

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

THE LOST CITY OF BARAKO



#91.1: A CITY AT THE CENTER OF AERETH
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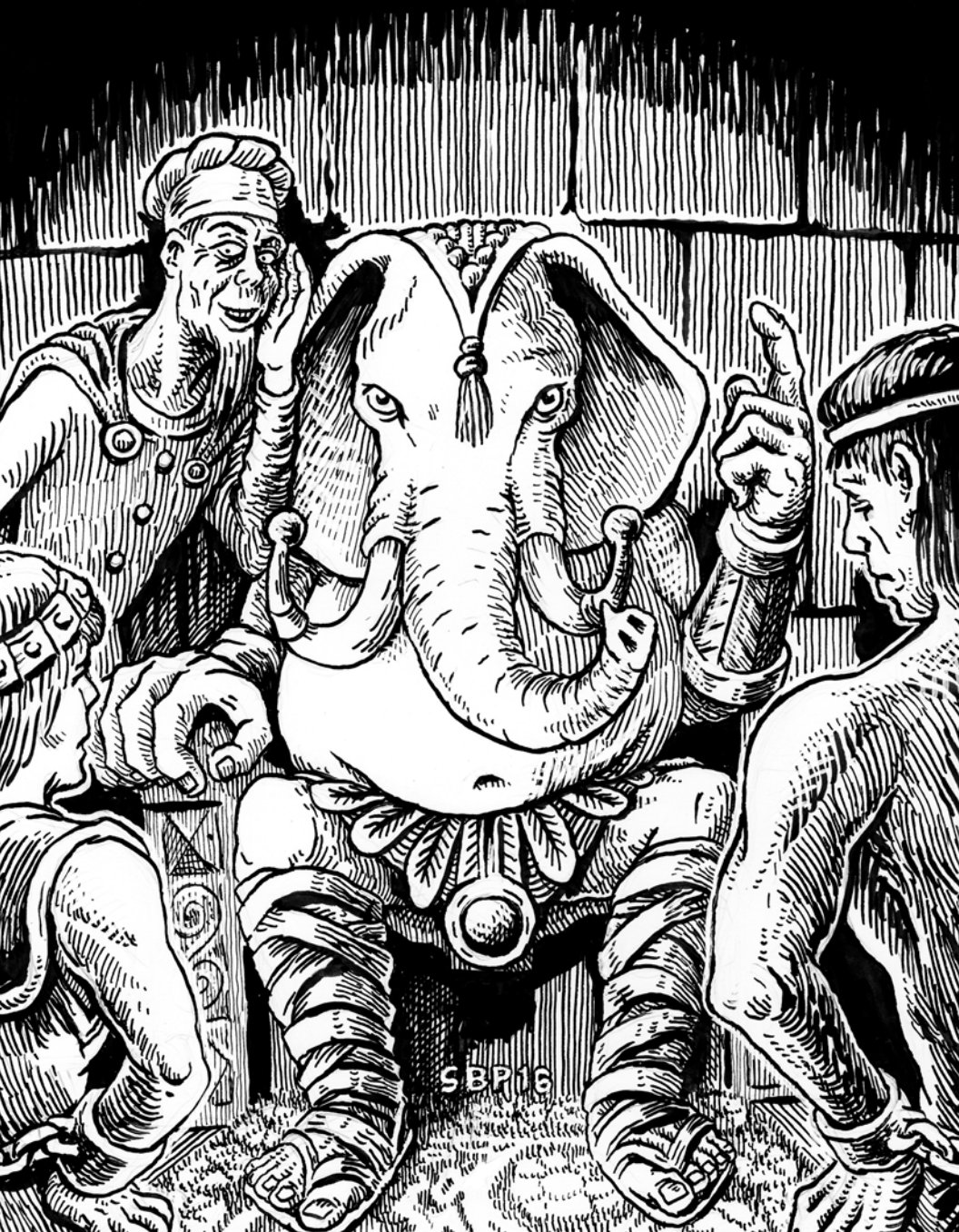


JOURNEY-TO-THE-CENTER-OF
AERETH

THE LOST CITY OF BARAKO

A CITY AT THE CENTER OF AERETH

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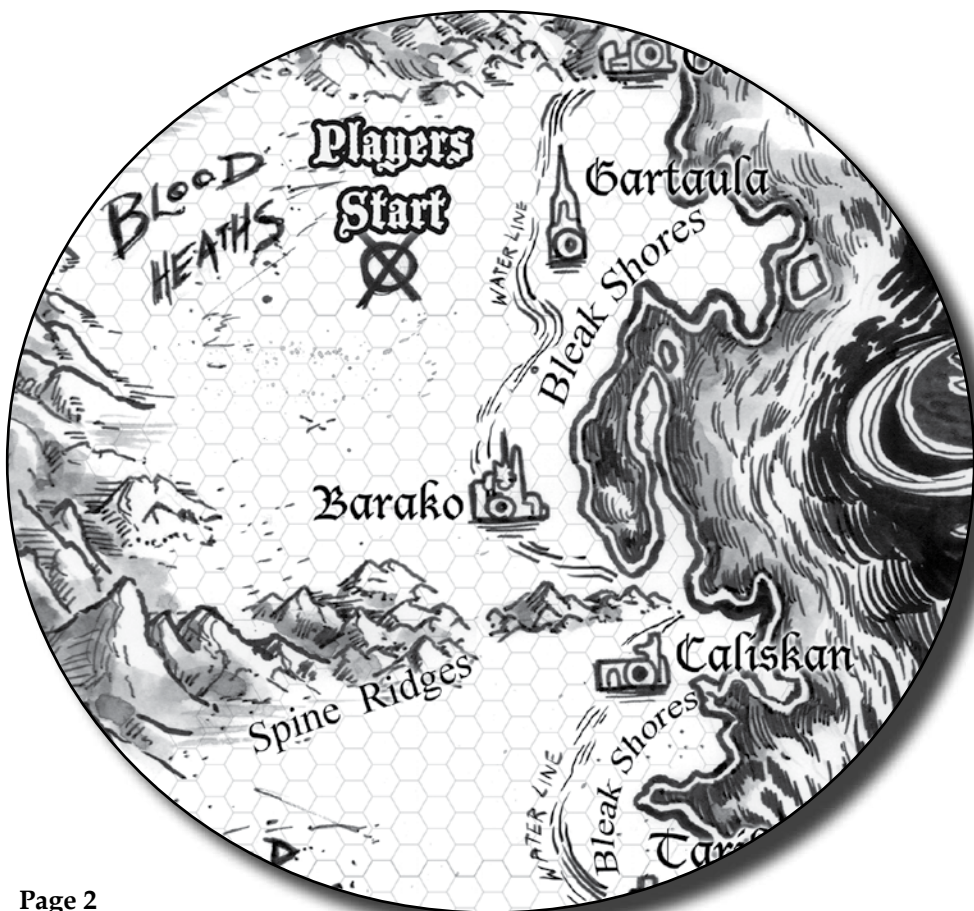




he pleasure palace of Barako rises above the Bleak Shores atop enormous stone pylons. The gloomy palace and golden domes are lit by a thousand lanterns fueled by rendered flesh. Within the city, hellish figures dart and whirl about in the flickering light, prostrating themselves before Aghartan masters to sounds of a cacophonous, alien symphony played by lamenting slaves. The City of Choruses is never silent, the eerie and horrific songs sounding across the shores and heaths long into the night.

The city is approached by a winding stone staircase rising from the rocky shore to a pair of high bronze gates. The stairs are set with mighty stone braziers that are filled with oil and lit every "dawn." As dusk falls and the waters of the great Inner Sea roll in, the braziers are extinguished and vanish beneath the waves, step by step.

The towering bronze gates have been worn smooth from centuries of nightly assaults. Though battered, dented and scarred, the gates remain in good repair. During the brief daylight hours, the portals are drawn open by teams of slave giants in harness, permitting the crimson-bannered warriors of Barako to march down to the heaths, and then hauled closed again at dusk.



Woe to the city should the nightly ritual be interrupted: the inky waters of the Inner Sea would roll up the steps and past the might gates, bearing a host of foul leviathans to a very door of the slavers' palaces.

Each half of the gate lays claim to its own slave-captain and army, responsible for opening, closing and defending the massive portals. The rivalry between the captains and their armies is so great that one force will wait until the other is on the brink of defeat before coming to their aid.

The slave armies of Barako bear slender silken banners into battle. Dyed a deep crimson, and strung with bronze bells, the banners depict three triangles set in a circle – the triumvirate of slave lords presiding over the fell city.

Slave-Captain: Init +4; Atk grab +7 melee (1d10+7 plus victim is pinned) or great cleaver +7 melee (1d12+8); AC 16; HD 10d10; hp 50; MV 30'; Act 1d24; SP immune to enchantment / charm magic; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +7; AL C.

Gate Army (50 slave giants per gate): Init +2; Atk grab +5 melee (1d6+6 plus victim is pinned) or great cleaver +5 melee (1d10+6); AC 14; HD 5d8; hp 20; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP immune to enchantment / charm magic; SV Fort +5, Ref -1, Will +5; AL C.

The promenades and byways of the city are typical of Lost Agharta – insofar as any of maddening pleasure palaces can be deemed typical – rising in a maze of overpasses, catwalks, alleys and elevated streets to the city's center: the palace of the slave lord.

The city is dominated by wide domes, punctuated with needle-like spires. Plated in the sheets of hammered gold and ringed by candle-lit arches, the domes glimmer like pools of fading sunlight in the dim gloom. The tower-spires are connected by high, narrow walkways, and seldom used by any save the slave lords' demonic servitors. Explorers traversing the high spans find themselves hundreds of feet above the city floor, on a stone span scarcely three feet wide, with neither railing nor rope to prevent a fall.

Like most cities perched on the edge of the Inner Sea, Barako is dying, slowly succumbing to the nightly assaults. Many of its towers and domes stand empty or collapsed; beasts and refugees lair in the ruins, carving out a desperate existence in the shadow of the slave lords.

As the PCs explore the city, roll on the following tables for inspiration on developing the maddening city. As always, common sense (as much as that term applies to the alien cities) trumps any roll, and judges should always defer to their imaginations.

General Notes: Floors are not necessarily standard, as surface dwellers have come to expect. A tower floor allows at least 20' of clearance for the slave giants and their wicked overlords, but can range to 60' or more.

Waste (including the bodies of dead slaves) is dumped out over the ramparts onto

the stone shores during the daylight hours, and washed away with the passage of each night.

Aqueducts run throughout the city. Water is drawn up into great cisterns during each night's rising seas, and then permitted to run down through the city during the day. Occasionally aquatic beasts and small leviathans make it into the cisterns, making the aqueducts perilous to incautious adventurers and slaves.

Table I: Structures - 3d4

- 3 Special (Table VI)
- 4 Ramp / Stairs (Table II)
- 6-7 Tower (Table III)
- 8-10 Dome (Table IV)
- 11 Plaza (Table V)
- 12 Special (Table VI)

Table II: Ramp or Stairs - 1d6

- 1 Ramp rising one level, guarded by 1d3-1 slave giants.
- 2 Ramp descending one level, guarded by 1d3-1 slave giants.
- 3 Stairs rising 1d3 levels. 30% chance of servitor demon.
- 4 Stairs descending 1d3 levels. 15% chance of servitor demon.
- 5 Flying staircase, rising to tower (Table III).
- 6 Spiral staircase descending to dome (Table IV).

Table III: Towers - 1d12

- 1-3 Collapsed tower, 1d5 floors remaining, visible through the rubble (Table VII).
- 4-5 Storehouse, 1d5+1 stories in height; 1d10+5 laboring slaves supervised by a single slave-giant.
- 6 Foundry, smithy and armory, 1d3+2 stories in height; 1d30+10 laboring slaves watched over by 1d5 slave giants.
- 7-8 Devil's tower, 1d20+5 stories, warded by a type III demon. 1d10 servitor demons traverse the high catwalks and flit in and out of windows above, in service of their dark master (Table VII).
- 9 Akashic library, 1d8 stories in height. Guarded by 1d5+3 slave giants and 1d4 lotus fiends; on the highest floor is a collection of 1d5 complete choruses and 1d10 holy wafers.
- 10 Ythothian sky dock; 1d20+10 stories in height. Presently 1d3-1 slaver vessels are anchored to the tower, high above.
- 11-12 Abandoned, 1d12 floors in height (Table VII).

Table IV: Domes - 1d12

- 1 Collapsed. Rubble crowds the crumbling walls (Table VII).
- 2-3 General Barracks, 1d3 stories in height, housing 1d20+5 slave giants per floor.
- 4-6 Slave pens: Rotunda with 1d10 large pits, each containing 1d30+10 untransformed slaves. Guarded by 1d12-5 slave giants.
- 7 Slave Market: 1d20+5 ythothian slavers showing 1d100+10 kidnapped slaves to an Aghartan slave lord, his troop of 1d10 slave giants, and 1d4 lotus fiend advisors.
- 8 Bath House: A perfumed, artificial lake, complete with artificial trees, plants and wildlife, created for slave lords that will never see the surface lands. At any time 1d5 Aghartan slave lords are soaking in the boiling waters, each guarded by 1d10 slave giants.
- 9 Coliseum / Arena: During the nights, the arenas are used to stage massive dramas, bloody reenactments and deadly arena battles. These grand performances are attended by 1d50+10 slave lords, each accompanied by 1d10+5 slave giants. During the “daylight” hours, the arenas are deserted, save for slaves hauling off the corpses from last night’s slaughter.
- 10 Slave lord villa: The dome is home to a lesser slave lord, his troop of 1d30+20 slave giants, 1d7 lotus fiend viziers, and 1d100+50 slaves.
- 11-12 Abandoned (Table VII)

Table V: Plaza - 1d12

- 1-4 Empty (25% chance that a spy fly enters the plaza as the PCs are crossing).
- 5 A triumphal arch dominates the plaza. The arch celebrates the cruelty of the Aghartan overlords and is regularly hung with the decaying corpses of sacrificial slaves.
- 6 The plaza opens into a great well; 25% chance of 1d20 slaves drawing water from aqueduct 50’ below.
- 7 A towering column, rising 2d100+50 feet into the air, topped by statuary depicting (roll 1d5): [1] a heroic depictions of a slave giant rendered in polished marble; [2] a massive Aghartan overlord, plated in gold; [3] a trio of silvery towers awash in carved stone waves; [4] five hooded figures, green with verdigris; [5] a mass of pleading humanoids in shackles, cast in bronze.
- 8 A troop of 1d12+3 slave giants, idly guarding the plaza.
- 9 A grand fountain sending brackish water spouting water dozens of feet into the air. The water collects in a pool at the base of the fountain. Drinking from the oily, fouled water improves a single physical stat by +1d3-1 and inflicts one minor corruption (per wizard rules).
- 10 A gang of 1d20+10 slaves, overseen by 1d5+2 slave giants. The work gang

is repairing a gaping chasm that has been torn in the plaza. The ravine plunges down to the stone shores, hundreds of feet below.

- 11 The plaza is home a large statue depicting (roll 1d5): [1] a devil cast in bronze; [2] a chaos lord cut from obsidian; [3] a trio of Aghartan slave lords, cast in gold; [4] a host of trembling slaves, carved from marble; [5] a toppled statue depicting a former Aghartan slave lord; the statue has been smashed into rubble, revealing a hollow cavity crusted over with dried ooze. It is left to the judge's determination whether or not similar statues conceal similar cavities.
- 12 Special (Table VI).

Table VI: Special - 1d10

- 1-4 Random encounter (roll 1d7): [1] Spy fly swarm; [2] troop of 1d5 slave giants; [3] one servitor demon; [4] 1d20+10 slaves accompanied by 1d5+2 slave giants; [5] 1d5 giant slugs; [6] 1d3 lotus fiends; [7] a lone Aghartan slave lord astride a great palanquin, guarded by 1d50+15 slave giants and accompanied by 1d5 lotus fiends.
- 5 Tremors shake the city and a chasm opens before the PCs. 1d30+3 feet wide, and 1d50+10 feet long. Each PC must attempt a DC 5 Luck check or pitch into the pit; falling characters are permitted a DC 10 Reflex save to catch themselves on the crumbling chasm walls. Characters failing both saves plummet to the rocky shores 1d300 feet below.
- 6 A ythothian slaver flees through the maze of streets and stairs, as his former companions and captain give chase from atop a flying ythothian long ship. The least lucky PC must make a DC 15 Luck check. On a failure the slaver spots the PCs and flees towards them, hoping to save his own skin. On a successful check, the PCs go unnoticed.
- 7 Enchanted pool: The PCs discover a small pool in the neglected shadows of the city. Characters drinking from the pool must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or take 1d20 damage from the brackish, algae-laden waters. Each time the fouled waters are tasted (whether or not the character succeeds on the check) the save DC worsens by +5. On a successful save, roll 1d5: [1] no effect; [2] character gains 1d3 feet in height and 1d3 Strength; [3] character loses 1d3 in height and gains +1d3 Agility; [3] character gains ability to smell magic; [4] character's touch acts as 1d24 *lay on hands* once per level / day; [5] flaming pentagram erupts on character's chest, granting +1d to *Invoke Patron* checks with demons or devils.
- 8 A mob of 1d20+5 rebel slaves fleeing before a gang of 1d12+3 slave giants. The least lucky PC must make a DC 5 Luck check. On a failed check, the slave giants spy the characters and decide to capture them as well. On a successful Luck check the PCs have the choice to remain hidden, or intervene, gaining a surprise round.
- 9-10 Random encounter weird (roll 1d5): [1] 1d3 soot wraiths; [2] type III demon; [3] shade of yearning; [4] 1d3 head hunters; [5] opus aberrant.



Table VII: Ruins - 1d12

- 1-5 Empty
- 6-8 The ruins are inhabited by (roll 1d8): [1] 1d3 escaped slaves; [2] 1d3 soot wraiths; [3] 1d5 giant slugs; [4] an opus aberrant; [5] 1d3 funnel wolves; [6] 1d3 head hunters; [7] 1d3 lotus fiends; [8] a shade of yearning. There is no treasure to be found.
- 9-11 The ruins are inhabited by (roll 1d7): [1] a banished type II demon; [2] a rebel ythothian captain hiding from his crew; [3] 1d5+3 escaped slaves; [4] an exiled Aghartan slave lord and 1d3 stolen slave giants; [5] 1d6+5 man bats; [6] a wounded servitor demon; [7] 1d3 lotus fiends. A close search of the lair reveals (roll 1d6): [1] 3d100 Aghartan coins; [2] 1d3 bags of spice; [3] 1d10 platinum orbs; [4] an Aghartan shortsword; [5] 1d3 gems. See Appendix B in *Journey to the Center of Aereth* for treasure values.
- 12 Though the ruins are not inhabited, a close search of the ruins reveals (roll 1d6): [1] 5d100 Aghartan coins; [2] 1d4 bags of spice; [3] a strongbox containing 1d20 platinum orbs; [4] a cache of 1d5 Aghartan blades of varying sizes; [5] 1d10 gems; [6] a complete Barakoan chorus (see Appendix III). For other treasure values, see Appendix B in *Journey to the Center of Aereth*.

CITIZENS OF THE SHRIEKING CITY



Barako is ruled by a triumvirate of enormously obese Aghartans from atop three ornate palanquin-thrones. Lords Tikoro, Apos, and Sargonos are unusual in that the rivals present a unified front, never undermining one another while in the presence of outsiders, be they servitor demons, ythothian slave traders or the PCs. Each of the triumvirate believes his survival depends on this balance of power – and that if any two of the slave lords resort to outright war, the third will make quick work of the survivor. If the characters upset this precarious balance, the palaces' rulers quickly devolve into violent chaos.

The triumvirate is advised (or perhaps amused) by a council of thirteen lotus fiend viziers. The group is forever at odds, making arguments, counter-arguments, and employing every sort of rhetorical device imaginable. No insult too low, and no logical fallacy is too blatant, for the viziers. What purpose they serve the slave lords is unclear, but lotus fiends are always present, hoping their empty words and senseless arguments win them lotus blossoms.

In addition to slaves and their foul masters, Barako is awash in demonic servitors – black-eyed, fanged cherubs with stunted wings and barbed tails, that demonstrate a hateful cruelty towards anything less powerful than themselves. The demons serve as messengers, envoys and diplomats for various Chaos powers. Despite

physical similarities between the demonic caste, all serve different patrons, and are constantly engaged in vicious deceptions and infighting.

In the event that the PCs cross paths with one of the small demons, the demons' response to the PCs is as varied as their patrons. While some might flee, in the hopes of reporting back to their infernal superiors, others engage with the PCs, hoping to earn their trust. Some bid for the PCs' allegiance, hinting at secrets concealed in the akashic libraries, and others will demand obeisance – lest they call down the wrath of the Aghartan slavers and their armies. Regardless of their particular flavor of manipulation, each of the demons immediately recognizes the value of the PCs as pawns in their schemes against one another and the Aghartans.

Servitor (Type I Demon, various): Init +1; Atk bite +6 melee (1d6+2) or tail +4 melee (1d10); AC 13; HD 3d12; MV 20' or fly 10'; Act 2d20; SP demon traits; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

THE UNDERBELLY

Below the city, many of the squat, supporting pillars have fallen to the nightly assault of leviathans; entire sections of the lower city have collapsed, falling to the slick-rock shores. A unique ecosystem hangs from the slimy, black underbelly of the city, fishing for smaller leviathans when the waters roll in during the nights, lone slave giants during the days, and whatever other creatures are desperate enough to seek shelter beneath fell Barako. The nature of these beasts is a mystery, but their fearsome might can be inferred from the fact that none of the leviathans have been permitted to claw their way up the rubble into the upper city.

NEW MONSTERS

DREAD BANALUS

The underbelly of Barako is covered with the briny sludge of a million receded tides. All manner of creatures live amidst the sludge, some even attached to the very undersurface of the city. By far the most terrible of this latter type is the dread balanus, a giant, sessile barnacle with a black, obsidian-like, six-plated pit-carapace.

The dread balanus begins its armored, post-larval stage unusually large – 4"-6" across. It then grows over time, adding to and expanding its exoskeleton and internal, spider-like, shrimp-form. The largest members of the species achieve an awesome 20'+ across!

Unlike mundane barnacles, dread balanus are predators. When the tide comes in and submerges the underside of the city, the dread balanus fishes the murky depths. But when the waters drop, these ever-ravenous crustaceans will attempt to devour anything that traverses their contiguous surface of a colony's countless shells. Beneath the balanus' opercula – exoskeletal plates that act like "access hatches" – are long, black feeder legs ending in sharp points. These are reminiscent

of the legs of the black widow spider but better armored and finely articulated via many more segments than a spider's legs. Instead of filter feeding like its common cousins, the dread balanus uses its wicked appendages to spear prey or entrap it. Once it has firm control, the dread balanus draws its prey into a maw lined with a hundred razor-sharp mandibles.

Colonies composed of swaths of mixed-size balanus cover the ledge-shores and underbelly of Barako. Hostile encounters with these creatures typically occur in one of two manners. When traveling across the water beneath the city, hapless adventuring parties may find themselves speared or entrapped from above. Or, when crossing the ledges that form the jagged "shores" of the city a party may find the hatches of a dread balanus beneath their feet, or an outcrop they mistook for a rock may suddenly sprout a tangle of viciously-pointed, articulated legs.

Large (2'-3' across) **Dread Balanus:** Init +3; Atk segmented leg +2 melee (1d3); AC 14 (legs), 18 (exoskeleton); HD (main body) 2d6; MV N/A; Act 6d16; SP camouflage, leg entrapment, protected vitals; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will +2; AL N.

Partly sunk into the slime and spawned amongst the rubble of Barako, dark exoskeletons give a large dread balanus a high degree of natural camouflage. Unless the party knows of the dread balanus and are on their guard, they will be made painfully aware of their presence when a large dread balanus opens its opercula directly under the foot of a trekking PC. This is a surprise round attack with a +3 melee bonus that does 3d3 damage. If this attack hits, the target's foot is trapped in the balanus' maw. The balanus automatically inflicts 1d3+1 points of damage per round and receives a +3 bonus to any melee attacks against the trapped individual. The trapped individual can free his foot with a DC 15 Strength check, but suffers 1d3+1 damage from tearing his foot free. The balanus' thick, hard exoskeleton provides an incredible level of protection for its main body. To harm the main body, a melee attack must be specifically directed at the exoskeleton and must hit against its higher AC. The exoskeleton protects the main body from magical attacks, reducing direct damage from spells like fireball or lightning bolt by 1/3 (rounded down) unless the caster successfully targets the main body inside the exoskeleton through the opercula. A large dread balanus' legs each have 4 hp independent of its main body. Any attack that does 4 or more hp of damage against a leg severs it.

Giant (5'-8' across) **Dread Balanus:** Init +4; Atk segmented leg +6 melee (1d8+1); AC 16 (legs), 20 (exoskeleton); HD (main body) 4d8; MV N/A; Act 6d20; SP camouflage, 12' reach, mawful grapple, protected vitals; SV Fort +8, Ref -4, Will +4; AL N.

Despite its size the giant dread balanus is well camouflaged and often mistaken for a rock. This often gives it the advantage of surprise. The giant dread balanus uses surprise to launch a piercing grapple attack with its legs on a single individual up to 12' away. A single d20 roll is made with a +3 bonus. If the attack hits, the target suffers 2d8+3 damage and is grappled. Each subsequent round, the balanus rolls an opposed check against the grappled creature with a +4 modifier. If the balanus wins the opposed roll, the target remains grappled and is pulled 5' closer to its

maw. Once a target is pulled into the maw of a giant dread balanus, the balanus gets an extra attack roll on a d24 against that target, doing 4d3 points of damage on a hit. The exoskeleton of the giant dread balanus is even thicker than its large brethren, reducing direct damage from magical attacks by ½. The giant dread balanus' legs have 8 hp independent of the main body.

Gargantuan (18'-24' across) **Dread Balanus**: Init +2, Atk segmented leg +12 melee (3d8+6); AC 20 (legs), 24 (exoskeleton); HD (main body) 12d12; Act 3d24; SP death from above, 36' reach, critical goring, devour, protected vitals, crit 18-20 on table G; SV Fort +16, Ref -6, Will +8; AL N.

Though too large to be mistaken for a common rock, the truly terrible gargantuan dread balanus may still achieve surprise against creatures swimming or boating on the surface of the sea below the underbelly of Barako. A gargantuan dread balanus that is able to open its opercula above a target without being detected will shoot its tree trunk sized legs down (or over) as far as 36'. The legs descend with such massive force and violence that the three attack rolls are made with a +4 bonus each. Though the large diameter of the gargantuan's legs prevents it from attacking with more than three at a time, a hit from a leg is so devastating that any roll of a natural 18, 19 or 20 scores a critical hit on Crit Table G: Giants. Even if a gargantuan dread balanus misses its living target, its legs are likely to smash apart any small boats or rafts conveying the PCs. If a target is hit by all three leg attacks, it has been skewered between the sharpened ends of the balanus' legs. On the following round it is drawn into the balanus' maw to be devoured. There, terrible mandibles automatically inflict 6d6 points of damage per round. The exoskeleton of the gargantuan dread balanus is even thicker than its giant brethren, reducing direct damage from magical attacks by 2/3. The giant dread balanus' legs have 36 hp independent of the main body.

DRIPPLING

Dripping: Init +0; Atk pseudopod +3 melee (1 plus infection); AC 10; HD 3d6; MV 0'; Act 2d20; SP infection, immune to mind-affecting; SV Fort +3, Ref -4, Will -8; AL N.

Driplings are dark masses, like quivering fungoid stalactites, which grow downward from beneath Barako. Driplings glean nutrients from sewage passing through them into the waters below. They can defend themselves with gelid pseudopods. Any creature striking a dripping with a normal melee weapon must succeed in a DC 10 Reflex save or come into contact with the fungal mass. The judge may adjust this DC up for small weapons, such as daggers, and eliminate it altogether for longer weapons, such as spears or polearms.

These growths are infectious, and any being that comes into contact with them must succeed in a DC 15 Fortitude save or take 1d3 points of temporary Personality damage each day. The infection can be cured with a 15 or more Lay on Hands check. When Personality reaches 2, the victim seeks a place to hang below Barako and the final transformation begins. The DC to cure the infection is now 20. The

creature loses 1d5 temporary Stamina each day as its flesh transforms. Once Stamina reaches 0, the infected victim is irreversibly transformed.

At the judge's discretion, the core of any dripping might yet contain the treasures of its original victim, in the form of metals or stone that the fungus cannot consume...The judge may use Treasure Type A or B from the Aghartan Treasure Tables, ignoring any spices or lotus blossoms.

HEAD HUNTER

Head Hunter: Init +3; Atk antennae +6 melee (memory drain); AC 16; HD 1d3; MV 40' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', stealth, fit through small spaces, memory drain; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +4; AL C.

These creatures appear like elongated cockroaches with twelve legs each, colored with a mottled pattern of mauve and grey blotches. Each is three feet long, with long, flexible antennae twice the length of their slender bodies. These creatures are stealthy, having a +8 bonus to all attempts at concealment. They are able to flatten their bodies so as to pass through cracks as small as 3 inches in height without any reduction in speed.

Head hunters consume memories, storing them in a special golden organ located in their thorax. These memories are not destroyed but are carried through the layers of rock away from Inner Aëreth to unseen and unknown masters who lurk in the deep places between the surface and the inner world. They offer no danger to the powerful minds of the Aghartan masters or the damaged minds of their processed slaves. Others exploring the cities along the Twilit Shores, and especially the akashic library of Barako, are not as lucky.

A successful attack means that the head hunter's antennae have penetrated the target's head (through ears, nostrils, mouth, etc.). The next round, the creature extracts memories from the target's brain, causing 1d3 points of either Intelligence or Personality damage (equal chance of each). After securing 3 ability points of memories, the head hunter attempts to scurry off and deliver them to its unknown masters.

Each day, a target may make a DC 7 Willpower save to restore 1 point of lost Intelligence or Personality damage. So long as the save succeeds, the victim may attempt a save each day until all ability damage is restored. If even one save is failed, however, the target's unrecovered memories (and the corresponding ability points) are lost forever. If a wizard loses a spell due to Intelligence damage, it is restored if the memories are regained.

Targets able to consume the memory organ of a head hunter containing their memories recover lost ability points at a rate of 1 per turn. Consuming the memory organ of a head hunter with another's memories (including those of the Barako library) can have strange consequences. Roll 1d14 (modified by Luck) and consult the table below:

D14 + Luck	Effect
1 or less	Psychic shock! The character permanently loses 1d3 points of Intelligence or Personality (equal chance of each).
2-3	Possession! The character is possessed by the stolen memories, taking on aspects of their original owner. If this is not a PC, roll 1d7: (1) Hyperborean savage from the City Beyond the North Wind, (2) human slave not yet mutated by the Aghartan masters, (3) man-bat which believes it can still fly, (4) dwarven prospector who followed a seam of mithral too far beneath Aereth, (5) a head from the akashic library of Barako which just wishes to chant its line, "Blessed the worms below", (6) the great warrior Gareth Bloodmantle, who came below seeking the forgotten secrets of the Old Ones, or (7) an escaped slave (which knows where he was heading, leading either to a dead body or a living character).
4-5	Mental anguish! The character must succeed in a DC 15 Will save or be at -1d on the dice chain for all rolls during the next 1d3 hours as he attempts to process the alien memories.
6-8	Disorientation for 1d5 rounds, during which the character can take no meaningful action.
9-12	Knowledge of an additional occupation. Roll on the Occupations table in the DCC RPG rulebook, or use the occupation of the PC whose memory was stolen. With a successful DC 15 Will save this knowledge is permanent; otherwise, it fades in 1d7 days.
13	Spell knowledge. The character gains enough knowledge to potentially learn a random wizard spell (roll 1d3 to determine level). The spell must still be learned as normal, taking 1 week of study per level and requiring an Intelligence check (DC 10 + spell level).
14	Mental boost. The character gains 1 point of Intelligence or Personality (equal chance of each, 18 maximum). This is permanent with a DC 14 Fort save; otherwise it fades after 1d5 days.
15+	Spell knowledge. The character understands how to cast a single random wizard spell (roll 1d3 to determine level), using his normal spell check. Mercurial magic applies, and is rolled when the spell is first cast by the PC. Spell knowledge is permanent with a DC 10 Fort save; otherwise it fades after 3d7 days. A PC may attempt to learn the spell, as in result 13, before it fades.

LOTUS FIEND

Lotus Fiend: Init +2; Atk claw +2 melee (1d6+special) or bite +4 melee (1d8+special); AC 14; HD 3d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to charm and mind-control effects, claw attack reduces victim's Luck ability by 1 on a successful hit, successful bite attack permanently reduces the victim's Will save by 1, for each Luck ability or Will save reduced the fiend gains 1d8 additional hit points; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

Haunting the pleasure palaces of Barako seeking sustenance from life-giving lotus blossoms, these once-viziers have withered into mockeries of their former selves. From a distance, their small frames, brightly-colored tattered clothes, and clumsy movements make them appear like abandoned children scavenging for food, but anyone who takes a close look will see the wrinkled eyes and veinous pale skin of the impossibly old. They travel in groups of three or four, often arguing about the best course of action when faced with potential pleasure or pain. Lotus fiends can smell the lingering scent of lotus petals from a hundred yards away and will immediately pursue an adventuring party who has come in contact with any variety of lotus, hoping to score a taste. To get what they want, the fiends will offer promises they will never keep and resort to murder if necessary. Their twisted biologies drink of willpower and luck, and they have developed immunity to mind-control effects.

OOZEMOUTH LAMPREYMAN

Oozemouth Lampreyman: Init +4; Atk acid spit +8 missile fire (1d8), spear +6 melee (1d12+special), or bite +4 melee (1d12+special); AC 15; HD 4d8; MV 30', climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP can adhere to walls and ceilings, on successful spear attack the victim must make a DC 15 Ref save or be immobilized enough to provide a +4 bonus to any bite attack against the victim for the remainder of this round, on successful bite the target must make a DC 15 Fort save or take a d10 crit on Crit Table M; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1; AL C.

Oozemouth Champion: Init +6; Atk crush +12 melee (2d12+4) or bite +8 melee (2d12+special); AC 20; HD 9d8; MV 40', climb 30'; Act 3d24; SP can adhere to walls and ceilings, on successful bite the target must make a DC 15 Fort save or take a d20 crit on Crit Table M; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +5; AL C.

These translucent humanoid creatures appear to be filled with gelatinous goo in place of bone or muscle. Instead of eyes and a nose, their faces reveal nothing but a large, shark-toothed, circular maw. Their smooth rubbery skin secretes clear adhesive that allows them to cling to walls and ceilings, where they wait for their prey. Because their bodies are translucent, remnants of their victims lay inside their torsos, slowly melting from internal acids. Bone and metal take the longest to dissolve, and some lampreyman can be found with multiple, deformed skulls floating inside their bellies, or with the remains of a treasure horde. On a successful Luck check, an adventurer would note that the closest oozemouth lampreyman indeed has something floating inside of its body (roll 1d7): (1) fragments of bone and teeth, (2) acid-burned skulls, (3) a shattered gauntlet, (4) slivers of useless

metal, (5) 1d10 silver pieces, (6) 2d30 gold pieces, (7) a signet ring worth 2d100 gold pieces.

The eyeless, noseless lampreymen “see” and “smell” through translucent glands in the back of their throats which are able to detect shapes and chemical changes in the environment. These senses rely on their mouths constantly open, causing acids to ooze out and drip from their teeth. They can spit this acid at a range of 50’ with considerable accuracy. They seem bestial, but they are tribal hunters who use metal spears to impale opponents and feed them to their kinsmen. Among every tribe an oozemouth champion rules. This is a 10’ tall monstrosity of a translucent lampreyman whose body has been transformed by a magical item it has digested, giving it three shark-tooth-filled heads and four arms. There is a 10% chance that the magic item (of the judge’s choosing) is still intact inside its belly. The champion will cling to a wall or ceiling and wait until the tribe calls for him with shrill cries – when they are out-numbered or when a magical item is used in combat.

OPUS ABERRANT

Opus Aberrant: Init 0; Atk special (see below); AC 16; HD 12d6; MV 120’ fly; Act 3d16; SP invisible, semi-corporeal, disruptive vibrations, madness-induction, brain rupture; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +8. AL C.

Whoever or whatever orchestrates the alien music that is ever-present in Barako, these artists have produced a few, rare works of such terrible sublimity that those compositions have attained their own strange sentience. These “living,” self-performing compositions believe themselves beautiful and they drift the halls of Barako ever seeking new audiences. But instead of entertaining or enlightening, their music is so demonically discordant that it drives most listeners insane.

Opus aberrants manifest on the physical plane as semi-corporeal fields of sound vibrations that fill spaces up to 3600 square feet. Composed almost purely of sound, they are effectively invisible – recognizable only as a slight shimmer in the air, like waves of heat off an asphalt road on a hot day. They can pass through any gap no matter how small, as well as any solid substance that conducts sound. They cannot be harmed by physical attacks that are not sources in magic or enchanted weapons. Mundane physical objects that enter the space occupied by – or are used to attack – an opus aberrant, are subjected to effects identical to the 2nd-level wizard spell *Shatter* as if the opus aberrant had rolled a spell check of 14-15.

Once per round, an opus aberrant may target one listener with a deafening, discordant, maddening wall of sound. That listener must make a DC 15 Fortitude save (the judge should award a bonus of +1 to +4 to the save roll for any measures taken to dampen the effects of sound, e.g. earplugs). If the save fails, the listener is overcome by the madness of the music, suffering a mental breakdown (4d4 damage and incapacitation for 2d3 rounds). After reviving from incapacitation, the PC is permanently afflicted with one of the forms of insanity, described below. Each form of insanity subtracts -1d3 from the PC’s Personality and affects two of the PC’s other ability scores:

- 1 Severe Phobia (-1d3 Intelligence, +1d3 Stamina): Manifests as an alternately paralyzing or panicked fear of (roll d8): [1] confined spaces (claustrophobia); [2] males or females (andro/gynophobia); [3] the future (chronophobia); [4] races other than one's own (xenophobia); [5] water (hydrophobia); [6] heights (acrophobia); [7] filth and disease (mysophobia); [8] blood (hemophobia);
- 2 Delirium (+1d3 Strength, -1d3 Stamina): Manifests as extreme, free-floating anxiety triggered by anything or everything; characteristic behaviors are compulsive talking, pulling out one's own hair and scratching one's own skin;
- 3 Melancholia (+1d3 Intelligence, -1d3 Strength): Manifests as a depressive emotional collapse and suicidal thoughts; characteristic behaviors are uncontrollable weeping, assuming the fetal position and self-pity.
- 4 Egomania (+1d3 Intelligence, -1d3 Luck): Manifests as a belief in one's absolute superiority; characteristic behaviors are controlling others and tendency to pontificate.
- 5 Derangement (+1d3 Strength, -1d3 Intelligence): Manifests as hallucinations and paranoia; characteristic behaviors are frequent, random violence, infliction of self-harm, raving and frothing at the mouth.
- 6 Dementia (-1d3 Intelligence, +1d3 Luck): Manifests as mental confusion and diminished affect; characteristic behaviors are disorientation, irritability and narcolepsy.

Insanity resulting from the aberrant's music can be healed by a 4-dice result on a cleric's *Lay on Hands* check or on a casting of the 2nd-level Cleric spell *Restore Vitality* with a spell check result of 20+.

PCs in contact with, or enveloped in, the aberrant's sound field who do harm to it or inhibit its performance become the target of an ultrasonic attack. The aberrant rolls each of these attacks using one of its d16 action dice against the target's armor class, ignoring mundane armor and Agility bonuses (magical armor and protective effects are still effective; as with the insanity-inducing musical "solo," above, the judge should award a bonus of +1 to +4 to the saving throw for any measures taken to dampen the effects of sound). If the attack hits, the target takes 2d6+2 subdual damage and must make a DC 13 Fortitude save or be stunned and incapacitated for one active round.

Occupations with Lyrical Skills: Beadle, Confidence Artist, Elven Sage, Guild Beggar, Halfling Gypsy, Jester, Mendicant or Minstrel.

Known Spells with Auditory Effects

Wizard: 1st Level – *Cantrip*, *Ventriloquism*; 2nd Level – *Magic Mouth*

Cleric: 1st Level – *Word of Command*; 2nd Level – *Snake Charm*



There are some special ways that PCs can try to combat a creature that is constituted from “sentient music.” Because opus aberrants are comprised of sound, they must have a sound-conducting medium in which to exist. Using a spell or spell-like effect to convert the space an aberrant opus occupies into a medium that doesn’t conduct sound can weaken, contain or even destroy it. Judges are encouraged to award players’ creative strategies, for example maneuvering the aberrant into a room, launching a massive fireball into it and then quickly sealing the door to ensure that all the air in the room is instantaneously combusted.

PCs with musical or oratory occupations can use their lyrical skills as a form of sonic grappling attack. Casters can use spells that have auditory effects or sound-based manifestations for the same purpose. The opposed grappling roll is a Strength check for lyrical skills or his spell check for spells versus one of the aberrant’s d16 action dice (the Aberrant gets a +4 bonus for its “larger size,” i.e. greater volume – its amplification goes to 11...) If successful, this attack cancels one of the aberrant’s attacks (player’s choice). Alternately, on a successful grapple, the PC can choose to do any one of the following: 2d3+1 damage, impose a -4 penalty on the aberrant’s next ultrasonic attack, give a +2 bonus to all of his allies saves against the aberrant’s sound-based abilities during its next action or force the aberrant to move up to 10’ for every point by which the PC’s grapple roll exceeded the aberrant’s, along a route chosen by the PC.

PYLON SPIKER

Pylon Spiker: Init +8 with surprise, +2 otherwise; Atk spike +4 melee (1d7+poison); AC 14; HD 5d10; hp 28; MV 30' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP camouflage (DC 15 Intelligence check to detect), poison (see table); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3; AL N.

There is a peaceful beast, large, and flat, that draws nutrients from Barako's stone pylons. Assuming the color of its chosen pylon, and conforming its body to the surface, the pylon spiker is rarely detected (DC 15 Intelligence check). If touched, 2'-long sharp spikes extrude from the beast, penetrating all but the thickest hides. The spikes inject venom so painful that even leviathans think twice about touching a pylon that "attacked" them. A PC attacked by the spiker must roll 2d5 to determine what venom is injected; if the relevant save is failed, each venom inflicts damage and an effect for 1d7 hours (except for "Pain by the hour" which lasts for 12 hours after the initial damage).

2d5 **Venom Effect**

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 2-4 | Delusions of grandeur, false feeling of indestructibility (1d4 damage, DC 14 Will save to avoid) |
| 5-6 | Paralysis of the hands (1d8 damage, DC 15 Fort save to avoid) |
| 7-8 | Paralysis of the legs (1d10 damage, DC 15 Fort save to avoid) |
| 9 | Paralysis of the mouth (1d7 damage, DC 15 Fort save to avoid) |
| 10 | Pain by the hour (1d3 initial damage + 1d damage/hour up to d30, DC 13 Fort save to avoid) |

Well-traveled assassins and thieves have heard of spiker venom, and may extract 1 venom sack from a defeated spiker (DC 20 handle poison check, roll 2d5 to determine type). Clever harvesters have even used rock trails to lure them away. Some Aghartan engineers believe that the spikers' slow extraction of minerals will eventually weaken all of Barako's pylons to the point of collapse, but that is a worry for another generation.

ROCKMOUTH

Rockmouth: Init +6 with surprise, -6 otherwise; Atk swallow +6 melee (3d5+digestion); AC 18 rock / 12 flesh; HD 8d8; hp 36; MV swim 20' or burrow 20'; Act 1d24; SP digestion (2d4 acid damage per round, DC 15 Fort save for half), dulling weapons (Luck check or mighty deed to avoid cumulative -1d damage penalty with non-blunt weapons); SV Fort +8, Ref +0, Will -2; AL N.

Aghartan armies are trained to avoid the deadly rockmouth, though repeated mental domination tends to erase this conditioning, much to the rockmouth's satisfaction. A large amphibious burrowing creature, the rockmouth protrudes from the Twilit Shores appearing as a tall rock that may be climbed as refuge from the night's rising tide. Climbers discover their folly, however, when the rock's plateau splits open into a gaping maw (DC 20 find traps to detect). The rockmouth's maw grinds flesh and bone, and its stomach has a highly corrosive acid that is

deadly with prolonged exposure. Those successfully attacked are automatically swallowed.

The exposed part of the creature (above ground) is rock hard; a PC successfully attacking with a non-blunt, mundane weapon must pass a Luck check (or perform a mighty deed) to avoid a cumulative -1d damage penalty as the weapon loses its edge or point (down to a d3). Just below the sand or water, however, the beast has soft fleshy scales. Swallowed PCs fall directly into the acidic stomach, which is below ground level. A PC can cut his way out (or rescuers can cut their way in) with 12 points of damage or by performing a mighty deed. Interestingly, it takes a very long time for the rockmouth to digest Aghartan alloys, so there is a chance that a weapon is being digested. Anyone searching the creature's innards may make one d50 Luck check (roll under Luck on a d50) to find an Aghartan weapon. Roll 2d5: (2-3) longsword; (4-6) dagger; (7-9) shortsword; (10) two-handed sword.

SCISSORMOTH

Scissormoth: Init +1; Atk slice +1 melee (1d4) or stinger +1 melee (special); AC 12; HD 1d3; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP stinger attack paralyzes area for 1d3 rounds (roll 1d4): (1) left arm, (2) right arm, (3) left leg, (4) right leg; SV Fort -1, Ref +3, Will -1; AL N.

Scissormoth Swarm: Init +6; Atk slice +6 melee (4d6) or stinger +6 melee (special); AC 16; HD special; MV fly 40'; Act 1d30; SP hit die equal to xd3 and hit points equal to x where x equals the number of scissormoths in the swarm, stinger attack paralyzes area for 1d3 rounds (roll 1d4): (1) left arm, (2) right arm, (3) left leg, (4) right leg; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will -1; AL N.

Vicious, black-green, 2'-tall humanoids with fluttering moth wings, these creatures live in nests beneath Barako made from leviathan rib cages attached to the underside of walkways or rock outcroppings through tar-like waste secretions. Scissormoths earn their name through the discordant sound of metal-against-metal, caused by the scraping of their chitinous scythe-like appendages as they fly. They share a form of collective intelligence, communicating by adjusting the frequencies of their metallic scraping sounds. Individual scissormoths patrol the perimeter of their territory, while the greater swarm remains at the nest, waiting to hear the sounds that indicate the availability of prey. Because scissormoths bring their dead or paralyzed victims back to feed the greater swarm, their nests are often filled with whatever treasures have not yet fallen into the waters below. The nests themselves have value as well, as the tar-like waste connecting the bones in place can be used as a healing salve for anyone brave enough to place it on an open wound, where it restore 1d6 hit points per application with only a 20% chance of disease each time. (If afflicted with the disease, the victim will lose all of his or her hair within 24 hours and suffer a -2 penalty to Fortitude saves each week, cumulatively, until cured.)

A solitary scissormoth will fight defensively with its stinger proboscis and blade appendages if necessary or flee while sonically alerting the greater swarm of po-

tential prey or imminent danger. Scissormoths in groups of 2 to 5 may be encountered, as perimeter scouts, but they prefer to attack in swarms. A swarm, in the nest or on the hunt, features 2d30+10 scissormoths, and operates as a collective threat, disbanding and fleeing the area if their collective hit points ever reach 9 or less. (Each hit point of damage vs. the swarm effectively kills a single scissormoth.)

SHADE OF YEARNING

Shade of Yearning: Init +6; Atk special (see below); AC 12; HD 4d3; MV fly 40'; Act 1d24; SP un-dead traits, thauma-musical phantasm, exists on the edge of perception, immune to non-magical weapons, empathic suggestion; SV Fort +4, Ref +9, Will +8; AL N.

Residue from Aghartan psionics and the accumulated, psychic “slag” of the broken spirits of generations of slaves has mixed with Barako’s ever-present, alien musics to create a unique type of ghost that, though it has some of the same traits as un-dead, is thauma-musical in nature.

Only one shade is ever encountered at a time. Such shades barely exist in the physical world, manifesting more in the minds of those it chooses to haunt. Existing on the edge of perception, shades flit into PCs’ peripheral vision, or echo at the edge of earshot then vanish. A shade of yearning can shadow its targets for hours with only a small chance of detection, in near-complete control of its phantasmal game of cat-and-mouse. The shade’s goal is put as many creatures as possible in empathic thrall for as long as possible. Because the Aghartans and their slaves are immune to the shade’s powers, outsiders exploring Barako quickly draw the attention of a shade.

Regardless of the particulars of the clues to its presence, a shade automatically achieves surprise on its first attack. At a quiet, opportune moment, the shade will choose the target within 40' with the lowest combination of Willpower save and Luck score. Targets will experience the attack simply as a long-lost, precious memory just barely on the edge of recall. The shade embodies the memory but the nature of the memory is different for each PC. For one it might be the appearance of a child parented by the PC that was lost to fever or plague; for another it might be an object of obsession, such as a legendary magic artifact that appears and calls out to the PC with enchanted sentience. The target must make a DC 17 Willpower save. If the target succumbs to the shade’s empathic suggestion it will compulsively seek out the shade as the representation of its yearning for 12d4 rounds. The shade will lead the target through Barako and the target’s compulsion means it will pay little heed to the route, risks, obstacles or destination. A target may burn points of Personality (permanent but restorable by *Remove Curse*), 1/round, to be able to make a new Willpower save. Once a shade has a creature in the thrall of empathic suggestion, it can attempt to bring more creatures under its thrall at an attack rate of 1/minute (6 rounds).

As a thauma-musical manifestation, shades of yearning are incorporeal and can pass through walls and other solid matter. They cannot be harmed by physical

attacks that are not also magical or enchanted. They are immune to critical hits, disease and poison, but because of their emotional component they are subject to *sleep*, *charm*, *paralysis* and other spell-like abilities that directly target the psyche.

Because of the musical component of the shade's manifestation, PCs with musical or oratory occupations – beadle, confidence artist, elven sage, guild beggar, half-ling gypsy, jester, mendicant or minstrel – receive a +4 on their saves vs a shade's empathic suggestion. PCs from these occupations may attempt to turn a shade of yearning as if they were a cleric performing Turn Unholy. Checks for these attempts are made with a d20 roll modified by Personality (but not any caster level or Luck).

SOOT WRAITH

Soot Wraith: Init +4; Atk phlogiston ray +4 missile fire (points spent, 100' range); AC 12; HD 3d12; hp 19; MV fly 40'; Act 2d20; SP un-dead traits, immune to non-magical weapons, phlogiston points (absorbs magical energy to spend on phlogiston ray, heal, or create another wraith, costing 1 action die each); SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +5; AL C.

A strange creature from the Inner Sea's half-sunken city, the soot wraith tends to lie dormant until encountering arcane energy. Indeed, raw phlogiston is one of its favorite sources of food, so some hide in the Akashic library hoping to eat an activated chorus or two. Soot wraiths are drawn to any magic, however, and gain sustenance from a cast spell, or even a magical weapon. Magical energy is absorbed as "phlogiston points," with the following examples. If attacked with a magical weapon, the wraith re-rolls the weapon's damage (e.g., 1d8+1 for a +1 longsword) in order to determine how many phlogiston points it absorbs. If attacked with a spell (divine or arcane), the wraith absorbs a number of points equal to the caster's spell check. If exposed to an Akashic chorus, it absorbs 5 points per chanting head. Once a wraith absorbs arcane energy, it may use one action die to "spend" phlogiston points for healing (same hp as points spent), for an offensive phlogiston ray (damage equal to points spent), or for creating other soot wraiths. For this latter case, a minimum of 10 points are required, and a wraith has as many hp as points spent creating it, but starts with half as many phlogiston points. However, points can be divided to make multiple wraiths. For example, if a wraith absorbs a 34 spell check spell, it may create one 34 hp wraith having 17 phlogiston points, or two 10 hp wraiths and one 14 hp wraith, with 5 and 7 phlogiston points, respectively. Even though a wraith absorbs the magical energy from a spell or weapon, it still takes full damage from the attack. In order to determine a wraith's initial phlogiston points, have the PC with the lowest Luck make a Luck check. If he succeeds, the creature starts with no phlogiston points, and is harmless unless exposed to magic; if he fails, then the wraith starts with a number of points equal to the Luck check result.

They are un-dead, and may be turned. Although turning involves a spell check, it does not count as a "spell" for the purposes of absorbing phlogiston points; a wraith absorbs nothing from the attempt.



While dormant, soot wraiths are hard to detect, appearing simply as sheets of soot or dust. Their motives may be more than simply seeking food. Did the soot wraiths leave the inner sea of their own accord, or were they sent as harbingers of a forthcoming doom?

SPY FLY SWARM

Spy Fly Swarm: Init +5; Atk special; AC 15; HD 5d8; hp 23; MV fly 50'; Act n/a; SP observe from outside melee range (cumulative -1d to Twilit Shores random encounters for each round of observation after the first), flees after 4 rounds, takes -2d damage from non-area attacks; SV Fort -3, Ref +7, Will +5; AL N.

Swarming in large numbers, a single spy fly appears as a large, headless dragonfly, roughly the length of a child's forearm. Two strands of optic nerves extrude from the thorax. One connects to a multifaceted, iridescent, compound eye about 2 inches in diameter; the other connects to a smaller, somewhat bovine eye. The Aghartan slave masters create spy fly swarms to seek out new slaves, hunt down escaped slaves, and even "scout" out a desirable slave from another master. A swarm may penetrate and infiltrate many areas that soldier scouts simply cannot, such as the elevated streets of Barako's promenade.

One can hear the telltale buzz of the spy flies when they approaches within 60'. Although a swarm does not physically damage PCs, and hovers well outside melee range, it relays information about the party to its master. For each round after the first that the swarm observes the PCs, the party gains a cumulative -1d penalty

to rolls on the Twilit Shores random encounter table, with a maximum of -3d (the swarm flees after 4 rounds of observation). PCs must destroy or hide from swarms quickly or else they may face dire circumstances when they leave the city's relative safety.

UNDERBELLY STALKER

Underbelly Stalker: Init +0; Atk bone needle +5 melee (paralysis); AC 14; HD 1d6; MV 20' or climb 201; Act 3d16; SP infravision 100', paralysis, liquefy muscles; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

This small creature is something like a dark starfish, with three long and three short arms. It lurks in the wet damp below Barako, and other places along the Aghartan cities of the Inner Sea. Underbelly stalkers are only 1-2 feet long, with hard barnacle-like plates. They hunt the vermin endemic to all cities – even those of the ancient Aghartans – and can consume even the softest outer layer of drippings without coming to harm.

Each of the long arms is equipped with a bone needle. This initially injects a paralyzing venom (DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer paralysis for 2d3 minutes). Once prey is paralyzed, the needle can inject a venom that liquefies muscle (1d3 temporary Strength and 1d3-1 temporary Stamina damage; DC 10 Fortitude save or 1 point is permanent). If a creature loses a combined total of 5 Strength or Stamina, the creature feeds, drawing fluid through its needles for 1d5 damage each round, until it is sated (10 hp damage).

Underbelly stalkers are usually solitary scavengers. Masses of them are sometimes captured for the slave pits, much to the amusement of the Aghartan masters.

UNGUISTIC SYRENE

Unguistic Syrene: Init -1; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 5d6; MV 10' or climb 10'; Act 3d20; SP syrene lure, climb sheer surfaces, immobilizing secretion, subsonic distraction, poison sting, ½ damage from slicing/slashing weapons; SV Fort +4, Ref -6, Will -4; AL N.

Resembling a cross between a venus flytrap and a sea anemone, Unguistic syrenes are ambulatory polyps with hollow, serration-tipped tentacles ringing the top of rubbery, tubular bodies. Unguistic syrenes exist in a near-continuous state of ravenous hunger. They live in tidal zones and when submerged they lie in wait with their tentacles – near invisible in water – ready to paralyze prey with their poison sting. But when the tides recede, the syrenes detach themselves to stalk prey amongst the pylons, pilings and rocky, raised shorelines of Barako.

The syrenes typically hunt in packs of 2-4. The faintest wind or breeze blowing through their hollow tentacles creates a subsonic pipe organ effect, producing a melody that exists on the very edge of the audible range of most creatures. The haunting effect of the melody compels creatures to seek out and confirm the source of what they can sense but not quite hear, luring them to the syrene.

This effect is frequently what will draw PCs into an encounter with them. When PCs are downwind within 120' of one or more syrenes, they risk coming under the influence of the subsonic lure (DC 15 Fortitude save, 1/hour). This influence has a slight disorienting effect at the same time that it draws the PCs to syrenes. Under this influence, the party may make navigational choices that lead them away from the syrenes but they end up following a route to the syrenes' location despite of themselves. In a hunting pack of two or more syrenes, after sensing the approach of prey lured by their song but before the prey has detected the hunters, one or more syrenes will always climb to a position on a wall, ceiling or rocky outcrop overhang where it has the best chance of surprising prey from above.

Syrenes that remain on the ground secrete an abundance of the substance that glues them to their positions, forming a puddle around them on the ground. This puddle of glue may cause any creature that closes within melee distance to become stuck. Creatures who close with the syrene will find their feet stuck to the ground, preventing them from moving and canceling their Agility modifier to their AC. Each round, creatures stuck in this manner can attempt a DC 13 Strength check to negate the effect. Creatures that fight with "reach" weapons - spears and other polearms - avoid the puddle.

The syrenes' melody intensifies when it begins using its tentacles in combat and this, in turn, intensifies the disorienting effects of this melody. Creatures within 30' of a syrene suffer a -1d for all checks in combat, i.e. to-hit rolls, spell checks, ability checks etc. (Luck checks and *Lay on Hands* checks are not affected). In addition, creatures suffering this effect fumble on a roll of a natural 1 or 2.

The syrene strikes with up to three of its tentacles each round. On a successful hit, the target must roll a DC 12 Fortitude save against the syrene's poison sting or be slowed to half normal speed and only be able to act once every other round. Once the same creature fails three saves versus this effect it becomes paralyzed for 3d3 rounds adjusted up or down by the victim's Stamina modifier. Each round a slowed or paralyzed victim may attempt a DC 16 Fortitude save to shake off the effects of the poison.

The rubberiness of the syrene's body reduces the damage from slashing/slicing weapons by half. Magical weapons do not suffer this penalty.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Table I. City - 2d5

2	Opus Aberrant
3	Soot Wraith
4	1d3 Head Hunters
5	Spy Fly Swarm
6	1d5+2 Slave Giants accompanied by 1d20 slaves
7	Servitor Demon
8	1d3 Lutus Fiends
9	Demon, Type II
10	Shade of Yearning

Table II. Underbelly - 2d5

2	Dread Banalus
3	Dripping
4	Pylon Spiker
5	1d3 Head Hunters
6	1d12+5 Oozemouth Lampreymen and 1 Champion
7	Scissormoth Swarm
8	Underbelly Stalker
9	Rockmouth
10	Unguistic Syrene

THE AKASHIC LIBRARY OF BARAKO



s in each city in Lost Agharta, the slave lords of Barako maintain their own akashic library – a record of antediluvian magic and arcane secrets gleaned from the sunken towers of the Inner Sea.

The libraries of Barako are composed entirely of desiccated heads locked in small, cabinet-like strongboxes. Placing a holy chaos wafer in the mouth of a head causes it to intone a message. Taken alone, most messages are gibberish, with neither rhyme or reason. However, if a series of cabinets are placed in the correct order (or the heads played in proper sequence, like the keys of a gruesome pipe organ) the words and groans combine to intone the arcane tongue of Lost Agharta – raw magic at its most powerful.

Chosen at random, the sequences produce unpredictable results, as likely weal as woe. However astute casters, puzzle-breakers and their kin, can discern patterns amongst the library, improving their odds. Similar strongboxes likely belong in the same sequence, and telltale sigils, stains and impressions can narrow the series even further.

Divination can also reveal certain clues, but casters must beware: Few are the Patrons or Powers that care to unleash even a portion of the akashic record. More likely the powers will lead petitioners astray, hoping to keep the secrets of Lost Agharta secret just a while longer.

SEQUENCING THE CHORAL BOXES

Discovering the proper sequence in a series of boxes is a two-part puzzle, testing both PCs and players:

Scribed on each box is a sigil that must be deciphered, either by magic or the application of thieves' skills. Each sigil translates to a word, or short phrase.

Once deciphered, the PCs (or rather, their players) must place the "sigils" in the proper order, forming a phrase that enables the power of the akashic casting. It is entirely possible that a party is only able to decode most of the sigils, leaving the remainder a mystery, and forcing players to guess at the correct sequencing. Judges are encouraged to write the translations on note cards for use as handouts, permitting players to physically arrange and sequence the casting.

When Chaos wafers are placed in the mouths of the heads, in the proper sequence, the akashic record is released. The spell may be recast as needed, and is only limited by the PCs' number of wafers (and the party's ability to transport large boxes of severed heads). But each chorus also lists a shadow effect, or *black casting*, for when the heads are incorrectly sequenced.

Example:

Chorus of the Stars: The chorus is composed of 6 heads, each taken from a different breed of horned beast, held in teak boxes – blackened with age – and set with gold runes. Each box is secured by an identical gold lock (DC 10 pick lock check to open).

The runes can be translated via magic (spell check 15, *read magic*), erudite expertise, or roguish wit (DC 20 read languages check), the properly sequenced runes translate as follows:

even/ beasts/ of the/ wilds/ obey the/ stars

White: Played in this sequence, the chanting heads bestow a permanent bonus of +1d3 Luck to the casters and their allies within hearing distance. Additionally, each PC will automatically succeed on his or her next saving throw. The tonal vibrations of the chorus continue for 6 hours following activation. If the chorus is activated again before the vibrations cease, a black casting is immediately triggered.

Black: Played in the wrong order, the heads howl and wail with abandon. Blood geysers from the heads’ maws, ears and eyes, and any PCs or ally within hearing distance must succeed on a DC 15 Willpower save or suffer a temporary loss of -1d12 Luck for the next hour.

NEW SPELLS

Air on the Amphibious

This simple chorus is composed of three lacquered seaweed boxes bound with jungle vines tied in complicated knots. Shiny, iridescent scales make up runes that are magically affixed to each box’s lid. The boxes are easily opened by simply cutting the vines (no penalty), an amateur thief (DC 5 pick lock check), or an Agility check (DC 10, +1d for those with nautical occupations). The runes may be translated with magic (*Read Magic* spell check 14, or *Comprehend Languages* spell check 20), or by a thief (DC 15 read languages skill check). The arcane nature of these runes allows them to be easily read by anyone who has almost died by drowning, or has spent time as an amphibian.

Each box contains a desiccated head. The heads and runes are as follows:

Rune	Head
Adding a fish	large, open-mouthed fish
to an ape makes	white-haired ape
the best amphibian	iridescent scaled primate with gills

The proper sequence of the runes is as listed above:

Adding a fish/ to an ape makes/ the best amphibian

White: Played in the proper sequence, the heads sing long, slow, high-pitched notes similar to whale sounds. The PC who placed the last wafer grows working

gills on his neck, and can breathe in fresh or saltwater (including the Inner Sea). This effect lasts for 8 hours. If one attempts to re-activate the proper sequence in less than 16 hours (a complete Aghartan “day-night” cycle), then a black casting is immediately triggered.

Black: If played in an incorrect sequence, foul-smelling, fungus ridden water gushes from all three mouths. The PC who placed the last wafer grows deformed gills, and has trouble breathing in air and water. In air, the PC is constantly gasping and suffers a -1d penalty to all actions. Submerged, the PC can breathe, but with great difficulty (-2d penalty to all actions). The effect lasts for 8 hours. Subsequent black castings applied before the effect expires automatically extend the effect another 8 hours.

Anthem for the Enduring Wise

Four cylindrical boxes of petrified green wood with brass interior locks compose this chorus; the lid of each box is decorated with amethyst inlaid runes. The boxes are easily opened by a skilled thief (DC 10 pick lock check), and the runes may be translated with magic (*Read Magic* spell check 14, or *Comprehend Languages* spell check 20), or by a well-read thief (DC 17 read languages check). The arcane nature of these runes allows them to be easily read by adolescents and the elderly.

Each box contains a desiccated, blue-skinned, humanoid (but slightly ursine) head. The heads and runes are as follows:

Rune	Head
The wizened	balding, elderly female
feeble old lead	balding, bearded, elderly male
the enduring	purple-haired, young female
foolish young	purple-haired, young male

The proper sequence of the runes is as listed above:

The wizened/ feeble old lead/ the enduring/ foolish young.

Translating the rune, “feeble old lead,” provides a hint to the proper order, even if other runes cannot be deciphered. Moreover, succeeding on a DC Intelligence check allows a PC to deduce that these heads belong to a matriarchal society, where women lead the men. Any PC that is well-traveled (another world, another plane, etc.) gains a +1d bonus to the check.

White: Played in the proper sequence, the heads sing an arousing, enlightening four-part harmony. The PC who placed the last wafer gains a slight greenish glint to her eye, and her Stamina and Personality modifiers are increased by one. Note that the actual ability score increases the minimum amount necessary to increase the modifier. For example, a 9 Personality increases to a 13, and an 8 Stamina increases to a 9. This effect lasts for 8 hours. If one attempts to re-activate the proper sequence in less than 16 hours (a complete Aghartan “day-night” cycle), then a black casting is immediately triggered.



Black: If played in an incorrect sequence, the elderly heads disappointingly nod back and forth, while the young heads laugh hysterically. The PC who placed the last wafer must make a Luck check. If he succeeds, then he is transformed into an adolescent, with Stamina increasing until the modifier increases by one, and Personality decreasing until the modifier decreases by one. If he fails, then he becomes elderly, with Strength and Stamina decreasing until their modifiers decrease by one, and Personality increasing until its modifier increases by one. The effect lasts for 8 hours. Subsequent black castings applied before the effect expires automatically extend the effect another 8 hours, but do not change the age of the victim.

Aria of the Already Seen

The aria is contained within five jewelry box-style, hinged-lid containers. These boxes are crafted from huge, cut gem stones: blood diamond, ghoulish emerald, pallid ruby, gloomy peridot and cursed citrine.

Inside the boxes are severed heads from a single species of large, sparkle-scaled game fish, perhaps some kind of trout. Though the heads appear to have been cleaned from the bodies by a fishmonger, revealing them releases an unbelievably fetid stench from the inside of the boxes, as if the containers had somehow been imbued with the essence of 1,000 fish stalls on a 1,000 warm, humid days. The fish heads are stuck permanently to the bottom of the box by the dried blood, mucus and residual entrails left over from their butchering.

Any careful observer will note that the entrails, partial spine and bones trailing out the back of the neck of each head forms a distinct shape resembling a rune or sigil. The shapes can be translated using the spell *Read Magic* (minimum spell check of 18 is required) or through successful interpretation by a character with the background occupations Astrologer, Fortune-Teller or Jester (DC 15 Personality check). The properly sequenced runes translate as follows:

O'er ripe fruit/ on the ground/ split o'en, spilling flesh/ worm fodder/ death's enrichment

In any sequence the fish heads vocalize musical notes that are indistinguishable from the crackle and roar of the flames of a conflagration.

White: Played in this sequence, the stench of the heads transforms into a perfume. The PC who placed the last wafer in a fish mouth sees a montage of memories pass through his mind's eye. The memories are somehow his and at the same time... not his. These memories bestow the power of mystical insight on that PC. This insight gives the PC clues to the meaning of events, objects or figures of significance encountered during the 24 hour period after the spell takes effect. The judge chooses a mix of clues/insights to give to the player controlling the PC, but the collected clues/insights should not exceed:

- four clues/insights of with a modicum of significance,
- two clues/insights with a modicum of significance AND two clues/insights of medium significance

- two clues/insights with a modicum of significance AND one clue/insight with major significance
- one clue/insight with a modicum of significance AND one clue/insight of medium significance AND one clue/insight of major significance

These options are presented as a rough guide: the judge can let events in the role-playing narrative dictate which of these options plays out, tabulating as events unfold.

Black: Played in the wrong order, the sound of crackling flames is “heard” instead as the deadly pull of an undertow. Any character within hearing distance must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be overcome with panic for one minute. During that minute these PCs who’ve failed their saves are flooded with images of decisions-gone-wrong that led to horrible deaths. In their next encounter, these PCs will hesitate, suffering a -4 penalty to their first initiative roll and a -4 penalty to their next attack roll, spell check (or class-given ability check that functions like a spell check) or skill or ability check.

Chorus of the Hidden

Six desiccated humanoid heads compose this chorus, each contained in a box covered with severed eyelids. Runes are gently burned into the fleshy tops of the containers, and each top is secured with a cubic iron padlock (DC 10 pick lock check). Though obscure, the runes have a structure recognized by thieves (DC 14 read languages); they may also be translated magically (*Read Magic* spell check result of 14+, or *Comprehend Languages* spell check of 20+). Strangely, the runes will glow in the caster’s native language if *Detect Invisible* is cast with spell check of 20.

Four of the heads have glass feline eyes, with irises oriented in different directions; the other two heads’ eye sockets are empty. The corresponding heads and runes are as follows:

Rune	Eyes
All	none
must be	head’s right eye looks to head’s right, left eye looks left
seen though	both eyes look to head’s right
in the	head’s right eye looks to head’s right, left eye looks left
end we	both eyes look to head’s left
are blind	none

The proper sequence of the runes is as listed above:

All/ must be/ seen though/ in the/ end we/ are blind

The proper sequence may be guessed by looking at the pattern of the eyes, as each head is “seen” by at least one neighboring head (“All must be seen”). This condition may be met with a different sequence of the eyes (e.g., none, right-left, both right, both left, right-left, none), though a proper translation of the runes rules out such a solution. Note that “in the end we are blind” is a hint that heads without

eyes begin and end the sequence. The judge is encouraged to use 6 index cards drawn with the corresponding eyes, and lack thereof, as an aid for the players.

White: Played in the proper sequence, the heads whisper a chant as their eyes glow. Up to six PCs (those with the highest luck) become invisible for 2d5 hours. Any magical attempt to see those cloaked must have a spell check of 25 or greater. Note that the invisible six can see each other, so a small party may not know it is invisible until passing by a mirror, attempting to speak to a NPC, etc. If one attempts to re-activate the proper sequence in less than 16 hours (a complete Aghartan “day-night” cycle), then a black casting is immediately triggered.

Black: If played in an incorrect sequence, the heads screech and howl, and all heads’ eyes roll upwards until the irises are not seen. Up to six PCs (those with the lowest luck), are surrounded by a glowing aura of detection for 2d5 hours. These six grant +1d bonuses to attack rolls and spell checks against them. Stealth is impossible, and the PCs suffer 1d penalties on encounter tables (e.g., the Twilit Shores) if applicable. Note that the six cannot see these auras on each other, so a small party may not initially know they are marked.

Chant of the Three Mystic Demons

This trio is composed of three iron boxes with interior locks. Magical runes appear to flame on each lid; strangely the runes themselves are cold to the touch, though the boxes are quite warm. The boxes may be opened by a skilled thief (DC 15 pick lock check, chaotic thieves receive a +1d bonus to the check), or by someone saying, “open,” in the Chaotic language. The runes may be translated with magic (*Read Magic* spell check 14, or *Comprehend Languages* spell check 20), or by a thief (DC 20 read languages check). The arcane nature of these runes allows them to be easily read by anyone who has spoken with a Chaos Lord.

Each box contains a desiccated demon’s head that sparks and smokes once the box is open. The heads and runes are as follows:

Rune	Head
Hear no	ears are stuffed with tiny severed hands
Law speak no	mouth has no tongue, and tongue is nailed to forehead
Law and see no Law	tiny severed hands are nailed over eyes.

The proper sequence of the runes is as listed above:

Hear no / Law speak no / Law and see no Law

White: Played in the proper sequence, the heads chant in unison in the infernal language (the nailed tongue struggles against the forehead). The PC who placed the first wafer becomes attuned to Chaos (even if he is Lawfully aligned, though the judge may impose consequences). Chaotic NPCs favor him, and chaotic opponents suffer -1d penalties to attack him. He receives a +1 HD bonus to healing from a chaotic cleric. Although the PC does not feel a change, any chaotic party member views the PC in a new positive light. This effect lasts for 8 hours. If one attempts to re-activate the proper sequence in less than 16 hours (a complete Aghartan “day-night” cycle), then a black casting is immediately triggered.



Black: If played in an incorrect sequence, clouds of acrid black smoke spew from the demons' noses. The PC who placed the first wafer is alienated from Chaos (even if he is Chaotically aligned, though the judge may impose consequences). Chaotic NPCs show him disfavor, will target him first, etc. Any healing from a chaotic cleric suffers a -1 HD penalty. Although the PC does not feel a change, any chaotic party member views the PC in a new negative light. The effect lasts for 8 hours. Subsequent black castings applied before the effect expires automatically extend the effect another 8 hours.

Drumbeats of the Defaced Dragonlings

This is a set of four-hand-span-tall boxes made from smooth ivory; their craftsmanship suggest that they once shone, polished and bright, but are now stained and smudged with the grease and soot of centuries. The boxes are square in footprint but wider at the top than at the base and taller than they are wide. They open from the top, where four, overlapping hinged flaps of ivory are held down with a clasp. The clasp evidences an unusual design – it is an upside-down, square “U” of silver metal hinged in the centers of two opposing sides of the boxes, like the handle of a common pail.

Inside each box is a small rattle drum, featuring a shallow, cylindrical, gilt drum body with a skin head on either side mounted on a dowel handle. The drum heads of these instruments are made of the bleached, stretched facial skin of dragons. Two cords for holding ball strikers are mounted on either side of the drum body. If ball strikers are bound to the drums by these cords and the handles are rotated with a quick wrist action, the strikers hit the heads, creating the percussive beats. Any PC with the occupations beadle, costermonger, guild beggar, jester, mendicant, minstrel, orphan, shaman, tax collector or urchin who examines the drums receives a DC 12 Intelligence check to recognize that these particular variety of rattle drums are meant to be played in pairs.

Two pairs of ball strikers can be found, loose in the bottom of each box. The strikers are made from the painted skulls of Snapping Turtles. Two are painted red and two are painted white and all the strikers have holes drilled in them for mounting the cords of the rattle drums. Also in the bottom of each box is a large round chaos wafer that has been folded in half and then in half again, such that the final baked product resembles a small, smooth-textures, crispy, angular crescent roll.

If broken open the wafers each reveal a small slip of parchment with (non-magical) picto-glyphic writing on it. Each slip has the same exact same writing on it which can be translated via *Comprehend Languages* (spell check 12+) or a DC 10 Read Languages skill check, and if translated reads:

Every man assumes the colors of his surroundings

This proverb is a clue to how to enact a white casting of the drums' magic: creatures from most civilizations will assume that the white pellet strikers are needed for a white (auspicious) casting, but in the culture where the drums originate, red is the auspicious color while white, being inauspicious, will likely produce a Black casting.

To cast the drums' magic, strikers must be attached, bits of the chaos wafers that contained the slips of parchment must be placed in the mouths of the strikers and at least three drums must be played. Several results are possible based on how many drums are played and what color strikers are attached:

- One or two drums are played, regardless of what strikers are attached – the drums make no sound and no magic is enacted.
- Four drums are played with more white strikers attached than red – the drums make a flat, dull, muffled “suh, suh, suh” sound, but no magic is enacted.
- Three drums are played with more red strikers attached than white – the drums make a flat, dull, muffled “suh, suh, suh” sound and no magic is enacted.
- Three drums are played with more white strikers attached than red – the drums make a flat, dull, “suh, suh, suh” sound that echoes in a strange and disturbing manner and a Black casting is enacted.
- Four drums are played with more red strikers attached than white – the drums make a sharp, bright “banh, banh, banh” sound that resonates optimistically and enacts a White casting.

White: The PC with the highest Personality score among all the PCs who are playing the drums will be bonded to a legendary magical weapon that the casting conjures, on the spot, out of the Great Aether of the Lost. The judge should design a suitable, named artifact using the Sword Magic section of the DCC RPG rulebook (p. 366-371).

Black: The PC with the lowest Luck among all the PCs who are playing the drums will immediately be bonded with a patron of the judges choosing. This is a uniquely strong bond, allowing a PC from non spell-casting classes to cast Invoke Patron using their action die modified by Personality and Luck for spell checks. This strong bond gives a spell caster PC a permanent +2 to Invoke Patron spell checks. However, the strength of this bond means the patron is particularly involved in the life of the PC and becomes especially particularly displeased with under-performers. Due to this, any of the PC's spell checks of 4 or less result in patron taint. Cleric PCs serving a deity or wizard/elf PCs with an existing patron who are affected by this casting will suddenly have an extremely complicated relationship triangle to manage. As part of the casting the patron or his/her/its avatar appears in the library of Barako to enact the bonding ritual; the patron's powerful aura may be detected by Aghartan slave masters.

Hymn of the Spider-Priestesses

The Hymn of the Spider-Priestesses can be found in a collection of five, two-foot-square, black wicker boxes. Each box is virtually identical, hinged at the top, latched and secured with a brass padlock. The only visible difference is a slight greenish discoloration in seemingly random patterns atop each box. The brass padlocks each require the insertion of two keys simultaneously, and in the absence

of such keys, a DC 20 pick lock check is required for each box. The boxes appear fragile, and though they are immune to non-magical fire they can be smashed or sliced open easily (DC 5 Strength or Agility check, respectively), but such damage causes lingering, compromised enchantments on the boxes to trigger. The more severe the damage, the more amplified the effect, as indicated in the Wicker Box Trap Effect table below.

Wicker Box Trap Effect		
Str or Agi Check	Manifestation	Effect
5-9	The box screeches as if alive and whoever touched it directly or indirectly finds his or her mouth foaming with a sticky substance.	The PC who inflicted damage upon the box must make a DC 20 Willpower save or find his or her mouth gummed up with webbing. Breathing in times of exertion will become difficult, causing a -4 penalty to all Strength checks or attack rolls until the webbing dissolves. Spells requiring verbal components may not be cast and no food may be eaten. The effect will last for 1d24 hours, until <i>remove curse</i> is applied, or until a successful <i>Hymn of the Spider-Priestesses</i> is triggered.
10-14	The damaged side of the box immediately begins to repair itself frantically, grabbing the offending weapon in the process.	The PC who inflicted damage upon the box must make a DC 15 Reflex save or immediately lose offending weapon as it is pulled inside the box and sealed shut. (The extra-dimensional nature of the enchantment allows even large weapons to be pulled inside the smallish space of the box.) If the PC used bare hands to inflict the damage, he or she must still succeed on the save or take 2d10 damage as the self-repairing wicker claws at the flesh.
15-19	The damaged box swings open completely, dropping its contents to the ground. With a clacking sound, the box transforms into a hostile, deranged spider-construct.	<p>The spider-construct, approximately the size of a small dog, viciously attacks whoever damaged the box.</p> <p>Spider-Construct (1): Init +6; Atk venomous bite +8 melee (2d10+special); AC 18; HD 3d8; hp 17; MV climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP venomous bite deals an additional 1d3 Stamina damage (permanent unless cured by a successful <i>Hymn of the Spider-Priestesses</i>), immune to charm and mind-control effects, immune to non-magical fire; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +8; AL C.</p>

20+	The box explodes into wooden shards that hatch upon impact with any surface. Hundreds of tiny white spiders stream out of the hatching shards.	Anyone within 20' who fails a Luck check becomes infested with the white spiders emerging from the shards. Any victim infested takes 1 damage per round until death, or until all clothes and armor are removed and the victim is able to scrub the nibbling creatures away (1d8 additional rounds of scrubbing using a suitable implement to clear away the spiders). Dousing the victim in alcohol will immediately kill the spiders.
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Note that none of the trap effects will damage or alter the contents of the box, though the condition of the contents may appear disturbed or damaged if higher-level traps trigger.

Inside each box is the dried, but relatively preserved, head of a human-like female with wisps of gray hair protruding from a pristine white hood, staring out with pale blue eyes. The head rests in a bed of thick webbing, resembling a nest. All of the heads look like they belonged to elderly priestesses, but any PC attempting to detect distinguishing characteristics will notice, on a DC 15 Intelligence check, that some of the eyes are cloudier than others, and a DC 20 Intelligence check would be able to identify all five heads from oldest to youngest, based on macular degeneration.

To trigger the *Hymn of the Spider-Priestesses*, the five heads must be placed in order from youngest to oldest, a wafer placed on the tongue of each head, and the appropriate incantation must be recited. The words to the incantation can be found in two ways: (1) on the lids of the wicker boxes – the greenish discoloration reveals itself to be ancient runes if a *read magic* spell is successfully cast or the lid is exposed to any liquid, (2) on the foreheads of the priestesses in the boxes, ancient runes invisible to the eye but revealed through *read magic* or exposure to any liquid. The incantation, translated through the *read magic* spell or through a DC 15 read languages check, can also provide a clue to the proper sequence of the heads, as each head (and corresponding box) contains only a fragment of the full verse, which reads:

We supplicate/ ourselves to/ the many-legged masters who/ weave the star-webs/ for eternity.

If placed in the proper order with the wafers in the mouths and the incantation recited, the white effect triggers and any curses caused by the wicker box trap are removed (though damage inflicted is not healed). If the heads are placed in an improper order or the incantation is out of sequence, than the black effect triggers and no trap effects are removed.

White: The spider-priestesses sing a beautiful song, repeating the sentiment of the incantation in a dozen languages. Their heads begin to spin and strands of glow-

ing white light project out of their eyes toward all nearby beings. All creatures within 20' become encased in glowing webs that sooth and comfort them for what feels like days but is mere seconds to anyone watching from outside the circle. As the webbing fades away, the affected creatures know they have gained the power to climb like a spider, project webs, and terrify the weak-willed. They each may cast *spider climb*, *spider web*, and *scare* once within the next 24 hours, with a spell check equal to their level plus Intelligence modifier (plus any additional bonuses for current spellcasting classes). Spellcasters who already know these spells may cast them once within the next 24 hours at +4 to the spell check. The hymn automatically triggers the black effect if it is attempted a second time within 24 hours. After 24 hours, it may be triggered again, but the effect does not grant the spellcasting abilities. Instead, it heals 1d8 damage to all within 20', once per 24 hours.

Black: The spider-priestesses begin repeating the words of the incantation in ancient Aghartan, then in a demonic tongue unfit for mortal ears. Their eyes bleed. The runes on their heads throb and explode into flame. All creatures within 20' become encased in flaming webs that screech forth from the mouths of the priestesses – judged unworthy by the masters of the star-weave. All affected creatures suffer 2d10 damage immediately and any aura of magic in or around their person becomes weakened. Spellcasters, divine or arcane or otherwise, lose one random spell for 24 hours. Non-spellcasters are unaffected by this secondary penalty, unless they carry a one or more magic items. If so, one of those items loses its magical abilities (this includes potions and scrolls as well as weapons, armor, etc.) for 24 hours.

A Kaftaric Cackle (in the Azfvari Mode)

This set of tomes consists of five large, hand-blown, glass bottles. The bottles are classic decanters, fashioned in an almost-teardrop shape, bulbous-bodied with a long, gradually-narrowing neck. Filling each bottle is the preserved, intact head of a shard-toothed arachno-hyena – eight-eyed, cannid-spider hybrids. The heads are so swollen from long suspension in a dull, pink liquid that they press up against every square inch of the walls of the bottle, warping the arachno-hyenas' already-fearsome features. While the heads are all from the same species of monster, close inspection may reveal (DC 12 Intelligence check) that the heads are from specimens across the creature's lifespan: young, adolescent, full adult, post-maturity and elder or aged. Any PC with an occupation involving knowledge of animals receives a +2 bonus to the check.

Each bottle has a pair of long, slender tongs attached to it by a fine chain of hard metal. The bottles are closed with rubber stoppers but the stoppers themselves have a slotted aperture that allows the tongs to be inserted into the bottle while still minimizing the exposure of the bottle's contents to the air and preventing spills. With careful use of the tongs, chaos wafers can be inserted in the mouths of the heads. Each bottle has a large wax seal adhered to one side and embossed with phrases that read as onomatopoeia in the common tongue, sounding out titters, giggles, guffaws and other kinds of laughter. This seeming gibberish is actually a pidgin version of the laughter-based language of the arachno-hyena. The phrases can be translated by any cat, dog or spider under the influence of an *Animal Sum-*

moning spell, or by any Wizard's familiar of the cat, hound, tarantula or spider monkey variety. Finally, destiny can play a hand in whether the party can attempt to translate the phrases through one final means: at the Judges's discretion, if there is a recognizable "class clown" among the PCs, that character can understand a phrase intuitively with a successful Luck check.

A successful translation of all five phrases also provides the contextual clues necessary to determine their proper order, which is:

Stripling youths/ think their elders laugh second/ because they do not get the jest./

The breath to laugh deeply/ takes longer to gather.

The translated proverb gives an additional clue to the correct order: putting the bottles in order of youngest specimen to oldest specimen also puts the five phrases in the correct order for a white casting.

When all the heads are fed chaos wafers, a burbling, choking, spluttering, underwater version of a hyena's laugh issues forth, evoking the bottles' spell, be it a White or Black casting.

White: Played in the correct sequence, the heads cast *Kryslyn's Repulsion*, a transmutation spell that affects all creatures within 10'. Affected creatures are permanently imbued with an always-on magnetic field. The field repels ferrous metals. Under normal circumstances the field is weak and its only visible effect will be to move very light objects made of ferrous metal, shavings, steel quill nibs, etc. slowly away from the caster. However, the field assesses the force (as a function of mass times acceleration) of any object of ferrous metal approaching the caster and will increase in strength in proportion to the force of an approaching object. In combat, the field conveys a +6 to AC vs iron and steel objects and reduced the damage inflicted by these types of weapons by -1 hp per die of damage. Judges may determine other effects that follow from this magnetic aura as situations arise.

Black: Played in the incorrect sequence, the heads cast *Kryslyn's Inversion*, a transmutation spell that will attempt to turn all non-magical objects and all living creatures within 10' *inside out!* Creatures must roll a DC 13 Fortitude save. If the save is successful, the creature resists being inverted but takes 3d3 damage from the wracking force of the *Inversion*. Creatures that fail are literally turned inside out. PCs who suffer this effect lose 2 points each of Agility, Stamina and base armor class (reduced from 10 to 8). Exposure of Inverted PCs vital organs means that opponents land critical hits on any attack roll that is one lower than the roll normally required for that creature to score a critical hit. Inversion also exposes these organs to wear and tear, and thus inverted PCs do not heal naturally with a night's rest or bed rest and, in addition, such PCs lose 1 hp/day just from engaging in activity. Inverted PCs lose their vision and most of their sense of touch, but the direct exposure of olfactory and auditory sensory organs to the environment compensates for this loss as far as back perception is concerned. Possessions that PCs were wearing at the time of their inversion are now contained inside them. While this has no immediate detrimental effects, accessing these items will require some creative strategies.

One Lyric of Luhsaal

Scattered amongst the library's vast collection of boxes are four, mundane-looking, tinplate buckets. The pails are dented and scuffed and speckled with rust. Any metal smith with knowledge of the Shudder Mountains who makes a DC 15 Intelligence check can identify the origin of the crafting of the buckets as the Shudder Mountains. Consistent with peasant-pails, simple rungs of curved tin rod are attached at opposing points the rim, forming hinged handles. In place of lids, greasy rags thrown over the top. Unless given special consideration, they may be mistaken for cleaning supplies left behind by vacant-minded slaves.

Each pail is filled with dark, rich, loamy soil. In the soil grows a cluster of slender vines wreathed in small, fine leaves and sprinkled with tiny blooms. Any investigation beyond casual observation reveals that the vines grown in the shape of sigils. These four can be found amongst the many sigils carved into a Luhsaal Wheel. Specifically, they are the symbols for Earth, Shuul's Eclipse, Aghartans, and Inner Sun. (The judge is free to show four sigils of his own design, or select symbols from the spinning wheel in DCC #83: *The Chained Coffin*.)

The sigils can be translated when either of four spells is in effect: 1) by tracing them while a *reverse casting* of any *Runic Alphabet* spell is in effect (The reverse of the spell can attempted by a caster who drops one die down on the dice chain when casting) 2) by tracing them while the spell *Divine Symbol* is in effect, 3) by viewing them through *Ekim's Mystical Mask*, or 4) by viewing them using the *Lotus Stare*. A caster who has previously spent any time in the Shudder Mountains receives a +2 to his spell checks when casting these spells with the intent purpose of translating the sigils.

A correct translation of all four sigils also indicates their correct order, providing information about their relative, inner/outer positions on the rings/bowl of the Luhsaal Wheel. The order in which the sigils are presented, above, is their correct order for the White casting of their spell.

If the PCs brush aside the top layer of soil (DC 12 Agility check to avoid rearranging the vines and ruining these runic topiaries...) they will reveal ancient wooden masks, made of cedar cut from Bog Hollow, carved and painted long ago by some aboriginal race. Chaos wafers placed in the mouths of these masks will trigger their music and their magic. In chorus, they chant one of the Old Songs. Though sung in an obscure aboriginal tongue, anyone who has translated the sigils can understand it. The lyrics, in proper sequence, say:

Like the old bridge above me/ our love spans the space/

I dream of your presence/ your sweetness, your face.

White: All creatures within 30' enjoy the benefits of a variation of the *Ekim's Mystical Mask* spell. For the duration of the Inner Sun's most proximal period of illuminated gloom, those affected are covered by an illusion that makes them appear as feeble-minded, Aghartan slave-giants. PCs disguised by this spell who are observed behaving in ways obviously inconsistent with the nature of these slave-



giants risk detection by intelligent, native creature. Spell casters affected by this casting gain knowledge of the spell. This is a Level 2 version of the spell that lasts one hour per caster level and affects one targeted humanoid creature per caster level. Cast with a spell check of 20+, casters can choose to appear as slave-giants.

Black: All creatures within 30' must attempt a DC 13 Fortitude save or have his face permanently transformed into the horrible visage of the 20-23 spell check result of *Ekim's Mystical Mask*. This effect can be removed as a minor curse per *Remove Curse* or through the successful casting of the reversed form of *Restore Vitality*.

Vorgtraaȝen Auzdruuk du Leibaan

The vorgtraaȝen consists of five wooden crates crafted from a xeno-plentary hardwood and assembled with an Uth-metallic armature. The planks on the sides of the crate have small holes drilled into them plugged with fine fixtures of Uth-metallic mesh. A faint, but vivid, blue glow emits from the mesh "portholes."

The top of each crate is branded with a picto-glyph. One is easily recognizable as a cougar or panther silhouette in profile. The other four pictoglyphs can be translated using *Read magic* (DC 13 spell check or better) or by a cat familiar or any feline-associated creature brought forth with *Animal Summoning* or *Monster Summoning* (e.g., a Tirgefrab). Together, the five picto-glyphs represent:

cat/ life/ death/ mystery/ wisdom

Each box has the disembodied head of a cat. Each head has differing coloration and markings: black (mystery), calico (cat), tortoise shell (wisdom), tabby (life) and albino (death). If a box is opened without all five boxes being gathered together, there is a 50/50 chance of the cat's head being alive or dead. If the five boxes are gathered to together and opened, the 50/50 probability of an individual cat head being alive or dead continues. If a box is closed and re-opened, the condition of the head it contains is re-rolled; a head's condition will not change so long as a box remains open. The blue glow disappears when a box is opened.

The key to accomplishing the White casting of the vorgtraagen is to gather all of the boxes together except the –death–glyphed box and open them simultaneously. All the heads will be alive and will greedily eat a proffered wafer. If all five boxes are proximal to each other – including death – and probability aligns so all the heads are alive, then the cats can be fed the wafers but a Black casting will be the result. In the event of either type of casting, the open boxes will glow a brilliant blue and the light of the glow itself will be heard as crystalline sound, a symphony – or cacophony – of the spheres.

White: All creatures within 60' of the symphony with a zero or negative modifier for their birth augur get to randomly re-roll their augur, replacing their original augur with the new result. If the result is another augur with a zero or negative modifier, then the next time the PC suffers an effect that would slay him, that effect is ignored for one round (ongoing effects are experienced normally in the following round).

Black: All creatures within 60' of the cacophony must make a Luck check. If any of the affected creatures fails the check, then the vorgtraagen manifests a phlogiston disturbance. The specific disturbance is rolled randomly on Table 4-7 of the DCC RPG rulebook (p. 103).

CHAOS WAFERS

EATING A CHAOS WAFER



Although Chaos wafers are intended to activate the choruses of the Akashic libraries, they may be consumed by PCs, albeit with great peril. Bound with phlogiston and Chaos, the wafers either cause damage, or permanently affect the eater. While the effects are permanent in nature, they can be “undone” by supernatural beings at an extremely high cost. Merciful judges may allow a *Remove Curse* casting with a 34+ spell check result to accomplish the task.

The mechanics for consuming a wafer are as follows. The PC eating the wafer attempts a Fortitude save. If he fails, then he takes damage; if he succeeds, he rolls 1d7 to gain the effect on the relevant table. Eating one wafer earns a d7 roll on the Table of the First (DC 7 Fort save, or 1d7 damage). Eating a second earns a d7 roll on Table of the Second (DC 14 Fort save, or 2d7 damage), and eating a third earns a d7 roll on the Table of the Third (DC 21 Fort save, or 3d7 damage). If a player rolls a 7, then his PC gains the corresponding effect, and rolls again on the successive table (no saving throw required). A truly powerful champion of chaos is obtained by the player that eats only one wafer and rolls three 7s in a row!

Table of the First

(DC 7 Fortitude save for effect, or take 1d7 damage)

1d7 Effect

- 1 **Head to the library!** The PC's head shrinks to half its size. Any attack targeting the shrunken head suffers a -1d penalty. The PC must make a Luck check; if failed, then he is hunted by a collector looking to add/sell the PC's head to the Akashic Library.
- 2 **Chaotic transfeysion!** The character gains the elves' sensitivity to iron. If the PC is an elf, he is no longer bothered by iron, but instead is sensitive to mithril.
- 3 **Entropic linguistics!** The character spontaneously switches to different languages (even if unknown) when speaking. This imposes -1d to spell checks, but grants a +1d bonus to deciphering unknown languages.
- 4 **Acquired taste!** The wafer's effect depends on the character's alignment. A chaotic PC gains +1d3 to his maximum hp. Neutral and Lawful PCs lose 1d3 and 1d6 from their maximum hp, respectively.
- 5 **Chaotic cravings!** Hunger and thirst are constant companions to the PC, who requires twice as much food and water per day for sustenance. Increased consumption does not affect body weight, however.
- 6 **A smidgen of corruption!** Roll 1d10 on the minor corruption table in the DCC RPG rulebook.
- 7 **Sight of the seventh!** The PC gains the ability to cast the level 1 cleric spell, *Second Sight*, though with a d16 spell check. The character is not susceptible to deity disapproval, but loses the spell for the day on a failed casting, and must roll on the minor corruption table on a natural 1. If the PC already knows the spell, he gains a +1d spell check bonus when casting it. **In addition, the PC must roll on the Table of the Second (no saving throw required).**

Table of the Second

(DC 14 Fortitude save for effect, or take 2d7 damage)

1d7 Effect

- 1 **Foe of flora!** The PC's touch slowly destroys plant life, including fruits, vegetables, and grains; he must depend on meat for sustenance. Plant-like creatures take 1d8 damage from the character's touch, and 1d4 additional damage from armed melee attacks. Note that hanging from vines, even hemp rope, can be fatal.
- 2 **Myopic emerald eyebeams!** The PC is near-sighted, and suffers -1d penalties for attacks beyond 60', but gains a green-fire eye-beam ranged attack (1d8 damage, range 60'). The PC uses his Luck modifier to adjust attack rolls (rather than Agility), and the attack still "costs" an action die.
- 3 **Surcerber's canine tongue!** The PC's tongue becomes canine-like. The character rarely sweats, instead panting to cool off. Nonetheless, the ability to both sweat and pant grants a +1d bonus to survival in hot, dry environments. The

PC may lick a wound to apply a +1d bonus to a cleric's subsequent lay on hands. However, the long, drippy, swollen tongue incurs a -1d penalty to any personality checks, reactions, etc. with non-canine humanoids (humans, elves, dwarves, etc.).

- 4 **Driven to betrayal!** Each day the character feels the need to betray someone; the betrayal need not be large (a simple lie may suffice) but it should be consequential. Failure to do so eliminates natural healing (hp and ability scores) for that day. If a character succeeds in seven consecutive days of consequential betrayals, he gains 1 to his Luck score.
- 5 **Snakebit!** The character loses 2 points of Luck (thieves and halflings cannot recover it). However, he gains immunity to all poisons from snakes, and +1d to poison related saves from non-snake sources. If the character is a thief, he gains a +1d bonus to *Handle Poison* checks.
- 6 **A pinch of corruption!** Roll on 1d10 on the major corruption table in the DCC RPG rulebook.
- 7 **Seventh of a seventh!** The PC gains the mystic power of Chaos healers. Three times per day, the character can heal a target of 1 HD worth of hit points, though the amount rolled is drained from a random PC within 70' (from the healer if nobody besides the target is within range). **In addition, the PC must roll on the Table of the Third (no saving throw required).**

Table of the Third

(DC 21 Fortitude save for effect, or take 3d7 damage)

1d7 Effect

- 1 **Hazardous halitosis!** The PC's breath gains a horrible stench; he loses 1 point of Personality permanently. However, the PC gains a breath weapon attack which is a 45-degree cone, 15' long. Once per day the character may spend an action die to spew tiny, acidic, chaos larvae that burrow and burn into targets (damage equal to current hp, DC 15 Fortitude save for half damage).
- 2 **Chaotic charmer!** Sweet sounds of chaos lightly echo in the character's voice. He gains a +1d bonus to Personality checks, spell checks, etc., that involve persuading a Chaotic PC, NPC, or creature to do his bidding. Frequently, weak-willed chaotic beings will seek out the PC just to hear his voice. These sounds aren't pleasing to Lawful creatures, however, and incur a -1d penalty for similar checks against Lawful listeners.
- 3 **Diabolical discourses!** The wafer bends the character's mind such that he can fluently speak and read the languages of Chaos, Demonic, Draconic, and Undercommon. However, the character loses fluency in Common (though he may re-learn it if the possibility presents itself).
- 4 **A bite for a bite!** The character's mouth transforms into a muscular, sharp-toothed maw. He gains a vicious bite attack (2d5 damage), but attacks with a -1d penalty. Many will fear the PC based on looks alone, though others may have use for his terrifying presence.

- 5 **The taste of patronage!** The chaos wafer resonates with the character's being, immediately forming a bond to a Chaotic patron of the judge's choosing (roll d14+13 for *Patron Bond* result). Recall that even non-casters can be bound to a patron. Depending on the character's alignment, the patron may be less happy about this forced arrangement, and require greater-than-average compensation for aid rendered. This bond can be removed by an *Exorcise* spell with a sufficient spell check.
- 6 **A dash of corruption!** Roll on 1d10 on the greater corruption table in the DCC RPG rulebook.
- 7 **Seventh of a seventh of a seventh!** The character has been chosen by fate to be a champion of Chaos. Flooded with insight and infernal magic, the character may immediately increase one level, and all ability scores increased until each modifier increases by one (e.g., a 9 Personality increases to a 13, and an 8 Stamina increases to a 9). The PC has no problem finding well-equipped Chaotic hirelings willing to work for him; they charge below-average fees and receive a +2d bonus to morale checks.

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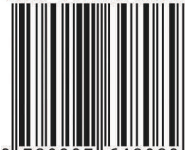
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