

MZA2

# CURSE OF ZARZUMOTL



A Maztican Adventure for Levels 4-6

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## ABOUT

This book is the second adventure in the Maztican series adventures which are tagged with *MZA*.

This adventure is inspired by **B4 The Lost City** by *Tom Moldvay*, but is designed for a Maztica campaign. The adventure is easily convertible to any setting, and only truly requires a desert that has the potential to conceal an extensive underdark.

It is a challenging adventure for four 4th to 6th level characters, but is easily adjusted upwards or downwards. The final encounter is CR 11, though it is optional, so the PCs might want to come back for it after achieving additional levels.

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# THE CURSE OF ZARZUMOTL

Deep in the sands a heroic warrior led his people to salvation, but at a dire cost to his own soul. Now a terrible beast, he still retains rulership deep underground in a hidden city, but his monstrous nature is costing his charges dearly. Insanity is taking hold of nearly everyone.

## INTRODUCTION

The Curse of Zarzumotl is an “old school” adventure in the True World Maztica Campaign setting and it is roughly designed for levels 4-6. Though the plot is complex and there is an overall goal for the players, in many ways The Curse of Zarzumotl is a basic dungeon crawl.

Many of the encounters here can be quite deadly if the adventurers are not careful and there are some encounters that only a fully rested, strategy minded party will be able to overcome. The DM should give the players plenty of opportunities to gather their resources between battles.

It is recommended that the players are awarded levels at key moments in the adventure, rather than at each encounter, particularly if they manage to avoid some of the battles. It is also necessary for the DM to have a good understanding of the events in the adventure before running it.

The Curse of Zarzumotl is set to begin in the desert city state known as Tukan (see **MZC1 The Maztica Campaign Setting for details**), but with slight alterations to the background, the adventure can be set to begin in any city of significant population in or near a desert.

## USING THIS BOOK

In order to run this adventure you will need **MZC1 The Maztican Campaign Guide** and **MZS1 Monsters of Maztica** which are both free supplements on DmsGuild. You also need the core 5e D&D books.

## BACKGROUND

Throughout history, life in the deserts of Maztica has long been considered difficult. The heat, the sandstorms, the creatures...

Normally, no sane person would ever want to live in such an inhospitable environment.

The ones with this belief however, have rarely taken into account the will of the folk of the True World. The desert dwarves for one, have not only survived in the desert, but have instead managed to thrive. Centuries ago, an event known as the Rockfire Disaster separated them from their Faerûnian kin and stranded them in the Maztican desert. The dwarves now dominate many parts of the desert.

The men and women of the fledgling city-state Tukan have also exploded in population and influence since its founding. For over a century, these rugged folk have reaped the benefits of a bountiful lake and rivers supplemented with trade through the goods of the traveling merchants known as pochteca.

Not all is well in Tukan this year, however. It has been abnormally hot and dry (even for a desert) and the river and streams have in many parts been replaced with mud and baked clay.

Each year, in an event known as the *Flowering*, the folks of Tukan celebrate the city's founding. During this celebration, signs of real trouble started to appear compounding the effects of the drought.

The revelers began to notice that the sky was darkening in the east. It grew duskier over the next three days until finally, four days after the Flowering Celebration, chaos ensued.

A huge brush fire began tearing through a century worth of growth. The fires raged over the course of two days, jumping the city's walls and killing many who foolishly remained.

Most fled to the west, waiting out the inferno. Fortunately, the rains came from the south and two days of a steady downpour finally put out the wildfire. By this time, a significant portion of the city and many of its outlying farms were left in ruin. Displaced folk were taken in by relatives and friends or they fled to nearby dwarven settlements. Rumors soon spread that the orcs, trolls, ogres and the jagre of the Viperhand were stirring yet again.

The beasts had decided that Tukan was vulnerable, and they could raid the city like a flock of vultures descending upon a carcass. The entire contingent of Tukan's eagle and jaguar knights were dispatched to fend off these attacks, and though they eventually turned the raiders away, much damage had been wrought.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

Player characters may have recently heard that Tukan is having some difficulties this year and are in desperate need of adventurers for hire. If the PCs reach Tukan with the intent of finding this adventure, read them the following.

Times like these are terrible, but the inhabitants of Tukan are hardy, and the city will rebuild. Recovery will occur at a much quicker pace and with the loss of far less life with help from adventurers and this is a great opportunity for you to endear yourself to the local populace. The local dwarves are certainly friendly enough, but their small settlements could not long support the thousands of Tukan refugees.

North of Tukan across the great House of Tezca lays Nexal, the terrible home of the beasts of the Viperhand. Should one travel slightly west of north however, the cities and towns of Kolan can be found. The people of Tukan have traded with this nation for decades, and now they are willing to nearly empty their coffers in order to purchase enough goods for survival in the following year.

You are to be Tukan's emissaries. The Revered Counselor of Tukan has handed you a signed trade agreement that must be delivered to Kolan. This will open the way for a free flow of trade that should see Tukan through its most difficult days.

Your journey will only take 12 days before you reach the first major settlement and with a reward of 100 quills of gold dust each (500 gp) not accepting the offer almost seems foolish.

## STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The Revered Counselor of Tukan is an old Cleric of Qotal named Tuahemoc. Said to be a direct descendant of the eagle knight Poshtli, his rule of Tukan has been both just and filled with wisdom.

Under his command, the beasts have not caused any lasting damage in Tukan, but he would certainly like to stop their incessant raiding once and for all. Also, in his 40 years of service, the population has grown in leaps and bounds.

You may play out the meeting of your party with the Revered Counselor, but the offer is relatively straight forward and Tuahemoc does not haggle. He offers the signed trade agreement to the party with half pay and a guarantee of the rest upon their arrival in Kolan. The closest Kolan settlement is approximately 12 days through the desert and Kolan's Grand Pochteca awaits them there to finalize the agreement. At that point, Tuahemoc explains, the party is free to go their own way or they might ask to accompany the caravans that await them there back to Tukan. The Revered Counselor is sure that the Grand Pochteca would hire such obviously trustworthy caravan guards.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE HOUSE OF TEZCA

It is possible for the PCs to have an uneventful trip for the first few days in the House of Tezca, but it is not likely. For the first seven days, roll a 1d20 to see which of the following events occur.

None should be too difficult for the PCs to overcome, but with bad decision making some real damage can be done. The poison oasis and dwarf party can only be encountered once each. Reroll a 19 or 20 if they have already been encountered by the PCs.

| Roll 1d20 | Encounter    |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1-6       | No Event     |
| 7-10      | Itzamti      |
| 11-13     | Sinkhole     |
| 14-16     | Dust Storm   |
| 17-18     | Mirage       |
| 19        | Poison Oasis |
| 20        | Dwarf Party  |

**Itzamti.** Two hungry Maztican **itzamti** appear from the brush and attack. Aggressive, not terribly bright, and suffering from an overly harsh season, these creatures are willing to attack despite being obviously outnumbered.

**Sinkhole.** An underground cavern system causes a sinkhole to form under one of the player's feet. The player can make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) saving throw with a DC 13 to avoid being sucked into the gaping pit formed.

If the player fails the check, he will begin to suffocate as sand pours into his mouth and nostrils. Allies may assist the character by making a DC 13 Strength check and if others assist, the check gains advantage.

What's worse is that there are two **itzamti** lurking nearby that take advantage of the confusion. Treat the helpless player in the sinkhole as if they are restrained for this attack until freed.

Anyone assisting the player also cannot attack and suffers disadvantage when defending against an attack.

**Dust Storm.** Due to the particularly dry season, dust storms have been occurring with far more frequency than ever recorded (full blown sandstorms are occurring as well, see below). A dust storm will put out any fires, ruin liquids and foodstuffs that are left uncovered and can cause the players to become exhausted.

A dust storm can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours. This one is particularly nasty and goes for a full four hours. By the dust storm's conclusion, every player must make a DC 13 Constitution save or gain a level of exhaustion.

If a player rolls a 1, they gain 1d4 exhaustion levels instead.

**Mirage.** The desert sun can play terrible tricks on the eyes and brain. The PCs see a beautiful oasis and palace further into the desert. Let the player with the highest Wisdom make a Wisdom (Perception) check with a DC of 13 to determine if they think it is real or realize it is a mirage.

If the character believes it is real, the players can choose to ignore the illusion or try to investigate. If the PCs investigate, they automatically add another two full days to the trip as they follow the mirage further and further off the trail and get lost. This can have serious effects on the rations that the players brought with them in addition to leading to other encounters.

**Poison Oasis.** It is common enough to find an oasis in the House of Tezca, but the one the players encounter here has been poisoned by a mineral known as blood salt that is seeping into the waters from the surrounding stone.

Unfortunately, in the water, the mineral is colorless and tasteless. If the PCs search the area they automatically find enough blood salt for 4 doses of the poison. See **MZC1** for more information on blood salt.

Though the water in the oasis itself is poisoned, the surrounding area has cacti known as the sand mother cactus in abundance. The pulp from these cacti can sustain a human for a full day and there is enough fresh water in each for a full two days. Each cactus weighs 5 lb. and the PCs can take what they can carry.

**Dwarf Party.** Five desert dwarves (**scout**, desert dwarf traits) have been sent from their village to pursue a thief who has stolen some "valuable materials."

The dwarves are typically friendly, though they do not want to waste too much time talking to the PCs. They will ask the players if they have seen any other dwarves in their travels, and will question the players further if they answer in the affirmative. Should the players be carrying the chunk of plumastone they bought or took from Skangar, the dwarves will demand that they turn over the stolen property. If the players refuse, the dwarves will attack.



## SET ENCOUNTERS IN THE HOUSE OF TEZCA

The following two events should occur in the desert in the order given, but on any day which the DM sees fit before the sandstorm hits.

**Stinger Race.** Known among their own people as the tlincalli, what mankind typically refers to as “stingers” is a race of scorpion men native to Maztica’s underdark.

Heavily reliant on divination, the tlincalli have some truly bizarre rituals used to determine their future path. One ritual, ignorantly known to mankind as the “Stinger Race,” is occurring now in the House of Tezca. In this particular instance (and it varies every time), fifty tlincalli burst forth to the surface and run in a seemingly random path.

The path that they follow and the events that occur are then “read” by tlincalli seers deep in their underground cities.

The players are now coincidentally bearing witness to this strange event. As cruel and violent as the tlincalli typically can be, they have no interest in anything but their divination ritual at the moment. If an individual is attacked it will respond with deadly force, and the others will follow. This will be an impossible fight for the party and hopefully they realize before it is too late.

**Dwarf Rogue.** Plumastone is a precious commodity in the True World. This material is described in **MZC1** but will be summarized here.

In appearance, plumastone is identical to obsidian. However, it is in fact much harder. Plumastone has more similarities with steel than it does with actual obsidian. The original plumastone was found near Tewahca, the City of the Gods and is thus very rare. Since its discovery a little over a century past, plumacasters have created spells to transmute normal obsidian into plumastone.

Plumastone from Tewahca has a reddish hue that makes it easily identifiable and tends to go for double or triple the normal price when a weapon is constructed of it.

A grizzled old desert dwarf named Luskag is the chieftain whose tribe is responsible for the mining and distribution of Tewahca plumastone. He distributes both the material and profits from selling surplus wisely among the other dwarf tribes. A dwarf rogue named Skangar (**Bandit**, desert dwarf traits) however, has stolen a large chunk of the material (worth 300 gp), and fled into the desert.

Skangar will approach the party, masquerading as a pochteca traveling merchant. He means to try to sell the plumastone to them at a cut rate price. Skangar is a thief, but ultimately not cruel or violent. He is aware that there is a party of dwarves tracking him, and he wishes to sell the plumastone as quickly as possible. In fact, he will drop to the bargain price of 100 gp if need be in order to get it off of his hands.

He will be honest with its actual value and will correctly claim that the party can make a 200 gp profit by selling it just about anywhere else. Should the PCs decide to simply take it from Skangar, he will attempt to flee, possibly dropping the plumastone behind him to throw off the pursuit.

## THE SANDSTORM

On the 8th day of the journey, the players discover why this year, the house of Tezca has been given the nickname the “Desert of Storms.”

Without much warning, a horrible and violent sand storm erupts, spewing bullets of sandy pebbles from the dunes all around. You are soon stricken blind by the scathing winds and for several hours the only sensation is the incessant howling. The only thing to do is drop to the ground and wait out the storm. More troubling is the contamination of your food and your water containers have either been lost or torn apart. You are left with minimal food and no water.

When you look for the trade agreement to see if the mission can be salvaged, you notice something alarming. The trade agreement is gone, along with whatever container it was held in! Some tracks lead a bit further into the desert, though you can’t make out what type of creature they belong to.



The tracks lead deeper into the desert. If the party wants to collect their reward (and save hundreds from starvation), they need to find the trade agreement. After traveling for a full day (roll again for potential encounters), the players will come upon a stone structure that seems to be the ruins of a city wall. Sand has piled up on the intact portions of the wall and it can be easily climbed over.

These ruins are the remains of an ancient city known as Ulbatuahemoc, which will be described in further detail later. The aboveground portion of the city might be ruined but as the exiles will explain to the PCs, far below the ground, the city is still very much alive.

Read the following text if the players climb the wall.

When you come over the stone wall, you see what must have once been six independent buildings, all in various states of ruin. All but one has completely collapsed under the weight of centuries of sand and winds. The standing structure is a small pyramid, and amazingly, nearby you notice that there are signs of life!

There are nine tents visible that form an irregular semicircle around the structure. In front of one tent, the players will see two figures huddled over a small campfire (the desert cools significantly at night time). The two figures are human exiles of the underground city, and they will not appear to be frightened by the approach of the party.

The exiles (all **commoners**) are friendly enough and are willing to talk to the party. It is not they who stole the party's trade agreement, but they might know the culprit.

The exiles speak of the tiny "cave dwellers" who occasionally come forth from the ruins, particularly during the worst of the sandstorms. Note that the exiles speak an archaic version of Nexalan (Maztican) which speakers of that language may easily follow.

## STORIES OF THE EXILES

If the party chooses to ask questions to some of the exiles in order to gain information, they may attempt to speak with any of the eight living in tents in the ruins of old Ulbatuahemoc.

To find out if the exile in question is receptive make a Charisma (Persuasion) check with a DC of 11 for the PC who is doing the talking.

Once they feel comfortable enough to talk, an exile may give additional details about the city, Zarzumotl, or the Curse. They will tell the PCs in unspecific terms that they should not fear contracting the madness as it would take many months to do so if the players ask about it.

They can also tell the PCs that there is a subterranean passage to the living portion of the city in the base of the pyramid. They can remember little detail about the passage itself other than it was a good half a day's journey.

When interviewing a random exile, roll 1d8 and consult the following.

### 1d8 Story

1 *"The entire city is affected by madness which emanates from the old palace. I was banished for trying to enter the palace. I'm certain it is the source of the city's sickness. Some say our ancient god Zarzumotl lives there, but I did not think gods made a habit of living in earthly palaces..."*

2 *"My father once led an expedition to the Isle of the Sun, which seems to me to be the only place in the caverns safe from the Curse. His party did not come back alive. Some say there are strange beasts that roam the Isle, others say that the Revered Counselor's shaman lives there and has gone mad. The priests sent me to the surface because I was trying to raise funds for an expedition to look for my father. They said I was a 'destabilizing force,' whatever that means..."*

3 *"I am a member of the Charity Guild. We honor Kiltzi, the Goddess of Love. I was exiled by Hedzl, the High Priestess of Zarzumotl. I had noticed that the priests were never afflicted by the madness, and I insisted they supply the cure to our own leader, Garriboc who was well on the way to succumbing to the syndrome. Unfortunately for me, Hedzl has very little tolerance for disagreement. My friend Emenitl, who comes to the surface as often as he can, told me that Garriboc has not improved nor has Hedzl relented."*

4 *"I was sent to the surface for complaining too much to the Council. I was upset that not enough was being done to fight a horrible insanity that was taking over the town. Frankly, I was afraid for myself, because my blackouts were coming with greater frequency. I honestly believe the council member who banished me was herself insane at the time, but I was denied a chance to appeal. I'm almost glad for it though, because since I've been at the surface, the madness has withdrawn. I still feel it, tugging at my mind, but it is weak, and I can stay in control now."*

5 *"I believe there are other powers in the city besides the Council and the priests of Zarzumotl. Our Revered Counselor appears from time to time, but he is not himself. Still, he is neither a puppet of Zarzumotl, nor does he seem to speak as he used to. I do not know who controls him."*

6 *"A friend of mine at the mushroom fields was recruited by a secret organization that lives in caverns away from the city. My friend was sworn to secrecy, but let slip once that there was a safe way to leave the underground city without traveling across the desert."*

7 *"At night, the city is sometimes invaded by the cave dwellers. The cave dwellers are not human, and are not always dangerous, except when they are defending their territory. I found their home caves once and was chased back to the city. The Council banished me for increasing the hostilities between our city and these stone men. They were probably right to do so."*

8 This exile is deaf and mute, and he only communicates with gestures.



If the party wants to complete their original task, they must recover the trade agreement. If the party spoke to the 6th exile, they might also be happy to know that there is an exit in the city close to their destination in Kolan, and that they can bypass the remainder of their journey by using it.

## THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGE

The underground passageway eventually leads to the city of Ulbatuahemoc, and is a relatively straight run through the underdark of the House of Tezca.

There are many empty caverns and side passages that the players might want to explore.

While exploring these rooms, consult the table below to indicate any additional random encounters.

You may also want to develop some of these rooms on your own to explore story arcs not addressed in this adventure, or to introduce an item that you would like to be in the party's hands.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Every time the PCs enter an unmarked room, roll 1d20 and consult the following table to determine the contents of the room and its resulting encounter.

### RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLE

| 1d20  | Encounter        |
|-------|------------------|
| 1-6   | Empty Room       |
| 7-8   | 3 Deranged Human |
| 9-10  | 2 Cave Apes      |
| 11-12 | Yallagog         |
| 13-14 | Carrion Crawler  |
| 15-16 | Trap             |
| 17-18 | 3 Giant Geckos   |
| 19-20 | 5 Firiji         |

**\*\*Empty Room.**\*8 Whether natural or hewn by human hands, the room is empty of any interesting features.

**Deranged Humans.** These human men and women are from the city of Ulbatuahemoc and have utterly succumbed to the Curse of Zarzumotl making them homicidal maniacs. Use **beserker** statistics.

**Cave Apes.** Other than the fact that they are universally aggressive and live in caverns, and have silver or white fur, these creatures use **ape** statistics.

Note that apes of any sort are practically unheard of in Maztica. Native born characters will not recognize them for what they are, and the DM might want to refer to them as "great hairy men" to a party which only consists of native born Mazticans.

**Yallagog.** These gargoyle-like stone men known as a **yallagog** are not always aggressive, but this one does not approve of intruders into its lair. It will attack mercilessly.

**Carrion Crawler.** Having just finished consuming a giant gecko, the **carrion crawler** is not hungry.

However, it is also not intelligent enough to hold off from attacking a well-armed party.

**Trap.** The firijis, yallagogs and humans located nearby need to find a steady method of finding food in these underground chambers to supplement their diet of small fish, mushrooms and cave locusts. The trap set in this room is designed to slay bigger game.

Allow the party to make a Wisdom (Perception) check unless they are actively searching for traps in which case they use an Intelligence (Investigation) check to detect the trap. The trap is well hidden and requires a successful DC 15 to discover.

The trap itself can cause bludgeoning (a rock fall), slashing (a spring loaded metal trap) or piercing (spring loaded spikes). The damage is always 7 (2d6).

**Giant Geckos.** Though the normal sized version of these creatures don't typically live underground, nor are they aggressive. These giant geckos have adapted to life in the underdark. They are hungry and will attack when they detect the party. Use the statistics for a **giant lizard** from the Monster Manual.

**Firiji.** A hunting party of five **firiji** finds the PCs. Though they are not overly cruel creatures, they are hungry and the party looks delicious.

## KEYED ENCOUNTERS

The following encounters are keyed to the Underground Passageway Map.

### 1. RUINS

Read the following if the players choose to enter the pyramid.

As you enter the ruins, you notice the sunlight streaming through holes in the ceiling. Sand covers the floor along with rubble from the fallen walls of the pyramid.

Along some walls are faded tapestries. Several depict the city as it must have looked in its heyday, a city claimed from the desert by a large irrigation system.

Another series of paintings shows more disturbing scenes, including a few that feature a horrible beast towering over the city. Standing ten times the size of normal men, the beast crawls along the sand on a slug-like body, its torso and head lifting upright in an almost humanoid posture. It seems to have thirty tentacles and an enormous red eye.

The only other immediate feature of the room is a deep crevice along the floor.

There is nothing of value in this room and the crevice leads to a small, underground chamber.

Read the following to the PCs if they enter the underground chamber.

You enter a widening passage with walls of hewn rock. Considerable labor must have gone into opening this deep passage which widens to nearly 50' just a few yards below the surface. Some sunlight filters in from above, but what lies beyond is difficult to see.

If the party has bright light, they will see the tunnel sloping downward and westward some distance. The tunnel is about 15-20 feet wide, unlit, and is refreshingly cool.

Further down the tunnel there are more paintings as well with similar images to the ones at the entrance.

## 2. WIDENING PASSAGE

The tunnel begins to widen to nearly forty feet across. The walls here are no longer so neatly hewn, and you begin to wonder if the man made passage might slowly be giving way to natural underground caverns. It seems unlikely that such formations exist without a source of water to make them, but there appears to be no water here.

As the PCs have observed, the passages are no longer created by human hands and are a natural part of the Maztican underdark.

## 3. ARTIFACTS

The passage widens again into a long room of irregular shape. In one corner you see a pile of junk. Also, along the ceiling of the south wall are many small stalagmites, again indicating that this part of the passage was carved by natural forces.

The pile contains several backpacks, pickaxes, and canteens, all empty. There is also a small pile of small bones of rats or lizards. All of the artifacts are near the remains of a campfire.

## 4. POOL

You begin to approach a widening passage, and up ahead, you can barely make out the sound of dripping.

This room contains a large pool of water, fed from an unknown source. The dripping comes at slow intervals and water pours through the rocky ceiling onto forming stalagmites.

Like the poisoned oasis, this pool is also contaminated with blood salt. Two doses worth can be collected near the pool.

## 5. BRIDGE

This room contains a giant sinkhole that drops down 30'. The characters will clearly see a narrow plank (2' wide) running from one edge of the pit to the other, a distance of nearly 100'. However, a 6' wide strip of floor runs along the northwest side of the pit, so that it actually provides a wider and seemingly more stable path to walk.

However, any characters using this path needs to make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check with a DC of 13 or fall down the unstable cliff, taking 7 (2d6) points of bludgeoning damage.

It will also be very difficult to get back up, requiring a successful DC 15 Strength (Acrobatics) check if unassisted with a rope or spells.

Characters who decide to traverse the plank will have no difficulty, provided they move single file at a cautious rate. If the PCs are being careless, they might have to make the same save as above with similar consequences at your discretion.

## 6. BODIES

The players begin to notice a rather foul smell from ahead, and with each step they take, it gets fouler. If the party enters the next chamber, they will find a dead giant gecko lizard crawling with small insects. Most of its flesh has been torn from its bones. If the party investigates carefully, they will find clean gashes made by sharp edges and flecks of obsidian remain in the corpse.

The gecko is a fresh kill of the firiji in the firiji camp.

## 7. FIRIJI CAMP

The gecko-like race of humanoids known as the firiji are common in the underdark beneath the House of Tezca.

This room has a camp of 6 **firiji** who are resting after recent kills. These firiji are outcasts of a lair in the underground caverns and fend for themselves. They are all armed with a dagger and a *tēmātlatl* and have small pieces of turquoise worth 40 gp between them. More importantly, they each have full canteens of dirty (but safe) water.

## 8. ROCK FORMATIONS

The passageway widens into a rather spectacular room, with large stalactites, stalagmites, and rock pillars. The rock glistens with the shine of obsidian, reflecting your light sources. The room is so crowded with rock that it is not easy to walk through.

The room is empty of threats, but it is considered difficult terrain for movement purposes. If PCs are not careful in this room they might get cut by the sharp obsidian edges. If the PCs are in combat or are fleeing through the room, they must make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) save (DC 10) each turn or take 2 (1d4) points of slashing damage per 10 feet of movement.

## 9. CAVE APES

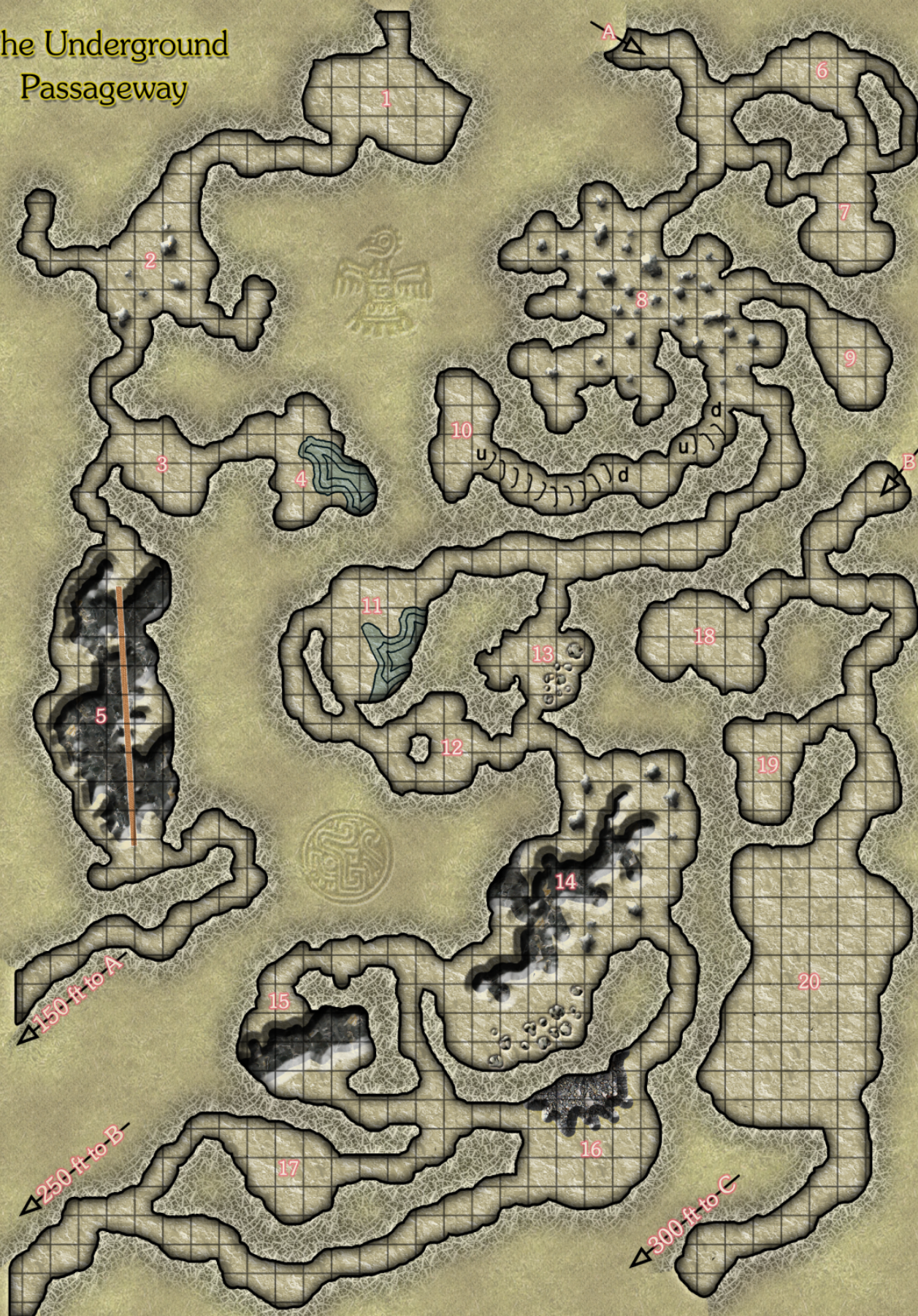
This room contains the lair of five cave apes. Their fur is white, and they resemble mountain gorillas. If the party is very careful, they can back away from this encounter, but if they make any threatening moves, a male will first threaten by beating on its chest, pacing, and bellowing.

If it feels threatened, it will attack. The females and young males will hang back until the male takes significant hits.

If the party attacks and then flees from the cave, the apes will pursue, and combat must be handled in the maze of stalagmites in Room 8. The apes also need to worry about the sharp obsidian.



# The Underground Passageway





## 10. ELEVATED CHAMBER

You climb what resembles a natural staircase to a huge cavernous room that sits about 20' above the passageway you left. You are surprised to see four rolled mats in one corner of the room.

If the mats are unrolled, they resemble man-sized sleeping mats. One contains the embroidery "Knights of Kiltzi".

Another mat, unrolled, will reveal an empty smoking pipe.

This room is used as a hideout for the Charity Guild in case an overnight stay is needed on a trip from the underground city to the surface. It is currently empty and is a safe place to rest.

## 11. FRESH POOL

This room contains a large pool of water. The water is an off-green in coloration due to mineral seepage, but it is drinkable.

## 12. CRACKPOTS

The passageway widens as it curves westward. The party will be able to see the glow of light ahead. If the party continues on read the following description.

You see five robed humanoid figures sitting around a large fire. One man is standing and appears to play an imaginary musical instrument. The other humans (two male, two female) lie on their stomachs, propping their head up as if in adoration.

The humans are all inhabitants of the underground city, and all suffer a rather advanced form of Zarzumotl's Curse. They are defenseless and won't even respond properly to attacks (statistics as **commoners**).

Killing these poor souls amounts to nothing more than murder and should be considered an evil act.

If the party is friendly, the leader will stop "playing", and announce the following.

"Ah, at last, we'd been expecting you. Surely you seek my guidance. Come, I have foretold the future for my acolytes and you too shall have your futures told."

The man then holds out his hand as if waiting for a coin of some sorts. If none is offered he bizarrely exclaims:

"That is no matter, for time means nothing to me. I shall take from you one silver piece in the future, if that will do. I could easily take a silver piece of the past, but I shall not make you poorer than you used to be, though I'm afraid you shall be poorer than you will be when you are."

Anything from a silver piece or more will do, at which point he begins to chant in a strange language (gibberish, actually) and then proclaims one of the following for the character. Roll 1d12 to determine a character's "fortune." Each character may have his fortune read for a different coin each time. Reroll repeated results.

## 1d12 Fortune

- 1 "There is great danger in your future. Beware the hawks of Hunab-Kuum, for their poison is greater than your gumption."
- 2 "There is much peril on the road ahead. All that glitters is not gold, though much of it is."
- 3 "There is no peril in your future. You will find that the hottest fire does not burn, the strongest acid does not degrade, and the sharpest blade does not cut. But beware the common things, the water, the food, and the very air itself - this you shall despair."
- 4 "One step calls fortune, two steps calls unanswered longing, three steps calls one and two."
- 5 "There is only one who can help you. This man is named Constollatl. Seek him out, if you can."
- 6 "Live by the blade, die by the blade. The next blade you see, do not take up, for it shall bring great woe. But the next chimalli you see, pick it up, for it shall bring woe to your enemies."
- 7 "An ancient ruler decreed a stately pleasure dome. It was declared for you."
- 8 "When the sun and moon collide you shall be freed, freed from a prison you do not yet know, nor can you yet comprehend!"
- 9 "You shall face a great riddle before the next moon shines full. If no answer comes, then the answer must be "up", though I cannot myself see the question."
- 10 "When three ways are open, take the middle road. It brings joy and luck. The left road brings the chance of great reward, but at great cost. The right road brings certain death."
- 11 "I see many rings, rings of ruby, and rings of gold. Their powers are great, if you can control them."
- 12 "One who you think is your friend is your enemy, one who you think is your enemy is your brother. Choose wisely your ally."

In general, these prophecies are the deranged musings of a broken mind, but they could be expanded upon (and possibly have a kernel of truth) if desired.

## 13. LAUGHTER

If the party did not explore room 12, they will hear laughter from that direction. This room is empty, save for two flasks of oil and a backpack full of rations (mushrooms and insect carcasses). There is also a pile of small boulders along the southern wall.

## 14. CREVASSE

The floor of this room is bumpy with tiny stalagmites. In the center of the room is a long crevasse that runs about 75' along in a southwest to northeast direction. The walls of the chamber display the jagged and reflective surface of obsidian. There are several large chunks of it along the southern wall.



If the party investigates the boulder-like chunks of obsidian, a Wisdom (Perception) check with a DC of 13 will allow them to catch the slightest of movements which might clue them into the nature of the boulders.

If they disturb the boulders, the camouflaged **Maztican geonids** will rise up and attack. The 6 geonids are from the lair in room 16.

If the party leaves the room without investigating the boulders, they will hear a slight tapping sound (a warning to geonids in 16). If this occurs, the geonids in 16 will prepare a rockfall attack.

The geonids are fervent in their reverence for the god Plutoq. Should one of the players be openly displaying a holy symbol of the god, the geonid will instead address the characters in halting Maztican. They will see the players as allies and tap a message to the other geonids in the area that the players are not enemies.

No more geonid attacks will occur from that point forward. Also, if the geonid are befriended in this way, they will offer the players a *ring of resistance (poison)* that they have no use for. While the geonids are immune to poison, they are aware of the ring's value and keep it hidden in a chipped stalagmite which requires a DC 19 Wisdom (Perception) to find otherwise.

## 15. CLIFF

The long and winding passageway appears to come to an end in mid-air. Actually, you find yourself at the edge of a high cliff. The opposite wall of the room is barely visible at the edge of your lights, but the depth of the pit in front of you cannot be ascertained.

However, you do manage to notice the head of a massive worm-like creature come swooping toward you from the depths below.

The beast is a **h'calan**. These aggressive creatures are the descendants of the terrible star worm H'Calos and The creature is 25' long, and stands on a small cliff about 15' below the one the players are on. The h'calan is directly under the party and is difficult to see and it is lightly obscured in bright light. In dim light, treat the creature as if it is heavily obscured. Either way, the worm itself is not affected because of its blindsense.

The pit below the cliff goes down another 100 or so feet, and the DM might consider expanding the underdark here if the PCs decide to explore below.

## 16. GEONID LAIR

If the **Maztican geonids** were warned, 6 of them prepare a rockfall attack from an outcropping above the entrance to this chamber. A geonid removes a single shard of obsidian which causes a chain reaction and an entire outcropping falls on a 10 radius area near the entrance.

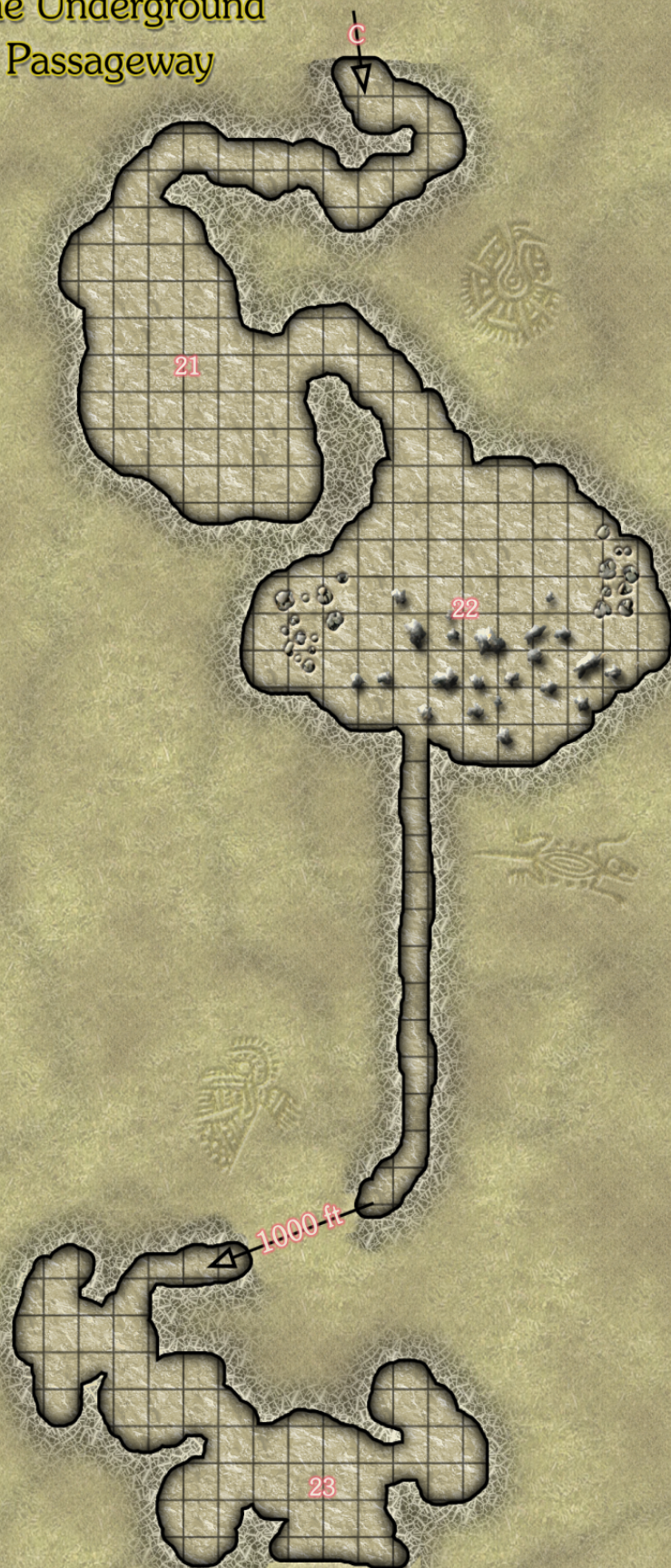
This trap causes 14 (4d6) slashing damage which a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check can cut in half. There are 12 additional geonids in the main chamber for a total of 18 and if the geonids in area 14 were not defeated, they will enter the room in 3 turns. The room also contains 11 infants that cannot fight.

The geonids have treasure that can be looted if they are destroyed. This includes a small onyx (50 gp), a small moonstone (25 gp), a large star rose quartz (100 gp), a smoky quartz geode (50 gp), and a marble statuette of unknown origin depicting a strange four armed humanoid in the garb of a plumaweaver (80 gp).





# The Underground Passageway





## 17. CAVE LOCUST

There are 5 **giant Maztican cave locusts** in this room that flee from almost everything. They are on the bottom of the food chain within the caverns and support the survival of most of the other creatures. This room is otherwise empty.

## 18. RENEGADE

As you enter into this chamber, a robed figure whirls around to face you. He gets a good look at your number and weaponry, and drops to his knees and sobs.

If questioned, the man will admit to being from the underground city. He assumes at first that the party has been hired to hunt him down. He was an **acolyte** of Zarzumotl but had performed poorly on their tests and even openly disobeyed his masters.

The man heard he was to be dropped from the order and possibly exiled to the surface so in anger, he did something very stupid by robbing the other priests.

Most of the wealth he gave to his family before fleeing, but he still has some of that treasure and will trade it for his life. The treasure consists of 30 gp and a small silver statuette of Zarzumotl worth about 200 gp outside of the underground city.

Attempting to sell the statuette within the city will draw attention from the priests and is not a good idea. He also has a vial of liquid which is a non-magical antidote to the mineral poison found in a number of nearby pools. Finally he has an item called *baubles of detection*.

The acolyte whose name is Amoxltli, does not want to fight and is nearly helpless. He knows basic information about the city of Ulbatuahemoc and can fill in any details which the party doesn't already know.

## BAUBLES OF DETECTION

*Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)*

The baubles are glass beads and miniature figurines that hang from a thin chain and would normally have less than a 1 gp value. However, they are magical and very useful.

The baubles, if worn, will vibrate if the wearer passes within 20' of any unusual architecture such as shifting walls, hidden panels, secret doors, trap doors, and the like. The baubles cannot detect traps.

## 19. EMPTY ROOM

This room is empty but shows remnants of an old bonfire.

## 20-21. SLOPING PASSAGE

The far northern end of these chambers and connecting passage is much lower than the western end, meaning the floor is tilted almost at a 45 degree grade.

Room 21 is littered with obsidian boulders that appear similar to the geonids but are in fact just regular boulders. Both rooms are otherwise empty.

## 22. SIGNS OF LIFE

The tunnel again starts to open into a very large room, perhaps 100-120 feet in diameter. As the far southern end of the room you detect the glow of light. The stalactites and boulders cast huge, eerie shadows on the high walls of this room; the ceiling is over 100 feet above your heads.

Beginning roughly 30 feet beyond the exit to this chamber is a series of lit torches, one on either side, spaced at 30 foot intervals to room 23 and the exit.





## 23. ENTRANCE CAVERN TO ULBATUAHEMOC

After passing through a long, narrow tunnel, you emerge into another modest sized chamber with a large, gaping cave mouth at the eastern end. The chamber is well lit by torches.

You are somewhat unprepared for the next sight. As you exit the chamber via the cave mouth to the south, you find yourself on a rocky outcropping some 40 feet above the chamber floor. This cavern is unbelievably massive!

In the distance, perhaps a mile off, you clearly see a weak shaft of sunlight entering through the ceiling of the mammoth caverns, some 500 feet above the floor. About 900-1000 feet away, you see points of lantern light dotting the cavern floor, possibly on the top of tall pillars, and in a semblance of geometric arrangement. It almost certainly resembles a human settlement, in fact, it resembles an entire small city.

You can make out shadowy structures, even massive buildings at this distance. Faintly you hear the rushing of water.

The PCs have discovered the hidden city of Ulbatuahemoc and stand at map location R of the Underground City.

## ULBATUAHEMOC, THE CITY OF MADNESS

Ulbatuahemoc is an ancient underground city that certainly predates its closest neighbor Tukan, and whose people are of the same stock as the Green Folk of the southern jungles. It initially had a small settlement on the surface with which its inhabitants kept in frequent contact. For a time, they traded with the Empire of Nexal, and eventually picked up their tongue and many of their customs.

Long ago, a disastrous flood wiped out entire civilizations in the southern portions of the True World. The ancestors of Ulbatuahemoc's inhabitants followed a charismatic leader named Zarzumotl out of the jungles and into the desert.

Zarzumotl knew the endless rains would not follow his people into the great sands and he was initially hailed as a hero. Some even began to worship the proud warrior.

Unfortunately, Zarzumotl had traded one great threat for another. The deserts were rife with the great fire lizards and other monsters that preyed on the refugees. This however, was not the greatest threat to their survival. The desert heat and (ironically, considering they fled a flood) a lack of water now threatened to kill the refugees slowly and terribly.

Hundreds began to perish, their bodies left to the carrion birds and scavengers. The once loving and charismatic Zarzumotl became bitter and cruel. He soon began to mercilessly slay the aged or infirm that he felt might slow down the refugees' journey to an unknown promised land.

Zarzumotl called out to any god or being who would listen while his madness slowly set in. Something listened, though to this day, not even Zarzumotl knows what.

A small oasis was found with tunnels leading deep into the sands and further into endless caverns below the oppressive heat. The refugees rejoiced once again, but the warrior knew that whatever presence had led him into the underdark, had also twisted his soul and warped his psyche.

Zarzumotl might have celebrated with his brethren had he not immediately been made aware of the price of salvation.

Zarzumotl became immortal. This was no gift however, as over the years his form slowly changed to match his maddening mind. The man who many now saw as a god warped and changed into the terrible creature he is today. To many, this was just a sign of his apotheosis.

The small community that had settled on the surface had by this time fled to other lands or returned to the underground city. The settlement was left to outcasts and exiles.

It has been centuries, but Zarzumotl's transformation is finally complete. He too now believes himself to be a god and not the monstrosity he has actually become. The madness has recently become contagious and manifests itself as *Zarzumotl's Curse*. Once again, the entire population is in jeopardy.

The goddess Kiltzi has seen what Zarzumotl's Curse has done to her people. It was this goddess who enchanted the cibarius glow moss, and her worshipers do what they can to help the faithful. Alas, it is not enough, and the city descends deeper into madness.

Perhaps it was Kiltzi, in a desperate attempt to interfere yet again, who sent the yallagogs to steal the trade agreement and draw the heroes to the city – or perhaps it is just coincidence.

## ULBATUAHEMOC CULTURE

Ulbatuahemoc, as Faerun-born PCs may notice, has a number of amenities, items, monsters and even cultural norms that are uncommon or even unseen elsewhere in the True World. There is a reason for this that was established long before Zarzumotl ever made his fateful trip into the House of Tezca.

While the people of Ulbatuahemoc are descended from Green Folk, at one time they did somehow have contact with mainland Faerûn. It might have been a portal, a secret trade route, or even some other more unique connection.

This bit of history is unknown to any outside of their society and it has largely been forgotten within as well. The connections are obvious, however, and a creative DM could expand on this history to lead into further adventures.

## ENTERING THE CITY

The city is a complete madhouse and the PCs should get that impression the minute they attempt to speak to one of its citizens. There are no guards at the entrance, and no one will otherwise pay any mind to the players unless approached first or if they are part of the keyed encounters.

Roll 1d12 every 10 minutes the party spends exploring or simply select one of the scenes from the Scenes of Madness table.



## Roll 1d12 Encounter

1 A solitary man will approach the party on all fours with a small disc in his mouth and drops it at their feet. If ignored, he will follow the party, picking up and dropping the disc. He may display other dog behaviors. He will bother the party until chased away or until someone tosses the disc, whereupon he will stand up and say, "Excuse me, but that is my play-disc." Then he will run off in a direction other than the one the disc was thrown.

2 Four men and two women in cloaks approach the party, carrying incense burners. They begin to circle the party, waving the burners in the air and chanting. If questioned, they will indicate that the party has been afflicted with Zarzumotl's Curse, which they are attempting to ward off. If the party is wounded, the strangers will cast attempt to cast healing spells on them. Unfortunately, none of them actually have that capability nor are they clerics.

3 Two young women are carrying small sacks slung over their backs. They smile pleasantly, and open up a character's hand. Then, they reach into their sacks and pour the PC's a fistful of odorless, bitter powder. They will offer some to the others by way of hand gestures, never speaking. The powder is ground up fungus, and has no special properties.

4 Five men approach the party with stern faces. The leader holds out his hand to stop the party. "I'm afraid it is tax time, gentlemen. You have freeloaded here long enough. The Revered Counselor requires 10 copper pieces from each of you, and 20 from each of the foreigners." This last request is directed any non-humans in the party. The party may pay or not, the men have no authority, nor any weaponry to back it up. They also recognize they are the weaker. If the party resists paying, they will merely say, "We will be back with the force of the law! The Revered Counselor does not tolerate insolence from his subjects!" And they will storm off, a bit petulantly.

5 Four deranged men who believe they are fishermen walk out from behind a structure. The men have an enormous fishing net that three carry while one lays trapped within. The man in the net is flopping wildly and it seems the men are having a tough time holding onto their "catch."

6 A woman runs up to the lead party member and gives him/her a big hug. She will rattle on as if they are old friends. If the party member does not play along, then she will get a bit petulant, and to save face, she insists that they get together some time in the future.

7 If the party did not meet the fortune teller in the underground passageway, concoct a similar encounter in the city. If they have, roll again.

8 Ten civilians will appear to be in some kind of panic. They will warn the party members to flee, but each sees a different danger: snakes, rats, cave dwellers, insect swarms, and one who complains of the approaching hurricane. They will eventually wander off in panic.

9 This party of four carries large clay jars. These mad folk believe they are beekeepers. They will stop and ask the party to sample their honey. Inside, there is no honey, but they do have blood salt tainted water that looks quite refreshing to drink.

10 A group of four women are carrying a stretcher. On top of the stretcher is a sack of mushrooms. The women think that the sack is their sick friend Azumas. If the party has a cleric, they will say "You sir are a healer! Please cure our friend." If not, they will request directions to the nearest healer.

11 A short, old man rushes up to the party. "Come! It is urgent! The Guild sent me! You are needed immediately for an important mission!" If the party doesn't budge, or inquires further, the man will insist on the need for secrecy. If he can convince the party, he will lead them back to his shack, where his elderly wife lies in the corner on a mat of what appear to be insect carcasses. "My wife has been ill. Please have this place swept up by noon." Then he will leave the shack.

12 Two men are fighting with one another. The wrestling match tears through the streets, crashing through lines of people that have gathered to watch the combatants. If the party tries to break the pair up, the men will begin to calm down. If asked the reason for the battle, one will complain that the other attempted to give him a ring. The other will insist it is not true; he was trying to give the man a bracelet. In exasperation, he will say "You see?" and hand the party a dead rat from his belt pouch. Upon seeing it, the first man will say, "Ah, so it is a bracelet after all." They will shake hands, and pat one another on the back.

## CITY LOCATIONS

The following locations in Ulbatuahemoc are keyed on the map.

### A. TEMPLE OF ZARZUMOTL.

This is an ornate building that rises above all others in the city with the exception of Zarzumotl's Palace. The main gallery is open to the public, and features carvings of a human Zarzumotl.

In the paintings, he is depicted rather unrealistically as being some 25 feet tall and aiding the citizens. A triptych tells of his coming to lead the people underground when disaster befell them.

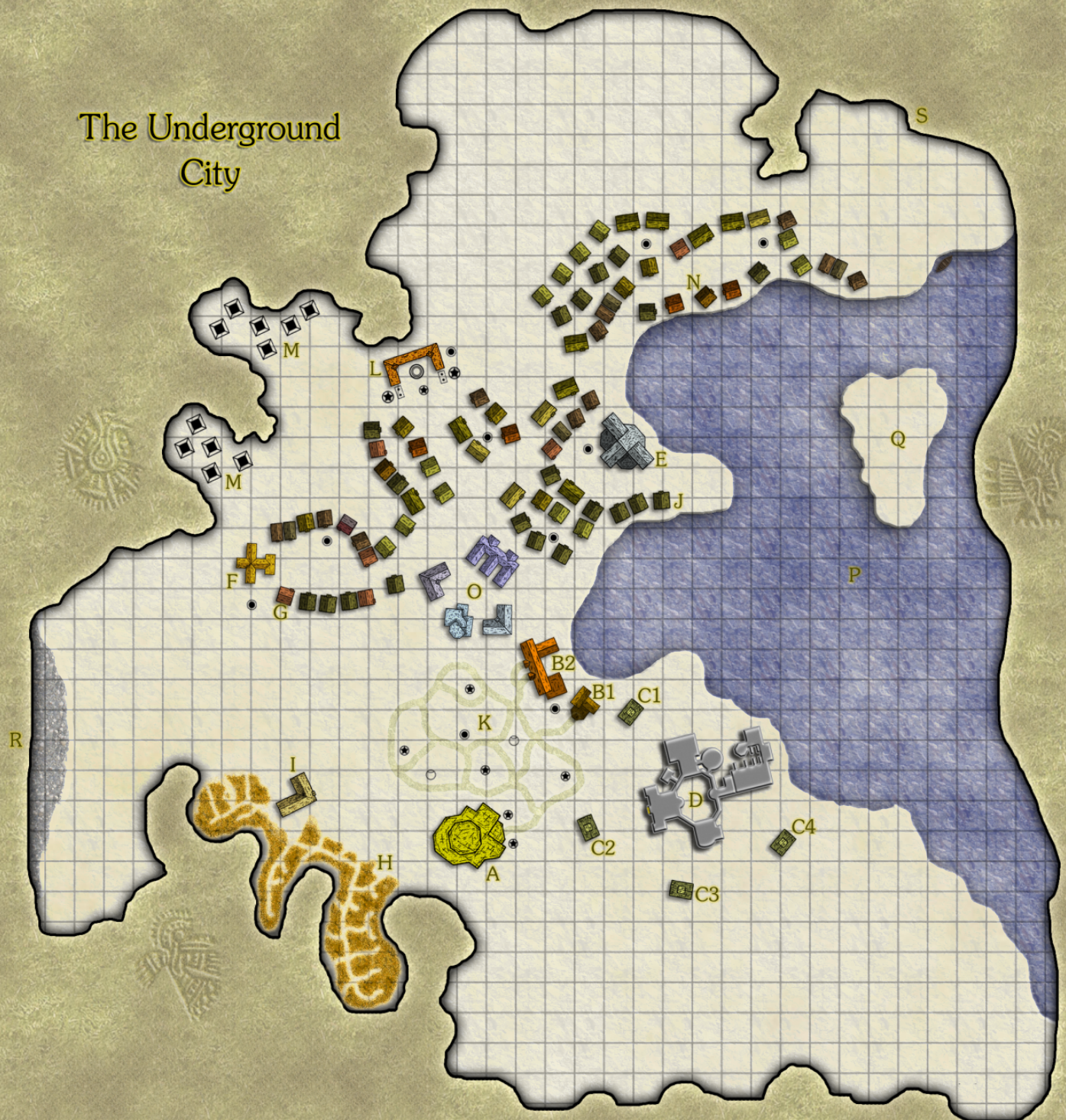
Beyond the main gallery is a shrine, where priests hold services and ceremonies (for the public). Once a month, the bells of the temple ring out to commemorate Offering Day, in which four citizens are sacrificed — one to Zarzumotl, and one to each of his guardians.

There are other rooms in the temple that serve as offices, and there is also a room where sacrifices are held for a tenday before sacrifice.

The temple is locked at night, requiring a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to open. There are 2d4 priests of Zarzumotl (who are **cult fanatics**) located in addition to 3d6 citizens (**cultists**) who are often insane, and 2d6 **acolytes**.



# The Underground City



- ★ = Statue
- = Fountain
- ◻ = Altar
- = Fresh well
- ◻ = Insect pens
- ◻ = 20 yards



There is a gold and stone statue of Zarzumotl behind the main altar worth 5,000 gp but it is incredibly heavy (3,000 lb.) and probably cannot be carried without pulleys and carts. Tampering with the statue will cause the acolytes and priests to attack.

## B. DORMITORY

This room is the residence of the priests of Zarzumotl. The High Priestess lives in a large house nearby and the acolytes live in huts throughout the Temple District. There is little of value here, items measured in silver pieces and copper pieces amounting to a total of no more than 20 gp can be found if the place is ransacked. It is locked like the door to the temple and always occupied by 2d4 **acolytes** and 1d4 **cult fanatic** priests of Zarzumotl.

## C. GUARD TOWERS

Zarzumotl's Palace (D) is always guarded by eight human archers (**guards**, armed with tlahuītlōlli bows), four in each of two 20' high towers.

The construction gives the archers three-quarters cover from ground based attacks. The towers have rope ladders which are difficult to climb, costing climbers 2 feet per foot moved for the full length.

During their climb, the players can be attacked by the towers' archers. If the party tries to get to the keep, the guards will fire weapons and sound an alarm. The alarm will eventually call a contingent of 10 keep **guards** who arrive in one minute.

## D. ZARZUMOTL'S KEEP

This building was built as the Palace for the Revered Counselor of Ulbatuahemoc, though he did not occupy it long. The keep now houses Zarzumotl and his guardians.

It also serves as a seminary for new priests (housed in the east wing), and the majority is left for the DM to develop.

The keep sits some 50 ft. above the rest of the city and a single, wide path leads up to its massive double doors. The only other entrance is a giant secret door which an Intelligence (Investigation) check with a DC of 13 will find, though it cannot be opened.

It is an escape route, impossible to open from the outside. The keep is normally kept locked which requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to open.

There is also a lightning trap on the door which requires a password or a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to disarm. The lightning causes 9 (2d8 points) of lightning damage to those who attempt to pick the lock. It can discharge once each turn.

The doors are only opened on Offering Day once a year, and once weekly for routine maintenance. The students within the keep are not allowed to leave until their training is complete. The palace is guarded by the towers listed in C and the door cannot be forced open without a ram.

## E. THE TOWN COUNCIL

This is a large stone building that houses the councilors' offices and bedrooms. There are 11 members of the Council, and each holds a significant amount of power (power of exile, imprisonment, taxation, etc.). The grand chamber is open to the public; town meetings used to be held there before the citizenry and councilors went insane. The Council is now a puppet of the priests of Zarzumotl.

They will never rule against their wishes in important matters though most of the Council is also affected by the madness to varying degrees.

## F. CHURCH OF CHARITY

This is the home base of the Charity Guild. While more of a civic organization than a rival religion, they are nonetheless despised by the priests who cannot understand why Emenitl, its present leader, is immune to Zarzumotl's madness.

They are occasionally openly hostile to the guild's members but they assume Emenitl must have Zarzumotl's favor since he has avoided the insanity. Emenitl is immune for a completely different reason, noted in G.

The Charity Guild is harassed and persecuted, but never fully eliminated. The citizenry generally avoids them, knowing attention angers the priests. However, they too are awed by Emenitl, whom they call The Healer.

The building itself is a simple stone pyramid and temple to their god Kiltzi. It is regularly attended by its clergy, twelve clerics, and four bodyguards, including Kolitl.

## G. EMENITL'S HOUSE

This is the home of The Healer, Emenitl. He is primarily interested in destroying Zarzumotl, who he correctly believes is responsible for the demise of Ulbatuahemoc.

In the meantime, he only wishes to ease the suffering of his fellow citizens. Emenitl regularly brings food and water to the exiles on the surface, makes certain that the city lamps are lit in the daylight hours and supervises the mushroom fields and the insect pens.

The city contains a number of freshwater wells. The one nearest his house has become infected with a glowing plant-like material known as cibarius glow moss. This substance, unbeknownst to all, prevents Zarzumotl's Curse from taking effect. Though it is completely unknown to the populace, consuming the moss will also eventually return a victim to sanity. Unfortunately, the stuff tastes awful and is otherwise inedible. If this had not been the case, the populace might have already discovered its protective properties.

There is enough of the moss on the Isle of the Sun for the entire populace to be cured. Anyone who drinks from Emenitl's well regularly begins to lose symptoms of the madness (one point of Wisdom will be returned daily). Emenitl suffers from a disorder where he cannot smell (anosmia), nor taste (ageusia), and therefore is not affected by the awful taste of his well water.

Emenitl will be receptive to a foreign party of adventurers, but he will know nothing of the missing trade agreement. He might suggest that the players investigate the yallagogs, which he refers to as the stone men of the caves or simply the cave dwellers. He also will insist that no citizens (except the priests) be harmed during their quest, which may be difficult, considering the rampant insanity.

Emenitl also knows several important people in the adventure and may put in contact with the PCs including Kolitl, Jari, Pituailli and Garriboc. Kolitl has knowledge of the League of Stealth and the Underground River, Jari is a fisherman who could tell the party how to get their hands on a boat, Pituailli is a herbalist whose notes reveal how to create powerful healing potions, and Garriboc can cure Zarzumotl's Curse.



## H. THE MUSHROOM FIELDS

The mushroom fields are a well-irrigated farmland for molds and fungus that serve as the main food source for the city. None of the foodstuffs grown here can be used in potions or poisons. The fields are irregularly tended by mushroom farmers.

Typically, citizens can just wander the fields and eat when hungry, as the madness has destroyed all social structure. There is always a chance of meeting an insane and hostile farmer (a **cultist**), however.

## I. STOREHOUSE

The storehouse contains harvested mushrooms and molds, but has not been properly tended. If a party member eats any of the mushrooms or molds stored here, there is a chance (roll of 4 on a 1d4) that the food is poisonous. The PC must make a DC 10 Constitution save to avoid taking 7 (2d6) points of poison damage and having violent stomach pains for a full 24 hours giving them the poisoned condition.

In a small cupboard, a case of 4 vials of nonmagical antidote to this poison can be found.

## J. JARI'S HUT

This is a small hut for Jari the fisherman and his wife. Jari used to fish from a boat but now he nets the blind cave fish from the shore and the pier. The priests claimed all boats so the wood could be used in shrine construction.

Jari knows the whereabouts of the yallagogs, and is mildly insane. The underground lake contains very low concentrations of cibarius glow moss dissolved into its waters, thus his madness is a bit milder than those who do not drink from the lake. An encounter with Jari is sketched out in the encounter "Mad Fisherman."

## K. CENTRAL PARK

This park has stone benches and paths meandering past statues, metal sculptures, and working fountains. The park is tended by the priests, and there are several statues of Zarzumotl and his guardians.

The park has secular overtones as well and is frequented by demented citizens (typically 1d6 **cultists**) who are attracted to the lights and statues. It is also a place of respite for the **cult fanatic** priests.

## L. SHRINE TO ZARZUMOTL

This is an open-air shrine featuring several altars, paintings, and statues in honor of Zarzumotl. It is frequented by the same number of cultists and priests as area K.

## M. INSECT PENS

The noises coming from these pens are maddening in themselves as they contain dozens of giant cave locusts. There are also giant centipedes, giant fire beetles, giant scorpions, and even giant spiders. This is the primary meat source of the citizens. The pens are carefully kept by Emenitl, his acolytes, and Knights of Kiltzi.

Insects must be purchased for food but given the nature of Ulbatuahemoc's economy, charity is frequently given. The number of insects is staggering (10d20 of each), though there should be no reason the party must combat the creatures.

## N. PITUALLI'S HOUSE

The town herbalist Pitualli lives here and though he is showing signs of insanity, it is in fact only amplifying his true nature and Pitualli is coming closer to becoming a homicidal maniac.

In his modest hut is a footlocker which is locked and trapped. It requires a DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or a poison needle causes 7 (2d6) poison damage. In it, there are 30 gp and a notebook with instructions on how to make basic poisons and potions of healing from the local flora.

Pitualli is only in his residence on a roll of 1 on a 1d6 at any given time. Every 10 minutes, roll 1d6 again to see if he returns to drop off some newly collected ingredient. Pitualli is always home during the evening.

Pitualli secretly worships the deity Zaltec and stands apart from both the priests of Zarzumotl and the Charity Guild. He will not take kindly to invaders in his home and will attempt to use his prized possession, a *talón of Zaltec*, to destroy the intruders. Killing Pitualli will initially anger Emenitl, but if they present evidence of Pitualli's secret allegiance (the talon, for example), Emenitl will not fault them. Pitualli is a **druid**.

## O. ABANDONED MARKETPLACE

There are several shop huts set up in the center of town. Once the burgeoning center of town activity, it has been largely abandoned. Some huts have been claimed by townspeople as an improvement over their own small quarters. Roll 1d6 - on a 5 or 6 the hut is occupied with 1d4 **commoners**.

## P. LAKE OF TEARS

Long ago this lake earned its name because so many of the original settlers lost their loved ones to it. Terrible monstrosities once dwelled within the lake and managed to take dozens of lives before they were eliminated.

Zarzumotl actually slew the beings virtually single handedly before he descended into madness, and was hailed once again as a great hero.

When the corpses of these creatures sunk into the deep lake, their magical nature somehow seeped into the lake itself and fed the growing lichen on the strange central isle in its waters. From these waters, the cibarius glow moss received their nourishment.

The waters, however, are fouled by massive amounts of dissolved blood salt, and cannot be drunk by human without them suffering the effects (at disadvantage due to potency).

## Q. ISLE OF THE SUN

In the massive cavern roof above this island, there is a shaft that travels all the way up to the surface. If the PCs could somehow get to this tunnel which is approximately 450 feet above the lake, they could crawl through to a spot in the desert that is less than a full day's travel from their meeting point in Kolan.

More spectacularly, at approximately an hour before midday on the twelfth day of Flamerule, the sun lines up in such a way that a perfect beam of sunlight filters directly onto the island for just under a minute. The effect is known to be beautiful, and has given the isle its name.



The magic of the creatures who Zarzumotl slew (some who know of such creatures claim that they were aboleth), mixed with the high mineral concentrations in the lake and caused a mutation in the local mosses that soon became the first colonies of cibarius glow moss.

This confluence of events was actually set into motion by the goddess Kiltzi who sought to favor her people. The glow moss can now be found in many parts of the city, but its greatest concentration still remains here. There is enough here to cure the entire city's populace.

## ENCOUNTERS IN ULBATUAHEMOC

The party will probably want to get to their original mission upon locating the city. Emenitl and a lucid Jari are the only ones available who might clue them into the yallagogs and their penchant for thievery.

It is best to steer them in his direction. Once the PCs see the condition the city is in, they may decide to attempt to save it from Zarzumotl's Curse. The citizens are obviously suffering terribly.

### 1. THE INQUISITION

At any point that a party member is separated from the rest of the group while in Ulbatuahemoc, they will have an encounter with a member of the city's guild of thieves, known as the League of Stealth. This woman, who is a **spy** named Inimi, has gotten her hands on some kurari poison from jungle halflings that she met on one of her many expeditions to the upper world.

Kurari poison is described in the **MZC1 The Maztica Campaign Guide**, but in short, her crossbow's bolt will require any creature hit to make a DC 13 Constitution save or become paralyzed for a minute. Inimi has two **thugs** with her. Should things go bad, they will attempt to cover her escape at which point she will wait to have her revenge.

Inimi and her thugs will bind and gag a paralyzed character using very strong rope with perfect knots that require a DC 19 Strength (Athletics) check to break or DC 19 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) to escape. Then the character will be dragged off to a hidden hideout which would require the remaining PCs to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to find.

Inimi will ask questions of the restrained character about the party's intentions in the city, where they came from, who their friends are, etc.

Inimi only wants to be sure the party do not endanger the League. She does not care at all about Zarzumotl or the yallagogs, and she knows nothing of the trade agreement, though it piques her curiosity if the bound player brings it up.

If the bound character makes a Wisdom (Insight) check of 12, he or she will notice how Inimi's ears perked up at the mention of the agreement.

At the end of the encounter, Inimi will dismiss the hirelings, wait several minutes, and then toss the character a knife to cut his or her bonds. Inimi will disappear into the night.

If the PCs return to the city at some point with the trade agreement, Inimi will confront them in the streets with a band of 6 **thugs** from the League of Stealth. She believes that she can return the agreement to the Grand Pochteca and receive the remainder of the reward herself.

### 2. MAD FISHERMAN

Jari is a local fisherman who knows that the cave dwellers sometimes use boats to row upon the great underground lake. He is somewhat insane and will first pretend that he has a boat of his own.

Jari will attempt to get in, falling from the end of the pier into the water, which is about 25 feet deep and he will drown unless rescued. Until he is rescued, he will still think he is in a boat and say "The boat is taking on some water!" as he barely stays afloat.

Once rescued, the experience will afford him a few moments of clarity and the party can then talk to Jari about the yallagogs. He describes them in the following way.

The cave dwellers are a vicious and thieving lot, but they used to stay away from the city for the most part.

Recently, they have been coming awful close and I fear for myself and the other fisherman some days.

You'll be able to recognize them easily if you can see them. Their stone skin keeps them well hidden, so if you enter their lair, make sure you don't take any stone outcropping for granted. They'll know you're there long before you see them.

If the PCs mention their trade agreement, Jari will claim that the yallagogs frequently raid the surface and bring just about anything they can find back with them. Since their stone skin protects them from its effects, they usually go up at the onset of major sandstorms. Somehow, he claims, the cave dwellers know when they are going to occur.

Jari is also willing to provide the PCs with a small boat made from a hallowed out giant mushroom cap. He will rent it for a few gold (5 gp), but he would like them to return it and he retains an extra 15 gp until its return.

### 3. PITUALLI

The party may seek out Pituali at his home and confront the cruel druid there. In this case, Pituali will not have his hired thugs from the League of Stealth along with him.

Otherwise, he will actually seek the party out himself and will bring four of the **thugs** as hired mercenaries.

Pitualli saw something he wanted on a PC, and the madness has driven him to become utterly obsessed with the object.

Pitualli carries his *talon of Zaltec* with him along with two potions of healing and the key to his footlocker. The item's statistics can be found in **MZC1**.

### 4. INSECT PLAGUE

One of the Knights of Kiltzi has succumbed to the madness of the Curse and thought it might be a good idea to free the "poor imprisoned people" in the insect pens. Unfortunately, his madness has led him to believe that **giant centipedes**, **giant fire beetles**, **Maztican giant cave locusts**, **giant scorpions** and **giant spiders** are people.



Dozens of the insects have escaped and are running, hopping and crawling through the city. Let the PCs have any number of the following encounters before the combined efforts of the priests, their acolytes and Emenitl's faithful round the remainder up. Either choose the encounters or roll 1d8.

**Roll 1d8 Encounter**

|     |                                |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| 1-2 | 10 Giant Maztican Cave Locusts |
| 3-4 | 10 Giant Fire Beetles          |
| 5   | 6 Giant Centipedes             |
| 6   | 3 Giant Spiders                |
| 7   | 1 Giant Scorpion               |
| 8   | Roll twice, ignore 8           |

## 5. YALLAGOG RAID

At some point after the PCs meet Jari, a raiding party of yallagogs enters the city unopposed by the priests of Zarzumotl. Their main goal is to steal what they can, but the yallagogs are not averse to slaying any who stand in their way.

Very few of the city's inhabitants are prepared to handle the raid, particularly with the rampant madness. Pockets of resistance do form however, mostly led by Emenitl and some guards who have turned to his cause.

A pack of **yallagogs** equal in number to the PCs decides to take them on in the streets. The yallagogs are carrying loot amounting to a total of 140 gp in small jewelry items and coins.

If he hasn't encountered the PCs yet, Emenitl will take note of the PCs' heroism at this point and will invite them to his home through a Knight of Kiltzi.

## 6. EMENITL

Emenitl observed the PCs repel the yallagogs and was impressed with their heroic behavior. If the PCs accept his invitation, refer to Area G of the City Map for a description of Emenitl's house.

Under these circumstances, however, Emenitl will add the following dialogue when he speaks to the PCs.

I have long sought to ease the suffering of this once proud city, but I grow weary. I have long sought to see it rise from the darkness but I fear that the age of man in Ulbatuahemoc is coming to an end.

You see, when Zarzumotl led our people to our city some feared him, but most revered him as a god. One who had the greatest distrust of him was the founder of my order, a high priestess of the goddess you may know as Kiltzi.

The priestess was named Centehua, "The Lonely One." My master Garriboc is a direct descendant of Centehua in both blood and philosophy.

Unfortunately Garriboc has succumbed to the insanity, and I feel there is nothing I can do to assist him, nor complete his honorable mission of ending this terrible curse.

Before Garriboc turned, he uncovered some truth about the curse that I have not been able to replicate. He claimed that he knew a cure that had been provided by Kiltzi and that I was to be the first to benefit from its effect. My continued sanity is proof that he succeeded, but alas, Garriboc was too far gone to pass on his knowledge.

If Emenitl is pressed for more details about Zarzumotl he gives the information presented in the history of Ulbatuahemoc and then in a hushed tone he relays the following suspicions to the PCs.

I do not know what Zarzumotl's exact goals are, but recent events have led me to believe that he is trying to replace our city's entire population with another.

Zarzumotl has always required sacrifice on our Founding Day, but at one time he at least cared enough for the people to protect it from greater threats.

I believe the curse is a manifestation of his will and as the chaos leads us into destruction, he does nothing. These are not the actions of a god, even a cruel one!

The cave dweller attack today is just the latest in a series of events that would never have occurred in the past. My feelings are that the cave dwellers sense something, and they are taking advantage of our weakness.

I would not be surprised if Zarzumotl had something to do with their recent attack.

The "cave dwellers" is the colloquial name for the stone men who call themselves the yallagog. Emenitl can pass the following information about the yallagogs onto the PCs which ties deeper into his theory.

I fear that today's attack was nothing more than a scouting party for the cave dwellers. I worry that Zarzumotl seeks to replace those of us who still survive with these creatures.

Perhaps he believes that their worship will actually lead to his ascension. Were we not fervent enough? Perhaps Zarzumotl has been infected by his own curse in this belief!

We cannot handle raids such as the one today for much longer. Zarzumotl's "protection" has kept us weak and dependent and we have so few warriors at our disposal. How many of those that we have to fight remain sane enough to do so?

There is no doubt in my mind that should the cave dwellers launch a concerted attack, we are doomed. Perhaps with a little more information or a reduction in their numbers, all would not be lost.



Could you be the heroes we need? It is likely that the cave dwellers have stolen this "trade agreement" you speak of. Even as an afterthought to this mission of yours, perhaps Kiltzi has led you here for this reason!

At this point, the party has little choice but to enter the yallagog caverns if they would like to complete either mission.

Emenitl is nearly positive at this point that the trade agreement is with the thieving yallagogs and without a raid on the yallagogs, their next attack will surely overwhelm the city's defenders.

## THE YALLAGOG CAVERNS

The location of the caves is on the cavern map (Area 13). They each require a slippery climb of 10 to 50 feet and without a climbing speed or magical assistance, the highest cave is almost impossible to reach (every 10 feet of climbing requires those without a climbing speed to make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check with a DC of 13 or the characters fall taking 1d6 damage per 10 feet fallen or part thereof in bludgeoning damage). There is, however, an entrance to the highest caverns via a ladder in Cave A.

### CAVE A

Refer to the Yallagog Lair and Caves map for Cave A.

#### 1. DEAD BODIES

A small passage from the cave mouth opens into a large, circular room with irregular walls. Two dead yallagogs can be found slowly decomposing. Their stone-like skin is sloughing off in large, stony chunks of flesh.

Between the plates of stone it is obvious that the yallagogs have pinkish skin similar to that of humans. They are not in fact, creatures of elemental earth, but rather they have developed a thick callous which covers the entirety of their body in stony plates. If the PCs search the bodies carefully and make a successful Wisdom (Perception) with a DC 12, they will notice unusual marks on their skin where the stirges from Area 2 inserted their proboscis.

#### 2. STIRGE NEST

The tunnel eventually widens into another natural room. In the center of the room is a ladder made of wood. The ladder extends up through a 5 foot wide hole in the ceiling which is about 25 feet above the PCs. There does not appear to be other exits in this room.

If the party searches the room, they see a 4 foot high crawlspace about eight feet up on the eastern side of the room. If a character investigates the crawlspace, they will be able to see that it goes back some distance, and will notice bat-like creatures hanging from the ceiling. This is a thirteenth of 12 stirges.

The stirges have not eaten since they killed the yallagogs and if they detect the PCs, they will fly out and attack.

The ladder leads up through a narrow tunnel, and emerges 20 feet higher in room 14 of Cave D. The yallagogs in Cave D use this as a convenient way to enter and leave the high caves.

### CAVE B

Refer to the Yallagog Lair and Caves map for Cave B.

#### 3. ENTRY HALL

This area is large and oval shaped, but shows many signs of civilization. There is a feathered mat in the middle of the room, and ashes from a fire along the eastern wall. Along the western wall is a heavy stone door and there are two narrow corridors that leave the northern end of the chamber.

The room is empty, but the yallagogs in room 5 will be alerted to the party's presence if the PCs make any noise here. They will prepare themselves for battle, following the party if they head down the hall, and attacking the party immediately if they attempt to go through the door.

#### 4. STORAGE AREA

This square room contains several chests and barrels. The barrels contain water and some kind of fragrant beverage. The chests contain food; mostly fungus and insect carcasses. The chests are latched, but not locked.

#### 5. WATCHERS

This room contains 10 yallagogs. They will most likely hear the party in room 3 (unless all of the PCs were being stealthy) and will be prepared to cast *bane* and *slow* on the PCs as they enter the room.

The sounds of battle will alert Areas 6, 8 and 9 to the presence of intruders but only Area 8 might send reinforcements. Roll 1d8 each round of combat; if an 8 is rolled, 1d4 yallagogs will leave the common area to join the battle here.

These yallagogs have 3 chunks of uncut turquoise (150 gp total) between them.

#### 6. TURQUOISE TREASURE

Read the following to the PCs when they enter this chamber.

Two features of this room are immediately striking. First, this room is more or less square, hewn out of the rock by the inhabitants to create a larger living area. The second is that you can see a vein of blue stone in the walls that looks a lot like precious turquoise.

Unfortunately, the reward promised in these walls will not come unearned as the guards begin their attack.

This room contains seven yallagogs. One of the creatures wields a *mācuahuitl* +1.

The walls do in fact contain a good sized vein of turquoise. It has been chipped at by the yallagogs, but the PCs could still receive 1500 gp worth of the stone if they spent the better part of a tenday chipping at the stone.

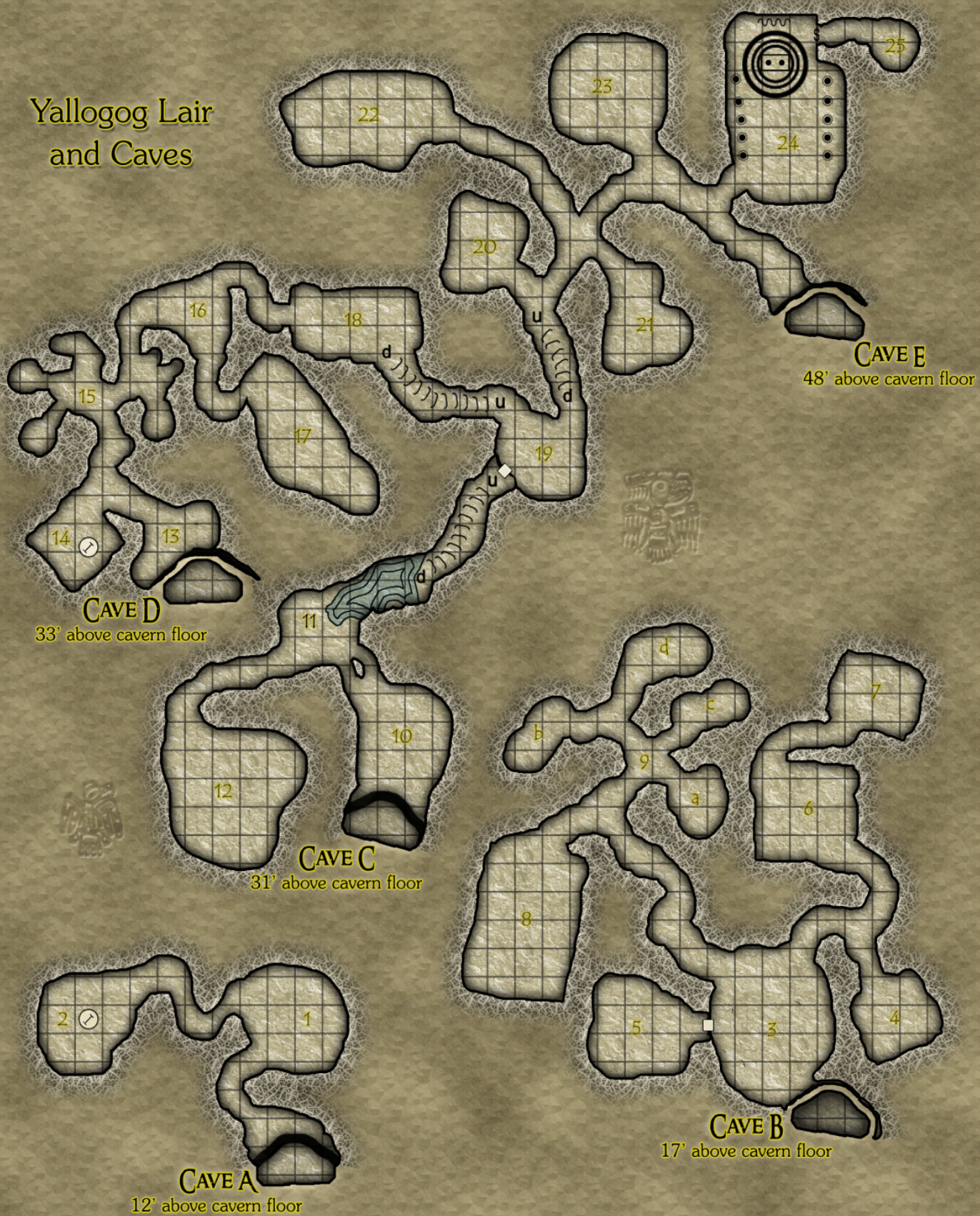
#### 7. ARMORY

The yallagog almost exclusively use *mācuahuitl* and 15 of them lay in this storage area. There are also several large chests here which contain 5 *cuahuitl*, 3 *cuauholōlli*, 8 *tēmātlāt* (taken from murdered *firiji*), 6 *itzōpilli* and even an *ahtlatl* with 12 *yāōmītl* as ammunition. Each of these weapon types can be found in **MZC1 The Maztica Campaign Guide**.

One of the chests contains three lengths of rope and three grappling hooks.



# Yallogog Lair and Caves





## 8. COMMON AREA

This room contains 9 **yallagogs**, who will likely enter combat as described in room 5. They carry two uncut chunks of turquoise between them (100 gp).

## 9A.–9D. NURSERY

Each of these small cubicles contains 3-12 young noncombatant yallagogs, one **yallagog** who oversees the children's welfare and two yallagog guards. The young cannot defend themselves and slaying them outright would be an evil act.

The overseer and guards try to avoid combat and make a promise to the party (in halting Maztican) that they will not interfere with their raid if they are willing to spare the young. The yallagog are being truthful.

## CAVE C

Refer to the Yallagog Lair and Caves map for Cave C.

## 10. TWO-HEADED BRUTE

Read the following to the PCs as they approach this section of the cave.

As you approach this area you hear loud arguing in two distinct, yet similar deep voices. You cannot make out the language, but undoubtedly it is getting increasingly heated.

There is a foul smell permeating the entrance which has you dreading going in any deeper.

Inside the chamber is a grotesque malformed and two-headed giant of a creature. The argument comes from the two heads, who are angry over which head gets to consume the dead firiji which it has recently slain.

The creature has no chance to surprise the PCs, but it is so distracted by its conflict that the PCs have advantage to surprise it.

The creature does not have a name and is possibly unique; a mutation formed from unexplained underdark energies.

It has all of the same stats as an **ettin**, except it only speaks yallagog.

## 11. SUNKEN ROOM

This room contains a large, shallow pool of water that is over thirty feet across and spans the width of the room. At no point is the water deeper than 4 feet, but in the middle of the pool the ceiling dips as low as 18 inches above the water level.

The pool contains relatively clean and cool water, as well as several varieties of small, edible fish and crustaceans. These small creatures live in a number of these interconnected pools throughout the caverns.

The room is otherwise empty.

## 12. GLITTERING ROOM

The walls of this large chamber are studded with flakes of mica. When the players bring light into the room, the walls sparkle, forming quite a beautiful display.

Other than this innocuous effect, the room is empty.

## CAVE D

Refer to the Yallagog Lair and Caves map for Cave D.

## 13. ENTRANCE HALL

A **Maztican geonid** that has been beaten and tortured for years by the yallagogs lies tied to a carved stone in the center of this room. It has gone insane from its predicament and attacks any who approach. The length of its fiber rope allows it move the entire length of the hall, but not beyond.

## 14. LADDER ROOM

This room contains a ladder that leads down to Area 2 from the lower cave (Cave A). Upon hearing the characters enter, the four yallagogs from Area 15 will rush in and attack. If the party does not enter by the ladder, they will be resting in room 15.

## 15. SLEEPING QUARTERS

These are sleeping quarters for the fighting males, which are a little more private than the common rooms of the major lair areas (i.e., those in caves B and E). There are four **yallagogs** here, as described in room 14.





The yallagogs have various stolen items among them. In total, the items have a worth of 120 gp, but the PCs may also roll 3 times on the “trinket” table on pages 160-161 of the **Player’s Handbook**. If you would like to create trinkets of your own for the players to find this would be an excellent opportunity to do so, or the trinkets could simply be selected at random.

## 16. EMPTY QUARTERS

This room appears to be sleeping quarters, as there are several sleeping mats and sacks. The inhabiting yallagogs are currently out collecting food, and are unlikely to return for several hours. Underneath the robes is a single **giant centipede**.

## 17. BATS

This long chamber has a very high ceiling. The floor is thick with guano. Above, some 2,000 bats roost. They will be sleeping, but may become startled by sounds of battle (see room 18).

## 18. SLEEPING QUARTERS

This room houses 8 **yallagogs** but it is relatively far removed from the others, and there is little chance that the sounds of battle will attract attention from the other yallagogs.

The sounds may however wake the bats in Area 17. Each time a PC casts a loud spell or otherwise creates a ruckus (DM’s discretion) roll a 1d8. A result of 6-8 awakens the bats. If startled, they will flee the caverns in massive swarms. Some bats will leave through Area 16 and some through Area 18.

The bat exodus will last 4d4 rounds, during which the swarms will attack any creature whose space they occupy. In total for each round, every PC and yallagog in those areas will be subject to the attacks of 2 **swarms of bats** each.

The bats are simply frightened and are attacking out of fear. They move deeper into the cave system at the end of the rounds.

The yallagogs here have 6 chunks of turquoise (300 gp), 90 gp in quills full of gold dust and another 2 trinkets.

## CAVE E

Refer to the Yallagog Lair and Caves map for Cave D.

## 19. BACK ENTRANCE

The door to this room is very sturdy and difficult to move, as it is rarely opened. Currently it would take a successful Strength check (DC 15) to open, but if oil is placed liberally on the hinges, or if more than one character assists in opening it, the check has advantage.

Any attempt at opening the door alerts the yallagogs in the Guard Room (Room 20).

## 20. GUARD ROOM #1

There are 5 **yallagogs** stationed here. One wields a *mācuahuītl* which bears the mark of Zarzumotl. This is the “left hand” *mācuahuītl* of Zarzumotl and the wielder is a CR 1/2 creature due to the added damage from the weapon.

## 21. GUARD ROOM #2

There are 5 **yallagogs** stationed here. One wields a *mācuahuītl* which bears the mark of Zarzumotl. This is the “right hand” *mācuahuītl* of Zarzumotl and the yallagog wielding it is a CR 1/2 creature due to weapon’s ability to paralyze.

## 22. BANQUET HALL

This irregularly shaped room is well lit with symmetrically arranged torches which sit atop six foot tall columns. In the center of the room is a long stone slab that may serve as a table. There are several boulders arranged around the slab.

This room is used as a banquet hall and it is currently empty.

## 23. COMMON ROOM

This room contains 22 **yallagogs**. Eight are children which are unable to fight and 3 others are too old to battle as well.

Of the remainder, 6 do not have access to weapons, but will attack with their fists to defend the young.

The other 5 can grab their *mācuahuītl* in time to start battle normally. The room contains loose pieces of turquoise of various sizes worth a total of 150 gp in addition to various valueless personal effects.

## 24. SHRINE TO ZARZUMOTL

This room, unlike the others, is almost perfectly rectangular.

Along the far wall is what appears to be a small dais, upon which rests a stone altar, about 5 ft. tall and 2 ft. deep. The altar contains a small golden grail, some feathers, and a vial of liquid.

Behind the altar is a huge tapestry, painted unmistakably with the face of Zarzumotl. Lanterns are burning slowly on stone pedestals around the room.

The grail is indeed made of gold, and is worth 250 gp. The liquid in the vial has a sour smell and a bitter taste, and is actually a slow-acting drug which induces sleep that the yallagog have developed using various mushrooms and used before performing sacrifices to Zarzumotl.

If imbibed in full, the player must make a DC 15 Constitution check or suddenly act as if slowed. The effect will last for 10 minutes at which time the player must make another Constitution saving throw (same DC) or fall asleep.

A sleeping character cannot be awakened until the end of his next turn. There is a secret door in the northern corner or the room which requires a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to find.



sleeping character cannot be awakened until the end of his next turn. There is a secret door in the northern corner of the room which requires a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to find.

## MĀCUAHUITL OF ZARZUMOTL

*Weapons (mācuahuītl), legendary (requires attunement)*

The mācuahuītl of Zarzumotl are twin mācuahuītl that are designed with a lighter wood and slender shape that is somewhat rare for a typical mācuahuītl and gives them each the *light* weapon property. An owner may attune to both weapons, using only one magic item slot to do so.

The warrior Zarzumotl once wielded both weapons simultaneously and may have been the only warrior in Maztican history to have used mācuahuītl in this manner. Both weapons bear his mark.

The “left hand” mācuahuītl of Zarzumotl causes an additional 7 (2d6) piercing damage due to replenishing chips of obsidian that break off in a wound and wind themselves deep down into flesh.

The “right hand” mācuahuītl forces a victim who is struck by the weapon to make a DC 14 Constitution save or suffer from the temporary effects of paralysis. On each of their turns, a paralyzed victim can make an additional save to shake off the effects of the mācuahuītl. The paralysis effect is caused by a direct assault on a creature’s nervous system, so victims who do not have a nervous system (even those who aren’t immune to being paralyzed) are immune. The paralyzation otherwise wears off after 10 minutes.

## 25. CUBBYHOLE

This is a small crawlspace where treasure is stored. The lair treasure is: 120 gp worth of quills filled with gold dust, a large white pearl (300 gp), an agate (10 gp), and a marbled onyx (50 gp).

The characters can also find their slightly crumpled, but fully intact trade agreement.

## ZARZUMOTL'S KEEP

Zarzumotl’s keep contains the most difficult encounters of the adventure, and the final encounter is quite deadly. If the players decide to tackle the creature itself in order to end the threat to Ulbatuahemoc forever, they have quite a battle on their hands.

Zarzumotl is a victim of his own insanity, and is currently too lost within his own self-created reality to notice as the characters march through his guardians. Allow the players to rest and prepare for the deadly battle ahead, should they decide to take on the immortal threat.

## 1. ENTRY HALL

The entrance hall is about 20 ft. wide and nearly 60 ft. long. The walls are illuminated by lit lanterns, and an eerie glow filters in from above through small windows in the ceiling that rises 20 ft. above the floor.

Evidence of the grandeur of the old Revered Counselor’s days is all around. The hall is lined with ornate pillars with carved motifs of the various Maztican gods, and the walls decorated with ornate featherweavings.

There is a door on the far wall, and what appear to be two doors on the side walls very near the far wall. There are also two doors opposite one another on the side walls about halfway down.

The room is empty. If a search for secret doors is made, the party can discover several arrow slits on the side walls with a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check to find.

In the days of the Revered Counselor, these slits allowed guards (rooms 2 and 3) to watch over entrants to the palace and to pepper them with arrows if necessary. The guard rooms are unmanned today.

## 2 AND 3. GUARD ROOMS

Two identical, empty guard rooms. If the party makes a careful search, they will notice the arrow slits that give a surprisingly wide view into the entry hall, and a clever arrangement of slits that allows an arrow to be shot at nearly any angle into the room. These rooms are no longer used.

## 4 AND 5. ARMORY

These two identical rooms are both locked with badly rusted locks which require a DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to pick.

The rooms are stocked with old weapons and include dozens of weapons and pieces of armor. Every weapon \*\*M Maztica Campaign Guide can be found here in addition to every type of armor except for Eagle or Jaguar Knight Armor.

## 6. SITTING ROOM

This room, like the entry hall, appears to show off the palace as it may have looked in the old days. Around its border are several intricate pieces of handcrafted furniture; several large chairs, two divans and two full length couches stuffed with feathers. All are made of rare woods and other materials. There are also two desks with wooden chairs and several small bureaus.

Like the entry hall, this room has a bluish tint thanks to skylights in the ceiling, which is 12' above the floor.

The room is empty, and there is nothing in the bureaus. In each desk are quills, jars of ink, and blank scrolls. A careful search will reveal that most of the bureaus are dusty, but the desks have no dust.

## 7. LIBRARY

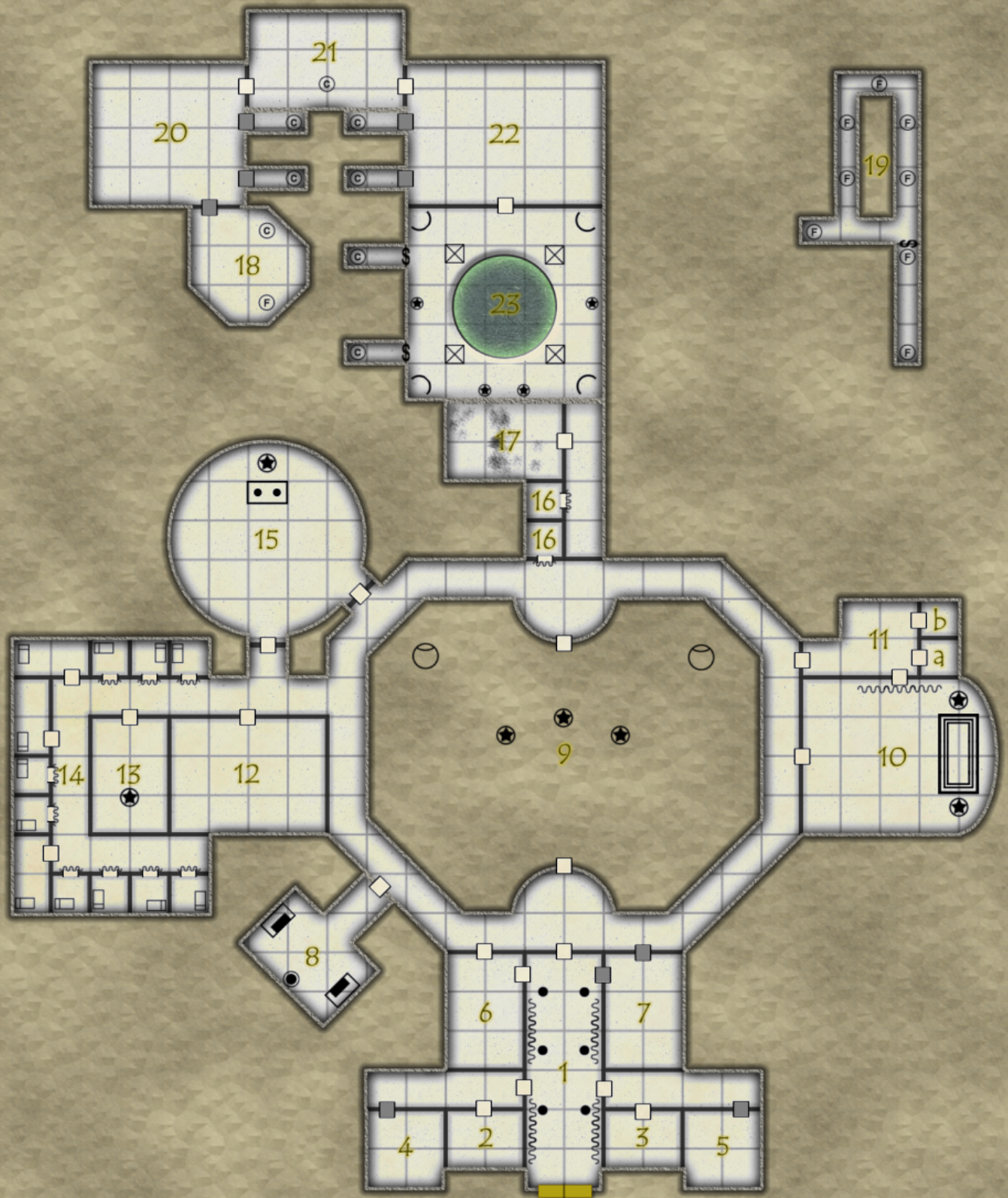
The doors to this room are locked. No one has the key to the door from the entry hall, but the other door has been fitted with a lock which requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to open, and many of the acolytes (area 16) carry a key.

The room contains ornate furniture like in room 6, but also contains a wooden bookcase that has alcoves in it holding piles of old papyrus scrolls.

Mixed among dozens of poems, theories on war tactics and other useless items are a number of *spell scrolls* that contain both hishna and pluma magic spells.



# Zarzumotl's Keep





There are three scrolls with a cantrip, two with 1st level spells, two with 2nd level spells and one each for 3rd and 4th.

Suitable spells can be found in the **MZC1 The Maztica Campaign Guide**.

## 8. KITCHEN

This kitchen is still in use and contains pots and pans, areas for controlled fires, shelves with dinnerware, bags of grain, mushrooms, fungus, and other foodstuffs. There are also large vats which contain a liquid that tastes much like octal (see **MZC1**) and has the same effects, but is made with mushrooms.

## 9. DINING HALL

The dining hall has an ornate dining table and chairs and there is a lit lantern on the wall.

## 10. CONSERVATORY

From the double doors, this room slopes down gradually. A carpet of woven feathers lies on an aisle between two rows of benches. The ceiling is up to 20 ft. high in places. At the far end is a small stage on which sits an organ. There is also an area with stands set aside for a choir. The organ is functional and quite loud.

## 11. PREPARATION ROOMS

Where the conservatory performers waited backstage. Room 11a contains several musical instruments in varying states of repair, and room 11b contains a closet with robes. These rooms are empty.

## 12. COURTYARD

An open air courtyard, featuring fountains and colored lights, as well as three large statues on a large hill. All are of Zarzumotl. If the horn is moved on the central one, the statue shifts to reveal a secret passageway to the feeding chambers. A PC will notice the mechanical nature of the statue if they search it and make a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

## 13. CHAPEL

A large, circular chapel, devoted now to the worship of Zarzumotl. Behind an altar is a statue identical to the one in the courtyard (room 12) that can also be opened to the underground areas.

When the party enters, there will be a priest (**cult fanatic**) accompanied by three armed bodyguards (**thug**).

If a member of this group is captured, he will reveal the location of the hidden passageway with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check. The priest carries a key to unlock the feeding chambers.

## 14. RUBBLE

This is a roughly rectangular room measuring about 30 feet by 20 feet and there is rubble strewn about the room. High along the outer walls and in places in the ceiling, the blue-glow of the outside streams in.

It is difficult to traverse the room because of the rubble. Along the center of the room runs a very low column of stones that may once have been a wall dividing the room in two.

Most peculiar is the long east wall which seems to be made out of a different type of stone, and seems to be in perfect condition.

Among the rubble are a shredded tapestry, some broken glass and candles, and a golden necklace with a diamond/sapphire pendant worth 1500 gp.

## 15. CLOAKROOMS

These cloakrooms contain the robes of the priests.

## 16. SLEEPING CHAMBERS

Each sleeping chamber contains a bureau, a desk, a holy book, a mirror, and a bed. Any given chamber may contain a sleeping **acolyte**. Roll 1d4, with a result of 4 indicating a single acolyte.

## 17. CENTRAL AREA

This area is a central meeting room and study room used by the priests. There is modest furniture, tables, desks, and divans, but there is also another statue of Zarzumotl in the center that contains a secret door like those in room 12 and room 13.

## 18. OCTAGONAL ROOM

This room is almost perfectly octagonal except for one corner which has a 90 degree angle instead of a 135 degree angle. On one wall of that square corner is a door. The room is well lit by a slow burning lantern on a small wooden table in the corner. Beside the lantern is a pile of scrolls.

There are two other exits to this room: a trap door in the floor and another in the ceiling. The floor trap door is plainly visible but it requires some force to open (Strength check to open with a DC of 14). If the party searches, a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check will allow the PCs to notice a small handle in the ceiling, reachable by standing on the table (which will only support a smaller character).

The trap door contains a ladder that unfolds and leads up to room 19. The scrolls contain what appears to be a series of tables, with writing in one column and filled circles in smaller four smaller columns. The scrolls contain tables and schedules for feeding the guardians and Zarzumotl himself.

## 19. UPPER CHAMBER

In this long access hallway, the ceiling is 4 ft. above the floor. The players must crawl through it in single file (requiring that they remain in the prone position).

At seven locations around the square room are folded ladders on trap doors in the floor that can be easily opened. One leads to room 18 and the others drop down to a landing 7 ft. below the ceiling.

Each of the six is 15 feet long and 5 feet wide, and they end at a locked door. The doors may be picked using a DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or opened with a key found on any of Zarzumotl's human attendants (rooms 13 and 16).



The locked doors lead to room 20 or room 22, and are used to feed Zarzumotl's guardians. The gird in room 21 is fed by another trap door that has no ladder; food is simply dropped down. Two of the smaller cubbyholes have secret doors that lead directly into Zarzumotl's lair.

## 20. FIRST GUARDIAN

As you enter this room, your ears are assaulted by a loud shrieking sound like the sound of a huge, wounded bird. Uncurling from slumber in the far corner, a thousand-pound beast rises to its feet. Standing 8 ft. tall, the great creature regards you with reddish eyes peering from its owl-like face. The creature emits further squawks and shrieks and charges.

The creature is an **owlbear**. It is a guardian of Zarzumotl and is somewhat under his control. There is a small hidden lever on the east wall that will release a long rope from the ceiling. If tugged, it will cause the south wall of the palace to collapse, its great stones becoming an avalanche down the embankment upon which the palace stands. It is one of Zarzumotl's two escape routes. To find the lever, a player would need to make a successful Intelligence (Investigation) check with a DC19, as it is very well hidden.

## 21. SECOND GUARDIAN

When the players drop into this room, they are assaulted by the mixed scents of manure and oiled metal. From the rear of the room a metallic scraping heralds the attack of Zarzumotl's second guardian – a bull-like **gorgon**.

## 22. THIRD GUARDIAN

The third guardian is slightly more self-aware of its captivity and purpose, and certainly does not appreciate its confinement.

Zarzumotl's control of his guardians also does not extend quite so casually to the **minotaur** which occupies this room. Should the players somehow allow the minotaur to escape, it is just as likely to turn on the priests or even Zarzumotl himself.

## 23. ZARZUMOTL'S LAIR

This battle is undoubtedly deadly for players who have even reached levels as high as 7. Only the most prepared or clever should even attempt it, and if the players are obviously in over their heads, a kind DM should allow ample opportunity for escape.

If the player's decide to return, the guardian rooms should already be stocked with new creatures in addition to slain priests, acolytes and cultists.

Read the following to players who enter Zarzumotl's lair.

The first thing you notice upon entering the room is another gigantic likeness of Zarzumotl. Unfortunately, unlike the statues, paintings and carvings you have come across, this likeness is moving and breathing.

You have no doubt that what stands before you is the Lord of Madness, Zarzumotl himself.

Zarzumotl lays prone in a vile cesspool in the center of the great chamber, but he soon rises from the muck to glare at you. Slime drips from his body, creating ripple waves that lap at the edges of a pit whose depth you can't gauge.

Zarzumel's giant head, with its glowing red eye, insect-like rows of additional eyes, and devilish horns stands four or five feet above the tallest among your party.

From its thin, muscular torso flails eight long tentacles – each ending in a single, razor sharp talon. Smaller writhing tentacles writhe endlessly beneath its vile chin. Above its head dangles several ropes of varying colors.

Even while motionless, Zarzumotl emanates a buzzing sound like a huge swarm of bees. You cannot quite tell if the sound only exists in your mind.

In a clear baritone of unaccented Common Zarzumotl says, *"Come, my children, and enter a paradise you could only have dreamed of."*

For this encounter, it might be easier to run the battle if the DM sketches a map of the room and keeps track of character positions.

Zarzumotl has trapped this room and keyed their triggers to the colored dangling ropes which he will pull throughout the battle (using a Legendary action).

He will also choose to use his ability to confuse those around him to keep the players disoriented.

When Zarzumotl decides to use one of the ropes, refer to the descriptions below for the effects of each. He may also decide to commit four of his tentacle attacks to pull a rope instead. Zarzumotl may use remaining tentacles to attack on the same turn that he pulls a rope.

For all other battle information with Zarzumotl, refer to the entry for Zarzumotl. While he is a CR10 creature, the encounter in his lair makes him CR11, considering the traps he has set up.

## ZARZUMOTL'S COLORED ROPES

Refer to the following descriptions should Zarzumotl pull a rope. If the players foolishly decide to pull one the same effects will occur. Each can only be used once.

**Blue Rope.** The area immediately around Zarzumotl's pit is sealed off by a wooden partition that swings down from the ceiling. Anyone on the border must make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) save with a DC of 16 or drop to a chamber below taking 18 (4d8) bludgeoning damage from the fall on blunt protrusions that line the floor. A successful save means the character takes half damage. Zarzumotl falls along with the characters and suffers the same fate, but he will pull this rope anyway if he is attempting to escape (see room 24).

**Orange Rope.** A dust cloud accumulates from hidden reserves in the ceiling. The dust contains an irritant that makes it difficult to use weapons or cast spells, causing the characters to suffer disadvantage on all attack rolls for a full minute while the dust dissipates.







Zarzumotl is immune to this effect, and the dust cloud is unavoidable.

**Yellow Rope.** A giant boulder falls from the ceiling and rolls down a fairly steep incline to the center of the room. Characters who fail a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check with a DC of 15 take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage. A successful save means the character completely dodged the boulder.

**Lime Rope.** The statues in the front and rear alcoves shoot each shoot darts everywhere in the room except in Zarzumotl's pit. The characters must make a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) check with a DC of 17 or suffer 21 (6d6) piercing damage. A successful save means the character does not take any damage, but is prone due to the fact that they had to drop in order to avoid the darts.

**Cream Rope.** Four trap doors (marked by the X on the map) swing open forcing characters to make a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) save or fall into pits of acid. This only can affect characters standing on the trapdoors and Zarzumotl will not pull the cream rope unless there is at least one character doing so. The acid pits cause 28 (8d6) acid damage.

**Violet Rope.** Eight jets on the pit floor fire, spewing disgusting filth in all directions. Players must make a Constitution save with a DC of 15 or become poisoned until the smell lessens in one minute.

**Red Rope.** Pyrotechnics erupt with a brilliant light around the pit. Characters must avert their eyes in time by making a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) save or become blinded for 1 minute.

**Gold Rope.** Powerful motors kick in that sends a violent wind gust through the chamber. Each player must make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check at the start of their each of their turns for a full minute to prevent themselves from being knocked prone. If the wind is still active, they must make another to stand back up.

## TREASURE

Zarzumotl hides his treasure underneath his sizeable bulk. There are 15 random gems worth 200 gp each, ten golden statuettes worth 150 gp each and a tiara set with sapphires and emeralds worth 9000 gp.

Zarzumotl's corpse can also be used in a number of ways which any character who makes a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check will be aware of. Emenitl could also inform the characters of these special properties.

**Small Eyes (6).** Each of Zarzumotl's small eyes can be thrown with a range of 60/80 ft. At the point of impact, they explode in a 20 radius spherical fireball which can wrap around corners and cause 27 (8d6) fire damage allowing a DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) save for half damage.

**Large eye.** Zarzumotl's large eye can be removed and will function as a crystal ball until it rots after a full week.

If the players think of a way to keep it preserved, either magical or mundane, its powers last indefinitely. The eye might allow foreign entities (possibly from the Far Realm) to observe the character as well when its magic is in use.

**Horns.** Zarzumotl's horns are said to be the source of his immortality. Ground up and dropped into a healing elixir or any sort, the effectiveness of the draught doubles. There is enough horn for 20 applications of this magic (10 per horn).

## 24. ESCAPE ROUTE

Beneath Zarzumotl's Lair (room 23) is a small system of catacombs that provide an escape route for Zarzumotl, except that there has been a cave-in in the passage to the city. Zarzumotl will fall in (taking the resulting damage) if he pulls the blue rope.

He will quickly try to make his way out, but will stop at room 26 and try to heal his wounds. If he manages to fully heal, he will make his way back to his lair to continue the fight.

## 25. EMPTY ROOM.

There is nothing of note in this room other than cobwebs and the scent of mold.

## 26. CAVE-IN

This room used to lead to an exit route, but there has been a cave-in that has not been repaired. Rubble will be all around, and there is no chance to dig out without considerable equipment. Zarzumotl may be holed up here if he fled room 23.

# CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Whether or not the players "cure" the residents of Ulbatuahemoc or not, they must accomplish their original goal of delivering the trade agreement to the Grand Pochteca of Kolan in order to receive their reward.

If the PCs have assisted the city against the yallagogs at the very least, Emenitl will show them secret tunnels that safely reach the surface less than a day's walk from their destination in Kolan.

Emenitl does not believe the city has much time before it collapses under its own insanity. He will encourage the heroes to come back as soon as they possibly can to help find a cure. Emenitl knows that killing Zarzumotl is a solution, but also how difficult it might be for even powerful adventurers. Emenitl does not realize that the easiest solution is so close to him, but the PCs may figure it out.

Emenitl's predictions are correct. If Zarzumotl's Curse is not stopped, the city will implode in bloody warfare within a single year.

# FURTHER ADVENTURES

There are many opportunities for additional adventures presented in the Curse of Zarzumotl.

First and foremost, Kolan is bound to profit richly from Tukan's terms and this will make the Grand Pochteca very happy. He is by nature a traveling merchant and knows of many great lands. The Grand Pochteca has been as far north as distant Anchôromé and as far south as fiery Lopango.

Duly impressed with the PCs performance, he may seek to hire them for countless additional missions. The first might in fact be to bring a brand new trade agreement to this underground, unknown city of which they speak.



Within the adventure itself, the players may have come across rumors of ancient aboleth, portals to Faerûn, hidden thieves guilds, and races that are virtually unknown in the aboveground world.

Any one of these could lead to further adventures, and the League of Stealth is certainly interested in the heroes newfound wealth.

Emenitl spoke often of Garriboc, but his former mentor did not make an appearance within the adventure due to the fact that he has become irrevocably insane and is lost somewhere in the city or nearby tunnels. The cibarius glow moss can cure the vast majority of the population, but some, like Garriboc, are too far gone. Perhaps the PCs could seek another cure somewhere in the outer world?

When the PCs raided the yallagog lair, the players may have left many young behind with few adults to keep them safe in the dangerous wilds of the underdark.

Despite his fear of these creatures and their obvious propensity for cruelty, Emenitl might request that the players seek out the survivors and offer peace, or even a place within the city (particularly if Zarzumotl has been killed).

The fate of Ulbatuahemoc, as stated in Concluding the Adventure, very much depends on the PCs actions and successes, but even if they manage to kill Zarzumotl there will always be further adventures lined up for the players.

If the madness is cured, Zarzumotl and his cultists will continue to rule over Ulbatuahemoc and their animosity with the Knights of Kiltzi may grow to open warfare. If Zarzumotl has been killed, this conflict would end quickly and the Knights would set up Emenitl as the city's de facto ruler.

Emenitl would rule justly, retaking the title of Revered Counselor. Perhaps statues of the heroes of Ulbatuahemoc might be erected where Zarzumotl's once stood.

## ZARZUMOTL

*Huge aberration, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 105 (10d12 + 40)

**Speed** 40 ft.

| STR     | DEX     | CON     | INT     | WIS     | CHA     |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 19 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 19 (+4) | 13 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 20 (+5) |

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Int +5, Wis +5

**Skills** Perception +9

**Damage Immunities** psychic, poison

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** truesight 60 ft, darkvision 90 ft, passive Perception 19

**Languages** Common, Abyssal, Infernal

**Challenge** 10 (5900 XP)

**Maddening Aura.** Within a mile of Zarzumotl, all creatures must make a DC 10 Saving throw or suffer a form of indefinite madness as defined on page 258 of the DMG. This save must be made at the end of each year that a creature spends within that range without going beyond the range for more than a period of 30 days. Each year, the DC increases by 1, and additional forms of madness accumulate with additional failed saves.

**Confusion Aura.** Zarzumotl continually exudes an aura that duplicates the effects of the 4th level spell confusion. Anyone standing within 30 feet of Zarzumotl must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 16) or be affected by the spell. Between 30 and 60 feet, the effect

still exists but is somewhat weakened (giving Advantage to the saving throw).

**Regeneration.** Zarzumotl regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If Zarzumotl reaches 0 hit points, he can no longer regenerate.

### ACTIONS

**Tentacles.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (8d4+4) bludgeoning damage plus 24 (5d6) psychic damage.

### REACTIONS

**Fleshy Spawn.** If Zarzumotl is hit by any slashing attack that causes more than 20 points of damage, his flesh spawns a miniaturized version of himself temporarily that lives for 1 minute before melting into a pool of morass. This miniature Zarzumotl is Medium sized, has a Strength of 13, and can only make tentacle attacks causing 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage. Zarzumotl can spawn only 1 per turn no matter how much damage he takes.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The zarzumotl can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The zarzumotl regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Move.** Zarzumotl moves up to half his speed.

**Activate (Costs 2 Actions).** Zarzumotl can activate any trap he has designed that is within his 10 foot reach.



# A HIDDEN HORROR IN THE HOUSE OF TEZCA...

While Maztica settles from centuries of exile, communities recover in any way they can. Many are seeking the aid of folk who could see to their salvation. But there are secrets hidden in the dark places of Maztica that could easily get in the way. Beware the madness in the desert!

Cover Art: "Desert"

**Lia Perrone** <http://pechan.deviantart.com/>

## MADNESS IN MAZTICA!

Throughout history, life in the deserts of Maztica has long been considered difficult. The heat, the sandstorms, the creatures...

Normally, no sane person would ever want to live in such an inhospitable environment.

The ones with this belief however, have rarely taken into account the will of the folk of the True World. The desert dwarves for one have not only survived in the desert, but they have managed to thrive. Centuries ago, an event known as the Rockfire Disaster separated them from their Faerûnian kin and stranded them in the Maztican desert. The dwarves now dominate many parts of the desert.

The men and women of the fledgling city-state Tukan have also exploded in population and influence since its founding. For over a century, these rugged folk have reaped the benefits of a bountiful lake and rivers supplemented with trade through the goods of the traveling merchants known as pochteca.

Not all is well in Tukan this year, however. It has been abnormally hot and dry (even for a desert) and the river and streams have in many parts been replaced with mud and baked clay.

Each year, in an event known as the *Flowering*, the folks of Tukan celebrate the city's founding. During this celebration signs of real trouble started to appear even beyond the effects of the drought.

The revelers began to notice that the sky darkening was in the east. It grew duskier over the next three following days until finally, four days after the Flowering Celebration, chaos ensued.

A huge brush fire began tearing through a century's worth of growth. The fires raged over the course of two days, jumping the city's walls and killing many who foolishly remained.

Most fled to the west, waiting out the inferno. Fortunately, the rains came from the south and two days of a steady downpour finally beat down the wildfire. By this time, a significant portion of the city and many of its outlying farms were left in ruin. Displaced folk were taken in by relatives and friends or they fled to nearby dwarven settlements. Rumors soon spread that the orcs, trolls, ogres and the jagre of the Viperhand were stirring yet again.

The beasts had decided that Tukan was vulnerable, and they could raid the city like a flock of vultures descending upon a carcass. The entire contingent of Tukan's eagle and jaguar knights were dispatched to fend off these attacks, and though they eventually turned the raiders away, much damage had been wrought.

Player characters may have recently heard that Tukan is having some difficulties this year and are in desperate need of adventurers for hire.