

THE ORM LIES DOWN IN PUNJAR



Marra



BY TERRY OLSON
ILLUSTRATION BY BENJAMIN MARRA

***The Orm Lies Down on Punjar** is best served when the PCs are recovering from their latest exploits, and are carousing and carelessly spending their hard-earned gold. Although the title references Punjar, this adventure can take place almost anywhere. “Punjar” is chosen for its familiarity among DCC veterans, as well as having the same number of syllables as “Broadway” (this romp is inspired by the well-known progressive rock opus by Genesis). Due to it being a short-format adventure, read-aloud area descriptions and level-specific stat blocks are not provided; the judge is encouraged to tailor the journey appropriately for heroes, demigods, or gongfarmers as needed.*

*Like its inspiration, **The Orm Lies Down on Punjar** could be interpreted as something that really happens, a bad drug trip, a dream sequence, a metaphysical exploration of the self, or something else entirely. The intent is to provide a few hours’ worth of entertainment when something slightly “off the books” is needed or when the judge needs a catalyst for transporting the party elsewhere (or elsewhen), giving the PCs an opportunity for reward along the way.*

INTRODUCTION

The PCs have acquired an entire bottle of ultra-rare Purple Rhost, a hard, throat-scorching, mind-altering liquor known by its glowing green worm writhing within. Purple Rhost is actually an arcane hallucinogenic distilled from the blood of an Orm-Master deep within the Purple Planet’s Under Plateau. Its power is such that all who partake of a given worm’s liquor share the same “trip” - eating the worm is simply the catalyst. There are a number of places the PCs could have acquired the drink:

- Punjar’s Black Market;
- a gift from Dim Lane’s Old Thom;
- the Silent Maid’s secret stash;
- left in a PC’s pack by a mischievous quasit.

The fun begins when a PC eats the worm.

Consuming the bottle’s inhabitant causes the PC to see a spectral worm emerge from his palm; the apparition has a viridian glow, with

a forearm's girth. This PC gains a temporary +2 to their Luck, which must be spent during the adventure. The worm seems endless as it penetrates and wraps around all who shared the liquor. Other PCs drinking from the bottle must make a DC 15 Fort save. If they fail, they also see the specter and gain a temporary +1 to their Luck. Use the Luck gain as a lure for those who haven't partaken of the rhost. If PCs succeed on their save, encourage them to try again to get the temporary Luck bonus by drinking the last drop, really believing, etc.; subsequent saves are made at a cumulative -1d penalty. Note that this is when PCs may choose whether or not "to go on the adventure." Those that see the apparition and gain the temporary Luck have no escape from what follows unless successfully treated for poisoning.

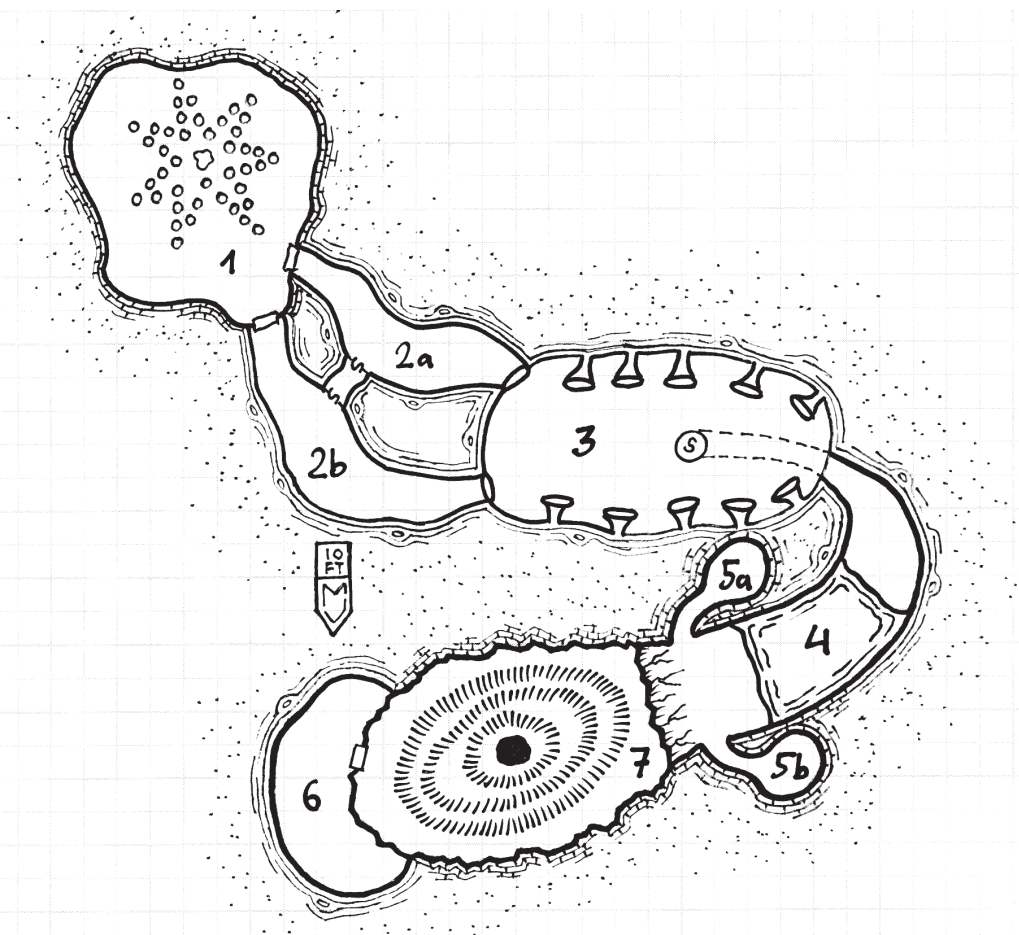
Once the saves have been resolved, the worm's tail exits the eater's hand and the ghost dives into the floor. The ground trembles as a large worm bursts through the floorboards and attempts to swallow the entire party. PCs may make a DC 12 Ref save to avoid being swallowed. Those who succeed see an even larger worm extrude from the ground, swallowing the first worm and attempting to swallow the survivors. Successively larger worms arrive until all PCs are consumed (increase the DC of the Ref save by 4 for each subsequent worm). The sensation of being swallowed is pleasant, and each PC passes out while seeing a warm light glowing from within his stomach.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

PCs may believe that they are in the carcass of the worm that swallowed them; this is not the case, although the map bears some similarities to a worm's anatomy. The PCs are trapped in a multiversal intersection of their physical beings, shared subconscious, and the arcane transplanar energy of an Orm-Master's blood. Any attacks made against the chambers' fleshy surfaces also damages the PC that ate the Purple Rhost's worm.

Area 1-Gelatinous Tears:

The PCs awaken, each suspended in a giant, gelatinous tear-shaped pod that is partially filled with water. Numerous pods hang 10' above the ground forming the shape of a seven-pointed star. A fleshy orb



dangles from the ceiling in the star's center, sending jolts of electricity to the pods. The chamber is made of a chalky white rock. The pods can be easily punctured by PCs attempting to escape. Anyone opening a pod that doesn't contain a party member either finds a naked dead body visually identical to his own, or finds a Punjar resident (if a replacement PC is needed). On the wall, two skin-like portals alternate opening and closing. Each may be pried or forced to stay open, but when doing so the other remains tightly closed.

Area 2A and 2B-Anima and Animus:

These fleshy chambers are identical in function, but differ in content. Both contain surfaces with tiny nubs that extend and retract, creating

the sensation of a moving floor (MV 15') going toward area 1. Subtract 15' from a PC's MV when determining his movement toward area 3: MV 15' stands still; MV 25' moves forward at MV 10'; MV 10' moves backwards at MV 5', etc. Area 2A contains flying tadpole-like creatures with vicious bites; they only attack male PCs. Area 2B contains flying prickly spheres that drip with acid; they only attack female PCs. 2A and 2B are joined by a secret corridor found by prying apart the fleshy wall (DC 14 Intelligence check). If the corridor is open at both ends then the PC with the lowest Luck makes a Luck check. Upon success, the inhabitants of 2A and 2B attack and destroy one another, otherwise their union creates a violent creature from the party's past.

Area 3-Pulsing Chamber of the Lily:

The party finds themselves in a room that rhythmically expands and contracts. Except for the floor, a pink, luminous membrane surrounds the chamber. Besides the entrances to 2A and 2B, there are ten large tubes in the walls, each of which either suck or expel air in a complex rhythmic pattern, accompanied by a faint thumping. The floor is covered in soft, freshly tilled earth, in which a solitary white lily grows. Any PC examining one of the tubes is sucked inside and expelled out another (DC 14 Ref save to avoid); the exit is random even if the same tube is entered. The journey is too quick for PCs to gauge how they are traveling, but the expulsion causes damage.

A secret tunnel lies 5' below where the lily is planted. PCs may dig for the exit, although if they water the lily, it grows instantly and reveals the tunnel by removing dirt with its roots. At full growth, the lily's sticky stigma is capped by a humanoid head which tells the party, "Narcissim is poison" (a hint for area 4). The judge is encouraged to make the head identical to someone the party has met or will meet in the future. If the PCs do not have water, they may use liquid from the pods in area 1. Picking the flower causes it to turn to dust and another to grow back the next round.

Area 4-Pink Pond of Id:

The tunnel leads to yellow spongy room, with odors reminiscent of rotten eggs. A large, 3'-deep pond of pinkish liquid spans the chamber, and must be traversed to reach the other side, which transitions to

a white-stone shore. Large stunner eels hide in the pond's sandy bottom and attack the party as they attempt to cross. This should be a challenging fight; stunner eels have a ferocious bite and can shock PCs to helplessness or team up to hold a PC underwater while others freely attack him. There are as many eels as there are party members. When an eel is killed, it floats to the top of the pool, and its head transforms to look like one of the PCs. Each PC is represented by an eel's corpse, without duplication. If a PC eats a portion of the eel representing himself, then he is severely poisoned, and his neck, chin, and shoulders grow flaps of flesh that seem to melt together. However, if a PC eats a portion of an eel representing someone else, then the represented PC is healed 1 HD of damage. The white-stone shore near areas 5A and 5B does not stink, due to a draft coming up the cliff from area 7.

Area 5A and 5B-The Unperceived Portal:

Chalky corridors lead to areas 5A and 5B which are (seemingly) empty white-stone chambers. Entering either chamber causes a bluish portal to silently appear in the other. The only way for the portal to stay in place is for both rooms to be occupied simultaneously. PCs wishing to use the portal have to figure out how to get the last person through, since the portal always moves to the empty room. The party may use the body of a deceased PC, an eel's corpse from area 4, or a body from one of the pods in area 1 to occupy a given room, so that the portal stays in the other. The portal leads to the Shapeless Friends in area 6.

Area 6-Shapeless Friends:

Upon entering the portal, the PCs are teleported to a chamber with firm gelatinous surfaces and a solitary metal door. Oozy humanoids step out of the gel, and speak to the PCs in bubbling voices, as if underwater. "Clever, clever," they say, and present the party with a huge net made of tiny, green, crystal links (extremely helpful in area 7). They speak in unison, as if sharing the same mind. Any melting-necked PC who poisoned himself in area 4 is given a scroll of alien hide; one side is tough and durable, the other is highly reflective. The scroll must be unrolled to see its reflective side. If a PC asks why he's receiving the scroll, they reply, "Because you remind you of you." Note that the ooze creatures have no reflection.

The creatures ask the PCs about where they come from, and why they are here. All answers are met with polite giggling chuckles of disbelief. If asked questions, the creatures are either silent or answer cryptically with metaphysical contradictions, for example:

PCs: "Where are we?" Creatures: "You are in It's in you."

PCs: "How do we leave?" Creatures: "You have to get in to get out."

If the PCs attack their hosts, then a TPK is probable. The oozy humanoids become highly adhesive, as do the chamber's floors and walls, which close in on their assailants, attempting to suffocate them as they stick in place by oozing into the PC's ears, noses, and mouths.

Area 7-Mocking Shade:

This is a gigantic cavern, the top hidden in a gray mist. The bottom is bowl shaped, with a 10' hole in the middle leading to darkness. The chamber's floor may be accessed either by descending the 40' cliff from area 4, or through the door from area 6, which is not visible from this side of the chamber. The area is otherwise empty until the PCs come within 20' of the hole in the floor; at this time, a Mocking Shade rises from the hole and attacks.

A Mocking Shade is a flying un-dead creature akin to a shadow, but more substantial in form. Each round, it forms part of its body to parody one of the PCs. The PC being mocked must make a Will save to act that round, and takes the same damage the shade does. In order to determine which PC is parodied, have the players roll 1d20, adding their character's Luck score (not modifier). The PC with the lowest result is mimicked, with the lowest Luck score used to resolve ties. Netting the shade with the green crystal net from area 6 has multiple benefits: the shade cannot change who it is mocking; the party gains +1d on all attacks; the shade is penalized -1d on all attacks. The shade may be turned, but this should be extremely difficult. Clerics who consumed the worm at the adventure's start are spiritually unable to turn the creature. If the party uses the Shapeless Friends' reflective scroll as a mirror, then upon seeing itself, the shade must succeed on a Will save or its mocking duplication melts away for one round. This encounter should be scaled appropriately by the

judge to present a significant challenge for the PCs. Upon its defeat, the shade transforms into a large black bird wearing a green crystal crown and flies away, dissipating moments later.

The bowl's hole begins as a 10' diameter fleshy, oily chute, ending in a portal; the entire chute is masked with darkness and silence. PCs cannot see into the darkness, hear anything from it, or gauge its depth. They have to make a leap of faith.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

After the PCs jump into the chute, they appear where and when the judge desires. Perhaps they wake up back in Punjar, having passed out in a tavern (which may or may not be flattened by the carcass of a giant, alien worm). Perhaps they find themselves on the Purple Planet, or in the Shudder Mountains, or in Lankhmar's Silver Eel. Regardless, the PCs should be rewarded appropriately by increases to Luck, removal of deity disapproval, etc., and also gain an insight specific to some unsolved problem. If they had gifts from the Shapeless Friends, then they still have them, but must discover their relevance in this new existence.