

# The 2016 Gongfarmer's Almanac:

## A Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG Zine

Written, Illustrated, Edited and Produced by  
the DCC RPG G+ Community



### DROP-IN ADVENTURES

### VOLUME 5 OF EIGHT BOOKLETS

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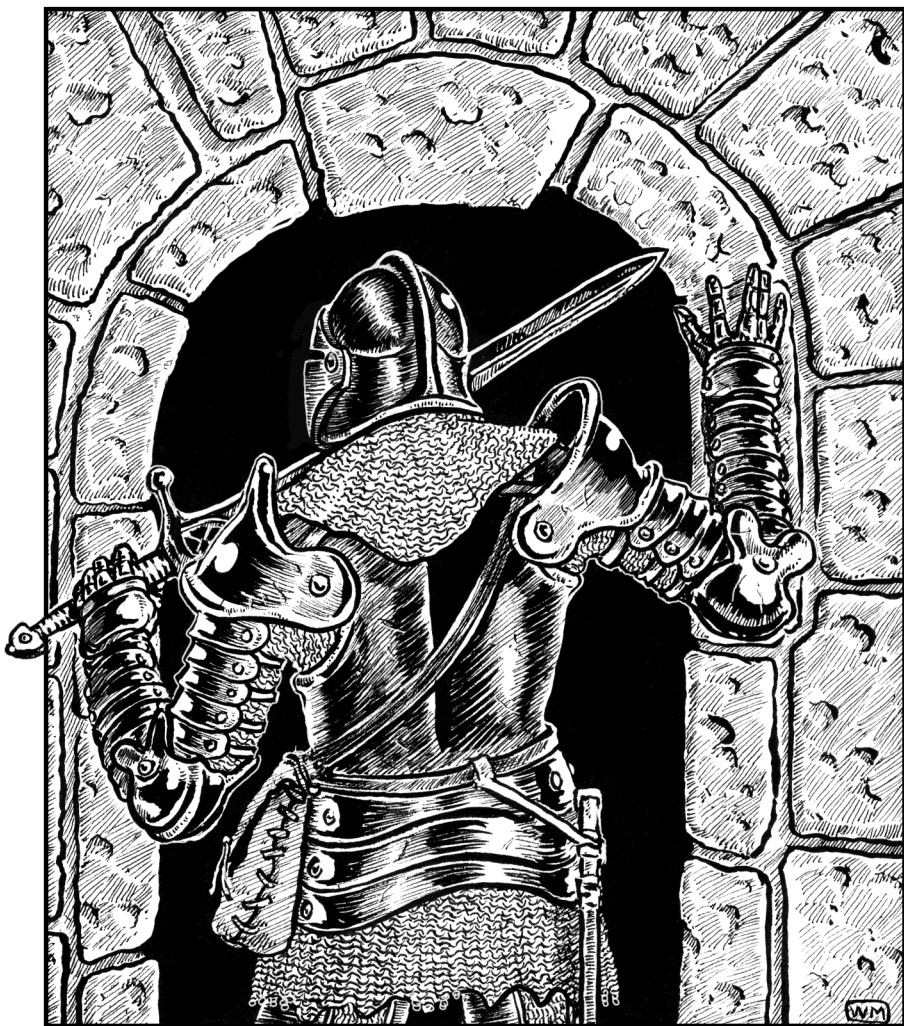
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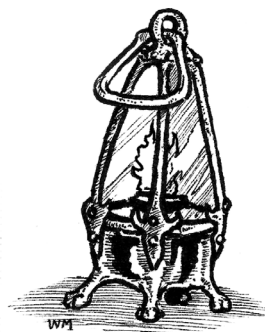
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# The **FORGOTTEN LIBRARY** of the **TOADFIEND**

A single room encounter for any dungeon or  
dire temple dedicated to the Evil Lord of Amphibians.

by **MARZIO MUSCEDERE**



Once used by Bobugbubilz's most learned disciples as a place of arcane research and profane studies, this age-haunted sanctum now lies forgotten and shattered, lost to the ravages of dread antiquity. Sinister and ancient as the very shadow of death, the forgotten library of the Toadfiend still teems with astounding mysteries and abominable lore for any who dare its unhallowed gloom.

**Read or paraphrase the following once the chamber is reached:**

*The dismal gloom of the chamber yawns before you, surging with the odor of long-imprisoned mustiness mingled with the cloying rot of elder desolation. A sickly-green glow emanates deep within a large pond in the chamber's center — its poisonous gleam casting everything in unnatural shadows and alien gloom. The pond's bank is a viscous mire of fetid slime, alive with the sinister movements of unseen things that writhe and squirm within the vile muck.*

*The chamber walls are of mortared stone, sweat slick with moisture and dotted with recessed shelves that house mummified corpses swathed in decaying cerements of emerald and scarlet. Each squat in unnatural batrachian poses — forever trapped in reverent mimicry of their croaking lord. The faint echo of dripping water breaks the unnatural silence of dead ages that hangs over this forlorn chamber.*

This massive chamber serves as a repository of profane knowledge passed down by Bobugbubilz to his most loyal vassals over the centuries. Part esoteric archive, part sacred crypt, the remains of the Toadfiend's greatest disciples are entombed here — displayed along the walls in all their hideous majesty.

## **Disciples of the Toad**

A closer examination of the mummified corpses reveal their hideous batrachian deformities. Strange elongated legs, great bulbous eyes, and wide gulping mouths mar the otherwise human aspect of these entombed devotees.

## Scripture in Slime

**Read or paraphrase the following to any that approach the slime surrounding the pond:**

*Fetid slime surrounds the stagnant pond, thick with the mulch of decay, and alive with the squirming of vile and unclean creatures crawling within its ooze. Salamanders, tadpoles, and creatures unnamed squirm within the rot — yet their movements are not that of mindless vermin but deliberate and ordered, possessing a uniformity of intelligence. Within the soft mud their slithering bodies trace out geometric symbols and lost letters of some forgotten alphabet, alien to both human sanity and reason.*

The fetid slime serves as a dark grimoire of sorcerous power. Alive with the writhing of vile creatures that continuously burrow and slither through the mud, their very tracks compose a chronicle — the *Scriptum Putridis*. Written in the forgotten language of the Toadfiend, this unholy writ is a collection of dark wisdoms passed down by Bobugbubilz since time immemorial. Any who attempt to read the vile *Scriptum Putridis* must roll 1d20 + Intelligence modifier, and refer to the table below. Note that devotees of Bobugbubilz add a +4 circumstance bonus to the roll.

### SCRIPTUM PUTRIDIS DECIPHERING TABLE

D20 + INT MOD	EFFECT
1 or less	Arcane energy pours through the reader's mind in a torrent of soul-wracking waves. Manifesting as eldritch slime, the reader's head swells and distorts until it explodes in a shower of pink mist and putrid ooze.
2-8	Gazing too long into the fetid slime fills the reader with the putrid ooze of the Toadfiend. Roll 1d10 on the <b>Toadfiend Taint Table</b> below.
9-17	Reader feels nauseous and dizzy but is largely unaffected, except for a foul tang of dirt that stings the mouth.
18-19	Reader imbued with esoteric knowledge of Bobugbubilz. The patron spell <i>Tadpole Transformation</i> (DCC RPG rulebook) is upon the reader's lips. The next time the character speaks, the spell is automatically cast. Roll normally for spell effect and mercurial magic. Once cast, the spell is lost regardless of success.
20-22	Reader suffused in dark wisdoms of the croaking lord. As above, except the patron spell <i>Glorious Mire</i> (DCC RPG rulebook) is upon the reader's lips.
23+	Reader bathed in the putrid acuity of the Lord of Amphibians. As above, except the patron spell <i>Bottomfeeder Bond</i> (DCC RPG rulebook) is upon the reader's lips.

## TOADFIEND TAINT TABLE

D10 ROLL	RESULT (Note that ability scores can never fall below 3 or be raised above 18.)
1	Eyes become pronounced and bulbous, and grasp upon reality becomes tenuous. Character suffers a permanent -2 penalty to Will saves.
2	Feet and hands become webbed. Character permanently loses 2 points of Agility, but is capable of swimming at twice the normal speed.
3	Character vomits a <b>Swarm of Living Toads</b> . The toads attack nearest targets, including the caster. <b>Swarm of Living Toads</b> : Init +0; Atk bite +4 melee against all in 10'x10' space (dmg 1d4); AC 8; hp 40; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4; Ref +0; Will +0; AL C.
4	Character's face takes on a distinctly batrachian air, with wide-set eyes and thick brow ridges. Character suffers persistent migraines and permanently loses 2 points of Intelligence.
5	Character's legs twist and elongate. Character's speed permanently reduced by 10', but is capable of leaping 25' in a single bound.
6	Character suffers from random and uncontrollable hopping spasms, resulting in a permanent -2 penalty to initiative rolls.
7	Character becomes cold-blooded, and as such is incapable of adjusting to rapidly changing environmental temperatures. Character permanently suffers double damage from any cold or fire based attacks.
8	Character's mind constantly haunted by a great cacophony of bass croaking. Character permanently loses 2 points of Luck.
9	Character develops an obsessive habit whereby they continuously and uncontrollably lash out with their tongues as if catching flies. Character permanently loses 2 points of Personality.
10	Reader becomes enthralled by the scriptures in slime and its dark secrets. Character refuses to leave the library and attacks anyone if made to do so.

## Necro-pond

### Read or paraphrase the following to any that approach the pond:

*You stand at the edge of a carrion black pond, its stagnate waters dimly illuminated by some sickly phosphoresce deep within its heart. An occasional bubble belches up from its fathomless depths, bursting upon the slime-thick surface with the putrid stench of a plague hot wind.*

This chamber not only serves as the eternal resting place of Bobugbubilz's disciples, but also a conduit to their very spirits. The Necro-pond enables an individual to consult with the spirits of the disciples entombed here. A spirit can only be contacted by offering a blood sacrifice to the sacred pond. Suitable sacrifices include PC ability-burn or the ritualistic drowning of a living creature beneath the dark waters. The HD level of the living sacrifice or the amount of ability-burn determines the result, as per the chart below.

# Croaking Souls

If a suitable sacrifice is made consult the **Blood Sacrifice Table** below, and read or paraphrase the following:

*A great cacophony of bass croaking rises from hidden throats as the alien-glow from deep within the pond comes pouring forth — slowly merging into a shadowy form that vaguely resembles a man. Its batrachian face gazes upon you with great bulbous eyes that seem to hold the wisdom of untold centuries.*

BLOOD SACRIFICE TABLE	
HD of Living Sacrifice or Amount of Ability-Burn	RESULT
1-2	Supplicant establishes a simple rapport with the spirit and understands the nature of the entity to which he speaks. The supplicant has enough time to ask 1 simple question and hear an answer.
3-4	As above, but the supplicant may ask 2 simple questions.
5+	As above, but the supplicant may ask 3 simple questions.

Note that sacrificing a dead creature to the water or entering the pond without first making a sacrifice offends and infuriates the spirits. Offended spirits manifest in the form of a ravenous **Spirit Toad** that bursts forth from the putrid waters to lay vengeance upon the defilers of the sacred pond. Casting an inanimate object into the pond has no effect, but does result in the permanent loss of the object beneath the slime.

**Spirit Toad:** Init +1; Atk bite +7 melee (1d8+2); AC 15; HD 5d12; hp 30; MV 20' or swim 10'; Act 1d20; SP swallow whole, crit table DN/d6; SV Fort +4; Ref +2; Will +0; AL C.

On a successful attack, the spirit toad swallows its victim whole (DC 14 Strength check to resist). Once swallowed, the souls trapped within the toad launch an agonizing spiritual assault upon the victim, dealing 1d4 Personality damage per round (DC 15 Will save to resist). A victim whose Personality score reaches zero dies, their soul forever trapped within the hellish toad. A swallowed victim can successful escape from the creature's gullet with a DC 20 Strength check, or by slaying the dread beast.

The size of a large draft horse, this giant toad sports a cavernous mouth lined with needle sharp teeth. Capable of swallowing a man whole, each time the toad opens its giant maw, shadowy human forms can be seen swirling within the toad's gullet, their ghostly faces frozen in screams of terror and despair.

The spirit toad attacks with abysmal savagery, eager to slake its ravenous hunger for fresh meat and human souls. It attempts to swallow any who disturb the pond without first making a suitable sacrifice.

If slain, the spirit toad may have some items of treasure (as per the judge's discretion) within it, grim evidence of past transgressors' demise.

## TZOLK'IN CRAWL

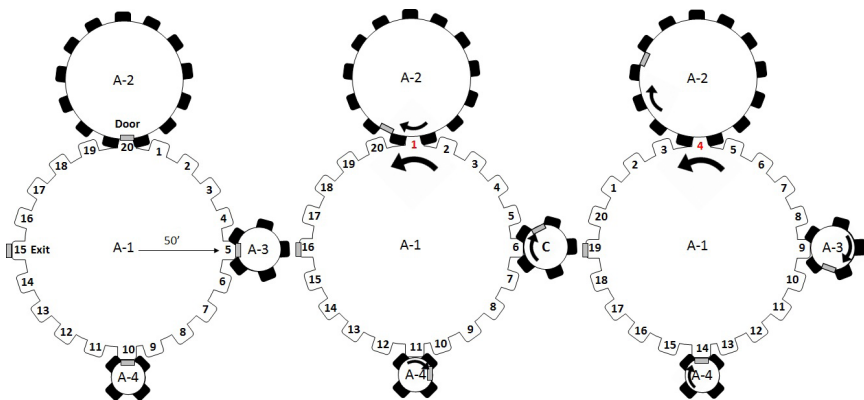
## A DCC RPG Mini-Dungeon

by **MARC BRUNER**

# Introduction

This mini-dungeon inspired by the Mayan calendar can be used as a drop-in location for judges to present an interesting set of encounters and a unique puzzle for a group of adventurers to solve. The dungeon is comprised of four interlocking gear-shaped rooms that rotate to present different configurations; the challenge for the players is to solve the correct sequence of rotations and unlock the exit door before succumbing to the dangers within. As written, it is intended for parties of level three or higher, but can be introduced to any level of characters by scaling the difficulty of the listed encounters up or down.

The characters start in location A-1 on the map. This could be a location within an existing dungeon they are exploring or possibly they arrive in situ via some magical mishap. The main gear room is circular with 20 regularly-spaced alcoves, each containing a weathered stone figure representative of a unique force or being from the pantheon of some long-dead race as described on the table below. At the back of each alcove is an egress, which is open only when the doors to the smaller gear rooms line up with the main gear room, otherwise the alcove ends in a blank stone wall. When the PCs enter, all of the alcove exits are currently blocked except four located at the cardinal directions. See the map for the initial configuration of the rooms when the PCs arrive.



Configuration when PCs enter. Doors to locations A-2, A-3, and A-4 are open

Start position after the introductory text. Location A-1 rotates 1 space until alcove 1 is in the top position. Doors to locations A-2, A-3, and A-4 are now closed.

Example of the configuration if the PCs activate statue 4 after the introductory text. Location A-1 rotates 3 spaces until alcove 4 is in the top position. The door to location A-4 is re-opened.

## LIST OF DEITIES, DESCRIPTIONS, AND CURSES

ALCOVE	DEITY	REPRESENTATION	DESCRIPTION	CURSE
1	Imix	A swollen crocodile with an oversized head and jaws	This figure represents the world. The PC who carries the jade figurine of Imix can never be knocked down.	Small green shoots grow from skin and pores. If left untended, they flower, releasing a pleasant scent.
2	Ik	A tall man carrying a bellows	This figure represents the wind. When carried, the PC can cast Gust of Wind once/week as per the 3rd level wizard spell (d10 action die for non-spellcasters).	The PC is pursued by a feeling of wanderlust and can never stay in one location or town for longer than a night.
3	Akbal	Hooded figure	This figure is symbolic of the underworld. This figurine grants the PC +1 to attacks at night or in darkness.	The PC is sensitive to light and incurs a -1 to attack rolls in any light stronger than a torch.
4	Kan	Handsome youth with a net	Abundance, harvest. The PC gains the additional occupation of farmer for purposes of related skill checks.	PC is abnormally thirsty and requires twice the normal amount of drinking water per day.
5	Chicchan	A long snake with stars for scales	The celestial serpent. PCs possessing this figurine always can find true north. This figurine is one of the three keys required for the exit.	N/A
6	Cimi	A grotesquely masked figure	Death. Companions of the PC gain a +1 to roll the body checks, and successful rolls result in no attribute loss.	Death follows the PC, always ready to claim its prize. The PC bleeds out in one round regardless of level.
7	Manik	A deer with a large set of antlers	The sign of the Lord of the Hunt. PCs with this figurine roll a d30 action die on all hunting, tracking, or foraging-related checks while in wilderness.	PC can only eat raw meat. Eating anything else induces extreme nausea (DC 16 Fort save or 1d4 temporary Stamina loss).
8	Lamat	A rabbit carrying four small ears of corn in a pouch	Sign of the planet Venus and sunset. When carried, the PC gains +1 to all personality checks.	The PC has -1 to all hide and stealth checks.

TABLE CONTINUES >

ALCOVE	DEITY	REPRESENTATION	DESCRIPTION	CURSE
9	Muluc	A woman pouring an earthenware jar	An aspect of water. The figurine provides a small amount of refreshing, clean water once/day.	Any iron the PC owns rusts within a week.
10	Oc	A dog carrying a circle of dark flames on its back	The guide of the night sun through the underworld. The PC carrying the figurine can see in any darkness as if it were full daylight. This figurine is one of the three keys required for the exit.	N/A
11	Chuen	A grinning monkey	This figure represents the arts and craftsmanship. PCs carrying this figurine gain +1 to all knowledge-based skill rolls.	The PC incurs a -1 penalty to all initiative rolls.
12	Eb	Two youths dancing	The twins of Rain and Storms. PCs carrying this figurine can move completely unseen while outside during storms as if invisible.	Fires cannot be lit by the PC and any source of flame carried by the PC is extinguished.
13	Ben	A man holding a sickle	The god of growth of corn, cane, and man. When carried, the PC can cast Enlarge once/week as per the 1st level wizard spell (d10 action die for non-spellcasters).	The PC suffers from painful cramps in her limbs that cannot be healed and reduce movement by 5'.
14	Ix	A jaguar made of black jade	The night sun. PCs with this figurine can Polymorph as per the 4th level wizard spell into a jaguar once/week as if cast with a result of 18-19.	Each transformation causes a lingering aspect of the jaguar to be retained, e.g. whiskers or hair changing to black as the PC assumes more and more cat-like features.
15	Men	An eagle, wings spread	An aspect of wisdom and the moon. PCs carrying this figurine gain +1 to Will saves.	At nights of near and full moons, when passing pools of water, the PC is drawn to the reflected moonlight and unless prevented, will attempt to dive into depths to find the hidden worlds underneath.

TABLE CONTINUES >

ALCOVE	DEITY	REPRESENTATION	DESCRIPTION	CURSE
16	Cib	A two-sided figure with an owl and carrion bird faced opposite directions	The death-birds of night and day. The PC cannot be surprised as long as he carries the figurine.	Hunted. The PC has a feeling of always being pursued. In combat foes will always attempt to strike the PC first.
17	Caban	A huge figure wrestling the world	The figure represents earthquakes. PCs carrying this figurine gain a +1 to Reflex saves.	Animals act skittish around the PC, and if pressed, will attempt to run away from his location.
18	Etz'nab	A woman wielding an obsidian knife	Sacrifice. The PC gain +1 to spell checks when using spellburn.	Spellburn recovery is at half of the normal rate.
19	Cauac	A dragon coiled around a mountain	The god of thunder and lightning. The movement rate of the PC is increased by 5'.	The PC burns Luck at twice the normal rate.
20	Ahau	A man carrying the sun	The radiant sun god. The PC can bless allies once/hour per the 1st level cleric spell as if cast with a result of 12-13. This figurine is one of the three keys required for the exit.	N/A

## Player Start

**When the characters enter the room, read or paraphrase the following text:**

*You see a large circular stone chamber with evenly spaced, dim alcoves around the perimeter. The alcoves appear to contain large carved figures, and with the exception of those at each cardinal point, all appear to end in a blank grey wall. Of the four remaining alcoves, the North, East and South ones have an open door behind the figures through which another room can be seen. The fourth, West, alcove also contains a door, which is currently closed. Unfamiliar symbols and grotesque faces are carved into the dark surface, along with three recesses shaped like smaller versions of the alcoves located around the room. Before you can examine the room further, a feeling of dizziness and slight nausea overcomes you. When the feeling passes, you see that all of the open doors have closed showing only the same blank grey wall as the other spaces.*

At the judge's discretion, characters entering location A-1 from another part of the dungeon find that whatever entrance they came in through (e.g. a stairwell) has also disappeared, trapping them in the chamber.

Triggered by the PCs presence, the main gear room has rotated one position, which also rotated the doors to the smaller gear rooms out of alignment with the main gear, thus appearing to have "closed".

From within the main gear room, the movement of the gears is silent and intended to be subtle, only noticeable by the feeling of accompanying dizziness; the otherwise blank and regular features of the rooms mask the change in gear position. PCs taking precautions to mark the positions of the alcoves should be rewarded with additional information based on the judge's assessment of how successful their attempts are. Dwarves or characters with masonry-related backgrounds can make a DC 12 Intelligence check to detect that the room has some type of unusual hidden construction.

Trapped, the PCs must solve the puzzle of the dungeon's configuration and retrieve the correct three keys from the smaller gear rooms to unlock the exit door. Unknown to the PCs, due to the different size of each gear room, the correct combination only appears once every 260 rotations in the gear positions! Players with a math background or those familiar with the 260 day Mayan calendar might jump to this deduction after a little investigation, others may have to brute-force a solution.



## The Puzzle

The mechanism to rotate the room is triggered by touching or investigating one of the stone figures. This causes the main gear room to rotate counterclockwise 1-20 spaces until the activated figure is at the top position on the map. Depending on how many rotations have occurred, this may cause a door to one or more of the smaller gear rooms (locations A-2, A-3 and A-4 on the map) to open up. See the map for an example of the resulting configuration if the PCs activate figure 4 after reading the introduction text. The judge should keep track of the total number of rotations since the PCs entered the dungeon and compare it to the smaller gear room tables below as a shortcut to determine the open or closed status of the doors for each smaller gear room.

When the door to a smaller gear room is open, the PCs can see into the room from the main chamber, as when they first entered the dungeon. Like the main gear room, each smaller gear room is circular, though without any alcoves or additional markings, and except for size, are all identical to each other. As identified on the map, the smaller gear room location A-2 has 13 gears, location A-3 has 5, and location A-4 has 4. None of the gears of the smaller gear rooms are visible to the PCs, and can only be deduced based on observing the number of rotations it takes for the door to return to the aligned position.

The external gear rooms are 'activated' based on the figure currently aligned with the room, and characters entering them trigger an encounter per the location tables below. After each encounter, an exact replica of the activating figure, but smaller and made of jade, appears inside the room and can be recovered by the PCs. These jade versions bestow a minor boon to the first PC that touches them per the deity description table above. The correct combination of jade figurines are also used to unlock the exit door. Only one figurine of each deity can exist at a time, and subsequent configurations for the same activating deity result in no encounter for that room.

## LOCATION A-2 CONFIGURATION TABLE

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROTATIONS FROM THE START CONFIGURATION	RESULTING ALCOVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE GEAR ROOM DOOR	ENCOUNTER
13	13	Stone men silently emerge from the walls and attack the party. <b>Stone men (13):</b> Init -1; Atk various farming tools (as pitchfork) +1 melee (1d8); AC 16; HD 1d8+1; hp 5 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP Elemental Traits (per DCC core rules p411); SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +2; AL Neutral
26	6	PCs entering the room trigger a trap that rotates the room one space such that any PCs inside are trapped. Once sealed, the room starts filling with a noxious yellow gas. The trap requires a DC 15 check for a thief to find and disable. For 2d4+4 rounds, PCs in the cloud take 4 points of damage each round, and must make a DC 12 Fort save when first exposed or be poisoned (-2d4 Agility, duration 1 day).
39	19	Chain lightning! A lightning bolt jumps between up to four targets inside the chamber. The lightning bolt cannot loop back to a prior target. The first target takes 4d6 damage, the second target takes 3d6 damage, the third target takes 2d6 damage, and the final target takes 1d6 damage (DC 24 Ref save for no damage)
52	12	PCs entering the room trigger a trap that rotates the room one space such that any PCs inside are trapped. Once sealed, the room starts filling with water that drips out of hundreds of small holes in the ceiling. The trap requires a DC 15 check for a thief to find and disable. The room will completely fill in 4 rounds. Once filled, drowning creatures take 1d6 points of Stamina damage per round and die when Stamina reaches 0; lost Stamina is restored immediately if they are removed from the water.
65	5	PCs stepping into the chamber find themselves floating in a vast field of stars, the door they entered from a bright rectangle suspended behind them. PCs must make a DC 10 Will save each round or be lost to drift alone in space as they are overcome by the wonder and beauty of the universe. PCs making the save can take actions to return to the door, attempt to rescue lost drifting comrades, or recover the jade figurine.

TABLE CONTINUES >

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROTATIONS FROM THE START CONFIGURATION	RESULTING ALCOVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE GEAR ROOM DOOR	ENCOUNTER
78	18	The PCs cannot enter the chamber unless they burn a total of 13 points as a group of Strength, Stamina and Agility per the spellburn rules. Non-wizard characters can contribute to this spellburn to access the chamber.
91	11	<p>When the PCs enter this room, their perspective suddenly shifts as they are transformed to the size of insects. Their clothes and equipment, now made for giants, clatter around them. The jade figurine of Chuen looms above on a pedestal. They must find a way to reach the figurine and take it out of the room.</p> <p>A small spider, previously ignored by the PCs, has made its web in the doorway and its many eyes glimmer with interest...</p> <p><b>Spider, relatively colossal:</b> Init +3; Atk bite +12 melee (1d10+4 plus poison), shoot web +6 ranged (SP); AC 18; HD 12d10+12; hp 84, MV 50' or climb 30'; Act 3d20; SP poison (DC 15 Fort save or death in 1d4 rounds), spin web (a creature that touches the web is held fast, able to escape only by a DC 20 Strength or Agility check. The web can be burned off (possibly wounding captured creatures) or hacked through with a very sharp blade by a creature not already caught (AC 16, 5 hp to free one creature). A dull blade or blunt object will simply become entangled; even a strike with an exceptionally sharp blade has a 25% chance of entangling the weapon; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will -2; AL N.</p>
104	4	PCs entering this chamber sense the rapid passage of time and must make a DC 12 Fort save or age 1d10 years.
117	17	The chamber shakes, throwing PCs to the ground and raining stone from the ceiling down on them (2d6 dmg, DC 12 Ref save for none).
130	10	Inside the chamber it is completely dark per the level 1 cleric spell. From the outside, the chamber appears normal.

TABLE CONTINUES >

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROTATIONS FROM THE START CONFIGURATION	RESULTING ALCOVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE GEAR ROOM DOOR	ENCOUNTER
143	3	<p>Growling can be heard coming from the room. PCs entering are stalked by an invisible three-headed jaguar. Each attack is either a bite (+4 attack, 1d10+4 damage) or a fiery breath weapon (+10 attack, 2d6 damage plus DC 15 Ref save or target catches fire, suffering additional 1d6 damage each round until the target makes a DC 15 Ref save).</p> <p><b>Three-headed jaguar:</b> Init +4; Atk bite +6 melee (1d10+4); AC 18; HD 1d10 (7 hp) per head; MV 20'; swim 40'; Act 1d20 per head; SP crit on 19-20, fiery breath weapon; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +5; AL C.</p>
156	16	<p>PCs see a body lying on the floor surrounded by a wake of vultures picking off flesh in ragged tatters. PCs can easily scare away the birds who fly up to perches on the ceiling, but continue to eye the party below. The jade figurine of Cib is inside the body, and can be recovered by a strong-stomached PC.</p> <p>If the PCs attack or kill any of the birds, the remaining vultures regurgitate their meal on the PCs (Atk +6 ranged) who must make a DC 20 Fort save or contract a debilitating disease. The disease manifests 1d7 days later as terrible shakes and shivers, inflicting a -4 penalty to Strength and Agility until cured by magical means.</p>
169	9	<p>The jade figurine of Muluc can be seen at the bottom of a clear pool in the middle of the room. The pool is a mirage and is much deeper than it seems, though the figurine always appears to be just within reach. PCs diving into the water to recover the figurine must make a DC 12 Intelligence check. Failing the check, the PC unwittingly has dived too deep and starts drowning per the drowning rules (each round the PC takes 1d6 points of Stamina damage per round and dies when Stamina reaches 0; lost Stamina is restored immediately if they are removed from the water). Returning to the surface takes 1d4 rounds.</p>

TABLE CONTINUES >

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROTATIONS FROM THE START CONFIGURATION	RESULTING ALCOVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE GEAR ROOM DOOR	ENCOUNTER
182	2	The jade figurine of Ik is located in the center of the chamber. Entering, PCs feel a slight breeze starting at the doorway and growing stronger the closer to the figurine they move. A full-fledged cyclone, 10' wide at the bottom and 20' wide at the ceiling whips around the center of the room. Everything touched by the cyclone takes 8d6 buffeting damage.
195	15	<p>PCs entering the room see a game board set up on a table. The game is a miniature version of the dungeon with interlocking gears. The PCs must defeat an unseen opponent by winning more pieces from the game board.</p> <p>The game mimics the dungeon in that touching one of the deities moves the main gear until the activated figure is on top, and when a smaller gear room door is aligned with the main gear room, the player collects the deity piece that is in front of the room, removing it from play. The unseen opponent goes after the PCs and will always rotate the board to the next total rotation number divisible by four (e.g. 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, etc.) and collected any resulting pieces.</p> <p>The game ends when all 20 pieces are removed from the board. If the PCs win, they get the sense that their unseen opponent is satisfied - the game board disappears and reveals the jade figurine of Men. If the players acquire fewer pieces or tie, they are returned to the main room and find location A-2 forever sealed.</p>
208	8	<p>In this chamber, a source of bright white light hangs from the ceiling, casting elongated shadows outward in all directions. The faint glimmer of jade can be seen inside the light. 1d4 rounds after entering the chamber, the PC's shadows rise up behind them as faceless women and men wielding dark blades. The faceless women and men always surprise the PCs unless they specifically take precautions to watch their shadows.</p> <p><b>Faceless women and men (number as party members):</b> Init +4; Atk poisoned dagger +9 melee (1d12 then 1d4, plus poison); AC 14; HD 3d6; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP poison (DC 18 Fort save or death, dmg 1d12+1d4 Strength on successful save), thief skills (disguise, move silently, climb, hide in shadows); SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +4; AL C.</p>

TABLE CONTINUES >

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROTATIONS FROM THE START CONFIGURATION	RESULTING ALCOVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE GEAR ROOM DOOR	ENCOUNTER
221	1	<p>The chamber appears empty, but a giant stone-grey crocodile rests curled in the corner of the room, camouflaged against the walls (+10 to hide checks). It will wake and strike with surprise if the PCs make noise or search the room.</p> <p><b>Crocodile, giant:</b> Init -1; Atk bite +8 melee (4d4); AC 19; HD 5d8; hp 27; MV 40' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP camouflage; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will -2; AL N.</p>
234	14	<p>A dark orb spouting black flames hangs from the ceiling, with the jade figurine of Ix inside. The air around the orb is unbearably hot, and PCs approaching the orb without protection take 1d6 heat damage per round. PC within 10' catch fire. Targets on fire must make a DC 16 Ref save or take an additional 1d6 damage each round until the fire is extinguished with another DC 16 Ref save.</p>
247	7	<p>PCs entering this room set off a pit trap, dropping the floor and the PCs 30' onto a bed of spikes (3d6+4 damage, DC 12 Ref save to cling to the edge and avoid falling in). The trap requires a DC 15 check for a thief to find and disable.</p>
260	20	<p>The PCs are attacked by floating, flaming Crystal Skulls.</p> <p><b>Crystal skulls, flaming (5):</b> Init +4; Atk flame touch +8 melee (2d4 damage plus DC 15 Ref save or target catches fire, suffering additional 1d4 damage each round until the target makes a DC 15 Ref save); AC 16; HD 4d8; hp 18 each; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP flame touch, hypnosis; SV Fort -2, Ref +4, Will +4; AL N.</p> <p>The Crystal Skulls cast hypnosis at a +6 spell check; the victim must succeed on an opposed Will save or be under the control of the skull, which communicates with the PC telepathically. Hypnotized creatures appear dazed and will perform tasks as commanded. Any suicidal or dangerous task allows a new Will save to resist. The hypnosis fades after 1d4 hours.</p>



## LOCATION A-3 CONFIGURATION TABLE

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROTATIONS FROM THE START CONFIGURATION	RESULTING ALCOVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE GEAR ROOM DOOR	ENCOUNTER
5	10	Entering the room, a random item goes missing from the PC's pack. The judge should secretly record which item was taken and notify the PC when they attempt to use it that it is no longer there. Missing items have been collected by a mischievous wizard's familiar that can be later encountered at the judge's discretion.
10	15	<p>The PCs see an enormous eagle perched in the room. The great bird riddles the PCs and attacks if they do not answer correctly. The judge is free to use any riddles they wish, but the riddles should always include the numbers 20, 13, 5, or 4.</p> <p><b>Eagle, giant:</b> Init +2; Atk bite +9 melee (2d6) and claw +5 melee (1d6); AC 17; HD 7d10; hp 51, MV 30' or fly 80'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +4; AL N.</p>
15	20	<p>Entering the chamber, the PCs are momentarily blinded by a bright flash of light. When they recover their vision, they see that representations of their images are now etched into the walls around the chamber performing a sequences of actions: picking up the jade figurine of Chicchan, Oc, and Ahau, placing them in an ornate carved door, and walking through the exit.</p> <p>For the next day, one randomly determined PC also glows as if suffused in bright sunlight, becoming the target for any animal-minded creature that attacks.</p>
20	5	PCs entering the room trigger a trap that rotates the room one space such that any PCs inside are trapped. Once sealed, the room starts constricting like a snake. The trap requires a DC 15 check for a thief to find and disable. The room will completely squeeze the PCs inside in six rounds unless the room can be reopened or the PCs find a means to halt the constriction.
Every five additional rotations (e.g. 25, 30, etc.)	Alcove sequence restarts from '10'	As result above.

## LOCATION A-4 CONFIGURATION TABLE

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROTATIONS FROM THE START CONFIGURATION	RESULTING ALCOVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE GEAR ROOM DOOR	ENCOUNTER
4	14	Entering the room, spellcaster PCs sense some type of growing magical energy. After 1d4 rounds, all wizards and elves must make a DC 18 Will save or be forced to release a portion of their magical energy in spell form. On a failed save, a random spell misfires per the spell effects. After four such misfires, the energy dissipates.
10	15	<p>Inside the chamber, the PCs find a ceremony in progress. Hooded figures chant as one raises a blade over the heart of a woman chained to a table. PCs that elect to take no action see the ceremony gruesomely concluded, and the scene fade. If the PCs intervene, the woman on the table laughs and frees herself, revealing herself as a witch. She receives one surprise round before the PCs realize their mistake.</p> <p><b>Witch:</b> Init -2; Atk claw -2 melee (1d4-1) or curse (DC 16 Will save; see below) or spell; AC 9; HD 3d6; hp 12; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP familiar, curse, spellcasting (per core rules 4th Edition p434); SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +8; AL C.</p>
12	2	PCs entering the room trigger a trap that rotates the room one space such that any PCs inside are trapped. Once sealed, the room starts emptying of air. The trap requires a DC 15 check for a thief to find and disable. The room will be a complete vacuum in 1d4 rounds. Once empty of air, creatures inside take 1d6 points of Stamina damage per round and die when Stamina reaches 0; lost Stamina is restored immediately if they are put back in breathable air.
16	6	Death claims a victim. One random PC loses a close friend, ally, or relative.

TABLE CONTINUES >

TOTAL NUMBER OF ROTATIONS FROM THE START CONFIGURATION	RESULTING ALCOVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE GEAR ROOM DOOR	ENCOUNTER
20	10	<p>The PCs enter the chamber and discover a labyrinth inside. The door behind them has turned into a blank wall — they can only move forward. In the distance, the bellowing sound of some animal can be heard.</p> <p>Each round, the PCs must designate someone to make a DC 15 Intelligence check. Dwarves and players with navigation-based occupations get a +2 to the check. PCs must make four successful checks to reach the center of the labyrinth and recover the jade figurine of Oc. After three failed checks, the Minotaur of the labyrinth catches them and attacks.</p> <p><b>Minotaur:</b> Init +8; Atk gore +8 melee (1d8+4) or axe +8 melee(1d10+4); AC 15; HD 6d8+6; hp 38; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP bull charge, never surprised; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +2/+6 versus spells that affect their mental faculties; AL C.</p>
Every four additional rotations (e.g. 24, 28, etc.)	Alcove sequence restarts from '14'	As result above.



## Unlocking the Door

The solution to the puzzle is based on comprehending the cyclical nature of the dungeon, and that of its creators, which is reinforced by clues provided during several of the encounters. PCs must rotate the main gear room a total of 259 spaces from the position it is in after the introductory text is read until it has completed an entire 260 rotation cycle. This puts the room back into the original configuration the PCs briefly observed when they entered the mini-dungeon with all four doors revealed. In math terms, this is because the lowest common denominator between 20, 13, 5, and 4 — the number of gears associated with each gear room — is 260. In that configuration, the smaller gear rooms are aligned with the correct figures to unlock the exit door: Chicchan, Oc, and Ahau (deities 5, 10, and 20 respectively). If the PCs over-rotate, then the cycle repeats, requiring another 260-based cycle to get into the correct configuration.

Clever PCs working through the solution to the puzzle may hit upon the idea that they can encounter and retrieve the jade figurines required to unlock the exit door after fewer rotations, or without having to visit all three rooms. This is because Chicchan, Oc, and Ahau all line up with the smaller gear rooms multiple times during the complete 260 turn cycle. For example, as shown on the table for location A-3, all three required figurines, 5, 10, and 20, can be retrieved after as few as 20 rotations. This could result in a less difficult set of encounters for the PCs.

While the exit door is always visible, it can only be unlocked once every 260 rotations. To unlock it, the PCs must place the jade figurines of Chicchan, Oc, and Ahau, in any order, into the recesses in the door. Once placed, the figurines vanish and the door swings open. Placing any combination of the incorrect figurines in the door or trying to unlock the door before 260 rotations causes the main gear room to jerk and quickly rotate a random 1d50 number of spaces, throwing the PCs against the walls and pinning them with centrifugal force (2d6 damage, DC 12 Ref save for half).

Leaving the dungeon with any of the jade figurines offends the gods of this place and the PC is cursed per the deity description table. Any attempts to remove the curse such as via a remove curse spell also negate the figurines' boon and renders it inert.

# BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE PUNAR



**So**, this is the gist of the story. When you tell it, change anything you can't believe. If you don't believe it, those you tell it to won't believe it either... So spare them the eyerolls.

Fast Jack and Tophat Charlie went to get Charlie's main, Other Molly, out of lockup. The Lords of Deepwater were there, too, buying folks out of prison for some ugly purpose or other. They tried to take some woman, but another woman called Grace was there to pay off her bond, so there was a scuffle with no way this Grace could stand up to The Lords gang. Jack and Charlie chimed in, and in the dust-up the Lords took Other Molly instead of Grace's friend.

Jack and Charlie got bloodied up bad, so they and this Grace all trooped over to the Iron Boot tap house to round up the gang. Whoever they can find at the tap house is expected to head over to the Lords' territory in the little favela of Punjar and teach the Lords something and get Other Molly back. Because you don't mess with Jack or Charlie or anyone from the Iron Boot, and if anyone from the tap house says they've got someone's back, that's everyone who's got their back.

If you're with me so far, this is the set up for your low-Level adventure, or even Zero-Level Funnel. Don't sweat having to wing some of it. Pitch in any ideas that twist your buttons.

*[For insight into running the scenario, check out The Goodman Games Forums, specifically: Board index » DCC RPG » DCC RPG Play-By-Post » Big Trouble In Little Punjar – (RAPID URBAN FUNNEL PbP).]*

## ARRIVAL IN LITTLE FAVELA

The place is all stirred up with a giant funeral procession weaving through the streets. It's like New Year's Eve, Independence Day and a NOLA Second Line, all rolled into one uber-bombastic thing. As the PCs search for the hideout of The Lords of Deepwater, they are challenged by gang members who take their presence as an affront to the funeral, and who will literally kick them out of the area. Use assorted Bandit stats from the Rulebook, and maybe an assassin, if you like. The thing is, rival gangs dog-pile on, fighting the first gang and then each other until it's just a mess, and who knows who's against or for whom...

During that, the heavily-enameled casket of the funeral should enter the region of the street fight. If the PCs don't make tactical use of this, shame on them. If need be, one of the gang members cracks the coffin open in some grandiose maneuver, and the crowd all flees rapidly. The dead sorcerer rises, blue fire in his eye sockets and a oily black snake where his tongue should be... He starts blasting gang members with purple lightning bolts and they die instantly, partly from fear (+4 to hit, damage 1d6+1d8 from fear). The PCs have no idea who this guy is, so they suffer no fear damage.

Abruptly, a figure from the fleeing crowd grabs one of the PCs by the arm, and will attempt to lead the PCs away. Every line of his face screams that they'll die if they don't leave now. He knows stuff about the sorcerer.

Make it a restaurant or flop house or the back of a pawn shop where this dude, Ninnim, leads everyone to hide out\*.

Ninnim explains that the sorcerer is Oll Zen, said to be from the dawn of time. He 'dies' every 10-20 years and spends a year in the grave before resuming his life. He's got his fingers in multiple pies here in the Little Favela, running things quietly through fear of his sorcery. This is why the funeral was like a party – there was going to be a year without fear... Ninnim knows that Oll Zen's headquarters is located in the center of the favela, hidden by magic, but now that the PCs have seen Oll Zen's face, they can see through the magics that hide his headquarters. Oll Zen is cursed to both live and die at the same time, thus his crazy life-cycle; while living he is always dying, and in death comes back to life. He can break the curse by marrying a woman with one green eye and one blue eye – such as Other Molly.

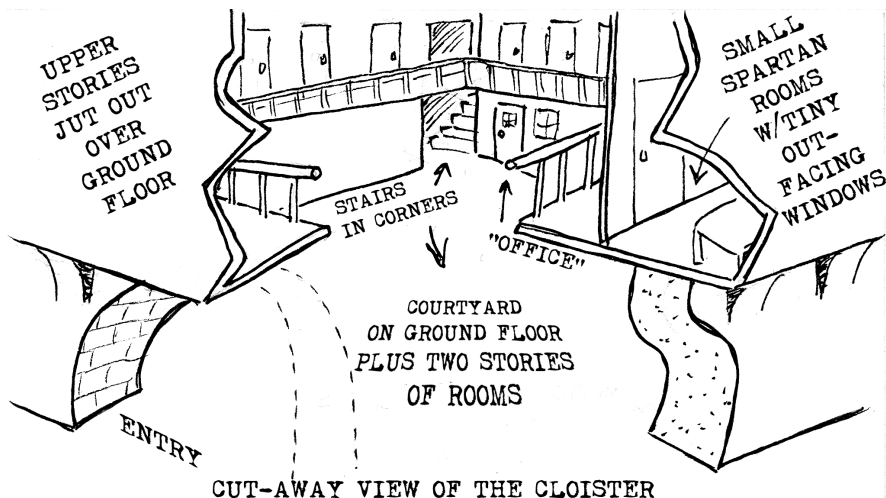
If getting the story about Other Molly, Ninnim expects she is likely held at The Cloister, the sort of place where you can rent someone's company for a bit (for maybe two bits). This is one of Oll Zen's operations, overseen by the Lords of Deepwater.

## THE CLOISTER

Other Molly is not here, but there are clear signs that she has been here (distinctive items of clothing, a pendant, what have you, left behind). The PCs will probably either be sneaking in or assaulting the place. An assault reveals that the ladies who run the place are trained to lethally defend it if need be. A few of the Lords are always around, too.

Skulking can turn up that Other Molly was here – and if this is part of campaign play or a Funnel starting a campaign, it can also turn up individuals (barristers, city officers, viziers) who might want their presence kept private, giving the PCs some interesting relationships to play on later. Skulking could also erupt in mayhem, if the skulkers are sloppy.

In the office for the place, the Matron has a set of keys, given to her for safe keeping. They open the important doors within Oll Zen's Headquarters, but she can't say which keys go to which doors.



## OLL ZEN'S HEADQUARTERS

This is a huge building hidden in the center of the favela. There are five major areas of Oll Zen's headquarters that are most relevant. Please invent other areas as logic and your needs demand. Each of the major areas is defended by one of Oll Zen's special guards who have magical powers. They block the path to the Banquet Hall where the wedding is taking place right now.

• • **ENTRY WAY** • • This long hallway leading to the main doors into Oll Zen's sanctum is guarded by the first of his trained assassins. When in melee, he extends his neck to about 2.5' in length and it becomes as hard as iron. This adds 1 point to his AC as he uses it like a shield. Each further round, he can transform one other limb into a head with a similar iron neck (and an additional +1 to AC), or give up an Action Die to transform an additional limb, eventually becoming a flying starfish thing of iron necks and biting heads.

## He Of The Many Iron Necks

Init +4; Melee punch/kick/bite +3 (1d6+1); Ranged throwing stars +2 (1d4/1d10); AC 13+; HD 3d8+8; MV 40, fly 30; Act special; SP -; Fort +5; Ref +4; Will +2; AL C

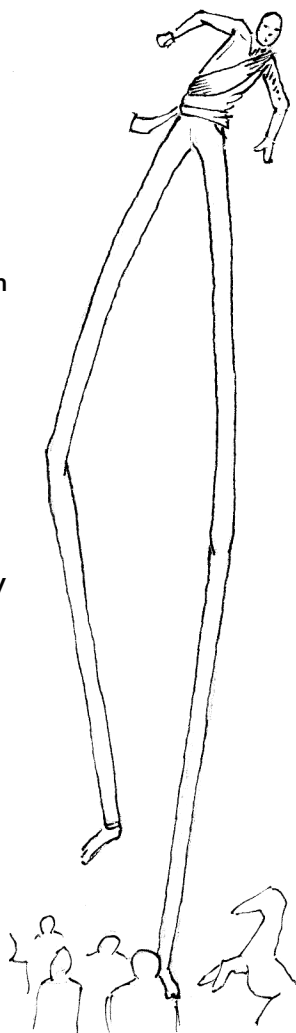
Starting with 1d20 Action Die, as iron necks are added Action Dice progress as follows: 1 iron neck = 1d20 +1d14, 2 iron necks = 1d20 +1d16 +1d14, 3 necks = 1d20 +2d16 +1d14, 4 necks 1d20 +2d16 +2d14, 5 necks = 2d20 +2d16 +2d14. Don't forget that Action Dice can be used for movement.

• • **ART HALL** • • The vast room is full of statuary of all sorts, standing warriors, ferocious animals on plinths, mythical beasts, strange abstractions, etc. At the far end of the room, standing motionless and easily mistaken for a statue is another of Oll Zen's special guards. Abruptly, he leaps into the air, except he's not leaping — his legs stretch to ridiculous length! He starts running around the room, with each foot on top of a statue. He has a small crossbow, which he can fire every other round from on high. He can also knock over a statue he is standing atop onto a PC.

## Longstrider, Baddy Long-Legs, The Long-Limbed

Init +0; Melee kick statue +2 (1d10); Ranged crossbow +1 (1d4); AC 16/18; HD 3d8+6; MV 30; Act 1d20/3d16; SP -; Fort +1; Ref +6; Will +2; AL C

When stretched out, he has 3d16 Action Dice, instead of the regular 1d20 Action Die. His elevated position and ridiculous flexibility give him the higher AC when stretched out. If stretched and standing on the ground among the statues, he'd be lowered to a 14 AC, having to dance around all the statues, standing or fallen.





• • **STORE ROOM** • • This room houses huge amounts of non-perishable foods, including four absolutely gigantic casks of imported alcohol for the celebration after the wedding. In order to prevent the PCs from advancing, the guard here will shatter the casks causing the alcohol to flood the room to a depth of over 10'. He can hold his breath indefinitely and fight underwater without any

hindrance. He has blades mounted on his forearms, like fins. PCs' underwater: movement is halved, lose Agility bonus to AC and Reflex, and attacks and skills step down the dice chain, as the Judge sees fit.

### **Beeracuda, The Never-Breathing Street Shark**

Init +2; Melee arm blade +2 (1d6); AC 15; HD 3d8+4; MV 30, swim 30; Act 1d20; SP no need to breathe; Fort +6; Ref +2; Will +2; AL C

The exit from this room leads via stairs down to:

• • **CEREMONIAL ROOM** • • Not a small chamber, this is where ceremonial clothing is donned by large numbers of Oll Zen's organization, for dark worship and other twisted fetes. As the alcohol flows in ankle deep and the sodden PCs stumble in, the guard here sets the alcohol on fire. It burns at a low temp, doing only 1 hp damage per round after the first round of exposure. The guard is immune to the effects of all fires. NB: the ceremonial clothing present can possibly be used to smother the flames on someone, or limit the effects of fire in other ways.



### **Flaming Moe, The Fireproof**

Init +3; Melee kick +2 (1d7); Ranged blowgun +2 (1d4+poison); AC 17; HD 3d8+2; MV 30; Act 2d20+1d16; SP flame immunity; Fort +4; Ref +4; Will +4; AL C

The poison requires a DC 13 Fort Save, or else the target falls unconscious for 1d4 rounds.

## • • OLL ZEN'S BANQUET HALL • •

Why the hell not? As the PCs enter, Oll Zen is saying his "I do" and a cutthroat with a big sword is standing by to make Other Molly say hers. A dozen or more gang members are in attendance (adjust numbers and severity for the circumstances).

I'm just going to assume the PCs launch into some kind of assault now. Before they can reach Other Molly, she's forced to say her vows; they are slurred as if she's been drugged. Oll Zen laughs hysterically as she says them and once she's done he is out of his flipping gourd: "Jahahajajjhaha! Now! Now for the BOON! 800 years of youthful LIFE!!" He whips out a wicked knife and has Other Molly carried to a table so he can cut out her heart.

Let chaos ensue.

The special guard here can hold massive amounts of liquid in his mouth, his head swelling proportionately. He can suck up the entirety of the spirits present in a hot-tub-sized punch bowl in 2 rounds.

### **Beerspitter, The Giant Cheeked**

Init +6; Melee kick +0 (1d5); Ranged jet of spit +4 (1d8); AC 16; HD 2d8+10; MV 30; Act 2d20; SP endless spit; Fort +6; Ref +4; Will +4; AL C

### **OLL ZEN**

Init +7; Melee wicked dagger +3 (2d4); Ranged lightning bolt +4 (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8+8; MV 30; Act 1d20+1d16+1d14; SP -; Fort +8; Ref +9; Will +10; AL C

Oll Zen will attempt escape once near half hit points. The marriage means he is no longer dying-and-living at the same time, and can make his attempt at 800 years of life again, elsewhere.

THUS ENDS BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE PUNJAR

— Special Thanks to ProdigalWilliam, jeff c, and Fenris Ulfhamr  
*The only original Iron Freebooters!*

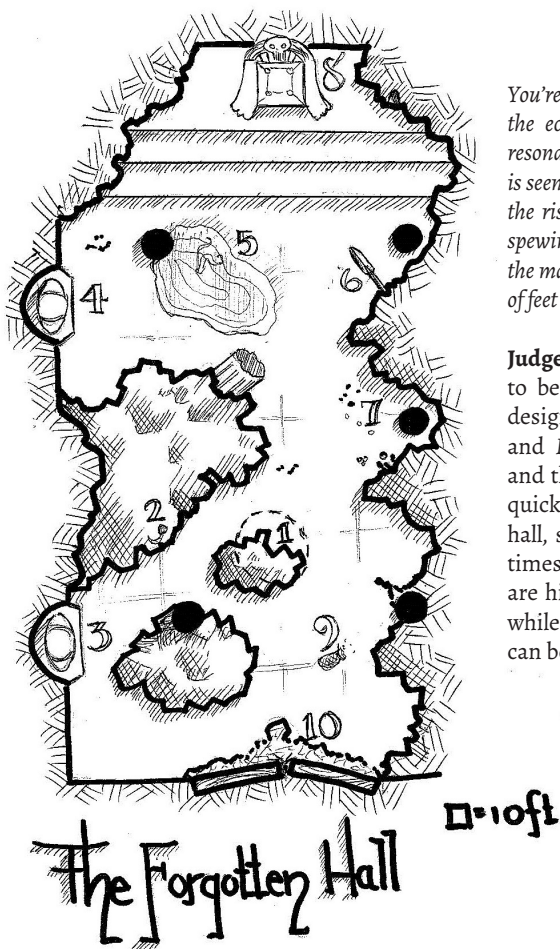
# The FORGOTTEN HALL

A cyclopean ruin awaits brave adventurers.

by R.S. TILTON

*You're woken by a massive rumbling, and the echo of of large stones crashing below resonates through the ground. A cloud of dust is seen over a nearby hillock. Your party crests the rise to see a sinkhole as wide as a tower spewing dust from it. As you drop a torch into the massive sinkhole, you see it drop hundreds of feet to the polished marble floor below.*

**Judge's Notes:** This one-page is designed to be different every time; as such it's designed to use the *Monster Alphabet (MA)* and *Dungeon Alphabet (DA)* extensively, and the encounter location notes are for quick reference. This is an ancient titan hall, so everything found within is 10-15 times normal size. The mounds of rubble are hills reaching up to 80' in height, so while this appears to be a single room, it can be treated as an entire dungeon.





1. **The Sinkhole:** 30' in width
  2. **Den:** The den of a large rodent monster. (Use *T* is for Tail and *U* is for Unexpected. **MA-66 & 67**)
  3. **Titanic Statue:** 100' tall (Use *S* is for Statue **DA-34**)
  4. **Titanic Statue:** 100' tall (Use *S* is for Statue **DA-34**)
  5. **The Pool:** The floor sunk in this location and the pool is 10'-15' deep, hiding a tentacled horror. (Use *A* is for Aquatic **MA-7**)
  6. **The Silver Spear:** A massive spear lies in the rubble, its 12' long silver head attached to a steel shaft. The lack of tarnish suggests its magical nature.
  7. **Piles of Black and Green:** Large tarnished copper and silver coins lie untouched. Each pile contains hundreds of coins — the problem is moving them.
  8. **The Throne:** 12' high steps lead to the 50' tall throne, taking the form of a skull with jeweled eyes. (*J* is for Jewels. **DA-18, 19**)
  9. **The Coin Purse:** Home of Vermin or a Serpent. (Use *T* is for Tail or *V* is for Vermin **MA 66** or **DA-38**)
  10. **The Grand Portal:** What lies beyond the grand portal? (Use *I* is for Insectoid and *C* is for Crossbreed. **MA-20 & 36**) An ancient inscription marks the portal. (*I* is for Inscription **DA-16**)
- Feel free to add *G* is for Giant traits (**MA-32**) to any monsters as well.

**Lore:** This was the audience chamber of the titan Vo Kendjahl over a thousand years ago. The titans were driven from the area by a cadre of wizards working using mighty earth magics to summon earthquakes and magma. The hall withstood the brunt of the attacks, but when the column collapsed, Vo Kendjahl knew his time on these shores was done.

# CRAWLING THROUGH a HELL of ONE'S OWN MAKING

A DCC “Second Chance” Meta-Encounter.

by **STEVE BEAN**



Unlike recent pen-and-paper RPGs in which character death is so unlikely as to be a practical impossibility, DCC embraces an old school ethos where death is a constant threat. But DCC owes its ethos to more than old school games — it is steeped in the lore of Appendix N. In Appendix N, the mythology that informed it, and in much of the modern fantasy literature it inspired, death is not just a physical condition or transformation of the spirit, it is a geographical location, a place, whether it be the Hades of ancient Greece, the Shadowland of Newhon or the Dragaeran Hall of Judgment.

DCCers can journey to the realms of the dead in DCC #74: *Blades against Death*, but have to be 4th level and complete a sizeable pre-quest to face off against death in Harley Stroh's adventure. So this article offers a different take, a lands of the dead “meta-encounter” that can inserted into almost any adventure and scaled to any level. The judge can make this encounter omni-present within an adventure, giving PCs an opportunity to try to rescue their comrades from death — if they're willing to face the risks.

In this meta-encounter, the lands of the dead are a mystical realm that borders the mortal world anywhere and everywhere. To use this meta-encounter in an adventure, choose a feature that defines the boundary between the mortal realm and the lands — the table below offers options for dungeon/urban and outdoor settings. Give the feature a distinctive look or feeling whenever it appears in your adventure — this identifies the feature as a gateway to the land of the dead. PCs should be able to see the shades of the dead on the other side of any boundary feature that doesn't completely block line of sight to the lands on the other side.

DEADLANDS BOUNDARY TABLE		
D11	DUNGEON OR URBAN SETTING	OUTDOOR SETTING
1	Well or cistern	Pool
2	Crypt	Cave
3	Narrow alley or column-lined corridor	Slot Canyon
4	Smoking braziers or censers	Mists
5	Rune-carved frieze	Toadstool fairy ring
6	Archway	A stone henge or a hollow in a large tree
7	Far side of an architectural feature: past the spray of a fountain, in the shadows behind a statue, etc.	Far side of a landmark: a skull-shaped boulder, stone wall, cairn, ruin, a tree split by lightning, etc.
8	Stairway up or down	Cliff, escarpment or waterfall
9	Amphitheater	Secluded swale or small valley between knolls
10	Hovel (urban) or monk's cell (dungeon)	Hermit's shelter
11	Other side of a curtain or through a tapestry	A tree line or ring of trees different from

The lands are populated by the dead in the form of shades – semi-corporeal versions of individuals' living selves. Shades have physical substance if touched by another but cannot affect the corporeal world themselves. In the lands of the dead, shades are stuck in a fugue state, staring off into oblivion because they are trapped in a “hell of their own making.” They suffer the very torment that they most dreaded when alive.

Anyone who dies, including PCs, becomes a shade in the lands of the dead. The judge should instruct the players of dead PCs to secretly describe the torment that his or her shade is suffering. The judge then secretly assigns an ability to that torment that best fits with nature of the torment, i.e. the ability required to best endure it. For example, if the torment is an endless trek through a blazing desert, the judge would assign Stamina or if the torment is a battle against an infinite horde of goblins, the judge would assign Strength.

The table below provides examples of torments and identifies the ability assigned to them. This table can be used to randomly determine a torment if the judge needs to speed up play or if a player has difficulty coming up with their own idea for a torment on the spot. Under no circumstances should the judge allow a player to choose a torment knowing the attached ability.

## TORMENT TABLE

ROLL A D3 AND A D5	NATURE OF TORMENT	ABILITY CHECK
<b>1 ON D3</b>		
1 on d5	The consignee is in a room with their loved ones with a single door that opens inwards. On the other side of that door is some monster that terrifies the consignee. Only by holding the door closed can the consigned keep their loved ones from being killed, but the monster is slowly forcing its way in. Each time the consignee's strength is about to falter, the monster backs away from the door, allowing the briefest of respite.	Strength
2 on d5	The consignee believes that they can escape by building a tower of stones and climbing it out of the lands. But each time they try to make it high enough, the tower of stones topples over.	Agility
3 on d5	The consignee believes that they have been buried alive and endlessly tries to claw their way out of the grave while slowly suffocating.	Stamina
4 on d5	The consignee sees their loved ones in their mind's eye and must watch them grow old, suffer and die without them, over and over, each lifespan completing within minutes.	Personality
5 on d5	The consignee knows that they can leave the Lands if they can successfully navigate a labyrinth. Each time they find the exit, it leads to a new labyrinth.	Intelligence
<b>2 ON D3</b>		
1 on d5	The consignee is suspended in a huge spider web. They desperately try to wrench free of the tough, sticky strands. Each time the web's giant arachnid inhabitant is about to feed on the consignee, they get close enough to breaking free that the spider must pause and spin more webbing to keep the consignee from escaping.	Strength
2 on d5	The consignee is trapped in a tomb. Ghosts of the many dead interred there are constantly appearing out of thin air. If the consignee fails to avoid their lunges, the apparitions suck a small portion of life energy out of the consignee. The sensation is soul-wracking.	Agility
3 on d5	The consignee must inscribe the statement "I will never question the ultimate rulings of the judge" on rows of fresh clay tablets that stretches over the horizon.	Stamina
4 on d5	The consigned is shipwrecked in the middle of a sargasso sea while the most banal individual they know (e.g. in-law, parent, shrewish spouse, droning clergy-person) endlessly lectures the consignee on how they should have steered their boat differently to avoid calamity.	Personality
5 on d5	A god-like figure agrees to release the consignee from the lands if they compose a sublime ode of atonement. However, each time they feel close to finishing a stanza, the consignee simply cannot recall the one word that would perfect the poetics of the composition.	Intelligence

TABLE CONTINUES >

## TORMENT TABLE (CONTINUED)

ROLL A D3 AND A D5	NATURE OF TORMENT	ABILITY CHECK
<b>3 ON D3</b>		
<b>1 on d5</b>	A huge stone is slowly crushing one of the consignee's body parts (e.g. arm, leg, head, groin. They can lift the stone enough to relieve some of the pressure but cannot maintain the effort to suspend it for long. Eventually, the stone crushes the body part and the consignee blacks out, only to awaken with the stone pressing down on a different body part.	Strength
<b>2 on d5</b>	The consignee is trapped inside a huge clockwork. Razor sharp blades protrude from endlessly complex machinery and constantly swing at the consignee from all angles. If the consignee fails to avoid a blade, it slices off a thin layer of flesh.	Agility
<b>3 on d5</b>	The consignee is trapped naked in a large, perforated metal sphere. The sphere rolls about in an endless bed of hot coals. If the consignee does not keep the sphere moving, the surface touching the bed quickly heats up and delivers searing burns to parts of their body.	Stamina
<b>4 on d5</b>	The consignee experiences falling to their death from a great height, but the shock of hitting the ground startles them awake – it was just a dream. But each time they start awake, it causes the consignee to fall again for they were asleep on a ledge, a rooftop, in a tree, etc.	Personality
<b>5 on d5</b>	The consignee knows that all beings and all objects have the ability to communicate. They also understand that all things know a route out of the lands. The consignee receives a continuous stream of visitors that speak in excruciatingly painful sounds (e.g. the screech of a rusty gear, a dripping spigot, a chirping cricket) but each time the consignee has listened long enough to be on the verge of understanding a visitor, it leaves and is replaced by something new.	Intelligence

However, all is not lost when a dead PC is consigned to the lands of the dead. Still-living PCs can enter the lands and attempt to rescue their comrade's shade and return them to life. Entering the lands is easy: once the PCs have identified the feature that marks the boundary between the mortal world and the lands, they simply cross the boundary with the intention of passing between worlds. Living PCs can see the mortal world from anywhere just inside the border of the lands of the dead and can re-enter it with a successful Will save against a DC adjusted for the adventure challenge level (see the table below).

Rescuing comrades from the lands is a more difficult matter. It is done by one or more PCs aiding a shade's own continuous effort to free itself from its torment. One attempt to aid a shade may be performed each round. Any number of PCs can lend aid this way by making physical contact with a shade and declaring their intention to lend assistance. This grants the shade an ability check using the ability associated with its torment. The roll is modified by the modifier of the ability score the shade possessed when it was still alive, also adding the modifiers of any PCs lending aid. The table below shows the DC of the ability check, by adventure level:

## ABILITY CHECK TABLE

LEVEL	ABILITY CHECK DC	WILL SAVE DC TO RE-ENTER THE MORTAL WORLD
0	15	10
1	16	11
2	18	12
3	20	13
4	23	15
5	25	18

**Example:** Valhallo, a zero-level elven artisan, and Laurent, a zero-level caravan guard, enter the lands to try to rescue the shade of Loderil, a zero-level elven navigator, from a torment associated with Intelligence. Valhallo grabs the shoulder of Loderil's shade and Laurent joins Valhallo in lending aid. The three PC's Intelligences of 14, 8 and 12 correspond to modifiers of +1, -1 and 0, respectively, yielding a net modifier of zero. This means that Loderil's player will make a DC 15 Intelligence check with no modifier.

Before the roll is made, one PC lending aid may use a technique similar to spellburn called "lifeburn" to improve the shade's chances of freeing itself from torment. Only the PC who first chooses to lend aid or who declares themselves the lead aide can lifeburn. Before the ability check is rolled, that PC may burn as many points as they wish from one or more of their abilities. Every two points lifeburned from ability scores adds a cumulative +1 bonus to the shade's ability check roll. Ability points that are lifeburned are deducted from the PC's ability score and the stats they influence such as saving throws, hit points, etc. are reduced accordingly. Lifeburned ability scores cannot be restored by any normal or magical means within the lands without help from a sufficiently powerful divinity or patron. Lifeburn can be restored after a PC returns to the mortal world in accordance with a judge's preference via normal healing or magical means. Lifeburned luck is not restored.

If the ability check succeeds, the shade is restored to life in the subsequent round, regaining full hit points and with ability scores identical to what they were immediately before the PC died. If the ability check fails, all PCs aiding the shade permanently lose one point from the ability associated with the shade's torment (at the judge's discretion they may be restored in the mortal world by magical means, such as *Lay on Hands*). If any still-living PC's ability scores drops below three while in the lands, that PC becomes a shade.

If the judge wants to make rescuing fallen comrades from the lands even more difficult, shades need not be the only denizens of the lands of dead. After all, something has to maintain the lands, patrol its borders, keep watch over its shades, etc. Judges can get as creative as they like in selecting challenge level-appropriate monsters to "staff" the lands of the dead. Ghosts could be the remnants of shades whose will, spirit or soul broke under the strain of endless torment. The lands of the dead might need carrion eaters in the form of vultures, crows, insect swarms or decomposing oozes. Along the lines of the terracotta army of the first Emperor of China, the lands might be served by constructs such as iron

shadows. Whether you decide that they are guided by the ethos of Law, Neutrality of Chaos, the lands could be populated by primal servants of its alignment; serpent men and hollow ones might be interesting base creatures to modify into primal servants. Finally, who is to say that the spirit or soul might not be fractured by the strain of death and crossing over the boundary from the mortal world. This could result in one or more extra-dimensional analogues of each of the deceased roaming the lands. Any living being slain in combat in the lands of the dead immediately becomes a shade consigned to endless torment.

But in addition to the myriad risks, there could be great rewards - beyond rescuing a fallen comrade — that come from a foray into the lands of the dead. After all, great heroes who have fallen in battle often carry their weapons with them in death, and the shades of powerful wizards restored to life might, out of gratitude, share their deepest lore...



# BEYOND

## THE PORTAL UNDER THE STARS

*A Post-Portal Under The Stars Toolkit*

*"They say a dryad has been seen in the forests east of here..."*

### **The Forest Of the Dryad**

This should rightfully be a forest the PCs have never ventured into before, a place where they can't possibly know what to expect... Here are some notions for making that palpable:

1. The scale of the place shifts as one gets deeper and deeper into it, as if one is shrinking. But that can't be true — can it?
2. Time stands still. The further into the forest, the deeper the sense of time losing meaning. It quickly seems like days must have passed, though there's been no need to eat or sleep.
3. The colors in the forest intensify. The colors are bleeding directly into your brain. They are so intense that when you leave, the rest of the world is in greyscale for a week.
4. After the PCs leave the forest, they dream about it intensely for a week, as if every moment they are asleep is spent in joyous contemplation of the place.

Throw in whatever "forest dangers" suit your campaign, your world, your recent sessions, or your mood. Some ideas follow:

1. A saber-tooth tiger or similar 'extinct/prehistoric' beast appropriate to the setting (use the owlbear's stats if others are not handy).
2. The floor of the forest itself folds around the party, ensnaring them.



('grab' Reflex DC 14 (1d3), Str 18, AC 8, HD 12d12, MV -, SV +0, AL N; missing the plant carries risk of hitting an ally, 2-in-5).

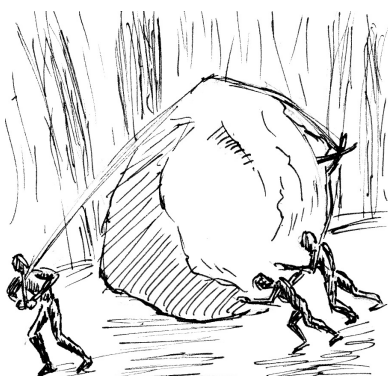
3. A pit trap set by bunnies and birds with human intelligence.
4. A mighty, roaring river splits the forest. Care, expertise and/or Luck will be needed to cross it.
5. A false dryad (from [appendixm.blogspot.com](http://appendixm.blogspot.com))
6. "The Umber Woods" entry in the One Page Dungeon Contest 2016 has a slew of ideas (available online at [onepagedungeon.info](http://onepagedungeon.info)).

The heart of this segment of the scenario is this: They will find that to achieve their goal, they must be ready to see the world and themselves in a new light...

The dryad that guards the deepest groves in these woods will challenge the PCs, demanding in a melodious, multi-toned voice to know their purpose. If they prevaricate, she will harry them until they relent and explain themselves.

Once they are honest, she will explain how to find a sacred spot in this wood. Only after visiting that spot will they be worthy of her direct help. This could be as simple as one member of the party reaching that spot, or it may be her intention that they *all* attain that locale and fulfill it's requirements. Follow your gut on that one. To reach the place requires great physical exertion in the form of such things as:

1. Scaling a rocky outcropping to gain the sacred spot (three successful climb checks DC 16, proper equipment drops the DC by 1d3).



2. A boulder must be moved to gain access. This is a Str-check DC 17 (for every point the DC is missed, 1 hp may be spent to raise the result to a success; those muscles will heal eventually).

3. Clearing a tunnel through a massive bulwark of dirt. If you just go over it, you're not in the right place. If you clear the tunnel of debris, it takes you to the exact

same physical spot, but it now looks as described below. Clearing the debris will take hours of work in the form of 4 successful DC 16 Stamina checks, each check representing an hour's work.

The sacred point is hidden in the densest growth of trees, but is effused with bright, warm light. An idea occurs to the visitors, forming as words in their heads, that they should express who they are **now**, who it is that they have become. Something has changed within them recently, and they must acknowledge it to gain the blessing of the grove.

This need not be a couch session, Dr. Freud. One so inclined could simply say aloud that they were a turnip farmer, but their path is broader now and they study wizardry... Or they can get highfalutin and poetic, if they choose. But describing that basic shift from Zero to 1st Level character aloud is the essence of what is expected of them, and the point would be to have the player state it however they wish to state it. If it is a bit of a struggle to get them to that idea, that's fine and even appropriate.

Returning from the sacred point, the dryad can guide them into collecting the wood they need for their ritual.

*This segment of the toolkit uses the "True Dryad" from the Appendix M Blog. In the interests of space, the full entry is not repeated, since it is readily available. A shortened version is as follows:*

## **TRUE DRYAD**

Init +5; Ranged harrowing +8 (1d6; line-of-sight); AC 19; HD 4d6+4; MV fly 60; Act 1d20; SP fleeting, limited telepathy; Fort +6; Ref +6; Will +8; AL N

If mortals enter a dryad's wood with malice or mischief in their hearts, the dryad can sense it. She will aim to intercept the intruders and harry them into leaving. Dryads can recall the pain of any who have suffered in their groves, and call that echo to harrow intruders, inflicting the full intensity of the original pain and causing hp damage. This damage is negated after the target leaves the dryad's woods. Any being reduced to zero hit points in this way will enter a coma, not awakening until the dryad allows them, or until they have been removed from the woods.

Targeting a dryad with arrow, stone or spell is no easy feat. Anyone trying to attack a dryad, or even someone merely attempting to speak to one, will have to make a DC 18 ability check to find the dryad, either Intelligence-based, Luck-based, or as adjudicated otherwise by the Judge to fit the specific situation.

The wood of trees from within a dryad's protection can be used for special purposes by those who know how to unlock their unique properties. A dryad may make a bargain with collectors seeking such samples; she may allow the taking of such things, if the collector promises to right a wrong previously inflicted in her grove. Being far from human, the only way the dryad has to help a collector do such a thing is to use her harrowing power to bring the memories to the collector, painful though they will be... And she can only hope that the collector may glean enough clues from such memories to champion the subject of the wrongdoing....

*"...ignite it with the spark of a living fire..."*

## The Spark Of Living Fire

Finding fire is not a problem. Imbuing that fire with *life* — now *that's* a problem.

It may take some time to discover how to do this. You may wish to run other adventures while the party is keeping their ears open for some clue on how to bring a fire to *life*.

Where does the information ultimately come from...?

1. A stone tablet dredged up from the bottom of the sea, from amid some sunken ruins. That's either from an incident the PCs were involved in directly, or part of a haul of some other entity: a man searching for clues to the whereabouts of his missing family, or pirates searching for lost gold, or fishermen building a wall just under the surface of the water to confound a fishing village.



2. A star-traveller shares the information with the PCs. The luminescent creature is benevolent, but brings sad tidings that others of their kind are spreading out along the starways, intent on conquest. When asking about the PCs' endeavors in order to get to know them, if they bring up the quest for living fire, the star-traveller

answers as if it was as obvious as the bifurcated oxygen-collection apparatus centered on their rather peculiar brain-boxes.

3. If any of the PCs are getting obsessed with trying to figure it out, it comes to them in a dream: They open a drawer in their abdomen and take out a tiny jewel. They place the jewel in an empty candle holder and watch it rise up to become an out-sized candle with a towering flame atop it. The flame makes them warm and glows with a pleasant amber light. [GM Fun: *Who sent this dream?*]
4. An ancient Order holds the secret. They will not easily share it with those who simply ask. They may require that someone of the party join the Order, or fulfill some quest for the Order before the secret can be shared.
5. A PCs patron may have the answer, but require some duty or task be performed before they share it. Make your Wizard or Elf jump through hoops before they are told.

The secret is based on the idea that to create life, one must give up a part of their own life to do so. The artist gives up years to perfecting techniques that give their creations life beyond the artist's own life span. Parents give up years to provide for their children. Doctor's train for years and keep training in order to preserve life. And so to give true life to that which does not have it, a PC must give up a part of their own life.

There is an apparatus described in the above source that the PCs can build which makes this possible. It costs 5d30x10 gold to build, and permanently takes a point from a random attribute (not including Luck). If the PCs want to be able to choose which attribute is permanently drained, it takes an additional 5d30x10 gold. Components for the apparatus may include, any or all of the following:

1. The freshly drawn blood of a rare (but not unique) creature. The blood can be no older than 2d24x10 minutes when used for the life-giving process.
2. A previously unheard of material. It exists in a single location in the world, or in an extra-spacial dimension.
3. Precious metals owned by a citizen of the Realm of Faerie, a Lord of the Elflands, a Prince in the Domain of the Trollkings, or the

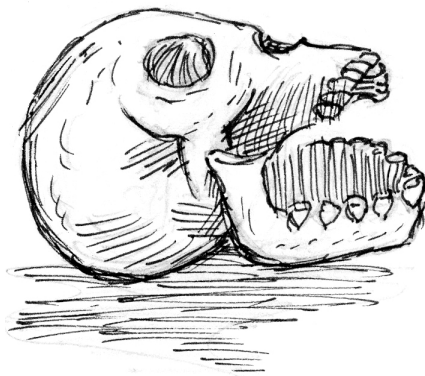
Demesne of the Eldest Un-living. The metals must not stop being the owner's rightful property.

#### 4. The skull of a genius.

Once the PCs have the living fire, they must keep it burning until they can set up the copper brazier with the wood from the dryad's grove. Combining these elements reveals the location of the other half of the rod, as described in Portal Under the Stars.

What happens when the other half of the rod is discovered and joined together with the first half? Well... that's another story for another time...

— bygrinstow



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Lucky sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Align: \_\_\_\_\_

Str: \_\_\_\_\_

Agi: \_\_\_\_\_

Sta: \_\_\_\_\_

Per: \_\_\_\_\_

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Int: \_\_\_\_\_

Speed: \_\_\_\_\_

GP: \_\_\_\_\_

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Init: \_\_\_\_\_

XP: \_\_\_\_\_

CP: \_\_\_\_\_

PP: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

AC

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CURRENT

4w



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

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GP: \_\_\_\_\_

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Other: \_\_\_\_\_

AC

HP

CURRENT

4w



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

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XP: \_\_\_\_\_

CP: \_\_\_\_\_

PP: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

AC

HP

CURRENT

4w



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