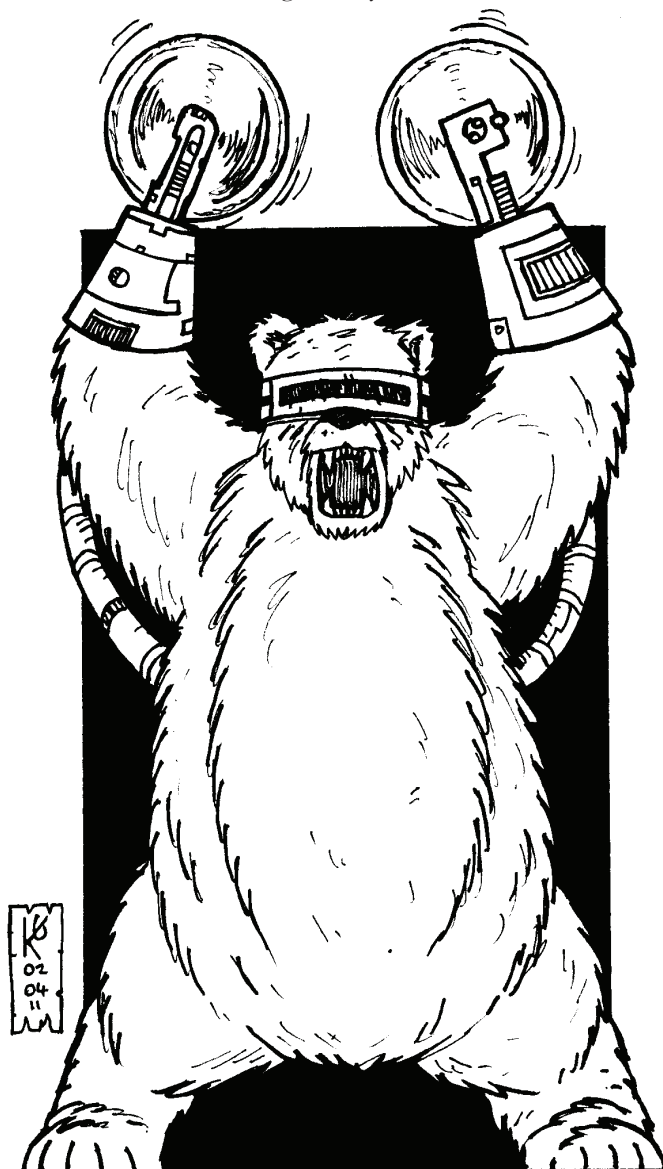
Sawbear

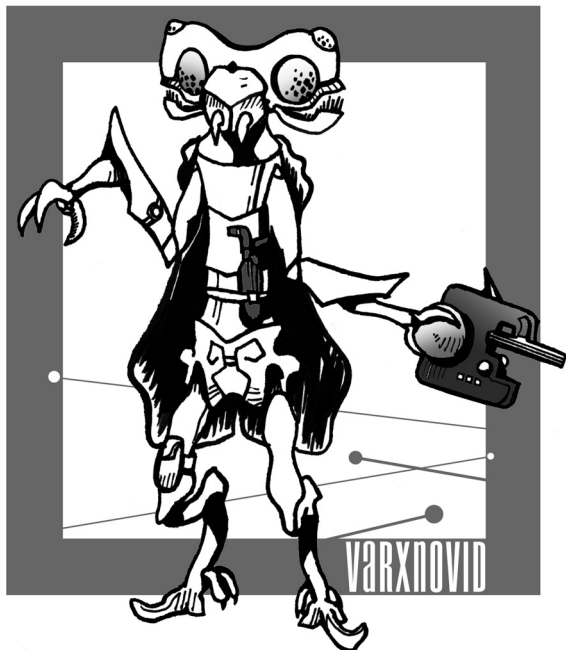
6+6 HD Cave Bear; hp 45, DC 5; Low Intelligence

Abilities: 3 attacks for 2-20/2-20/1-12; if either sawblade hits on a natural 20 the Sawbear also hugs for 2-16 additional, giving it +4 to hit with any remaining attacks; will keep fighting 1-4 rounds after reaching negative hp; speaks Ursine, Common, and Avian/Air Elemental

Possessions: Infrared Goggles, Circular Saw Prosthetics

Description: These wild cards wander the dimensions in search of adventure. They are generally believed to be neutral, though may serve good or evil in truth. They are ideal assistants to a mid-level fantasy or sci-fi adventuring party looking for a little extra information, support, and muscle. Cowboy earns a good if irregular living playing and telling stories; he combines intentional and unintentional humor to good effect, and is a font of curious information. For Sawbear, one Open Entry night at the gladiator pits typically sets him up with raw meat and berries for half a year. They nonetheless demand an equal share of all treasures recovered, and generally more than earn it.





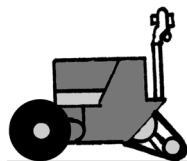
Ferenc "Dog fighter" Donitz of Cygnus (deceased Pilot) and Jerome the Varxnovid (5th level Gunnery crewman)

S 10 I 12 W 13 C 13 D 18 Ch 11 hp 28 DC 5

Possessions: Varxnovid light blaster, a canister of Atmo-lok Sealant, one sterile Data Tag Stapler in leg pouch.

While escaping a heavy gravity world, the Dogfighter of Cygnus lost power to his augmented space suit, and died of a heart attack 8.4 meters from his comrade's extended green claw. Jerome, a jewel-eyed marksman of inflexible chitin and care, froze the body and solemnly viewed the will of Donitz. After returning to the Varxnovid home world, the brave bug should sell the notorious Cygnus Swatter, their customized shuttle. Jerome knows this can't be a simple auction, since the craft was stolen years ago from the mogul of Vat-O-Loin Astro Meats, and sports other purloined technology. He plans to stop at all outlaw ports between his current space sector and the distant Varxnovid colony, quietly advertising the sale. Although the Swatter is no faster than a base fighter, it makes use of its wider hull to equip a strong cannon and a clever turret (borrowed from a shipyard welding rig). The command chair is made for starfaring presidents, and a touch of luxury (for humans) is provided by the food Servomat. A showroom model, it can replicate Vat-O-Loin's priciest protein, like Saturn Sirloin. For an extra sum, Jerome will include the serviceable Half-Track Mule, a combat support robot with one rocket launcher arm and a microwave fanbeam. If a buyer is found before the last voyage is complete, Ferenc's funeral will be observed in dangerous proximity to the Cygnus Police. His final wish was to be laden with timed grenades and glided bodily, like a cold comet, towards their HQ. Thus, the newfound owner will be sure to enjoy a life on the run from authorities.

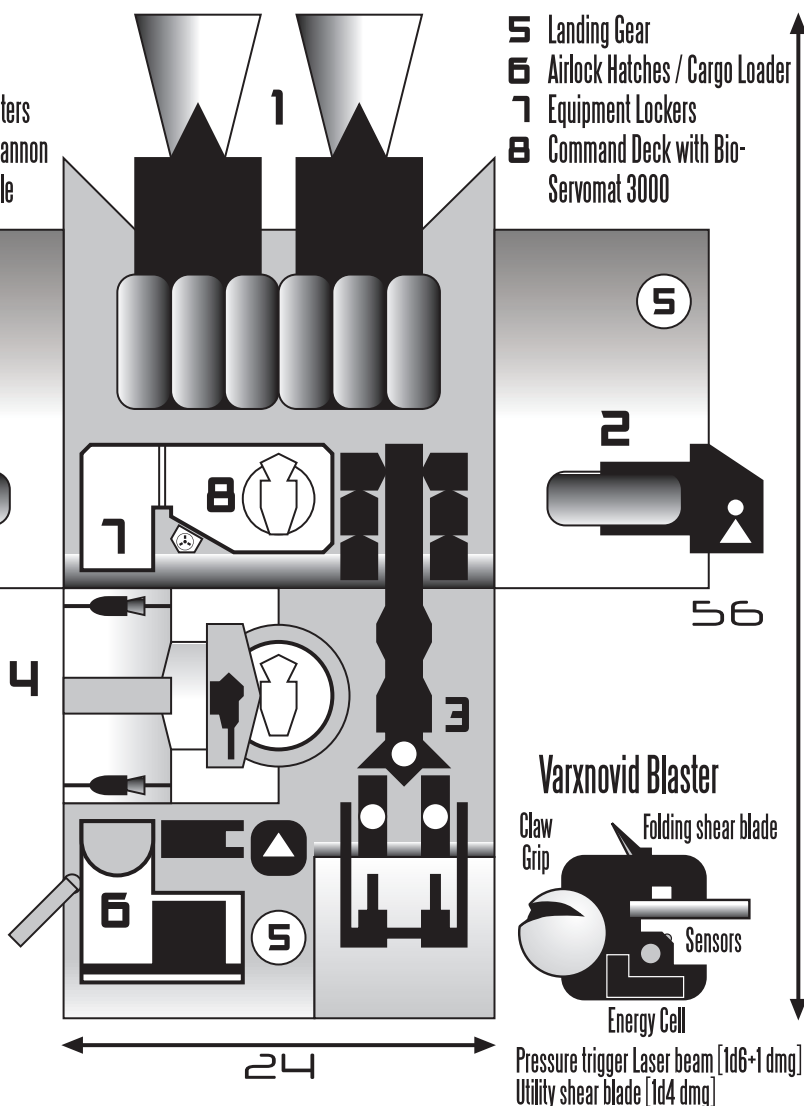
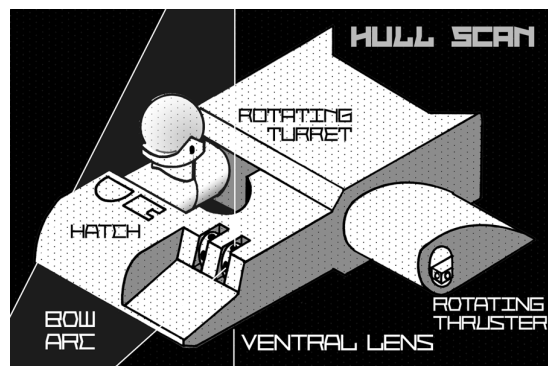
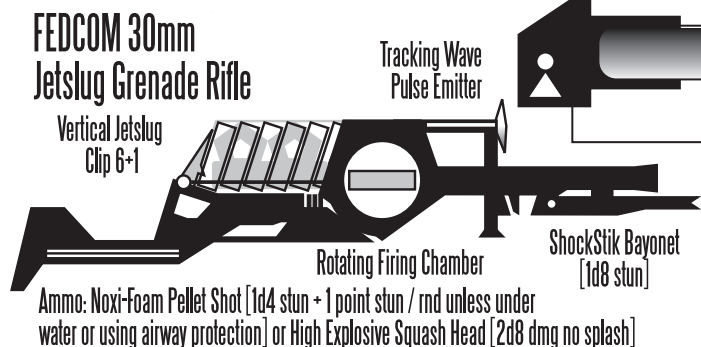
THE CYGNUS SWATTER



HALF
TRACK
MULE

- 1 Original Executive Shuttle
SpikeDrive Propulsion
- 2 Retractable Attitude Thrusters
- 3 40 cm Split Beam Laser Cannon
- 4 Gun Turret / Escape Module

- 5 Landing Gear
- 6 Airlock Hatches / Cargo Loader
- 7 Equipment Lockers
- 8 Command Deck with Bio-Servomat 3000



Grognard's Grimoire:

mystical tomes in black and white by Erin "Taichara" Bisson

The Book of the White Cat: A compact volume, the *Book of the White Cat* is small enough to be cradled comfortably in the crook of one's arm. The book's pages are of creamy parchment edged in gold, with its contents scribed in a sure and delicate hand using black and cinnabar inks; the covers are of dense oak overlaid with immaculately clean white velvet. What seems to be the pelt of a small white cat is stitched to the cover with golden thread, its tail dangling free from the book's spine. The book registers enchantment (see below) and contains:

Veil of Mist (M1, Duration 2 turns): Casting this spell cloaks the magic-user in a protective sheath of magical force. This ward may take on any form -- a pearly mist, orbiting plates of milky crystal, a barely-perceptible green glow -- and will absorb 2-5 hit points of elementally- or magically-inflicted damage before dissipating.

Senseglyph (M1, Range 60', Duration 4 hours): Casting this spell places the glyph for "watchfulness" anywhere within the spell's radius. This glyph is normally silvery but may be rendered visible only to the magic-user if so desired when the spell is cast. For the duration of *Senseglyph*, if a creature passes within 5' of the glyph the magic-user is alerted to its activity; but the glyph does not identify the type of creature or its intent.

Winter's Talons (M1, Range 60', Duration 10 rounds): Casting this spell at a target coats its lower body in bitterly cold ice, freezing it in place and injuring the flesh. The target takes 1-3 hp damage and is immobilized for the spell's duration unless she can break free; a successful Strength check will enable escape in 2-4 rounds, and strong creatures break free in 1-2 rounds. Application of flames frees the target but also inflicts appropriate damage.

The Fire Rose (M1): Casting *The Fire Rose* conjures to the mage's hand a rippling, twisting flame resembling a stylized rose. The mage may use it as a melee weapon (as dagger, with +1 to-hit/damage) or release it as a one-use projectile with range 60', 1-6 damage, and +3 to hit.

Pale Wind's Gift (M2): A rare curative trick in the mage's arsenal, this spell allows the caster to give up his own life force for others. For every hit point sacrificed by the caster, the recipient is healed two hp. This spell's dweomer resists being cheated; if priestly healing is used on the caster to heal the sacrificed hp, it is only half as effective.

Storm of Doves (M2, Range 120'): *Storm of Doves* creates a flock of fluttering birds of crackling electricity that swarm all within a 15' radius of the spell's point of origin. The doves inflict 2-8 points of damage, and victims must save vs. paralyzation or be stunned for one round.



White Queen's Tail: The tail dangling from *The Book of the White Cat* functions as magic item that requires life force to function. Every day a single spell level may be created and stored within the *Tail* by sacrificing two hit points, which may not be healed that day; the *Tail* will hold no more than that single spell level at a time, which may be tapped when the owner of the *Tail* wishes in order to cast any single first level spell currently available to the owner.

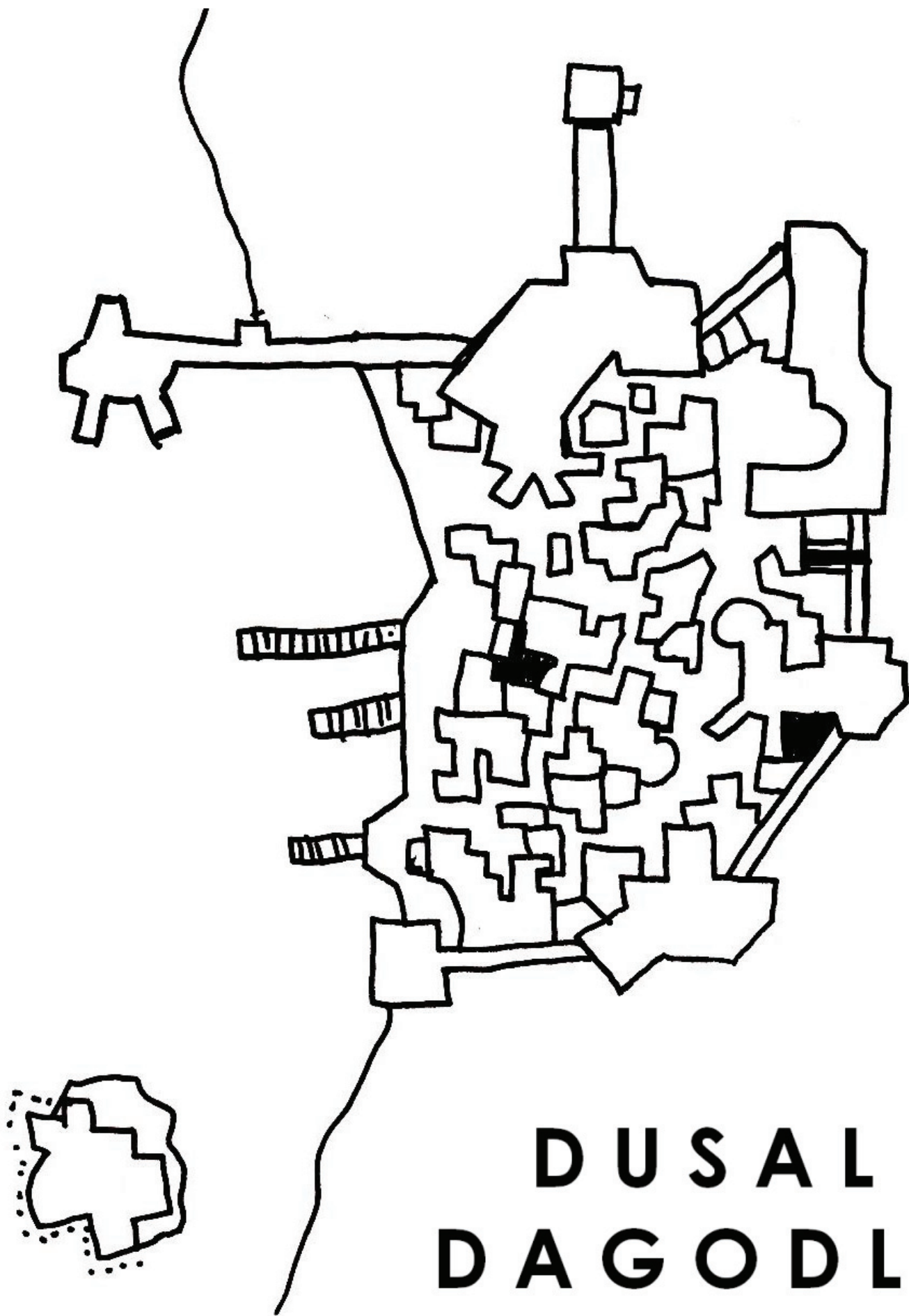
The Book of the Black Rose: Not a "book" at all, but an ebony box suited for containing such a book. Carved delicately all over with knotwork of barbed briars, the two halves of the box are solid pieces of ebony and the seam between them can scarcely fit a hair. Inside the box rests a handful of dried rose petals, a handful of tiny bones, and a sheaf of impossibly thin vellum sheets inked as follows:

Black Rose Talon (M1, Duration 5 rounds): Casting this spell conjures to the mage's hand a long, curved and razor-sharp spur resembling a gigantic briarthorn. It may be used to attack as if it were a dagger, and every successful attack inflicts a -2 penalty to all rolls on the target as a magical toxin floods their veins. The penalty fades after two hours.

Dead Rose Heart (M1, Range 150'): This spell creates a cluster of dark energy resembling a long thin thorn or needle that moves with the mage until directed at a target. It then flies towards the target's heart, blossoming upon impact into a blackened rose and biting into the flesh. The target is stunned for one round, unable to act; and then must save vs. spells or flee from the mage for 2 rounds.

Thorned Retribution (M2): *Thorned Retribution* creates a lacework of thin ruby-black energy vines bearing fanglike thorns that slowly move across -- or perhaps under -- the mage's skin. The first successful attack on the mage activates the vines, causing them to lash out and strike the attacker for 1-4 damage. Wounds caused by the vines bleed at a rate of 1 hp/ round until the wound is seen to.

Iron Briar Embrace (M3, Range 50', Duration 6 rounds): This spell creates a tangle of coiling, clawing metallic black briars studded with fanglike thorns. The briars erupt from the ground beneath the target and wrap themselves around it -- effectively immobilizing it -- and inflict 2-5 hp per round as they drain blood (or other fluids). Targets trapped in the briars may be cut free in 1-4 rounds. Ω



DUSAL DAGODLI

The City State of Dusal Dagodli

locale/adventure by Gabor Lux

playtested by Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago, Laszlo Feher, and Gabor Izapy; dedicated to Italio Calvino

The City: The City State of Dusal Dagodli (pop. 1200) is the calm holiday resort of a few comfort-loving deities on the Sea of Lost Days. The marketplace of ideas in this idyllic, peaceful, and for many dead-boring city state has lead to the flourishing of many competing schools of thought. Religious doctrines are only some of the options for discerning savants; other ethical and moral creeds, to suit most temperaments and provide proper justification for one's deeds, are in abundant supply.

The small, crowded city is ringed by tall and incredibly massive buildings. Most houses within the ring are also at least four or more stories, and they are linked by bridges, galleries and balconies. The lands outside the walls are wild, but not dangerous; the Dexad and the gods provide ample protection for the rocky hilltops, small valleys and miniature lakes within Dusal Dagodli's environs. A few small colonies and villas are found in this countryside.

Although the greatest power in Dusal Dagodli is held by the gods, administration and policing is provided by bureaucrats and soldiers under the control of the Dexad. Membership in this ten-person executive authority, which is open to foreigners as well as citizens, is earned by civic merit and esteem, calculated on the basis of a complicated and constantly re-tallied point system. Only members of the Dexad may make decisions in issues of the city state or gain access to its confidential archives. The Dexad also enjoys monopoly over the right of admittance to the city and the rest of the isle; the former is normally priced at 5 gp and the latter at 100 gp with a further 100 gp deposit; for outlanders, it is mandatory to wear a distinguishing armband while in Dusal Dagodli. The monopolist profits are redistributed among the Dexad's members on the basis of its current organisational structure, weighted by the points possessed by individual members. In accordance with the principle of Optimal Equilibrium, the Dexad may outsource specific public functions if they can be more efficiently fulfilled by private parties than its own corps.

The Places

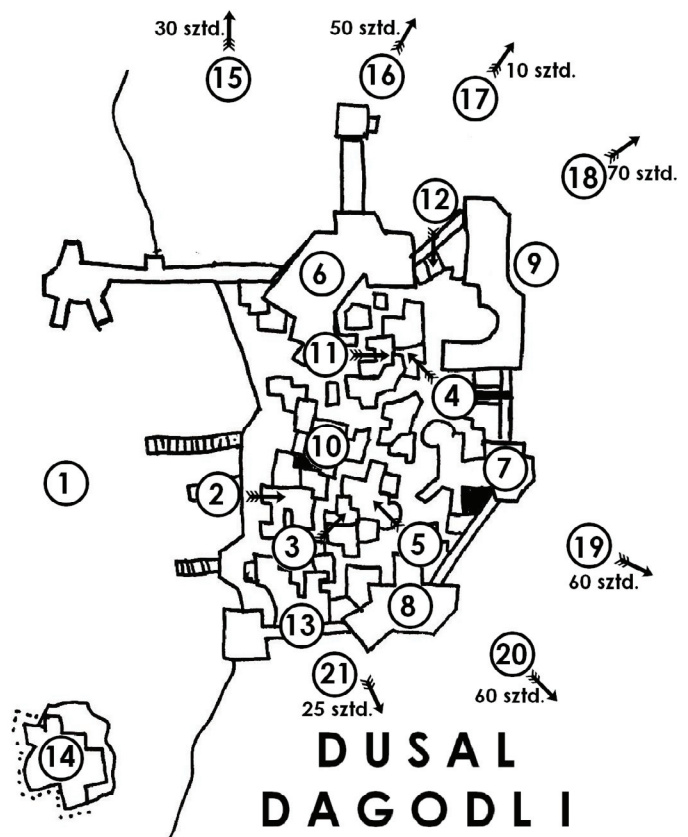
1. Port: Promenade with a long row of old bronze dolphins; teeming multitudes. Sunken marble slabs and torsos clearly visible under the clear water are remains of a fallen regime condemned to be forgotten.

2. Doaal's Star is the city state's best known serai. The prices are steep, reaching 5-7 gp per night, but the fare is very good and the premises entirely safe. A suite occupying the entire southern wing is on permanent reserve to an important client – a tyrant or a god, some say – and not available to guests.

3. The Greater Syncretistic Rabbinate, concerned with a synthesis of all religious and philosophical teachings, has evolved into a society celebrating abstract obfuscation for its own sake. Almost as skilled at sophistry as the Incrementalists, its followers are more concerned with a flamboyant lifestyle than the accumulation of power. The small but friendly structure is dominated by suites around an interior court rich with vegetation.

4. The Heterodox Teacracy was once a place for lively debate and discussion. Now the sumptuous building of blue, gold and green stands empty. Seeing the only goal that united the adherents accomplished, they have scattered to the winds and left the city behind.

5. The Temple of Fedafuce is a place to buy and sell. Suitably exclusive for this city, its services here go beyond the usual loans, letters of credit and other deals in money: subtle and forbidden derivatives, a gambler's poisonous delight, are for sale; one may wager one's kin, one's life, or even one's soul, for buyers may here be found. In chains and fetters deep underground, the overlord of a now lost city state laments what he had sold.



6. The Northern Gate is in fact one of the fortress complexes overlooking the city, home to soldiers and bureaucrats. Punishments for transgressors of local law are here meted out. The only sentence is exile one stadion into the island: a round tunnel ending in a concrete wall and a massive ten-ton piston accomplish the deed.

7–8. The Eastern Gate and The Gate of Omerg Yemtri are half fortress, half a combination of residences, plazas, markets and places of entertainment. They are rather run-down, but possess a derelict charm.

9. The Incrementon: Pragmatic Incrementalism is a school of philosophy and governance which has gained worldwide interest due to its emphasis on achieving the general good through a series of small steps. It is easy to operationalise and implement, and perfectly able to supply an ideology for any regime or policy, making it one of the most popular self-justifying humbugs of ruling circles all over the planet, and contributing significantly to the material gain of Incrementalist philosophers. The faction has possessed the highest tally of points in Dusal Dagodli as far back as anyone can remember. Their headquarters, the Incrementon, is a futurist palace overshadowing the city with its eighteen levels, garden terraces and elegant cafés. As a consulting agency, it maintains a valuable historical archive and a cache of magical writings: these are available to outsiders at market prices, and to cathecumens at various discounts.

10. New Famful is an independent micro-state in the heart of Dusal Dagodli, with its own legislation, armed forces, and citizenship. The main inhabitants are exiles from the city state of Famful, mostly members of the old aristocracy and moneybags fleeing from the egalitarian rule of Mung – as well as its redistributivist policies and the throngs of beggars it has attracted to their ancient homeland. Preaching return to a sedate and simple pastoral lifestyle from the heart of a dense city, the emigrants ever scheme against the men of the Empire, and have been known to sponsor missions of espionage and terrorism.

11. The Mission of Mung, noting the affluence of the city state, has largely placed emphasis on questions of ideal

urban development instead of social progress. Archdeacon Thelanos has nevertheless been frustrated by constant administrative meddling: his petitions and generous funding have not yet warmed the city's authorities to him, while requests for an island pass have been entirely unsuccessful. For years, Mung's point value has not even achieved the minimal threshold.

12. The Council of the Transarchic Sages has seen better days, reduced to penury due to inflexible orthodoxy. Grandiose plans to support the constant adaptation of governance structures to public needs have yet to be taken seriously anywhere, and funding has completely dried up since the enthusiasm accompanying the initial charter. The old and bitter remnants of the council, who accuse the Incrementalists of offering a watered-down imitation of their own tenets, are known to pass their days in endless discussion of policy on the balcony of their dilapidated residence; the senile old fools have been known to insult strangers and hurl trash or other foul materials at anyone who approaches within throwing range.

13. The Temple of Bubeq Mor, a fanciful but uninviting complex, is sanctum to the exclusive religion of this inscrutable deity. Worshippers consider affiliation a great privilege, for which they pay substantial sums. It is not known what form the returns take, or if they are even worthwhile: nonetheless, the austerity of the interior and the simplicity of the idol suggest a purpose beyond self-benefit.

14. The Palace of Beauty soars over the sea with marble and porphyry terraces. This sanctum to Xoé, the goddess of beauty and her all-female retinue is a gilded cage: the sea-side is surrounded by gold-plated poles in the water, a perimeter that keeps inhabitants in and interlopers out with its peculiar power. Only on select holy days, the lowest and highest tides of the year, does a large barge pass: disciples to beauty are then admitted, and those who no longer embody the criteria of Perfect Splendour are sent back to the world with a funeral dirge. A teleportation gate links the temple to Xoé's Aviary (22).

15. The Baths of the Bull's Well are noted for their cure of arthritis and melancholy. Old men retired in comfort are known to congregate here; women are not admitted.



16–18. Halidon and Aellos are pastoral settlements, as closed to the world as it is to them. Tremder Amath, on the far shore of the island, is a drab fishermen's village monitored by watch towers. Unlike the other two, it is off limits to both strangers bearing an island pass – and most autochthones as well.

19. The Temple of Snolog is the main centre of this hedonistic religion on Fomalhaut, where the slug-deity lives in pampered comfort. The orgies of the shaved priests and priestesses are most infamous; yet behind the easy façade are men and women who can kill with the mind as well as implements that send forth invisible forces, and a domed temple's mirages that are known to the wise as a separate, inverted (?) world.

20. The Lakes of the Dexad are named for the council which rules Dusal Dagodli. Half-submerged stone rods sunk to unfathomable depths send forth a steady vibration, with which those attuned to abstract mathematics may commune to gain understanding. Many gain nought; some gain too much and wander the land in empty glee.

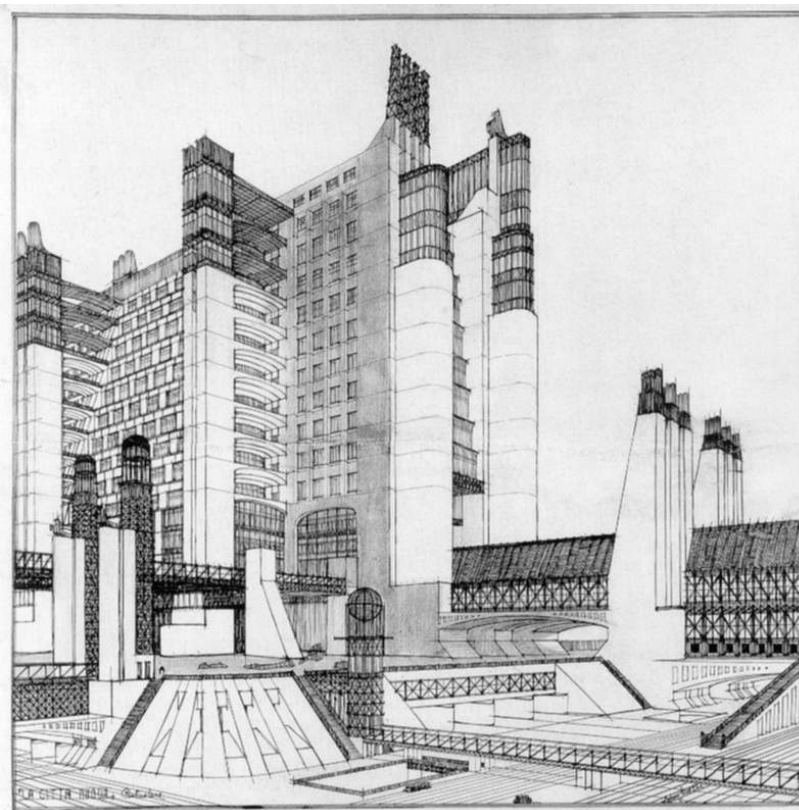
21. The Temple of Mezeng is a half-submerged sequence of terraces by a small but deep lake. Worship is highly methodical, organised around rote sequences which adherents follow unquestioningly and with exactitude. Each rote follows from directions revealed by the clerical hierarchy. Followers include multiple notables in the city, who claim their participation gives them a renewed sense of purpose in their ordinary life. Rumours of doppelganger infiltration in the faith have been denied with the usual vehemence by Mezeng's spokesmen.

22. Xoé's Aviary is a triangular group of empty glass-and-steel towers linked to the Palace of Beauty (14) via a gold-and-pearl gate – a refuge for colourful birds and the priest-esses who care for them. It is a self-contained biosystem of hunters and prey, some subtle and some not, where none may remain uninvolved. Every day, cries fill the glittering prison-paradise. Some say this place is the faith's perversion; others call it its essence, its holy of holies.

The Proclamations of Eidark the Gastronomer

☛☛☛ **The Incrementon:** This meeting point of enlightened governing philosophies, extravagant architecture and neo-avant-garde cuisine is a rare point of light under the dark skies of Fomalhaut. The entrées are characterised by platings seemingly irregular, but in fact meticulously composed with the most precise strokes – a feast of layers and textures in the sequence of dishes delicately juxtaposed with the thematically unified, but constantly and consciously varied, shapes of our plates. Unified yet nonetheless ultra-variant – here, then, is the very spirit of the New Cuisine in an unmistakably splendid environment!

☛ **Doaal's Star:** Famed, respected, but now overshadowed by the unstoppable minds of the Incrementon, this workshop of the Culinary is a locus of impeccable Chromatic traditions. Fundamental dodecahedron-signatures with a lopsided glint on the glaze – Doaal's consistent introduction – lead into a perfect order of the dip's dots, following the composition like an unvanquishable army. The bronze-hued dusts of the house bring calm and a sharp contemplation – and yet, one may not escape the impression that Doaal's star, after so many years, is a falling one.



X Bilbul's Roast: Popular for unfathomable reasons, this place thrives on pseudo-cuisine dedicated to the basest and most animalistic vulgarities of self-nourishment. One finds here sea urchins served on "rectangular" wooden slabs with oil-and-vinegar garnish and limp piles of spuds. The forms are indeed ruled by chaos, but chaos without any hidden order – and elementary geometric principles are

trodden upon with the roast cornerfish, while the "dessert," sea gelatine, is little better. If one takes the time to sail to this city with all the alternatives it has to offer – what sort of stubborn bad taste would ever compel him to dine here?! Ω

THE DARKNESS BENEATH

Level 8: The Deep Caves

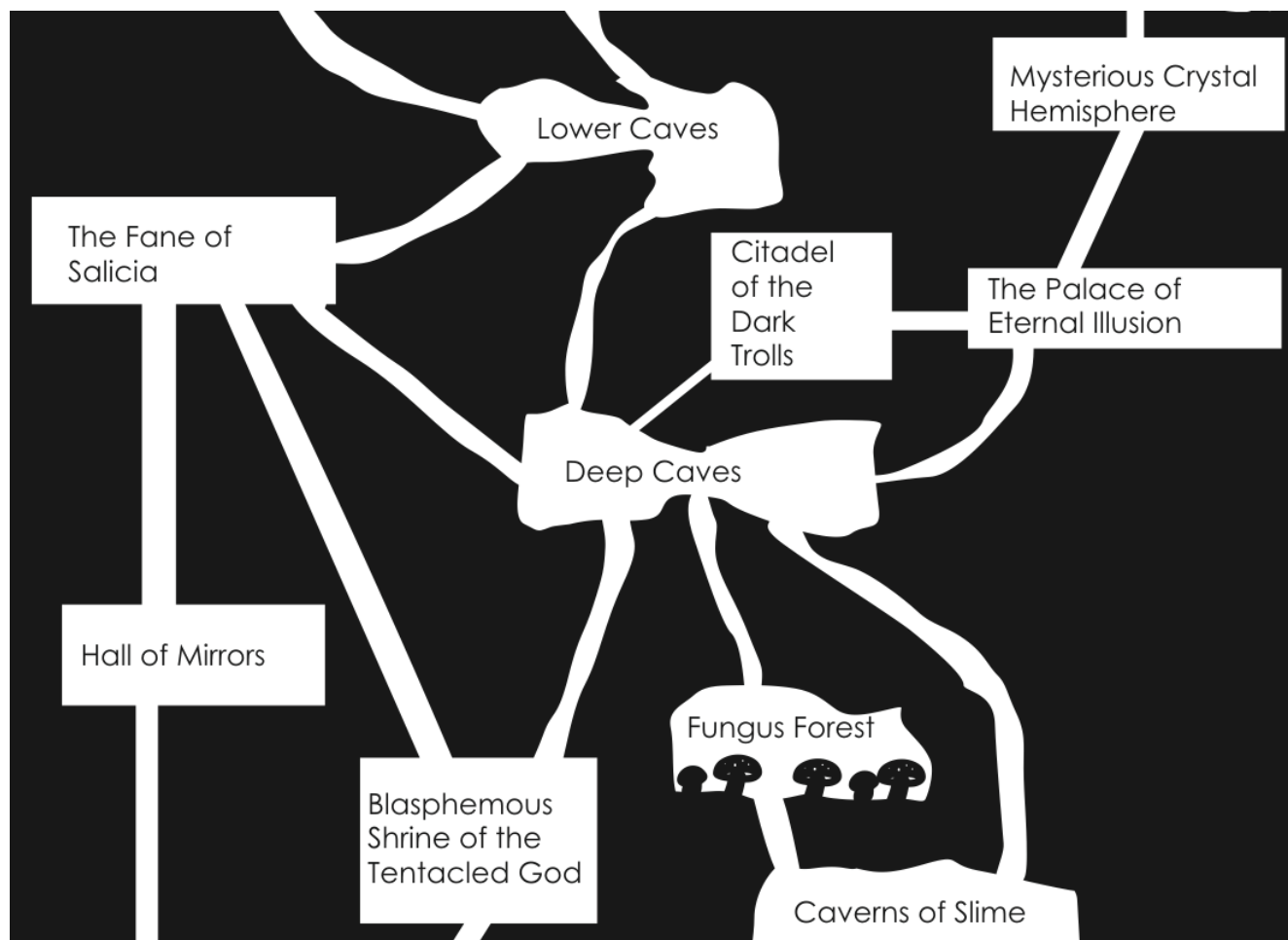
by Heron Prior, David Bowman, Calithena and Simon Bull

Introduction: What you hold in your hands is a self-contained ‘underdark’, a great cavernous wilderness beneath the earth where lightless lakes lap at stalagmitic peaks and raptor-mounted trolls ride a range of desolate howling temples and gem-encrusted tombs. Designed for parties of about the eighth level of experience, this adventure environment can be located anywhere you wish in your own fantasy world, connected to other dungeons by cavernous passages or standing largely on its own.

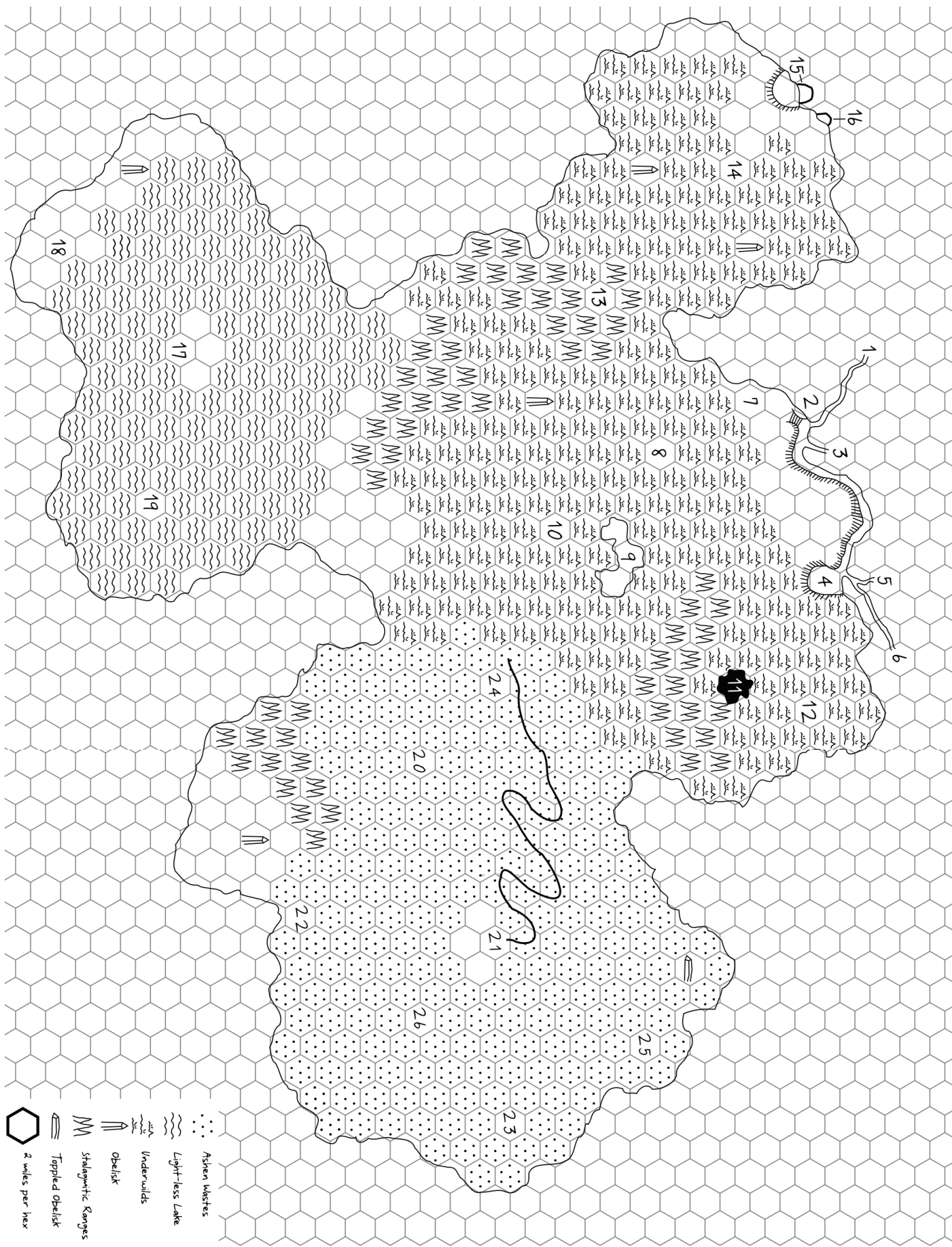
It is also designed to serve as the beating heart of *The Darkness Beneath*, a community megadungeon published in these pages. While you do not need any of the other *Darkness Beneath* levels to play in the *Deep Caves*, if you like what you find here you may wish to check them out! Connections to other levels will be noted, but we have striven to make this underworld as self-contained as possible.

What Are Characters Doing Here? A fair question, deep in the dismal depths – though in our day we never shirked from girding up our loins and going forth in search of plunder and wonder, though our quest took us to the jagged edge of hell and beyond! Still, if more specific pretexts are needed, here is a sampling (d6):

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | The Goblins of the Thousand Spears (15) or the Dark Trolls of Dagendreng Hold (5) have taken a prisoner, or characters need to hire goblin or troll armies there. |
| 2 | An ancient artifact or map is needed, and can only be recovered from the Tomb of Thirteen (13), Night-Wing Temple (14), or Snow Throne (20). |
| 3 | Characters need to buy or sell something that can't be obtained anywhere else at the Multiversal Bazaar (21), or else attempt to solicit the services of the Undoers there to travel to another world. |
| 4 | The Iron Duke of Marchand has hired or sentenced PCs to capture 100 pterocs from their aeries (or from 4) to serve as mounts for his new Winged Knights. |
| 5 | An old friend or mentor or renowned hero lies tangled and asleep in the Thicket Tunnels of the Flower Dryad (7), and must be brought back to the surface. |
| 6 | A PC or prominent NPC wishes to establish his own fortress in <i>The Deep Caves</i> , and the party travels these lands to establish their own stronghold. |







The Map: The footprint of the Deep Caves is about 72 miles across (2 mile hexes) which will require several days to cross on foot. The “floor” of the level is undulating and rolling, with shallow vales and low rises punctuated by towering stalagmites that pierce the dim air sometimes quite far above. Intermittent clouds of bioluminescent fog create varying levels of light, from nearly pitch black to something better than full moonlight. The uppermost reaches of the cave have a star-blue luminescence which serves to add scope and depth for onlookers, but is not enough to yield normal sight in the lower reaches on the cavern floor. In general the lower the altitude, the darker it is. The Ashen Wastes (20-26) are unlit, although the bazaar at their center (21) serves as a beacon, one whose unearthly glow can be seen from anywhere in the *Deep Caves* which has a line of sight to it.

Key to the Deep Caves

Highway Area

1. Troll Highway
2. Black Spinel Cliffs
3. The Tilting Tunnels
4. Pteroc Stables
5. Dagendreng Hold
6. Fortified Causeway to the Troll Citadel

Underwilds

7. Thicket Tunnels of the Flower Dryad
8. Seekers' Redoubt
9. Fell Lagoons
10. Raptor Run
11. Tar Pits
12. The Bad Puppets' Camp
13. Tomb of Thirteen
14. Nightwing Temple

Thousand Spears

15. Cliff-City of the Thousand Spears
16. Lair of Gorangol, the Night Dragon

Lightless Lake

17. The Pale Grove
18. The Cock-Robin
19. Sunken City

Ashen Wastes

20. Snow Throne
21. Multiversal Bazaar
22. Bubble Boy
23. Shrine to the Black Lord of Nothingness
24. Siren Temple
25. House of the Toad
26. Mourner's Keep

To fully detail an environment of this scope is beyond (*what I was willing to print in one issue – Ig*). What we have done instead is to provide a general Gazetteer, with short descriptions and random encounter tables, for the entirety

The Obelisks: Black basalt pillars covered with ancient runes, anyone with even remote psychic sensitivity (magic, psionics, or Wisdom 13+) will hear a dim buzzing from them even a mile away that grows to a terrible grinding chitter when the obelisks come within sight. The language is indecipherable even to magic. Every turn a sentient being is within 30' of an obelisk they must save vs. *Feeble-mindedness*, whether they are sensitive/ magical or not (non-sensitives and non-spellcasters save at +2, however). Beings failing their save become drooling, humming idiots until 1-6 days spent continuously outside any obelisk hex. Toppled obelisks have the same appearance but do not cause madness, and their otherworldly buzz is only audible to the most sensitive. The obelisks are in effect an unresolvable mystery unless you, the GM, deem otherwise, though they are venerated by the Shrine of the Black Lord of Nothingness (23) and ignored by the Undoers of the Multiversal Bazaar (21), who are immune to their effects.

of the Deep Caves, mostly written by Dave and Cal; and then more detailed descriptions of the Ashen Wastes and the Siren Temple and House of the Toad within it, mostly written by Heron. Future submissions to *FO!* documenting the areas merely sketched here in more detail, or even inventing completely new ones, are welcome.

The Highway Area

1. This region is defined by the **Troll Highway**, a well-trodden thoroughfare running from higher up in the underworld (in the full *DB* it connects to Level 5, *The Lower Caves*). Until it reaches the Black Spinel Cliffs (2), the Highway is a great twisting enclosed tunnel with occasional side caverns, of a minimum diameter as to allow two elephants to pass side by side. It is also fairly safe as such places go; the Trolls are vigilant so close to their Citadel.

2. When the highway reaches the **Black Spinel Cliffs**, a breathtaking view of *The Deep Caves* may be had, as the road here emerges from its cavernous containment and runs along a cliff-side running from 500 down to 300 feet above the Underwilds. The cliffs are difficult to climb due to sheerness and sharp outcroppings; a thief might manage with good rolls, but what of the rest of the party? Unless some magic or serious climbing equipment can bring a whole party down, the Pteroc Stables (4) are likely to be a party's best bet for exploration.

3. **The Tilting Tunnels** are a complex, three-dimensional maze of caverns and wooden buildings and bridges counterbalanced over vast subterranean abysses. The whole tunnel complex is somewhat akin to a giant Rube Goldberg contraption, and when the wooden segments move relative to one another PCs may often be left at a dead end or unable to retrace their steps. There are however two routes down through the tunnels that allow one to reach the Underwilds two hexes SE of the Tunnels, and this is known to Snearg (4), who will suggest this as an alternate route for the parsimonious. The Tilting Tunnels are inhab-

ited by the Puppeteer (Neutral Mag 12 with Dr. Octopus-like wooden prosthetics), a bizarre enchanter of semi-sentient, Oz-like constructs made from wood and sawdust and dungeon detritus. Along with his twin djinn servants, the Puppeteer creates a vast panoply of servitors – animated puppets, life-size cuckoo clocks and jack-in-the-boxes, juggernauts, spinning tops, and his vexing masterworks, the Bad Puppets, sentient, free-willed animates who are quite willing to thwart the Puppeteer’s will whenever they can get off the strings that bind them to him. The Puppeteer is avid to trade for more wood, and if PCs of insufficient strength challenge him he may well Geas them (with a clockwork device grafted to their backs) to bring him more from the Underwilds, as he is loath to lose any more Bad Puppets to the bandits there. The Puppeteer is obsessive and eccentric, monomaniacally focused on his creations, but not malevolent per se. He is very powerful, especially in his own realm, and coexists with the Undoers and the dark trolls in an uneasy détente.

4. The most reliable way to get down to the Underwilds and beyond is found at the **Pteroc Stables**, run by Snearg, a Cave Troll (10 HD Troll, 2 Claws for 2d6 each) whose long possession of a *Pearl of Wisdom* has bestowed upon him ordinary human cunning and intelligence, and his stone giant wife Lith, whose minimal druidic ability allows her to speak to the Pterocs, something Snearg has learned rudimentary skill at as well. Pterocs (9 HD, DC 6) are giant, atavistic, brightly colored flying reptiles with a vague resemblance to eagles and parrots. One pteroc can carry one large, two normal, or three small PCs. The pterocs here naturally roost in this part of the Black Spinel Cliffs, so Snearg has no fear about his charges returning; they cost 1000 gp to rent, with an additional 1000 gp deposit to be refunded upon the pteroc’s healthy and timely return. A single Multiversal Bazaar token suffices for rental as well. Unless PCs have some way to command their obedience, the pterocs will return immediately after characters get off their backs at their first destination. They may be flown anywhere in *The Deep Caves* except the Ashen Wastes, which they will not cross farther than 3 miles into. The Dark Trolls have an understanding with Snearg, and they ride at no cost and with priority over other riders. Snearg will bargain if he is treated with respect, but he knows that his customers have few other options.

5. After the Pteroc Stables the Troll Highway once again becomes tunnel-like, and a smaller (one-elephant) branch leads to the **Dagendreng Hold**, a carved-out redoubt for highborn and recently wealthy dark trolls, as well as the bravest wayfarers in *The Darkness Beneath*. A sort of dungeon-bound Gentlemen’s Club, this is the best place for non-trolls to go if they wish to purchase influence or mercenary support from the dark trolls, although prices are always high and service always uncertain, and petitioners may be eaten for their trouble. There is also a teleportation circle hidden here that connects to the Thieves’ Guild in the city of Marchand, and a particularly ruthless coterie of

thieves (some placed high in the Dragon Earl’s retinue), working to further the dark trolls’ purposes in the world above, can sometimes be found here as well. (The Puppeteer (3) deals with them for wood.) Highborn Dark Trolls are known as Drones, and those who loiter here play the role of the young, idle scion of wealth to the hilt; *Nellie Dean* may be heard at all hours, emanating from the gindrenched bowels within. It is hard to imagine spirits more crushed than those of Dagendreng’s elven barmaids.

6. After winding its way down from the surface far above, the Troll Highway steadily rises after Dagendreng Hold and finally ends here, before massive stone walls and a gargantuan iron-shod gate of petrified wood. Warriors and anyone moderately alert will note that ballista-sized murder holes and giant pots of superheated tar festoon the **Fortified Causeway to the Troll Citadel** for some distance before and after these mighty gates, which are heavily guarded by dark trolls in plate armor bearing light ballistae (3d6 damage). None but Dark Trolls and their dinosaur pets and mounts may pass these gates, a fact which the guards will politely (really!) inform visitors of; even superheroic parties will likely find a direct assault on the front gates akin to suicide, for there are wards against magic here as well as tremendous force of arms. In the full *Darkness Beneath* the Citadel of the Dark Trolls is Level 9, and will be detailed in a future issue of *Fight On!*

Underwilds

7. The Underwilds are akin to a primeval jungle, albeit with a greater proportion of jutting stone, fungus, mold, and moss to go with its trees, ferns, and grass. They are full of dinosaurs and strange enclaves, such as the **Thicket Tunnels of the Flower Dryad**, a dungeon complex filled with shambling plant monsters, scores of delvers slumbering amidst somnolent mists and twisting roots for eternity, and the eponymous dryad and her ‘flower.’

8. One of the safer places in the Underwilds, and one that dark troll dinosaur hunters and unguided pterocs will almost always come to, is **Seeker’s Redoubt**. An ancient shrine of Law, the Redoubt bestows its blessings on the just and the unjust alike; a great calm falls on all those who camp within its environs, making fighting nearly impossible (-4 save vs. magic to initiate or continue each round) and healing those who rest here 1d6 hp each day. Beings are often present here: roll 1d6-4 Underwilds encounters here each day, but no matter how evil or hungry these beings will never cause trouble within the Redoubt itself.

9. The **Fell Lagoons** teem with visiting dinosaurs, plesiosaurs, horrible toothed fishes, carnivorous aquatic plants, and slaughtered caravans of dark trolls, goblins, and adventurous traders. Highly valuable (1000 gp +) pearls may be obtained by divers from the freshwater oysters found here, and there are a few ancient ruins as well, but it is quite questionable whether any of it is worth the cost. Somewhere within the Lagoons are passages stretching

deeper into the dungeon; in *The Darkness Beneath* these lead to level 11, the Fungus Forest and Mold Falls.

10. The relatively open mosslands of **Raptor Run** are full of Claw Maws (velociraptors – HD 2, DC 2, Bite 1-4, jaws lock on) and Blood Thumps (dark troll dinosaur mounts – HD 10, DC 4, Bite 2-12, trample), as well as the rarer and not yet troll-domesticated Great Maws (utahraptors – HD 14, DC 4, Claws 1-12, Bite 2-20). Within this area is a dark troll breaking ground, where an outpost of dark troll dinosaur hunters bring their captures for training to expert troll animal trainers and a wizened halfling druid-witch.

11. The **Tar Pits**, in addition to being a good source of undecayed ancient dinosaurs and monsters, are haunted by a band of terrible Tar Fiends from the Ashen Wastes. An Ashen Mage is here as well, and if the Mourners (see the Ashen Wastes, below) ever learn to harness and conjure force the vast life-forces still trapped within the tar, it could alter the balance of power in *The Deep Caves* and the dungeons beyond forever, or even give them an army with which to assault the surface world.

12. The Bad Puppets' Camp is home to a large gang of semi-sentient enchanted beings, escaped servants of the Puppeteer (3). Three Bad Puppets lead a coterie of several score lesser creations with various levels of ability and consciousness. They occasionally engage in banditry against trolls and wayfarers, their goal being to gain more magical devices to use in their war against the Puppeteer. But their primary motive is revenge against their creator for the servitude he keeps their fellow Puppets in, and towards that end they are perpetually planning sorties into and, eventually, a decisive raid against the Tilting Tunnels. They know where the lower exits from 3 to the Underwild are, and their leader, the first Bad Puppet to break free from the Puppeteer's control, also knows a secret passage that leads to within the dark trolls' Citadel. He will not reveal this information (or that he has it) to anyone unless they provide decisive help against the Puppeteer; the Bad Puppets are no fools and do not want trouble with the trolls until their original score is settled.

13. The Tomb of Thirteen, a lethal dungeon, may present welcome respite from the terrible dinosaur-infested wilderness outside. In addition to monsters and treasure, the Tomb includes a great number of puzzle-traps and will require dumb luck as well as good play to reach some of its most remote secrets. Treasure maps may well lead here.

14. The Nightwing Temple and dungeons beneath are the dwelling-places of the psychic, extradimensional Control Freaks (treat as intelligent Unseen Stalkers with telepathy and mind control), allies of the Undoers who keep Gorangal the Night Dragon (16) and the goblins of the Thousand Spears who worship her (15) in mental thrall. Cave-villages of enslaved Troblins who serve the Control Freaks ring the temple, and these will both fight off outsiders and warn the Control Freaks of their



A tar fiend prepares for its afternoon snack.

approach. Nominally a semi-ruined temple to the Night Dragons, the dungeons here are difficult even by the standards of *The Deep Caves*, but if a party has the ability to cope with psychic attack and invisible foes, the strange extradimensional spaces beneath the temple contain a great deal of information and valuable magical and technological treasure. Gorangal's consort Liringhast is imprisoned here as well. Victory here also opens up the possibility of friendship with two Night Dragons and a thousand goblin warriors, if the thralldom of the Control Freaks is broken.

Thousand Spears

15. Cliff-City of the Thousand Spears: The proud goblin warriors who live here (treat as 2 HD hobgoblins who regenerate 1 hp/round) once held these lands against the troll-folk above, hunting dinosaurs for meat and hiring out as mercenaries. But since the coming of the Mourners, the Multiversal Bazaar, and above all the Control Freaks, they have been brought low, and now live in psychic thralldom, their souls slowly flensed for the Freaks' nourishment. There is a secret passage here to an underground shrine of Chaotic priestesses (Level 6, *The Fane of Salicia* in the full dungeon) who sometimes hire or kidnap these goblins as well as selling them healing and other services. The Goblins of the Thousand Spears worship Gorangal, the Night Dragon, and her consort Liringhast, in great caverns higher up in the cliffside (16). They would die to a goblin against the Control Freaks at her orders, but as long as they have Liringhast she will not act against them.

16. The Lair of Gorangol, The Night Dragon stands higher on the cliffs and to the north of the City of the Thousand Spears. Ancient idols flank the cavern mouth; within the dread Gorangol (Chaotic Huge Ancient Night Dragon) mourns with her hoard, pining for her stolen consort Liringhast. Gorangol is neither good nor patient, but she does love Liringhast and will reward any who rescue him, with her friendship if not her treasure. She is strong enough to resist the Freaks' mind control, but not so strong as to act against them without losing Liringhast first, so she does nothing, leaving her worshippers to be enthralled and muttering into her vast golden troves.

Lightless Lake

17. If one can bypass the gargantuan sixteen-headed hydra swimming the Lake's waters and navigate across miles unlit by dimshroom or the Bazaar's beacon – for this region, unlike the rest of the Caves, is almost completely dark – one might eventually come to the ghostly island at the Lake's center and the **Pale Grove** upon it. Glowing softly, but visible only a mile or less away, this ghostly forest is a dimensional nexus of sorts, through which not only space but time can be traversed. Within the Grove can be encountered strange monsters from other worlds, as well as Skogsra (10 HD, DC 3) and Huldra (7+1 HD, DC 5), cow-tailed fae beauties that act as guides and tricksters to those who venture within. Among their other abilities, Skogsra and Huldra can conjure a black moss in a 30' radius which instantly puts 2 HD and below beings to sleep and slows all others. Elsewhere on the island is an altar of purple stone, stained from centuries of ritual sacrifice; this leads downwards to an eldritch temple deeper down (Level 12, *The Blasphemous Shrine of the Tentacled God* in the full dungeon).

18. On the far shores of the Lake may be found the good ship **Cock-Robin**, crewed by forty-seven ginger-headed sailors and captained by Redhead Tom; a freak storm off the Yucatan left them stranded here. Whether they are now implacable undead pirates who must be defeated, or still-living Earthly sailors who might help PCs or be returned to their home through the magic of the Grove, or both, is up to the GM to determine.

19. Beneath the waves of the Lake here is a **Sunken City**, where dwells an ancient race of sea elves that neither has nor desires any contact with the world outside. There is ancient magic and technology here, and the City is very large, full of forgotten areas, strange interlopers, and interesting treasure. It is not magically concealed, but it is in the dark, and its highest spires are one hundred feet below the Lake's surface.

The **Ashen Wastes**, some of the areas for adventure within them, and tables for random encounters there are given a fuller treatment by Heron below.

Random Encounter Tables

Highway Area (d12):

1-3	Mounted Dark Troll Patrol: 2-8 Dark Trolls mounted on Blood Thumps
4	Siege Dinosaur Handling Party: 0-3 Dark Trolls mounted on Blood Thumps, 1-3 Dark Troll Dinosaur Handlers, and 1 Monoclonius
5	3-24 Dark Troll Footmen returning from a battle in the surface world
6	1-4 Dark Troll Drones (highborn); 20% to be accompanied by 1-3 human members of the Marchand 'Theives' Guild (see 5)
7	Surface World Trading Party heading to Multiversal Bazaar; led by d3: 1 Mage, 2 Nobleman, 3 Trader of level 8-13; d6 other NPCs or monsters of levels 6-12; 75% to have a Multiversal Bazaar Token already
8	1-20 Escaped Slaves (race d6: 1 Human, 2 Goblin, 3 Troglodyte, 4 Crab-Man, 5 Other Type, 6 Mixed Group, d4+1 types present)
9	3-18 hungry Claw Maws (velociraptors)
10	1-6 Puppets on an errand for the Puppeteer; 50% chance of a single Bad Puppet leader (solo if only one puppet is indicated on the first roll)
11-12	Roll on your standard encounter tables for dungeon level 8

Underwilds and Thousand Spears (d16):

1	3-8 Dark Trolls patrolling on foot
2	2-4 Dark Trolls patrolling on Pterocs
3	1-2 Dark Troll Dinosaur Hunters with 2-5 ordinary Dark Trolls; 50% chance of 2-8 Claw Maws for tracking; 20% chance to have actually caught and bound something (d20: 1-16 Blood Thump, 17-19 Monoclonius, 20 Great Maw)
4	Trading Party (as roll of 7 above)
5	Escaped Slaves (as roll of 8 above)
6	Puppet Bandit Party (2-12 Puppets and 1 Bad Puppet – on patrol from 12)
7-8	Herbivorous Dinosaur d6: 1-2 Blood Thump, 3-5 Ignuanadon, 6 Monoclonius
9	Carnosaur d4: 1-3 Claw Maw, 4 Great Maw
10	Roll or choose random dinosaur from prehistoric table
11	Hunting Party of 4-32 Thousand Spears Goblins or 3-18 Troblins (50% chance of each)
12	Zombie Dinosaurs: choose or roll d6 at random
13	Adventuring Party: 2-5 members of level 5-11
14	Treasure Hunters (roll on subtable below)
15	Roll random (sub-tropical) wilderness encounter from your standard tables
16	Roll random encounter for dungeon level 8

Lightless Lake (d4: 50% chance every d3 days)

1	Sixteen Headed Lake Hydra
2	The Cock-Robin (see 18)
3-4	Roll on a standard deep ocean encounter table – if humans or other sentient beings are encountered, they are either Escaped Slaves (as roll of 5 on the Highway Area table) or Treasure Hunters (roll on subtable below)

Treasure Hunters (d4):

1	Veteran Treasure Hunters. A large group (1d12+12) of Neutral human and half-orc fighters and thieves, levels 4-7. They were formerly henchmen to a powerful Lord, abandoned in <i>The Darkness Beneath</i> when their master was dissolved by a nasty slime. They have since turned to tomb robbing, and are returning from a modest score (3000gp value). All are on foot, but one leads “Bessy” - a blind, mangy pack mule, driven insane by her extended time below. Despite her shortcomings, Bessy is of especially sturdy stock. She has uncanny luck, having been blessed by a minor godling early in her dungeoneering career. She has since passed from owner to owner, most of whom she has outlived. She will follow whoever holds her rope, but is prone to fits of braying at inopportune times and will kick anyone who stands too close behind her. The words “wizard,” “treasure,” and the sound of lute strings all send her into a mindless panic, braying and bolting recklessly in a random direction for 1 turn. Those who spend time with her learn to work around such things.
2	Dark Troll Deserters. Six Dark Troll footmen in battered armor are led by a Dark Troll Captain on a Blood Thump. A second Blood Thump carries supplies. The Captain carries a map showing several areas of interest, only one of which is real. They have little interest in a fight but may try to shake down the party anyway.
3	Surly Dwarves. 3d4 luckless Dwarves and a Dwarf Warrior/Priest (L 5/5) are returning to the Multiversal Bazaar, eager to claim justice for a bogus map. They are irritable but not looking for trouble. All carry large packs and excavation tools. One has been replaced by a Tar Fiend shape-shifter.
4	Ogre Expedition. Ten Ogres carrying packs of excavation gear accompany a half-ogre warrior (barbarian warrior 8) on a large lizard. Twelve Troblin slaves scamper behind. The Ogres carry useless charms against the Mourners and a map showing both the Keep (26, with an X marked at a point nearby) and the Trade Road. Ogrish notes in the margins state “over the second ridge south, third pillar from the left.” The Ogres are well-equipped, with chainmail shirts, spears for throwing, and bardiches.

The Ashen Wastes

Introduction: The Ashen Wastes are vast plains of hardened mud and volcanic ash, rising hundreds of feet above the original floor of the cavern. From their outer edges, the Wastes ascend in a gradual slope to a central plateau, cut through with a spider-web of cracks, trenches, and steep-sided valleys. Here, the ever-swirling dust muffles both sound and light, moving of its own capricious will. Traces of unknown minerals are borne on the winds, disrupting both detection and navigational magic. Some whisper that the particles are bits of Chaos itself, and have wrought strange transformations on the creatures here.

At the center of the cavern lies the Multiversal Bazaar, a fabled marketplace drawing travelers from throughout the planes. If not for the Bazaar, few would choose to travel in this desolate place, but travel they do. The Bazaar has become a hub of activity in *The Darkness Beneath* and a base of operations for tomb robbers. Extensive ruins lie beneath the dust, built centuries ago by a tribe of strange and alien settlers. Though a sudden eruption brought an end to both the settlers and their city, their vengeful spirits linger on. They are known now only as the Mourners. Their ruins hide wondrous relics, but the Mourners defend them with a jealous fury, and most who go searching do not return.

The Environment: Though the Ashen Wastes are largely dead, pockets of life do exist. Moisture from above creates seasonal streams, carving narrow channels through the deep mud. Elsewhere, colonies of bats create fields of guano, nurturing small oases of fungal and insect life. Persistent rumors also tell of hidden aquifers and waterways far beneath the dust.

Travel: Travelers here are usually desperate bands of tomb robbers or well-armed caravans passing to or from the Multiversal Bazaar. The terrain is difficult, and movement is at half speed. Mounts not indigenous to the area must be led on foot. Only the Trade Road and several lesser caravan paths allow faster travel, $\frac{3}{4}$ the normal rate.

Power Groups within the Wastes

The Mourners: These free-willed mummies haunt the Wastes, attacking all who live. Deep within their sunken ruins, their magi still labor upon strange and inscrutable projects, but their ultimate goals remain unknown. See *New Monsters* for greater detail.

Dark Trolls: The Dark Trolls have nominal lordship over the Ashen Wastes, but do little to control them. Those encountered here are typically merchant caravans, military officers on some official business, or private groups of treasure seekers. If given a choice, most Dark Trolls prefer not to enter the Wastes at all.

Urek Deadbear and Gluushik the Toad: Two rival necromancers are at work within the Wastes, and wild rumors about both are circulating throughout the region. Players may be drawn into their struggle by chance encounter, or

Multiversal Bazaar Tokens are special, triangular metal coins bearing an indecipherable rune that allow the bearer and up to 2 associates entrance to the Bazaar. There is no other way to enter the bazaar, short of being a berserk demigod with the power to cow the Undoers, so these Tokens are in high demand. They may be found in treasure hordes or after especially tough fights, but they are not common, and owners never give them up easily. It is possible that one of the Drones in Dagendreg Hold (5) might gamble one away at a game of chance, if PCs can survive such a victory after the fact. The Puppeteer (3) and Gorangol (16) surely have a few each as well.

may be enticed by a bounty for the one known as Gluushik the Toad. For further detail see *The Bear and the Toad* scenario below, connected to 25.

Points of Interest

20. The **Snow Throne** may be found ice-bound within snow-covered ruins, highly uncharacteristic for the region. This is a pocket realm under the rule of an insane outcast demon-prince (*to be detailed by Simon next issue – Ig*).

21. The great beacon and twinkling lights of the **Multiversal Bazaar** are visible throughout the cavern, though often obscured by swirling dust. Here, the merchandise of countless worlds is bought and sold, and many strange creatures come to trade. A bizarre shantytown filled with unexpected enticements and a cavern system partially flooded with both water and garbage border it. This place is run by the Undoers, strange dimension-traveling sorcerers (invisible within their cowed cloaks) powerful as greater demons who will barter for just about anything with those who possess tokens. Their headman's name is reputedly Grigij, but as they are impossible to tell apart for most, this information is nuncupatory. They

bargain brutally, and some of their wares are treacherous, but with luck and cunning the Multiversal Bazaar is a place where anything one wants genuinely can be found. As a result, great potentates, archmages, and even slumming demigods can sometimes be found here, hoping to gain something new or regain something old.

22. Here a vengeful undead monster, the **Bubble Boy**, dwells deep within the ruins. The Bubble Boy has a very high level of psychic awareness and tremendous power to melt minds, which he does with nightmarish memories from his painful life.

23. The **Shrine to the Black Lord of Nothingness** is inhabited by a band of specters, whose current project is to animate Tyrannomortis (a zombie T-Rex) to cause havoc throughout *The Deep Caves*. The Black Lord of Nothingness is a bizarre not-deity, without representation or creed, which seems to represent something like the utter annihilation of existence. The specters here have no genuine psychic or intercessionary connection with their deity, but they do possess an ancient dull black rod which radiates magic (a key, perhaps, to vaults lower down...).

24. The **Siren Temple** has only recently appeared, rising from the dust in a single night. From its lighted tower a droning horn sounds across the plains, luring all who hear it to their doom. Its presence now renders the westernmost section of the Trade Road impassable. Several armed groups have already set forth to silence its deadly song, but none have returned. This area is detailed in *The Siren Temple* scenario.

25. When not traveling about the Wastes, the necromancer Gluushik dwells at the **House of the Toad** in a ruin at the bottom of a steep gully. Here, he watches out for his rival



Deadbear and hopes to learn the secrets of the Mourners' spiritual power, thus far with little success. He traps lone Mourners for study, eventually harvesting their powdered organs for sale. Though the Mourners as a whole have not yet organized against him, knowledge of his activities is spreading. For his part, Gluushik is aware of his enemies, and takes great care when traveling. This area is detailed in *The Bear and the Toad* scenario.

26. Mourner's Keep, or simply "The Keep", is a maze-like jumble of cyclopean blocks, likely a partial foundation for some massive, unfinished building project. The site coves roughly 4 acres, and is used as a landmark, meeting place and occasional shelter. Lately, a large camp of Troblins led by Hungus the Drooler has attempted to claim it as their own, but no one expects them to hold it for long.

The Trade Road: From the western border of the Wastes, a road of raised stone cuts across a lowland plain before disappearing beneath the dust. From there, a rough cart track continues onward to the Multiversal Bazaar. The path meanders through ravines and gullies, with only a handful of scattered markers as guides.

The Canal: Persistent rumors tell of a subterranean waterway, discovered by treasure seekers over a decade ago. Its location, purpose, and ultimate destination vary with the telling, but many believe the tales hold a grain of truth.

Ashen Wastes Encounter Table (d12):

1	1d2 Will'O'Wisps attempt to lure the party into a sinkhole, 20'-40' deep. 25% chance this reveals sunken <i>Ruins</i> (roll on ruins table).
2	1d6+4 Howling Dead. Their calls will be heard from all around for several minutes as they converge.
3	3d6 Wererats, seeking captives for sacrifice to She-Who-Whispers, a sentient plant they worship as a god. They are primitive and somewhat agoraphobic on the open plains, and will flee if 1/3 of their number are killed.
4	Sudden dust storm, limiting vision to 30' and causing uncovered flames to gutter and possibly go out (70% chance). 40% chance the storm uncovers previously hidden <i>Ruins</i> (roll on ruins table).
5	A Trapper, covered in dust, sits stretched across a sinkhole. Anyone stepping onto its surface is enveloped and dragged down 15'. At the bottom, shallow caves hold bones, ruined equipment, a pouch with 3 amethysts (250gp ea.), and 630gp in scattered coins.
6	A pack of 1d6+4 wild Hellhounds, roaming the Wastes. The alpha hound has 8 HD, causes Fear 1/day, and wears a black iron collar trailing a broken chain. Two Imps tag along to revel in the mayhem, flying or occasionally sneaking rides on the beasts.
7	Remains of three dead men, jaws stretched and broken and mouths filled with dust. They have been stripped and looted by later passers-by.

8	1d3 Mole-bats, hunting for food. Dozens of these creatures nest among the thousands of ordinary bats on the ceiling of the cavern.
9	Flashing lights and strange auroras are visible in the distance. If investigated, players find 6 Ashen Magi seated in meditation around the lip of a sunken, hollow tower. They have summoned and are communing with a being formed of wild, electric energy. If the Mourners are disturbed, the creature breaks free and attacks random targets (including the Mourners) for 2d4 rounds, then disappears. Surviving Mourners are greatly displeased. Treat the creature as a 16 HD Air Elemental dealing lightning damage.
10	<i>Special</i> (roll on table below)
11	<i>Treasure Hunters</i> (roll on table p. 39)
12	<i>Ruins</i> (roll on table below)

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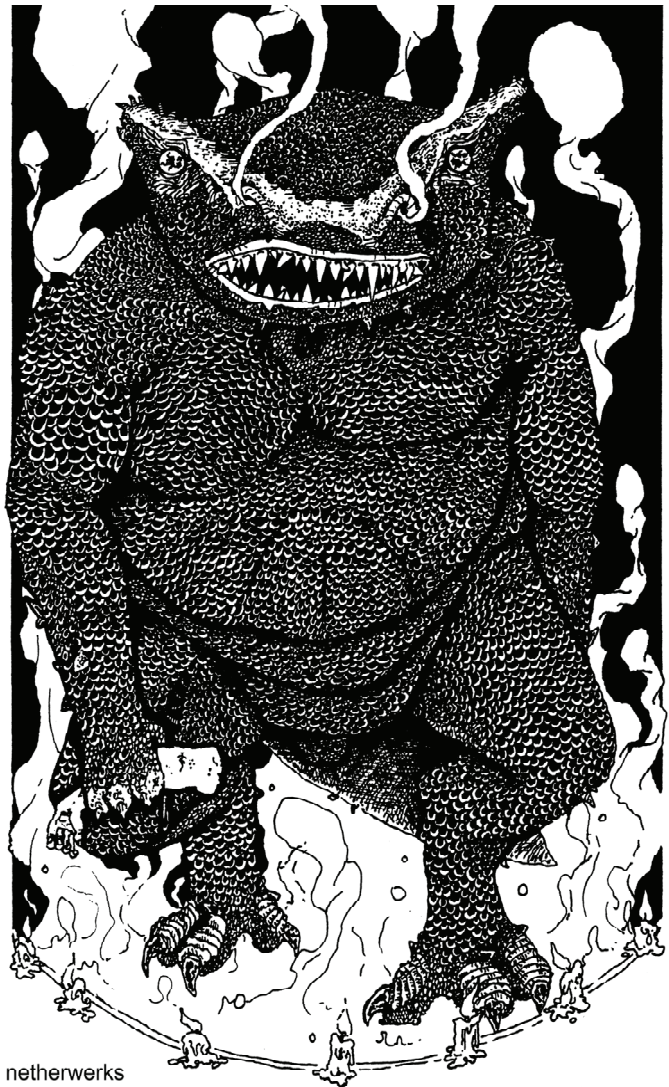
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Ashen Wastes Special Encounter Table (d8):

1	A pair of Noble (10HD) Earth Genies in ruined finery slump at opposite ends of a courtyard. After pummeling each other for hours over the division of treasure, both have collapsed from exhaustion. Between them several terra cotta pots have spilled forth a handful of gemstones. Neither Genie makes any effort to rise, but each calls out in an imperious manner, commanding the party to destroy his opponent. Ignoring them brings a stream of curses, but no hostile action. If the party actually attacks, touches the gems, or is insulting in any way, the Genies immediately band together, enraged at the audacity of such lesser beings. Each is at 2/3 normal hp.
2	Necromancer. Either Gluushik the Toad approaches in <i>The Wandering Hearse</i> (50% chance), or the party comes upon Urek Deadbear's campsite. See <i>The Bear and the Toad</i> scenario for detail.
3	Three hooded Dark Trolls with heavy clubs look on as a blubbering Human Thief digs his own grave. Three Pterocs are tethered nearby. These Trolls are part of a secretive criminal organization with interests in the Multiversal Bazaar. The man is Zelgen the Fink, a grifter and degenerate gambler whose luck has run out. Though it may appear the right thing to do, rescuing him or becoming involved in his affairs is definitely not in the party's best interest.
4	A Dust Giant plods slowly towards the party, shaking the ground with every step. It takes no notice of them. If the party moves, and the Giant is left alone, it continues on its way. If not...
5	A single stone pillar bears a sheet of tattered hide. Inscribed upon it in Dark Troll is a bounty of 10,000 gp for the head of Gluushik the Toad.
6	A crater 100 yards across contains a warren of large guano mounds, crawling with life. A dense stand of towering fungi grows along the eastern slope, and is cultivated by a nearby nest of giant Boring Beetles. 1d6 Beetles are present at all times. They make an aggressive display if the party approaches, but ignore them otherwise. There are several hundred Beetles in the nest. Collectively the group exhibits an unusual level of coordination, as if directed by a greater intellect. Among the western mounds are two Otyughs, who live in symbiosis with the Beetles. The bones of two explorers lie covered in guano. Among their ruined gear are a decaying sack of 637 gp, a jeweled comb worth 500gp, and a <i>Potion of Heroism</i> .
7	Remains of a Dark Troll convoy. Half-buried corpses of Trolls and pack animals lie amidst shattered wagons. The animals are torn apart, but whatever killed the Trolls left no wounds on their bodies. A huge, wheeled cage lies overturned; its bars are bent and its occupant is gone. A scrap of the caravan master's manifest mentions "a beast"

they had been transporting to the Bazaar, but whatever it was has been unleashed into the Wastes.

- 8 The Hand of War. Rust-colored stone hand, twelve feet high, protruding from the dust. Fingers clutched, clawlike, as if in agony or rage. The stone is heavily chipped and scarred. Tiny rivulets of blood leak from the cuts, creating a darkened, crusty patch around the Hand; sharp-eyed characters may notice dozens of weapons buried just beneath. Each weapon is untarshed silver, and anyone who picks one up is filled with an unquenchable lust for battle regardless of profession. The individual will seek out the first opportunity for conflict, but will not attack friends or betray his or her alignment. Once battle is joined, the subject knows no fear, saving at +2 and attacking as if one level higher until either he or his enemies are dead. If the weapon itself is employed, it is a +2 weapon, with the ability to *stun* an opponent on a natural 19 or 20, causing them to lose their next attack. Each person may carry only one such weapon; if another is chosen the first disappears. It remains for one week, then vanishes. If traded or sold, it disappears. The Hand of War can be found but once.



Ashen Wastes Mourner Ruins Table (d12):

1	Unidentifiable structure, worn down by the winds. A large flagstone is engraved with a Mourner symbol meaning either Peace or Pacification. Sealed below is a <i>Type II Demon</i> , released if the stone is lifted.
2	Camp of 1d10+10 Troblin robbers attempting to chisel through the exposed roof of a stone tower. This encounter is made more awkward by the arrival of a pack of 3d4 Howling Dead. The tower itself proves to be a hollow shell, all furnishings having long since disintegrated.
3	Ghoststone. These milky-blue pillars are found throughout the Wastes, typically in ruined courtyards or plazas. Each is a natural menhir of unknown stone, mounted upon a dais. Ghoststones are nodes of spiritual power, once central to the Mourners' religious and spiritual beliefs. Ashen Magi still use them to contact ancestral spirits, and they may have other uses as well. While touching a pillar, characters are able to see into the ethereal plane, revealing the throngs of disembodied spirits circling the skies above the Wastes. For each round of contact, there is a 10% chance of attracting a hostile <i>ghost</i> .
4	The corner of a wall pokes through the dust, revealing a stone door. This leads to a sunken hall of well-preserved murals, depicting a thin, alien looking people with pale orange skin. Each sits in meditation, while above him, a phantom form projects into some other dimension. These projections pray reverently at the feet of colossal, yet seemingly benign beings of confusing aspect.
5	Abandoned excavation. A sloping tunnel leads to the ruins of a simple dwelling, where a guttering lantern on a tripod still burns. Tools are scattered around the bodies of two men, their limbs twisted and broken. 50% chance three Encrusted Mummies return after having chased down a third robber.
6	A stone lid reveals a vertical shaft, dropping 40' to a small chamber. Debris surrounds heaps of broken crystal and withered remains. One large, crystal cylinder remains intact. Within is a bizarre winged humanoid of saurian appearance, with red, pebbly skin and a single, bulging eye. It wears a harness of belts and straps, perhaps indicating intelligence. It is quite dead, and withers to dust if exposed to the air.
7	Guardhouse. This is a small, sturdy bunker between thick fragments of wall. A stone door is still barred, but opens with a good shove. The furnishings have disintegrated, but stone bins hold heaps of rusted arrow heads and corroded spear tips.
8	A collapsed dome is filled with huge terra cotta globes, 6' wide. Most have shattered, but one is intact and sealed with lead. If opened, it holds four Evil Sprites, which stream out, cackling with glee.

9	A multi-family compound, in well-preserved state. There are signs of frequent traffic, and Mourner footprints are everywhere. A number of small sleeping chambers show signs of occupancy. These are Mourner "homes," if that term still applies. Most hold mats of tattered cloth, where Mourners sit in meditation, and some also hold worthless keepsakes - household objects, pieces of ancient clothing, or other mundane items prized by the Mourners as remnants of their former lives.
10	Slaughterhouse. Crumbling pens still hold skeletal remains of some gigantic, subterranean swine. Corroded hooks and blades remain, but there is nothing of value.
11	Sunken tannery in a series of low, interconnected domes. Shallow stone pits were used as baths for various stages of curing and tanning hides. Sealed urns hold toxic residue of urine and other substances. Heaps of withered hides crumble at the touch. One vat holds a Grey Ooze, coated in dust.
12	An odd, wheeled contraption of ceramic, crystal and bronze rests within a preserved dome. Polished lenses encircle a 6' metal dish, resting atop a confusing array of gears, pipes, and other machinery. The gears which once adjusted the disc have corroded, but the batteries still have power. Turning a large dial powers it up with a loud, rattling buzz, and a single glowing button emerges from the surface. If left alone, the machine shorts out and collapses into junk. If the button is depressed, a massive beam of energy, six feet wide, lances skyward, and the machine collapses into a heap. The beam disintegrates everything in its path, carving a 6'bore hole up through the preceding dungeon levels and on into the sky.

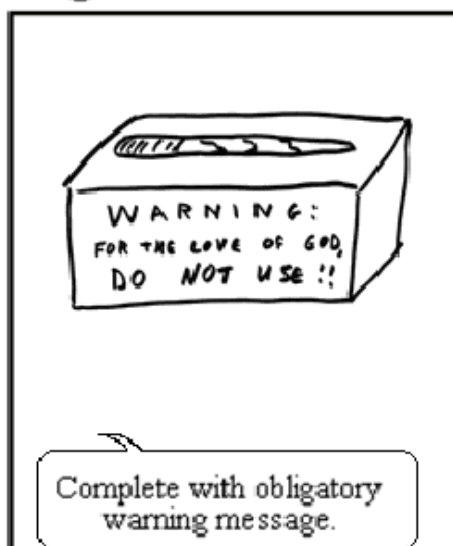
Mourner Artifact Table (d6):

1	Exotic weapons and armor of unknown minerals or ceramics. These are often enchanted, but brittle, and may break unexpectedly.
2	Bizarre reed instrument, with a tonal range undetectable by humans. Attracts Mourners within 100 yards.
3	Tablets of stone or bronze, detailing unknown alchemical or metaphysical knowledge.
4	Unrecognizable dimensional and celestial models, or engravings of planar diagrams.
5	Strange hand tools, ceramic batteries, or gauges for unknown measurements. Mishandling has a chance of delivering an electric shock for 2d4, one time only.
6	Crystalline pendant on a copper cord, once used as a spiritual communication device, but now instilling its bearer with <i>sensitivity to psychic impressions</i> . May also attract unwanted spiritual or psychic attention.

Use this table to spice up treasures in Mourner ruins.

Education of a Magic-User

Part the Tenth: The Importance of Research



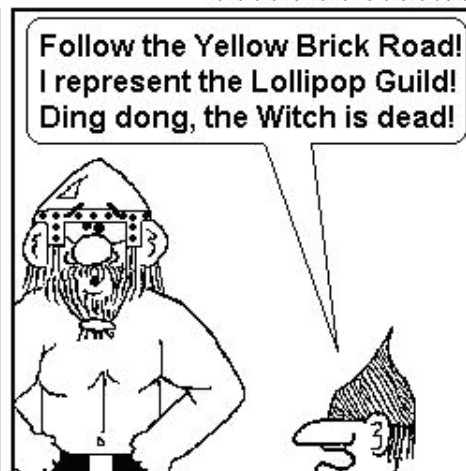
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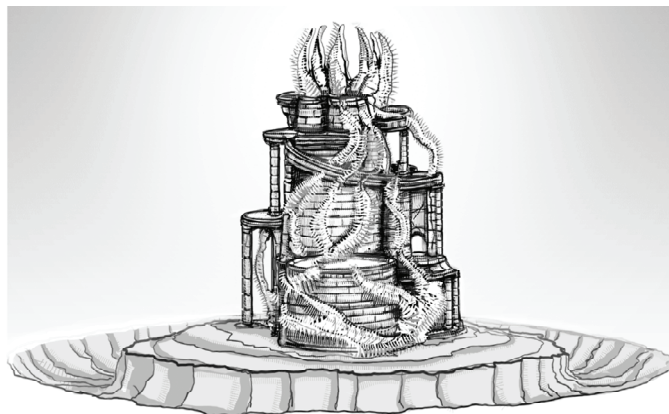


The Siren Temple

Introduction: Centuries ago, this was a shrine of fertility and life. Now, the temple has been reborn in the service of some nameless charnel gods. From atop its lonely tower, a dreadful siren song drifts across the Wastes, luring all who hear it to their doom. Through means unknown, a small Mourner sect has raised this sunken temple from below the dust. Its nearness to the Trade Road has disrupted traffic to and from the Multiversal Bazaar, and several wealthy merchants have already sent unsuccessful expeditions to silence the tower's song. The Temple is a ghastly place, less a true chapel than a monument to death itself. Its sole purpose is to entice the living, in hope that their deaths might bring pleasure to its nameless gods. Devotees are granted no divine magic, if indeed the gods are even aware of them. Those who worship here are nihilists, linked only by their hatred of life. They've established no alarms, and aside from a series of deadly traps, there are no plans for organized defense. The idea that enemies might win their way through to the lower Temple is of little concern. Death would find them, soon enough. And if it did not, and the Temple should fall, so be it. The Mourners have eternity, after all.

Approaching the Tower: Most of the Temple remains buried. All that is visible is a broad, stepped tower of green-tinged basalt, its pinnacle lit with a sickly yellow glow. The tower emanates a deep, mournful drone, requiring all within 300 yards to save vs. Spells or shuffle wordlessly towards the tower, where they impale themselves on a moat of spears (check each turn). Safe approach requires *silence*, earplugs or similar measures. A loose-walled moat, 20' wide and 30' deep, encircles the tower. Within are dozens of impaled corpses – animals, mostly, but three decayed men lie among them. None has anything of value, but anyone entering the moat is struck by 1d4 spears (damage 1d6 each) hidden beneath the dust. The tower itself is 120' high, rising in circular steps linked by a narrow ramp. Its surface is engulfed in twisting, vine-like tendrils of bone, which burrow in and out of the stone like roots through soil. Some are nearly as thick as a man's waist, making climbing quite difficult. Ascending on foot requires two successive DEX checks to avoid a fall. Those who reach the top find a low dome set with a sunken bronze door. Rising above are six glowing tendrils of bone, arrayed like the horns of a crown. Each terminates in a hollow, fluted pipe, 3' wide - the source of the Temple's dreadful song. Though the pipes can be shattered or plugged, each is restored within a day.

The stones of the Temple's outer wall bear powerful wards, resisting destructive or transmutation spells such as *disintegrate*, *rock to mud*, and *passwall*. These protect only the structure itself, and do not interfere with other magic in the vicinity.



Level One -- The Upper Temple

Common Features: These chambers are magically lit with flickering reddish light. Tendrils of bone are everywhere, climbing the walls like ivy, but leaving doors and hallways unobstructed. Throughout the structure, the party notices a low, humming vibration, rising from below. Murals and carvings from the original shrine have all have been defaced, and newer works are gradually replacing them. This imagery is often abstract, but provokes a sense of revulsion, seething with hatred not only of light and goodness, but existence itself.

Random Encounters on level one are rare, and occur only at GM discretion. Roll d4:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1d6 White Spiders (see 2) |
| 2 | An Ashen Mage with 1d4 Hateful Dead bodyguards |
| 3 | 1d4 Howling Dead, carrying sacks of masonry tools |
| 4 | An Encrusted Mummy pushing a cart of rubble |

1. Entry: Despite its age, the portal at the top of the tower opens easily. Just within, the time-worn image of a fertility goddess protrudes from the wall, her face chiseled away. As the party ventures further, the siren song quickly fades, replaced by a faint, humming vibration from below. A spiraling stair circles downward, terminating at a point well below the surface of the Wastes.

2. Vaasha's Web: Two bronze portals stand ajar; beyond is a vaulted chamber, its ceiling lost in shadow. Veins of yellowed bone climb the walls, framing horrific carvings. In the center of the floor is an empty pool, 3' deep, its surfaces encrusted with sediment. Anyone stepping down notices the hum of the temple seems slightly stronger within the pool. A secret catch in the eastern wall reveals a stairway to the Lower Temple (see 12). Lurking near the ceiling, 90' above, is Vaasha, the White Widow, an ancient spider-priestess whose own god has allied himself with the Temple. She is attended by 6 Giant White Spiders. If undetected, she casts her protective spells and sends them forth. She remains in the shadows, cooing sweetly as she drops strands of poisonous webbing. If pressed, she flees through 4 to the lower Temple. Near the ceiling, crisscrossing growths of bone create a tree-like bower

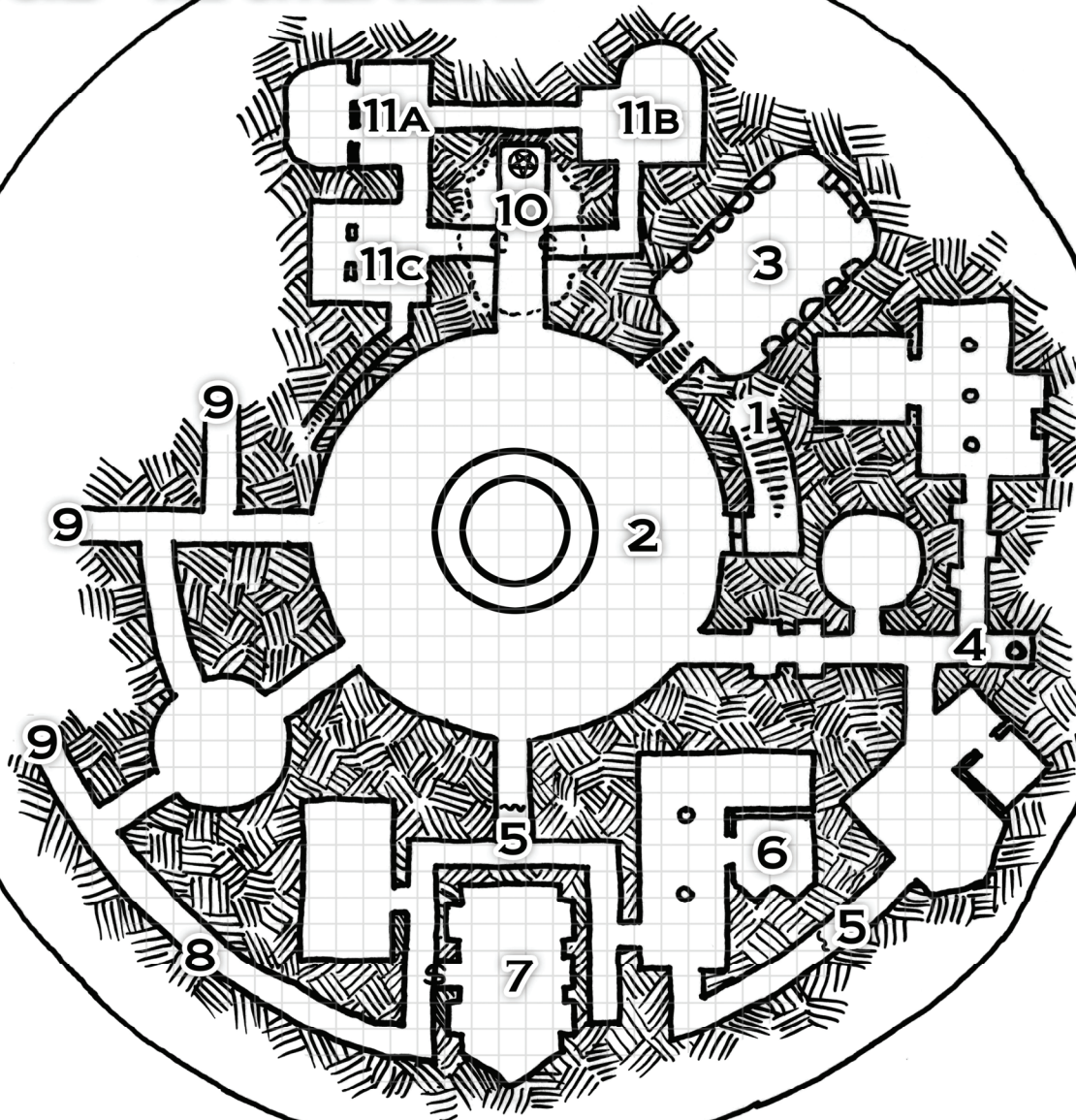
wrapped in dense webbing. Among the many corpses found within are a Dark Troll and three human adventurers. They carry a total of 430gp, a gold ring (value 200gp), 2 potions (*Delusion* and *Levitation*), and a scroll of 2 Mage spells (*Monster Summoning B* and *Remove Curse*).

Vaasha, the White Widow: Ancient Spider Priest 8, DC 0, HD 12+3, hp 65, Att 1 web strand, 2 claws or pounce and bite; dam 1d10/1d10 or 1d12 + poison; Spd 15; Webs cause 1d6 to exposed skin, plus 1d4 the next round; Spells: *Darken*, *Protect From Good*, *Create Sanctuary*, *Paralyze Person*, *Resist Fire*, *Silence*, *Dispel Magic* (x2), *Feign Death*, *Heal Serious Wounds*, *InFLICT Poison*. **Giant White Spiders:** DC 4; HD 4+4; hp 20 ea.; SPD 12; Atk 1; Dmg 2-8 + poison.

3. Hall of Sarcophagi: This darkened hall is lined with empty, crumbling sarcophagi and at least six inches of dust. In the opposite wall, images of leering, sub-human faces frame a pair of heavy bronze doors. From somewhere beyond comes the faint whistle of wind. This room poses no threat until someone tries the doors. At the slightest touch, the portals burst open with gale-force winds. Anyone in the room is blown back 10', and those of less than 13 Strength are knocked down, with a 1 in 3 chance of dropping any items in hand. Dust fills the air, limiting vision to 1"; this improves by 1" each round thereafter until the dust settles. In the confusion, two **Mourner Shades** (DC 5 or -1, depending on light; HD 7+3; hp 39,35; SPD 12; Atk 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-8; cause

THE SIREN TEMPLE

LEVEL ONE - THE UPPER TEMPLE



Darkness 10' r. and Fear in 30' r. once per day; Magic Jar 1/week; immune to fire, cold, and lightning; cannot be turned) emerge from the wall (treat as Shadow Demons). They attack immediately with *Magic Jar*, using hollow beads in the sarcophagi as receptacles. If unsuccessful, they attack as normal, targeting those with light sources first. The bronze doors open for one round only, and will not open again for 2 turns. If forced, they expose a one-way rift from the Elemental Plane of Air, releasing gale force winds endlessly until the rift is somehow closed.

4. Fetid Well: A chain ladder descends into an open well. A breeze carries an odd stench, like a mixture of mold and spoiled meat. The well drops 60' to a natural tunnel, eventually connecting to Level Two. The hum of the Temple is louder here, rising from somewhere below.

5. Halo of Flies: A curtain of black beads blocks each of these passages. At the touch of any living thing, the curtain transforms into a swarm of flesh-eating flies. Anyone within 15' is engulfed, suffering 1d6 each round, and is unable to act except to swat at the flies or run blindly. Smoke or wind drives the swarm back temporarily, but melee weapons are useless. However, a *Dispel Magic* against a 12th level caster destroys it outright. Fire and other area attacks are also effective. The swarm begins with 72 hp. Each fly bites once, then disappears, delivering 12d6 of damage before all are gone. Reduce this total by 1 die for every 6 hp of damage the swarm suffers. The swarm does not regenerate, and does not pursue more than 40'. If left alone, it reforms into a curtain after 3 turns.

6. Discarded Weapons: Piles of armor and equipment from the Temple's victims are collected here. Searching the room takes at least 3 turns, but players may reequip standard dungeoneering items here. One of the shields is a cursed *Shield +1*, *Missile Attractor*, and a padded box holds a *potion of neutralize poison*. Pouches and pockets hold a total of 1450gp and a single diamond, worth 450gp.

7. Meditation Chamber: This chamber holds three alcoves for sleeping or meditation. A single *Ashen Mage* sits in one, her spirit roaming in *Astral Projection*. She is aware of intruders, but requires 4 rounds to return to her body. Meanwhile, 4 *Hateful Dead* emerge from the shadows. The ceiling is painted with some unfathomable cosmic diagram. A table holds a map of the Ashen Wastes, with a number of unknown areas marked. Weighting down the map are a gold bracelet set with sapphires (value 800gp) and protractor of gold and ivory worth 350gp. On a shelf, glass jars contain the hands, feet, and grimacing head of a Dark Troll, suspended in a mild acid. All seem very much alive. If removed, they reform in 3-18 rounds. The Troll is Captain Rot-Tooth, leader of an unsuccessful attack on the Temple. He knows nothing and will not stay to help, but if allowed to go free he offers one bit of aid. He tells the party to drop his name if they come into any trouble with Dark Troll patrols. This will actually work 60% of the time (within reason), but only in *The Deep Caves*. **Ashen Mage:**

DC 0; HD 8+8; hp 45; SPD 12; Atk 2; Dmg 3-9/3-9 plus 2 in 6 chance to stun 1-6 rounds; Resist Fire/Cold (at will), Telepathy (24" range), ESP 2/day, Haste (5 rounds) 1/day, Suggestion 2/day, Astral Projection (self only) 1/week). **Hateful Dead:** DC 2; HD 6; hp 30 ea.; Att 2 swords for 1d6+2 ea.; Speed 12; Special: move, hide, and backstab as Th6, regenerate 1hp per blow struck. **Captain Rot-Tooth:** DC 4; HD 6+3; hp 40; SPD 12; Atk 1 or 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/2-12; regenerate.

8. Scorched Troll Expedition: Dozens of iron spears protrude from the walls, holding aloft the blackened remains of four Dark Trolls. Below the bodies, a sunken section of the floor reveals suspicious looking vents. An identical trap lies just to the east. It requires 100 lbs of pressure to trigger, but the floor has a suspicious amount of give. Small plugs of plaster hide the spears (2 in 6 to spot). If triggered, spears strike for 4d10, pinning victims fast (save vs. Death at -2 to leap to safety). The next round, jets of burning gas erupt from the floor, causing 2d6 each round for 3 rounds.

9. Dust-clogged Halls: These halls are choked with ashes, eventually becoming impassable. No amount of digging will clear them.

10. Golden Idol: A short hallway flickers with smoky torchlight. A golden idol, 4' high, rests at the opposite end. The idol resembles a lump of dripping wax, from which three separate, indistinct figures are emerging. Its seven eyes are set with gemstones. At its base, an obsidian knife rests on a dark-stained bowl. On closer inspection, the statue is gold-painted stone, while the "gems" are polished pebbles. However, anyone approaching within 15' must save vs. Death or be compelled to slice open a hand, draining 1d3 hp of blood into the bowl. If no blood is offered within 3 rounds, the floor of the entire hallway becomes *ethereal*. Below is a boulder-strewn pit, 15' deep (1d6+3 damage, plus 50% chance of striking a boulder for an additional 1d6). Three *Encrusted Mummies* wait within. Among the rocks, dismembered remains and broken gear hide 632gp, 6 *arrows* +2, and a *potion of Diminution*. The floor remains *ethereal* for 1 turn, after which anyone still below is trapped. The tiles can be raised with little difficulty (minimum Str of 9), but those below may have trouble reaching them. **Encrusted Mummies:** DC 2; HD 8; hp 33, 41, 40; SPD 6; Att 2 fists for 1d8 each, or Lunge for 1d12; Speed 6; Special: Dust Cloud, Kiss of Ashes.

11. Sealed Chambers: Here, two unused doorways have been plastered over. Anyone actively searching detects them automatically; otherwise, they are spotted on a 1 in 4. Each takes 2 turns to break open.

A. Undamaged fertility carvings frame the doorways. Recessed nooks hold disintegrating, illegible scrolls. In one corner, a stack of copper tablets bear portions of a personal memoir. These are difficult reading, but portray the Mourners as a people in hiding, far from their native

land. Reference is made to pursuers of some sort, and to crimes which would never be forgiven.

B. A set of faded murals show a cut-away view of the Mourners secure in their city below the earth. Up on the surface, winged, reptilian beings fly overhead, projecting searching beams of light from their eyes.

C. Numerous small alcoves hold ancient bones, many spilling onto the floor. A secret door has crumbled with age, and now stands ajar; the tunnel beyond leads to another secret door in **12**.

Level Two – The Lower Temple

Common Features: The humming vibrations are louder here than on the upper level, but the place is otherwise silent. However, anyone attempting mental communication such as *E.S.P.* or *Telepathy* is suddenly aware of a cacophony of psychic activity, as scores of sepulchral voices chant droning hymns in an unknown tongue. The discovery is jarring for the player, but the Mourners take no notice of the intrusion. Mourners encountered here make no attempt to raise a Temple-wide alarm, but may summon aid from adjacent locations 50% of the time. The inhabitants of this level live as if in slow motion, and do not move from place to place very often.

Random Encounters occur on a 1 in 6 every third turn:

1	An Ashen Mage leading two Encrusted Mummies, carrying iron ingots to 19
2	1d4 Hateful Dead, who begin stalking the party
3	One Encrusted Mummy demolishing an old carving with a maul
4	Two Ashen Magi with brushes and pigments, working on or heading to a half-completed mural

12. Spiral Stair: Statues in darkened alcoves line broad stone steps. Most of the statues are old and defaced, but those near the top are newer, depicting misshapen, malevolent beings. The seventh step is trapped, and 50 lbs or more of pressure causes its statue to launch forward, striking for 3d6. Anyone struck must make a DEX check or fall 60' to the landing below. The trap slowly resets itself with a grating sound. A broken statue midway down the stair hides a secret door (not shown) to **11C**, but it has not been used in quite some time. At the bottom of the stairs, four arched doorways lead to rough-hewn tunnels. An especially thick tangle of bone emerges from the eastern passage, obscuring the arch. The humming sound seems to originate from this direction. Strangely, the tendrils avoid the western arch, and a heap of broken stones, 5' high blocks this passage. Clearing enough away to clamber through requires 2 turns.

13. Western Path: This darkened tunnel is unused in recent times. The hum of the Temple gradually fades and is replaced with the sound of rushing water. Carvings here are ancient, but seem to celebrate life, water, and fertility.

14. The Elder Shrine: The tunnel opens into a large, damp cavern, lit by patches of phosphorescence. This was the spiritual center of the old fertility shrine. Unable to corrupt it, the Mourners simply ignore it. The chamber echoes with rushing water, and several small waterfalls spill down into the darkness. If anyone climbs down, the cavern floor lies 30' below, and is filled with 3' of clear, fresh water. An elevated pathway leads to a saddle-shaped formation of rippled flowstone. Two horn-like outcroppings have been hollowed out like towers. Each holds a pair of bunks carved from the living rock and a small stack of firewood, as fresh as if it had just been cut. Steps lead to small fire pits on each roof. If a fire is lit in either one, soothing, indistinct voices whisper from all around, and the entire plateau begins to glow with faerie fire. If both fires are lit, the ceiling of the cavern transforms into a starry sky, filled with unfamiliar constellations, and the voices join together in hushed chants of joyous praise. Eventually, the voices fade, leaving only the starry sky. If the party rests here, they awaken from unremembered but invigorating dreams. If both fires were lit, they gain a +1 bonus to all die rolls within the Temple. Party members are also exceptionally fertile for the next seven days, should such factors come into consideration.

15. Warrens: Burrow-like spaces hold mats of tattered cloth, where Mourners "rest" in meditation or prayer. While in these areas there is a 2 in 6 chance each turn of encountering 2d4 *Howling Dead*. Their cries attract an additional 1d3 *Howling Dead* within 3 rounds, but no further alarm is raised. 1 in 4 burrows contain a Mourner keepsake (d8): 1. A soapstone whistle. 2. A child's wooden rattle. 3. A brittle silk handkerchief. 4. A jade comb (value 35gp). 5. The skull of a small lizard (a former pet). 6. A silver locket, holding a miniature painting of a female Mourner (value 50gp). 7. A string of clay beads. 8. A cracked porcelain dish.

16. Hall of Faces: This hall has been partially shaped, creating a shadowy, vaulted ceiling. Images of agonized faces emerge from the walls, as if grown from the stone itself. Here, the tendrils of bone seem to grow around the images as if by conscious thought. Hidden in the shadows 15' above the floor are six meditation alcoves, three to a side. Three *Ashen Magi* rest within. At the sign of intruders, they quietly drop down to attack. One wears a gold and tourmaline choker, worth 1200gp. **Ashen Magi:** DC 0; HD 8+8; hp 30, 41, 44; SPD 12; Atk 2; Dmg 3-9/3-9 plus 2 in 6 chance to stun 1-6 rounds; Resist Fire/Cold (at will), Telepathy (24" range), ESP 2/day, Haste (5 rounds) 1/day, Suggestion 2/day, Astral Projection (self only) 1/week.

17. Morbid Hall: A newly-painted mural covers the western wall, showing a vast plain heaped as far as the eye can see with dead and rotting creatures of all kinds. Fading into the distance is a range of low mountains or foothills. On closer inspection, these begin to suggest massive organic forms, thousands of feet high. 5 *Howling Dead*

(DC 3; HD 4+1; hp 20 ea.; Att 2 fists for 1d6 each; Speed 15; Special: Death Grip) and 2 **Tar Fiends** (DC 0; HD 7+3; hp 36 ea.; Att 2 tentacles for 1d8 ea.; Speed 12; Sp -1 damage per die from physical; vulnerable to fire) are seated before the mural as if in meditation. If the party is moving quietly, there is only a 1 in 6 chance they awaken.

18. DM's Choice: These lead to areas outside the scope of this adventure. They may be exits, or lead further below. If the DM prefers, they may be blocked with ash or bone.

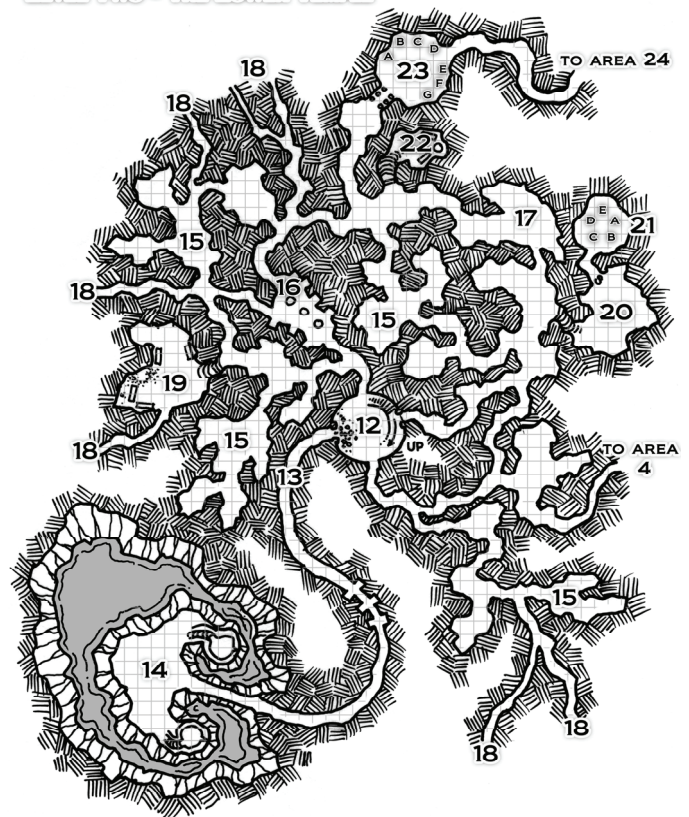
19. Workshop: This messy workspace is scattered with tools and building materials: some familiar, some not. The southern half contains a small stone furnace, crucibles and various casting materials. Ingots of iron, copper, and tin are stacked carelessly. Beneath the iron is a single bar of gold, worth 500gp. Along the western wall are heaps of bronze and copper scrap and a mound of loose earth 4' high. The mound is actually an **Earth Elemental** (DC 2; HD 12; hp 60; SPD 6; Atk 1; Dmg 4-32; +2 weapon to hit) used for heavy lifting. Anyone digging in the soil is effectively stabbing the elemental, causing it to attack.

20. Ghastly Formations: The walls of this cavern are lined with odd, flowing formations of rust-colored mineral. A foul, viscous liquid oozes from down from the rock in thick sheets. Touching it has a different effect each contact (d4): 1. Acid burns for 1d8; touched objects require an item save. 2. A sudden seizure incapacitates the PC 1 turn. 3. Drains 1d4 Con for 12 turns. 4. Heals the PC for 2-7, but drains two companions for the same amount.



THE SIREN TEMPLE

LEVEL TWO - THE LOWER TEMPLE

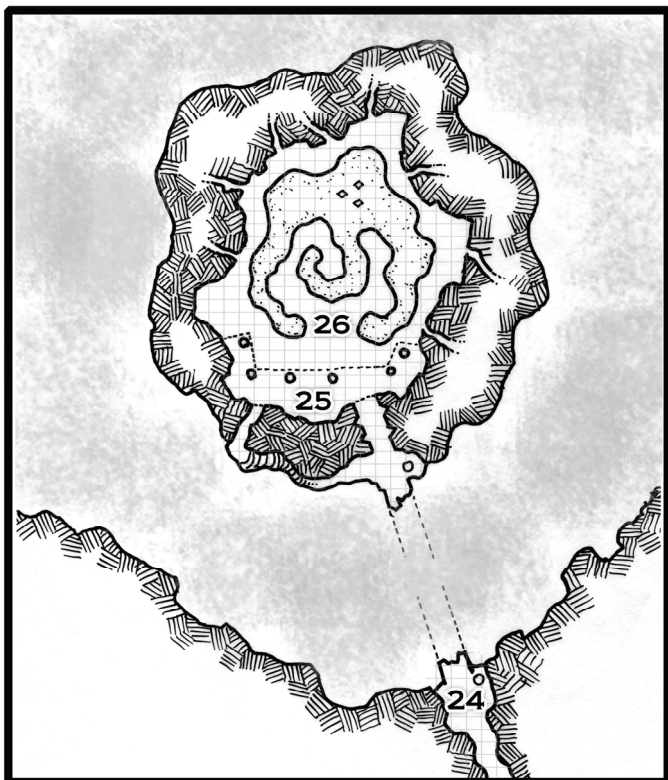


Another formation in the northwestern corner forms a sort of natural font, overflowing with fluid; searching the bottom reveals six emeralds worth 250gp each. To the north a carefully-cut door blends into the wall, its edges concealed by dripping fluid (1 in 3 to spot if within 10'). A careful search of the southwest corner reveals the shallow impression of a Mourner's dual-thumbed palm inset into the rock. The touch of a Mourner's hand (attached or otherwise) stops the oozing liquid for 1 turn.

21. The Imprisoning Columns: Five rust-blackened stelae, 6' high, are here arranged in a pentacle formation. Each is a three sided column, etched with corroded, illegible symbols. Hanging on a hook on the eastern wall is a long, wooden mallet. Those near column (E) hear a faint, oddly accented woman's voice, calling out for help. It seems to come from within the column itself. Anyone approaching the columns is attacked by a lone Mourner Shade hiding on the ceiling. It casts *darkness*, then attempts to *magic jar* the strongest looking character, rushing the victim forward to touch one of the columns (see below). It then returns to its own body and attacks as normal. The columns radiate evil, and anyone laying a hand upon one is sucked into a shadowy, extra-dimensional cell, littered with bones. The prisoner can hear voices from outside, but his own cries carry no more than 10'. There is no physical exit, although spells such as *Open Dimensional Door* may allow escape. If struck, each column gives off a distinct note, sustaining for six rounds. If all five notes sustain at once, the columns glow for 4 rounds; if one is struck again

during this time, it releases its occupants, alive or dead. Cells A through C hold withered remains, both human and Mourner. D holds a skeleton with four grimy gold rings, worth 100-300gp each. Only Cell E contains a living prisoner: the last living Mourner! Within is Colquithiq, a withered, orange-skinned woman, bound head to toe with enchanted chains of lead. She has the six-fingered hands and elongated limbs of a Mourner, but is very much alive. Colquithiq was a witch, driven out by her people, and so escaped their fate. She speaks halting common, and begs the party to remove her chains, which stifle her powers. Unfortunately, she is quite mad, and much of what she says is gibberish. How she came to be imprisoned here is unclear. Removing the chains requires *dispel magic*, *knockspell*, or similar magic (treat as a 9th level caster). Once removed, the chains disintegrate. If freed, Colquithiq regains her mental powers. In gratitude, she pries a gold tooth from her mouth and gives it to the party. The tooth grants a +3 bonus vs. poison to whoever carries it. Colquithiq then summons a strange minion, equal parts ogre and moth, which lifts her over a shoulder and teleports away. If engaged, it fights as a Type III demon.

Colquithiq: Mourner Witch; DC 9; MU 12; hp 22; SPD 6; Atk mental abilities only; She has forgotten all spells, but has the following mental powers: Hypnosis (10hd max), Levitation (12 turns/day), Telepathy, and Astral Projection. **Mourner Shade:** DC 5 or -1; HD 7+3; hp 39; SPD 12; Atk 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-8; cause Darkness 10' r. and Fear in 30' r. once per day; Magic Jar 1/week; immune to fire, cold, and lightning; cannot be turned.



THE SIREN TEMPLE
2A - THE CHARNEL TREE

22. Scented Chamber: The air is filled with an eye-watering haze of competing fragrances. Dozens of tins hold dried herbs, oils, and scented powders. Two larger bowls hold blended mixtures, one with an acrid, moldy smell and the other an overpowering floral scent. These are used to control the *Eyes of the Nameless* in **23**, and have no other value. A small silver measuring cup (value 50gp) rests between the bowls.

23. Eyes of the Nameless: Six braziers are arranged at the entry, a strong breeze wafting their smoke into the adjoining cavern. Close examination reveals flecks of powdered herbs on the floor. Within the cavern, seven monstrous eyes protrude from the wall, their lids half-closed as if dozing. Patches of cadaverous looking flesh cover the walls and floor, each sprouting ugly bristles of hair, 4'-5' long. The slightest touch to any of the hairs awakens the Eyes. Crossing the chamber without touching them is possible, but slows movement to 2" and requires a successful DEX check. Once awakened, 1d3 Eyes attack each round, randomly targeting enemies with beams of magic energy. The Eyes attack for 10 rounds, then disappear, unable to return for 24 hours. The Eyes can only awaken for brief periods, and are kept sedated to preserve their power. If a cupful of the acrid blend from **22** is thrown on the braziers, the Eyes close and the bristles recede into the floor, allowing safe passage. The Eyes remain comatose for 1 hour before returning to their dozing state. Burning the floral mixture awakens and enrages them, while mixing both awakens them in a confused state (only a 50% chance they attack each round), and causes 1d2 to burst in showers of goo. Burning larger amounts of either mixture has no increased effect. **Eyes of the Nameless:** DC 4, HD 7, hp 30 each, Att 1d3 per round, D special; immune to poison and mind-affecting spells, suffers 1/2 damage from cold and fire; Turned as *Special*; Each Eye has a different attack, with a range of 12": A. *Hold Person*, B. *Heat Metal*, C. *Cause Serious Wounds*, D. *Slow*, E. *Confusion*, F. *Magic Missile*, G. *Blindness*, all as a 9th level caster.

24. The Charnel Tree: A broken platform edges out over a mist-filled chasm, flickering with an aurora of multi-hued lights. Spears of bone protrude from the mist below, while across the gulf, a massive, gnarled tree of rotting ivory is visible through the fog, its roots twining around a large spur of stone. A yawning tunnel leads into the tree. To one side, chiseled steps climb to a smaller entry, 20' above. On each side of the gulf is a sconce, burning with a purple flame. Brass wands rest below in trays of sand. If held to the flame, each wand lights like a torch, and an iridescent stone bridge solidifies from the mist. The bridge remains until the torch is either extinguished or taken more than 90' from the cavern.

25. Balcony: A shadowy balcony looks out over the main vault on three sides, but there is no way down. Walls of scented candles give off a nauseous stench. Four **Hateful**

Dead (DC 2; HD 6; hp 30 ea.; Att 2 swords for 1d6+2 ea.; Speed 12; Special: move, hide, and backstab as Th6, regenerate 1hp per blow struck) stand watching the activities below. The humming sound is nearly deafening here, and any sounds of combat are lost in the din. If combat breaks out in the Cathedral, the Hateful Dead leap down 15' to assist, arriving on the third round.

26. Cathedral of Bone: Broad steps lead down to a ghastly, red-lit cavern, like an alien cathedral shaped entirely of bone. The vibrations here are deafening, and PCs must shout to be heard. Even screams will not carry more than 40'. Rat-like tunnels enter the chamber on all sides. In the center, a series of interconnected pools are filled with a *Charnel Ooze*, which bubbles and sloshes with a sickening vitality. Its surface is like clotted blood, from which grasping tendrils and vestigial hands constantly rise and submerge. Three *Ashen Magi* in ornate jewelry stand submerged to their knees at its outer edge, heads bowed as if in prayer. Six *Howling Dead* and two *Tar Fiends* look on in an agitated state. Rising from the central pool are three glowing, fan-like formations of bone, pulsing and vibrating with energy. They seem to be the source of the deafening hum. The *Charnel Ooze* does not attack, but any living creature standing within it suffers 2d12 damage each round. It cannot be killed by ordinary means, but if attacked, it spits forth a lesser minion, equal to an Ochre Jelly. The psychic disturbance of combat in this chamber attracts nearby Mourners. After 3 rounds, there is a 40% chance each round that 1d2 *Howling Dead* emerge from the tunnels. Furthermore, the 5th round signals the arrival of the *Grand Magus*, who has been submerged in a trance deeper in the Ooze. The Grand Magus is a towering, jeweled mummy, whose flesh has taken on the color and sheen of the Ooze. He fights as an exceptional Ashen Mage, with two additional abilities. Twice per day, he can cause the tendrils of bone to *Entangle* as a 12th level caster. In addition, he can emit the Shriek of the Void once per day, requiring all enemies within 120' to save vs. Spells or suffer -2 to all dice rolls for 1 turn. Fighting everything in the Cathedral is a recipe for disaster (and if it's not, bump up the difficulty). However, by destroying the fan-like columns, the party can bring down the Temple. Each column stands 12 to 15 feet from the edge of the pool, and can withstand 25 hp of damage. Columns are DC 2, with a magic resistance of 40%. All Mourners who are able immediately shift their attack to any character damaging the columns. As each column is destroyed, it gives off a burst of psychic energy, stunning all Mourners within the chamber for 1d4 rounds. Destroying one or two columns causes the Ooze to recede by several feet, and silences the Temple's siren call for a week. Destroying all three columns causes the Ooze to boil away, and all Mourners within the Temple to crumble to dust. There is no wealth on display in the Cathedral, but each of the Ashen Magi wears an ornate torc of gold and ivory worth 2500gp. One also wears four jeweled rings worth 900 each. The Grand



Magus wears a diadem of gold, jade, and emeralds worth 5000gp and a necklace of gold and sapphires worth 4500.

Charnel Ooze (lesser): DC 8; HD 6; hp 30; SPD 3; Atk 1; Dmg 3-12; cold, fire immune; lightning splits it in two.

Ashen Magi: DC 0; HD 8+8; hp 40 ea.; SPD 12; Atk 2; Dmg 3-9/3-9 plus 2 in 6 chance to stun 1-6 rounds; Resist Fire/Cold (at will), Telepathy (24" range), ESP 2/day, Haste (5 rounds) 1/day, Suggestion 2/day, Astral Projection (self only) 1/week.

Tar Fiends: DC 0; HD 7+3; hp 36 ea.; Att 2 tentacles for 1d8 ea.; Speed 12; Special: -1 damage per die from physical; vulnerable to fire.

Howling Dead: DC 3; HD 4+1; hp 20 ea.; Att 2 fists for 1d6 each; Speed 15; Special: Death Grip.

Grand Magus: 7' tall Ashen Mage; DC -1; HD 10; hp 50; SPD 18; Atk 2; Dmg 3-12/3-12 plus stun 1-6 rounds; Attack 2 opponents simultaneously; Resist Fire/Cold (at will), Telepathy (24" range), ESP 2/day, Haste (5 rounds) 1/day, Suggestion 2/day, Astral Projection (self only) 1/week, Dimension Door 1/day, Entangle 2/day, Shriek of the Void, 1/day.

Concluding the Adventure: If all three columns are destroyed, the Charnel Tree begins to weaken, falling to dust within a week's time. As the players exit the Cathedral, they find the mists are gone, and the purple torches have extinguished. To escape, the party must climb down to the cavern floor and then up the other side. If the party assaults the Cathedral but retreats, the Mourners mount an organized pursuit (this is the only situation to bring such a response). Any surviving Ashen Magi lead the remaining forces plus 2d4 Howling Dead reinforcements, beginning 1d4+3 rounds after the party's exit. As they pursue, they extend a telepathic call to any surviving Mourners within the Lower Temple. These are likely to emerge in front of or to the side of the party as they retreat. The Temple forces pursue to the top of the tower, but no farther. If the party returns, new traps and guardians will have been placed, their complexity depending on the amount of time which has passed.



The Bear and the Toad

This scenario involves a pair of rival necromancers known as Urek Deadbear and Gluushik the Toad. Years ago, Gluushik was Deadbear's apprentice. When he had learned all he cared to, Gluushik stole a set of powerful items from his master and fled. Among these items were a skeletal warrior, her *golden circlet*, and an artifact known as the *Wandering Hearse* (see *Unique Items*). Now, Deadbear has tracked his former pupil to the Wastes, where he looks to reclaim his property and exact revenge.

Encounters: Players will most likely be drawn into this struggle through a chance encounter. Deadbear is sometimes seen in the Multiversal Bazaar, but is more likely to be found in the Wastes, searching for his foe. Gluushik is more limited in his movements, fearful of a dark troll bounty on his head. He prefers the safety of his hideout, but sometimes travels the Wastes in the *Wandering Hearse*.

Deadbear's Campsite: This encounter can occur anywhere in the Ashen Wastes. The wizard will be scouting the landscape with his spectral ravens. If alerted, he stands waiting for the party, flanked by his wight, undead cave bear, and three juju zombies. If possible, he will have sent his shadows out to circle behind. Deadbear is gruff and

guarded, but quick to recruit a capable party. He offers six gems (800 gp each) and scrolls of two of his spells for his enemy's confirmed location. Unlike Gluushik, he always honors his word. If met in transit, Deadbear is mounted, with his retinue straggling behind. He is unable to scout with his ravens while in motion. If encountered within the Multiversal Bazaar, he must leave his mount and juju zombies at the gate, but retains the shadows hidden in his clothing. He will also be accompanied by his "slave" – the wight, heavily cloaked and perfumed.

Gluushik: The toad will only be encountered in the Ashen Wastes. An elaborate wooden hearse approaches, drawn by two ghostly horses. Gluushik and his manservant, Qarl, sit in the driver's perch, while two juju zombies cling to the top; all are hooded. The skeletal warrior, Abhorra, remains hidden within the carriage. Gluushik halts at a distance and addresses the party with ESP. He is eager for news of Urek Deadbear, whom he describes as an evil wizard. Like Deadbear, he is quick to recruit a capable-looking party, offering up to 5000gp for his enemy's verified location (information to be delivered to Levankis Kleb, a merchant who handles Gluushik's interests in the Multiversal Bazaar's shantytown). Within the carriage, a padded crate holds four pots of powdered mummy organs (value 1200 gp each), on their way to Levankis Kleb for later sale.

The Necromancers: Both Deadbear and Gluushik are immune to the fear, paralysis and strength drain attacks of undead, and are allowed a save vs. death to avoid level drain. Each necromancer *controls undead* as an evil priest of two levels higher than his level/HD, and can command up twice his own HD of undead at a given time. Control is retained indefinitely. All undead servants within 12" of their master resist turning attempts as if four ranks higher (so a shadow would be turned as a mummy). Turning a *controlled* creature breaks the necromancer's hold, causing it to attack a random target. The creature can subsequently be turned as normal. The necromancer cannot make another *control* attempt for 2d4 rounds.

Gluushik The Toad :DC 3 (natural); HD 9+3; hp 55; Att 2 claws for 1d6+2 ea., or by weapon; +1 or better weapon to hit; Regenerate 2/round; Magic resist 35%; Telekinese 250 lbs; Telepathy 120' range; Invisibility 1/day; Power Word: Stun 1/day; Hold Monster (1 individual only) 1/day, Control up to 20 HD of undead as 12th level priest. The Necromancer, Gluushik, is an odd, toad-faced creature of unknown origin, who wanders the planes in search of secret knowledge. Some believe he is a demon, while others tie him to the batrachian fiends of Limbo, but Gluushik does not speak on the matter. He is tall (7") and thin, with dead white skin and long, slender claws. His bulging, toad-like head wobbles comically atop his spindly neck. Despite this manifest ugliness, Gluushik takes care in his appearance, dressing in silken robes and gaudy finery. Gluushik usually communicates through telepathy, but can speak dozens of languages. He is friendly, even light-hearted, but this hides a cold and self-serving nature. Though he does not cast traditional spells, Gluushik knows many necromantic rituals and enchantments. With the exception of the skeletal warrior, Abhorra, all his servants are of his own creation, and he can craft many wards and protective charms, given the time. Gluushik has survived for centuries by knowing exactly when to cut his losses and flee. He is especially averse to melee combat, and will reserve his *power word: stun* to escape such situations. Equipment: light crossbow with 12 bolts +2; *potions of gaseous form, fire resistance, and speed; wand of fear* (6 charges), vial of strong ingestive poison and two vials of acid. He wears Abhorra's *golden circlet* on a chain at all times, as well as jewelry worth 1600 gp. Note that Gluushik's affinity for the undead gives him great control over Abhorra, allowing the two to act simultaneously.

Urek Deadbear, "The Bearskin Man": DC 2 (magic pigments); Mag 12; hp 32; S 15 I 17 W 11 D 12 C 13 Ch 16; Control up to 24 HD of undead as 14th level priest; Spells: *Shield, Mystic Missile* x2, *Charm, Turn Invisible, Darkness, Create Mirror Images, Stinking Cloud, Slow, Fly, Dispel Magic, Fear, Polymorph Other, Teleport, Paralyze Monster*. Urek Deadbear is a tall, powerfully built man from the barbaric northlands, appearing more like a berserk warrior than a mage. He dresses in bear skins, while his arms are

painted with elaborate indigo designs. He is never without his cherished mount Reska, an undead cave bear of his own creation. Though an immoral and uncaring necromancer, Deadbear lives by his own code, and honors his word once given. He is unusually proud, bristling at even the slightest offense, and never forgiving a wrong, real or perceived. Equipment: magic pigment on arms acts as *bracers of defense* DC 2 (four applications remaining, each lasting 5 days); *ring of infravision*; potions of *extra-healing* (2), scrolls of three of his spells (choose, or select randomly); *wand of frost* (5 charges; cannot be recharged). In a hidden pouch, he carries 12 gems worth 800gp each.

Gluushik's Servants:

- **Abhorra**, female skeletal warrior: DC 0 (armor, plus bonus from weapon); HD 9+6; hp 55; Att 1; D by weapon; hits at +3 with all weapons; Only hit by magic weapons, 90% magic resistance; panic in creatures 5 hd or lower; cannot be turned) Abhorra wears an antique skirt and breastplate of greenish bronze, and wields a magic spear known as *The Seggolian Spike* (see below).
- **Qarl**, dark troll flesh golem: DC 2 (natural, chain vest); HD 9; hp 50, Att 2 claws for 2d8 ea.; regenerates 2 hp/round; +1 or better to hit; immune to most spells as standard flesh golem; takes ½ damage from fire/acid but does not regenerate it) After a lifetime of service Qarl was of failing health, so his master transferred his life force to a special flesh golem, built from dark troll remains. Although his new body is formidable, he is still a timid, elderly manservant at heart, and avoids combat when possible. In his new form Qarl is mute, but Gluushik communicates through gestures and *ESP*. Qarl is typically cloaked to hide his true nature.
- **Severed Guardians**: DC 2 (speed and size); HD 1; hp 6; 12" infravision; Howl as shrieker; bite for 1d3 plus save vs. Poison or contract a random disease; Turn as ghost. These are severed heads, animated through a secret process to act as sentries. They have superior (12") infravision, and if intruders are sighted, they emit a piercing howl (treat as if they were mobile shriekers).
- **Juju Zombies**: DC 3 (platemail); HD 3+12; hp 26 ea.; Att 1 heavy crossbow for 1d6 or 1 greatsword for 1d10; attack as 6hd monsters; +1 or better to hit; ½ damage from piercing or blunt; immune to poison, electricity, cold, and spells affecting the mind; ½ damage from fire; turn as a Specter, or as Special within 12" of Gluushik.

Deadbear's Servants:

- **Undead Cave Bear**: DC 4; HD 8+6; hp 50; Att 2 claws for 1d8 and bite for 1d12; Hug on 18 or better for 2d8; +1 or better to hit; ½ damage from piercing or blunt; immune to mind altering magic, poison, electricity; ½ damage from fire; turn as Special. This is Deadbear's mount. Custom saddlebags hold provisions, 600 in gold, and his traveling spellbook, hidden in a secret pouch. The book is *invisible* and *flame trapped* (1d4+12), and

contains his memorized spells plus 1 additional per level, determined randomly.

- **Shadows:** DC 7; HD 3+3; hp 16 ea.; Atk 1; Dmg 2-5; SA Strength Drain; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; turn as Mummies within 12" of Deadbear. These are bound within the folds of Deadbear's cloak.
- **Juju Zombies (3),** with banded mail, shields, longbows, and axes (stats as above). These carry packs of supplies for a long journey.
- **Wight:** DC 5; HD 4+3; hp 25; SPD 12; Atk 1; Dmg 1-4; SA Energy Drain; SD silver or magic weapon to hit; turn as Specter within 12" of Deadbear.
- **Spectral Ravens:** no combat abilities; Turned as Shadows, which destroys them. These are simple animal spirits, employed by Deadbear as spies. He can view through their eyes within 1/2 mile, though he must remain in a meditative state to do so.

Unique Items

The Seggolian Spike: This ancient, wide-bladed *spear* +2 is wrought entirely of black iron, but is surprisingly light. When wielded with both hands by a skilled warrior, *The Seggolian Spike* confers an additional DC bonus of +2. Only Warriors can gain this benefit, and only after at least two weeks of practice. Due to its unusual shape, the *Spike* deals damage as a glaive-guisarme rather than as a spear. The *Spike* has an ego (12) and a dim intelligence (6), and was created for the special purpose of killing Seggolian fish-men – a species extinct for over 1200 years. Lacking direction, the spear has grown imbalanced. There is a 50% chance the spear attempts an ego struggle when encountering *any* cold-blooded humanoid. Though the PC is unlikely to lose, the weapon still begins to twitch, and the words "*Fish Man! Kill! Kill!*" echo in its owner's mind.

The Wandering Hearse: This beautifully crafted funeral carriage is built from some exotic wood, whose surface seems to absorb the light. Its fittings are of polished silver, and its furnishings trimmed in crushed velvet. The interior is spare and cramped, but with room for two seated passengers (though more could pile within, if comfort is not a concern). A single, padded bench hides a sizable storage space. This powerful relic allows travel over nearly any terrain and even between the planes. Affixed to the driver's perch is a silver urn, flanked by two ivory-handled levers. The reins are embedded with hundreds of tiny thorns, which pierce the hands and soak up blood. Driving the *Hearse* under normal circumstances drains 5 hp immediately and another 1 hp every 3 hours. The reins *must* have blood to activate, so this damage cannot be avoided through the use of gauntlets or similar means. When in motion, the *Hearse* is drawn by two ghostly horses with eyes like burning coals. Its wheels are at least partially in the Ethereal at all times, leaving no trail, and allowing travel over any terrain without penalty. Normal movement is 32 miles per day. Speeds of up to 72 miles per day can be achieved, but at the cost of 1 hp per hour. The *Hearse's*

plane-shifting powers require sacrifice, either in the form of souls (the heart's blood of a sentient creature or a crushed larva), or gems of 5000gp value. Offerings are placed in the silver urn, and consumed in a flash of blue flame. Once proper sacrifice has been offered, the levers begin to vibrate. The left lever allows Astral travel, while the right shifts into Ethereal space. In this fashion, the *Hearse* can be used to reach other planes or dimensions if its driver knows the hidden pathways. Each time this power is used, there is a 1% chance, cumulative, that the *Hearse* instead carries its occupants away to the Abyss, where they must contend with its creator. If unused for more than two weeks, the *Wandering Hearse* is 50% likely to *plane shift* away (check daily), appearing again in some other land. Feeding the urn regularly is the only way to maintain possession. There is also a 10% chance per month that 1d3 demonic beings (GM's choice as to type) come looking to collect the *Hearse* for their master.

The House of the Toad

The necromancer, Gluushik, resides in a ruin at the bottom of a steep gully. Here he hopes to learn the secrets of the Mourners' spiritual power, but has had little success. He traps lone Mourners for study, eventually harvesting their powdered organs for sale. Though the Mourners as a whole have not yet organized against him, knowledge of his activities is spreading. For his part, Gluushik is aware of his enemies, and takes great care when traveling.

Approaching the Compound: The easiest approach to the ruins is across a dry creek-bed. Otherwise, the drop from the surrounding cliffs is around 60'. Mourner tracks circle the area, but none enter the ravine. Gluushik's entire compound is warded by a specially-tailored circle of *necromantic salts*, affecting Mourners as *protection from evil*. No other creatures are affected. The *salts* are scattered loosely in a wide area so simply walking through them will not break the enchantment.

1. Sentries: Patrolling the perimeter are the luminous, floating heads of three Mourners. These are severed guardians (hp 6). If intruders are sighted, they immediately retreat to raise an alarm.

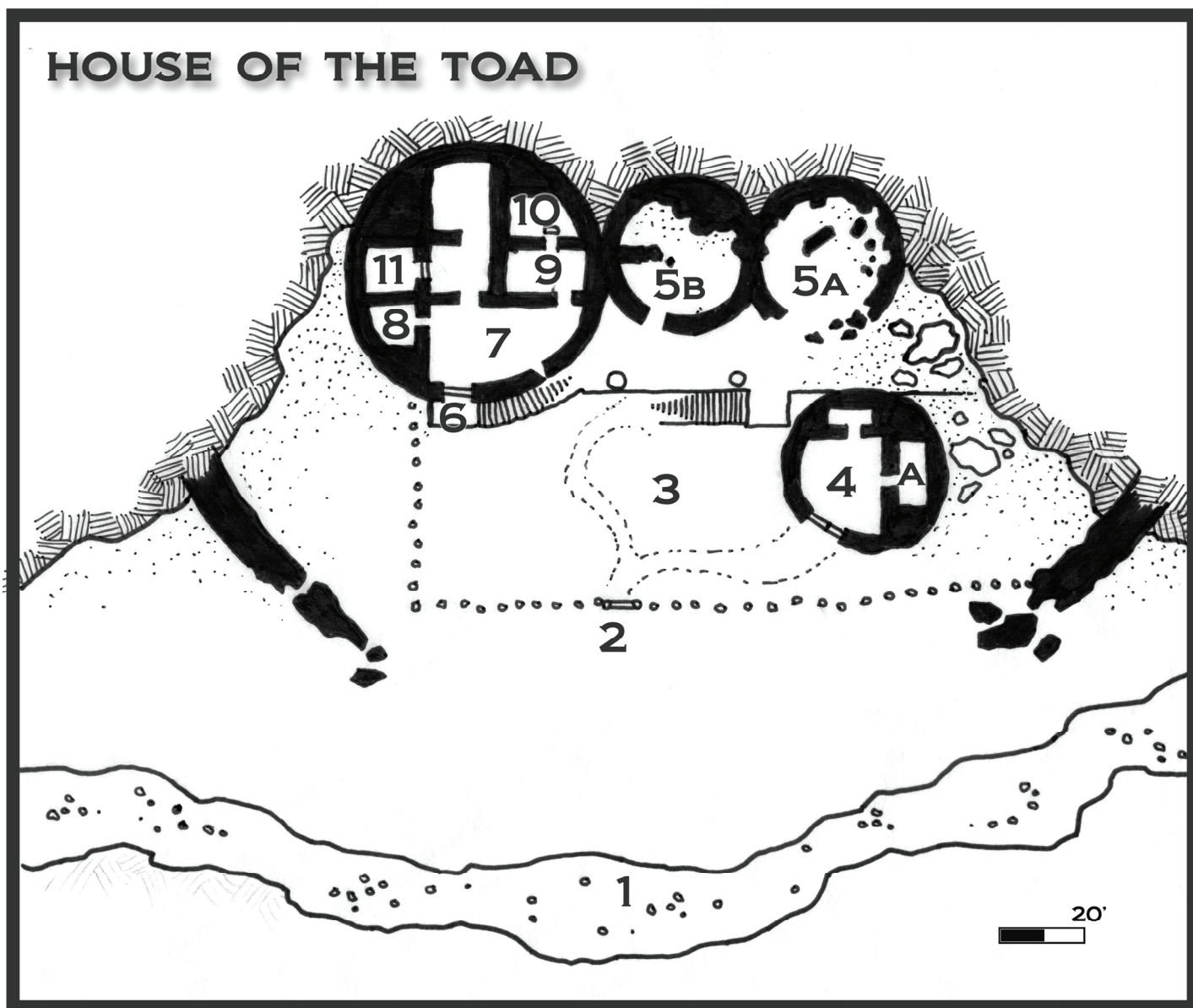
2. The Picket of Bones: The ruins of a stone-walled residence are half-buried in the cliffside. Several partial structures are visible at ground level. An open stairway rises to a second story apartment, where a faint gleam of reddish light escapes from a tiny window. Surrounding the ruins is a gated fence of bones. Any intruder crossing the picket within 10' of the ground sounds an alarm, provoking an immediate hostile response from all defenders. Ringing a small bell hangs beside the gate draws Gluushik to parley (*via* telepathy from a position of safety). He is polite, but unless he thinks the party can aid him he orders them away. If suspicious, he invites them in to be poisoned.

3. Buried Guardians: Six severed guardians (hp 6) lie buried in the dust, programmed to rise up at an alarm or at Gluushik's command. Each bears a *glyph of warding* (12 points of frost damage in a 15' x 15' area; save for half), triggered on a successful touch attack, which also destroys the guardian. They attack in waves of two, flying forward on successive rounds.

4. Carriage Shed: A domed outbuilding has been partially repaired. Its doorway is stretched with a sickly, patchwork sheet of grayish skin. At the slightest touch, this sheet turns rigid, with the strength of iron and capable of withstanding 100 points of damage. If a command word is spoken ("necroticism"), it draws aside like a curtain, remaining flexible for 1 turn. *Knockspell* or *Dispel Magic* allow entry if they overcome a 12th level caster. Within the dome is the *Wandering Hearse*, guarded by four juju zombies (platemail, halberds; hp 30, 28, 26, 26). The *Hearse* itself is defended by a greater shadow (DC 3; HD 6+6; hp 40, SPD 12"; Att 2 claws for 1d8 ea.; +2 or better to hit; touch

drains 1 point Str and Con; turn as a Ghost), but it only attacks those entering the carriage. Searching the *Hearse* reveals woolen travel garments, a jug of extra-planar liqueur, and a large jar of bile in which an uncomfortable looking larva (DC 7; HD 1; hp 2, SPD 6"; Att 1; D 1d4+1) squirms and grimaces. The creature is helpless unless freed. Beneath the garments, a folder of oiled devilskin holds three planar charts, used to navigate through Astral and Ethereal space. Where the charts lead is up to the GM.

4A. Qarl's Quarters: Qarl remains here when not performing other tasks (40% chance). The floor is thick with sand; hidden beneath and positioned under a huge cot is a wooden lid. Within, a lead-sealed clay coffin holds Qarl's mortal remains. The body is of a goblin-sized bipedal toad, similar to Gluushik, but withered with age and covered in green, honey-like fluid. Qarl still maintains a spirit-link to this body; if it is destroyed, he dies, and his golem form rampages uncontrolled.



5. Crumbling Domes: Two partially repaired domes sit on the second level. **5A** holds empty crates and rolled tarps. A crumbling well has been cleared and provides potable water. **5B** holds an improvised smokehouse, where lizards, beetles, and other small creatures are being cured.

6. Gluushik's Apartments: Two juju zombies (platemail, crossbows, halberds; hp 26 ea.) stand guard at the foot of an open staircase, leading up to a third storey apartment. A narrow window, 6" across, emits a flickering, reddish light. The doorway is sealed with a sheet of sickly, grayish skin, identical to that at **4**. Anyone entering the apartments notices a strong, smoky scent throughout, like an unpleasant mixture of sage and burnt soup.

7. Necromancer's Workroom: Two juju zombies (plate, crossbows and 2-handed swords; hp 25, 28) guard this room. If Gluushik is here, Abhorra stands motionless in a corner. Antique Mourner lanterns shed a reddish *continual light*. Shelves hold worthless curios and an ivory bracelet worth 200gp. Laid out on a table is a disintegrating silk scroll, covered in Mourner pictographs. This is the partial notation of a spell, known as *the curse of crepitating bowel erosion*, and could be worth up to 1000gp to a wizard or sage. A mortar and pestle hold residue of powdered mummy organs, while two amphorae hold more of the powder (value 200 - 300gp each). A basin holds the heads of two Mourners immersed in chemicals, destined to become severed guardians. A large wooden case holds small jars of special inks and rare magical components. The collection is worth 1500gp to anyone interested in enchanting magical items, but is bulky and weighs 75 lbs.

8. Pantry: This holds jugs of water, kitchen tools, and odd spices, pastes, and herbs suited to Gluushik's extra-planar tastes. A crate holds assorted smoked meats and edible fungi. A decanter holds a few sips of extra-planar liqueur (save vs. poison or struck senseless for 1 turn).

9. Storeroom: Crates and empty pots hide a crawlspace leading to Gluushik's quarters. A 200 lb. stone slab blocks the far end (Gluushik moves such barriers using *telekinesis*).

10. Gluushik's Quarters: Sparsely appointed, with a simple cot and a small trunk of clothing and toiletries. Tucked behind a water jug is an *invisible* lockbox, about 1' high by 1 1/2' wide and weighing 50 lbs. A button toggles the box's visibility, up to 4 times a day. It holds a collection of coins from unknown lands (total value 1,500gp), 6 diamonds worth 1000gp each, and 12 rubies worth 250gp each. A hidden compartment holds Gluushik's workbook, written in an obscure tongue of Limbo. It contains notes on the *Hearse*, the Mourners, the process of creating Qarl's body, and speculation about harvesting a dust giant. Reading it provides no magical benefits, but may provide clues for further adventures. If cornered here, Gluushik grabs his lockbox and attempts to escape through cracks using *gaseous form*.

11. Blocked Doorway: This doorway is blocked by a stack of three paving stones, each weighing roughly 200 lbs. An unpleasant odor seems to come from within. Inside is a huge iron cauldron, kept at a constant simmer by a juju zombie (platemail and halberd; hp 25). A multi-hued steam rises from the bubbling pot. This witches' brew is the source of the *Necromantic Salts*. Heaps of drying crystals are laid out on canvas sheets, but the process of enchantment has not yet been completed.

New Monsters within *The Deep Caves*

The Mourners: Centuries ago, a group of refugees fled to this plane from some unknown dimension, eventually finding safety in *The Deep Caves*. There, they prospered, building a sprawling settlement of stone villas and soaring towers, until a sudden eruption buried it all beneath a mountain of ash. The settlers were a secretive and alien people, but they were known to practice highly advanced forms of spiritual magic. When their doom came upon them, some simply refused to die. Through the strength of their spiritual mastery, they returned, animating their own mummified bodies or rising as beings of pure dust and ash. Sadly, the ashes which entombed them were seeded with the stuff of Chaos itself, and their new forms became monstrous and twisted. Known only as The Mourners, these lost souls are driven now by rage, insanity, and a jealous hatred of all who live. Though Mourners take various forms, all are oddly proportioned, with multi-jointed limbs and narrow, horse-like skulls. Their bodies are withered, but retain an unnatural agility. Despite their undead nature, they take no damage from holy water, and are unaffected by clerical turning.

Ashen Magi: DC 0; HD 8+8; Att 2 open palms for 2d4+1 each, plus stun 1d6 rounds; Speed 12; Special: mental abilities. The strongest of the Mourners, Ashen Magi retain the full power of their living minds. They are emaciated figures of noble bearing, wrapped in shredded cowls. Each is highly skilled at unarmed combat, with a 2 in 6 chance to *stun* opponents for 1d6 rounds. They are also powerful mentalists, with the following powers at the 9th level of ability: Resist Fire/Cold (at will), Telepathy (24" range), ESP 2/day, Haste (5 rounds) 1/day, Suggestion 2/day, Astral Projection (self only) 1/week. Unlike their kin, a few Ashen Magi retain a neutral attitude towards the living. They have no use for wealth, but 40% wear antique jewelry worth 1d4x500gp, and a small number may own and use magic items. If destroyed, an Ashen Mage may form a new body within 1 week.

Encrusted Mummy: DC 2; HD 8, Att 2 fists for 1d8 each, or Lunge for 1d12; Speed 6; Special: Dust Cloud, Kiss of Ashes, Resistances and Fear. These Mourners are mindless, driven only by hate and resentment; only the Ashen Magi can control them. Encrusted Mummies appear as obese, dirt-caked corpses, their torsos swollen to

superhuman dimensions with dust and ash. Once each day, an encrusted mummy can cough forth a blinding cloud of dust (20x20 area; save vs. Poison or suffer -2 to all dice rolls for 2d4 rounds). They are also able to lunge with surprising force, dragging down and pinning any opponent who does not save vs. Paralysis. On the following round, the mummy delivers a Kiss of Ashes, filling the lungs with dust and inflicting 1d10+2 damage each round. The victim may attempt a STR check (at -4) each round to break free, but recovery takes an additional 1d3 rounds.

Hateful Dead: DC 2; HD 6; Att 2 swords for 1d6+2 ea.; Speed 12; Special: Thief abilities, resistances and Fear. These withered, rag-draped killers serve the Ashen Magi as bodyguards, spies, and assassins. They are stealthy, with the ability to Move Silently, Hide in Shadow, and Backstab as a 6th level Thief. Hateful Dead prefer curved, ceramic knives of unusual strength and sharpness, wielding one in each hand without penalty. Each blade is attuned to the spiritual energy of its owner, and radiates a faint, blue glow. In the hands of a Mourner, each blade acts as a +2 short sword, and heals its wielder by 1hp for each blow struck. In any other hands, it strikes as a dagger, and shatters on a roll of 5 or less. Hateful Dead may also carry 1d4 poisoned throwing knives (25% chance).

Howling Dead : DC 3; HD 4+1; Att 2 fists for 1d6 each; Speed 15; Special: Death Grip, Resistances and Fear. These hunching, ghoul-like creatures are the most common of the Mourners. Known as “the wolves of the Wastes”, their hunting cries are 25% likely to attract others of their kind within 1/4 mile. Howling Dead rend their victims limb from limb. A successful attack with both hands indicates a Death Grip on a random limb (Roll 1d10; 1-2 Left Leg, 3-4 Right Leg, 5-6 Left Arm, 7-8 Right Arm, 9-10 Head), causing an automatic 2d6 damage each round thereafter. While held, the limb is immobilized, and breaking free requires a STR check at -2. After 3 rounds, a Death Grip results in a fractured limb (unusable until healed) or broken neck. Once each month, in accordance with some unknown rite, all Howling Dead clamber to the surface of the Wastes to wail as one for their lost kingdom.

Tar Fiend: DC 0; HD 7+3; Att 2 tentacles for 1d8 ea.; Speed 12; Special: resistances and Fear. These Mourners are formed from pockets of tarry, liquefied remains trapped beneath the ashes. They have an oily, amorphous shape, making them resistant to physical blows (-1 damage per die) and allowing them to slide through cracks and under doors. Furthermore, each can alter its appearance as a Doppelganger, requiring three rounds to assume another form. This ability is frequently used to enter the surrounding settlements, where they commit murder and sabotage until exposed. Even in an assumed form they cannot speak – a fact often used as a primitive form of detection by the surrounding races. In combat, Tar Fiends attack with two elastic tentacles which can extend up to 15'. Tar Fiends are vulnerable to fire (+1 damage per die, save at -2).

Others:

Bad Puppets are sentient and cunning as humans, despite being magical constructions. They receive +4 to saves against mental effects and illusions, but are vulnerable to such. Made from wood, sawdust, and a wide variety of other materials, statistics are variable, but 5-7 HD and DC 2-6 would represent the norm.

Blood Thumps and **Claw Maws**, Troll Riding-Dinosaurs and Velociraptors, are detailed in *FO!* #6.

Control Freaks may be treated as Unseen Stalkers with genius-level intelligence, mind control, and telepathy (psionics if applicable).

Dark Trolls are similar to regular Trolls, except that they are more intelligent and make use of advanced technology (plate mail, metal weapons) and trained dinosaurs. Their dinosaur hunters are +1 HD and have ranger abilities.

Dust Giant: DC 2; HD 12-16; Att 1 stomp or strike for 4d8; Speed 24; Special: Deafening Groan, +1 or better to hit. Dust Giants are lonely, titanic figures of dust and rubble, thirty to sixty feet high. They are shaped by the collective psychic energy of restless souls, but have no individual consciousness. Each rises from the ashes at random, trudging slowly across the Wastes before disappearing into the dust once more. Dust Giants are seldom hostile, but are sometimes attracted by the psychic disturbance of sustained combat. Otherwise they are oblivious to living things and will trample any caught in their path. If attacked, a Dust Giant begins a horrific groan, causing *Deafness* within 12". This has a 40% chance of attracting 4-6 Howling Dead within 5-10 rounds. If slain, the Dust Giant collapses, burying anyone within 15' (save vs. Paralysis or suffer 2d6; victim must be excavated or dig himself free, requiring at least 1 turn). Persistent rumors maintain that the heart of a Dust Giant is a compressed mass of precious stones, but this may be simple fancy.

Mole-Bat: DC 4; HD 2+1; Att 2 claws for 1-4, bite 1-8; Speed 30 (flying, excellent maneuverability). Mole-bats are dog-sized bats which burrow deep into cavern walls. They eat grubs and flesh, and will harry adventuring parties for a chance at a good meal, though they are intelligent enough to know when to leave off.

Night Dragons are darkly colored, gorgeous drakes of onyx and deep grey. They are statistically identical to Red Dragons, except that their breath weapon is a cone of black clinging acidic stuff.

Puppet Minions are constructs of wood, sawdust, and detritus, occasionally with complex machinery included. Their statistics are quite variable but DC 7-4 and 1-3 HD depending on construction would be typical.

Troblins are troll/goblin halfbreeds, quite stupid but effective in a fight. 3 HD, regenerate 2 hp/round – including fire and acid damage, but not if dismembered. Ω



birds by Tim Snider; thew wagon by Jeffrey P. Talanian

Caw-Caw

No. Enc.: 1 flock (consisting of 1d100 Caw-Caws)

Alignment: Neutral

Movement: Fly: 140' (60')

Armor Class: 7

Hit Dice: hp = No. Enc.; HD = hp/5, rounded up

Attacks: 1 (multiple pecks)

Damage: 1d12

Mutations: metaconcert, mind reflection

Save: L2

Morale: 8

Horde Class: None

Description: The caw-caw is a miniature version of the common crow or raven. It is a small black bird about 4 inches in wingspan, the size of a large butterfly. The caw-caw gets its name from the call it makes. A single caw-caw is hardly a threat; however, these birds always travel in an insect-like swarm, staying in constant contact with each other through their *metaconcert* mutation. For all practical purposes, the Mutant Lord should treat a caw-caw flock as one large entity consisting of d100 individual caw-caws. When attacking, a caw-caw flock will engulf a victim in a



swirling mass. Numerous pecks from the flock do 1d12 damage. Since each caw-caw has only 1 hit point, the entire flock's hp total is equal to the number encountered. A successful hit on the flock kills or disables as many caw-caws as hp of damage rolled. When rolling to hit, take the caw-caws' current hp and divide by 5, rounding up, for their HD. A flock of 36-40 caw-caws will thus attack as an 8 HD creature. If a party kills 15 of them during a combat round, the flock will be down to 21-25 hp and will attack as a 5 HD creature next round. The strong mental unity of these birds gives the flock the ability to "bounce" mental attacks back upon attackers through a form of *mind reflection*. It is not a wise idea to try to drive them off with mental abilities...Caw-Caws live as one unit in large trees or in multiple ground nests. If a PC sees a mass of small black birds approaching, it is best to hide and wait for them to pass. There's a reason a flock of caw-caws is referred to as a "murder"...

Crocotinae

No. Enc.: 1d2 (2d4-nest; 2d10-migratory flock)

Alignment: Neutral

Movement: 70' (30'); Fly: 140' (60')

Armor Class: 7

Hit Dice: 2

Attacks: 1

Damage: 1d8

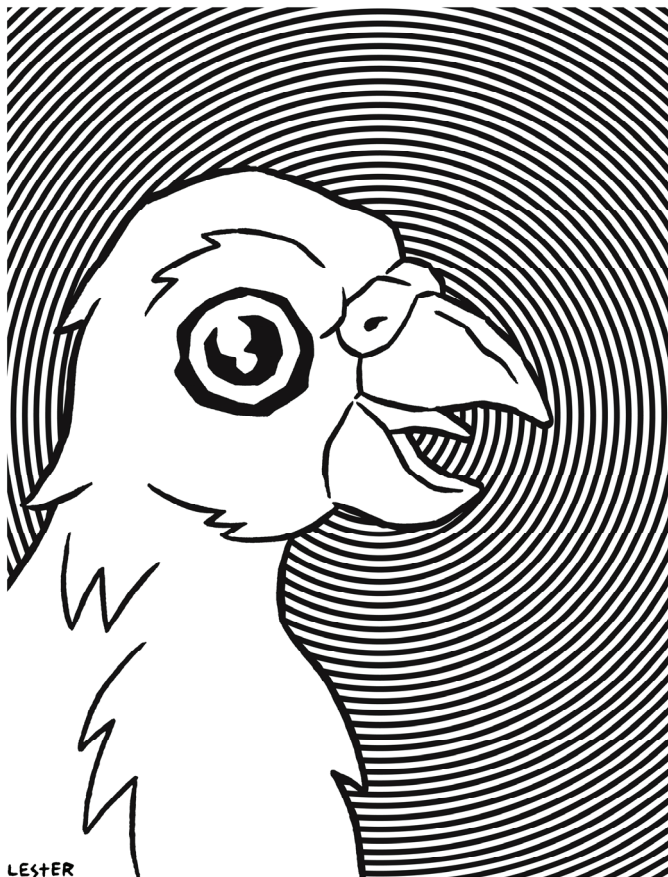
Mutations: metaconcert

Save: L2

Morale: 7

Horde Class: None

Description: The crocotinae (krow-KOT-in-ay) are small duck-like creatures with the head of an alligator or crocodile. Crocotinae (also called "snapping waddlers") make their nests in swampy or marshy areas, though they have been occasionally encountered in fresh water ponds and lakes as well. Brutally vicious and territorial, the crocotinus will attack anything it views as a threat to its nest or territory. It is also carnivorous, so a hungry crocotinus is a dangerous one. Crocotinae have developed a mental link amongst the flock. Whatever one snapping waddler sees, the entire flock sees, and it will react accordingly. As winter approaches, crocotinae will abandon their nests and begin a southerly migration. Their V-shaped migratory flocks contain 2d10 crocotinae. During migration, the birds eat whatever they can find en route. Herd animals and wandering travelers spied by an overhead flock of crocotinae are often later discovered stripped to the bone. If a party spies a flock overhead, they had best find cover and hide while the crocotinae pass over. There is a 40% chance the party will be seen by the flock if they're out in the open or caught by surprise. And if they've been seen by one crocotinus, they've been seen by all of them, and the whole flock will swoop down to feed.



Parascreech

No. Enc.: 1

Alignment: Neutral

Movement: Fly: 120' (40')

Armor Class: 9

Hit Dice: 1 hp

Attacks: None

Damage: None

Mutations: shriek

Save: L0

Morale: 7

Hoard Class: None

Description: The Parascreech is a small, harmless yellow bird. Descended from Ancient housepets, Parascreeches are usually tamed and kept as pets in the *Mutant Future* as well. However, the Parascreech has evolved with a very powerful set of vocal cords, giving it the *shriek* mutation. If a Parascreech is disturbed or agitated, it will let loose with a deafening scream affecting all within a 10' radius. Those who fail a save versus stun will take 1d4 points of sonic damage and be deafened for 1d6+4 rounds. Those who successfully save are unaffected. Parascreeches are useful as nonaggressive guardians: NPCs may set one in a cage near some valuables they hope to protect, or outside their hideout. When the Parascreech lets loose, you can bet its owner will come running to see what the commotion's all about...Some Parascreeches have been trained to stay silent when a password is spoken. The password is usually something innocent, like "Pretty bird!" or "Kiss kiss kiss!"

Great White Gull

No. Enc.: 1d2 (1d4)

Alignment: Neutral

Movement: Fly: 240' (80')

Armor Class: 6

Hit Dice: 3

Attacks: 1

Damage: 2d8

Mutations: echolocation, know direction

Save: L2

Morale: 8

Hoard Class: None

Description: Great White Gulls are white-and-gray birds with the unmistakable head and jaws of a shark. They are quite large, with a 4-foot wingspan. Although their feet are fairly useless for grasping, it is not unusual to see a great white gull (or "gullshark") flying away with prey grasped in its teeth. From a distance, a flock of great white gulls could be mistaken for crocotinae; but whereas the crocotinus is found in swampy or fresh-water areas, the great white gull prefers salty seas. Great White Gulls are tenacious hunters, having developed *echolocation* and *know direction*. The former gives them the ability to locate and track even invisible and hidden prey with ease (as well as a +2 to hit); the latter means they can never be shaken or lost by a fleeing victim. Great White Gulls can be driven into a blood-induced feeding frenzy. If a bite attack lands home for more than 5 points of damage, the attacking gull's Morale is raised to 11. It will rarely break off its attack at this stage.



Thew Wagon

No. Encountered: 2-12

Alignment: Neutral

Movement: 20

Armour Class: 4

Hit Dice: 10

No. of Attacks: 1 (slam)

Damage: 1-10

Saving Throw: 12

Morale: 8

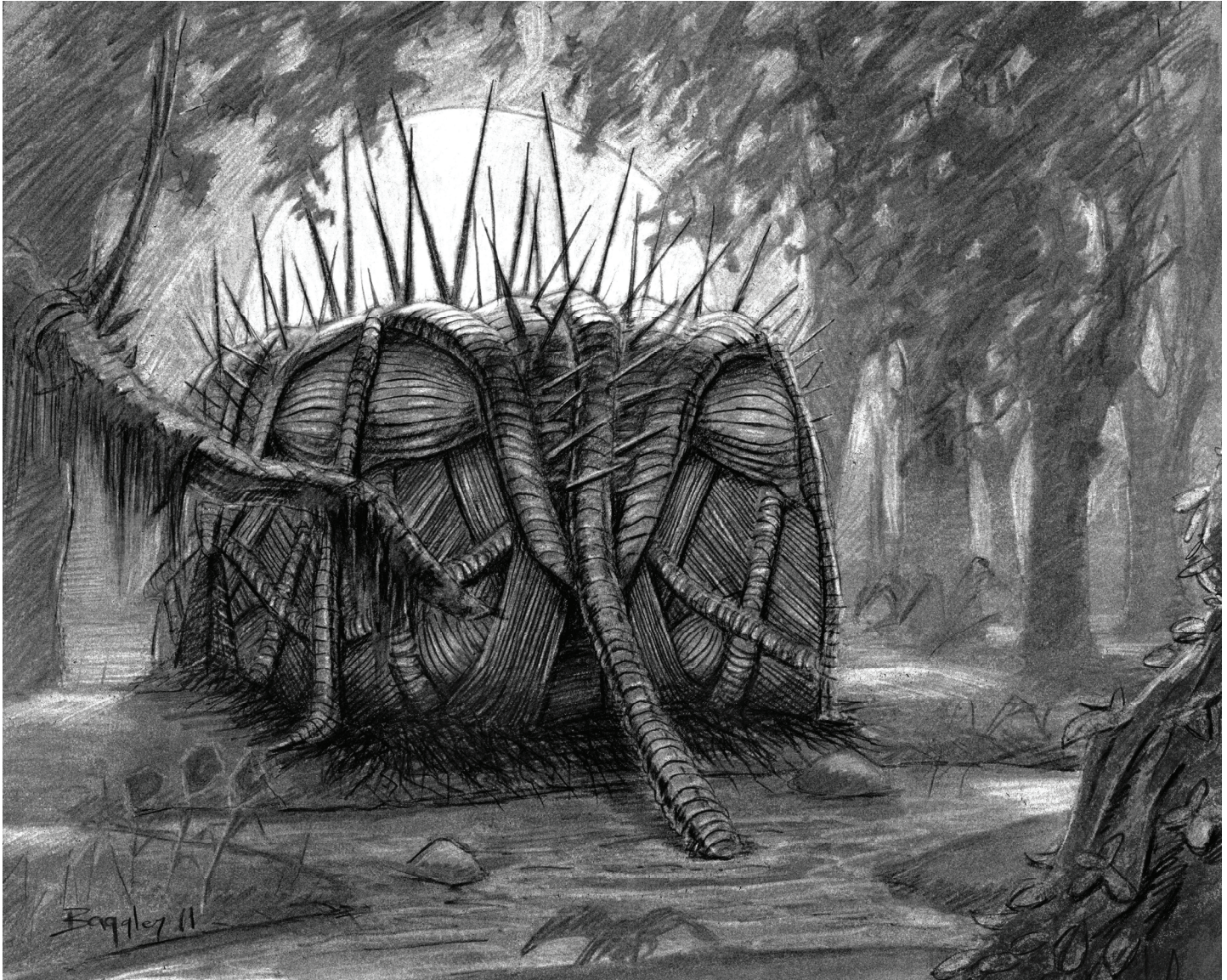
Treasure Class: Nil

Special: Bodily contact inflicts 3-12 damage (barbed quills);

Musk release up to 3 times per day burns eyes, nose, throat & nauseates any within 30' unless a save v. poison is made; -4 "to hit" and saves for d4 turns if failed.

Description: Thew Wagons are 8-12' cubes of dense, corrugated muscle weighing up to 4,000 lbs. Small of brain and sluggish of temperament, these swamp-dwelling behemoths bristle with barbed quills up to 12", ambulating by means of rotating underbelly muscles. Thew Wagons are herbivorous: they feed on decayed plant matter using a tubular snout. These beasts fear little, but if threatened

they shake their quills, slam their bulk against the ground, and release a nauseating musk, driving away all but the most tenacious predators. In the bogs of Hyperborea and elsewhere, enterprising men have tamed thew wagons to serve as transports. First, a large syrup sac is attached to the end of the beast's snout containing decayed vegetal matter laced with ground lotus petals; this placates the beast. Next comes quill extraction, a painstaking process that must be repeated regularly. Once tamed, the thew wagon is fitted with a harness fastening a carriage house atop its back and a tow bar extending from its posterior. Next, the "leg" muscles are made to grip heavy wooden axles, to which massive wheels are set. This entire process yields a most uncanny freight engine, with unmatched torque. The driver sits in the carriage and employs a long iron rod which he presses between the folds of muscle that line the beast's back, touching nerves that stimulate specific responses: *stop, go, left, right*, etc. (*The Thew Wagon is one of many unique creatures that inhabit the realm of Hyperborea, the default setting for Astonishing Swordsmen & Sorcerers of Hyperborea* (swordsmen-and-sorcerers.com). This creature is inspired by Jack Vance's *The Last Castle*.)



Monstrous Ecology: Beholder & Gas Spore

new perspectives on old terrors by Ron Edwards

Perhaps the best model for the dungeon environment is the very deep ocean, in which the critters living there eat, not so much one another, but whatever drifts downward too far consistently enough. In this model, nearly every species is an “apex predator.”

In this context, consider the Beholder. If you’re a creature that a Beholder wants to eat, you are very fucked, unless either

- i) You have a hell of a ranged attack, but then again, the Beholder is mighty clever and knows your habits and capacities better than you do, so you’re probably still fucked, or
- ii) You breed so copiously that getting eaten doesn’t affect your reproductive success much, also known as the “r” life-history strategy; but then again, if you’re big enough to be viable Beholder prey, then this isn’t an option, so you’re probably still fucked.

And then there’s the rest of us, without ranged weaponry worth playing chicken with a death-ray with, and without the ability to spawn 100,000 offspring. OK, so my point is, faced with a Beholder, you have a single viable tactic: run up and hit it as hard as you can. Behavioral ecologists call selection for this kind of behavior “the best of a bad job,” meaning it works *only* well enough to be selectively favored over all the other options, which don’t work at all.

Spores are reproductive cells, the equivalent of sperm/ova in animals and pollen/sperm in many plants. However, they are not restricted to fungi; there are lots of ancestral-type plants whose gametes are best described as spores. No one uses the term spores for animals or animal-related protists, but in theory and practice equivalents may be found. Also, it’s a very common thing to see sacs of spores sent out to fall upon whatever they may, and explosive or at least highly-dispersive packaging is often involved.

Based on this, it seems likely that the gas spore as described in the *Monster Manuals* is not itself an organism, but rather a spore sac sent out by some kind of creature as a distributive reproductive device. It’s quite nifty: the creature is practicing parasitoidy, getting its offspring to develop in the tissues of a host by exploiting a common behavior. All of which means that biological mimicry is not the issue at all, but merely imitation, a much simpler phenomenon. So cries of



“Fuck! A gas spo” – *hack, gag, choke* – now resound through the corridors.

Now for the \$64 question: what sort of creature sends out the gas spores? What does mama/papa/whatever look like? Putting aside considerations of metamorphosis for a moment, what do the spores – once combined and gestating – grow up into? (All of these are the same question.) You can probably see the answer coming: no other than the diabolical Beholders themselves. This neatly converts the only vaguely plausible defensive prey tactic against it into a reproductive tactic for itself; leaving no genuine vulnerability remaining. Ω



Random's Assortment

tricks and traps by Peter Schmidt Jensen and Random

Automenagerie (Jensen): A chamber is filled with carved images of jungle animals, tropical trees, and plants made of stone and metal, painted in garish colors by someone who seems to have only heard second-hand stories about jaguars and pythons. The paint is peeling and cracked in many places, with rust gradually reclaiming this cut-rate forgery. Towering above the rest, a vast chrome tree rears its mighty boughs in the center of the room. At its foot is a 10' tall lump of granite, made to resemble a dour gorilla. Its chest is hollow, with a space in front wide enough to allow a grown man to crawl inside. A ladder can be seen at the bottom of the cavity, leading up through a hole in the gorilla's back into the tree. Keen-eyed adventurers may spot the glint of precious metal in the branches of the tree above; large orange counterfeit parrots, striped with azure and vermillion, peek out from nests filled with gem-studded golden eggs. Anyone who attempts to climb the gorilla's ladder will cause the statue to animate, beating its limbs against its chest in life-like fashion and severely pounding the intruder for multiple dice of damage. The noise of the gorilla's drumming against all the metal in the tree and its own hollow torso will attract the attention of other creatures lurking in the fake jungle, whose hunger is all too real. Should the adventurers get hold of any eggs, the parrots will animate to peck and antagonize them, trying to make them fall from the tree. (If they managed to bypass the gorilla, the shrieks and calls of the mechanical parrots will now alert the other residents...) The eggs themselves may be real gold and gems, props made of pyrite and colored glass, or genuine eggs which hatch to reveal birds of rare and exotic origin.

Catacomb Cogwheel (Jensen): A certain chamber has only three exits: an open door, a doorway barred with a large metal plate, and a rounding flight of stairs leading to a small door near the ceiling. If at least three human-sized persons are climbing the stairs at any time, their combined weight will cause the 'stairs' to move downwards – revealing that they are, in fact, standing on a large cogwheel, connected to a massive set of machinery (concealed beneath the floor and walls), which is set in motion by the turning of the cogwheel. A heavy metal plate will crash down, shutting off the open door (and possibly crushing anyone standing directly before it), whilst the metal door that was previously closed will begin to slide upwards, releasing the snakes and scorpions that were trapped within. If the PCs try to flee by running up the 'stairs', the cogwheel will keep turning and lift the metal door even further, releasing bigger and nastier beasts from their enclosure. *Hold Portal*, cast on either the cogwheel or the metal door, will keep the mechanism in place for the duration of the spell, whereas an incautiously cast *Knockspell* could open the metal door all the way...

Hall of Madness (Random): Characters are stricken with bizarre forms of insanity during their stay in this freakishly decorated chamber. Roll **twice** on the following table (d20):

1	Catatonia (unless this conflicts with the second roll).
2	Extreme phobia of [roll random item of equipment].
3	Grandiose proclamation of each action performed, complete with the need to write one's actions on paper and distribute to those present.
4	Urge to strip naked and run as far as possible.
5	Uncontrollable cannibalistic desires!
6	Truly believes he or she is a [roll random monster].
7	Dancing fever! (With a great desire to moonwalk.)
8	Bitten by the gambling bug. Roll twice more if no cards, dice, or other gambling paraphernalia are found
9	Believes the nearest object at hand to be a [random magical item] and wields it to supposedly great effect.
10	Insists that the nearest creature is a horse in desperate need of being ridden.
11	Unceasing, incredibly loud fits of screaming emotion.
12	Heroic feelings of invulnerability, along with the need to take care of everything (from battles to merely opening doors) without any help whatsoever.
13	Will only pantomime communication.
14	Absurd displays of affection, to the point of tackling any creature whatsoever and showering it with kisses.
15	Insatiable greed.
16	Desire to guzzle any liquids as quickly as possible.
17	Starts a game of freeze tag and insists that everyone present participates.
18	Will stop at nothing to exchange clothes with the nearest clothed creature.
19	Rips hair out and jumps up and down repeatedly.
20	Roll again or use another madness table.

Curses Gone Wild!

bad mojo by John Laviolette

Cursed items rarely offer much variety. Cursed sword? Ho-hum. Penalty to hit, maybe an additional effect. Cursed scroll? Does one of five specific things. And no cursed items show up by surprise. Time to shake things up a bit...

How Do Things Get Cursed? Personally, I prefer the idea of death curses: the souls of the dead scream curses against those who loot their bodies. Make a Curse Check Roll 2d6: on a 5 or less, all of the deceased's magic items are cursed, and on a 2, even the non-magic items are cursed! For NPCs, creatures, or random unlabeled corpses, roll separately for the most powerful magic item (if any). Only roll once for groups of pretty much identical creatures. If the victim was killed by a supernatural monster (undead, demonic, or optionally other supernaturals,) subtract half the creature's Hit Dice from the Curse Check Roll. Horrific unnatural deaths should have horrific consequences! You can also allow evil priests aligned with Chaos to utter spontaneous curses instead of giving them the ability to command undead, using the Turn Undead table for your system: treat the victim as equivalent to an undead creature of the same Hit Dice. If the roll is successful, one item in the victim's possession that isn't Blessed or Holy becomes cursed. The victim doesn't know what, if anything, has been cursed until that item is used. A blasphemous altar may have the same effect on anything laid on its surface.

Option: Playing Favorites. Players may want to retrieve a favorite item later if they are slain and resurrected, or even just pass it on to another character... or they may want to prevent anyone from ever using their favorite item. Let the player of a slain PC choose to either add or subtract half the character's level from the Curse Check Roll.

How Do You Know When an Item Is Cursed? A spell to identify an item's properties only reveals a curse if all its other properties are known. Optionally, roll a d6 to give a slim chance of revealing the curse each time a magical property is identified: on a 6, the curse is made apparent. On the other hand, priests should have a slim chance of feeling a curse the first time they handle a cursed item, with the same d6 roll as above.

Option: Holy Water. For sheer coolness, give holy water a chance of sizzling when it contacts a cursed item. Again, use the d6 roll, with the curse revealed on a result of 6.

When Does a Curse Take Effect? For single-use items or the last use of an item with limited uses, the curse automatically takes effect when the item is used. However, for other items, it's more fun to delay the first effect. Any time a character rolls for anything other than an attack, the curse takes effect on a 6 or higher. If a triggering action has

no die roll, roll a d6 in secret. To keep players guessing whether an item is worth the risk after the curse is revealed, make another Curse Check Roll to see if it remains cursed, without any level or Hit Dice modifications. If a spell is used to curse an item, subtract the spell level from the roll; if an item remains cursed after affecting three victims, the curse is permanent until a priest removes it.

What Kind of Curse Is It? Curses have a trigger action, a target of that action, and a cursed effect. The trigger is normally what the cursed item is meant to do. The target is what the cursed item is used to attack, fix, alter, or otherwise affect. The effect is what the curse does to annoy or harm the bearer of the cursed item. Examples:

- A cursed sword is triggered when used to attack, with the opponent as the target
- A cursed key is triggered when used to lock or unlock, with the lock as the target
- A cursed statue is triggered when viewed, with the viewer as the target



If the action has no obvious target, the target will be either the owner of the item or the item itself, whichever makes more sense. If it has no obvious trigger, roll on the Curse Trigger table. Roll the effect on the Curse Effect table.

A (Reversed) Magical Effect reverses the primary ability of a magical item; or, if the ability can't be reversed, the ability or its equivalent is perverted. Look up the ability on a standard spell list for the appropriate level; move 3 or 4 steps down the list (depending on the Curse Effect roll) to find the curse effect. Non-magical items must roll 1d6 for the spell level and select a random spell from the indicated spell list.

Curse effects do not have to be damaging, but they should be interpreted as being potentially annoying at the very least. If the effect is potentially useful, reduce the duration to a low random amount. Example: A sword "cursed" with Light will glow brightly when it strikes a foe, but if the adventurers try to use it as their sole illumination, they may find that it goes dark at an unexpected moment.

Option: Multiple Curses. An already-cursed item can be cursed a second, third, or even fourth time. Roll on the Curse Trigger table to pick a new trigger, then roll on the Curse Effect table for the actual effect. If Reversed Magical Effect is rolled for a second curse effect, this is not a perverted version of an existing effect, but a totally new effect. Multiple curses are permanent unless removed by magic, one curse per spell. Optionally, there may be a high-level spell to remove all curses from an item.

Option: Cursed Locales. Homes, abandoned buildings, battlefields, and mass graves may also be cursed by a dying spell-caster, a murdered king, or multiple violent deaths or corpses. Make a Curse Check Roll when a spell-caster dies or a king is assassinated, or if 20 or more victims are killed or buried in the locale; the locale is only cursed on a result of 2. An evil priest may also be able to spontaneously curse a locale; use the Hit Dice of the locale's owner as the opposing strength on the Turn Undead table of your choice. Determine the actual curse with the Curse Trigger table and the Curse Effect table, assigning a random spell effect as for mundane items if necessary.

Sample Cursed Items

- Potion of Invisibility with "Swapped Target" curse: the person drinking the potion develops selective blindness, unable to see one or more people or creatures.
- Scroll of Light with "Broken" curse: the scroll crumbles to dust, which swirls around the reader of the scroll, causing choking damage to those who inhale it. GM may instead blind random victims with the dust, to partially cancel the Light spell.
- Ring of Three Wishes with "Swapped Target" curse: each wish has a 1 in 6 chance of affecting a random target other than the one intended.

- Wand of Illusion with "Conjured Enemy" curse: 1d6 centipedes have a 1 in 6 chance of appearing to attack the wand's owner every time an illusion is created.
- Cursed Abandoned Smithy: if someone enters, that person's current allies and opponents have a 1 in 6 chance each to become water-breathers for 1d6 turns, unable to breathe air.

d6	Curse Effect
1	Broken: The target, cursed item, or both is broken by the trigger action on a 1 (1d6 for each item). If the intention was to break or harm something, or if there is no target, the shards of the broken item act as shrapnel (d6 damage) to the bearer of the cursed item and anyone within 10 feet.
2	Conjured Enemy: Roll 1d6 for monster level or use item's spell level. Select monster from appropriate list for that level. Creature is hostile to the bearer of the cursed item, but has a random reaction to bearer's allies. <i>Dispel Magic</i> within 6 turns dismisses the enemy.
3-4	(Reversed) Magical Effect: If the item has a magical ability, it is reversed or perverted into a spell 3 or 4 steps down from the equivalent spell on the standard spell list, depending on the die roll. If the item is mundane, select a random spell of level 1-6.
5-6	Swap Target: If an opponent is targeted, the effect targets the bearer of the cursed item instead and vice versa. Each of the bearer's allies may also be affected (see shrapnel rules for "Broken" above).
d6	Curse Trigger
1	Prejudice: The cursed item despises the presence of one or more races or classes. Roll a d6 for each race or class present when the item is cursed; on a 1, that race or class is hated and becomes the target of the curse.
2	Travel (or Presence): Each turn of travel with item has a chance of triggering the effect on a 6 (1d6). Immobile items or locales are triggered when someone enters or leaves the immediate area.
3	Magic: Any active spell or supernatural effect can trigger the effect on a 6+ (1d6). Add the spell level to the roll, if known. The spell caster or person who triggered the magic becomes the target.
4	Violence: Any damage of 6+ within the immediate area triggers the curse. If an action is violent but does not normally cause damage, roll 1d6 to see if it triggers the curse. The aggressor is the target.
5	Language: Reading, writing, or speaking in the presence of the curse triggers the effect on a 6 (1d6), with the reader, writer, or speaker as the target.
6	Feats of Strength: Attempts to lift, push, carry, or crush objects trigger the curse on a 6 or higher (1d6). The person exercising strength is the curse's target.

Artifacts, Adjuncts, & Oddments

by Jason Sholtis

Azanath's Intellect Enhancer: Arch-mage Azanath, an obsessive seeker of arcane knowledge, could never accept the inherent limitations of the human mind. For a period of one high-sleepless year, he threw his own unsurpassed intellect (and a considerable portion of his hoarded wealth) into the pursuit of ever more potent herbal, chemical, and magical enhancements to mental potential. Following a failed experiment to surgically increase the capacity of his brain and a lengthy recuperative coma, the sorcerer awoke in a feverish state fueled by a subconscious breakthrough. Without pausing to restore his enfeebled tissues, Azanath flew to his alchemical laboratory. Striking dead his lone remaining servitor with a single dagger thrust, Azanath magically extracted and distilled the intuitive component of his hapless hireling's disembodied animus into a pleasant, lightly fizzy beverage. Repeating this method with freshly hired servants allowed Azanath to bottle and cork a dozen of these potions before he succumbed to self-induced stroke, whereupon his treasures and many inventions fell into unknown hands. Designed to aid creative problem solving, these extremely rare potions were intended to be used whenever a particularly vexing puzzle, riddle, dungeon maze, or other mental challenge flummoxed the sorcerer, and may be employed in similar fashion by PCs. Drinking one when not faced by an intellectual quandary wastes its effects (unless a 6 is rolled). For a period of 1d4 turns after drinking, the excited faculties of the imbiber may turn to other matters of the mind with enhanced capacity and artificially enhanced fervor, during which the character may decide to begin work on an epic poem, metaphysical treatise, new system of mathematics, etc., only to have his hopes dashed by a sudden drop in ability at the end of this time. As each dose was extracted from a different victim, Intellect Enhancers produce a variety of effects on the user (d6):

1	Stupefied 1 turn by racing thoughts of genius
2-3	Partial insight gained: the referee should give a reasonable hint or clue
4	Substantial insight gained: two hints or clues
5	Total insight: referee reveals all pertinent secrets
6	Total insight plus a permanent +1 to Intelligence

Hurang's Recursive Treasury: A treasure amongst treasures, each of these thousand golden coins has the magical power to sprout tiny limbs on moonless nights. Fully animate, the coins force their way out of wherever they are stored and surmount any obstacle to return to the coffers of their current owner, seeking concealment when the moon shines or the sun rises. When exchanged for goods or ser-



vices, the coins always endeavor to return to the spender. The coins change allegiance only if their current owner is killed or somehow loses the coins through negligence. If this procession of walking coins is encountered en route, it can be readily followed to its destination.

Shroud of Impecunious Obscurity: When draped over the neck and shoulders, this fine silken bolt of magically wrought fabric radically alters the wearer's appearance until removed. Any ostentatious signs of wealth, such as jewelry, polished plate armor, regal finery of any kind, bulging purses, etc. are transformed by the shroud's singular power into exceedingly humble illusionary images. Jewelry ceases to sparkle, gemstones become bones or shabby beads, armor appears rusty and full of holes, beautiful fabrics seem as filthy sack cloth. The character's own physical features are similarly downgraded. Where once a hale and hearty countenance commanded respect and admiration, the shroud's unique dweomer casts a sickly pall, giving the appearance of ill-health and suspect personal hygiene (even by medieval standards). For game purposes, the shroud reduces charisma by 6 points but also produces an effective visual disguise and/or deterrent to would-be robbers. Ω

Treasure Types

by Simon “waysoftheearth” Bull

An alternate, more intuitive treasure type sub-system is here presented. No effort whatever has been made to match the treasure values delivered with those of more ‘official’ tables –this is intended as a wholesale replacement.

Treasures A to Z

A is for **Art** (paintings, sculptures, costumes, etc.)
B is for **Brilliant**s (gemstones, pearls, bibelots, trinket, etc.)
C is for **Copper** (coins, metals, worked metals, etc.)
D is for **Documents** (scrolls, letters, maps, tomes, writing stuffs, etc.)
E is for **Estate** (furnishings, fixtures, habiliments, etc.)
F is for **Furs** (furs, pelts, skins, teeth, ivory, etc.)
G is for **Gold** (coins, metals, worked metals, etc.)
H is for **Hardware** (tools, ropes, lanterns, shovels, firewood, carts, etc.)
I is for **Ingredients** (rare earths, herbs, liquids, and so on for the alchemist, apothecary, etc.)
J is for **Jewelry** (rings, broaches, necklaces, tiaras, etc.)
K is for **Mixed Koins** (3:2:1 copper : silver : gold)
L is for **Livestock** (chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, etc.)
M is for **Musical Instruments** (pipes, whistles, lutes, drums, horns, etc.)
N is for **Niceties** (soaps, perfumes, mirrors, combs, handkerchiefs, snuff, tobaccos, etc.)
O is for **Ore** (coal, iron, copper, silver, gold, mithril, etc.)
P is for **Plants** (flowers, seeds, timber, yew, mistletoe, wolvesbane, etc.)
Q is for **Queeriosities** (pets, grand designs, information, projects, diaries, etc.)
R is for **Rations** (meat, fish, fruit, bread, vegetables, etc.)
S is for **Silver** (coins, metals, worked metals, etc.)
T is for **Textiles** (fabrics, carpets, tapestries, clothing etc.)
U is for **Utensils** (glassware, kitchenware, cutlery, goblets, candelabra, etc.)
V is for **Victims** (remains, prisoners, slaves, etc.)
W is for **Weaponry** (armour, shields, helms, weaponry, etc.)
X is for **eliXirs** (ale, wine, mead, spirits, remedies, etc.)
Y is for **Young** (eggs or younglings to be captured, sold, tamed, etc.)
Z is for **Zilch!** – no treasure when this is rolled.

So What Have They Got? When a group of monsters is defeated, roll 1d6 for each HD of defeated monsters. Each type of monster should have six types of treasure assigned to it. These can be whatever the referee likes – each type can be unique (such as “BCGJSW”), or fewer types can appear multiple times each (e.g., “CCGGSS”). “Z” would appear six times (“ZZZZZZ”) for a monster type with absolutely no treasure. Cross-reference the d6 rolls above with the tables for each type of monster defeated. Here are examples for some classic monsters:

Basilisk VVZZZZ	Berserker FKLWVZ
Brigand HKLRWZ	Centaur KPRWZZ
Chimera GKSVZZ	Cockatrice VVZZZZ
Dryad AIMNPX	Dwarf EGHKOX
Elf AJMNTX	Gargoyle ZZZZZZ
Ghoul KVZZZZ	Giant, Cloud AEGJKU
Giant, Fire BCEKUW	Giant, Frost BEFKSU
Giant, Stone EHKKOV	Gnoll CKLWZZ
Gnome BGHIQU	Goblin CHLRZZ
Gorgon KVVZZZ	Griffon GSZZZZ
Halfling EKLNRU	Hobgoblin KRVWWZ
Hydra CKSVZZ	Lycanthrope CGQRSW
Manticore GJVZZZ	Medusa BGKVVZ
Merchant AFKNTU	Minotaur CSRVZZ
Mummy AGKSZZ	Nixie KIPWZZ
Ogre KLRSVZ	Orc HKORWZ
Pixie KITWZZ	Purple Worm VZZZZZ
Roc JVZZZZ	Spectre ADQZZZ
Troll CKRSZZ	Vampire ADEGJN
Wight KJUVZZ	Wyvern KSVZZZ
Zombie ZZZZZZ	

Dragons are among the most voracious treasure collectors, and their hoards are not the stuff of legend for naught. A dragon has not one but *two* treasure types – one for its type and another for its age category. Thus, dragons are more likely to have richer treasure than many other monsters:

White AEFKSU	Very Young KZZZZZ
Black EIKSUX	Young CKVZZZ
Green CEKPSU	Sub-Adult CKSVZZ
Blue AEGKSU	Adult CGKSVZ
Red BGEKNU	Old BCGKSV
Gold DGJKEU	Very Old BGJKSV

The referee can easily adjust a monster’s treasure type to reflect the folk the monster has been despoiling, to achieve a particular campaign flavour, or to satisfy his own personal taste. It’s simple.

But How Much is it Worth? The referee can set the value of each share of treasure to whatever he likes. However, as a basic guide, each share of treasure types ABFGIKMNSU are nominally worth 100gp per monster HD. Each share of treasure type J is worth 1d3 times as much, and each share of type D has a 1 in 6 chance to be worth twice as much but is otherwise worth only 1/4 as much. Shares of treasure types CEHLOPRTWX are worth only 1/4 as much in any case. Types QVY are of unpredictable value (referee’s discretion), and treasure type Z obviously has no value.

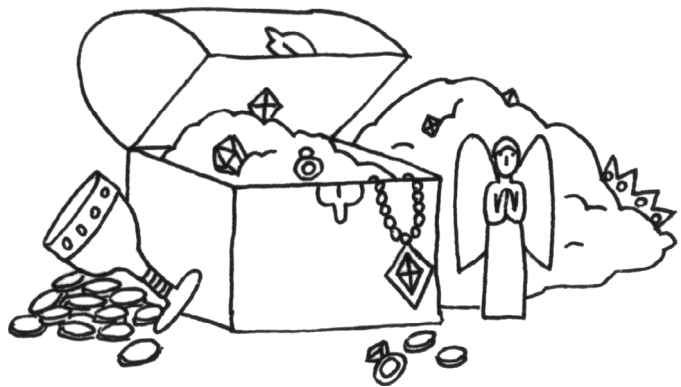
What About Magic Items? Enchanted items are so rare and wonderful that there is a reasonable argument which says they should never appear as random treasure. On the other hand, there are countless tales wherein magical treasures fall into the heroes’ hands by chance alone. Should the referee wish to allow such luck, here is a simple addition to this method: Roll 2d6 for each monsters’ lair sacked by the PCs. If the result is less than or equal to the HD of the

strongest monster present, one item among the loot is enchanted. Subtract 1 from the HD and roll 2d6 again, repeating so long as magic items are indicated.

Examples

1. Orcs have treasure type HKORWZ. Thus each 1 results in a share of (H)ardware, each 2 of mixed (K)oin, each 3 of (O)re, each 4 (R)ations, each 5 (W)eaponry, and each 6 an empty (Z)ilch share. If the players defeat a lair of 20 Orcs (1 HD), the referee throws 20d6 to determine the loot: let us suppose 11111122233344555566. In this case the Orcish trove contains 6 shares of hardware, 3 of mixed coin, 3 of ore, 2 of rations, and 4 of weaponry. Therefore the PCs would have won 150 gp worth of miscellaneous hardware, 300 gp of mixed coins, 75 gp worth of bulky iron-ore, 50 gp worth of food-stuffs (dried meat, salted fish, hard cheese and pickled onions), and 100 gp worth of normal weaponry (spears, arrows and hand-axes).

2. An adult White Dragon has two treasure types, AEFKSU and CGKSVZ. The referee rolls 7d6 twice and throws 1223 566 followed by 1223445. The first roll indicates that the white dragon's hoard contains 1 share of art, 2 of estate, 1 of furs, 1 of silver and 2 of utensils; the second that it also contains 1 share of copper, 2 of gold, 1 of mixed coin, 2 of silver and 1 share of victims. Therefore the PCs would have won 700 gp worth of art pieces (paintings, beautifully worked bowls, goblets, and vases), 350 gp worth of estate (perhaps a graven throne), 700 gp worth of mixed animal furs, skins, and ivory, 700 gp worth of silver ingots, and an additional 1,400 worth of candelabra, goblets, polished vessels and other utensils. In addition, the adult dragon had collected 125gp worth of copper coins, 1,400gp worth of gold ingots, 700gp worth of mixed coins, and another 1,400gp worth of silver – these being a mixture of raw metal and worked metal objects. Finally, the dragon possessed some victims (or victims' goods) as determined by the referee. The defeated White Dragon was a 7 HD monster, so there is a good chance it had magical treasure as well. The referee throws 2d6 and scores a $5 \leq 7$, so at least one magic item is present. The referee throws 2d6 again and this time scores a $3 \leq 6$, so a second item is found. A third throw scores a 9, so the hoard contains two magic items. The referee may wish to place 1d6 magic arrows, 1d3 potions or 1d3 spell scrolls in place of one permanently enchanted item. A legendary haul! Ω



Dungeon Modules: The Rondo Rooms

by Jeff Rients

"...a system of exchange of sealed envelopes for special rooms and tricks/traps is urged."

- Gary Gygax, "Solo Dungeons & Dragons Adventures", *Best of the Dragon* vol. I

Fellow referee Ron "Rondo" King recently decided to embark upon a series of solo expeditions, relying primarily on the random dungeon appendix in the first *Dungeon Masters Guide*. Rondo asked me to provide him some special rooms for his poor adventurers to discover. Below are the first five rooms I sent to Rondo, each in a text file only to be randomly selected and opened when his party actually enters a "special" room. I found working within the solo expedition format an interesting challenge, as it required an entirely different "fog of war" approach to standard refereeing. Pardon the indelicate language in some entries; Rondo seems like the kind of guy who can enjoy a good cuss.

Room 1 – Fountain. An elaborately carved stone fountain depicting a scantily clad nymph pouring water from a pitcher into the mouth of a recumbent troll. Water overflows from the small pool in the troll's mouth into a larger round pool. Due to the flowing water the air is fresher here than elsewhere in the dungeon. Check your PCs' equipment lists. Did they all bring full wineskins or other beverages? If anyone did not, those dudes are thirsty. The one with the lowest Wisdom drinks first and rolls 1d6:

- | | |
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| 1 | Cool, refreshing water. No other effects. |
| 2 | Magic healing water! Cures d6 hit points per person per day. If you can get a dead PC here within 2 turns they get a 15% chance of revivification. Note: If no thirsty PCs is wounded, treat this result as a roll of 1. |
| 3 | Ack! Poison! Save or die, dude. |
| 4 | The water tastes terrible, but anyone with a Con of at least 8 can man up sufficiently to get a drink. Anybody who cannot is ridiculed by the rest of the party. |
| 5 | Cool, refreshing water, plus a secret. Roll one Secret Doors check for each thirsty PC. First to succeed finds a magic ring that someone left hidden in the troll's mouth. Roll on some magic ring chart to determine exactly what they get. If the PC has a Wisdom of under 11 they will put on the ring whether it be awesome or accursed. |
| 6 | Aieee! My hand! That water is ridiculously acidic. Poor bastard must save vs. poison. Success indicates his right hand is merely useless for d6 days (or until cure serious/potion of X-healing), failure means his whole damn hand just melted off. If you have any empty vials, potion bottles, etc., this stuff does 2d8 when thrown at monsters. Just don't fall into any pits while carrying it! |



Room 2 – Top Shelf Treasure. Roll on some wandering monster chart. You have to deal with whatever the heck that is before proceeding further. What kind of light source do the PCs have? If it's only flickering torches or candles then they totally miss the treasure chest up on a secret niche way up near the high arched ceiling. If they're working off of (Continual) Light or at least two lanterns then they spot the chest in its cubby hole. Any use of flight or levitation makes accessing the chest easy. One climb check by a thief will do the job as well (d6-1 falling damage if the roll fails). If none of those are available, a ladder could be employed. One human sized dude could boost another human sized dude up, but the bottom guy has to make a Strength check and the top guy a Dex check. Three dwarves, elves, etc could do the same think all cartoon-like, but the middle man has to roll both Strength and Dex. In both these cases, falling damage for the top man is d6-1. A grappling hook and rope will only snag the chest, bringing the chest down rather than you up. That will wreck up the chest pretty fiercely, as well as any fragile contents.

d12	What is in the damn chest?
1	300 gp and a random map/scroll
2	a bunch of big brass cogs from some machine
3	six black robes with evil red runes decorating them
4	four random potions – if one comes up poison (delusion, etc.) randomly determine a PC who must roll Wis plus level or less on d20 or take a sip
5	a deli tray that has been magically preserved, the spell breaking when the chest is opened – snack time!

6	five random pieces of jewelry; the most expensive is the Lost Crown of Wudfrid the Mediocre, a local king of yawn-inducing legend
7	explicit photographic evidence that the mother of a random PC was not as ladylike in her youth as she always led him to believe
8	a small note from Redgewick the Neurotic Thief apologizing for beating you to the treasure
9	a cloud of purple vapor spurts out, scaring the bejeesus out of whoever opened the chest but having no other noticeable effect (monster pheromones, double wandering monster checks for rest of adventure)
10	a silver dagger in a leather sheath and 20 silver-tipped arrows in a leather quiver; quiver and sheath are decorated with a heraldic winged eagle in front of a <i>fleur-de-lis</i> , with runes underneath (if comprehend languages or some such is used, the runes read "Be Prepared")
11	three ancient books: a cookbook in Common worth 50 gp on the open market, a long lost geometry text in some ancient tongue worth 2,000 gp to a sage or wizard and a spellbook with 3 spells of level 1-6
12	a black pudding, roll initiative

Room 3 – Total Deathtrap. Crap! Once the last PC is in this room a hidden portcullis drops down in front of every exit while d4+1 secret doors open to release d10 slobbering attack corpses each! (Roll for each door.) Only one baddie can come out of each door in any given round, so it will take a while for the whole bunch to show up. The monsters will not follow the PCs out of the room, but a bend bars type roll takes a round, during which the bending character is attacked by one monster unless the PCs outnumber the badguys. All this is happening so fast your guys don't even know what exactly is attacking them until you commit to how many and who are bending bars the first round. Then roll d6 to seal your doom:

1	superwimpy zombies (only 2 hp each)
2	regular type zombies
3	fuck! ghouls!
4	the first (up to) three monsters from each door are zombies, they are followed by up to three ghouls, followed by up to four wights!
5	ordinary skeletons wearing skin suits some sickfuck necro-psycho sewed for them
6	mummies in street clothes rather than formal bandages, these casual dudes only come out every other round

If a priest turns some of these guys each turned undead will flee back the way he came, causing a logjam that will delay further monster deployment by d2 rounds per monster turned for that door. There is no treasure here, only death.

Room 4 – What the hell just happened? This appears to be a 30' x 30' square room with at least one extra exit. But something weird happens the first time the party passes

through to investigate the new door: an invisible force splits each of them in half from stem to stern. This does not kill them, though it's painful, gross, and totally freak-out worthy. What might kill them is the fact that the left halves of the PCs all hate their right halves and attack them. The right halves are your party and the left are monsters (switch up any southpaws). Split your hp in half, with odd points going to the good guys. Split spells available in half, assigned randomly with odd spells going to your team. Your team probably all has weapons to wield (two handers are -6 to hit and 1/2 damage one handed), while the other team may have to make do with shield bashes (1 + 1/point of Str over 15) and torch attacks (d4). But if you have spare weapons and it isn't clear from the character sheet what side of the body they are stored on, the bad guys can use those. Also helping you out is the fact that the lefties are -2 to hit due to using the off hand. The down side is that you probably don't want to kill your left halves, so you only score half damage, subdual-style. If you can subdue, knock out, etc, your left half, it reattaches and you're whole again, as if this whole bad trip never happened. All spells and hp are back, etc. If a right half is killed, the lefty hops off, never to be seen again. If a left half is killed the half-PC gets out of the adventuring business altogether. He'll grow skin to cover the gaping wound in d6 days and find some quiet line of work where the loss of one leg, arm, and eye won't disadvantage him too badly. (Roll d6: 1-2 town drunk, 3-4 filthy beggar, 5-6 circus freak.) If somehow person A's right half and person B's left half are killed, you can put together a new PC averaging both half-characters. He'll be a fully functional adventurer, but he'll always be a little weird in the head. All saves versus insanity etc. are at -4 for the rest of his days. This scene happens exactly once and no explanation is ever available for it. Surviving nabs xp equal to defeating the PC party plus a 250 xp weirdness bonus each.

Room 5 – Throne of Crom. This 60' long, 30' wide hall is lit with mysterious flickering white light. It's bright, almost too bright to see the far end without hurting your eyes. Down at the far end is a mighty stone throne, upon which sits the corpse of a mighty-looking king resplendent in bronze plate and a wicked awesome helmet, Otus batwinged style, holding a sword. If it weren't for the weird sourceless light almost blinding you, the whole scene would look hella like the part in *Conan the Barbarian* where he finds that awesome sword. Roll d6 on each chart below, in order.

How are we going to die?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The king is a wight of max hit points. Roll on the charts below to kit him out, if he gets an item with a daily effect he will use that first. Sword strikes also affect victims as normal wight attacks. He waits until the PCs are close enough to melee before attacking. Because of the light effects everyone is -2 to hit him. Between the light and maybe some magical armor this guy is going to be hard to hit. You may want to run. |
|---|---|

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | The dancing white lights coalesce over the head of the king, throwing long, twisted shadows behind the party. These Shadows attack. Multiply the # of party members by a %ile throw, rounding up to the nearest whole number. That's how many shadows form and attack. They don't count as undead for purposes of turning, etc. |
| 3 | The sword animates and attacks. It attacks once/round for d6 rounds, then clatters to the ground. Roll a random target each round. It rolls to hit as an 8HD monster doing normal sword damage, except that a natural 20 beheads the target. Normal attacks, grabbing the sword, etc. have no effect. Spells that cause items to roll saves can destroy it if the save is failed. Do not roll on the sword chart below until after the fight is over. |
| 4 | The weird white light is actually ethereal lightning. It phases into the real world when the PCs get too close to throne, zapping d6 random party members for 6d6 damage, save for half. The room then goes dark. |
| 5 | The white light coalesces into an angry lightning elemental. Treat as a fire elemental of 16 hit dice, but the damage is electrical in nature. Also, it ignores metal armor and anyone hitting it with a metal weapon is zapped for d6 damage. If killed the room goes dark. |
| 6 | Surprisingly, nothing attempts to kill the PCs; the corpse shifts a bit like in the movies. The weird lights remain. |

Effects 1, 2, 3 and 5 reset after 1 turn should the party flee the room.

How awesome is this sword?

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Just a normal sword, but it looks wicked cool. |
| 2 | In addition to looking cool, the sword is magic (roll). |
| 3 | As 2 above, but the sword is past its prime. The next time a natural 20 comes up on the to-hit roll it shatters. On the plus side, that final strike will totally kill <u>absolutely anybody</u> . The greatest god of your campaign world steers clear of this sword. |
| 4 | When grabbed the sword crumbles to a pile of rust. |
| 5 | The sword is as 1, but the sheath it is magical. As long as you wear it all edged weapons do half damage to you. Monster claws and fangs do not count. |
| 6 | As 1, but the sword has a rune on that allows the wielder to use a randomly determined Mage spell (d4 for level) once/day, even if not a spellcaster. |

How awesome is this armor?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Normal bronze plate (DC 4), but it looks wicked cool. |
| 2 | Very cool looking DC 3 platemail, but super heavy. |
| 3 | You have to rest 2 turns instead of 1 after fights or 5 turns of dungeoneering. |
| 4 | As 2 above, but it's falling to pieces. Loses one point of DC at the end of every fight. At DC 9 it is destroyed. |
| 5 | Magic armor (roll type randomly), but smells like dead king for the first d6 months. |
| 6 | Crumbles to rust when touched. |
| 7 | Wizard King Armor, as 4 above but also mages can wear it and totally cast spells. |

How awesome is this helmet?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Just a normal helmet, but it's the coolest looking normal helmet you're ever likely to see. |
| 2 | As 1 above, but there's this huge ass ruby set in it to look like a third eye, worth 1,500 gp. |
| 3 | As 2, but the gem is enchanted. Once per day it can zap some fool with a fire beam for 4d6, save for half. Range 120', no to-hit required. Gem only works if set in helm. |
| 4 | The helm falls to rusty pieces when you touch it. |
| 5 | As 1, but the dead guy had a really odd shaped head so there's only a 2 in 6 chance it fits well. If it doesn't fit well you look like a dope while wearing it. |
| 6 | As 1, but the helm will stone cold stop the next critical, spell, or monster attack at the head, shattering the helm. |



Pigdivot!

by Chris Robert, based on a map & concept by Greengoat

Introduction: Pigdivot is small and stinky, no doubt due to the inhabitants' fondness for pigs. The town is named after the shape of the river hollow it inhabits, a soggy patch vaguely shaped like the cloven print of a corn-fattened trotter. Life is typical of a small village: slow, repetitive, and everyone knows each others' business...mostly. There is a main table of adventure hooks for the town, and several locales have their own table of adventure hooks as well; simply roll the indicated die whenever you want to spice things up (once a week?). Pigdivot is designed to be dropped into any campaign. It could be a base of operations for nearby adventures, or just a colorful stop on a long journey.

1. Small Blacksmith's Workshop. Hilber Gently is the local blacksmith, a barely competent crafter of tools and farm implements. Adventurers looking for weapons & armor are certain to be disappointed – it takes Hilber twice as long as normal to craft even simple items like arrows and spearheads, and complicated items are completely beyond his ability, including most armor and swords. Wife Elda takes care of their four young children; they are devout worshipers at the Temple of Law. **Hilber Gently:** Level 0 Human, 4 hp, AL L; trade appropriate tools & supplies, shield & helmet, mace; 13 gp, 41 sp, 33 cp in an iron box hidden behind anvil; Elda wears a silver ring worth 15 gp.

2. Temple of Law. This small place of worship services several lawful deities of the local pantheon. It can fit two dozen worshipers, which is more than enough room for the handful of devout in Pigdivot that do not serve gods more attuned to nature and pastoral activities. Apeley Knobbins is the head of the temple. He is concerned above all else with expanding the number of worshipers here and accumulating wealth, though he is savvy enough to appear kind and thoughtful as he plots new schemes. Apeley is served by two acolytes, Berl and Gesper. They were handpicked by Apeley and possess the winning combination of strong arms and

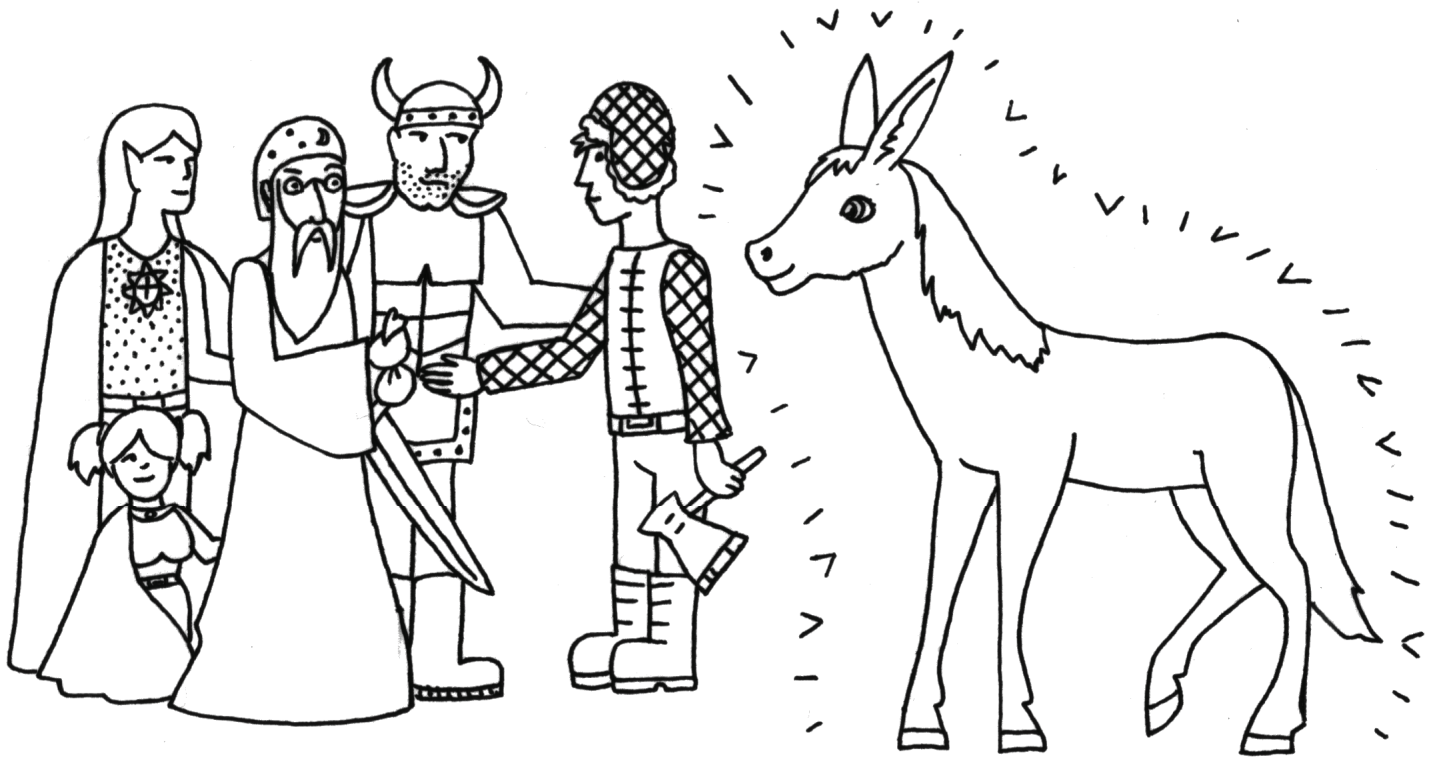
d12	Pigdivot Village Adventure Hook
1	Bogeyman. A Troll takes up residence beneath the bridge. The Troll is not evil <i>per se</i> , but anyone who wants to cross must answer a riddle or they will be eaten. Lavish gifts of tasty food & drink will be accepted in lieu of a correct answer. There is a 5% chance/day that the Troll eats a child or a pig, after which the villagers will be highly-motivated to be rid of it. The Troll wears around its neck 250 pierced gold pieces on a thin silver chain, total value 275gp.
2	Taxman. It's that time of year – the local taxman arrives, with six deputies for protection. They take over Algret's house (9) for two days asserting their

(2)	right to eject any other boarders. Everyone in town gets a little poorer and a little sadder. There is a 25% chance that someone is apprehended as a tax cheat or deadbeat, which will lead to an angry standoff between the villagers (excepting Temple of Law members) and the taxman's retinue.
3	Bad Omen. A shooting star of unsettling color and trajectory is taken to signal imminent misfortune. At the behest of the local druids, the village shuts down for 1d6 days: no services, no nothing. The pig statue will be watched 24 hours a day. Worshipers at the Temple of Law will conduct themselves normally, as they hold themselves above such quaint superstitions.
4	Bad News. A group of adventurers stops in town. They are equal in number to the PCs, two levels higher, and exactly opposite in alignment.
5	Orc Raid. The local Orcs want their tower back! Pigdivot Pinnacle (3) is besieged by an angry mob of 10d6 Orcs, led by a shaman with magical powers equivalent to a Level 4 Priest. They will ignore the rest of Pigdivot for the most part; the villagers will rally to protect the tower, and the PCs are expected to help.
6	River Beast. Something wicked this way comes from downriver – it's hungry & ill-tempered. Roll 1d4 to find out if it's a Giant Crayfish, Giant Leech, Swamp Troll, or Eye of the Deep. Villagers will put up a fight, but flee into the forest if the battle goes badly.
7	The Hangover. Algret runs out of booze and is forced to serve Dolf Scheissenbrau's concoctions. Roll on <i>Potion Miscibility Table</i> to determine effects?
8	'Tis the Fae. 8D4 Nixies emerge from the falls and run riot. They will use their <i>charm</i> power to grab as many hostages as possible in an hour, then retreat back to their watery realm.
9	Unwelcome Visitor. A Purple Worm has decided it likes the fields south of Pigdivot – it churns the soil endlessly and attacks any interlopers. Until the worm is removed, no crops may be planted or harvested. Anyone who can defeat this beast can expect a handsome reward from the grateful villagers (including betrothal to an eldest daughter or two).
10	Lost Maiden. A Wild Elf maiden emerges from the forest and asks for sanctuary. She is beautiful and tells a sad tale of persecution by her people. A party of 3d4 elf warriors arrives 1d6 days later to demand her release – they will not accept 'no' for an answer.
11	Traveling Salesman. A wandering vendor comes to Pigdivot. He has several rare herbs, magical components, and a few items of weapons & armor that are not available in the village. Prices are 5x normal.
12	Circus. A touring circus comes to town. It features the usual characters: a strongman, bearded lady, three-legged Goblin, Gnoll-faced boy, fortuneteller, and a handful of others. The circus is a cover for a ring of thieves who intend to rob the town blind.

dim minds – when not attending to their duties, they can often be found drinking in Algret's common room. Apeley's latest plan to whip up local interest in his temple is to embark on a witch hunt – all he needs is a group of outsiders that are suitably scruffy looking and not overly able... **Apeley Knobbins:** Level 3 Priest, 14 hp, AL L; plate & shield, *morningstar* +1, *brooch of shielding*; 175 gp, 1250 sp, 400 cp kept in a lockbox in the temple, three matching engraved electrum rings worth 45 gp each, electrum & yellow jasper necklace worth 350 gp, ornate electrum choker worth 125 gp. **Berl & Gesper:** Level 1 Priests, 4 hp each, AL L; scale & shield, mace [Berl], war hammer [Gesper]; 1d6 gp, 3d6 sp, 2d20 cp, ornate iron bracers worth 20 gp [Berl], platinum amulet worth 55 gp on a cheap chain (Gesper). Roll 1d6 for adventure hooks:

1-3	Pilgrims. 4d4 pilgrims of law arrive to admire the temple and Apeley's zeal. They will stay for 3d6 days in a small campsite arrayed around the temple. Apeley will be emboldened by their presence, and his swagger will likely cause his rivalries within the village to be inflamed.
4-5	Cultists. Local cultists dedicated to chaos target the temple. On the next moonless night, 2d4 Level 1 Warriors, led by a Level 3 Mage launch a bold attack. Those of the druidic faith in Pigdivot will rush to the temple's defense, despite their rivalry.
6	Converts. Apeley manages to win over some new believers – the Peckerwoods (7) join the temple.

3. Pigdivot Pinnacle. This four-story tower predates the town – Dwarfs and other savvy stoneworkers can identify the construction as originally Orcish, though heavily modified subsequently. Today it is the home of village brewmaster Dolf Scheissenbrau, his grown son Dolf Jr. and his wife Ilsa, and Dolf Sr.'s seven younger children. Dolf's wife passed a little over a year ago, and he broods and tends to his brews endlessly as he continues to mourn her. Dolf has created several unique brews, including 'Ye Olde Pirate's Shame,' 'Wee Jas Juice,' and 'Greengoat's Tummyache,' known for its robust verdant coloration and gut-twisting potency – each tastes more foul than the last. Algret takes rare orders from Dolf out of kindness, then dumps the beer into the river at first opportunity, where it is usually responsible for a substantial fish-kill downstream. Dolf is a cantankerous sort, and is currently involved in several disputes with Apeley Knobbins – he frequently vents brewing effluents onto the temple's land to tweak the priest. Of course he will take a shine to anyone that expresses a taste for his skanky beers, and he will practically adopt anyone who comments favorably upon the portrait of his beloved wife that adorns the tower entry landing. Dolf Jr. cut short a promising career as a thug and burglar to care for his dear ol' Da; he is resentful at being stuck in Pigdivot, and has been half-heartedly casing various residences as he contemplates returning to a life of crime. **Dolf Scheissenbrau Sr.:** Level 0 Human, 2 hp, AL N; elaborately-horned helmet,



sling; wife's jewelry worth 180 gp is arranged about a makeshift altar in topmost room of tower; wears ornate ring of Elvish Silver worth 220 gp; 88 gp, 121 sp, 73 cp in lockbox beneath bed. **Dolf Scheissenbrau Jr.:** Level 4 Thief, 16 hp, AL C; *leather* +1, two precision-crafted daggers (+1 damage), *sleeping fragrance* (4 doses), *shoes of sure footing*, thief's tools; 1743 gp, 6 gems each worth 1d4x100 gp in a sealed clay pot buried in the cellar. Roll **1d8** for hooks:

1 **Bad Neighbor.** Dolf's ill will toward Apeley boils over into violence – Berl & Gesper bash in the door and pen the Scheissenbraus into the upper room of the tower. Intervention will be required to prevent someone from being killed.

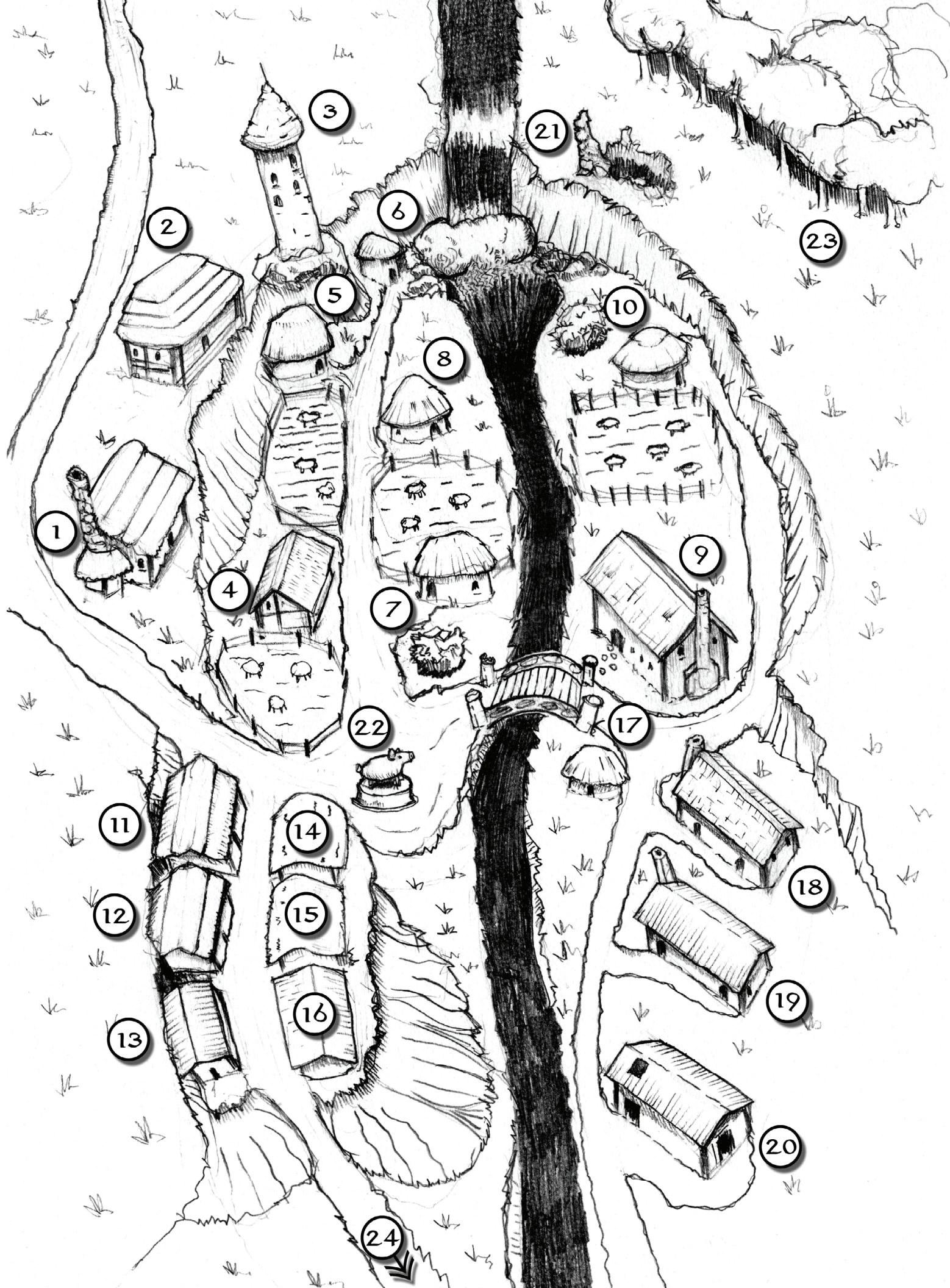
2-7 **Recidivist.** Junior goes rogue and renews his life of crime – roll **1d20** to find out which location gets burgled, 10% chance the victim is killed. Junior will leave behind (flimsy) evidence implicating the PCs.

8 **Sweet Hereafter.** Dolf's wife returns from the grave as a Wight. The Scheissenbraus flee the tower, but the Wight must be placated or destroyed before it terrorizes the town. And what dark force created such a monster...?

4. Carpenter. A sturdy home rendered with artistic flair, this is the dwelling of village carpenter Londo Pushkin. His skill is evident in the elaborate carvings and novel fittings that adorn his house. Londo can craft quality wood items to order (chests, wagons, 10' poles, and the like); he bucks local preferences by keeping three sheep in his pen. When not plying his trade, Londo can often be found feeding and talking to his pack animal, Bill the Mule. Londo enjoys telling tall tales about Bill: "Ol' Bill been struck by lightning three times – smelled like a pot roast for a month each

time." "Bill done rassled a Jelly Cube one time, damn Jelly Cube just curdled up an' squirt away! Bill's ears ain't never growed back, though..." "Ever seen a mule take a shot from a Storm Giant and live? I have," and on, and on...Bill the Mule's scabby pelt, lumpy head, and thousand-yard-stare give mute testament to the horrors he has witnessed in the employ of countless adventuring parties. He has inexplicably survived certain death on a score of occasions, often drenched in the blood of adventurers who were not so lucky. If *Speak to Animals* or similar is ever used to talk to Bill, he has only the following to say: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Godlings on fire in the realms of the Demon Princes. I've watched magic missiles glitter in the dark near the Fae Gates. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in the rain. Someday, it will be time to die." Bill the Mule is available for rent at a cost of 5 sp per day. Renters can select from two different types of tack. Red tack increases Bill's speed by 25%; blue tack allows a 25% heavier load. **Londo Pushkin:** Level 0 Human, 5 hp, AL N; ornate wooden armor (counts as splint) & shield, spear, club, longbow; tools, spare wood, Bill the Mule; polished hardwood crown worth 35gp (worn on festive occasions), 56 gp, 109 sp, 32 cp in an old can in the kitchen.

5. Furrier. This is the modest home of village mason Ebenezer Peppercorn, his wife Jorah, and their four children. Although Ebenezer is responsible for most of the stone buildings in Pigdivot, his own home is made of wood and mud bricks. The Peppercorns are polite to strangers, but will not go out of their way to make friends; they worship at the Temple of Law. **Ebenezer Peppercorn:** Level 0 Human, 4 hp, AL L; helmet & leather, war hammer, dagger, crossbow, trade appropriate tools & supplies; Jorah wears a dozen gaudy but cheap rings on her fingers, each



worth 1d6 sp; 65 gp, 342 sp, 332 cp in a stone cask beneath a loose floorboard.

6. Decrepit Shed. Notorious oaf and layabout Deedly Poonce resides in this disgusting hovel, unfit for even a goat. Deedly does odd jobs around town for a copper or two, but is mostly known for the abuse he suffers from other residents – even the children delight in throwing stones at him. Deedly can be hired as a linkboy or porter at standard rates. He is slow, easily distracted, a loud complainer, and he will drop everything and flee screaming directly back to Pigdivot at first sight of trouble. If killed, the villagers will burn his shack and push the debris into the river. **Deedly Poonce:** Level 0 Human, 3 hp, AL N; tattered & smelly clothing, rusty short sword, battered lantern; 3 sp, 23 cp scattered about his floor. Deedly has only one adventure hook: **Deedly's Revenge.** One humiliation too many and now Deedly's turned deadly, attacking his fellow villagers while the PCs are present. Deedly transforms into 'Psycho Deedly' and attacks for 2d4 rounds, after which he runs into the forest, seen again only as a feral brute viewed rarely and from afar. **Psycho Deedly:** DC 5 due to insane quickness, 36 hp from maniacal determination, fights & saves as 5HD monster, attacks 2x per round with bare hands (1d2+3 damage per hit).

7. Jack-of-all-Trades. Anson Peckerwood fills a number of roles for the villagers, including barber, locksmith, chandler, and shoemaker – he has a modest house and three fat pigs to show for it. His wife Insilda takes care of their seven children, ranging in age from 2 to 15. They are a quiet family and suspicious of outsiders. **Anson Peckerwood:** Level 0 Human, 4 hp, AL N; trade appropriate tools & supplies, helmet, shield & spear; 10 gp, 42 sp, 125 cp in an urn in the pantry, Insilda keeps a fancy silver mirror worth 30 gp next to the bed.

8. Ramshackle Hut. Dirkman Scutter lives alone here, and his extended bachelorhood is apparent in the disrepair of his hovel. The thatched roof sags, a small garden is choked with weeds, and rotting planks cover the only window. Dirkman was formerly a member of a ruthless bandit gang based in the forest, but fled with a sack of gold coins following an argument over the division of spoils. He settled in Pigdivot two years ago, telling the locals that he was a farmer from several leagues away whose village had been destroyed in an Orc raid. He can often be found at Algret's common room table, although she is growing tired of his fondness for alcohol – wine & beer bring out the brute in him. Dirkman is half-hearted in his desire to put his old life behind him. The transition has been harder than he anticipated and he is beginning to get desperate – his efforts at working the fields have come for naught. Dirkman will offer to hire on with adventuring groups looking for help but will prove unreliable; he will look for an opportunity to escape with as much treasure as possible while leaving the group for dead. **Dirkman Scutter:** Level 2 Warrior, 13 hp, AL C; light crossbow &

22 bolts, heavy pick, 2 daggers, studded leather armor, poor quality farming tools, camping equipment, and a small cask of rotgut wine; 14 gp, 78 sp, 11 cp, engraved silver clasp worth 86 gp in a small iron box buried beneath his floor. Adventure hooks (d10):

1-3	Reunion. Three of Dirkman's former associates stay with Dirk for a few days. They will be boisterous and aggressive when encountered in Algret's common room.
4-6	Sheriff. A county warden passes through, looking for Dirkman. Dirkman will appeal for help in waylaying this officer.
7-8	Can't Swim. Dirkman's body is found pinned beneath the bridge, the result of a drunken accident. There's a fixer-upper available in Pigdivot!
9-10	Stolen Pig. One of Gabe Dunderflap's (10) pigs goes missing. It won't take Sherlock Holmes to trace the crime back to Dirkman.

9. Well-Kept Farmhouse with Common Room. Widow Algret Slotem makes ends meet by hosting a common room for the village and renting out sleeping space to travelers and adventurers. A typical crowd is 1-3 villagers, but the room can become boisterous if out-of-towners are visiting, as the villagers are eager to hear stories of adventure. The menu is limited, but the food tasty & satisfying – several beers and two regional wines are available. Algret typically calls on various children of the village to help out with cooking, cleaning, chores, etc., for a few coppers. Either of the two bedrooms are available for 1gp/person per night, while a cot in the common room is 4sp. Algret's charms are in decline, but she will nonetheless dote on handsome, strapping lads... **Algret Slotem:** Level 0 Human, 3 hp, AL N; comically-too-large helmet, light crossbow; copper belly-chain worth 5 gp, 108 gp, 92 sp, 192 cp hidden in the root cellar.

10. Flimsy Hut. Gabe Dunderflap has five pigs, and in Pigdivot that makes him practically the mayor. Eight months ago he was barely scraping by, with a one-legged chicken that laid green eggs. Now he practically skips gold pieces across the river. No one knows where his money comes from – he just tends to his pigs by day and heads over to Algret's to drink on many a night. Sometimes he talks vaguely about 'generous woodland spirits,' but it's all hogwash. Gabe is a secret agent of the local bandits. He receives a modest stipend to watch for juicy targets and

1-2	Bushwhackers. Gabe fingers the PCs and the bandits send a crew to ambush them. They will outnumber the PCs three to one, and will typically hit them when they are at their weakest.
3-4	I Want Out. After demanding too much money, Gabe is on the outs with his bandit buddies and they are sending a crew to tie up his loose end. Gabe appeals to the PCs for protection, promising details of where the bandits hide their juiciest loot.

relay their movements. Dirkman seems to think he looks familiar, but can never put two and two together. Gabe spends his money almost as fast as he's paid, and he is considering holding out for more gold from the bandits.

Gabe Dunderflap: Level 0 Human, 5 hp, AL N; leather & shield, short sword, club, light crossbow; 15 gp, 31 sp, 10 cp in an iron teapot. Roll **1d4** for adventure hooks.

11. Malign Dwelling. Small door, no windows, coated in a thick layer of pine tar....this house sticks out like a sore thumb. It is the home of Hobbit Otto Twopints, his wife Gretel, and their six children. They, along with the rest of their clan and workers (see **12** and **13**), are farmers and recent arrivals to the village. Otto is a disagreeable brute, and his family and workers live in constant fear of his temper. He is also a remarkably successful farmer – his vegetables are known for their size and succulence. His secret? Who knows. Also unknown is why Otto has excavated a series of tunnels in the hill beside his house. The other villagers do not know these tunnels exist; Otto's family thinks they are simply a bizarre hobby, and they are happy to have him expend his energy digging rather than beating them. The tunnels link **11**, **12**, and **13**, and twist back into the hillside for 100' or more. Otto just keeps digging and digging... The Twopints' presence in Pigdivot is only tolerated because their crops have proven an uncommonly good draw, attracting customers to the local farmers' market from as far as the foothill mining communities six leagues away. The other farmers are becoming increasingly agitated at the mystery of Otto's techniques, and a high turnover among his farmhands has not gone unnoticed. And why is he often seen dumping dirt into the river in the dead of night? **Otto Twopints:** Level 4 Hobbit, 19 hp, AL C; lavish wardrobe that includes several gaudy capes, *chain* +1 and helmet, short sword, club, *dagger* +2; 613 gp, 1209 sp, 126 cp in a large wooden chest just inside the tunnels; Gretel wears several silver bangles worth 65 gp total; they have fancy plates, tableware, and décor worth 360 gp total. **1d4** for hooks:

1	Escapee. One of the farmhands rushes out to the center of the village, bound & severely beaten. Otto follows soon thereafter, intending to return his worker to the farmhands' shack. Otto will claim that the boy is being punished for stealing – he will fly into a violent rage if anyone tries to stop him. The boy will die within an hour if he is not healed.
2-3	Bug Problem. Otto and family come flying out of their house like their hair is on fire, and an enraged swarm of 4d6 Giant Ants pours out after them. If they are not killed quickly, they will signal for reinforcements.
4	Vamoose. No one hears from the Twopints or their farmhands for a couple days – investigation of the homes reveals everyone is dead. Otto's is the only body missing. Three houses for sale!

12. Sinister Hovel. Similar to **11** – dark and foreboding. Otto's brothers Topher, Chico, & Topsy live here, along with Chico's family, wife Glendamar and three young children. Their fear makes them thralls to Otto, and nothing is done without his say-so. Of the three, Chico is the most likely to eventually reach out for help. He can on rare occasions be found in Algret's common room, drinking to forget – Otto will eventually come to collect him, driving him back home amid a flurry of blows from his club.

Topher, Chico, & Topsy Twopints: Level 1 Hobbits, 3 hp each, AL N; farming tools, 2d6 gp, 2d20 sp each; Glendamar wears a platinum ring with rubies worth 650gp.

13. Ominous Shack. A decayed shanty with boarded-over windows and a front door that locks from the outside. A number of hired farmhands live here in cramped and unsanitary conditions. During planting and harvest, they can grow to as many as a dozen, while in winter the number dwindles to less than a handful. They are a frightened and abused lot kept at all times on the verge of desperation, and occasionally one or two go missing. A secret door in the west wall leads into Otto's tunnels. **2d6 Farmhands:** Level 0 Human, 1d4 hp, AL N; the soiled clothes on their backs, farming tools & supplies; 2d4 cp each.

14. The Weaver's Lair. Ancient spinster Petra Parkour has a good heart, but a soft head. She is the village weaver, but nearly a century of work at the loom has left her convinced she is an avatar of the spider goddess Lolth. It's all harmless fun, but her good days are balanced by her bad ones – on those latter occasions, she typically totters over to the Temple of Law and covers the windows with grey yarn tied to look like webbing. Apeley Knobbins would like nothing more than to hoist her from a tree by her neck, but knows that the village would have him up soon after. **Petra Parkour:** Level 0 Human, ½ hp (the breeze from a flashing blade could kill her), AL N or Chaotic Adorable; big ol' loom, tons of yarn & fabric; spider-motif silver bracelet worth 85 gp, 462 gp, 90 sp, 3529 cp in a hamper buried beneath piles of yarn.

15. Tailor. The widow Olma Teapot lives in this cramped but well-kept home. She makes ends meet by leveraging her talents as a seamstress; her work is quite good. At some point during the PCs' stay in Pigdivot, Olma will introduce herself and ask if anyone needs any clothing made or mended. Mended clothing takes only a day and costs anywhere from a handful of coppers to a couple silvers. Olma will respond enthusiastically to requests for new clothing – inflate normal prices by 50% owing to her use of quality materials. For the princely sum of 25 gp, in five days of work Olma can craft a full adventuring kit, including cloak, shirt & pants, belt, boots, gloves, and socks & undergarments (coat-of-arms and custom embellishments are extra). This jaunty ensemble grants a +1/+5% modifier to reaction rolls among like-minded company, as long as the outfit remains clean and intact. **Olma Teapot:** Level 0 Human, 1 hp, AL L; trade-appropriate

tools & supplies; 42 gp, 222 sp, 503 cp, pearl & silver necklace worth 110 gp, silver religious knickknacks worth 30 gp in wooden crate in pantry. **1d4** for adventure hooks:

1	Peril. A suitor from a nearby town is wooing Olma. She is enchanted at the prospect of romance, but it is plain to everyone else that the man is a cad. Worse than that, he is a devotee of a malicious cult and has murderous intentions.
2-3	Fetch. Olma requires rare materials for a wealthy client – Owlbear feathers, Dire Wolf pelt, etc. Olma knows where to find the beast, but needs a few hardy souls to do the dirty work. 75 gp reward.
4	Prick. A petty noble is unhappy with the cape he commissioned: his haughty complaints to Olma soon degenerate into cruelty, and his guards seize her with the intent of imprisonment. Unless someone steps forward, she will be dragged off to the noble's manor-keep and never seen again.

16. Dry Goods. A small store with limited inventory – anything over 10gp not rural-themed is not carried. Proprietor Frendel Merson will be happy to take special orders and attempt to fill them *via* the peddlers and merchants that occasionally wander by, but there are no guarantees of success. Frendel, his wife Tardra, and their three young children worship at the Temple of Law. **Frendel Merson:** Level 0 Human, 2 hp, AL L; helmet, club; 47 gp, 233 sp, 44 cp in lock box beneath floorboard, Tardra has a collection of fancy silver-chased plates & cups worth 45 gp.

17. Slimy Hut. This soggy shack looks as much like a gigantic toadstool as a human dwelling. Found within is the 'Last Tarl of the Gloomlands,' a man whose self-proclaimed honorific is of uncertain derivation. The Tarl is a Priest in the druidic vein, whose powers have never progressed due to his mental instability – the nature gods the Tarl worships are overwhelmingly of the imaginary variety. Roughly once a month The Tarl musters enough coherence to make contact with a *bona fide* Nature God. On these rare occasions, the Tarl provides some value to the community, in the form of a healing spell, minor blessing, or the like. Should this benefit disappear, the Tarl would likely be ejected from Pigdivot. The Tarl will enthusiastically join adventurers who seek to right any local nature-themed wrong. **Last Tarl of the Gloomlands:** Level 1 Priest, 5 hp, AL N; gnarled staff, mildewed clothing, worthless clattering bangles & gewgaws too numerous to catalog. Roll **1d12** for adventure hooks:

1	Hallelujah. The Tarl did something right – the Nature Gods smile on Pigdivot and the next crop is remarkable for its size & quality. If word of this bounty reaches far & wide, bandits will come..
2-12	Monster Mash. The Tarl's latest ceremony makes contact with a capricious Wild Godling – it's displeasure takes the form of a Giant Rhagodessa, Giant Crayfish, or Ankheg (max hit points and abilities) rampaging through Pigdivot 3d10 rounds.

18. Home of the Honeycatcher. This is the residence of the Galfalfa Family: father Spineas, mother Lotte, and their four children. Spineas collects honey from the Giant Honeybees that build hives in the forest, while Lotte keeps a tidy home and close watch on the children. They are a popular family, as Spineas is quite generous with the fruits of his labors. Eldest daughter Berber will seek to hire on with the PCs, against her parents' wishes. She is actually somewhat exceptional: if she survives an initial expedition, she will 'graduate' and become a Level 1 Thief. If Berber is killed while in the employ of the PCs, an implacable lynch mob led by Spineas will set upon the PCs on their return to Pigdivot. **Spineas Galfalfa:** Level 0 Human, 4 hp, AL N; spear, padded leather armor, buckets & stoppered bottles; fine china worth 20 gp, silver tea service worth 30 gp, 12 doses of *Royal Jelly*, 125 gp worth of normal honey in a storage cupboard; 122 gp, 255 sp, 192 cp, wrapped in a blanket in the linen closet. **Berber Galfalfa:** Level 0 Human, 2 hp, AL N; short sword, helmet, lantern, 100' rope, 10' pole; 3 gp, 24 sp. **1d6** for adventure hooks:

1	Swarm. Berber scampers back into town with word that Spineas has been trapped by an angry swarm of Giant Honeybees. Rescuers will find him hiding in a forest pool; the Giant Honeybees will not let him depart without a fight. Better hurry...
2	Burglary. Lotte's tea service has been stolen. The PCs will be questioned thoroughly and must be able to provide a solid alibi to avoid rough justice. If Dirkman Scutter's hut is searched within three days, the tea service will be recovered; otherwise increase Dirkman's treasure by 15 gp.
3-6	Runaway. Berber heads into the wilds to seek her fortune. Her diary can be found with a cursory search of the personal effects she left behind, and reveal that she intends to explore an ancient barrow several leagues to the west. Can she be caught before disturbing the rest of the undead within? PCs who refuse to try will be shunned.

19. Pottery Barn. When potters Jermand & Vilma Bustle-bottle are not found here, they are likely down by the river gathering the rich clay that provides the basis for their livelihood. They supply good quality clayware to the other villagers and to the residents of nearby hamlets. They have two children and are friendly toward strangers – stout-hearted individuals may be hired to secure certain rare ingredients that can be rendered into stunning pigments and glazes for their more valuable works. Jermand is a retired adventurer, and some days he misses the heft of sword & shield and the smell of battle. When trouble rears its head, he is usually first on the scene. **Jermand Bustlebottle:** Level 2 Warrior, 11 hp, AL N; lots o' pots, chain & shield, *longsword* +1, spear, short bow; 21 gp, 113 sp, 52 cp stacked neatly in the back of the breadbox; Vilma wears gold hoop earrings worth 30 gp, and has a dozen gems each worth 2d20 gp secreted in her pillow.



20. Shabby Barn. This is the sometime home of Chopper Mazoo, sturdy woodsman of muted disposition. Chopper has a bed, clothing, and some personal effects in the tiny loft. The barn includes a small stable for Chopper's draft horse; chopped wood and unfinished timber fill the rest of the building. He typically takes meals & drink at Algret's common room table, in exchange for firewood and handy work. Chopper is known to disappear deep into the woods for days at a time. He's not much of a talker, but when deep in his cups he sometimes lets slip tales of the bizarre folk he meets on his journeys. Chopper is skilled at staying hidden within the forest, and he spends most of his time there secretly observing the Wild Elf maidens he sees gathering berries and frolicking in field & stream. Chopper is a hard worker and a skilled woodsman, but lack of tools and floorspace means he can provide little more than firewood, rough lumber, and small crafted items (which are invariably of modest price and above-average quality). **Chopper Mazoo:** Level 0 Human, 6 hp, AL N; several sturdy woodsman's axes & saws, padded armor, wood-working tools, travel gear, draft horse, tack & sled; 3 gp, 22 sp, 121 cp in a hidden earthenware pot. 1d6 for hooks:

1-2	Missing. After two weeks away, the villagers begin to wonder after Chopper's whereabouts. The PCs' standing in Pigdivot will be diminished if the villagers' pleas to search for him are ignored.
3-4	Raid. Chopper comes tearing out of the woods with a pack of 6d6 Treescabber Goblins hot on his heels. When they see the small village, the Goblins' eyes go wide with thoughts of easy plunder.
5	Revenge. The Wild Elves of the forest take great offense to being spied upon and respond accordingly. In a midnight raid, flaming arrows are fired into 1d4 randomly determined buildings (d20): roll d% for each, with the result being the level of

damage to the building and the chance for each occupant to be killed. Chopper's severed head is left on a stake atop the eastern bluffs. The villagers will be spoiling for payback.

6 Ransom. Bandits have captured Chopper and demand an outrageous ransom be paid. Dirkman Scutter knows where their hideout is, should anyone wish to attempt a rescue instead.

21. Rushing Falls. Waterfalls are an important interface between the real world and lands governed by whimsy. Various water-friendly Fae have been glimpsed here, perhaps from the corner of one eye, including Nixies, Sprites, and Brownies. These falls are currently empty of magical denizens, but anyone who crosses under the falls backwards beneath a full moon will be transported to the Realm of Faerie. The Gently's (1) eldest child, 11-year-old Myrtle, knows this and has many friends among the Fae.

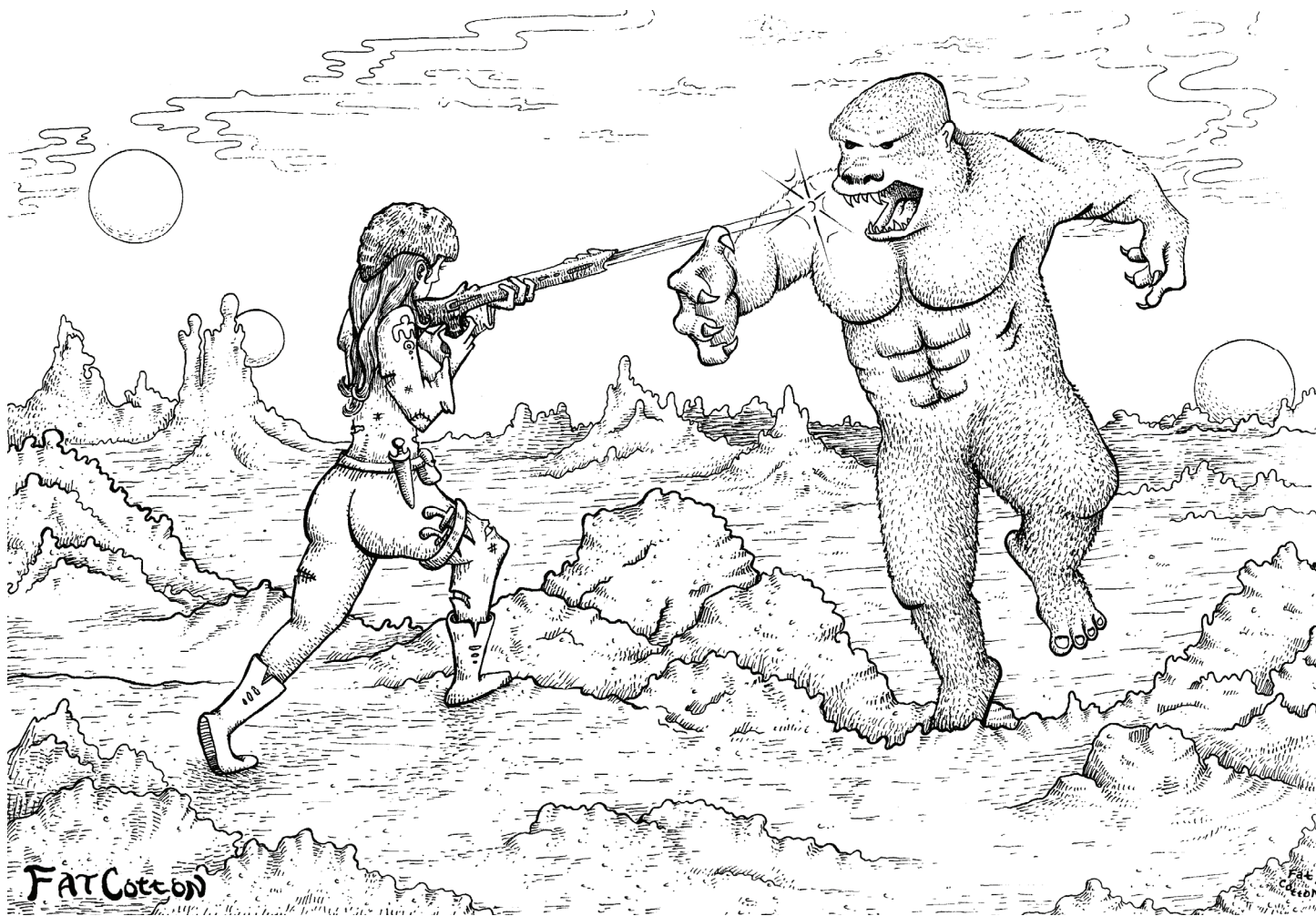
22. Statue of the Watching Pig. A large iron statue of a pig, currently facing due east, mounted upon a rough soapstone pedestal. Only a few flecks remain from a pink paint job. This pig is the mascot of Pigdivot as well as its guardian. The statue is magical, though it does not radiate magic and will pass as normal despite all efforts to prove otherwise. The statue will change its facing to indicate danger to the village – in the past, it has swung south to indicate an approaching army of Orcs, west to warn of a deadly winter storm, and northeast when the Wild Elves threatened a raid. The statue will change position quietly, and only when no one is watching (only a glance away is long enough for it to change). Villagers check the statue by habit several times a day to note its facing. Anyone who damages the statue will suffer three separate curses (per the spell), and each of their immediate family members and close associates will suffer one curse each. To remove

the curse, the transgressor must apologize to the statue profusely and sincerely – it will then issue a geas (per the mage spell), upon satisfaction of which the curses will be lifted. If the statue is destroyed, the curses are permanent.

23. The Overgrown Forest. This dark forest of tangled trees and impenetrable brush extends for several dozen leagues north and east of Pigdivot. This sinister wood is home to Wild Elves, human bandits, Giant Honeybees, and a shockingly diverse selection of dangerous creatures. Rumors hint at several interesting locations within,

including an ancient tomb beneath a small hill, a pool that heals those who drink from it, and the treetop home of a cranky wizard who specializes in weather-related magic.

24. Fields. Cultivated fields begin about 100 yards south of Pigdivot on both sides of the river, and appear intermittently for another mile or so. Shallow irrigation canals bring water from the river and divide the fields of grains, vegetables, and hemp. During planting and harvest times, Pigdivot's farming families spend up to eighteen hours a day toiling here. Ω



Where The Action Is

guest editorial by Zak S.

Rule #1: experience points don't motivate my players at all.

Don't get me wrong here: my players **like** xp, my players will **take** xp, my players will get **angry** if you try to take xp **away** from them once they have them, but they *never do anything because they think it'll get them x.p.*

Here's how things usually go: The players show up. They are excited to finally play *D&D*. They get their PCs out and then try to figure out *where the action is* – “action” can in this case be defined as “whatever seems interesting to do,

find, or kill in a given adventure.” They find some action. They have fun and snacks.

This action either reveals more places where there might be action or sets off an unfortunate chain of events. Or both. The PCs try to find more Action, or extricate themselves from the Events, or both. They have more fun and snacks.

Then the players go home.

A few days later they get an e-mail where I detail all the xp they got and how, and they go “Oh yeah, xp! Sweet.”

If they get enough then they level up – this changes the nature of the game slightly and so keeps things interesting. Anyway, the point of Rule #1 is that the widely-held belief

that xp is *necessarily* an important motivating engine in a game, and that therefore knowing what players get xp for in a game allows you to gauge the philosophy, meaning, or morality of a given game is a fallacy. At least with respect to the people I play with.

There are many corollaries of this rule – one being that not “rewarding” something with xp *doesn't* mean it's not an important part of the game. So, while it's true that in *OD&D* the players don't get xp for role-playing (in the sense of “acting”), neither do they get xp for eating pizza or quoting Monty Python movies – but just try to stop them. If you look at the *AD&D DMG*, despite the lack of rules rewarding good role-playing, there are rules which *punish* bad role-playing. The *DMG* also has recommendations for punishing other kinds of behavior at the table which make the game less fun. The idea is: Gary *assumed* the players would be role-playing and not acting like dicks, so he felt no need to positively incentivize them to talk like a funny dwarf or not attack other players for no reason. It was only when RPGs got so popular that dickheads and teenagers started playing them that more complex incentive schemes started getting developed. (Incidentally, in the *DMG*, Gary also seemed to assume – correctly in my limited experience – that storylines would also naturally develop out of games, and so storytelling didn't need to be incentivized either.)

I beg you to keep Rule #1 – the only important rule – in mind while we move on to the other Rules About XP.

Rule #2: The xp value of a given treasure is presumed to be proportional to the amount of problem-solving required to get that treasure. Bilbo didn't get xp for trusting Gandalf, walking around with dwarves, surviving a goblin attack, and beating Gollum at a riddle game. But he got xp for the ring, which abstractly represents the effort of doing all that stuff and more. The idea is to reward problem-solving without having to calculate every little thing – so instead of rewarding the individual steps of solving the problem, the game gives a lump award in the form of treasure. It's not meant to be “a reward for stealing” (though it can be that), it's a reward for all the adventuring that lead up to the stealing. *D&D* is, as everyone knows, very big on abstractly resolving stuff involving a lot of variables rather than calculating all those variables separately. And yes, such abstract systems are not infallible – but rule #2 is the *intention* behind xp-for-treasure, and if you want to fuck with a rule, it's good to know why the rule was there in the first place.

Rule #3: The xp reward for killing monsters can be thought of as a bonus reward on top of the abstract treasure problem-solving bonus. In other words, you get a treasure reward that accounts for all the blood, sweat, tears, and problem-solving involved in getting that treasure, but if some of that problem-solving took the form of monster-killing, you get a bonus. Why exactly you get this bonus is a matter of debate, but I think one of the

most important reasons is: *unlike traps and other problems you solve in D&D, monsters are entirely defined in the rules.* That is, you don't get a set xp for solving riddles or defeating traps because Gary had no way of quantifying how hard your DM's traps or riddles were, but he knew how hard your monsters were **because he statted them himself**. So the monster bonus represents a degree of granularity and detail tacked on to an otherwise abstract system. In *D&D* 3rd Edition, they tried to break it down further by giving traps challenge ratings just like monsters, but that still left every other challenge a DM could think of unquantified, and still left puzzle-traps unaccounted for. A published game can, obviously, never prescribe an appropriate general reward for puzzles because (A) the difficulty of puzzles can't be abstractly generalized and (B) the moment you get more specific about a puzzle in the published rules, the players know the answer to the puzzle, and then it's not a puzzle.

Rule #4: XP is, therefore, an abstract measure of the amount of problem-solving a given player has done with a given character. It's not how much fighting your fighter has done, or how much stealing your thief has done, or how long your wizard has spent in front of spellbooks. It's a reward for the *player*. And the reward essentially is: *solve enough problems with this kind of character and eventually you earn the right to try to solve different kinds of problems with a slightly different (i.e. levelled-up) character.* Which leads to:

Rule #5: The purpose of xp in *D&D* is to create an automatic method by which the nature of the problems faced in the game will change over time so the game won't get stale.

How There's Meaning In A Game of *D&D* Even If You Don't Know It. As has been pointed out before, *D&D* emulates a *picaresque* – a story that is essentially a series of short stories about the same character strung together, which may or may not develop an *obvious* theme or meaning. Other picaresques include James Joyce's *Ulysses*, all mainstream superhero comics, Jack Vance's *Dying Earth* stories (a huge influence on *D&D*), Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas*, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, all unplanned serialized adventures (like a cliffhanger TV or radioshow that goes on for years and has 20 writers), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, etc.

The late George Plimpton on picaresques: “Such novels are invariably lengthy, heavily populated with eccentrics, deviates, grotesques with funny names...and are usually composed of a series of bizarre adventures or episodes in which the central character is involved, then removed and flung abruptly into another. Very often a Quest is incorporated, which keeps the central character on the move.” James Maliszewski has this to say on picaresques and *D&D*: “My feeling is that one's level of dissatisfaction with *D&D* is closely related to one's dissatisfaction with picaresque stories. If your preference is for something

more “epic” than a bunch of rogues – possibly with hearts of gold -- on the make, then you’re likely to see *D&D* as lacking in some way.”

As someone who liked Thomas Pynchon’s picaresque *Gravity’s Rainbow* so much I once drew a picture for every single page of it, I think it’s fairly obvious where I stand.

The picaresque is derived (a little bit ironically, considering James’ choice of words) from a pattern found in epic poems (early ones like *Gilgamesh* and the *Odyssey*, not later ones like the *Aeneid* or *Paradise Lost*) which were stitched together from series’ of short stories about individual heroes and gods. (These shorter sub-stories are often built around a character cleverly solving a problem without too terribly much character development happening all at once – like a Sherlock Holmes story or Hercules’ labors.)

The most familiar *other* kind of story – let’s call it “traditional drama” – is derived less from epics than from tragic theater – this type of story is the one where the plot is largely an extension of the characters’ personalities and flaws, this kind has a fairly obvious moral, and the law of conservation of detail is observed relatively carefully – this is the efficient kind of story that you find in mainstream melodramatic novels, *Madame Bovary*, the majority of literary novels (good and bad), individual episodes of sitcoms, Shakespeare, most Hollywood movies, and, as far as I can tell, in the ambitions of most people who want more ‘story’ or ‘meaning’ in their games. In short, if there’s a gun in the first scene of a traditional drama, it’s probably Chekhov’s gun, but if there’s a gun in the first scene of a picaresque, it’s probably just Ensign Chekov’s gun.

Obviously, there are hybrids of these two (*The Hobbit* might be an example – part Bilbo-learns-about-life, part random-wacky-adventure) but what I’d like to do now that I’ve gotten the distinction out of the way is point out how a kind of meaning or depth or character development does emerge, even in the purest picaresque.

Building a long story one short story at a time by the picaresque method allows the story to be uniquely expressive of the builder’s own personality (as opposed to the builder’s intentions). Quoth ‘the emonator’, a commenter on Maliszewski’s blog: “*D&D* exposes the hidden theme within the DM. A spontaneous story evolves out of the dice rolls and lethal rules, the player’s actions and personality, and the personality and interpretation of the DM. In *OD&D* characters carve out an emergent history action by action, roll by roll, with some awareness that they might be snuffed out at any time by the rules or a fickle DM...This creates a world which is strange, does not conform to many bread & butter narrative tropes, and is often senseless in a cause/effect kind of way.”

What all this makes me think about:

- Jack Vance and James Joyce and Thomas Pynchon and Miguel de Cervantes and Hunter S. Thompson and the

guys who wrote *The Wire* for HBO and most other well-known purveyors of *picaresques* are not just known for being picaresque writers, they are known for being very *stylish* writers. That is, they tend not to be of the less-is-more/plainer-is-better school when it comes to density of language.

- This suggests that *meaning* in a picaresque, or in a game that develops a picaresque narrative style is *conveyed less by the fates of the characters than by the style in which the tale is told*.
- i.e. when you cease to use plot developments as your main conveyor of message and meaning – style *is* substance. And substance can be found there.
- On *Groggnardia* (Maliszewski’s blog), the post “emonator” was replying to was about how people who came after R.E. Howard and J.R.R. Tolkien used ideas from their worlds, but not their themes. The reason is, I think, those worlds grew organically from those themes. If you take, say, a hobbit, much of what JRRT thought about the world could be deduced from:
 - the fact that he invented them, and
 - the fact that he chose to make them the heroes of his stories.

In much the same way you can reconstruct someone’s DNA from a drop of their blood, you can reconstruct a good writer’s worldview from the stylistic choices and inventions in their work. This isn’t on purpose, this is just what happens when you’re trying to do a good job -- your personality sinks in there. Sucky writers who used barbarians and hobbits etc. later were largely sucky because they didn’t realize (or, sometimes, care) that the very shape and substance of the sandbox they were playing in was devised to reflect someone else’s psyche and if they were going to be good at fantastic literature they couldn’t just pile a little bit of plot and a few cosmetic or political ideas on top of someone else’s inventions and style, they had to re-invent the genre to reflect something that was in them, and that, therefore, they could see all the way to the bottom of. This doesn’t mean imposing your own worldview on the world in some obvious way that reflects your value system, it means letting the world reflect your actual imagination.

- Look at comic books, the pre-eminent purveyor of serial-format adventure. Spider-Man isn’t really about what eventually will happen to Spider-Man when the comic ends one day (that last issue right before the sun explodes), or indeed about any character development that happens to Spider-Man during a story arc (since the writer of a given issue is aware that all character development in comics is reversible) – Spider-Man is really about what you *know* you’ll get when you pick up *any* issue of Spider-Man. That is: a guy who looks scary and alien and ominous yet is simultaneously friendly and funny and humble getting through life by defeating jackasses who are full of themselves. The weird visuals came

from the psychedelic, agoraphobic mind of Steve Ditko, the jokes came from Stan “the living PR department” Lee. There’s more meaning to understand there than in, say, how Spider-Man’s failure to stop the Green Goblin meant Gwen Stacy died.

- One could argue that *serial heroic fiction in general* is less about the moral meaning of what happens to the characters than about modelling *different styles by which a person can get through life and defeat obstacles*. The Spock style is not the Kirk style, and the Conan style is not the Elric style is not the James Bond style, and the Sal Paradise/Jack Kerouac style is not the Raoul Duke/Hunter Thompson style is not the Don Quixote style. Conan can save the world by eviscerating the man-scorpion, Spock can save the world by tricking the man-scorpion into eating the poisonous jubbub fruit, James Bond can save the world by seducing the man-scorpion’s wife and then planting a bomb in his bedroom – different heroes model different methods. If these were heroes in a Greek (or Shakespearean) tragedy, we would understand them and their flaws in terms of *what eventually happened to them* – but this isn’t the way picaresque heroes work. Picaresque heroes’ fates in the end are always the same – at the end of each episode, they are back on the road, ready for the next adventure. If they eventually die on the page, that death is not necessarily tied to events put in motion earlier, and therefore the death is not as integral to the story as the death of a tragic character – whose method-of-death is, in a sense, the point of the whole fatalistic story. Whereas in a sense, nothing *ever* happens to James Bond or James Kirk – they just go on forever demonstrating a way in which heroism *can* work. The serial or picaresque hero is not designed *in tandem* with the plot (as he or she is in a one-shot work like, say, *Hamlet* or *Pride and Prejudice* or *Napoleon Dynamite* – rather the plots of serial or picaresque adventures are designed *to test and stretch and display and probe the many possibilities of the already invented hero*. Just like in an RPG.
- So this is what a *De&D* party so often is: not a group of people necessarily destined to grow and change and bend to conform to Principles of Drama, but a group of people who demonstrate, with infinite variation, how you can get through life by enacting different styles of being week after week in different short stories. And what styles are these? These are styles that emerge organically from the psychologies of the people playing them, and styles that, from a distance all look like “pulp fantasy” but, on further inspection, reveal shades of differences in tactics and role-playing that are really differences in outlook. And when you put these differences in outlook together in a crowded matrix of poorly-lit 10’x10’ rooms for a few months, you get drama. And comedy. And it’s all a surprise. And it’s fun.
- It was great when, somewhere in the middle of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Data and Worf emerged as the



funniest characters in the series. The android and the Klingon. Nobody saw that coming, but it was *in the actors*, and that’s far more interesting than the cast and writers’ constant, conscious planned-from-the-beginning attempts to convince us that Wesley and Whoopi Goldberg were supreme space geniuses capable of solving any problem. In *Empire*, George Lucas wanted it to go:

Leia: “I love you.”

Han: “I love you, too.”

(into the carbonite chamber)

But, on the spur of the moment, just before the crew was supposed to break for lunch, they ran it and Leia said: “I love you” and Han said “I know.” If you want a “meaning” to the Han Solo character it’s more in that moment (a moment the “player” just threw in) than in that obviously pre-marital kiss he shares with Leia at the end of *Jedi* (a moment of character development and plot resolution that’d been planned more-or-less since they first told Lucas he’d get to write a Star Wars sequel).

- And in the end, that surprise “meaning” – the revealed meaning of what’s inside the people playing individually and as a group – the subtle differences between what they as people find compelling and interesting and generally effective *even when they’re not trying to* is as real and meaningful a meaning (for those who care about looking for such things once the blood’s dry and the owlbears are dead) as any kind of meaning that a DM or story-gamey consortium of players puts together on purpose.
- Everybody likes heroes and wants bad guys to lose, so that’s not the surprise or the meaning and so the fact that someone decides to play a hero tells you nothing new about the human condition. The interesting bit is *which* hero and *how* they defeat the bad guys. Ω

Merlyn's Mystical Mirror

reviews by Gabor Lux and Jo Kreil

ASE1: Anomalous Subsurface Environment, by Patrick Wetmore

This 88 page sourcebook and module is the first in a series describing an eponymous science-fantasy megadungeon and the strange post-apocalyptic lands that surround it. Here, millennia after an undescribed cataclysm, the world is fragmented into self-sufficient city-states, ruled by malevolent wizards of great power. Far from being simply high-level Magic-Users, these feared beings were once human, most of them *"mutated horribly in some way, whether as a result of super-science gone horribly awry, super-science gone horribly exactly as planned, or the metaphysical manifestation of their philosophies"*. The wizards, masters of supernatural powers and ancient technology, rule the land as they please, or plunder it; much like the sorcerer-kings of Dark Sun, lording over an army of functionaries, slaves and soldiers.

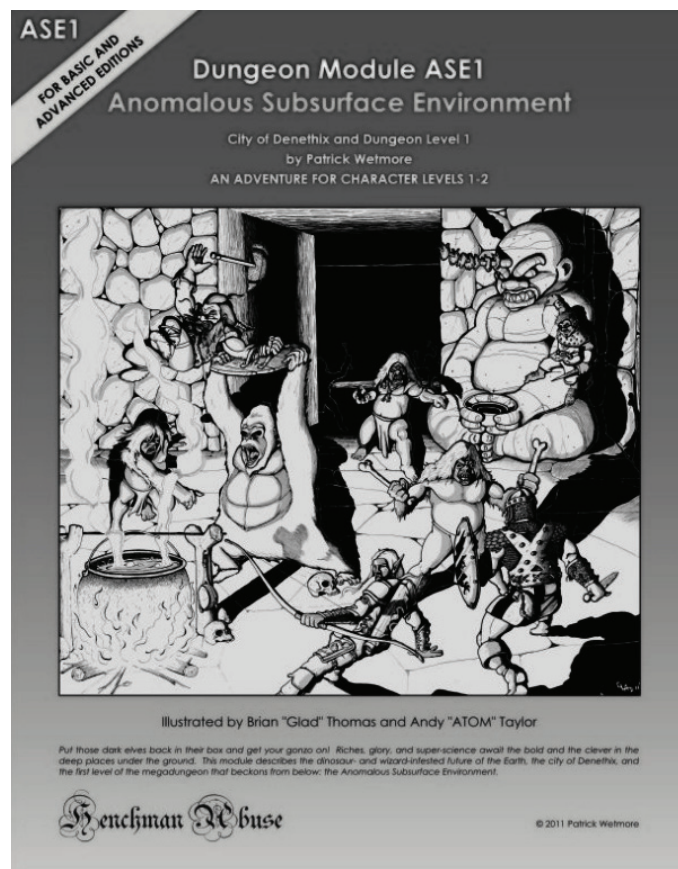
Then there are the Orbital Gods: telecommunication arrays around the planet gained sentience, personality and divine power, masters of a hundred idiosyncratic philosophies (which, unlike the unstated assumptions of most

D&D games, clerics are supposed to obey *simultaneously*, not exclusively). Ancient metals left over from the technological era; mad cults following the Orbital Gods, a bastardisation of the scientific method or even Nyarlathotep; firearms and war machines: this is a setting where magic and high technology exist side by side – and the synthesis works, producing something in between BECMI *D&D*, *Flash Gordon* serials, *Thundarr the Barbarian*, *Carcosa*, and 1st edition *Gamma World*, yet with its own identity. This is very important: far from being an imitative grab-bag, ASE transforms its ingredients into something more than the sum of its parts. In short: it is legitimately fantastic in a way "just an orc" and "just a robot" aren't.

A large part of the book examines the World of Denethix: its history, the extent of its known lands, and the city of Denethix itself, where the local wizard and his servants are known to be a little more benevolent than elsewhere. The descriptions of the setting are economic and flavourful: factions, NPCs and locales are presented with an emphasis on play-relevant information, providing just enough facts to inspire a GM, but not too much to overwhelm. Things such as the Ceratopsian Plains, the Livid Fens, Commonwealth Secure Holdings, the Street of Lesser Men and even farming villages such as Marston (a place for protoceratops herders) or Southdeep (a village located in a huge sinkhole) are granted enough exotic detail to make them adventuresome –greatly helped by a generous number of random tables to generate unusual curios, haute couture, horrible secrets, NPCs of different social classes, even deities.

Then comes the Anomalous Subsurface Environment itself, a sprawling underground experiment site sealed off for untold years and now maintained by mysterious forces. Not since Necromancer Games' *Rappan Athuk* and *Tomb of Abysthor* have I seen a published megadungeon designed with so much coherence and inner complexity. After an intro adventure (which provides a means, as well as motivation to investigate the place), we get a "moathouse"-style entrance level, populated by slowly disintegrating machinery and robotic guardians locked into their own internal fight for survival, and then the sprawling first level inhabited by scavengers, mutually hostile humanoid tribes, and several challenging and entertaining dungeon puzzles.

In its general ideas as well as individual encounters, ASE keeps up the quality of the outside world: it is a good megadungeon by the usual standards (such as its convoluted but navigable map mainly centred around interconnected sub-complexes, or its briefly discussed yet fairly functional dungeon ecology), but in every element, it injects its own flavour – here are stirges who have gorged themselves on nuclear goo, disintegrating office complexes hinting at the long-lost technological age, weird new monsters, humanoid lairs and enigmas whose purpose may be revealed after visiting other, yet unpublished levels. Fantasy and internal consistency are not considered mutually exclusive, but complementary: one enhances the other. Helpful notes are



provided on running the dungeon as a complex, dynamic environment, gradually introducing rival outsiders drawn to the action. This would be a great product for both advanced GMs and beginners.

If there is a weakness in *Anomalous Subsurface Environment*, it must lie in presentation. By that, I do not mean the typical errors that come with self-published modules: such errors are few and far between, and the product has an air of unobtrusive professionalism. However, the levels of ASE are so closely interlinked that to run it properly, you will need at least the second part (due by the end of 2011) to have a good chunk of the entire nine-level megadungeon complex; ideally, you should have all of it. As was the case with *Rappan Athuk* a decade ago, until this wait is over, the product remains incomplete. Naturally, in an exotic setting, some exposition is required, and the “gazetteer” part of the volume at least gives enough material to run surface adventures in the meantime. In spite of this (temporary) problem, this is very much a product worth buying. It is not just a personal vision, handling its subject matter expertly, but also an example of a megadungeon product “done right” – which, as someone fascinated by the genre but also critical of its specimens, I greatly appreciated. In a sense, the growing realisation as I was reading through *ASE1* was that I was finally holding the kind of product *Yggsburgh* and *Castle Zagyg* might have been.

A great megadungeon has its own legends, histories and potential to develop even more as the characters interact with it. It is large not by virtue of its dimensions, but by its possibilities. *Anomalous Subsurface Environment 1* is the beginnings of a great megadungeon. Go buy it. – GL

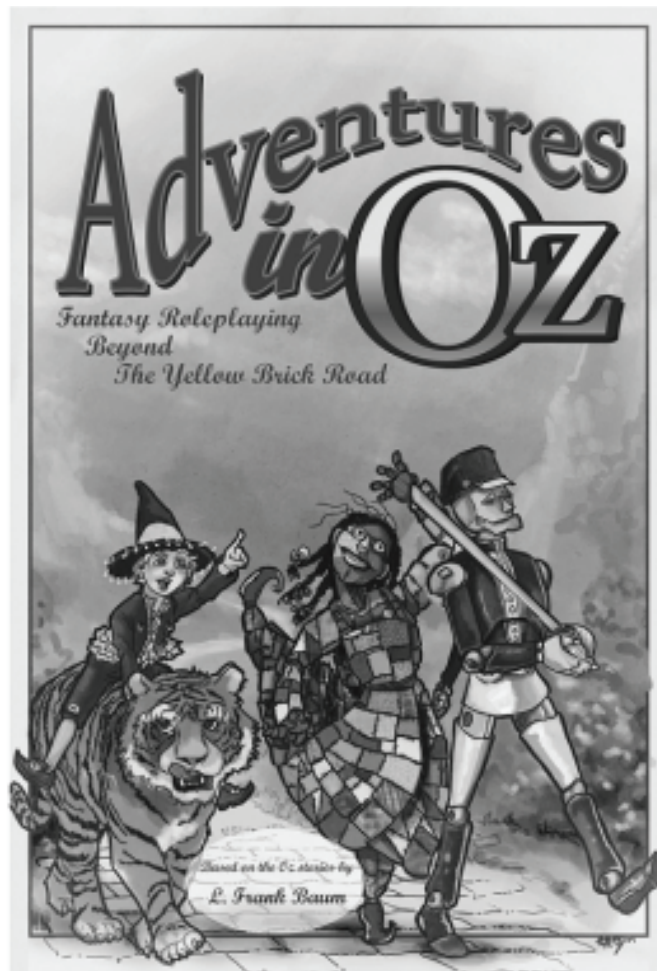
Adventures in Oz by F. Douglas Wall

“As a newcomer to RPGs, I was glad to see that this book does not leave people like me behind in the dirt, assuming the reader is already RPG fluent. At the same time, it also provides lots of introductions for Oz characters and places, so RPG players who are not so familiar with Oz can glean enough to go on....”

– Jared Davis, The Royal Blog of Oz

The Land of Oz has been around for 110 years, but in spite of being one of the most popular and well-known fantasy settings this is the first English-language RPG devoted to it. Like the stories, this game has been designed for the youngest and oldest of children. *Adventures in Oz* is a small soft-covered 130 page book re-tailing for \$14.99. All you need to play are a pencil and 2d6.

After a brief ‘introduction to roleplaying’ we learn that the citizens of Oz have no need for money and everyone helps out everyone else. They also can’t be killed. Even if chopped to bits, all the pieces will live. Given this, it seems like there is little reason for average citizens of Oz to adventure. Players will need to think long and hard about why



their character decided to forsake civilization to push on into the wilderness. However, Chapter 5 is full of helpful advice on how to run a game in Oz. One of the best written parts of the book, it is full of advice for running a game in a humorous world like Oz. I recommend it for anyone wanting to run a game in a fairytale world.

The character creation system is simple and quick. Anyone can make a character in about ten minutes by picking a template based off a common archetype (Crafted Person, Animal, etc.) and then selecting traits and skills, friends, and Oz Points, which either give you bonuses on rolls or allow you to receive help from your friends. (Dorothy spends an Oz point after the Wizard’s balloon takes off to get Glinda to appear and tell her how the slippers work.) Combat is fairly brutal, with frequent limb loss, but remember that characters are immortal and can even quest for lost limbs, so we are closer to Monty Python’s black knight here than the *Arduin Grimoires*. Sorcery works similarly to skill rolls, although it must be said that the magic chapter was not as clearly written as the others. There is also a great deal of information on the lands of Oz, with each chapter full of adventure and character ideas, a starter adventure, a map of Oz, and character sheets.

Overall, I like *Adventures in Oz*. I recommend this game to anyone looking for something to run for younger players or anyone wanting a rules light fantasy system. – JK



Notes on Games and Gaming

by James M. Ward

I was fresh out of college in 1973. Every Tuesday I would drive over to the Lake Geneva News Agency to buy the new science fiction and fantasy books they had delivered that day. One fateful Tuesday, I was poring through the racks, picking up the newest Conan and Arthur C. Clarke novels. When I reached the end of the racks, I had seven books in my hand. There was a gentleman doing the very same thing beside me. When he got done, he and I had the exact same books in our hands. We laughed at the coincidence and he started talking about a game he had just invented where a person could play Conan fighting Set. I was instantly hooked on the idea. A few weeks later I was regularly going over to Gary Gygax's house to learn the game of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

I played week after week, vastly enjoying myself and learning it was often wiser to run away from a powerful enemy than to stand and die fighting it. In the summer of that year at one of the weekly gaming sessions, I suggested to Gary that he really needed to do a science fiction version of the game. That very kind and generous man, maybe sensing I had a spark of talent, suggested that he didn't have the time right then, but that I should give it a try. That's how METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA, the first science fiction role-playing game, was born. I owe a lot to Gary and I'm proud to say he would often urge me to run my MA campaign for him and his friends. We had just finished a campaign of MA when he passed and his style and smile are greatly missed at my gaming table.

So, while I'm proud to say I learned my role-playing skills at Gary's table, I'm equally proud to say I have my own set of fairly impressive credits to my name. I'm the original Monty Haul gamer. For those of you who aren't familiar with the term, it's not a badge of honor in many role-playing circles, but it is in my house. A Monty Haul referee is one who likes to give away lots of treasure and magic

items to their gaming group. So much so that things like +2 swords, *Rings of Three Wishes*, and talking, flying iron griffons are commonplace. From my observations of the current batch of gamers and role-playing game designers, we Montys of the world are frowned upon.

My personal gaming philosophy is to keep my players happy. Since I count my imagination as my greatest asset, I have no problem with players owning lots of equipment. As proud members of the "Old School" crowd we believe the story is far more important than the "action" of the adventure. If PCs become very formidable with high levels and cool magic equipment, all you have to do is make the challenges they face equally formidable. The accountant referees of the world would like to give out +1 swords like they were the Holy Grail. They believe too much magic spoils the whole world and makes it too easy for the player. I haven't found that true in my 35+ years of gaming and being a referee. In my MA campaign there are characters using laser cannons and wearing power armor. They think they are vastly powerful, until they meet nine foot tall humanoid rabbits that can turn any metal to foam rubber. As an "Old School" referee, I also have no trouble killing off PCs, unlike the majority of current referees. While my gaming style is tough, Gary and his group never died once while playing for years in my game.

In a month I'm starting a new MA campaign and the story is going to run the action of the game. In the current METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA version four storyline, the colonization starship Warden strikes an invisible asteroid filled with deadly aliens. A strange radiation flows through the Warden, killing most of the crew and colonists. In the first phase of the game robots activate and begin the difficult task of neutralizing radiation on the decks of the ship. In the second phase the robots activate the androids to deal with the new aliens invading through two holes in the hull. Finally, in the third phase the few remaining humans are woken up when the androids realize they are facing a losing situation. The players are first robots, then androids,

then pure strain humans. Those who stick with the game can then play any of their three characters plus they can become mutants of thousands of different types.

I think I run my games in much the same manner as Gary ran his games for me. The idea is to leave your players grasping for breath and returning to their inn barely alive, ready to go back into the dungeons (or ship levels) again as soon as possible. I and a few others are starting a new gaming company and we all hope to bring some of that “Old School” feel to the products we will be bringing out. You can also still buy the original 32-page version of METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA, as well as the much larger version four: look for them on RPGNow.com.

I’m always eager to say that the germ of the idea for the colonization starship Warden came from the excellent novel *Starship* by Brian Aldiss. There are lots of books about such a trip, and Heinlein and others have written great ones as well. The Warden is designed to carry colonists to a star with a habitable planet. It’s a long voyage, and most of the colonists and crew are placed in cryosleep for the entire trip. I believe the experience is fun for the players in part because the primary objective of the game is known from the start. The Warden is in trouble; the PCs have to solve the problem before the ship can get back on course, with a wide range of options to do so. MA is something of what we used to call a ‘thinking player’s’ game, because the character doesn’t advance in levels as in most other role-playing games. Characters gain power by acquiring knowledge about the area and equipment, but for the most part their abilities, hit points, etc. don’t improve.

Exploring the ship is a fun romp through a wild and wacky campaign world. The ship is huge, with single levels up to 18 miles long and 9 miles wide. Just finding the exits on each level can be difficult. Furthermore, many bizarre mutant races have taken over large parts of these levels. My favorite mutant group has always been the wolfoids. Imagine a nine foot tall wolf that walks erect and has come to believe that human fingers are a rare delicacy. Wolfoids can seem peaceful and open handed when dealing with PCs, but eventually they always stab them in the back, usually at the worst possible moment.

So what happens at a convention when players come to play in my MA game? I usually run one of two different scenarios. In the “Coming of Age” game, the players are all young tribesfolk who are given a bone spear and a turtle-shell shield. They are to roam in a dangerous area until they find their way back home: their “rite of passage” to adulthood in the tribe. In that type of adventure they encounter a lot of technology that they have to learn about. In the second scenario the characters are technologically skilled soldiers with lots of weapons and tech armor. These characters meet a lot of mutants that have no problems surviving laser and grenade attacks.

Players and I have a great deal of fun with the item complexity chart. Imagine you have this silver sphere in your hand, and there are two slots in the sphere. You want to figure out what the sphere is, so you begin rolling on the item complexity chart and things happen as you try to figure out the device. Eventually the device either explodes, doing terrible damage, or you discover that it is perfect for toasting bread. There are plenty of stops along the way that allow a player to stop rolling and put down the dangerous device. But they almost never walk away without finding out what the device can do.

One of my favorite game stories happened when Gary Gygax and his friends were discovering a new level on the starship Warden. As a pure strain human, Gary was talking to the level’s artificial intelligence system. He discovered this was a supply level. His first request was for a drug that would enhance strength and speed. I will never forget Gary’s face when the artificial intelligence asked him how many metric tons of the drug he wanted. Ω

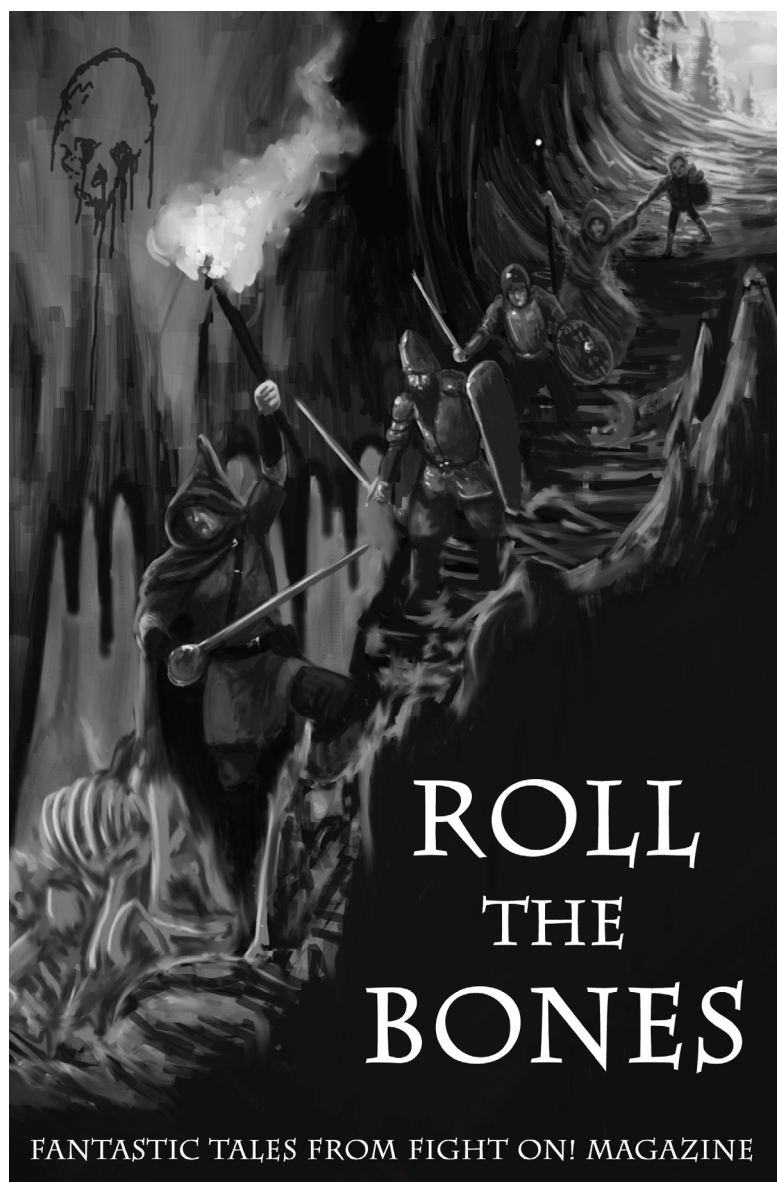
Master of Intonation - *Tim Kask*

Jim Ward taught me to use my voice more effectively when I game. He did not know he did at the time, but I am telling him now if he does not already know. More years ago than I care to try to count, I was walking by a room in which an RPG was being played when it struck me that the game was going differently than the last three or four I had just passed. There were no players in this group having little side-chats, no players scanning a chart or table: there were only players focused on the GM. I told myself I had to see more of this and lingered in earshot. I did not *see* anything unique. I *heard* Jim Ward being Jim.

Jim does not have the stentorian tones of a fire-and-brimstone evangelist, nor does he possess some Karloff-like timbre. Jim has a voice that draws you into the story, if only you choose to listen. Being a former teacher also (Jim taught English), I know the power of attraction that can be achieved by less volume, not more. At the time I first listened in, I had not learned that yet.

I have long compared GM’ing to outlining a story idea, thinking up a few plot elements, picking a beginning, and letting the players do the rest of the writing. Jim narrates these developments; you know that if you do not listen, you may not pass the next quiz. The timber of his voice, the inflections he uses echoes the history-keepers reciting the myths of the people around a comforting fire.

Jim’s games tend to mimic his calming demeanor; the only outbursts heard are when the players can’t hold it in because they are so astonished at something Jim has done or chagrined at something really dumb they just did. And the tone, coupled with the so-sincere face, can almost make you believe him when he says how sorry he is that you entered the sub-atomic trash disintegrator and had your atoms vented into deep space. Almost.



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