

The Fantasy Trip™ The Chaos Triads™



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INTRODUCTION

An unknown assassin has attacked Baronet Ehlmick, 12-year old heir to the Barony of the Foothills. A tiny dart of a rare and dangerous substance called Chaos Matter is lodged in the Baronet's neck. The effects are slowly killing him, and the dart cannot be removed. His grandmother, the elderly Baroness Dawn, wants to send a party of mercenaries to the abandoned Hedgeforth Caverns where the substance was once mined.

The party must retrieve an artifact, the Orb of Ages, hidden in the Caverns. The Orb is described as a sphere of glowing crystal about 2 feet in diameter. It absorbs Chaos Energy and should allow the Baroness' physickers to remove the dart and save Ehlmick's life.

Officials have announced the Baroness will give a \$10,000 reward to a party that enters the Caverns and returns with the Orb. A famed mercenary band, the Silver Stars, took on the job . . . but after several weeks they have not returned.

A ragtag band led by one "Alice the Ax" talked a panicked official into funding a second attempt. They have not returned, but nobody really expected to see them again.

The Baroness offers to equip a group with \$500 per person in supplies (including inexpensive magic and potions).

This adventure is suitable for 5-7 starting characters, and might be completed by four 40-point characters.

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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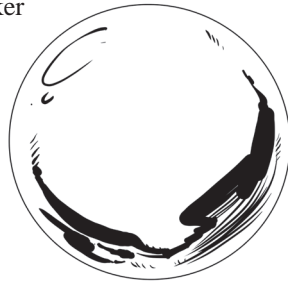


DOING A LITTLE DIGGING

Research and good reaction rolls may bring more information. The baronial retainers believe the expedition is hopeless. Small amounts of Chaos Matter were once mined by dwarves in the Hedgeforth Caverns. They brought in the Orb of Ages, which absorbs Chaos Energy, to make the mine at least marginally safe to work. But the small veins of Chaos played out and the Orb was taken away generations ago.

But the Baroness believes the Orb could still be in the mine, based on stories told by her grandfather. He said his ancestors required the dwarves to leave the Orb behind when they closed the mine, protecting it with concealment, traps, and a magical Guardian, to assure any remaining traces of Chaos Energy were absorbed harmlessly. The Orb was to be left there for 30 generations of Barons; the Baroness is the 17th. No one but the Baroness has ever heard of this, even in legend, and a few of the retainers think that grief has unbalanced her.

On a 3/IQ roll, a dwarf, Scholar, Alchemist, Chemist, or metalworker has heard of Chaos Matter but knows only that it is dead-black yet with a silvery shine, rare, dangerous, and unpredictable. That would confirm what the retainers and Her Excellency have to say about the properties of the material.



GM INFORMATION

The situation is worse than anyone knows. The caverns *are* a played-out Chaos Matter mine. Only the baronial family knew that the Orb of Ages was left when the mine was closed. Dawn's version of the story, a secret passed down from Baron to Baron, is correct in all particulars (and Dawn is not in the least unhinged; she is a strong leader).

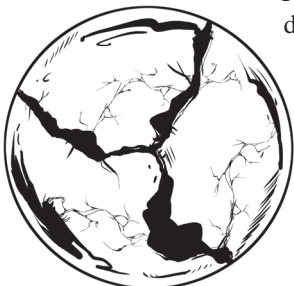
A dwarf or Scholar in the party, on a 4/IQ roll, has heard the name "Orb of Ages," but knows no more than the name.

The Silver Stars went to the mine, found the concealed entrance, and fought the Orb's Guardian. A misplaced crossbow shot broke the Orb into three shards, releasing the Chaos Energy it had absorbed.

Inside the mine, matter and magic no longer behave normally. There is a danger that the Chaos area will expand to threaten the rest of the barony, as the old Barons feared.

The three shards of the broken Orb are now leaking the Chaos Energy they once absorbed. Near the three old veins of Chaos Matter, three areas called Chaos Triads mark a rapidly thinning barrier between reality and the mad void.

The Orb's Guardian, itself now damaged and addled by Chaos, still tries to do its duty. The mercenaries killed in the Orb's explosion remain as Chaostained entities who single-mindedly defend the shards of the Orb. It is only by retrieving these shards that Chaos may be contained.



ANSWERING THE CALL OF CHAOS

If the PCs accept the job, they will be told the Orb has been described as a glowing crystalline sphere just under two feet in diameter, carried in a silver frame or tray.

The baronial advisers privately tell the PCs that they should not expect to actually *find* the Orb, but that they will pay \$3,000 if the party will enter the caverns and return with reasonable proof of the fate of the first two expeditions. They wish only to assure the Baroness everything has been done so that she can grieve in peace when the Baronet passes away.

The party will have two days to equip themselves before leaving on foot (the country is too uncertain for horses) to the area near the entrance to the mine.

THE ROAD TO CHAOS

On the second day out, the PCs encounter the second group recruited by Baroness Dawn's panicky retainer. Alice the Ax tried to take the money and run. They headed in the direction of the Hedgeforth Caverns, intending just to keep going, but the transformations near that region were unnerving and caused the superstitious bandits to turn back. They have returned to their old game of ambushing traveling parties.

If the PCs are scouting ahead, or have individuals with appropriate skills such as Alertness, a 3/IQ roll should be sufficient to give warning of the upcoming ambush. (Alice's crew is not very stealthy.) If so, the PCs automatically enter the encounter with initiative.

The bandits will immediately assume this well-equipped band is there to arrest or kill them for not completing the mission. Assume one adversary per PC, starting from the top of the list below. If there are more than six heroes, you can duplicate Antonio, or create some equally incompetent bandits on 28 points.

This encounter uses the standard *Melee* map; any available counters can be used for Alice's renegades.

Place the bandits at one set of entrance hexes and the heroes at the other as they enter a clearing. If the PCs gained initiative, they can choose to hold back some of their people and have them circle around to flank the bandits, entering from any side they choose at the beginning of turn two. If the players don't think of this themselves after an Alertness success, allow a 3/IQ roll for anyone with Tactics to come up with it. Again, Alice's crew is less than stealthy.

Alice the Ax

Human Bandit Leader

ST 11, DX 12(8), IQ 10

Weapons: Small ax (ready), shortsword (belt scabbard)

Armor: Chainmail, large shield painted with a battleaxe

Equipment: Chipped gemstone (worth \$25), \$18 in coin

Li Fang

Human Bandit

ST 11, DX 11(9), IQ 9

Weapons: Mace (ready), dagger (belt scabbard)

Armor: Leather

Equipment: Prayer book (worth \$5), \$6 in coin

Mel River

Human Bandit
ST 10, DX 10, IQ 10
Weapons: Hammer (ready)
Armor: None when encountered
Equipment: Healing potion (seal is tight; 5/ST to pull it out)

Thar

Human Bandit
ST 13, DX 10(8), IQ 7
Weapons: Morningstar (ready), dagger (belt scabbard)
Armor: Leather
Equipment: Pet hamster named Wiggles (worth \$2 if alive), hamster food, \$3 in coin

Mr. Chop

Human Bandit
ST 12, DX 10(7), IQ 8
Weapons: Broadsword (ready), shortsword (belt scabbard)
Armor: Chainmail
Equipment: Necklace of ears (worthless), \$0.50 in coin

Antonio

Human Bandit
ST 10, DX 10, IQ 8
Weapons: Cutlass (ready), dagger (belt scabbard)
Armor: None when encountered
Equipment: A bundle of racy love letters (worth \$20 to the right collector), small skin of cheap wine, \$2 in coin

The bandits are inclined toward violence (-2 to reaction rolls), but if the odds have them at a serious disadvantage, they may surrender or flee, as the tactical situation suggests. (The scoundrels don't *want* to die here!) If questioned, the bandits reveal they were just too frightened by the weirdness in the region to go on. (Example: they say the trees are "acting strangely," as are animals close to the area of the old mine.)

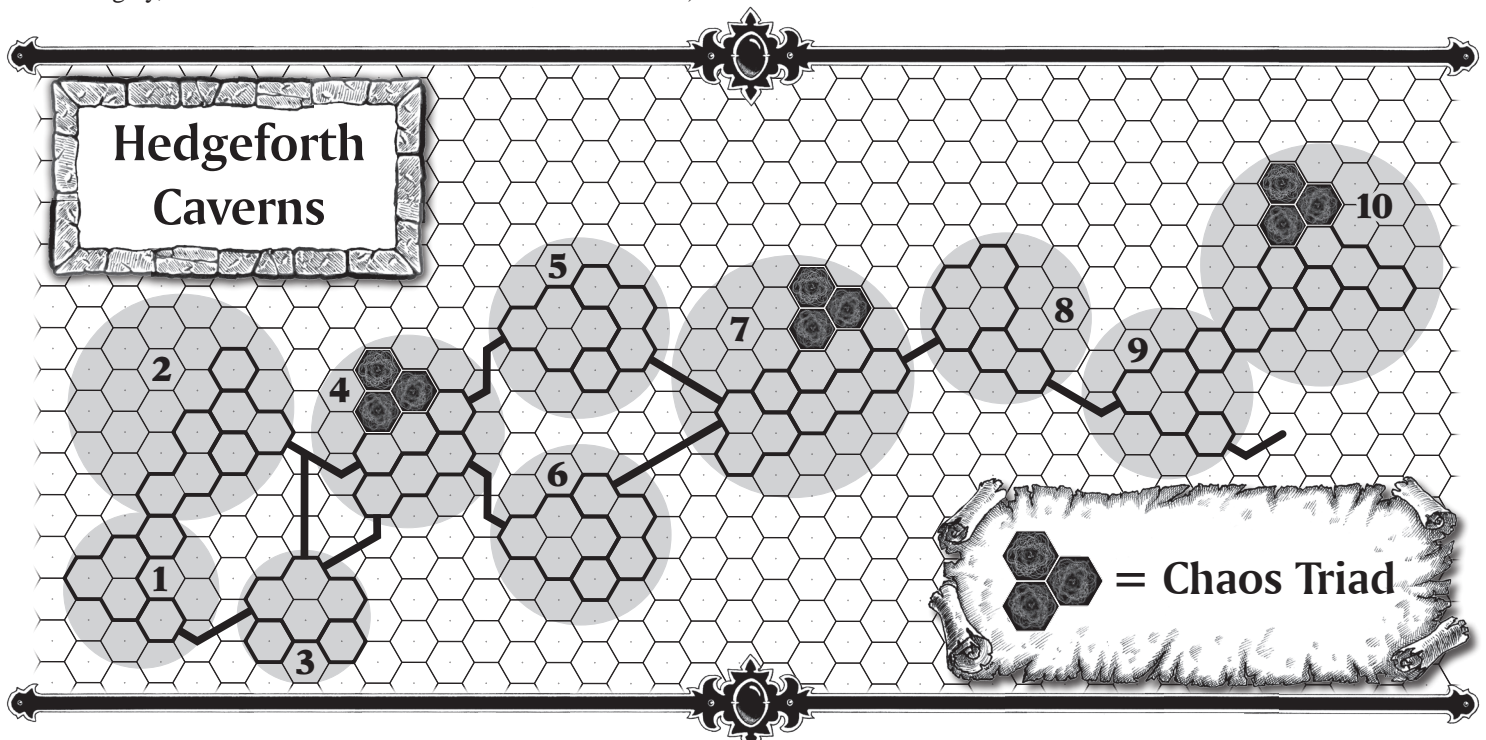
Under no circumstances can the bandits be persuaded to actually approach or enter the Caverns. If the party has taken them prisoner, they will have to decide what to do with Alice's crew, and be ready to justify it when they get back to Dawn's court.

WEIRDNESS ABOUNDS

After this encounter, the approach to the Caverns reflects the madness that scared the bandits, as Chaos slowly seeps into the area. The GM should feel free to improvise chaotic elements to make the atmosphere increasingly creepy as the PCs approach. These shouldn't be at all harmful (or useful). The "special effects" are to let the heroes know that something odd is happening – and spreading. Each effect doesn't last long, but should be disconcerting. Examples could include:

- Birds fly but don't flap their wings.
- Insect noises (crickets, cicadas, etc.) abruptly go silent within a quarter-hour's travel of the entrance area. (3/IQ secret roll for the PCs to notice.)
- The PCs' sense of smell is reversed. Wild flowers suddenly smell like fish; food and water look normal but smell vile. In contrast, anything normally bad-smelling has the undeniable odor of roses.
- Sound can only be heard in one ear (left or right). This changes from time to time for the whole party at once.
- Any reflective surface (shiny armor or weapons, a pool of water, etc.) reflects things non-mirrored (left to left instead of left to right).

Finding the cavern entrance itself proves to be no real problem. The PCs will know they are close when trees and other foliage sway the wrong direction in relation to the wind. (This is the creepy tree "wrongness" the bandits described.) The once-concealed entrance has had brush hacked away. The dirt and loose stone that once blocked the cavern mouth have been moved.





CHAOSTAINED

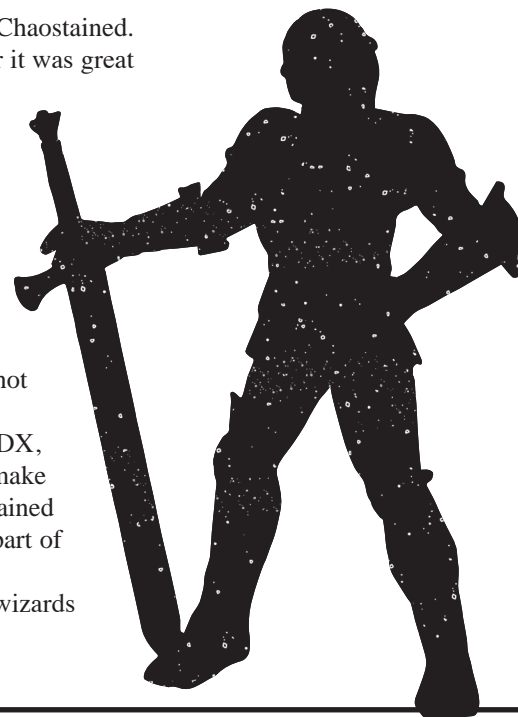
Those who die near a source of great Chaotic energy may become Chaostained. These wretched creatures remain fixed upon their last goal in life, whether it was great or small. But the effect of Chaos muddles their thoughts, making it all but impossible for them to communicate, cooperate, or focus on complex plans.

Chaostained resemble wraiths – they don't interact with the physical world as expected. They are not insubstantial, but they wade through the world like droplets of oil through water. Chaostained ignore effects caused directly by Chaos Energy.

To create a Chaostained, start with the original character's Attributes. The Chaostained will appear to have the armor and weapons they most used in life – but these are not real, only the figure's memory of familiar things. They will have the same Talents as they did while living, but cannot cast spells.

If the figure wore armor, the Chaostained will have the same MA, adjDX, and protection. If it favored a ranged or thrown weapon in life, it can make similar ranged/thrown attacks without running out of ammunition. Chaostained weapons do normal damage but cannot break or be dropped, as they are part of the figure's Chaos matrix.

No Chaostained can cast spells (but they are affected by them). Former wizards can strike as if they had a staff in hand, if they normally used one.



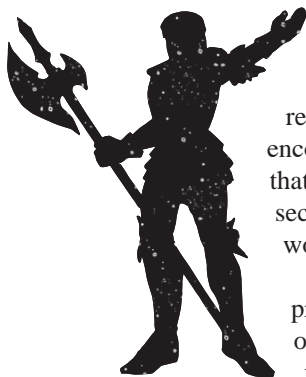
Every Chaostained has one Chaotic Power and one Chaotic Weakness. The following powers and weaknesses are just examples. Roll 1 die on each list as follows, or create your own weirdness. Describe the effects as bizarrely as possible. Chaostained break reality by their very existence. Each encounter is different, and should always be unnerving and harrowing.

Powers

- 1 – Uncertainty causes the Chaostained to appear to face in all directions at once, with front facing on all six sides.
- 2 – The Chaostained's perception is not blocked by matter. It ignores all obstacles (including magical walls and darkness) in ranged attacks.
- 3 – Attacks by the Chaostained warp around victims, striking from impossible angles. When attacking successfully, it rolls damage twice and takes the larger roll.
- 4 – Reality melts around the Chaostained at will. At the cost of 2 MA, it can move through a hex as if there were no impediment therein (including occupied hexes, solid walls, hazards, etc.). It cannot end its turn in an occupied hex. If it would, the Chaostained instead fades back to the last valid hex it occupied.
- 5 – The Chaostained can rewind time. It can reroll (once per encounter) the first failed attack roll that it makes but it must take the second result, even if the outcome is worse.
- 6 – Contact with the Chaostained proves painfully disruptive to others. It rerolls all 1s when rolling for damage caused to a target.

Weaknesses

- 1 – At the beginning of each turn, the Chaostained rolls 1d. On 1 or 2, it detaches from reality for the turn. This means it cannot move, act, or be acted upon in any way (giving foes a chance to get into position, ready attacks, etc.). In this state, it cannot engage a foe.
- 2 – The Chaostained oozes through reality, leaving echoes of itself in a shapeless radius. It is considered to be a 3-hex triangular monster as far as those who would attack it are concerned (use any 3-hex counter), but it can only attack others as if it were a single hex (the front of the triangle). Figures not adjacent to the front hex of the counter are not considered engaged. This gives attackers more areas to hit.
- 3 – Damaging blows repeat like echoes. Any critical success (roll of 3-5) against the Chaostained "repeats" for the next 1d turns, doing the same base damage roll (*not* tripled or doubled) at the end of each subsequent turn.
- 4 – Chaos makes the Chaostained unable to coordinate actions. It cannot move and act in the same turn, except for action options that can be undertaken while standing still or shifting one hex.
- 5 – Like lightning, the Chaostained can only move in a straight line each turn and can only rotate one facing at the end of its movement.
- 6 – Ranged attacks against the Chaostained are at a +4 DX, as if projectiles were being sucked toward it.



IN THE CAVERNS

1: ENTRANCE

As the heroes enter, a horde of rats streams out of the cavern toward them. Rat counters aren't necessary because the rats seem completely uninterested in the PCs as they spill across their boots in a mad dash to flee. Getting out of their way is the heroes' best bet, requiring a 3/DX roll to hug the wall until the rats pass by. On a failure, the figure is tripped up and falls prone in their hex. This is probably a frightening occurrence (3/IQ just to avoid panicking and rolling around screaming "Rats! Rats!" for the rest of the turn), but the rats will not try to bite even a fallen figure unless it deliberately attacks them.

The adventurers *can* attack the vermin on purpose, standing their ground and trying to block the flow. Any hit they make into an adjacent hex will kill a rat on any success; see *Rats, ITL* p. 99. A figure may also stomp on a rat in its own hex or an adjacent one, rolled like any regular attack.

A figure in an adjacent hex stomping rats does not need to roll to miss a character in the hex being attacked. (Using a weapon to do so *could* hit the figure in the target hex.) Don't worry about tracking the rats that are killed; there are always more rats.

A figure that does deliberately attack the rats will suffer 1d rat attacks that turn. Rats have DX 10, giving a 50% chance to hit. For simplicity, roll 1 die for each attacking rat. On a roll of 1-3, the rat bites successfully and does one hit. Rat bite hits in a single turn are *cumulative* against armor. Shields don't protect against rats.

At the end of the third combat turn, the rats have all fled. A 3/IQ observation of any dead rats shows that they have been transformed in subtle ways. Many have odd-colored fur: green, baby blue, orange. Variations in number of eyes, heads, legs, and tails abound. Use your imagination. Any rat corpse that has been transformed in an interesting way (roll 1d × number of PCs) would be worth \$10 each to the correct buyer, if the heroes care to carry such creatures out. (Maximum sale is 10 rats. There are only so many Chaos rat corpses that anyone really needs.)

2: THE GUARDIAN OF THE ORB

The door to this chamber seems to have been pretty well concealed, but someone has found it already and broken through the door. The chamber shows signs of recent battle. Several burned-out torches lie about, along with a pile of ash in which useless fragments of armor and weapons remain, including one half-melted silver amulet in the shape of a five-pointed star. (Value: about \$30 – but far more as proof of the fate of the Silver Stars mercenaries who died here.)

In the hex immediately in front of the exit on the far side of the area stands a battered suit of dwarven plate armor. The exit door beyond is completely smashed, leaving only burnt shards of wood behind.

The armor was once ornate and beautiful, but has seen better days and would be valued at no more than \$400 in current condition. At the center of the same megahex, in front of the armor, lies a tarnished and battered metal tray atop three short legs, with three metal bands attached to a handle at the top.




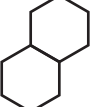
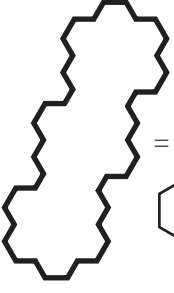
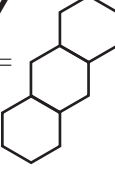
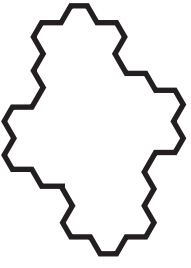
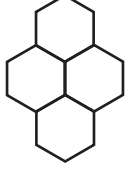
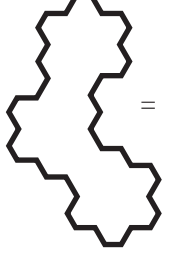
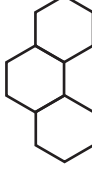
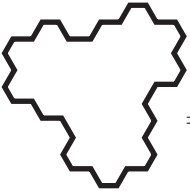
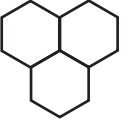
Though damaged and old, it appears to be made of fine silver. (The apparent value is at least \$200, even as damaged as it is.) The tray itself can be carried in one hand by anyone who picks it up.

Upon the approach of anyone within 2 megahexes, the armor will stir and creakily stand up straight. Though no face shows in the visor of the helmet, it moves as if occupied. A battleaxe is welded to the armor's right arm and gauntlet.



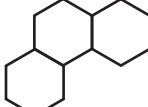

USING MEGAHEX TILES IN PLAY

*Megahex tiles in combat scale seen
as hexes in labyrinth scale*

Moving from your overall labyrinth map to combat-size megahex maps or tiles is just this easy . . .

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. . . and for single hex tiles:

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The encounter areas in the caverns can be assembled using *TFT* megahex tiles as provided in *The Fantasy Trip Legacy Edition*. See the labyrinth map (p. 3) for the size and types of tiles used to represent each room, the form of single-hex-wide tunnels that connect locations, and the entrances and exits to the areas. If you don't have the tiles or don't want to use them, you can just lay out each encounter on paper for the combat.

The special megahex tiles used to make the Chaos Triads shown in rooms 4, 7, and 10 are provided on p. 12, and can be printed and mounted to cardboard. The three tiles are grouped in a triangle as shown on the mini-maps to form a Chaos Triad.

In a booming metallic voice, it will speak to any who approach in an archaic form of the dwarven tongue. "I am the Sacred Guardian of the Seven Families of the Mountain," it will intone. "What can any living being – no matter how old, experienced, or well-traveled – never truthfully claim to have witnessed?" Any dwarf will understand the words, and if a PC speaks a different language in the Guardian's presence, the Guardian will repeat the question and thereafter speak to that individual in his own native tongue.



The acceptable answer to the question is "his own death" or the equivalent. This is from an old Seven Families proverb, and a dwarf of the region, a Scholar, or other person with appropriate Area Knowledge should be given a 4/IQ roll to vaguely remember the answer, even if no one can figure it out. Anyone giving the correct reply will get a +2 on further reactions from the Guardian.

The Guardian will converse peacefully even if the PCs do not immediately answer the riddle – as long as they do not approach within 3 hexes of the Guardian or the silver frame. (He'll advise them politely to stand back if they approach too closely.) He will attack if they do not heed this warning, attack first, or try to proceed through the doorway behind him.

He can say, if properly questioned, that he was placed here a long time ago by the Seven Families of the Mountain to protect the Orb of Ages and use it to defend against the rise of Chaos. He doesn't have any knowledge beyond that of how he got here or what his purpose may be, and his responses sound much like someone who is disoriented after suffering a shock or concussion.

If it is drawn to the Guardian's attention that the Orb is not present in the empty silver tray, he will seem to take stock of that for the first time. "It was broken," he will explain haltingly. "It was broken, and Chaos bloomed. The foes were destroyed and the pieces of the Orb . . ." He struggles for words, finally saying ". . . left me behind."

With a good reaction roll, the PCs may persuade the Guardian that they mean no harm and share its goals. (Any dwarf or even someone who speaks their language will get a +1 adjustment to a reaction roll.) A very bad adjusted reaction roll (2 or less) will result in the Guardian reluctantly initiating combat. If so, it will fight until destroyed.

If the Guardian can be appeased without combat, it will relate that it was challenged arrogantly by "foes with silver stars." During the fight, "the leader" misplaced a crossbow shot that struck the Orb. It exploded into three pieces, stunning the Guardian and killing all of the Silver Stars in a wave of Chaos. The three shards of the broken orb "jumped away" as the caverns transformed and deteriorated around the Guardian, who loyally remained at his post even in the Orb's absence. The Guardian knows the shards of the Orb are deeper in the cavern because he can feel them, but he cannot determine their exact locations.

If befriended, the guardian is willing to accompany the heroes and fight at their side *if they specifically ask*. It will fight to the "death" for them, but it will not come up with any original ideas. The PCs have to figure out things for themselves, though the Guardian can be used by the GM to give hints if they are getting too far off track.

The Guardian

Animated dwarven plate armor

ST 18, DX 12, IQ 10, MA 6

Armored body stops 5 hits

Battleaxe welded to its arm – 3d damage

Special Abilities/Weaknesses: Cannot be healed in any fashion. Cannot himself attack or attempt to touch any fragment of the Orb.

3: SILENT SNAKES

Lurking in the shadows of the two southernmost megahexes in the chamber are a number of one-hex giant snakes – one per PC, divided evenly between the two megahexes. The shadows and their utter silence give the snakes a +1 to obtain Initiative the first turn. Their silence – not so much as a hiss – is not the most unusual thing about them. They regularly become insubstantial to recent opponents.

In game terms, any figure in combat with one of the snakes may not hit the same target twice in a row, and vice versa. When a successful hit is scored by either combatant (whether or not it does damage), the opponents become "quantum paired." From that moment, they are insubstantial to each other. There is no change in appearance, but a hit on a paired target (by *any* means) just causes the attack to pass through as if it wasn't there.

The pairing lasts until either figure successfully hits some other target. At that point, the pairing ends and the two figures in the new combat are now paired and can no longer hurt each other.

This means that the first figure to successfully strike in a combat here will find their opponent unable to immediately strike back at them. Any other target is fair game. Only the last figure to strike an opponent is paired.

A mass or area attack that *doesn't* specify a target will not create a pairing. The combat must be close between two opponents to pair them; missile or thrown attacks don't cause a pairing.

If the characters figure it out, they can alternate targets and ignore engagement with any snake to which they are currently paired. Clever heroes might find other strategies. The snakes are not brilliant, and they will not realize this is happening, attacking any adjacent foe at random whether or not they can really hit them.

Giant Snakes

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 6, MA 6

Bite – 1d+1 (not venomous)

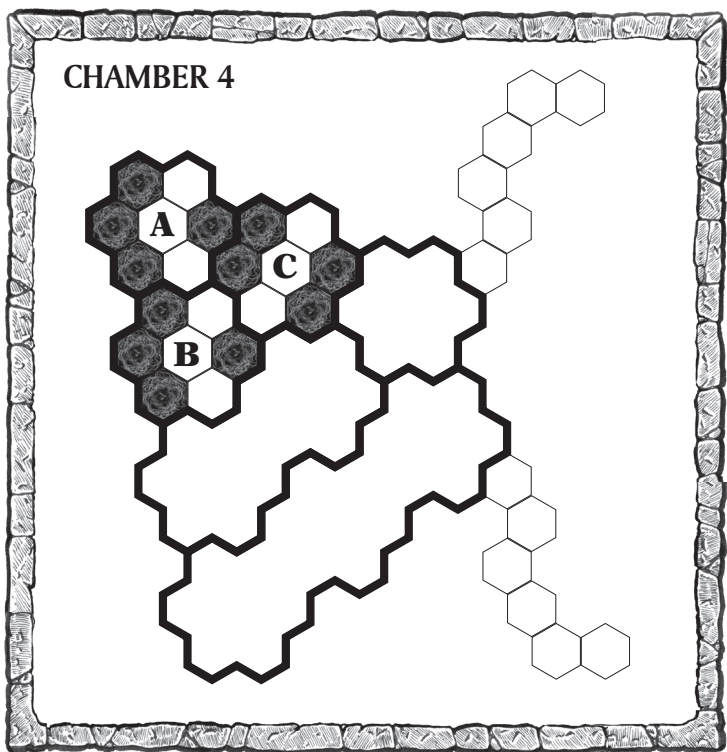
-3 to any attackers' DX; side hexes are considered as front hexes in combat.



4: THE FIRST CHAOS TRIAD

When the Orb of Ages was shattered, it exploded into three similarly sized shards. The shards – irregular pieces of glowing crystal – have teleported into the caverns to the site of the three largest concentrations of Chaos Energy, where veins of Chaos Matter once protruded into this universe. These three-megahex triangles are the Chaos Triads of the title – places where the fabric between reality and Chaos is wearing thin. Instead of absorbing Chaos Energy, they are now leaking it back into the world, bringing each Chaos Triad closer to becoming a catastrophic rift in reality.

In this chamber, the first shard begins the encounter sitting on the ground at A on the Chaos Triad detail map. Energy from it is visibly pouring into the ground around it, where some hexes in the Triad seem to fade back and forth from reality, revealing a glowing, swirling void beyond a thin layer of translucent mist.



Chaos Hexes

Anything that passes through or above a Chaos hex seems to fade a bit, as if not quite in sync with the material world. An object tossed into a Chaos hex in this chamber will not sink into the chaos beyond the mist.

A PC entering a Chaos hex in this chamber will feel a chill and a bit of momentary nausea, but they will find they do not sink below the mist or suffer any immediate ill effects. Chaos Hexes can be entered and left like any other hex.

Shard Movement

Each time anything (a person, a weapon, a thrown object, even a spell) comes into contact with the shard of the Orb, after the contact is resolved (damage from weapons or spell effects taken), the shard glows briefly and teleports to either hex B or hex C, determined randomly. This teleportation will happen immediately after any such interaction.

Any large object placed in a target hex will make it impossible for the shard to randomly “choose” that place to appear. The PCs might be reluctant to test this by standing in one of the target hexes themselves, but any substantial object (a helmet, piece of armor, shield, backpack, etc.) will have the same effect. If a PC, the Guardian, or a Chaostained is in the way, he will block the appearance of the shard and will not be harmed. If the shard cannot teleport because the two target hexes are occupied, it will flare with energy momentarily, but remain in place. At this point, it can be interacted with like any material object – struck, affected by spells, etc.

Attacking the Shard

The shard is made of tough crystal that has ST 30 but no armor to speak of. It is still dangerous to attack, even so. If struck hard enough with fists or anything held in the hand (delivering any hits of damage), the shard will flare bright red and deliver half that amount of damage (rounded down) back to the attacker. If it can, the shard will then teleport to a new location.

After taking 30 hits, the shard will break into 1d fragments, which stop glowing, fall to the ground, and are safe and easy to pick up.

Capturing the Shard

It is possible to capture the shard without breaking it. The shard itself is not dangerous unless struck, but it can be quite elusive. It might be possible to drop a sack or other container over it, but an attempt to pull it away will be treated like a touch and cause it to teleport if it can.

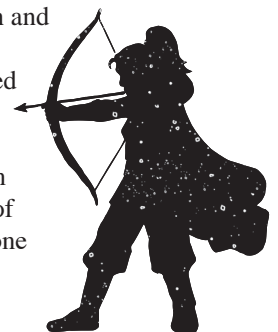
Only by blocking the shard from teleporting can it be captured intact. If unable to teleport, a shard can simply be grasped firmly and physically pulled away, requiring only a 3/ST roll to do so. This breaks the Chaotic loop.

The shard will stop glowing. If the damaged silver frame has been carried along by the PCs, the shard can be placed atop it. It will remain there and can be carried one-handed attached to the tray. It can also be wrapped in cloth or stashed in any other convenient container. Alone, however, a shard will take both hands to carry. It weighs only 5 lbs.

If carried outside the tray, openly and uncovered, into a room where *another* shard is still active, the uncovered shard will be reactivated and will teleport itself to one of the open target hexes in that room. It can be re-subdued, of course, by leaving it nowhere to flee again. Two shards cannot occupy the same space, but three can, as will be seen . . .

Attack of the Chaostained

Complicating any attempt to obtain the shard, this chamber also contains the three Chaostained described below. (See *Chaostained*, p. 4, for their description and nature.) Before their deaths, they were three of the Silver Star heroes who tried to recover the Orb for the Baroness. Their last thoughts were of dismay at their error, and they are now fixated on preventing further interference. Each of the 7-hex megahexes in this area has one Chaostained in it.



For each Chaostained, roll on the tables on p. 4 for their special power and weakness.

Chaostained 1 (formerly Berta, warrior)

ST 13, DX 11, IQ 8, MA 6

Protection: 3 hits as per chainmail

Attacks for 2d+1 melee damage as per morningstar

Chaostained 2 (formerly Slyn, elven archer)

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 9, MA 6

Protection: 3 hits as per chainmail

Attacks for 1d ranged damage as per horse bow

Chaostained 3 (formerly Gundar, dwarven thief)

ST 9, DX 15, IQ 8, MA 8

Protection: 2 hits as per leather armor

Attacks for 1d-1 (1d+1 in HTH combat) as per dagger

The Chaostained will attack any PC entering the chamber until the shard is subdued or destroyed. They will attack the Guardian immediately. The Guardian will attack a Chaostained on sight, and they may fight back as long as he is engaged with them. If the Chaostained are “slain” before this area’s shard is subdued or destroyed, they vanish.

If the adventurers retreat, the Chaostained will not pursue them from the chamber, but all of them will be back at full ST to attack again when the PCs come back – including any destroyed earlier. Dealing with the shard is the only way to defeat them permanently. Once the shard is no longer active, the Chaostained dissipate. The Chaostained do not have any personal treasure. Their weapons and armor are part of them and cannot be left behind, even if they drop a weapon in combat.

5 AND 6: TURTLES ALL THE WAY DOWN

Rooms 5 and 6 share a special bond fueled by Chaos, causing them to “echo” each other. Notice on the map how the rooms are almost identical, except for the locations of the entrance and exit doors. Regardless of which of the two rooms the heroes enter first, the encounter plays out the same, as follows.

The door to the room is of metal, but not locked. The chamber has a swampy odor as the PCs enter, but everything appears dry.

Two full turns after the first PC enters this room, stone slabs drop from the ceiling and cover both the entrance and exit doors. Any heroes still in the corridor outside cannot enter. One turn after that, the room starts filling with water.

End of Turn 1: Water reaches about ankle height (reducing MA by 2; see *Water* in *In the Labyrinth*, p. 120).

End of Turn 2: Water reaches the heroes’ knees (cutting MA in half).

End of Turn 3: Water is about neck-high, cutting a walker’s MA to 2. Swimming is possible for those who know how.

End of Turn 4: Water reaches the ceiling of the chamber. Swimming underwater is possible. The Guardian is too heavy to swim and must walk on the bottom at MA 2.

Although this may be alarming to heroes (especially those without the ability to swim), the situation isn’t as bad as it may seem. Because of the effects of the Chaos magic, the

water is *entirely breathable*, as if it were air. Heroes will not be likely to realize this until they fail their first attempt at holding their breath. This doesn’t mitigate any of the *other* effects of water (particularly the combat penalty at -6 DX for being fully submerged, the inability of items to function that rely on being dry, and the difficulty in communicating underwater). Drowning isn’t a danger in this room. Sadly, another danger exists.

In the southernmost megahex of this chamber, covered with silt, is a half-buried 3-hex giant snapping turtle (see *In the Labyrinth*, p. 97). Characters will only notice him on a 4/IQ secret roll unless they actually come adjacent to him. If they get near, or at the beginning of Turn 3 in any event, the turtle will shake off the muck and attack the PCs. He will not attack the Guardian directly unless he is attacked first, but the Guardian will act to defend the PCs if he is in the room.

If the Guardian has been kept out of the chamber by the PCs, he will act confused for two turns, then remember he was supposed to deactivate the water trap before anyone entered. He can do this from outside by manipulating a concealed control. Anyone outside the room can spot the concealed control with a 4/IQ roll.

Inside the room, there is another concealed control mechanism near the exit door. The Guardian will remember it at the beginning of Turn 3 and can use it once he is adjacent to the door. Finding it is a 5/IQ test for anyone else inside due to the distraction of having the room filling with water. There is no penalty for failure looking for either control, outside of the time wasted.

Using either control after the trap is sprung opens hidden drains, causing the water to drain as fast as it filled. (*Turn 1:* water starts draining. *Turn 2:* water is neck-high. *Turn 3:* water is knee-high. *Turn 4:* water is ankle-high and both the doors open. *Turn 5:* water is gone.) The turtle is considered on land (for its MA) on Turn 3 and later.

The Chaos-altered water has one other special property. It does *not* cause any water damage to items submerged. The PCs will even find their clothes dry completely within two turns.

Giant Snapping Turtle

Hex Size/Form: 3-hex triangular figure

ST 36, DX 12, IQ 4, MA 10 (in the water), 6 (on land)

Shell stops 4 hits

Bite – 3d+3 damage

Tail – An adjDX roll to hit *each* one-hex figure in one of its rear hexes; any figure hit must make saving roll (3 dice on DX) to avoid being knocked down. No damage.

Special Abilities/Weaknesses: Any attack on the turtle is at +2 DX because of his size. Hero may give up this bonus to attack the legs or head, reducing armor to stopping 2 hits.

Even with the help of the Guardian, it is likely that one or more PCs may be badly injured or even killed by the turtle. Sad.

When the surviving PCs travel down the corridor out of the room, they will find themselves approaching, not chamber 7, but the *other* twin room from the westernmost entrance. They will have no sensation of travel. The metal door is in a slightly different location relative to the room, and the resemblance may be noticed on a 4/IQ roll.

When someone touches the door, the PCs will experience a moment of disorientation and nausea. The next moment, the party is intact, exactly in the condition they were before entering the previous room. Any dead PCs are alive and not even aware of what has happened, which the GM can use to create a macabre but funny moment when one of them suddenly speaks and is noticed by the others. The Guardian will seem entirely unaware that anything has happened since they approached the previous room, right down to his “forgetfulness” about disabling the trap. Anyone who survived the first encounter, however, will remember it all – including how to disable the trap.

This area is the Chaotic “echo” of the chamber they just left. Due to the connection between these two rooms, visitors to the second room can see faint ghostly projections of the previous encounter, unspooling in real time. These visions are immaterial and too faint to be taken for real. The faint sounds of the noise of the previous encounter can even be heard.

However, the events seen will not match completely. The heroes may see attacks fail that succeeded during the first battle, wizards choosing different spells, the turtle pursuing other tactics or victims, etc. Someone may even witness their own death – ironic, given the Guardian’s riddle.

Most important, *there is no giant turtle in the echo room*. The PCs can trigger the water trap either accidentally or on purpose and it will fill and drain, but nothing else will happen. This room of echoes poses no dangers and has no other effect.

It is feasible the party may backtrack after this encounter, go back to the previous chamber, etc. If so, they will see the visions play out in both rooms – visions that again won’t match what happened the last time they experienced them. They’re witnessing reality diverge and merge in real time, which may prove terrifying but will have no real effect. After having PCs encounter the echoes, the corridors out of *both* rooms will lead to encounter 7, just as shown on the labyrinth map.

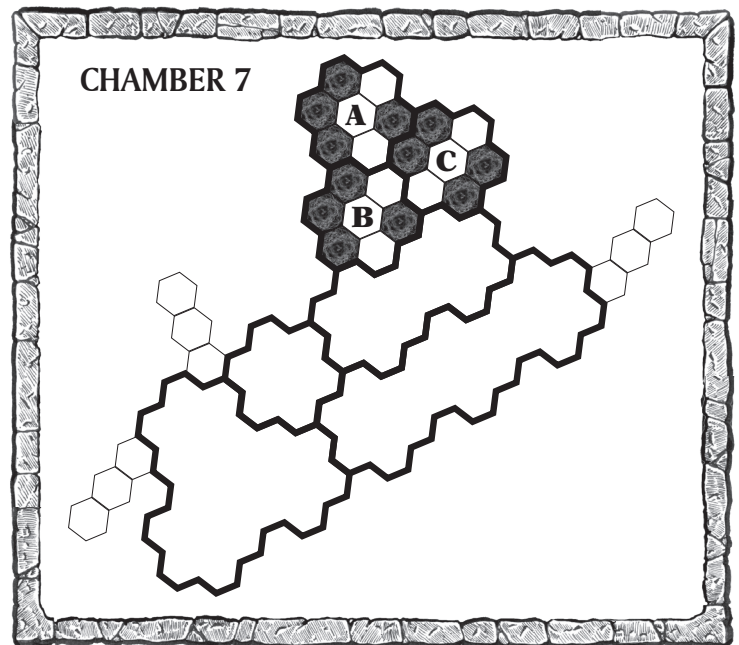
7: THE SECOND CHAOS TRIAD

This encounter is very similar to the first one (see p. 7). Again, this is a section of the caverns once mined for Chaos Matter, with a Chaos Triad having formed where the vein once extended. The second shard sits at A at the start, teleporting to B or C when acted upon as before. This shard follows the same rules for acquiring or destroying it. It leaves behind 1d fragments if broken and will cling to or remain in the silver tray if placed there.

However, this area has fallen further to Chaos, and uses the special Chaos Triad tile (see below).

The Chaos Triad

This Triad looks much like the first, although less misty and more well-defined. Entering one of these Chaos Hexes produces a feeling of bitter cold, as Chaos starts to leak into the figure. A figure in a Chaos hex suffers a -1 to adjDX for combat and to IQ for spellcasting as long as the figure remains there.



At the end of any turn that a character ends in a Chaos hex, a 2/ST roll should be attempted. On failure, the figure loses one hit due to the effects of contact with Chaos (treated like spellcasting fatigue, not physical damage). Thus, characters of ST 12 or greater will feel the chill but not lose hits as a result.

This room contains two new Chaostained. They begin the combat each in the center hex of one of the Chaos Triad megahexes. For each new Chaostained, roll on the tables on p. 4 for their power and weakness.

Chaostained 4 (formerly Josef, fighter)

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 9, MA 6

Protection 3 hits as per chainmail

Attacks for 2d damage as per broadsword

Chaostained 5 (formerly Dmitri, elven warrior)

ST 13, DX 13, IQ 8, MA 6

Protection 2 hits as per leather armor

Attacks for 2d-1 damage as per halberd, using normal pole weapon rules

The Chaostained somehow understand the detrimental effects the Chaos hexes have on outsiders and use them to their strategic advantage as much as possible. Chaostained are unaffected by Chaos hexes and can pass freely through them or stand within them with no penalties. They focus attacks on anyone entering one of the target hexes marked A, B, or C to make it as hard as possible to repeat a subdual strategy without first dealing with the Chaostained.

As per the encounter 4, the Chaostained remain and attack as long as the shard remains active unless “killed.”

8: TO BEAR THE ELEMENTS

The door to this chamber has been knocked down, with the frame showing both water and fire damage. Nothing can be seen as the PCs enter, but there is a strong gust of wind coming from somewhere above.



Residing here is a grumpy old bear that made this his den, coming and going through an overgrown tunnel leading to a small cave complex above, connected at the northernmost hex of this chamber. He has been tainted by Chaos, and when in the presence of living beings, shifts turn by turn through several elemental forms. This shifting wakes the bear and does nothing to improve his hostile temperament.

ELEMENTAL BEAR

Elemental Bear rotates among all four forms, changing just before movement on its turn. All forms have ST 20, DX 11, IQ 6, MA 8. All but the Air Bear form can enter HTH combat. Use a standard bear counter for the Elemental Bear.

He starts by shifting to the form of an Air Bear and attacks by surprise following an initial gust of wind if the PCs fail a 4/IQ roll. (Alertness modifies by 1 die, as does Acute Hearing in this case.) Swooping from above, the semitransparent bear-like figure drops on the most vulnerable-appearing member of the party.

At the beginning of each of his new turns just before movement, the bear shifts in order among his Air, Earth, Water, and Fire forms, repeating as necessary. All damage done to him is cumulative, and his basic attributes are those of a normal bear. If in danger of being defeated, he will attempt to flee through the tunnel to the caves above. In death, he will revert to the form of a normal bear.

Air Bear

In Air Bear form, the creature flies at normal MA and cannot be engaged. He can knock a target down with wind as he flies through the target's hex. (2d/ST to resist.) The air bear cannot otherwise do physical attacks or be harmed by physical weapons, fire, or lightning. Other spells affect as normal, as do wizards' staff attacks.

Earth Bear

Earth Bear's soil-like form stops 3 hits/attack. He can attack with claws for 2d+1 or enter HTH with a hug giving the same damage. Earth Bear is immune to Fire. A Magic Rainstorm melts his muddy form at 1d hits/turn of exposure.

Fire Bear

Fire Bear is made of living flame, lighting the entire chamber when he flares up. He can attack distant foes with fireballs, like the spell. (Costs 1 ST to throw, does 1d-1 hits.) He normally prefers to strike engaged opponents with burning claws for 2d hits, or hug for 2d+2 hits in HTH combat. He is immune to fire or lightning, but a Magic Rainstorm does 4d hits per turn of exposure.

Water Bear

Water Bear's claw attack does no damage but a hit knocks down the opponent if a 3/ST save fails. Its hug attack in HTH combat does damage just like immersion in deep water; 4/DX save for non-swimmers, 3/DX for swimmers, 2/DX for divers. 1d hits drowning damage is taken by the hug victim if the DX save is failed. In water form, the bear takes double damage taken from fire/lightning. 1/2 all damage (round down) taken from non-magical weapons.

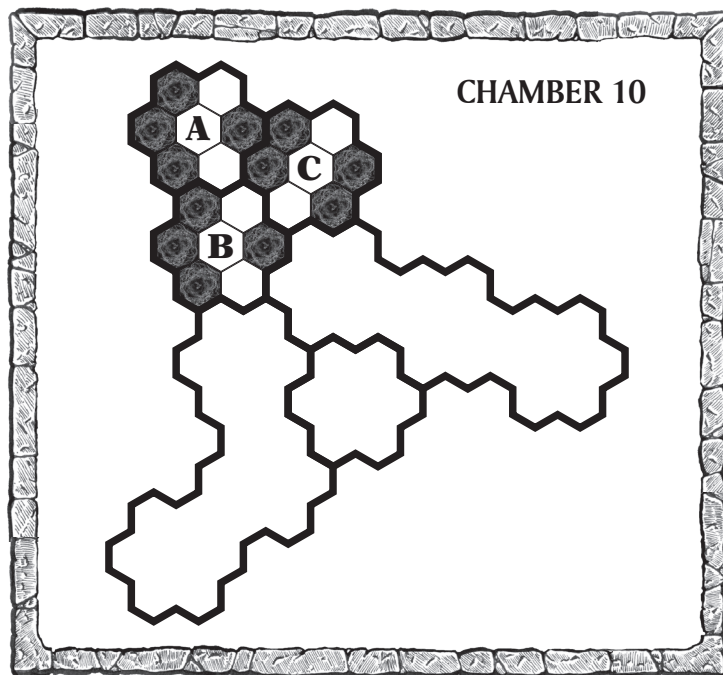
9: QUIET ROOM

This room is truly a quiet interlude before the final confrontation. Here, Chaos has taken an odd but mostly benign turn. Within this three-megahex area, no sound can exist. In the silence, the PCs will feel strangely relaxed and calm. Any previous loss of ST *to fatigue* will fade away at the rate of 1 ST/minute. This should be a relief to wizards in the party, certainly. While here, however, the PCs may not communicate with each other except by writing (if literate) or gestures (which should be fun). The GM should *strictly* enforce this condition.

10: THE FINAL CHAOS TRIAD

This chamber is constructed using the same Chaos Triad megahex pieces as seen in encounters 4 and 7. As before, patches of gaping void are part of the Chaos Triad. This time, the remaining barrier between reality and Chaos in the Chaos hexes is dangerously thin. Entering one of the Chaos hexes is like stepping into very sticky mud. Treat this like stepping on a Sticky Floor. The effects of being in a Chaos hex here are the same as in encounter 7. The target feels bitterly cold as Chaos starts to leak in and suffers a -1 to adjDX for combat and to IQ for spellcasting as long as they remain in a Chaos hex.

At the end of any turn that a character ends in a Chaos hex, a 2/ST roll should be attempted. On failure, the figure loses one hit due to the effects of contact with Chaos (treated like spellcasting fatigue, not physical damage).



In this final room, there is a cumulative effect of standing in pure Chaos. If the roll to escape damage is failed, the figure cannot move from a Chaos hex to a solid hex on their next move. They may move into another connected Chaos hex or stand still, but they sink farther into Chaos.

After a second turn in a Chaos hex, failing a 3/ST save costs the figure 1 ST in fatigue. If this save is failed, figures will also not have a chance to pull themselves out of Chaos and onto a solid hex next turn. They must continue to wallow in Chaos.

On a third consecutive turn in a Chaos hex, the figure is waist-deep in Chaos and needs a 4/ST save to avoid another fatigue hit. If the figure loses consciousness, it will continue to sink into Chaos. Any figure that spends four consecutive turns wading in Chaos will sink below the surface at the beginning of turn 5. (A generous GM might give the PCs a chance to recover him from Chaos in a subsequent adventure. Maybe.)

With a 3/ST save, a person standing on solid ground *can* drag another figure in an adjacent hex out of a Chaos hex at any depth including the one in which it goes under. This is reduced to 2/ST if the victim is conscious. The rescuer cannot move, fight, cast spells, or take any other action that turn, however.

A PC may ask the Guardian to plunge into a Chaos hex himself and physically lift a victim out to any consecutive solid hex – even if the victim has gone under the turn before. If he does so, however, the Guardian will himself be lost to Chaos. (Cue sad, slow music.)

Chaostained

This room has a final two Chaostained (see p. 4), described below. In addition, any PC killed earlier in the caverns will appear here as a GM-controlled Chaostained opponent. (Roll for their special power and weakness.)

Any PC attacking a Chaostained who used to be a member of their party must make a 3/IQ save on the first attack or suffer a -1 DX/IQ penalty for the entire combat. On the flip side, an engaged PC who tries to talk to a PC Chaostained attacker can attempt a 3/IQ roll. If it succeeds, the former PC has a moment of clarity, realizes what they have become, and with a cry of pure anguish, casts itself into the nearest Chaos Hex, disappearing into it. (Again, a very generous GM may offer PCs a later quest to rescue such a character, or at least put the anguished Chaostained soul to rest.)

For each Chaostained, roll on the tables on p. 4 for their powers (and weakness, if any).

Chaostained 6 (formerly Corragio, blademaster)

ST 12, DX 15, IQ 10, MA 8

“Skin” stops 2 hits (formerly leather armor)

Attack – 2d damage (formerly broadsword)

Chaostained 7 (formerly Anders, heroic leader)

ST 14, DX 14, IQ 12, MA 6

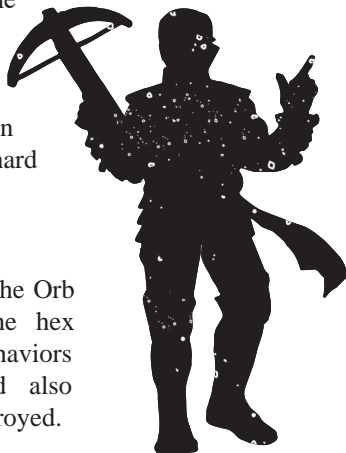
“Skin” stops 5 hits (formerly plate armor)

Attack – 2d ranged (formerly light crossbow)

As per Room 7 (p. 9), the Chaostained are unaffected by the Chaos hexes and use them to their advantage. As usual, the Chaostained remain alive so long as the Orb shard remains whole or uncaptured.

THE GOAL

In this room is the last of the Orb shards, again starting at the hex marked A. It has the same behaviors as the previous ones, and also generates 1d fragments if destroyed.



SUCCESS IS A SPECTRUM

It is possible, if they are very smart and skillful indeed, that the party can capture all three Orb shards intact. If they do so, they can restore the Orb by placing one inert shard in each of A, B, and C. They will teleport together onto A and recombine. If they do not think of this, and the Guardian still survives, he can restore the Orb by sacrificing his own existence to do so. (If the Guardian makes it past this point, though, his purpose will require him to go back with the party to guard the Orb or what remains of it; he will stay in the Barony when they leave.)

If the heroes do return the Orb of Ages intact, the Baroness will pay the full \$10,000 reward promised, plus a \$2,000 bonus for each surviving PC. The party, now Heroes of the Barony, will be allowed to be present when the Orb is used to dispel the Chaos Matter in the Baronet’s neck. This will drain the magic from the Orb (perhaps forever), but the Baroness will be very satisfied with that trade.

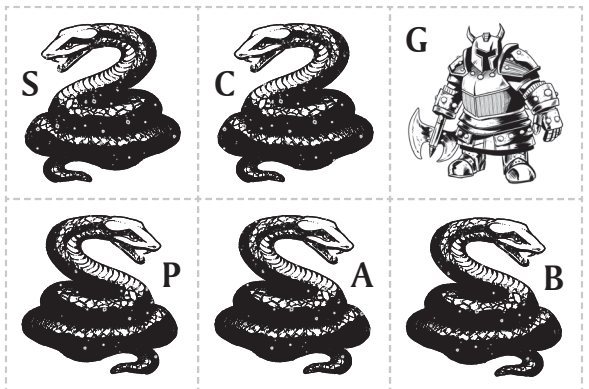
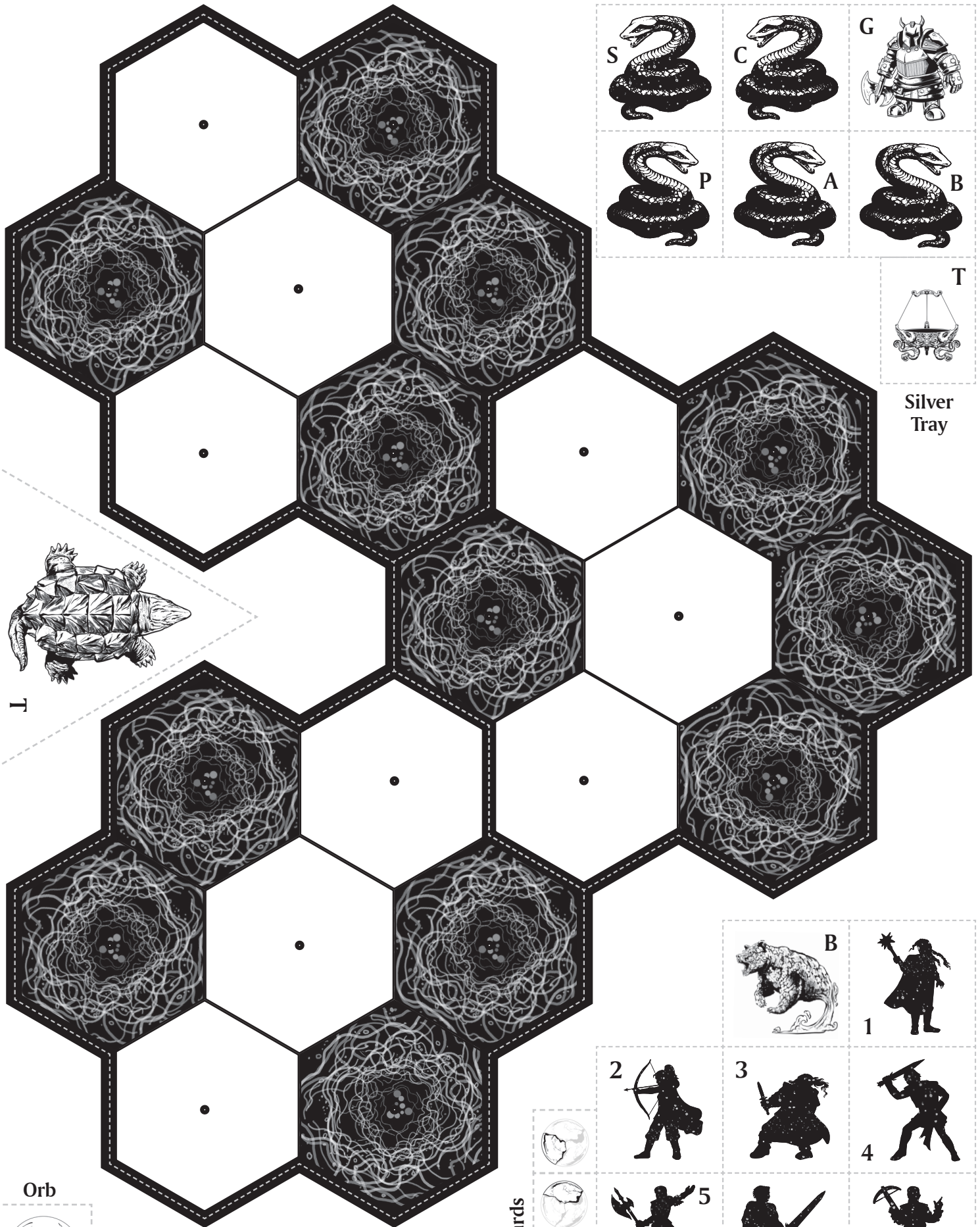
FAILURE IS AN OPTION

A winning outcome with an intact Orb is unlikely; the GM should not force such an ending on the PCs.

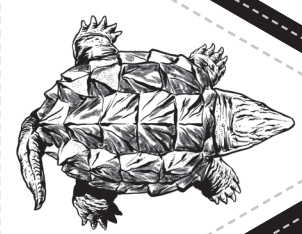
If the party returns with pieces of the Orb and the melted amulet, each intact shard is worth \$2,000 to the Baroness and any smaller fragments will bring \$200 each. Combined with the knowledge the PCs bring back, these may be used by baronial wizards to extend the Baronet’s life for a time. The Baroness will continue to hope for a cure, and she may hire the PCs again for subsequent related adventures.

With no Orb and no intact shards, the young Baronet will pass away within a few weeks. The *spread* of Chaos from the area of the mine will stop after a few weeks, but the Caverns and surrounding areas may continue to be a Chaos-tainted source of trouble for many years to come.

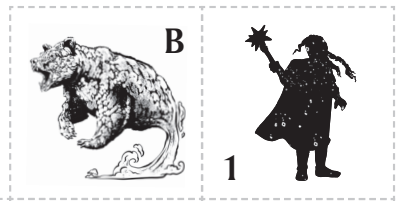
In any event, there is still the matter of an unknown assassin who must be tracked down. That is a tale for another time.



Silver Tray



T



Orb



Orb Shards

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