

THE WRETCHED HIVE



*An OSR adventure for low-level characters
by Eric Diaz*

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You can find more of my work in my blog: methodsetmadness.blogspot.com.

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INTRODUCTION

A titanic insect god, constantly giving birth to endless larvae. An assassin whose task is to poison the enemies of her faith. Twisted hybrids, half human and half bee, created by devilish biomancers. A pagan cult whose temple was invaded by demons. And these are the good guys! Welcome to the Wretched Hive.

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT

This book is an adventure for old school role-playing games. It all started with a [one-page dungeon, which you can find here](#). Here is a basic description:

The Chaos Lord Malavor and his demonic minions have conquered a temple of the Melissa, the Queen Bee, an ancient lawful goddess of Life. They managed to summon, imprison and warp an avatar of Melissa and create a fearsome hive fortress over the temples' ruins, filled with half-human, half-insect soldiers. Now hybrid creatures roam the countryside capturing riches and people for dark purposes, while Malavor builds an army within his wretched hive.

GAME MECHANICS

This book was written with old school games in mind. If you are reading this, you probably know what I am talking about: the first few versions of the world's most famous role-playing game. However, you can use it with any similar system, including contemporary games. I have my own version / "retroclone", [Dark Fantasy Basic](#), which mixes old school and new games, and is compatible with this book.

This book uses statistics such as AC, HD, HP, etc. You are probably familiar with most of these terms, but there are a few notes I'd like to add.

The total HP for each creature was already written in advance, so you don't have to roll if you don't want to. Movement ("move") uses 30' as the default for a normal human character. Save is a short for "saving throw" and uses a single number. A save of 12, for example, means the creature succeeds if a number of 12 or great is rolled on the d20. If a creature has more than one attack, this is also indicated. For example, "Knife x3" means the creature can attack three times with a knife.

The rest should be easy to understand if you're familiar with these games.

For contemporary games, the conversion is a bit more difficult. Here is what I would do: **double** the damage and hit points for every creature. The "to hit" bonus is equal to HD (for example, a 5 HD monster adds +5 to the d20 when attacking); likewise for saving throws. The rest can be used as written.



THE BACKGROUND

The goddess **Melissa** is a benevolent deity, respected throughout the land. Her followers have built many temples in the woods, where people come to receive blessings and healing. She is a goddess of love, agriculture and the sun. More than anything, she is a goddess of life.

Malavor is a half-forgotten demon, who hates and envies Melissa. He has an army of lesser minions in the Abyss, but not many followers in this world, which makes him weak and afraid of disappearing. He is jealous of Melissa's power and popularity.

Zothaq is a diabolist that spent his life studying tomes and summoning demons to gain knowledge and power. He discovered that the most powerful artifact of Melissa, an ancient talisman of the goddess that allows the wielder to summon her avatar to Earth, was hidden in one of her temples.

After the discovery, he summoned Malavor and offered him a deal. The demon would help the sorcerer to invade the temple and protect it from retaliation. Then, they would summon and bind Melissa's avatar and force it to build an army, so the two could rule the land. Malavor would be feared again, and Zothaq would have all the gold, knowledge and vengeance he could ever wish for. Of course, each of the two thought they could control the other if it came to that.

Their plan worked, up to a point. With the help of his demonic followers, it was easy for Malavor to take the temple and find the artifact, killing most of the priestesses in the process. They summoned the **Avatar of Melissa** (a gigantic queen bee) and forced it to build a fortress over the ruined temple.

The local prejudice against the "pagans" from the temple helped the demons avoid retaliation from the local authorities, until now.

Making the avatar create an army was harder. Melissa did bring forth semi-intelligent bee-people (the "workers"), but they were mostly peaceful and hard to control.

It was then that the **biomancers** appeared and offered their help. Obscure and mysterious even in the Abyss, those silent demons pledged allegiance to Malavor, promising to give him his army, asking for nothing but protection in return. And so they did, by transforming Malavor's prisoners into bee-people soldiers – disciplined, obedient and lethal.

Zothaq was so impressed that he ordered the biomancers to teach him their secrets. The sorcerer has accompanied the demons to their underground laboratories and disappeared.

Malavor sent demons and mercenaries to nearby villages to get more prisoners in order to enlarge his armies. He figures that by the time someone mounts a significant offensive against him, he will already be in possession of the formula for creating perfect soldiers, and thus unstoppable.

Unfortunately for the demon, the avatar has resisted his control and is currently trying to break free, although it is now almost completely crazy. The bee-people, also confused, rallied to protect their queen, even though Malavor is still trying to convince them that he is a friend.

For now, demons and insectoids have found an uneasy truce, but that cannot last for long. Malavor must either find the way to submit the avatar completely, or destroy it.

Meanwhile, in the underground tunnels under the fortress, the biomancers work on their own sinister plans...

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

There are multiple easy ways to get the PCs interested in this one. For example:

- They need to rescue a prisoner.
- They want to protect the goddess from further sacrilege.
- They want to find the gold still hidden in the temple.
- They bump into a prisoner-taking expedition.
- They encounter priestesses in the woods begging for help.
- They are a hired (or volunteer) to avenge the temple.

Of course, it is easier if they already have a prior connection: maybe they have been healed on Melissa's temple, or are followers of the goddess, friends to one of the captives, and so on.

Our recommendation is that the PCs are looking for gold or a specific person. For every prisoner they find, roll 1d6. If they roll a 6, this is the person they are looking for.

Just letting the PCs bump into these woods (or one of the nearby villages) can work as well. They are plenty of random encounters indicating the nature of the hive.

If they want to ignore it, so be it. In the "aftermath" section, there are a few ideas about what happens to the hive if the player characters leave it alone

WHAT DO THE PCs KNOW (RUMORS)?

The PCs do not know much.

Everybody in the vicinity knows there was a temple of Melissa in the woods, and many people went to them for healing and worship. The word is out that the temple was destroyed by some kind of demon, and there must be a relation between this and the people that have been disappearing lately. There are a few rumors around, but most of the

information will only be gained by talking with Melissa's priestesses (see the section below).

If they ask around, here are some things they may hear. Not all of them are true, and some are a matter of opinion (in any case, it is up to the GM).

<i>d10</i>	<i>Rumor</i>
1	The temple of Melissa is famous for producing sacred honey that heals people
2	There are strange humanoid figures flying around in the forest, especially during daytime.
3	One of the priestesses summoned a demon out of vanity, to become queen priestess. (probably false)
4	There are mercenaries and thugs coming from that region. They do not talk much, but they pay in gold.
5	The Lawful gods dwell in the Elysium, above! Everything that lurks below wants to destroy humankind! (probably false)
6	Many people seem to have disappeared near the temple lately.
7	Somebody has spotted a new mountain within the woods. It looks like a giant hive.
8	The forest has become darker somehow. This is certainly the work of demons.
9	This temple in the woods is a pagan thing... You cannot trust the gods of the wild! They hate us civilized folks! (probably false)
10	Those priestesses produce honey during the day, venom during the night. What they do with it, no one knows! (probably false)

WHICH LEVEL SHOULD THE PCs BEE?

This adventure is intended for a party with a total of 16 levels (for example, four 4th level characters), but this is a very rough guideline. In fact, any level will do, but results will vary wildly.

Here are some of the variables you should consider when running this adventure: are you using morale rules? Do you like adventures to be dangerous? Are the PCs entering the hive at night? Do they attack potentially neutral creatures for no reason? Do they make new allies when they can? Are they willing to retreat or even go back to the nearest town for supplies and reinforcement? Are they trying to slay Malavor, or just to rescue a particular person or artifact?

In short, this adventure isn't meant to be balanced. The hive is what it is; if a bunch of first level adventurers tries to fight through the hive without talking or thinking, they will die quickly. There are just too many adversaries.

One thing to consider is that the PCs do NOT need to defeat all the villains. If that is their mission, they should have 20 or more combined levels.

I have successfully run this adventure for twelve characters (levels 1 and 2), and they fulfilled their goal (rescue a villager in area J) with five deaths, more or less.

THE MIXED FUNNEL

One cool way of running adventures like this is “the

Mixed Funnel”. Start with a few heroes (first or second level), a bunch of 0-level characters (three or four per player), or even both (heroes with their followers and hirelings). Many characters will die, but the party lives on as they can always recruit new NPCs to their cause (priestesses at the woods and prisoners inside the hive, for example).

These new PCs can be common folk or hardened heroes, depending on the case (see “The Captives” for more information). The expedition only fails if the whole group is decimated.

If you want to turn these captives into PCs, use whatever rules you use for PCs instead of the statistics provided in this book.

LIFE BEYOND DEATH?

A PC reduced to 0 HP is not necessarily dead. The hive is looking for prisoners, and there is a decent chance (about 4 in 6) that any unconscious PCs are taken captive instead of slain, even if the whole party falls. It is even possible that they can be ransomed if taken by ordinary demons. It is equally likely that the other PCs will find them later, but turned into *something else*.

Just read on...



THE NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

This section describes all NPCs inside and near the hive.

THE MAIN NPCs

Malavor is a half-forgotten demon looking for worship. He plans to build an army, conquer the nearby lands and force people to worship it. He believes that it will disappear if nobody remembers him.

Malavor can be found inside tower 4, third floor.

Zothaq is a sorcerer that yearns for earthly power and forbidden knowledge. He has found the name of Malavor in an ancient grimoire, and summoned the demon to this plane. The sorcerer wanted to rule over lesser people (which means everybody), and Malavor has promised to make the sorcerer powerful as no man has been before.

Zothaq can be found in the underground.

The Avatar is a pure manifestation of Melissa, and painful to behold: a giant queen bee, constantly giving birth to white larvae (that the biomancers use to create bee-people). It is benevolent but it doesn't belong in this plane and is nearly mad.

The avatar is inside room R.

Zothaq believes he can control Malavor, and Malavor believes he can control the Avatar. They are both wrong. In fact, the avatar has unwittingly twisted Malavor's mind a little bit, and he is now more worried about expanding the colony than being worshipped.

Zothaq, on the other hand, has become so fascinated with the biomancers that he now wants nothing more than to experiment with new, hybrid life-forms, even to the point of perfecting himself.

The **biomancers** are like demons in almost all aspects, but even in the Abyss they are considered to be strange. They are silent and generally avoid violence, so other demons underestimate them.

They are also unable to reproduce by natural means and obsessed in continuing their civilization by creating superior life forms. By studying the avatar of Melissa, they managed to create new life; now, they are experimenting with it so it may spread in the future.

PRIESTESSES AND ACOLYTES

Since the priestesses and acolytes of Melissa shun cities and villages, some of them went hiding in the woods when they lost their temple. Others went to the nearby settlements looking for help.

All mentions of "priestesses" and "acolytes" refer to these people.

PRIESTESS. AC 10, HD 1D6 [4 HP], MOVE 30, ATTACK: WEAPON (1D6), SAVE 19, MORALE 8.

Priestesses will be eager to find anyone interested in returning to the temple to retake it, or at least save some captives and relics. They might join the PCs in their quest if asked. They are all 1st level clerics with no special powers except the ability of curing 1d4 HP per day. Most are unarmed and unarmored but are able to fight with spears or blades, and can wear leather armor.

They will also provide information about the temple, if asked. Roll 1d4+2 to find out the number of facts each priestess knows, following the order below (all of them know the first three facts).

ACOLYTE. AC 10, HD 1D4 [3 HP], MOVE 30, ATTACK: WEAPON (1D6), SAVE 20, MORALE 6.

Acolytes are men and women faithful to Melissa that serve the priesthood in the temple. They are ordinary humans. Most of them were killed or captured in the attack. They know 1d4 of the facts below.

Every priestess and acolyte will know about the myths and taboos of their religion: men aren't admitted to the priesthood, the bond between a mother and her children is sacred, civilization breeds corruption, members of a family should protect each other, priestesses use white and gold robes within the temple, etc.

Roll	Facts
1	Melissa is a goddess of healing, fertility and daylight. She is good to all that seek her blessings.
2	The temple produces a sacred honey that cures wounds and diseases. This honey comes from a fountain within the temple.
3	There is gold and artifacts hidden in the temple.
4	The most important amulet in the temple has the power to summon an avatar of Melissa, or so the legends say.
5	The avatar looks like a giant bee. This aspect of Melissa is dangerous, but it will help those in need.
6	The avatar isn't meant to dwell in this plane. In the past, it has built giant hives and transformed humans into bee-people before realizing this hurts her followers. It hasn't returned to this world since, giving only blessings and inspirations instead.

CAPTIVES

There are many prisoners within the hive. Most of them are common folk, captured from the vicinities, but some of them may be special one way or another. They will have little role in the adventure until the PCs free them.

As a general rule, prisoners are weak creatures, with low morale and not willing to fight.

If you're running a high-lethality, "funnel" style adventure, you can allow fallen PCs to be replaced by one of these prisoners, so that the players can

stay in the game. One way to do it is to ask players to create "backup" characters, and put them amongst the captives. Another way is using the ones below (either as written or changed to match your expectations of level, class, etc.).

These NPCs can also accompany the PCs while still remaining NPCs, with their own goals, although they should not betray the PCs under most circumstances.

The prisoners will be helpful to the PCs that free them, and any reaction rolls (if needed) should receive a +2 bonus. When in doubt, roll 1d6 for each prisoner.

Roll	The prisoner is...
1	Too young, old, sick, wounded or frightened to help, and will probably cause trouble unless escorted to an exit.
2	Too frail to help, but will follow quietly and obey simple orders as long as they are not dangerous.
3	Helpful in some way – maybe she has seen or heard something around the hive, or has some special ability such as tying knots or distracting creatures.
4	Able to help by carrying torches, looking around, making noises, etc.
5	Weak. A (zero level) character with no training, but willing to fight if given a weapon. Unable to use shields or armor. WEAK PRISONER. AC 10, HD 1d4 [3 HP], MOVE 30, ATTACK: WEAPON (1d6), SAVE 20, MORALE 6.
6	Fierce and willing to join the party. You can use the statistics below or make a 1st level character (random class). There is a 10% chance that he or she will actually be 2nd level or higher (choose from the list below, take a character from a past expedition, or come up with your own). FIERCE PRISONER. AC 10, HD 1d8 [5 HP], MOVE 30, ATTACK: WEAPON (1d6), SAVE 19, MORALE 7.

SPECIAL PRISONERS

Here are four special characters that can be found among the captives. Their inclusion may put an interesting, if ambiguous, spin to Melissa's cult. In any case, once they are in the player's hands, it is up to the player to decide what their exact motivations will be.

ILLARA. AC 13, HD 3D6 [12 HP], MOVE 30, ATTACK: RAPIER (1D8), SAVE 17, MORALE 11.

Illara, "the Bee's Sting", is a priestess of Melissa, but unlike others of her kind. She has received the holy (and secret) task of using poison to protect and avenge the temple; in game terms, she is a 3rd level thief (or assassin, etc.). She tried fighting the invaders but was captured with other priestess and acolytes and is trapped within the hive. Even in captivity, she has heard enough to know Zothaq has summoned Malavor, and now her main goal is killing them both. She is carrying a vial of poison (ten doses - see the "poison" section, below).

ORHAN. AC 17, HD 2D8 [10 HP], MOVE 30, ATTACK: LONGSWORD (1D8), SAVE 18, MORALE 10.

Orhan, the crusader, is a holy warrior from the faith of Rammus, the great goat-head god of justice. This 2nd level cleric (or paladin, etc.) came to the temple of Melissa to see if they were heretics deserving of destruction, only to be captured by demons he was not expecting to face. Seeing the avatar of Melissa or her offspring might convince him that she is indeed an evil deity, and Orhan may seek to destroy demon and bee-people alike, while seeing followers of Melissa do good things might change his mind. Maybe.

BELLEN. AC 12, HD 2D6 [7 HP], MOVE 30, ATTACK: WEAPON (1D6), SAVE 18, MORALE 6.

Bellen, the criminal, is a dangerous (2nd level) violent thief that escaped justice after fleeing from a nearby town. Unfortunately, he only made it to the forest before being captured by Malavor's demons. He will lie about his past, but for every group of prisoners found there is a 1 in 20 chance that someone recognizes him.

AERON. AC 10, HD 2D8 [10 HP], MOVE 35, ATTACK: WEAPON (1D6), SAVE 18, MORALE 9.

Aeron, the Huntress, a 2nd level fighter, fought bravely against a group of bee-soldiers while trying to invade the hive and free the captives. Everyone else in her group was killed, taken underground, or escaped cowardly, but Aeron was beaten unconscious and then imprisoned. She wants revenge, but she might also take the opportunity to leave this wretched place.

WHY ARE THEY TAKING PRISONERS?

At first, a few captives were held for ransom or menial works. The reason why more prisoners are needed is somewhat grim and should not be disclosed to the PCs, although they will eventually understand what is going on.

As soon as the biomancers arrived, they asked for human subjects. With the help of Melissa's Avatar, they would create better warriors.

The method was gruesome, but effective and fast – it only took about three days. The Avatar started producing voracious larvae – small balls of white wormlike flesh, the size of a human head. The biomancers managed to warp the larvae enough that they did not only eat whatever was presented to them, but melded with it. By inserting the larvae into living persons, they created the bee-people soldiers.

MONSTERS AND FACTIONS

There are two main factions within the hive: demons and bee-people. They dislike each other, but are not in open war yet.

Malavor wants to find a way to take the bee-people to his side. The bee-people, in lieu of direct orders from the half-mad avatar, try to protect the queen, some territories and resources. The wretched want to avoid disobeying Malavor, but they have little restraint and no love for the bee-people. In short, whenever two different factions find themselves in the same room, there is a 50% chance they will be fighting against each other.

In addition, many types of captives can be found inside the hive (priestesses, acolytes, peasants, mercenaries, etc.).

THE BEE-PEOPLE (SOLDIERS AND WORKERS)

Bee-people are more or less all alike, with a few exceptions. They have six legs, using four to walk and two (with little human-like hands) to hold things. They have wings but cannot fly for more than a minute.

They cannot talk but can communicate with each other through pheromones and some form of telepathy.

If reduced to half HP or less, they attack with a poisonous stinger (1d4 plus poison – see below),

but if they hit they also take 1d6 damage themselves (0 HP means the creature has separated itself in half).

Attacking them with fire makes them disoriented for the next attack (roll 2d20 and pick the worst).

There are two main subtypes of bee-people: soldiers and workers. All mentions of “soldiers” and “workers” refer to these creatures.

SOLDIER. AC 13, HD 2D6 [7 HP], MOVE 35' [FLYING], ATTACK: SPEAR (1D6), SAVE 19, MORALE 10.

Soldiers are hostile, and quick to attack if threatened. They usually carry crude spears and no carry treasure.

WORKER. AC 11, HD 1D6 [4 HP], MOVE 35' [FLYING], ATTACK: PUNCH (1D4), SAVE 19, MORALE 6.

Workers are unarmed - they will go about their businesses (usually getting honey and trinkets from the **blue area** or other places and taking them to the **yellow area** or somewhere underground) and won't attack unless attacked first (1d4 damage punches).

For each worker, there is one chance in six that it is carrying a bucket of honey (four doses – see below).



HONEY, POISON AND ROYAL JELLY

Any mention of **honey** in this text refers to Melissa's sacred honey, which cures 1d6 hit points per dose, but only affects any given character twice per day, at most.

Royal jelly can hardly be found above ground. It cures 1d6+1 hit points per dose (no limit), but each uses causes a minute of sickness and a cumulative 1% chance of mutation to something closer to the queen bee (the GM may use the mutation table below or come up with his own ideas).

Poison, unless otherwise stated, is a special kind of apitoxin. It causes 2d6 damage (Constitution save halves). If applied to any slashing or piecing weapon, it has the same effect, but it works only the first time it hits (if applied to an arrow, it stops working after it hits or misses), and lasts for only ten minutes if unused. Bee-people are immune to this poison, and demons suffer only 1d6 damage (no save). Using poison inside the hive has a 1-in-6 chance of attracting 1d4 bee soldiers.

d10	Mutation
1	Your limbs become longer. +1 Dexterity and -1 Strength.
2	You gain resistance to apitoxin (all damage is halved).
3	Your eyes become bigger and darker.
4	Two additional limbs sprout from your thorax. They have little use.
5	You gain an additional stomach to store things you would like to regurgitate later (no larger than a fist).
6	You gain three extra eyes in the forehead that can sense light, but not see shapes.
7	Your skin turns yellowish.
8	You gain antennae and an improved sense of smell that allows you to understand simple ideas and feelings from bee-people in the vicinity.

9	You gain full immunity to apitoxin.
10	Your body rejects the mutation. Take 1d6 damage instead.

THE DEMONS

The demons in the hive are all relatively minor powers; evil beings that see Malavor as a leader apt enough to provide opportunities for cruelty and other sins.

They can speak, but have little information since they are not very smart (with the exception of the Biomancers, who do not speak) and can see in the dark.

Since there is some commerce going on in the hive, demons will carry 1d6 gp on them each for each HD they have (thus, a biomancer carries 3d6 gp).

All mentions of "imps", "ogres" and "biomancers" refer to these creatures.

WRETCHED IMP. AC 13, HD 1d6 [4 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: WEAPON (1d6), SAVE 19, MORALE 7.

Wretched imps are small, ugly, sadistic humanoids, from two to four feet tall.

They vaguely resemble goblins, but they come in multiple colors, shapes and sizes, often with horns, claws, pointy ears, and sometimes wings. Most of them are cowards and prone to childish behavior from time to time. However, they are happy to start a fight with enough provocation, especially while outnumbering the opposition. They use spears, clubs, tridents, or their own teeth and claws (1d4 when disarmed).

Their job is to guard the hive and its prisoners, and hunt occasionally. They can be convinced to cooperate, but will keep looking for opportunities to betray the PCs, even at their own risk.



DEMON OGRE. AC 14, HD 4D10 [22 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: WEAPON (2D6), SAVE 16, MORALE 7.

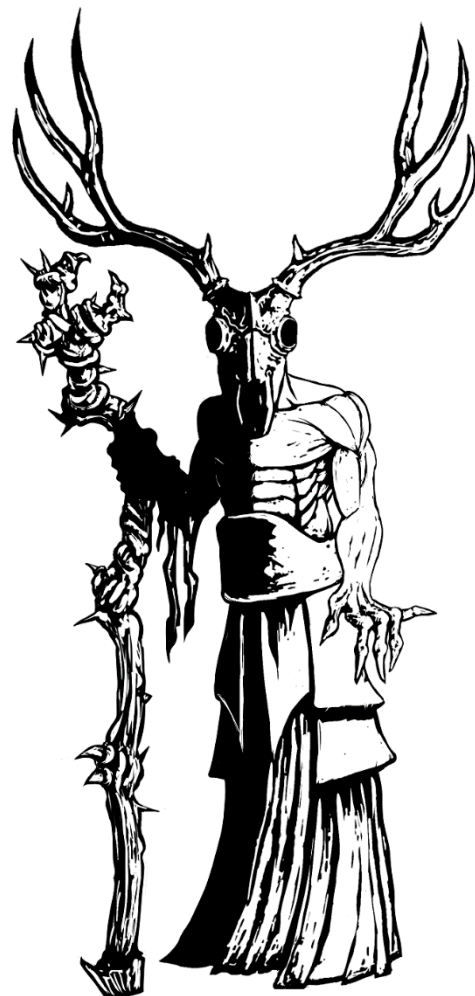
Demon ogres are more powerful (yet still quite dumb) demons that dwell inside the hive. They are tall, heavy, and strong, resembling large apes. They carry different weapons, all of them crude and scary: great clubs, maces, cleavers, gauntlets, etc.

They work as guards to Malavor and often as overseers to the imps. They like fighting against smaller opponents but might flee if fighting alone against a superior force.

Demon ogres are slow and do not like to talk, except for short sentences when they want something. They do not fight immediately, but always support the imps in a fight against humanoids or bee-people. If irritated, they'll grunt, growl, and then attack.

BIOMANCER. AC 14, HD 3D8 [14 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: SCALPEL (1D6), SAVE 17, MORALE 7.

Biomancers are the most sinister of the bunch. They are pale grey, with humanoid size and shape, dark-red robes and long, horse-like heads with no mouths. They will avoid combat unless they have an obvious advantage or see no other way out. Their job in the hive is building Malavor's army and conducting experiments and rituals. They can often be found dissecting a dead or agonizing creature.



AROUND THE HIVE

CITIES AND VILLAGES

There are no large cities near the temple of Melissa. The realm is dubious about this pagan cult. While it is popular among the common folk of the region, the aristocracy and the city-dwellers prefer the more urbanized and hierarchical churches of the Elysian gods.

The largest village in the area is called Lothlem, to the North of the temple. It is a good starting place for an expedition to the temple.

THE SACRED FOREST

The forest surrounding the temple of Melissa is considered sacred ground, but was not much different to any other forest until the temple was destroyed. Since the priestesses of Melissa shun cities and villages, some of them went hiding in the woods after the destruction.

It takes a six-hour walk (at least) into the woods to reach the hive. For every hour the PCs spend in the woods, there is a 1 in 6 chance of random encounters (1 in 12 during nighttime). You can use your standard table of encounters for forests, if you have one, or the one below. Each encounter below is supposed to happen no more than once.

Near the hive (i.e., in the last hour before reaching it), the chances are 2-in-6 instead, and it is recommended that you use the table below only.

The closer the PCs get to the temple, the more they see there is something wrong with the woods. Plants become twisted, with strange colors. All insects look different somehow – some have seven legs. Even animals might possess bizarre mutations. There is obviously something strange going on here.

d12	Encounter
1	A priestess of Melissa hiding in the woods. She will silently follow the PCs for a while, and then ask for help, unless they threaten or scare her. She may indicate the location of the hive and heal one of the PCs for 1d6 damage, but she is too scared to come closer to the hive.
2	A group of mercenaries (2d4) looking for gold – they heard rumors about selling captives to a demon in the woods. They will avoid fighting the PCs (unless provoked) or revealing their purpose (unless convinced). MERCENARY. AC 12, HD 1d8 [5 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: SWORD (1d6), SAVE 19, MORALE 7.



3	1d4+1 bee-people soldiers patrolling the woods and looking for food (mostly flowers). They will examine the PCs from a distance but will not fight; if attacked with ranged weapons, they flee unless cornered (during nighttime, replace this encounter with 1d4+1 wolves).
4	A group of imps (1d4+2) hunting for captives. They attack unless the PCs outnumber them (in which case they try to hide and ambush). All that they know is that they must bring captives to the hive.
5	A skinless worm-head bear , with no flesh on its head but innumerable maggots surrounding its skull. It is hurt (only 10 HP left) and crazy, and it attacks on sight. WORM-HEAD BEAR. AC 12, HD 4D10 [12 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: CLAW X2 (1D6), SAVE 16, MORALE 7.
6	A brown bear eating honey from a hole in a tree. It will attack if disturbed. If both claws hit the same target, the bear makes a hug attack (1d8 damage). The bees are harmless and the honey heals one hit point to anyone that eats it. Repeated eating has no effect. BEAR. AC 12, HD 4D10 [22 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: CLAW X2 (1D4), SAVE 16, MORALE 7.
7	A colorful garden full of huge, exotic flowers seems to have appeared in the middle of the forest. They look beautiful but alien, with unknown colors and dripping a golden pollen that can be harvested. If a bee-person sees the pollen (a one-pound bag is needed), it will forget everything it is doing to collect it (unless protecting the queen), and destroy anyone who tries to stop it.
8	A huge beehive is near; unless the PCs go around it (adding at least half an hour to the journey) they get stung by strange red bees (1d4 damage, Constitution save halves). If they approach the hive, they will see the lower half is darkened and oozing with some kind of reddish pus. There are hundreds of dead bees nearby.

9	An escaped weak prisoner . He was captured by imps and managed to escape when they were distracted. He knows little, but will tell that the prisoners were kept in cages until they were taken "somewhere below" and never came back. He will not go back to the hive.
10	A carcass of a half-maggot half-deer creature lies in the way. It stinks of fermentation. Anyone foolish enough to try eating it suffers 1d6 damage (Constitution save halves).
11	2d6 demon cultists wandering around the woods after hearing a mysterious calling in their dreams. They yearn to find their demonic master but haven't located the hive yet. They wear dark purple clothes. If asked, they will say that they are simple travelers looking for work. Their dark, satanic symbols are hidden in their bags, but at least half of them has daggers and short swords handy. Each carries 1d6 gp. CULTIST. AC 10, HD 1D6 [4 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: DAGGER (1D4), SAVE 19, MORALE 7.
12	A corpse with a dislocated jaw and a big hole on its stomach. Only by examining it closely it will become obvious that the entrails were eaten from the inside before something burrowed out.



THE WRETCHED HIVE

This is where most of the adventure takes place.

ENTERING THE HIVE

The hive looks like a cross between a mountain, a cave complex, an apartment building (with apartments made of hexes), and a beehive. Multiple entrances can be seen from afar.

There are four main entrances. If the PCs are coming from the North, they are more likely to find the doors in hexes **A** or **C**. If they decided to go around the hive, through the woods, they can easily find the doors in the ruins of the temple (hexes **Y** and **P**), where there are no guards. This takes about half an hour. There is a 1 in 6 chance of a random encounter here (see the random encounters from the forest, above).

Climbing the hive is possible, but the soldiers in the towers have a 1 in 6 chance of spotting the characters for each hex they climb or traverse. If they do, 1d6 soldiers attack the PCs.

DAY VERSUS NIGHT

The hive is active both day and night, but night makes it significantly more dangerous, because many creatures go out during the day to hunt for pollen, captives, etc. In addition, unless the PCs can see in the dark, their sources of light will make them easier to notice at night.

During the night, whenever you roll randomly to determine the number of creatures, re-roll all natural 1s. For example, if one room has “2d6 bee soldiers” and you roll a 1 and a 3, this would mean 4 bee soldiers during the day, but re-roll the 1 if the PCs enter at night (if you roll 1 again, there are four soldiers; if you roll 4, instead, there are seven soldiers total, and so on).

This rule applies to all encounters within the hive, random or not. On the upside, there is a 50%

chance for every demon to be sleeping during the night.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Inside the hive, there is a 1-in-12 chance of random encounters for each hour the PCs spend in the hive. If they spend an hour in a room with multiple doors, the chance is greater: 2 in 12 for two doors, 3 in 12 for three doors, etc.

Remember that if a random encounter causes one faction to appear where there are members of other faction (for example, if bee-soldiers randomly appear in the Imps’ quarter) there is a 50% chance they will be fighting against each other (if they aren’t, they will probably be ignoring one another).

If a random encounter happens, roll 1d10. In the red area, roll 2d10 and pick highest. In the yellow and blue areas, roll 2d10 and pick lowest.

<i>d10</i>	<i>Encounter</i>
1-2	1d4 bee soldiers
3-5	1d6 bee workers
6-8	1d6 imps
9	1 biomancer
10	1d3 ogres

STEALTH, LIES AND VIOLENCE

The rooms are big enough, and the hive noisy enough, that one might sneak around unseen with the proper skill check, unless the room is empty or the character is carrying a lit torch. Use your standard rules for surprises, hiding, etc.

A lit torch will ruin any character’s chance of stealth, but maybe his or her allies can sneak

unnoticed while the torch-carrier draws attention to himself.

When talking to the demons, the PCs can try to justify their presence by saying they are mercenaries selling captives, although this is more convincing if they have actual captives (or people that look like captives)

The demons and the bees are chaotic and disorganized enough that what happens in one room seldom affects another. A small fight in one room has only 1 chance in 6 of attracting creatures from one random adjacent hex (decide randomly; if there are no creature in the adjacent hex, a random encounter happens, instead).

ARCHITECTURAL OVERVIEW

THE HEXES (ROOMS)

Each hex is 50 feet wide and 25 feet high and reasonably well-lit during the day. They are mostly made of (incredibly hard) wax, but some (especially on the towers and red areas) are reinforced with stone and other materials.

The walls are irregular, made of endless small hexes, like a bee-hive (see the book cover for reference).

[Red] hexes (mostly inhabited by demons) are darker and fouler than others, with walls made mostly of stone and metal and exquisite crimson stains.

(Yellow) hexes (mostly inhabited by bee-people) are cleaner and emptier. The walls are made of in yellowy, translucent wax and a pleasant, flowery, smell fills the air.

<Blue> hexes are littered with ruins of the old temple. During the day, they look darker than the others do. It is easy to hide in the ruins; there are altars, chairs and broken walls all around.

Colorless hexes are newer, mostly white, with simple, dark-yellow walls and earthen floors.

DOORS AND PASSAGES

There are two kinds of passages in the hive. The black doors are traditional doors, which can be forced or unlocked, although they have a 50% chance of being unlocked already. Since demons are constantly moving around, a door left unlocked can be found locked later and vice-versa.

The white “passages” are actually big, round holes in the walls, starting three feet from the ground, and thus requiring a few seconds to cross for anyone who cannot fly. Since there are no actual “doors”, these are always open.

THE FOUR TOWERS

Towers 1 through 3 are bee-people watchtowers, with multiples floors. They have huge windows.

Tower 4 is Malavor’s lair. It has small windows.

THE UNDERGROUND

The underground is the most dangerous part of the hive and it will kill low-level characters. There are few ways to get there, all containing signals that the underground is a dangerous place. Most accesses are locked (Malavor has a key).

Entering the underground is usually not a requirement for most goals the PCs might have in the hive.



THE MAP

The hexes contained in the map (rooms A to Z) are described below.

Rooms marked by numbers (1 to 4) are towers – they are described in the next section (page 24).

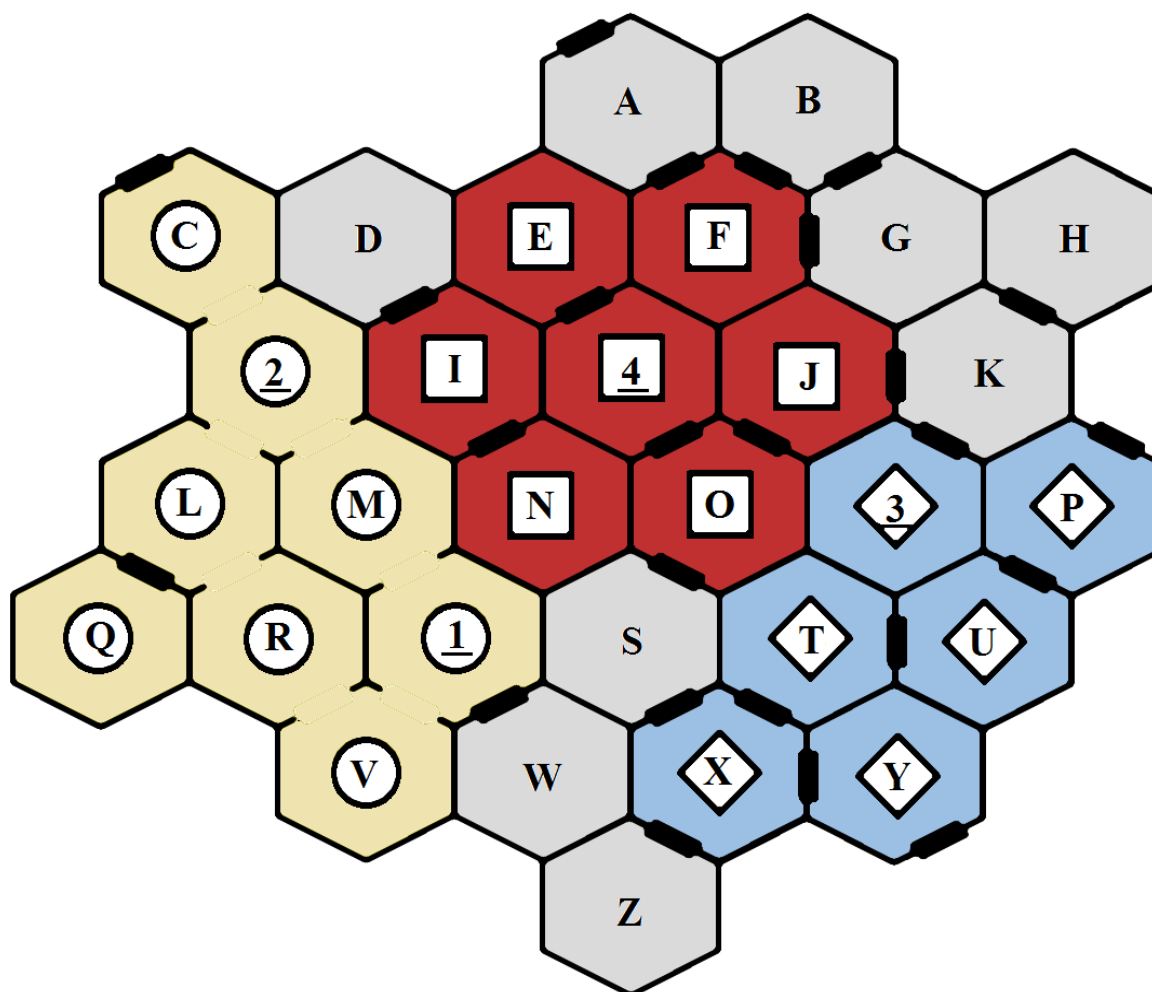
The underground is made of a single circular room, accessible through the ground floor in room 4. It has no map.

Notice that the hexes are marked with circles, squares and diamonds to allow black-and-white printing. As noted above, players usually approach the hive form the North (the top side of the map).

THE INVERTED HIVE?

If you need an underground dungeon instead of a fortress, you can flip the whole thing upside down. In this case, the towers become holes, with bee-soldiers guarding the lowest points while works dig further down. Similarly, the inhabitants of the hive can choose to “go underground” if the local opposition becomes too strong.

The hive was built this way for some inscrutable reason. If it is destroyed but enough powerful beings are still alive, it might be rebuild in a similar manner, but inverted. The exception is the blue area: it becomes a new temple, made of wax and honey instead of stone.



GROUND LEVEL

A. DEMONS' ENTRANCE

Seven mean-looking imps and one Ogre, nickname Blockhead, will question visitors about their business. Most humans come here to sell weapons and captives, or pay tribute to Malavor – the demons must see the goods before letting people inside.

Either way, a small bribe will be demanded (one gp per person if the PCs are convincing, five if they sound fishy). After that, the PCs will be told to proceed to room K. If the PCs come looking for a fight, they will get it.

B. THE ARSENAL

This room is filled with many crude spears, clubs, handaxes and machetes. Treat all as 1d4 weapons. There are also a few ordinary weapons (1 in 6 chance of finding an ordinary axe, mace, sword, etc. – there are 2d4 ordinary weapons in total).

The arsenal is usually guarded by a single imp, who will call his friends in room A if threatened.

(C). BEE ENTRANCE

1d6+3 bee soldiers guard this entrance. They do not speak, do not negotiate, are clearly defending the door and will become hostile if the PCs try to invade, but will not pursue if the PCs leave the premises.

D. TENTACLED HORROR

An alien mass of putrid flesh and tentacles is trapped here. It smells terrible makes growling noises. Its thick, spiky tentacles flail around aimlessly. A failed experiment from the underground biomancers, it has been trapped here for obvious reasons: it charges at anything on sight, and doesn't stop until the enemy is destroyed.

If two or more tentacles hit the same target, the monster can make a bite attack (2d12 damage).

TENTACLED HORROR. AC 14, HD 6d12 [42 HP], MOVE 20', ATTACK: TENTACLE x3 (1d10), SAVE 14, MORALE 11.



[E] THE BARRACKS

2d6+3 imps are here. During the day, half are asleep, but they do not seem to care with people coming and going. During the night, only a third of them is wake, but they'll be suspicious of outsiders.

The rest of the imps are playing disgusting games with small vermin and malformed dice.



[F] MESS HALL

2d6 imps are eating here at any time of the day. Some are selling dead animals from the outside, and some are selling unidentifiable meat they got “underground”. From time to time, a fat ogre chef sells hot stew (one cp per bowl). Everything is cheap and filthy.

G. EMPTY PASSAGE

There's nothing here.

H. LAB

A biomancer with four deformed homunculi assistants keeps an alchemy lab in this hex. Potions, dissected animals, and scrolls in unidentifiable languages all around. Three boxes with living

larvae are scattered around the floor. There is a corpse with an open wound on its stomach lying down. There is also a big fireplace and a living human prisoner.

If the PCs enter the lab, the homunculi will walk towards them slowly, and then attack. The biomancer will join in the next round.

HOMUNCULUS. AC 15, HD 1d2 [1 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: BITE (1 HP), SAVE 20, MORALE 10.

[I] FLOWER ROOM

Six **giant, artificial flowers** in the middle of the room are the trigger to a fire trap in the ceiling, covering the room in flames. It causes 2d4 damage to everyone that cannot duck fast enough (Dexterity save halves).

The doors to room I are barred with a huge piece of wood. It is heavy, but can easily be removed by three or more characters working together.

[J] PRISON

There are six cages here. All cages are locked. Two are empty, while the other four contain prisoners (1d6 prisoners in each cage).

Three imps are guarding the cages. Usually one of them is distracted tormenting the prisoners.

K. GRANARY AND TREASURY

This is the commercial hub of the wretched. The treasurer, a sly hunchback imp with one big eye and a purple hat, buys captives here (10 gp per person), and sells all kinds of trinkets (although nothing too valuable).

He is guarded by a couple of twin ogres and three unusually large imps with long halberds (1d10 damage), and will not leave his post. He is suspicious and smart but is mostly interested in money. He carries 50 gp in his pouch.

(L) TREASURE AND TRAP

A chest full of treasure, heavy but somewhat valuable, is lying unguarded in the middle of the room. Opening it triggers spears coming from the ground, causing 2d4 damage to anyone standing in the hex (Dexterity save halves). Examining the chest will reveal that it is full of wax, with 50 gp sprinkled over it to give the appearance of a big treasure.

(M) EMPTY PASSAGE

This room is empty.

[N] DOWNWARD SPIRAL

In the middle of this empty room, there is a barred hole. Beneath it, downward spiral stairs lead to the underground. This entrance is unnaturally hot, humid and foul. It is closed with heavy bars and very hard to open without a key. Strange alien moans, intermixed with anguished screams, can be heard from underneath.

Most inhabitants of the upper portions of the hive dislike this place. This is the way to the main biomancer's labs, full of mutated horrors.

[O] THE ARENA

The wretched gather here to watch captured humans, ogres, captives, drunk mercenaries and leashed bee-people fight for various prizes (up to 3d6 gp).

The people in the audience (2d6imps, 1d4 Ogres, 2d4 human mercenaries) are drunk and excited. They will not notice invaders unless disturbed.

If one of the characters want to try his luck here, the current champion is Ugruk, a four-armed

mutant ogre. Beating him will automatically win everyone's respect (and 100 gp).

DRUNK MERCENARY. AC 12, HD 1d8 [4 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: SWORD (1d6), SAVE 19, MORALE 8.

UGRUK. AC 14, HD 5d10 [27 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: WEAPON x2 (2d6), SAVE 15, MORALE 10.



<P> INVERTED FOUNTAIN

Six soldiers protect a "fountain" of honey (see p. 12) dripping from the ceiling into a big circular basin. They do not let humans or demons get near the fountain, but will not attack unless provoked.

(Q) THE HUNTER BEE

1d6+1 mummified animals (wolves, boars, etc.), imprisoned by an insane hunter-bee. One hunting dog is still alive and can show gratitude if released.

There is a mummified human amongst the “prizes”. It has 2 chances in 6 of being alive when the PCs arrive. The hunter is clinging to the ceiling, waiting for the right moment to strike.

INSANE HUNTER. AC 13, HD 3D6 [10 HP], MOVE 35' [FLYING], ATTACK: HUNTING SPEAR (1D8), SAVE 17, MORALE 10.

(R) THE QUEEN

The Queen Avatar is a giant bee, entranced by the sorcery of Malavor. She can barely move but is able to defend herself with paws and stinger (her sting causes 6d6 poison damage, but she only uses after losing more than half her total HP).

The ground is filled with little hexagonal basins, many of them filled with eggs or larvae. The avatar is intelligent, but insane and unable to communicate with humans. It will be very hard to calm her down. When people enter her hex, she will become progressively more agitated. After 1d4 rounds, she attacks anyone who comes near. If nobody does, she just makes menacing noises.

If the Avatar is threatened, 1d6 soldiers appear after two rounds, and another 1d6 soldiers after four rounds. If she is slain, read the “aftermath” section.

THE QUEEN. AC 16, HD 10D12 [65 HP], MOVE 5', ATTACK: FORELEGS X2 (2D8/2D8), SAVE 10, MORALE 12.

S. EMPTY PASSAGE.

There is nothing here.

<T> THE TELEPATH

A telepathic drone-man is hidden in this hex amongst the rubble from the temple. It can communicate with human and bee. He will offer his services in exchange of protection. The other bees want him dead because he is not a soldier or worker, and thus considered useless. He is also a mutant and therefore an aberration.

The telepath doesn't remember where it came from. It knows it is trapped within this hive, and it understands the motivations of other bees. It wants to leave the hive, but is not sure how long it will survive on the outside.

TELEPATH. AC 12, HD 2D6 [6 HP], MOVE 35' [FLYING], ATTACK: PSIONIC BLAST (1D4), SAVE 19, MORALE 7.

<U> THE STATUE

Amidst the ruins of the temple, a statue of a maiden with little insectile wings stands erect.

It will heal any sincere allies of the Queen if they pray to it or ask for help (1d6 HP, once per day). Clerics and paladins of lawful deities get 2d6, instead. It will also send them a telepathic message: “the artifacts in this temple will protect you”, but nothing else.



(V) CRACKED FLOOR

The floor in this empty room seem cracked. It will collapse if more than six creatures are inside it at the same time (bee-people don't count). If it doesn't, everyone inside takes 2d6 falling damage (save halves).

The resulting hole is shallow and leads to nowhere, although looking through the rubble may reveal a passage to the underground, at GM's discretion.

W. GUARD ROOM

2d6 soldiers guard this room. They will not let demons pass under any circumstances. Allies of the Queen could be granted passage, if they are somehow able to communicate.

<X> RUINS & RELICS

The floor in this room is made of outstanding white marble, with ebony stripes forming some kind of pattern. It would seem that it formed a circle before the temple was destroyed.

Examining the floor leads to a secret door. Inside it, there is a small safe containing four golden amulets, valuable (100 gp each) and sacred. Each imitates or contains a different kind of bee.

Two amulets are holy relics. One is a necklace that prevents bee people from attacking its wearer unless attacked first by him or her. Other is a ring that allows the wearer to fly for one minute, and then fall slowly for one minute (if necessary). After that, it stops working for one hour.

The other amulets (golden necklaces) have religious significance to the cult of Melissa, but no special powers.

<Y> TAPESTRIES

Beautiful silk tapestries lie in the ground, torn and scattered. If put together, they portray scenes representing Melissa's love towards humanity. Life flows from her hands: flowers, bees, and the light of the sun itself.

Everyone looking at these drawings will probably become convinced that Melissa is a benevolent deity and that most of her minions will not attack unless provoked.

In addition, all characters get a small mechanical benefit, as appropriated to your game. If you're using contemporary rules, we suggest giving inspiration or 2d6 temporary HP. If you're using old school rules, characters get 1d6 HP and their HP maximum is raised by the same amount for 24 hours.

Z. TROLL BEE

This room is full of viscous wax that drips from the ceiling, and the floor is difficult terrain (half speed).

A two-headed twelve-armed mutant troll-bee sleeps here most of the time in a corner. If awoken, it will go on an unstoppable rampage, attacking everything on sight.

If reduced to 25 HP or less, the monster must make a morale check. If it fails, it runs away causing havoc. It will go through room X, S and O until the armed thugs in that room there stop it. However, the destruction will be so great that the arena will be empty for days after that.

TROLL BEE. AC 14, HD 7D12 [45 HP], MOVE 25', ATTACK: FORELEGS x4 (1D10), SAVE 14, MORALE 7.

THE FOUR TOWERS

TOWERS 1 AND 2

These are bee-people watchtowers. They have 1d6 soldiers per upper level and “doors” (holes) to the outside, and not much else.

The ground floors are empty. Tower 1 has additional upper floor, while tower two 2 two additional floors. The upper floors have enormous openings on the sides so that the bee-people can fly freely.

There are no stairs between the floors, only big holes on the ceilings.

TOWER 3

This tower is similar to towers 1 and 2, with a few differences. It has three floors in addition to the ground floor.

The ground floor in this tower is littered with remains from the temple, including toppled statues and wooden benches. Piling things up would allow characters to get to the first upper floor, which is also empty.

The second floor is a watchtower, like towers 1 and 2, containing 1d6 soldiers.

The highest is a watchtower (1d6 soldiers) but also a deposit of sorts. It contains multiple flowers and interesting items the bee-people found in the countryside, mostly plants and abandoned items (some clothes, food, 100 gp).

There is a 1 in 6 chance that there is a living person in there. He or she was snatched by accident and is paralyzed by fear.

TOWER 4 (GROUND FLOOR)

This floor is empty, except for a spiral staircase that goes both upwards (up to level 4) and downwards, although the way down is blocked by heavy bars and cannot be opened without a key.

TOWER 4 (LEVEL 1)

This floor is decorated with gigantic demon faces. It is meant to dissuade people from moving upwards. The faces have no magical powers – they portray demons that Malavor has already vanquished.

The passage can be closed with heavy bars, but it is currently open.



TOWER 4 (LEVEL 2)

This floor is guarded by three archfiends with flaming swords (1d8 additional fire damage, already included) and shields. The flaming sword can be used by PCs, with identical effects.

They'll protect Malavor at all costs, but if the demon is slain they'll flee. If convinced that the players just want to talk, they might escort the players to level 3, ready to strike if needed.

One archfiend has a key to the underground (through the ground level in this tower).

ARCHFIEND. AC 15, HD 4D10 [25 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: FLAMING SWORD (2D8), SAVE 16, MORALE 11.

TOWER 4 (LEVEL 3)

This is Malavor's throne room. In his dark, spiked throne, he broods and waits for events to unfold. Imps and ogres often come here to beg for favors, but not today.

Malavor will not attack unless threatened. He is enthralled by the avatar and unsure about what to do. He welcomes advice but is not easily fooled. He holds a key to all passages to the underground.

Malavor also holds the amulet of Melissa, which binds the avatar to this plane. The amulet is a small statue of the deity. It controls all bee-people (except for the avatar itself) within 50 feet (although sometimes the avatar's pull is stronger). Under no circumstances will the demon give this away willingly.

Malavor has limited magical powers. He is immune to mind-controlling spells (but not to the divine charm of Melissa) and fire. He can cast fireball twice a day (8d6 damage) and throw firebolts from his fingertips at will (2d6 damage, treat this as an attack).

If he is slain, read the "aftermath" section.

MALAVOR. AC 16, HD 8D12 [54 HP], MOVE 35' (FLYING), ATTACK: EBON ROD x2 (2D10), SAVE 12, MORALE 12.

TOWER 4 (LEVEL 4)

This is Malavor's study. It contains tables, books in unknown languages, strange potions, and eldritch statues resembling deformed monsters from hell, and a big wooden chair. There is also a bound captive, brought here for no clear reason.

The potions are poisonous (1d6 damage, Constitution save halves). Trying to read the books or examine the statues will make you stunned for one minute unless you succeed on a Wisdom or Intelligence saving throw.

There is also a small, locked chest containing 500 gp and fine jewelry (worth 2000 gp).



THE UNDERGROUND

The underground is composed of a few narrow passages and caves. All stairs to the underground lead to narrow corridors, going deeper and deeper. The air is foul. There is not much movement, but the echoes of strange moans and desperate cries can be heard from down below.

The corridors are mostly empty. There are a few things scattered around – human bones, sticky ichor, and parts of unidentifiable monsters. It feels like a descent into hell.

After a few minutes walking, all corridors converge to a single big room, with the shape of a circle (approximately 200 feet of diameter).

Some tunnels and bifurcations go even lower, but they seem too narrow and foul to descend further. You can add a big cellar door in the middle of the room if you want. These might be pathways to the Abyss (or to whatever underground kingdoms exist in your campaign).

The room is the **biomancer's headquarter**. It has a number of interesting features.



DEMONS AND THINGS

There are **1d6+6 biomancers** here at all times. They are attended by **2d4 lobotomized mutant imps** (same statistics as common imps, but cannot communicate, and only follow orders from the biomancers).

They do not sleep. They seldom communicate. They do not attack unless one of them is attacked or threatened. They work without stop.

Some look at **metallic boxes** (strange machinery) and colorful cords. Others stir one of the three **breeding pits** – pools of gooey grey matter where bubbles seem to form humanoid silhouettes before bursting. Some carry **small hexagonal boxes** containing living larvae. Others tend to the **captives**, trapped upright, in racks.

CAPTIVES

There are **1d6+2 captives** in this room. By inserting the larvae into the captives, they create more bee-soldiers. They want to improve the process to create stronger, more obedient soldiers.

The condition of the prisoners varies:

d6	Condition
1	Healthy.
2	Unconscious and sick, but unharmed.
3	Delirious. Has a larvae inside. Will transform in 1d3 days.
4	Comatose. Will transform today.
5	A bee-soldier, close to awakening.
6	Dead (didn't survive the process).

TREASURE

The room is full of unguarded treasure. Clothes and miscellaneous items tossed in a corner, containing 10d6 gp. A few crude weapons. Enough honey and royal jelly for every character.

The demons have no treasure on them.

There are 2d6 identical dark green vials of pheromones here, line up in a table. Anyone drinking a vial is ignored by bee-people for one day, as if he or she didn't exist.

There are six other vials of various colors spread around. Use them at your own peril.

d6	Vial
1	Dark purple. Recover 1d6 HP.
2	Light green. Intoxicated for one hour.
3	Light blue. Reality is enhanced. Everything becomes easier to find for one hour.
4	Dark blue. No effect on humans.
5	Milky white. Eyelids are glued together for one hour.
6	Light gray. Can communicate telepathically for one hour.

ZOTHAQ

Zothaq is here. He is pale, mutated, looking more and more like a warped biomancer. His skin is becoming scaly, and there are tentacles coming out of his robes.

He is working with the demons in order to perfect himself. He does not care about power or riches anymore – only self-improvement matters.

Most of his spells are now forgotten. He can bind imps and ogres with ease, but not biomancers (although they follow his orders for some reason). Demons cannot attack him directly due to a protection ritual he performed before starting this whole deal.

He is the only one here who will talk to characters if approached. He intelligent, paranoid, and clearly insane. His mind is now immune to charming, sleep spells, and common sense. He has advantage in all saving throws against spells.

He will try to convince characters to try some “improvements”. If they accept, he gives them 1d6 vials of mutagenic – each vial causes one random mutation from the table on page 12. If they refuse, he will eventually run out of patience and order the other demons in the room to tie the characters down, adding them to the captives.

While the demons fight, he will attack from afar. He can use his psychic blast at will, from a distance of up to 100 feet. If he rolls a natural 20, the target must make a Wisdom saving throw or become stunned for one minute.

ZOTHAQ. AC 15, HD 10d4 [25 HP], MOVE 30', ATTACK: PSYCHIC BLAST x2 (2d10), SAVE 10, MORALE 12.



AFTERMATH

Here is what happens after the end (or in the middle, in some cases) of the adventure.

If Malavor is slain, the bee-people will immediately destroy the remaining demons. The Queen (now free from mental slavery) will telepathically ask the adventures for death, but she will resurrect from its own carcass (as an ordinary bee) in less than one minute and fly away. The fortress will collapse within 1d6+6 days. The demons in the underground will be buried alive. Some might survive.

If the Queen dies, bee-people will disperse immediately. It will take Malavor 3d6 days to summon another avatar or come up with a new use for his fortress. His success is not guaranteed. He might try a different plan. In any case, the hive will still be a menace as long as Malavor lives.

If both the Queen and Malavor are still alive, the hive expands. In 2d4 weeks, the number of demons and bee-soldiers is doubled, and the hive's defenses are reinforced. In another 1d6 weeks, Malavor manages to mutate himself into a bee-demon, half-insane, but with full control of the bee-people. The bloated and sick avatar dies after a while, but this no longer affects the bee-soldiers, that can now be cloned in the underground. Three

months after the characters left, Malavor unleashes his army against the nearest village.

The underground is a different matter. The underground is currently running its own schemes. It supports Malavor but only because he lets them do their own stuff. If Malavor leaves the hive, they will quickly take it. They will seal all doors to the outside, leaving a couple of secret passages. They might demolish the towers to avoid getting attention from the outside, and cover the whole fortress in dirt to transform it into a mound. They are digging their own underground tunnels, leading to somewhere miles away... or miles *below*. There are more demons in the Abyss that spawned Malavor and the biomancers.

In addition, unless Zothaq and more than half the biomancers working underground are killed, the underground keeps expanding until it becomes some kind of megadungeon, full of demons and hybrid life forms. The forest around the ruins of the hive becomes progressively weirder, with mutant beasts prowling around. Fortunately, they have no plans of conquering neighboring towns right away (the idea here is that the characters find this out and come back after a while, hopefully when they are a bit stronger).

THE END!