

# RIDERS ON THE PHLOGISTON

## GEN CON 2018 TOURNAMENT ADVENTURE

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## INTRODUCTION

**C**esteemed Judges, Cutthroat Slayers, and Wizard Mockers, welcome to *Riders on the Phlogiston*, the second annual team tournament for the Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG, and the latest in the proud line of tourney offerings from Goodman Games!

Armed with the lessons from 2017, we came at 2018 with the intention of making the tournament more exciting, more competitive, and deadlier than ever! You'll have to check with the players for the first two goals, but it is fair to say we nailed the third. The 2018 tournament was a brutal one, demanding that players be both quick to act and then cautious by turns. Survival depended far more on inter-player communication and efficient decision making, than dice rolls or luck. It was no accident that the teams that survived to the third round were actual *teams* — players who had been gaming together for years (if not decades).

*Riders* wasn't a tournament for every player. At least one table came to tears. (Direct your curses and banes to that death-dealer, Judge Jeff.) For those who joined the tournament without experience of the DCC culture, the inevitable march to the Doom Gong may have been a shock.

But for those looking to test their mettle against some of the fiercest monsters created for DCC, or to wrack their brains against puzzles written by some of the brightest minds; or for those wild-eyed reavers simply looking to ride death's knife edge as long as their Luck held out ...

For these brave, foolhardy, and beloved players, it was an adventure to be remembered.

## JUDGE'S NOTE ON TOURNAMENT RULES FORMAT

**D**amage from non-PC attacks was standardized for the tournament, ensuring that all PCs suffered equally in a given encounter. This number is usually the average of the damage roll, rounding up, and is noted in brackets after the regular damage notation:

**Crocman:** Init +3; Atk tail slap +5 melee (1d6+6 [10]) or great spear +5 melee or +3 missile fire (1d12+6 [13]); AC 16; HD 4d8+4; hp 21; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP crit range 19-20 plus bite for 1d12+4 [10] automatic damage each round until slain; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

Similarly, durations are standardized and noted within brackets.

Also new in this module is the Use Artifact check. This is a modified version of our MCC RPG cousin's Artifact check; DCC characters will roll 1d20 + Luck modifier (wizards and thieves may choose to use their Intelligence modifiers instead).

Tournament judges should refer to the accompanying Judge's Pack, prepared especially for the 2018 tournament: this contains the pre-generated characters to be used, as well as full tournament rules, tracking logs, and scoring sheets.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

**R**iders on the Phlogiston takes place over three rounds, each set in a different world, and each with its own opportunities and challenges. The adventure begins in familiar Áereth, but a miscast spell sends the PCs spilling across time and space to the post-apocalyptic world of Terra A.D. There the characters find themselves deep within a complex of metal and stone. In order to escape, the PCs must puzzle and fight their way past strange future-horrors and dangerous artifacts.

All the while, the PCs are pursued by a slowly expanding orb of activated phlogiston. Woe to the PCs who dally too long, or fail to comprehend the creeping horror that is slowly consuming the complex.

Those advancing to Round 2 awaken at the bottom of a rocky mine, somewhere deep beneath the Shudder Mountains. Gone are the strange mutant foes — replaced by demons, ghosts, and the fabled Ganderbeast itself. (Alas, while creeping right up to the 'beast's demesne, no teams at Gen Con experienced the full horror of the Ganderbeast's true nature.)

The third and final round finds the PCs on the wierdling Purple Planet. To escape, the PCs must contest against bewildering puzzles and terrible foes left by the Ascended Masters. But before the PCs can even contemplate making their way home, they must first contend with a rampaging, all-consuming, death ornn swarm. Pouring from the walls, floors, and ceilings of the passages, the swarm threatens to consume the PCs, stripping flesh bare.

Parties successfully completing the level (to date, none have in tournament play) discover that the adventure has brought them full circle, as they face off once more with the fell witch who first sent them streaming across the cosmos. But this time she is joined by her demonic patron, and the PCs' survival will hinge once more on their courage, decisive action, and resolve in the face of overwhelming odds.



## ORGANIZER'S NOTES

Designing tournaments for DCC RPG is itself an adventure. Perhaps one day it will become a rote task falling to shrunken scribes chained to ink-besotted desks, but for now it remains a chaotic and wild enterprise, replete with delightful surprises and the constant threat of failure — a foray into the unknown.

The 2019 Gen Con team tournament is no different. By the time you read this, hardened crews of tight-lipped warlocks and weaseling alley-bashers will already be contending against the hard streets of Lankhmar in our first urban tournament. Perhaps the Doom Gong has already sounded its dread toll as another reaver crosses into the Shadowland. Perhaps some young player, wide-eyed and determined, has already saved her party from certain death. And — no doubt — dedicated friends and fans are already cursing the Gods of Registration that they weren't able to play.

These stories and more will be told a year hence. For now we offer you the deadliest and most challenging DCC RPG tournament written to-date. May it offer fresh vistas and hitherto unknown challenges to you and your players.

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And gamers in Gen Con  
now a-bed

Shall think themselves  
accurs'd they were not here,

And hold their PCs  
cheap whiles any speaks

That rode with us upon  
the Phlogiston.

—Excerpt from the Weird  
Uncle Brendan Day's Speech

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# ROUND 1: THE INFINITE PHLOGISTOPIC ENGINE COMPLEX

The adventure begins in media res, with the PCs having successfully tracked down their nemesis: the foul sorceress Haera the White with her band of crocmen. The sorceress has begun a ritual of dread import and it is up to the PCs to stop her!

**Player Start:** *You and your companions creep to the very lip of the crumbling wall. The night air is cool on your skin, but waves of intense heat roll over you, emanating from the scene below:*

*A blazing red sigil has been carved into the overgrown courtyard. The sigil dances, cracks, and spits with brimstone, casting the keep in hellish red light. Hulking bipedal forms stand watch round the magic circle, with enormous ogreish frames and massive crocodilian snouts.*

*In the center of it all — at the very heart of the pentagram — is your quarry: the fell sorceress who has plotted against you all these years, lain low your allies, and erased your victories: Haera the White.*

The White Witch is attempting a dangerous ritual intended to summon her patron, the devil Rrhurantifax. The ritual depends heavily upon a conjunction transpiring in the night sky — the Darkening of the God-Eye — and the slightest interruption is sure to spoil the casting.

However, in order to do so, the PCs first must bypass the towering crocmen. There are seven in all; blinded by the blazing light of sigil, they have no chance of spotting the PCs prior to the characters taking action. However, once the PCs reveal themselves, the massive, towering creatures hurl themselves madly into the fray.

The crocmen rely on their massive spears in combat, but can also smash targets with their massive tails. On a critical hit in melee, a crocman not only receives a roll on the critical hit table, but also clamps down on the target with its massive jaws, automatically inflicting 1d12+4 damage that round, and each round going forward. A crocman must be slain in order to be forcibly removed from a living target.

For her part, Haera takes no action so long as the PCs are held off by her (entirely disposable) minions. However, if the PCs succeed in bypassing the line of defenders and threaten to disrupt the magic circle, she turns her wrath upon the party, casting and countering spells at a weakened 1d12+8 spell check, as she struggles to maintain the ritual.

Whether or not the PCs are able to damage the magic circle, or the White Witch, the damage is already done. Simply by drawing Haera's attention, the PCs have ensured that the ritual will fail.

Three rounds after Haera is first distracted, a blazing green vortex opens up beneath her. Streams of writhing phlogiston slap at the night sky. Haera screams a final curse, condemning the PCs to a thousand deaths across a thousand worlds, before she and the crocmen are shorn violently from the world.

The vortex closes with a crash, and the night is quiet and still, save for crackling of dying flames.

Then, in a final violent eruption, the ground opens up once more and tsunami of phlogiston washes over the PCs, casting



the party across entire galaxy and worlds. The PCs (or some iteration of them) awaken on a cold steel floor to the blaring of deafening klaxons (see area 1-1).

**Haera the White Witch:** Init +4; Atk claw +2 melee (1d4-1 [2] plus 1d4 [2] Sta) or spell; AC 9; HD 6d6; hp 32; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP counterspell (1d12+8), spellcasting (1d12+8 spell check: *charm person, color spray, magic missile, magic shield, polymorph, scare*); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +8; AL C.

**Crocman (7):** Init +3; Atk tail slap +5 melee (1d6+6 [10]) or great spear +5 melee or +3 missile fire (1d12+6 [13]); AC 16; HD 4d8+4; hp 21 each; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP crit range 19-20 plus bite for 1d12+4 [10] automatic damage each round until slain; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

LEVEL 1:

Round 1 of the tournament is set in Terra A.D., deep inside a station constructed by the Ancient Ones. The heart of the complex is the Infinite Phlogistopic Engine. The engine is a reactor engineered from the principles of N-Law. It has the capability to cross phlogistonic streams/particle superstrings and extract energy from the vibrational harmonies or discordancies produced by such crossings. The energy produced can be put to work, or it can be transmuted into matter. The engine uses some of the energy it produces to power itself, making it self-perpetuating.

GENERAL FEATURES

Except where noted, the air in the complex is cool and dry. The sounds of distant klaxons can be heard throughout the level, originating primarily in area 1-1.

Similarly, unless otherwise noted, the only illumination comes from buzzing emergency lights. The dimming lights offer little to dispel the absolute gloom; the corners and far walls of the complex are cloaked in deep shadows.

BLAST DOORS

There are a number of hardened, vault-style blast doors scattered throughout the complex. Each is marked with a set of colored striations, and responds to a successful Use Artifact check (see Judge Pack) made by a character wearing a matching control bracer. The PC wearing the bracer must touch the door to cause it to open.

Fortunately, for those failing Use Artifact checks, or PCs not in possession of the bracers, there are other ways of bypassing the blast doors:

- Any door can be lifted by any PC with a Strength score of 9 or better. **The danger comes when a character attempts to pass beneath the door.** When a character moves beneath the door, the PC holding the door must succeed on a DC 20 Strength check or drop the door, crushing the unfortunately for 1d30 [20] damage (DC 20 Ref save to avoid). Up to 6 PCs may add their strength bonuses to the check, but the attempt to hold a door aloft in a given round is only rolled once. Up to four PCs can attempt to crawl beneath a door in the same round; if the door falls, it strikes all of them.
- A 16+ *knock* spell check.

- A set of blast doors are destroyed if dealt 100 points of damage. Any attempts to strike the doors automatically hit.

The doors weigh too much to be supported by mere poles and the like, but can be suspended with spells (e.g., *force manipulation*).

Additionally, certain locations have control panels capable of activating the blast doors. However, using these control panels always requires a successful Use Artifact check.

**Area 1-1 – The Activated Phlogiston:** However the spell is disrupted, the PCs are caught in the phlogiston disturbance and cast across time, space and whole realities:

*The waves of phlogiston wash over you and your companions, obliterating all sight and sound, drowning you in the swirling, scintillating chaos. Finally all sense of touch – and even time – is lost, as you are shorn from the world.*

*The wave passes and the world has been transformed. You are standing in a small metal room, lit by flashing crimson lights and filled with the screech of deafening horns. The sorceress and minions are nowhere to be seen. In their place is a floor-to-ceiling glass tube. The center of the tube is shattered, littering the floor with shards of glass; a lambent orb, once contained in the tube, slowly pulses, expanding and then contracting.*

A quick glance around the chamber (cycling through absolute darkness, and then blood-red light) reveals a metal table, a small altar studded with jewels, and a single means of egress: a stone blast door, that has crushed a human-like body beneath its weight.

**The Activated Phlogiston:** In the center of the chamber is a shattered tube. In the center of the tube, at waist level, is a glowing green orb. The orb of activated phlogiston consumes everything it touches, releasing the matter in the form of raw energy. When the reaction was contained within the phlogistonic engine (see area 1-4) it was a source of nearly unlimited energy; however, the PCs’ arrival shattered the containment field, releasing the reaction that threatens to consume the entire station.

Any matter that comes into contact with the orb is instantly unmade, producing a flash of energy that washes through the chamber. Any time the orb is “fed” an object by the PCs in the chamber, it releases a blast of energy inflicting 1d14 [7] damage (DC 15 Fort save to avoid).

Otherwise, the orb grows and releases energy at the following rate:

Round 3	Orb consumes remaining containment tube	1d12 [6] damage, DC 15 Fort to avoid
Round 5	Orb contacts laboratory table	1d20 [10] damage, DC 20 Fort to avoid
Round 7	Orb contacts laboratory workstation	1d24 [12] damage, no save
Round 10	Orb consumes containment anchors	1d30 [15] damage, no save
Round 11	Orb consumes chamber	Death, no save



Begin tracking time as soon as the PCs awaken. In all instances, damage is applied at the beginning of the round. Each PC may take one move, and attempt one action each round. For simplicity, judges should treat the encounter as a combat, with PCs acting on their initiative count.

**Escape:** There is a single exit from the chamber: a massive blast door resting atop the mummified corpse of an Ancient One. The blast door is constructed from a rough stone (ferroconcrete) slab. The lower half of the door is marked with blue striations.

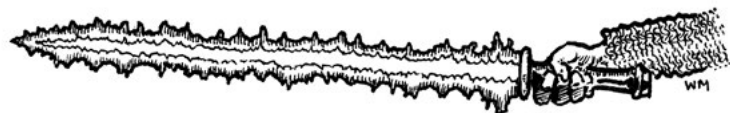
There are several means of escape. In addition to the common means listed in General Features, the blast doors can also be opened with the following, local methods:

- The bejewelled altar (work station control panel) can raise the set of blast doors with a DC 11 Use Artifact check. Attempting the check counts as 1 action.
- The body crushed beneath the blast door is wearing a metallic bracer set with blue jewels (see below). A DC 11 Use Artifact check can cause this, or any blue door, to open. Attempting the check counts as 1 action.

**Treasure:** The body beneath the blast door has become mummified in the thousands of years since the Ancient One's death. Preserved in the cool, dry air, relics can still be looted from the dried, desiccated corpse.

Characters taking the time to loot the corpse discover:

- **Control bracer (blue):** With a successful Use Artifact check, a wearer may open or close a single blue portal. The bracer has 6 charges before it is exhausted. Each time a charge is expended, one of the blue jewels goes dark. Attempting the check counts as 1 action.
- **Force Baton:** When activated with a successful Use Artifact check, this small pommel-sized device emits a 3'-long cylinder of blue light. The baton is +2 to hit in combat and deals 2d8 damage. This device has 11 charges, which are only consumed on successful strikes. Once activated, the baton remains so as long as it is in contact with a living creature.



## ACTIVATED PHLOGISTON

While escaping the chamber forestalls the immediate threat of the activated phlogiston, the matter-consuming reaction continues to slowly devour the station. Slow-acting PCs may find themselves facing the activated phlogiston again and again.

It would be tedious and difficult to ask DCC judges to track all action in rounds, especially when the role of the phlogiston is to drive dallying players on.

Once the PCs escape area 1-1, the rate of the phlogiston's advance is tracked in real time, rather than game time. PCs are well aware of this ceaseless march of chaos; they can hear the sound of rending metal and ferro-concrete, feel the thumping shudder of explosions, and see the brilliant lambent light, slowly growing brighter and larger in the darkness.

The reach of the expanding orb is indicated on the map with the radiating circumferences.

### Elapsed Game Time after escaping area 1-1

30 minutes	Anything and everyone in area 1-2 is consumed.
1 hour	Anything and everyone in area 1-3 is consumed.
2 hours	Anything and everyone in area 1-4 is consumed.
3 hours	Anything and everyone within area 1-5, 1-6, and 1-7 are consumed.
3 hours and 30 minutes	The phlogiston expands to consume the entire station. The PCs' last experience is a wave of beryl green light followed by an eternity of nothingness.

Characters caught within the circumference of the orb are immediately slain, with no hope of recovering the body. Once an area is consumed, characters—obviously—cannot return through the area.

Again, these times are in real time, not game time, and intended to drive players forward in the face of indecision.

**Area 1-2 – The Cell of the Speaker:** The entrance to the area is protected by a red blast door, which can be dealt with as noted above, or by a red control bracer.

Inside, the PCs see the following:

*The large room's walls are padded in white, seamless fabric. The ceiling is 18' high. The walls of the room are brightly lit with strange glowing runes that rotate, seemingly randomly, around the central figure: a small inhuman figure that floats 8' off the floor in the center of the room. It is bone white and short, perhaps 3' tall, with pupilless yellow eyes. In place of defined ears, the creature has large flaps on the sides of its domed head.*

The strange runes and symbols strobe in multiple colors and patterns around the central figure in no discernible pattern.

This is because the alien is trying all known mathematical symbols that it understands, trying to find some commonality with the PCs. The mathematics to which he is accustomed are far beyond the mortal ken of the men of this world and cannot be understood without the use of *comprehend languages* or other magical aid.

The alien is imprisoned within an immobile force field. This force field is transparent and radiates in a perfect 5' sphere from his body (10' diameter overall). The force field can be brought down by 35 points of physical damage or by 20 points of fire/heat damage. No other types of damage affect it: based on the alien's technology, the force field is static and impervious to non-fire magic. It cannot be moved, shrunk, teleported, etc., nor will it allow the alien to be so changed or moved while it is active.

The alien is a powerful telepath. If, after three rounds, the PCs don't respond to the many runes and symbols, it will broadcast an image of fire into the minds of the PCs. Deciding that they are primitive, the alien is trying to project this image since heat damage can destroy its force field. When it does this, each PC must make a DC 15 Will save or take 1d3 [2] damage as they feel their body heat momentarily crest due to the psychic projection—they believe, momentarily, that they are on fire.

If the image provokes a reaction in the PCs, the telepath continues broadcasting the image, in hopes of spurring the proper course of action. Characters who succeed on the Will save are immune to subsequent projections, but so long as PCs fail the save they continue to take damage.

The alien is intensely sensitive to sound. In his galaxy, sound is considered taboo and offensive; only the most primitive and debased cultures would communicate via disturbing the atmosphere with sound waves. Thus, although sound does not damage the alien, it enrages him.

If spoken to, the alien attacks the speaker with a mindblast doing 2d8 [8] damage (DC 15 Will save for half), in order to dissuade further speaking.

If spoken to again, the alien lashes out with a mindblast on anyone attempting to speak to it, doing 2d4 [4] damage per word spoken (DC 15 Will save for half.) The maximum damage is 8d4 [16].

If freed (and not attacked), the alien being rewards each of its liberators with 1 point of Luck, then vanishes from the chamber and is not encountered again.

If attacked after being freed, call for an initiative roll. If the alien survives to its turn, it vanishes in a psychic clap, inflicting 4d6 [12] damage to all PCs within sight, and draining 3 points of Luck from all PCs in the chamber. A DC 15 Will save results in half the damage, but does not prevent the Luck loss.

PCs who are reduced to 0 hit points by the mental attacks experience a gruesome fate: their heads explode, showering anyone within 5' with bone, blood, and brain. Obviously, their bodies may not be recovered.

**The Speaker:** Init +5; Atk special; AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 3; MV 0'; Act see text; SP mindblast, psychic clap; SV Fort -5, Ref +3, Will +10; AL L.



**Area 1-3 – Magnetic Freezer:** Note that dwarves coming within 50' of this room will smell the faint scent of gold. The entrance is warded by a blue blast door.

*This passageway ends in a square room walled, floored, and ceilinged with cream-colored wood. A 5' wooden corridor exits the room from across the entrance. A 5'-square iron plate stands 5' in front of the corridor's opening. Scuff marks along the floor lead from the plate into the corridor. A large red jewel is in the center of the left wall, while empty shelves line the entrance wall. The floor near the shelves shows water stains.*

Dwarves within the room smell gold coming from the corridor. When PCs inspect the corridor, read the following:

*The wooden corridor dead-ends before an iron wall filled with tiny holes. Scuff marks line the floor from iron plate to iron wall. The last ten feet of the corridor's floor have similar water stains as the shelves. Just before these stains, 15' into the corridor, fist-sized cylinders of gold protrude from the left and right walls. They are spaced vertically in 1' increments, from floor to ceiling, and horizontal red beams of light span the corridor from one wall's gold cylinders to the other's.*

At the very end of the corridor is a large metal box: 8' long, and 3' deep and wide.

This room was a storage chamber for flash-frozen items. The shelves used to hold steel boxes which were frozen by insta-freeze spray coming from the corridor's iron wall. The scuff marks on the floor are from these steel boxes being propelled by strong magnetic fields emanating from the iron plate to the iron wall. These magnetic plates are activated by the red button ("jewel"). If something passes through the laser array ("hor-

izontal red beams of light"), then the insta-freeze spray activates. Frozen items may be prematurely thawed with magical fire. Consequently, the wood of this room and the corridor are flame-resistant, and require 100 points of magical fire damage to ignite.

The best choice for the PCs is to leave this room, but, as they say, "Curiosity TPK'd the party." If a PC presses the button, then the room emits a faint audible hum, and the magnetic field is active (though undetectable unless iron or steel is placed near the corridor). Pressing the button again turns it off.

**If the magnetic field is active:** If a PC in metal armor (including studded leather) steps near the corridor's opening, they must make a DC 18 Strength check (modified by armor check penalty!) or be swept into the corridor and slammed against the iron wall (2d6 [6] impact damage), breaking the laser array (see below). If a PC in non-metal armor steps near the corridor's opening, then any metal objects worn will pull toward the opening, thus hinting at the field. Unattached iron or steel objects placed between the plates are slung along the floor to the corridor's end, and break the laser array if they are over 1 foot tall.

**If the laser array is disrupted:** The insta-freeze spray jets from the iron wall's holes. Non-living items are instantly frozen, and remain frozen in normal temperatures for 1 year, unless thawed with 10 points of magical fire damage. If a PC (or any living thing) breaks the laser array, they take 2d10 [10] cold damage and must pass a DC 20 Fortitude save or be flash-frozen. A frozen PC may be thawed within one round of freezing if exposed to 20 points of magical fire damage, though any damage in excess of 20 points is deducted from the PC's hit

## THEY WHO HESITATE ARE TPK'D

In 1978, TSR published a tome near and dear to many DCC players' hearts: Gary Gygax's AD&D Players Handbook. Its latter pages (before the appendices) contain guidelines that would have saved many tournament PCs had their players remembered them. The relevant sections are as follows:

1. "Assign one individual as leader. This character will 'call', i.e. tell the referee where the party will go and what they will do." (p. 106, Organization section)
2. "The leader and caller of a party might order one course of action while various players state that their characters do otherwise. Your DM will treat such situations as confused and muddled, being certain to penalize the group accordingly." (p. 106, Obedience section)
3. "First get in touch with all those who will be included in the adventure... so that you will be able to set an objective for the adventure...some firm objective should be established and then adhered to as strongly as possible." (p. 107, Successful Adventures section)

The PHB says that the judge will "penalize the group accordingly" for "confused and muddled" party behavior. In Round 1, this penalization took the form of a globe of activated phlogiston which unmade the station room-by-room according to a timer started once PCs exited area 1-1. As judges, we telegraphed the impending doom as we watched par-

ties fall apart due to the stress of real-time pressure. For my own tables, 17 of 18 PCs were killed by this expanding orb of annihilation. These 17 fallen heroes would have progressed farther had they followed the PHB's suggestions listed above.

In a timed tournament, assigning a leader is paramount. This doesn't need to be a "caller," per se, but it should be someone that all party members obey if a decision must be made when the party disagrees. Of the 17 deaths, 11 occurred because players were arguing at the table about what to do next, frantically reacting to the phlogiston rushing to engulf them, and having their PCs take independent actions without consulting the group. They may have made it much farther if they'd agreed upon a leader who said, "No, we're leaving this room now."

Moreover, these groups that died had no "firm objective" beyond exploration. Even an objective such as, "Stay at least one room ahead of the phlogiston," would have saved lives. There was one party that TPK'd in the station's second room (area 1-2); they were determined to try independent attempts to understand and interact with the room's telepathic alien, despite being given warnings of impending doom 10, 5, and 1 minute before the room was destroyed. When they had seconds left, they finally agreed to try to open the exit . . . and rolled a natural 1 on their Strength check.

They who hesitate are TPK'd.

points (unless they pass a saving throw, if applicable). For example, Skorch the wizard achieves a spell check of 33 on flaming hands to thaw his ally. He rolls 26 points of damage, so his ally takes 6 points of damage (flaming hands does not permit a saving throw). Frozen PCs who are not thawed within one round are dead (though recovering the body is possible if it is thawed later). After the spray jets have activated, the laser array is deactivated for 1 minute (6 rounds) to remove frozen “items” from the corridor. Being on the wrong side of the array when it turns back on would be a tricky situation indeed.

**Treasure:** The box at the very rear of the corridor is a metallic coffin; after the Great Disaster, deceased Ancient Ones were flash-frozen here to prevent their corpses from passing along the walking necrosis.

The coffin is not locked, but the freezing process has wedged the lid shut. Opening the coffin requires three rounds of work or a single DC 17 Strength check. Hauling the coffin free from the freezer takes 6 rounds (reduce by one round for each PC succeeding on a DC 10 Strength check).

The corpse inside thawed long ago, but its possessions can still be looted. The mummified corpse wears a control bracer (red, 5 charges) and a lazer pistol (8 charges).

**Lazer Pistol:** On a DC 11+ Use Artifact check, followed by a successful missile weapon attack roll, the pistol deals 3d6 heat damage. Each successful use expends 1 charge.

Note that the coffin cannot be reached without triggering the laser array. However, thoughtful PCs can trigger the array, then dash inside the flash freezer, retrieving the coffin.



to the roundabout (area 1-4e) and rotate it to face area 1-4g, allowing passage to area 1-5 and the remainder of the station.

The principle dangers to the PCs are threefold:

- The mutagenic mist trapped in area 1-4b.
- Succumbing to radiation poisoning if PCs elect to explore area 1-4f.
- Taking too long to explore the bay and being caught by the activated phlogiston.

**Area 1-4a – Main Entry Door:** *An alcove opens off the right side of the corridor. The whole alcove is surfaced in some kind of impossibly smooth, hardened hide or shell material. As you face the alcove, on the right is a long, built-in wardrobe or armoire, with gracefully-curved lines, made from the same smooth material as the wall and floor surfaces. To one side is a long workbench with the ends angled outwards. Two portions of the bench feature flat mosaics of brightly colored jewels with arcane runes written on them. Between these two mosaics is an array of mechanical controls that would confound the most wizened of sages!*

**Gear Lockers:** Maintaining, monitoring, and inspecting the engine was generally the province of robots, but occasionally a human scientist or technician wished to observe the operation of the engine or an experiment involving it up close and personally. On those occasions, such personnel wore special protective clothing stored in a set of streamline-styled plasti-steel lockers. The suits are made of special energy-deflecting and chaos-ordering materials. They are oversized to accommodate bulky gear that might be worn underneath. Pairs of rubbery boots and gloves and a conical helmet with a force-field-generating mesh visor reminiscent of a bee keeper’s mask provide a full hermetic seal.

The suits offer a number of valuable benefits, listed below. There is no Use Artifact check required to employ the suits; they need only be donned.

- The mesh filters out chemicals and toxins, making any gas breathable until the filter exceeds its capacity of 6 turns.
- The suits are radiation-protective and will reduce radiation damage by -2d/round (no minimum).
- The suits have radiation-hardened, voice-activated wireless communication units; anything spoken within a suit is broadcasted to the other suits and to the consoles in area 1-4a.
- The suits grant modifiers to Fort saves, Armor Class, and Luck (see table below).
- Finally, the suits ablate damage. Each suit can take a certain amount of damage before being destroyed. The suit takes this damage instead of the PC, but once a suit is destroyed, all the benefits are lost.

The suits come in three colors: Amber, Azure, and Auburn. The alchemical properties of the suits convey benefits – and in some cases, liabilities – to their wearers:

## LET THE RULES BEND TO YOU: AN ALTERNATIVE USE FOR FEATHER FALL

Besides Round 1’s activated phlogiston, another dominant PC killer was the doors. These would do 20 points of damage to those passing underneath, unless the door’s holder passed a DC 20 Strength check, or, if the former failed, the potential victim passed a DC 20 Reflex save. For team Exiles of Oz, the chaotic wizard (played by Brian Gilkison) found himself failing this Reflex save. Immediately before the door crushed his PC’s life away, Brian exclaimed, “I cast feather fall at the door!” Then he said, “Can I do that?” I said, “Make your spell check and let’s see.” The result was a 19, which affects the caster and “three additional creatures.” Although a door isn’t technically a creature, I allowed the wizard to escape unscathed since all the spell’s power was being focused on the door. Clever play is rewarded! As p. 314 of the DCC rulebook states, “Let the rules bend to you, not the other way around.”

**Area 1-4 – Engine Control Bay:** Judge’s note: This is the heart of the complex, and a chokepoint preventing PCs from accessing the remainder of the station. If the PCs dally too long, or if they are unable to solve the bay’s puzzles, they will be readily consumed by the expanding orb of activated phlogiston.

In order to pass through the control bay, the PCs must advance



Protective Suit Properties						
Color Name	Color Description	Designated Wearer	Save Mod*	AC Mod*	Luck Mod*	Hit Points ablation before destroyed
Amber	Mustard yellow	Officers, scientists	+3 Fort	+2 AC	-1 Luck	10
Azure	Bright blue	Technical staff	+2 Fort	+2 AC	+1 Luck	5
Auburn	"Alert" red	"Minions"	+1 Fort	+0 AC	-3 Luck	3

The (unsecured) lockers contain one Amber suit, two Azure suits, and three Auburn suits.

**Workstation Control Console:** These consoles used to be the locus of AI-directed monitoring, calibration, and control of the engine. However, the meltdown of one of the reactors created a phlogiston rift, rendering the system largely inoperable.

But the console also has complete manual status display, operation, and override systems. These redundant backup controls are engineered from simple, sturdy, early 21st-century manual mechanics—levers, knife switches, valves—styled in the then-latest pre-Disaster styling. From these consoles, the engine reactions can be amplified or dampened, re-calibrated, energy can be routed, and matter can be created and then delivered to the desired bay via J-GANSEL tubes.

The console has many uses:

- On the first Use Artifact check of 11 or better, the panel reveals a rudimentary map of the complex. Show players **Handout A**.
- A second Use Artifact check of 11+ reveals that the panel can be used to open or close any door, rotate the round-about (area 1-4e), and vent areas 1-4f and 1-4g. Even with this knowledge, accomplishing any of the tasks requires a DC 11 Use artifact check. If the artifact is mastered (with a Use Artifact check of 24+), the PCs no longer need to make checks to activate any of the panel's powers.

**Entry into the Inspection Area:** Two vault-style doors lead into the Engine Inspection Area (red striations). These doors can be opened, closed, locked, and unlocked from the console. Additionally, they can be broken down, hoisted, or destroyed as noted in General Features.

Mounted on the doors are two signs. Show players **Handout B**.

*Comprehend languages* (20+ spell check) or a thief's Read Languages skill (DC 20) translates the formula on the lower sign to the following: "Chaos 'parsed' by incantation is a fundamental form of change—the same as the two-way transmutability of matter & energy."

**Area 1-4b – Inspection Area and J-GANSEL Tube Access:** Beyond the first airlock are two corridors that provide access to portholes usable to observe the engine's twin reactors, as well as a second airlock that provides ingress to the J-GANSEL engine service tubes. All of the airlocks are marked with red striations and can be accessed with red control bracers, by the control panel in area 1-4a, or any of the common methods as listed in General Features.

As the first set of doors into area 1-4b are opened, a cold green mist begins to seep free. The mist is thick, obscuring sight, and clearly sentient in its hunt for the PCs.

Immediate action on the part of the PCs can trap the mist in area 1-4b. If the doors are being hoisted by hand, they can be dropped. If the doors have been opened with a Use Artifact check, a second check must be made to drop the doors.

All of this must be done immediately. **If the PCs delay for longer than a round, the mist escapes from area 1-4b and begins to assault the PCs.**

The mist is the particlized remains of former Ancient Ones. It retains their former intelligence but is fully mad, and takes its torment out on the PCs. In the context of the station, it can expand to a cloud 15' in diameter or compress as small as a 1'-cube.

Any PC within melee range of the mist is targeted by a tendrill. For emphasis: There is NO limit on the number of attacks it can make in a round, if there are sufficient targets. This can interrupt the normal initiative count: if a target attacks, then attempts to move, the tendrill gets an attack before the PC can move. If the PCs aren't attacking, the tendrills attack every character within melee range on the mists' initiative count. Any single target may be attacked only once per round.

A tendrill strike deals 1d10 [5] damage, and bestows one random mutation (per the Judge Pack); PCs resist the mutation on a DC 10 Fort save.

If a tendrill succeeds on an attack, it may then immediately attempt to hurl the target. The mist can attempt this action up to three times in a round, but only once per target (DC 15 Fort save to resist).

A hurled target flies as far as 30'. The tendrill directs the throw, preferring to throw the PC at another PC or a wall. (If the party is fleeing, the mist hurls any PCs the opposite way, splitting the party.) If a hurled PC strikes the wall, the character suffers 3d4 [6] damage. If the thrown PC strikes another character instead, each suffers 1d5 [3] damage.

The PCs' sole advantage is that the mist is very slow, able to move but a mere 20' per round. Most (but not all!) characters can outpace the mist by using their actions to take a second movement each round.

The mist's high AC reflects its gaseous state. Worse, it is immune to critical hits from physical attacks. Critical hits from future tech weapons (lazers, plasma swords, etc.) still take effect.

The mist's weakness is large, open flame (not heat, but actual flame). It suffers double damage from flame-based spells (*flaming hands*, *scorching ray*, *fireball*). Torches (when used as weapons), pools of burning oil, and the like automatically inflict 1d16 points of damage per round or attack, as appropriate. (Simply having a torch in hand is insufficient to deal damage; the act of attacking the densest parts of the mist inflicts the damage.)

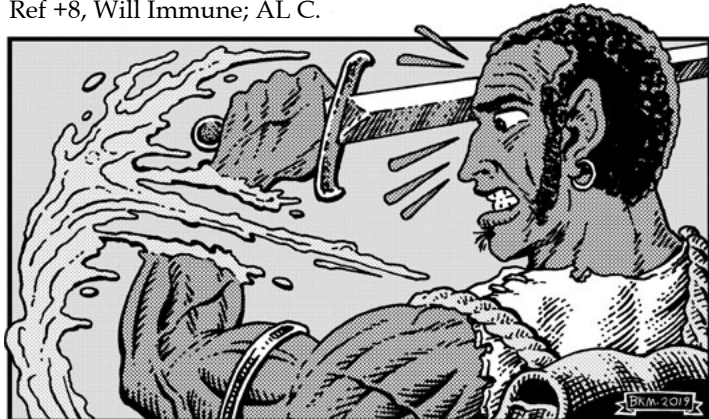


Note that the mist, as a whole, doesn't actually catch on fire; rather, the individual particles burn away. Efforts to set the mist aflame fail. So, while a *scorching ray* would inflict double damage, it wouldn't set the mist on fire with its secondary effects.

The mist cannot abide the radiation emanating from area 1-4c. If the PCs shelter there, the mist withdraws out of sight to area 1-4b.

Finally, the mist is immediately destroyed if it comes into contact with the radioactive gases vented from area 1-4f. To accomplish this, the PCs would need to lure the mist to area 1-4e, rotate the roundabout to face area 1-4f, and then vent the gases.

**Mutagenic Mist:** Init +0; Atk tendril +5 melee (1d10 [5] plus mutation); AC 19; HD 10d8+12; hp 55; MV fly 20'; Act see text; SP infravision 100', mutagenic tendril, hurl target, immune to critical hits from physical attacks, flame weakness; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will Immune; AL C.



**Area 1-4c – Left Reactor Porthole:** The corridor ends in a wall inset with a 4'-diameter, 10'-deep porthole made from a graphene-diamond hybrid. Looking through the porthole, PCs can see the maelstrom of the melted-down reactor:

*You estimate that the porthole is a solid plug of crystal 10' thick. That thickness and the darkness of its green tint seem like they would prevent you from seeing anything on the other side. But when you look in, the light on the other side is bright enough to force you to squint against it. On the other side of the porthole you see a howling gale made of light – a swirling, scintillating maelstrom. Again, despite the thickness of the glass, a deep bass throbs faintly off the translucent surface. A keening sound so high-pitched as to be almost beyond the range of hearing accompanies the bass. A mild force – like that of a loadstone – tugs you toward the surface of the porthole; it's weak, but it hints at a titanic strength beyond the barrier of the porthole.*

When this reactor melted down, hyper-energetic, subatomic particles pierced the containment walls and ping-ponged around the experimental surgical laboratory (area 1-6), destroying it and releasing the lagomorphs.

The mutagenic mist (from area 1-4b), weakened by the reactor, refuses to follow the PCs into this wing, offering a reprieve from its attacks (and a clue on how best to defeat it). The mist lurks at the end of the hall, waiting to engulf the PCs once more.

**Area 1-4d – Right Reactor Porthole:** A long corridor ends in a containment wall with a 4'-diameter, 10'-deep porthole made from a graphene-diamond hybrid. Looking through the porthole, the PCs can see the controlled phlogiston reaction of the still-functioning reactor:

You estimate that the porthole is a solid plug of crystal 10' thick. That thickness and the darkness of its green tint should prevent you from seeing anything on the other side. But when you look, the light within is so bright that it clearly illuminates the space within. In what you think is the precise center of the chamber, a sphere no bigger than a marble is suspended in mid-air. At the distance you're viewing it, making out detail on the sphere would normally be out of the question. Instead, the sphere superimposes its appearance upon reality with a hyperclarity, allowing you to study it as if it were a foot in front of your face. It's composed of swirling silver, blue, and white gases. It emits a cold blue-white light that paradoxically suggests a heat greater than any flame you've ever known.

The mutagenic mist (from area 1-4b) is not deterred by this wing, and readily pursues PCs.

**Area 1-4e – J-GANSEL Tube Tri-Cam Roundabout:**

The ladder ascends to a domed chamber dominated by a single large altar. The altar is set with a curious lever, and two sheets of dark glass that miraculously come alive as you draw near.

A trio of ladders rises to three large metal wheels, set in the ceiling.

The altar (control panel) is used to operate the roundabout. Show players **Handout C**. The panel has three key features:

1. A three-position lever with hash marks denoting three positions, which the judge should think of as UP, LEFT, and RIGHT. The lever currently set in the UP position. The dial controls the rotation of the tri-cam roundabout: areas 1-4e (the original entrance), 1-4f (the ruined reactor), and 1-4g (the functioning reactor). Moving the dial to LEFT rotates the roundabout one position clockwise. Moving it to RIGHT rotates the roundabout one position counter-clockwise. It takes one round to rotate the roundabout one position in either direction.

Once the roundabout is set into motion, the lever resets in the UP position and the roundabout's movement cannot be halted. When the roundabout arrives into a position, it can be rotated once more via the lever.

2. A simple display indicates the orientation of the roundabout (areas 1-4e, 1-4f, 1-4g) at any moment in time. The roundabout has three tube entry chambers, labeled on the display as I, II, and III. The display shows the roundabout, where the entry chambers are positioned, and indicates any changes in these positions due to rotation of the roundabout. When the PCs first find the roundabout, the panel displays that the PCs are in position I. Rotating the roundabout to 1-4f shows on the display as position II, and rotating it to 1-4g is reflected on the display as position III.
3. A second display uses a trio of simple colored bar graphs to indicate the levels of three different energies within the tube system: gamma radiation (green, of course); magical manifestation (purple); and "phlogiston attraction" – the interaction between the reactor and any magic in the tube system (light blue; because the graph measures attraction, the purple and blue graphs move in tandem).

As the roundabout is rotated, the entrance ladders line up with entrances to the two reactors. The roundabout shudders violently as it rotates into position, and the display graphs vary to reflect the specific dangers of each location. (See areas 1-4f and 1-4g below.)

The metal hand-wheels set into the ceiling are used to vent gases from the reactors; opening the vents has no effect until the roundabout has moved into alignment with areas 1-4f or 1-4g. If the vents are opened while the roundabout is in its original position, and left open while the roundabout is rotated, gases are automatically released into the roundabout when it moves into position with areas 1-4f or 1-4g.

**Area 1-4f – Left-hand Reactor Under-Core Access**

**Tube:** As an entry space rotates toward position 1-4f from either direction, its occupant will begin to feel the temperature rising and the cacophonous sound of the melted down reactor growing louder. The green bar graph will begin to move upwards steadily. When the roundabout positions an entry space in line with position 1-4f, the noise is already deafening and the green bar graph is just below the red zone. The purple and blue graphs remain stable.

The roundabout shudders violently into position, revealing a matching cylindrical shaft with a ladder lined up below! The heat here is nearly overwhelming and all sounds are drowned out by the deafening roar!

In this position, the exit ladder descends to a 5'-diameter horizontal pipe that feeds into area 1-4f. At the start of pipe, radiation poisoning inflicts 1d7 [4] damage and a PC will lose 1 point of Stamina every round (a successful DC 14 Fort save halves the damage and prevents the Stamina loss). The pipe extends 15' into the heart of the melted-down reactor. Each 5' that a PC travels down the pipe increases the risk to the PC:

	Damage	Fort save to halve damage & prevent Stamina loss
0'	1d7 [4]	DC 14
5'	2d7 [8]	DC 15
10'	3d7 [12]	DC 16
15'	4d7 [16]	DC 17
20'+	Instant Death	N/A

Lost Stamina is regained at the rate of 1 point per month.

Opening the venting system when the entry space is in this position is a bad idea: the green bar graph display shoots to the top of the red zone. A pressure wave slams the door into the PC doing 2d6 [7] damage. The venting radioactive gases inflict 3d7 [10] damage and 1 point of Stamina loss to every character in the roundabout (DC 15 Fort save halves the damage and prevents the Stamina loss).

Note: If the mutagenic mist has followed the PCs into the roundabout, opening the vents instantly slays the mist.

Characters foolish enough to enter the reactor core by traveling 20' or more down the broken causeway are immediately, instantly, and irrevocably slain.

**Area 1-4g – Right-hand Reactor Under-Core Access**

**Tube:** As an entry space rotates into this position from either direction, its occupant will begin to feel the slight push of the twin sound waves produced by the still-functioning reactor—an almost subsonic bass paired with a keening so high-pitched as to be just barely within the range of human hearing. The green bar graph will not move as the still-functioning reactor does not emit gamma radiation. The purple and light



blue bar graphs move together—the amount of movement is dependent on how much the reactor is exposed to magic from the PCs (see below).

*The roundabout shudders violently into position, revealing a matching cylindrical shaft with a ladder lined up below!*

When the entry space aligns with position 1-4g, a matching cylindrical shaft with a ladder aligned to the one in the entry space appear below the occupant's entry space. The vertical shaft downward descends 15' to a 5'-diameter horizontal pipe. The pipe runs 60' then ends in a ladder up to a hatch that opens into area 1-5.

The judge must keep track of how much accumulated magic is passed to the reactor. This reflects a corresponding rise on the purple and blue graphs on **Handout C**. Initially, the graphs all begin in the white zone, but the purple and blue graphs will rise up one bar for every point of magical exposure.

PCs observing the panel in area 1-4e see the bars on the graphs raise thusly:

- One bar for every dwarf, halfling, elf, wizard, or cleric present in the roundabout.
- One bar per spell-like ability (e.g., lay on hands) or spell cast in the roundabout, or active once it rotates into position 1-4g.
- One bar for every enchanted item employed when the roundabout rotates into position 1-4g.

If more than 8 bars are accumulated, the graph reaches the top of the red zone and the reactor risks meltdown. As the reactor interacts with magical energy, the “marble of light” at its center grows larger and brighter. Its twin sound pulses will grow louder and are joined by a screaming sound like tearing metal; lightning begins to arc off its surface.

The PCs have but a mere 3 rounds to react—reducing their magical influence over the reactor core is the only way to avoid a meltdown. This can be accomplished by rotating away from the core, ending magical effects, slaying allies with magical origins, or venting the reactor.

**Vent the Reactor:** Whether or not the reactor core is about to melt down, opening the vent tube fills the roundabout with phlogiston gases. The gases dampen sources of magic in the following sequence:

1. All active spells fail and are lost for the day (DC 20 Will save to resist). [In tournament play, the lost spells are not recovered.]
2. All elves, dwarves, wizards, and clerics in area 1-4e suffer 5d5 [12] damage (DC 20 Fort save for half).
3. Any magic items are rendered non-functional for 1 day.
4. Begin again with 1.

Each negative affect (whether one or all the PCs suffer) reduces the graph by one bar. Even if the PCs close the vents, the effect of the venting only ends once the graph is reduced by 4 bars (below level orange).

*Example: The party has maxed out the purple and blue graphs; they vent the phlogiston gases into the roundabout hoping to reduce the graph a total of four bars:*

*First, the casters with active spells are targeted. One caster fails his save and the graph lowers by one bar. (Even if 4 casters had lost their spells, the graph would only be reduced by one bar. But if all had made their saves, there would have been no reduction.)*

*Second, all elves, dwarves, wizards, and clerics in the area are subjected to damage. But all make their saving throws and the bars aren't reduced. (If even one PC had failed the save, the graph would have lowered by one bar.)*

*The party has no magic items, so the bars aren't reduced.*

*The cycle begins anew, with step 1 and proceeding in sequence, until a total of 4 ill-effects are suffered by the party.*

*Note: The reactor venting cycle effects occur **instantaneously**, in the space of one round, regardless of the number of times the sequence must be repeated as above.*

**If the reactor is maxed out and the party fails to react in time,** the reactor melts down and a horrific blast rocks the station.

- Most of the blast travels in the direction of area 1-5, wiping out the ecosystem (and, accidentally, rendering the hive safe for passage).
- Characters in area 1-4e, 1-4g, and area 1-5 take an initial 9d7 [36] radiation damage and lose 3d4 [6] points of Stamina (DC 20 Fort save to halve both the damage and Stamina loss). They then suffer 6d7 [20] points of damage and lose 1 point of Stamina (DC 19 Fort save to halve damage and avoid Stamina loss) each round until they escape the roundabout or rotate it at least one position away from area 1-4g.
- Any active spells fail and are lost for the day. [In tournament play, the spells are lost for the remainder of the tournament.]
- Any magic items are permanently disenchanting.

### **Area 1-5 – Frigid Hive of Mutillidae Nanocordyceps:**

*You peer from the tube through a hatch and up on to a triangular platform. The platform sits at the narrow end of a wedge-shaped chamber. The ceiling of the bay arches high overhead. The bay is extremely cold and the pool of intensely blue-white liquid that fills the majority of the chamber seems to suck the warmth right out of your body.*

*The only impression of warmth in the chamber comes from the light emitted by ovoid wall sconces along the walls.*

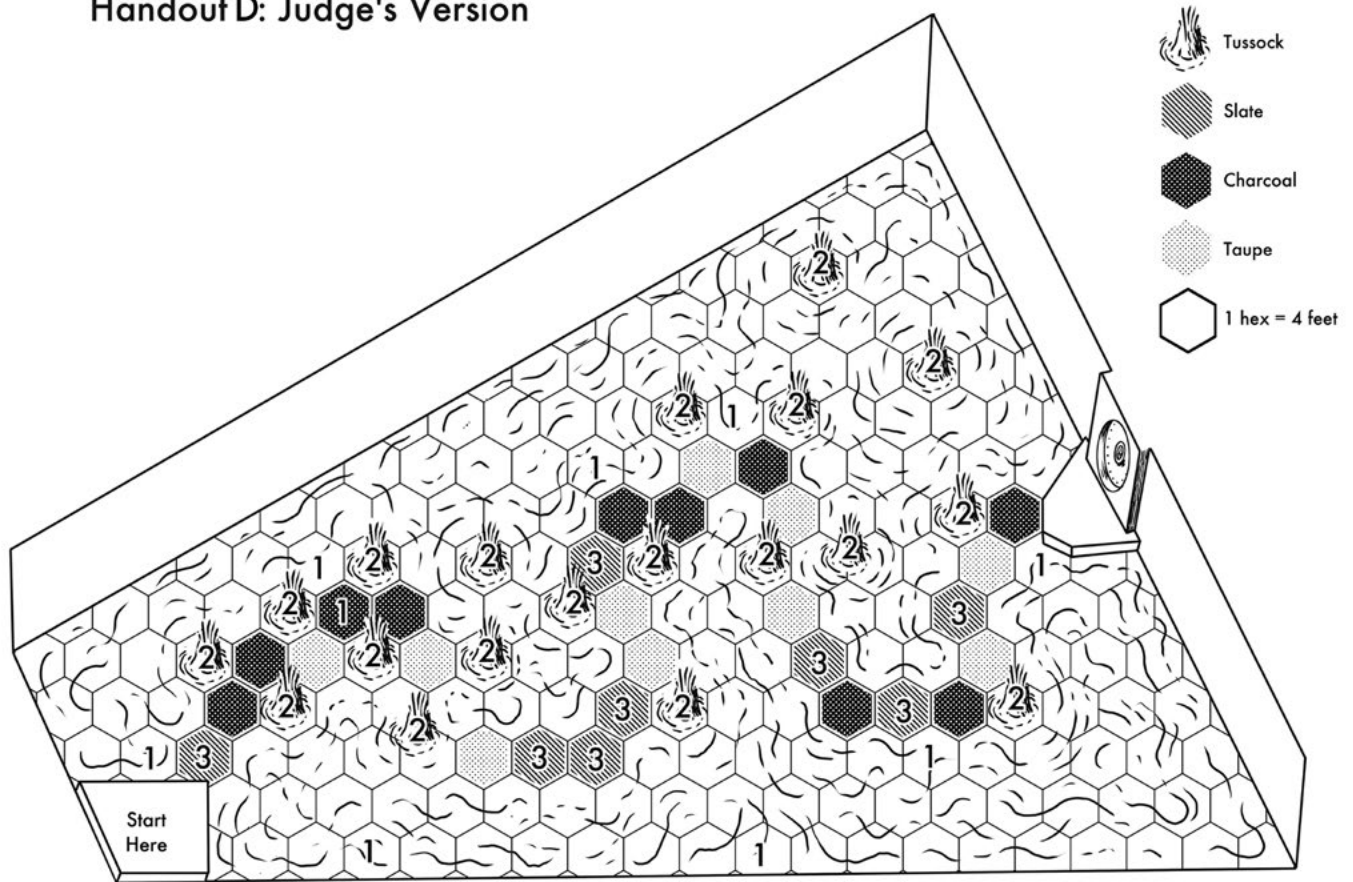
As the PCs enter the chamber, more is revealed:

*Round tussocks topped with what look like deep purple sedges poke out of the frigid blue liquid every 8' or so. 4'-wide hexagonal “stepping stone”-like platforms link together to form a nearly contiguous path across the liquid basin. The platforms are three different colors – charcoal, slate, and taupe – with no regular pattern. The path is missing hexagonal segments at about the 1/3 and 2/3 marks across the chamber, but the 4' gaps appear easily traversed. In the middle of the far wall you see an oval door with a mechanical wheel affixed to the center of it. As you exhale, the moisture in your breath starts to generate a light fog.*

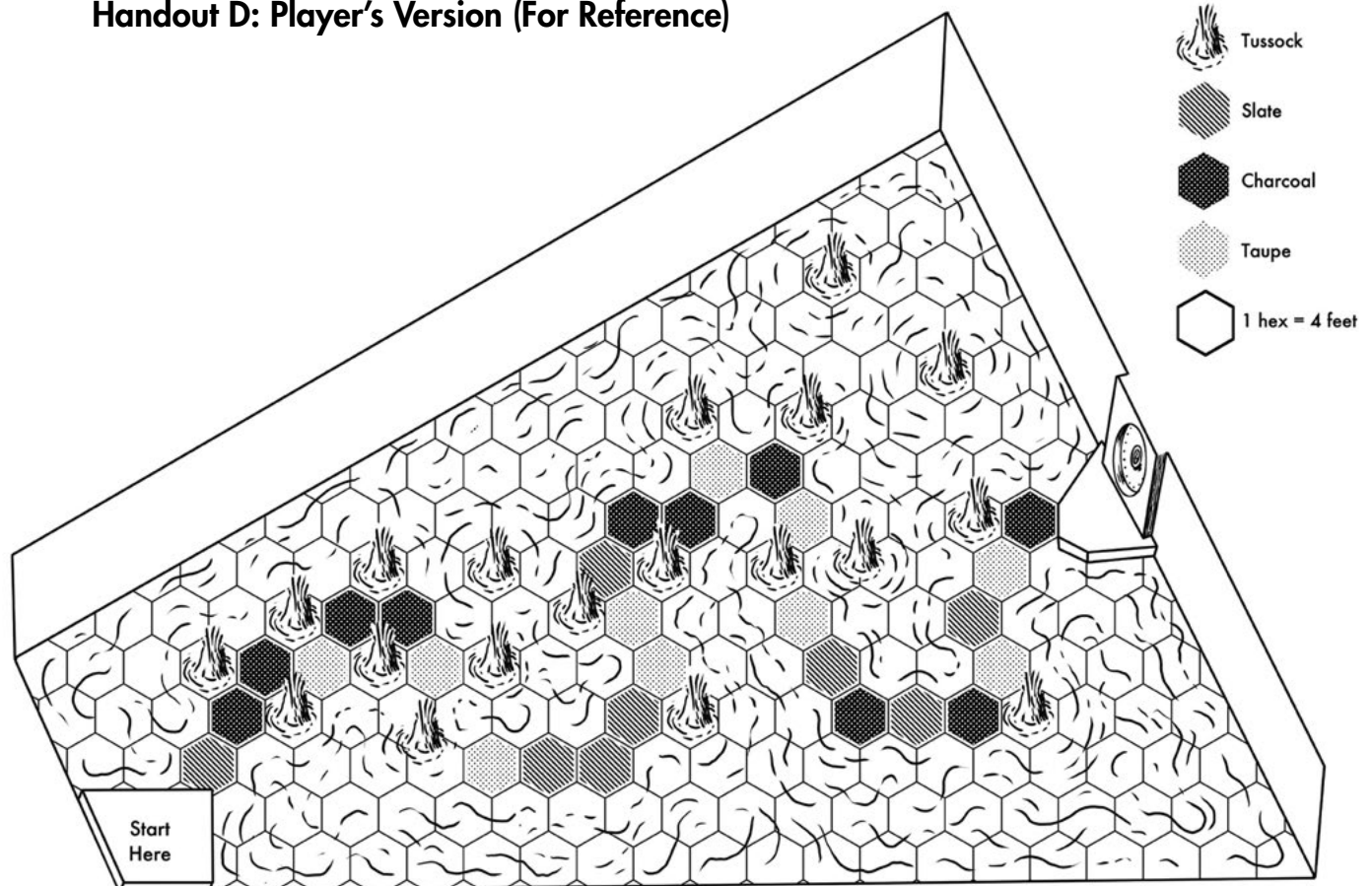
Show players **Handout D**, the players' detail map of area 1-5. Reference the judges' version while running the encounter.

The liquid is a 5'-deep pool of carbon tetrachloride—energized cold plasma. It is extremely cold. Any creature who comes in contact with the liquid without magical protection suffers 2d6 [6] damage (DC 15 Fort save for half damage); full immersion caus-

## Handout D: Judge's Version



## Handout D: Player's Version (For Reference)



es 4d8 [16] damage per round (DC 20 Fort save for ¾ damage).

The walls of the chamber are made from graphene and are extremely strong, extremely smooth, and engineered to be nearly frictionless (DC 23 Climb Sheer Surfaces checks). The ceiling is 30' high.

**The Pathway:** A closer look at the hexagonal platform segments reveals that each large hexagon is formed from a latticework of smaller, hexagons reminiscent of honeycomb, creating hives for the wasp-like Mutillidae Nanocordyceps nanite colonies.

**The Exit:** The hexagonal pathway ends in a triangular graphene platform identical to the starting platform. Sealed bulkhead doors bracket the airlock chamber. Characters have no difficulty passing through the airlock (it is not a protected blast door).

**The Encounter:** This bay was being used to cultivate Mutillidae Nanocordyceps colonies and evolve them into an anthropathogen that would constitute a major advance in fifth column warfare tactics. Over the centuries, the ecosystem has stabilized across three species.

Note: The other two species in the bay are aware of Mutillidae Nanocordyceps and have adapted to avoid contact with its honeycomb habitat. Observation will lead PCs to deduce that none of the three species ever move into contact with the hexagonal pathway.

For the purposes of the encounter, all the creatures' locations are static—characters only encounter the creatures when they cross into an occupied hex. Refer to the judge's detail map of area 1-5 as the PCs make their way across the chamber (noting that the dirijibbets are functionally invisible).

**The Challenge:** Finding a safe path through the chamber. Because none of the creatures move in pursuit of the PCs, the players are free to take as much time as they need to develop a plan for crossing the chamber. However, as the activated phlogiston continues to consume the station, it is only a matter of time before the PCs are forced to act.

## HEX ENCOUNTER 1:

**Dirijibbet (1 per marked hex):** Init 0; Atk clamp +3 melee (2d4 [4]); AC 16; HD 3d10; hp 24; MV levitate 30'; Act 1d20; SP invisibility, decomposing gamma ray emitter, immune to mind-affecting spells and abilities; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will Immune; AL N.

The dirijibbet is a cigar-shaped lattice of semi-sentient silicate, 12' in length and over 3' in diameter. A dirijibbet levitates silently and has the mutant ability to bend light around itself, rendering it invisible. The dirijibbet drops down on prey, clamping its lattice around the target's torso, then slowly hauls its victim up inside the lattice until that prey is fully enclosed—as if placed inside a gibbet.

Once a target is struck, it automatically takes damage each round until freed. A clamped target can escape with a DC 15 Strength check or by dealing the dirijibbet 10 or more points of damage from inside the creature.

From the moment prey is first clamped, the dirijibbet begins emitting a field of intense gamma rays. These rays slowly disintegrate living creatures. Trapped creatures lose one point of Strength permanently each round unless they have some form

of hardened protection against radiation or make a DC 17 Fort save. If a creature's Strength reaches zero, it dies.

Note that a dirijibbet's hide can be used to render a PC invisible. (However, any part of the PC sticking out from the hide is visible.) This power is slowly lost as the hide decomposes, and is lost entirely when the PCs are shunted to Round 2 of the tournament.

## HEX ENCOUNTER 2:

**Tussucubus (1 per marked hex):** Init 0; Atk rasping sedges +5 melee (3d4 [6]); AC 16; HD 4d8; hp 24; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP resist plasma, mist cloud, surprise, immune to mind-affecting spells and abilities; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will Immune; AL N.

A tussucubus is a 3½' spherical, symbiotic amalgamation of three species of mutant plants that cooperate to create one carnivorous creature.

Tussucubi look like metallic grey bog tussocks topped with neon purple sedge tufts. The tussucubus sits perfectly still until another creature comes into contact with its top, then it attacks—gaining an automatic surprise attack on any creature unaware of its nature.

The tussucubi rapidly pumps plasma up from the tussucubus' roots and out through its tubers, creating a mist cloud 5' in diameter that causes disorientation: creatures in the area of effect must make a DC 15 Will save or be unable to act for 1d4 [2] rounds.

Simultaneously, the tuft of sedge uses a mutation that allows itself to magnetically polarize its sedge blades, turning them harder than steel. The tussucubus begins to grind the sedge blades against whatever part of its prey is in contact with them. If a creature in contact with a tussucubus does not move away, it will be ground up completely by the sedges and then absorbed as nutrients.

Once the threats are known, they are readily avoided. So long as characters avoid touching the tussucubi, they present no risk to the PCs.

## HEX ENCOUNTER 3:

**Mutillidae Nanocordyceps Queen (1 per marked hex):** Init +5; Atk special; AC 20; HD 4d30; hp 60; MV fly 40'; Act 1d24; SP swarm target, freeze target, resistance (extremes of heat, cold, electricity, and acid); SV Fort +6, Ref +4; Will +6; AL N.

Mutillidae Nanocordyceps are microscopic nanobots organized into colonies. Over the centuries, Mutillidae Nanocordyceps has evolved beyond a mere anthropathogen into a creaturapathogen; where it was intended to only work on humans, Mutillidae Nanocordyceps is now capable of becoming the "zombie master" of any living creature. Mutillidae Nanocordyceps is engineered to withstand extreme environmental conditions and is immune to mundane sources of heat/fire, cold, electricity or acid. Mutillidae Nanocordyceps is not immune to magically- or technologically-enhanced versions of these effects, but can resist them, receiving a +4 on any saving throw against such effects and reducing damage by -2d per damage die (minimum of 1 hit point per die).

Each colony contains three types of Mutillidae Nanocordyceps and each type resides in and maintains its own hexagonal path segment "hive," according to its preferred color of hexagonal path segment (slate = queens; taupe = drones; charcoal = workers).



## A CHILLY RECEPTION

My first team of the tournament was one of the more surprising. Ten minutes before Wayne Snyder's beautiful gong rang in the start of Round 1, three grognards of the OSR sat down at the table, each with a lifetime of experience playing RPGs but complete newcomers to DCC, ready to try their hand in the tournament. I honestly cannot recall ever explaining the rules and classes of DCC so quickly—and under such pressure—before. Rounded out by three drop-in players of a decidedly younger generation who arrived as the last minutes trickled down, team Herculoids swiftly picked their characters and set out, a feeling of guilt rising in the back of my mind at sending such innocents into what was sure to be a slaughter.

It turns out I had nothing to worry about. The experience of the veterans mixed with the panache of youth to create a formidable team. During the first encounter one of the vets playing the elf got right into it, spellburning on his casting of *magic missile* and rolling a spell check of 24 to one-shot Haera. They continued to make their way through the dungeon, making mistakes here and there, but playing smart and applying everything they knew about gaming to the problem at hand—survival.

After several challenging encounters, they finally made their way to the Frigid Hive (area 1-5), where—through trial and error—they triggered a nanite attack that at first covered one PC and then another, and made the rest of the party retreat to the relative safety of the entrance corridor to the room. As the nanites continued to spread across the party and began pumping the sub-zero liquid of the cryogenic pool, the cleric managed to cast *resist cold and heat* to stave off the worst of the effects, but the party had a new, unexpected problem—all of the characters were now rendered blind as they became completely enveloped in the nano-goo! After conferring with Judge Harley, I further hobbled the team's ability to cope with the encounter by taking the player map of the room away from the table—their one remaining anchor of a safe harbor.

Sometimes the best stories come from these moments of improvisation. Undeterred, the players again proceeded to focus solving the immediate problem: finding ways to attack or burn away just enough of the nanites from their eyes to briefly clear up their vision before the nanites regenerated, even at the risk of inflicting damage on themselves. With each successful attack, I allowed them a few precious seconds glimpse at the map before taking it away again. In this manner, they slowly but methodically made their way across the room's pathway of hexes and made it to the next room before time ran out on them.

In the end the Herculoids came in fifth out of eighteen teams in Round 1 and just missed advancing—not bad for a cobbled-together team spanning generations of role-playing experience!

Only the flightless queen nanites of Mutillidae Nanocordyceps present a threat to the PCs. Any PC who contacts a marked segment risks possession by the queen nanites. The character must immediately attempt a DC 15 Reflex save; on a failed check, the queen nanites invade the character and then summon a swarm of drones and workers. The victim is covered in what resembles gray goo (the nanite swarm).

The swarm takes three rounds to cover the victim. At the end of the third round, the nanite slime draws freezing plasma up from the pool, inflicting 4d8 [16] damage per round to the victim (no save). The nanite continue to inflict the damage each round until the character is frozen solid.

Worse, any other character that physically touches the PC is also infected by the swarm of gray goo (DC 15 Ref save to avoid). This includes tapping the target with a pole, or from a distance. If the nanite goo is able to make a direct, physical connection with a second PC, that second character must succeed on the Reflex save or be overcome by the lightning-fast swarm of nanite goo.

Attacking the goo (presumably from a distance) is effective, but also deals the same amount of damage to the character. Similarly, melee attacks damage both the swarm and the character, but also risk spreading the nanite infection, as noted above.

Once a swarm is broken from a victim, it collapses back into the nests.

**Area 1-6 – Lagomorph Labs:** The entire bay features the same fortified and radiation-hardened vault-style doors found throughout the complex. These doors can be opened, closed, locked, and unlocked from the control room in area 1-4a. The doors are all marked with both blue and red striations, and can be operated by either blue or red control bracers.

**Areas 1-6b through 1-6e – Paired Wormholes:** When the reactor melted down, hyper-energetic, subatomic particles pierced the reactor containment walls and ping-ponged around



this laboratory facility, destroying its advanced med-tech. Their paths of travel can be traced along the scorch trails they left in their wake. Once these particles had expended an iota of energy, they settled into positions relative to each other and burned rifts in space-time, forming small, localized wormholes—eight in total.

The wormholes appear as blindingly bright shimmering distortions.

The wormholes are paired to one another (each marked with the same area notation), but PCs can only discern where one might lead by stepping through.

**Area 1-6f – Specimen Containment Area:** *The former purpose of this chamber has been erased by its obvious and long-term current use as the main sleeping quarters of some tribe of inhabitants. Six small, yurt-like structures dominate the room, fashioned lean-to style from tilted white panels or from hides stretched over stacks of elongated wire-mesh animal cages.*

This was once a zoological facility for raising, housing, and caring for the animals that were used as subjects of surgical experiments—rabbits (you guessed it). Over the centuries, the evidence of its former purpose has been replaced as it evolved into the main living area of the meta-lagomorph “tribe”.

The yurts are called “hutches” in lagomorph sign language. In addition to providing shelter for the lagomorphs, the hutches also house the primitive, hand-made tools the lagomorphs use to graft extra brains to their skulls.

## THE LOST WORMHOLE

On the maps submitted to the judges for Gen Con, there was a yet another wormhole — a remnant of prior iterations of the Lagomorph Labs. Area 1-6 was already a complex encounter, and the potential of a 5th set of wormholes threatened to add yet another level of chaos. And so, during the evening prep session prior to the Round 1 games, the team of judges agreed to scrub 1-6 from the tournament entirely.

While the Lost Wormhole should remain that way for tournament games, brave judges are welcome to add the portal back to the encounter for their home games. Here are some suggested variants that honors the original intent of the lagomorph wormholes:

- Add a wormhole entrance to area 1-4c, paired with the easternmost wormhole 1-6a. Brave PCs daring to step through the ominous portal of blinding light, then succeed in skipping the bulk of area 1-4 and 1-5 entirely. However, stepping through 1-6a a second time risks sending PCs to either of the paired wormholes (50% chance to arrive at either the second 1-4a or the new 1-4e).
- To make for a truly deadly encounter, permit the lagomorphs to use their superior brains to manipulate the wormholes so that a single wormhole may reach any other wormhole. (PCs however, are left using only the paired wormholes, and may not be able to follow the lagomorphs in their flight.)

## Areas 1-6g through 1-6i – Lagomorph War Party:

Characters crossing areas 1-6g, 1-6h, and 1-6i, encounter teams of meta-lagomorphs: giant, mutated rabbits who have learned to operate ancient tech well enough to graft additional, enlarged, isotope-augmented brains into their skulls, housed in glassteel globes. The lagomorphs leap to the attack, as detailed below.

Meta-lagomorphs appear as 4'-tall, stocky, pudgy, tan and white bipedal rabbits. Each has a single, flattened glassteel globe bolted to the top of their skull, which houses an extra isotope-enhanced brain floating in red translucent fluid. White glowing neural filaments run from the extra brain down inside the globe's metal collar-mounting to the lagomorph's primary brain.

The extra brain gives them the mutant power to transmute non-living material into orange-colored cellulose, rendering it weak and destroying its functionality. Meta-lagomorphs can do this in combat once per round as a touch attack.

To use this power, the lagomorph must successfully hit a target's AC. The target can attempt a DC 14 Reflex save to avoid the effects, otherwise the object touched is permanently transmuted into cellulose.

**Tactics:** Living in the complex over centuries, the meta-lagomorphs have acquired and learned to use a sizeable collection of pre-Disaster weapon tech.

The lagomorphs can also control the locks on all the doors in area 1-6, although the consoles in area 1-4a override their local control. They will use their control of the door locks to hem in opponents, unlocking the doors for their own combat teams to use for maneuvering or retreat.

The entries below identify the three-rabbit combat teams and the advanced weapons each team possesses. All the teams fight with the ferocity of cornered animals.

**Meta-Lagomorphs (3 per team):** Init +3; Atk hind leg kick +4 melee (1d7 [3]) or giant cleaver +3 melee (2d4 [4]) or special +3 melee or missile fire (by weapon); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 16 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP special weapons, transmute matter into cellulose, wormhole hopping; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +4; AL L.

**1-6g – Team Frank:** Team Frank keeps watch on the entrances to the labs. Characters attempting to sneak past the team must succeed on DC 15 Hide in Shadows checks, or otherwise utilize magic (or possibly the hides of slain dirijibbets) to slip past the sentries. Note that brave PCs can teleport past the team by utilizing the wormhole at area 1-6d.

If Team Frank spots the PCs, they signal the other teams by slapping their feet on the floor, then hop to the attack, aiming to stun and slow the PCs, setting them up for an attack by Team Caerbannog two rounds later.

If one of their team is slain, the survivors retreat to area 1-6i, joining with Team Energizer.

**Shanni** – Stun Grenades (3): Stun living creatures and AIs within 20' radius for 1d4 [2] rounds (DC 18 Fort save vs. living creatures, DC 12 Fort save vs. AIs). Stunned creatures suffer -2d to action dice and move at 1/4 speed.

**'Lester** – No special weapon.

**Hughie** – Zapper Glove: A zapper glove stores and dis-

charges an electric force sufficient to stun most living creatures on a successful melee attack (DC 18 Fort save to resist; target stunned for 1d4 [2] rounds). After a successful discharge, it takes the glove one round to recycle and recharge for subsequent use. The glove is +1 to hit in melee. Stunned creatures suffer -2d to action dice and move at 1/4 speed. Each successful attack consumes 1 charge, whether or not the target saves against the stun. 8 charges.

**1-6h – Team Caerbannog:** Team Caerbannog waits two rounds after being signaled by Team Frank, then approaches from the rear, focusing their attacks on stunned and weakened PCs. If one of their team is slain, the survivors retreat to area 1-6i, joining with Team Energizer.

**Violet – Fazer Pistol:** Range: 80'. Missile fire attack roll required. Damage: variable; Stun (DC 18 Fort save to resist); Heat 3d6 [10] damage; Disintegrate (DC 15 Fort save to resist). Found with 12 charges.

Fazer pistols project a pulsating red field of quantum energy that causes the molecular valences of target objects to shift, with variable effect. On a stun setting, the molecular disruption is minor enough to cause simple synaptic shutdown in living targets. The medium setting causes severe heat damage, and on the highest setting a fazer pistol completely disrupts a target's molecular structure, resulting in complete disintegration. The fazer pistol consumes cell charges for each function (stun: 1 charge; heat: 2 charges; disintegrate: 3 charges).

**Faras – No special weapon.**

**Chuckie – Plasma sword:** +4 melee. Damage 2d12 [13]. Found with 8 charges; each successful attack consumes 1 charge. When activated, this 1'-long metallic cylinder emits a 4'-long cylindrical beam of bright violet plasma.

**1-6i – Team Energizer:** Team Energizer serves as a bulwark, supporting other teams as they suffer losses in battle. As the other teams waiver in battle, their surviving team members withdraw to join Team Energizer. Team Energizer fights to the death.

**Joey – Dazer Pistol:** Range: 50'. Missile fire attack roll required. Damage: Stun (DC 14/16/20 Fort save to resist); duration: 1d6 [3] rounds. Found with 10 charges.

Dazer pistols fire thin pink beams of compact electro-magnetic energy that stun the neural systems of living beings as well as the CPUs of robots, androids, or AIs. The dazer pistol has three settings, which consume increasing amounts of power (light: 1 unit of power; medium: 2 units; heavy: 3 units).

**Darbie – No special weapon.**

**Bloody AI – Zapper Glove** (see Hughie's, above) and huge club (fashioned from a rigid robot leg; 2d4 [5] damage).

**Area 1-7 – Mutation Purification:** *This passageway ends in a square room of polished steel. A separate cubic chamber, apparently made of lead, occupies the room's center. The chamber has no windows and a closed lead door. A metal plate with strange runes stands above the door.*

Thieves succeeding on a DC 20 Read Languages check, or a successful casting of comprehend languages (20+ spell check) permits the PCs to translate the sign: **Mutation Alteration and Purification**

PCs opening the lead chamber's door find a 1'-diameter dark green sphere of alien material mounted on 4'-tall narrow cylinder in the center of the cube's floor. A lever is in the "up" position on the inside face of the door. If the door is open, then switching the lever has no effect. However, if the door is closed, and someone switches the lever from within the cube (either

## THE LONE WIZARD WHO ALMOST FINISHED THE ROUND

Team Crypt-kicker Six was playing a good round. They kept well ahead of the activated phlogiston until reaching area 1-4, where the distractions of the control panel, suits, and the mutagenic mist slowed them down. By the time they'd ascended to the roundabout (area 1-4e), they had minutes left before the phlogiston would reach them. Faced with trying to rapidly understand this room and its implications, their orderly behavior became entropic (see "They Who Hesitate are TPK'd"), when Joe Moore, playing the lawful wizard, shouted, "I'm going down the ladder." Seconds later, the phlogiston consumed the roundabout and all five of Wizard Joe's teammates. But Wizard Joe was alive.

Wizard Joe found himself in the Frigid Hive (area 1-5), and cast two spells to great effect: *force manipulation* and *enlarge*. With the former, he created a 3' floating disk of force (result 14-17) that he employed as a probe, sending it 25' ahead as it floated three feet above the frigid liquid. His disk triggered an attack by an invisible dirijibbet, so he backed away and let the disk disappear due to moving out of range. He then cast the spell again, chose the same result, and used it as a probe across the walkway. Wizard Joe was uncomfortable with only being able to safely skip over one hex, so he cast *enlarge* and rolled a spell check of 25, tripling in size, gaining

+6 to attacks, damage, and AC, and receiving 20 extra hit points...for four turns.

Being three times as large, he could safely skip over three hexes. Once he realized the slate hex was dangerous (he made the Reflex save to avoid a queen's invasion), he quickly exited the room by stepping only on non-slate hexes (which was trivial, being able to avoid three in one stride). Arriving in area 1-6, he took the portals immediately to jump about the area, and when confronted by lagomorphs, fled. He even weaponized the room by using his force disk to drop a crushing door upon a pursuing lagomorph, mortally squashing the beastie. Encounter avoidance and portal jumping took Wizard Joe quickly to area 1-6i, right outside area 1-9, the final room. However, he first had to face Team Energizer to get through the final door. Unfortunately for Wizard Joe, I rolled a crit for Lagomorph Joey's dazer pistol attack. The critical effect was a heart-crushing blast of energy doing 18 points of damage and requiring a DC 20 Fortitude save or instant death. Wizard Joe endured the damage but failed his save and died. Because of such skillful decisive play, his name is inevitably etched with honor in the secret tomes of battle wizards who ride the phlogiston!



up to down or down to up), then the sphere glows a blinding bright green for 1 round and irradiates the inhabitants with weirdling rays! Subsequent 1-round activations of the globe require switching the door's lever.

Exposure to radiation is risky. With each 1-round dose, a PC must make a Luck check (roll equal to or less than Luck score), although multiple exposures require using a larger die than the standard d20. Results depend on how many exposures a PC has sustained.

1. First exposure: On a passed d20 Luck check, the PC loses one randomly selected corruption or mutation (if any), and is healed for 1d8 hp. On a failure, the PC takes 1d8 [4] damage and gains a mutation (see Judge Pack).
2. Second exposure: On a passed d24 Luck check, the PC loses one corruption or mutation (determined randomly), and is healed for 1d10 hp. On a failure, the PC takes 2d8 [8] damage and gains a mutation (see Judge Pack).
3. Third exposure: On a passed d100 Luck check (aww, did the player expect a d30?), the PC loses one randomly-determined corruption or mutation, and is healed for 1d12 hp. On a failure, the PC is irrevocably killed as their body is vaporized in a flash of green light. Having no body, they are ineligible for a recovering the body check.

**Area 1-8 – Smart Metal Assembly and Repair:** *This oblong chamber features a floor-based rubber belt that feeds into and exits out of a large metal container. On the container's entry-facing side are two dials and a lever; to one side is a large bin with pieces and fragments of crude metallic humanoids. A metal plate with strange runes hangs above the door.*

Thieves succeeding on a DC 20 Read Languages check, or a successful casting of *comprehend languages* (20+ spell check) permits the PCs to translate the sign: **Smart Metal Assembly and Repair**

This encounter has a slight chance of bestowing permanent boons to PCs, but is significantly more likely to damage the party and consume resources. When the PCs investigate the assembly chamber (the "metal container"), show the players **Handout E**. The belt feeds into and exits from 5'-square holes on opposite sides that are blocked by an impenetrable force field unless the chamber is activated. The premise is simple: set the dials, pull the lever, put something (or someone) on the moving belt, and see what comes out the other side.

If PCs place something on the moving belt without including some of the robot parts from the bin, the belt stops before entering the assembly chamber and a metallic voice says,

*"INSUFFICIENT MATERIAL COMPOSITION. SMART METAL FRAGMENTS REQUIRED."*

PCs must include the broken robot parts with whatever (or whomever) they submit.

**Submitting Robot Parts without a PC:** If the PCs do not submit a member of the party to the assembly, an insanely aggressive robot or cyborg emerges from the other side; the data corruption in the AI repair code prevents any other reaction.

The borg's attacks depend on the body-part dial's setting:

- Head: bite +4 melee (2d6 [6])



- Arms: blade-claw +5 melee (3d8 [12])
- Legs: kick +6 melee (3d6 [9])
- Torso: chest ray +4 missile fire (4d4 [8], range 100')

Its HD and hp are determined by the number dial: (1) HD 4d8, hp 18; (2) HD 6d8, hp 27; (3) HD 8d8, hp 36.

**Assembled Botborg:** Init +4; Atk as above; AC 15; HD as above; hp as above; MV 30'; Act 2d24; SP crit range 17-24, suffers double damage from shock/electricity, immune to paralysis and mind-affecting spells or abilities; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will Immune; AL N.

**Submitting Robot Parts with a PC:** If a PC is brave enough to enter assembly with some spare robot parts, then the outcome depends critically on the dials' settings and the PC's Fortitude saving throw. The PC takes automatic damage depending on the number dial (no save), but the Fortitude save determines whether they receive a benefit or a (possibly fatal) debilitation. Regardless, the PC's body part is integrated with the robot fragments. Refer to the table below:

PC/Robot Integration Table				
Dials	Damage	Fort DC	Pass	Fail
Head, 1	1d8 [6]	15	Infravision 300'.	Near-sighted, -1d to attacks beyond 30'.
Head, 2	2d8 [8]	20	Omnisensorial target tracking, +1 to attacks.	Deaf; -2d to spell checks unless able to cast silently.
Head, 3	3d8 [12]	25	Gains optional laser eye-beam attack (requires an action die): 2d4 energy damage, range 70/140/210', attack bonus as PC.	PC is decapitated with head irrevocably destroyed within machine. Recover the body check is prohibited.
Arms, 1	1d8 [6]	15	Permanent +1 to Strength.	Permanent -1 to Strength.
Arms, 2	2d8 [8]	20	Melee attacks gain +1 damage.	Melee attacks have -1 damage penalty (minimum 1 damage).
Arms, 3	3d8 [12]	25	Metal plating on both arms, +1 AC, no check penalty, suffers +1d damage from shock/electrical sources.	Arms are irrevocably destroyed in machine and PC is killed. Recover the body check is permitted, but PC is armless.
Legs, 1	1d8 [6]	15	Permanent +1 to Agility.	Permanent -1 to Agility.
Legs, 2	2d8 [8]	20	Permanent +10' to MV.	Permanent -10' to MV (minimum MV 5').
Legs, 3	3d8 [12]	25	Metal plating on both legs, +1 AC, no check penalty, suffers +1d damage from shock/electrical sources.	Legs are irrevocably destroyed in machine and PC is killed. Recover the body check is permitted, but PC is legless.
Torso, 1	1d8 [6]	15	Permanent +1 to Stamina.	Permanent -1 to Stamina.
Torso, 2	2d8 [8]	20	Can hold breath for 30 minutes.	Cannot hold breath longer than 10 sec (1 round). -1d to drowning/asphyxiation checks.
Torso, 3	3d8 [12]	25	Metal plating around torso's front and back, +1 AC, no check penalty, suffers +1d damage from shock/electrical sources.	Torso is irrevocably destroyed within machine. Only head, arms, and legs come out. Recover the body check is prohibited.

\*All DCs increase by 5 (cumulative) each time a PC re-enters the assembly chamber.

**Area 1-9 – The Creator / Escape Portal:** The entrance is protected by a pair of blast doors (green).

*The blast doors open to reveal metal steps descending into a darkened vault. On the floor of the vault stand several familiar, crocodillian forms. Above hovers a massive apparition of an aged man cast in blue lights, with a spectral beard and wizened eyes.*

*The enormous head gazes down upon you and your companions. In a deep voice, it speaks:*

*“At last you have arrived. It was almost too late. Let us begin.”*

The towering head is a hologram projection of one of the Ancient Ones. It refers to itself simply as the Creator.

The crocmen are former minions of the White Witch. Any intelligence has been lost to the Creator's experiments. While they obey the Creator's unspoken commands, their violent instincts and savage skills are all but lost.

The AI fully knows that the station is doomed, and that soon it will be consumed by the activated phlogiston. It has the ability to activate a portal on the far side of the chamber, permitting living creatures to pass from this world into another time and place. The Creator freely shares all this knowledge, speaking slowly and with great deliberation.

The Creator also shares its knowledge that it is doomed to be consumed along with the complex—unless the PCs agree to sacrifice one of their own to serve as a host, bearing a fraction of the AI's intelligence into the next world.



To the AI, this is a simple calculation: sacrifice one PC so that the others (and itself) may live. For the Creator, there is no moral or ethical quandary. It gives the PCs 5 minutes to decide which among them will offer his or her life for that of their allies. (Players are allowed 5 minutes of real time to derive an answer.)

(If there are fewer than 30 minutes remaining in the session, the Creator demands an answer now.)

While the PCs deliberate, the Creator offers an enticement: it activates the portal at the back of the darkened vault. Shimmering with violet light, the portal reveals a darkened cave. All the PCs must do, the Creator asserts, is step through to the other side.

**The Creator:** The Creator knows that its doom is nigh. Its only hope for survival is to instal its personality in a living creature. This process is far from perfect; the Creator has tried and failed with each of the crocmen, rendering them mindless zombies.

Despite initial appearances, the Creator is quite insane. If the PCs insist on parlaying with the AI, or seem to stall for time, begin rolling a d7 to determine the tenor of the AI's reaction.

Roll (1d7)	Creator's Personality
1	Kind, forgiving.
2	Cruel and mocking.
3	Mechanical and devoid of emotion.
4	Pleading, begging.
5	Paternal, dismissive and condescending.
6	Frightened, child-like.
7	AI snaps. Commands crocs to take random PC by force.

On a roll of a 7, the Creator commands the crocmen to attack the PCs.

The crocodilians attempt to capture and restrain any single PC. On a successful attack, a croc-man seizes hold of a PC and violently pins the character to the ground for 1d3+6 [7] damage. A pinned character can take no action other than to attempt to break the hold with a contested Strength check. (The crocs receive +5 to the check.)

Once an ally is captured, the PCs have but a short time to free their comrade:

**Round 1:** PC is restrained. Contested Strength check to escape. (Strength check can be attempted each round the PC is held.) If multiple crocs restrain the PC at once, the character must succeed against the best contested roll to escape.

**Round 2:** Medi-bot descends into the vault.

**Round 3:** Medi-bot quickly removes a portion of the PC's skull with its plasma scalpel. This is a very painful, yet surgically precise, procedure. The PC suffers no damage (yet) from the procedure even though the character's brain is exposed.

**Round 4:** Medi-bot installs a cyberchip in the PC's brain.

**Round 5:** The Creator downloads its personality to the chip.

**Round 6:** Medi-bot reseals skull and activates the chip. Roll 1d5 modified by the PC's Luck.

Roll (1d5) + Luck mod.	Surgery Result
1 or less	Character is entirely under the control of the Creator. (Score as slain, and not recovered.)
2-3	Character retains faint semblance of original personality. PC must fight the Creator for control of character's body, suffering -1d to all actions.
4	Fail! Character reduced to 2 Int. (Score as slain, and not recovered.)
5	Fail! PC loses 1d5 Int, but is not under the Creator's control.
6+	Fail! PC gains +2 Int, but suffers no ill-effects.

**The Creator (Hologram, Resurrection):** Init +2; Atk laser ray +4 missile fire (1d12 [6]); AC 18; HD 1d6; hp 6; MV 30'; Act

3d20; SP immaterial/invulnerable except for heat-based attacks, death throes: vanishing portal; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

**Medi-Bot:** Init +4; Atk plasma scalpel +2 melee (1d10 [5]); HD 10d6; hp 35; MV fly 20'; Act 1d20; SP immune to mind control, heal 4d8, cure radiation/poison; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +2, AL N.

**Lobotomized Crocmen (7):** Init -3; Atk grapple +3 melee (1d3+6 [7]); AC 14; HD 4d8+4; hp 21 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP hold and restrain on successful attack; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will +8; AL C.

**Escape from Terra A.D.:** Having come this far, escape is as easy as crossing the vault and leaping through the portal. Anything and anyone touching the shimmering gate is cast through time and across space into a dark, sooty cave, lit by a strange red glow. The PCs have succeeded in escaping Terra A.D.!

However, to reach the portal, the PCs face the mob of crocmen and the Creator's lazars.

The Creator does not readily dismiss the portal, as it still hopes to possess a character and escape Terra A.D. However, the Creator is the source of the portal's power. If the Creator is destroyed, the portal begins to shrink growing slower by the round and vanishing entirely:

**Round 1 following Creator's death:** Portal shrinks to half size. PCs must make DC 5 Reflex saves to dive through portal.

**Round 2:** Portal shrinks to a mere 5' across. PCs must succeed on DC 10 Reflex saves to dive through the gate.

**Round 3:** Portal shrinks to a scant 2' across. Halfling and creatures of similar build can dive through with DC 15 Reflex saves.

**Round 4:** Portal snaps closed; escape is no longer possible.

The portal's shrinking can be forestalled by quick-acting wizards or elves. By spellburning at least one attribute point, and succeeding with a spell check of 20+, the caster manages to stall the portal's collapse for one round. If two casters meet these requirements, their combined prowess is sufficient to enlarge the portal.

If, somehow, *three* casters succeed, the portal is enlarged to encompass the entire vault and the PCs are whisked across roiling waves of phlogiston to Round 2.





# ROUND 2: BENEATH THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS

The round begins with the PCs emerging through a phlogiston portal, arriving at the near-bottommost reaches of the mine. The blast ignited the coal seam, compounding an already deadly situation: green and yellow flames dance all around the party, threatening the PCs.

To escape, the PCs must grope their way through flickering shadows, hoping against hope that their prison also offers an escape.

**General Features:** The mines are thick with grime and coal dust. The air is hot and dry, and the PCs' lungs are assailed by stinging gases and choking clouds.

Except where noted, there is no ambient light, save the burning coal seam. Characters without a light source or infravision suffer a -2 penalty to rolls requiring sight.

The corridors vary wildly, from nearly 12' in width, to a claustrophobic mere 3' in width. [In tournament games when a specific width is needed, default to 8'-wide corridors.]

Finally, it is left to the cleverness of the PCs (or more likely their players) to deduce where the adventure is located. There is nothing inherently Shudder-like about the PCs' arrival or first few encounters, and the judge shouldn't connect the dots for the party. The "ah-ha!" moment is its own reward—and, like all rewards, better won than given.

**Player Start:** *The cool, metallic air gives way to a dense, choking darkness. Your lungs sting with every breath, and the very air seems to burn.*

*You and your companions are in a low cave, the ceiling no more than 4' from the floor. The floor is rough and rocky, with sharp stones and rocks teetering underfoot with each step.*

The far wall of the cave, no more than 10' distant, spits amber and beryl flames. Waves of heat and foul miasmas wash over you and your companions.

Remaining in the chamber is a death sentence:

Each round the PCs remain within the chamber they must attempt DC 5 Fort saves or suffer 1d8 [4] Stamina damage from the heat and the fumes. The stat damage is permanent, and can only be treated by divine magic. Characters reduced to 0 Stamina or less are slain.

## Area 2-1 – The Bird, the Gas, and the Scroll Case:

*This passageway is caved in some ten to twenty paces ahead. A steel bird cage, with a dead yellow bird, hangs on your right. The corpse of a robed man lays supine on the ground at the corridor's end, his legs buried by rubble. One hand clutches an unlit candle, and a leather scroll case with a strange, dimly glowing red glyph lies on his chest.*

This poor wizard hung the canary then was trapped by the cave in. Hearing the canary die, he blew out his candle. Unfortunately, his legs were broken, and he succumbed to poisonous vapors. His scroll case rests on his chest, but it is warded with a demonic rune.

The dead canary should be a clue to extinguish all sources of

flame, since the toxic odorless gas beyond the bird is concentrated enough to explode. If a PC wielding fire (torch, lantern, candle) proceeds 5' past the bird cage, the gas explodes doing 5d6 [16] points of damage (DC 14 Reflex save for half). The explosion targets anyone back to and including the junction.

The gas in this corridor is highly toxic, similar to carbon monoxide. For each round beyond the first spent in the danger zone (within 10' of the junction), a PC must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or fall unconscious and begin to asphyxiate. An asphyxiating PC dies if not moved to a location with clean air within 4 rounds.

PCs that reach the body without any fire sources may inspect the glyph on the case. A *comprehend languages* spell check of 21+ reveals that it is the demonic rune for "flame." If the case is touched by any living being, it ignites—causing 2d6 [6] flame damage to whoever touched it (DC 21 Reflex save for half) while destroying its contents. The rune may be deactivated with a spell check of 15+ from *dispel magic*, *chill touch*, or other cold-based spells.

Obviously, if the case is touched between the cave-in and the bird cage, the gas also ignites. A smart PC will use an object to push the case out of the danger zone before messing with the glyph. If it is opened safely, it contains three scrolls: *magic missile*, *rope trick*, and *strength*. Each requires a spell check to cast. Note that clever PCs may cut into the case to circumvent the rune. As long as a PC does not physically touch the case, the rune doesn't detonate.

**Area 2-2 – The Low Spoils:** *A pool of water dominates the room, fed by a fissure in the wall. The water cascades down through a narrow tunnel into another pool, which in turn feeds a third pool just at the edge of the gloom. The cave seems as if it could proceed to the very center of the earth.*

The trio of pools are, unfortunately, spoils, created by the roiling phlogiston and offer only woe to those that would explore them. (Their fell qualities can, however, offer clues to cautious PCs discovering similar spoils later in the round.)

Their sinister nature isn't immediately evident, and PCs can only determine the truth by investigating the pools. However, even the most cautious of PCs will be exposed to risk.

*Judge's note:* *Each time something (or someone) is dipped into a pool, call for the player to roll 1d12, then pretend to consult a table. While the results are NOT randomized, PCs (and their players) should not know this from the outset.*

**Pool A:** The first pool is limned with a faint green glow that is only obvious if the PCs pause to inspect the pool. (It is clearly evident if the PCs extinguish all flames, plunging themselves into darkness.) Objects are transmuted or transformed as follows:

- **Leather and other dead flesh:** Object grows into a squat, leathery humanoid that instantly leaps at the PC. The thing ravages the unfortunate victims with its over-wide mouth, filled with row upon row of dagger like teeth. The leathery attacks twice per round, with both a 1d20 and a 1d16



action die.

**The Leatheren:** Init +6; Atk bite +3 melee (1d16 [8]); AC 14; HD 4d10; hp 20; MV 45'; Act 1d20+1d16; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will -2; AL C.

- Wood or plant-material: Grows into a long, woody creature composed of writhing roots and vines. The green man tears at its targets, and its multitude of roots and vines can attack any foe within 20'.

**Green Man:** Init +3; Atk root or vine +3 melee (1d8 [4]); AC 16; HD 4d12; hp 24; MV 30'; Act 5d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will -2; AL C.

- Stone or metal: Grows into a lumbering, 8' tall humanoid covered in dozens of sharp, jagged crystals. The massive creature smashes at its foes, making up in brute strength what it lacks in speed.

**Crystal Destroyer:** Init +0; Atk spiked fist +0 melee (1d12+5 [11]); AC 18; HD 4d16; hp 32; MV 25'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will -2; AL N.

The pool can spawn a total of 7 creatures before it is exhausted. Creatures may be spawned simultaneously, and woe unto the character that tosses a handful of stones into the pool.

**If ever a character inserts his or herself into the pool:** The PC immediately suffers 1d20 [10] damage as the body part disassociates from the rest of the body, transforming into one of each of the three monsters, above.

**Pool B:** This pool is alight with licks of black flame that cast shadows rather than light, and consume heat. Anything com-

ing within 1' of the flames is quickly encased in ice, suffering 1d5 [3] damage per round of exposure.

Any object (or character) plunged into the black pool is immediately frozen solid and shatters. Objects are instantly destroyed and characters (including monsters) suffer 1d20 [10] damage and must make DC 20 Fort saves or be slain with no chance of recovery.

**Pool C:** The third pool shimmers with a silver light. Any living creature touching the placid waters recovers 1d20 [10] hit points and gains +1 point of Luck. (This effect can take place but once per character.)

If a slain creature comes into contact with the waters, it immediately animates into a hellish, silvery ghoul that lunges to attack. Regardless of the "source" creature, for the purposes of the tournament, a ghoul always has the stats listed below.

Characters bitten by a ghoul must make a DC 14 Will save or be paralyzed, unable to move or take any physical action. A character can attempt the Will save once per round. Elves are not affected by this paralyzation.

The silvery creature is un-dead, and thus can be turned by clerics. It is immune to critical hits, disease, and poison. As un-dead, they are immune to sleep, charm, and paralysis spells, as well as other mental effects and cold damage.

**Silver Ghoul (1 per slain creature):** Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 [3] plus paralyzation) or claw +1 melee (1d3 [2]); AC 12; HD 4d6; hp 12 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, paralyzation, infravision 100'; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.



### Areas 2-3 – He Who Draws the Axe from the Coal:

**Section 2-3a:** *This roughly-hewn tunnel spirals downward. Shadows of large dogs with lolling tongues run along the walls, descending deeper into the darkness. Strangely, the shadows' eyes glow green.*

These are spectral manifestations of “black dogs,” harbingers of supernatural doom. Although Shudder Mountain black dogs typically cry a Luck-draining howl for those they visit, these shadows are merely projections from black dogs elsewhere, and do not howl. Should PCs continue to descend the spiraling loop, read the following when they reach section 2-3b.

**Section 2-3b:** *Shadows of people gather on the walls, and violently gesture for you to turn around and go back up the spiral. Suddenly, the silhouetted crowd is overrun and devoured by green-eyed shadow hounds.*

The forces of benevolence have done their best to warn the party. Should the PCs continue down the wooden plank stairway into section 2-3c, read the following.

**Section 2-3c:** *The makeshift planked stairway descends into a natural rock cavern. The far wall to the right from the entrance has a bizarrely-shaped coal seam layered within its strata. The black rock has the outline of a large, four-armed, 15'-tall giant. Even more strange, however, is the massive silver axe that is driven into the area resembling the creature's thigh. A pack of shadow dogs runs along the walls to gather at the portion that looks like feet. Then the shadows dissipate into the rock.*

Characters who take the time to explore the chamber, readily note the vertical shaft in the rear of the chamber (section 2-3d) rising to the next level of the mine. The ancient wooden ladder has long since succumbed to wear and rot, leave but a few skeletal rungs dangling in darkness, some 20' above the cavern floor.

In order to reach the shaft, thieves must succeed on a challenging DC 20 Climb Sheer Surfaces check. Once a character reaches the chimney, it is relatively easy work to stem to the top of the shaft (DC 5 Climb Sheer Surfaces or Agility checks), then lower ropes. (However, note the crocmen at the peak of the shaft, eager to take advantage of any lone climbers.)

Bereft of a thief's skill, characters must resort to magic or creativity. (Building a ladder makeshift ladder with the planks from the stairway is the most obvious solution.)

Once a means of exit is established, escaping the chamber is readily and safely accomplished. **However, parties that elect instead to ignore the warnings and investigate the strange, giant-like coal outcropping have a far different encounter:**

The silver axe is a two-handed lumberjack's axe. Warriors and dwarves are trained in its use (as well as any PCs with a wood-cutter or similar occupation). The axe does 2d6 damage, though those with Strength scores lower than 13 suffer a -1d penalty to attack.

He who draws the axe from the coal...releases the coal demon Sakrat Sart! The axe had been blessed with binding magics long ago to imprison the demon on this plane, but the enchantment has faded. The act of removing the axe frees the demon. Sakrat Sart steps forth from the rock, glows with internal infernal flames, and attacks. Sakrat is almost impossible to defeat, but the party was warned...and they did remove the axe...

**Sakrat Sart (Type II Coal Demon):** Init +10; Atk bash +10 melee (1d8+10 [14] plus draw-and-quarter) or coal stream +8 missile fire (2d6 [6], range 100') or abyss lung (special); AC 19; HD 8d20; hp 85; MV 40'; Act 4d20, or 2d20 + abyss lung; SP varied actions (on Sakrat's turn, roll 1d3: on a 3 it uses abyss lung plus two other attacks for the round), abyss lung (cloud radius 30' placed up to 80' away, damage equal to Sakrat's current hp, DC 20 Fort save to avoid), draw-and-quarter (if all four bash attacks hit the same target in the same round, Sakrat tries to pull off the target's arms and legs: DC 24 Fort save or instant death; Sakrat devours limbs so recovering the body is impossible), crit range 19-20, immune to natural attacks from creatures 3 HD or less, elemental resistance (half damage from fire, acid, cold, electricity, gas), infravision (1 mile); SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +10; AL C.

Sakrat will not pursue PCs out of the chamber, though it still attacks them with coal stream or abyss lung. If targets flee out of range, the newly-freed Sakrat teleports to its home plane.

If somehow slain, the demon's corpse is transformed into a 15'-high mound of seething coal.

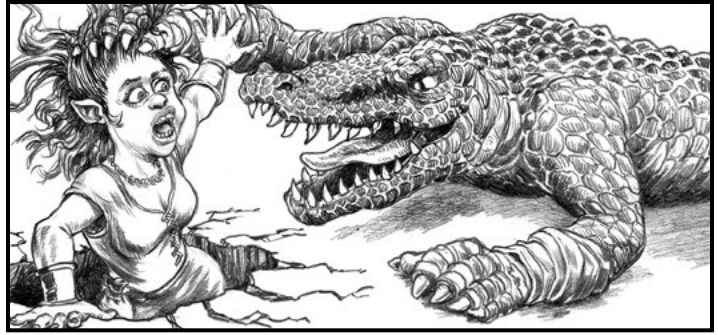


## THAT IS WHY THEY CALL IT A PLAYTEST

One of the most memorable moments of this year's tournament came not during Gen Con, but in one of my early playtests leading up to it. The first time I ran a group through Round 2 I had no idea how deadly the adventure would be compared to the 2017 tournament. Nor, as it turns out, did my players; experienced DCCers and tournament veterans all, they brimmed with overconfidence heading into the session.

Trouble started nearly right away. Escaping from the burning coal seam and reaching area 2-1, the players debated whether to inspect the bird cage area or ignore it, with the party ultimately deciding the risk was worth the potential reward. There was talk about "a canary in a coal mine," but even so, one of the clerics went ahead and moved to inspect the wizard's body, resulting in her falling unconscious due to the invisible gas in that part of the tunnel. Holding their breath and using a makeshift torch to help see in the tunnels, the elf and thief moved to pull her out of harm's way, which ignited the gas and sent the three PCs to 0 hit points. Now clear of gas, the party's remaining cleric managed to heal the downed characters before they bled out—but while that was going on, the cheeky halfling decided to grab the wizard's case, triggering the protective rune to explode and destroying it along with the halfling. All in all, a rather ignominious beginning!

It got worse, though. After licking their wounds and only coming away with a slightly-used candle and dead yellow bird, the party proceeded—more cautiously—down the spiraling tunnel to area 2-3. However, yet again the group could not resist the room's obvious temptation. While the rest of the party did a thorough search for other exits, the elf walked right up to the wall and drew the silver axe, freeing the coal demon. In the first round of the ensuing combat, Sakrat Sart promptly tore off the elf's arms and legs and ate them. The party was only rescued from a TPK by the quick-acting cleric who made a natural 20 on her *banish* spell check, sending the demon back to its plane of existence. After that, the sheepish players were much more circumspect as I allowed them all a mulligan in order to not have a playtest that ended after a mere 20 minutes!



This is decided entirely by player declaration:

- PCs exercising some degree of caution discover two crocodilians, roasting the body of a third over a crude coal fire.
- PCs failing to exercise any caution are assaulted as they climb out of the shaft. One of the crocodilians attempts to pin the PC (with a successful attack roll), while the other assaults the target. The crocodilian receives +4 to the contested roll on its attempt to pin.

The two crocodilians continue this tactic (using the shaft as a choke point) and know nothing of their former companions in area 2-11.

**Crocman (2):** Init +3; Atk tail slap +5 melee (1d6+6 [10]) or great spear +5 melee or +3 missile fire (1d12+6 [13]); AC 16; HD 4d8+4; hp 21 each; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP crit range 19-20 plus bite for 1d12+4 [10] damage; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

**Area 2-4 – Trapped Corridor:** *Judge's note:* There is no initial read-aloud text for this area so that it isn't betrayed as an encounter. However, there are many clues that can be noted by astute explorers.

As the PCs approach the first bend in the corridor, the mine shaft shows distinct signs of weakness. Large beams that once supported the ceiling have collapsed, and litter the floor of the chamber. The stone walls and ceiling crumble in hand or at the slightest pressure (e.g., testing with a pole or spear). PCs proceeding down the corridor are forced to navigate the debris, though whether this gives the explorers pause is entirely dependent on the players.

Rounding the first corner, the debris grows worse. Read or paraphrase the following:

*Rubble litters the passageway in mounds nearly reaching your waist. Large rocks, thick beams, and rotting rope lay cast about.*

Again, any character testing the walls or ceiling discovers that the stone readily crumble. Any dwarf or miner can confirm the great danger of a cave-in, but the players should not be prompted to ask the questions.

If the PCs blithely press on, their fate is nearly sealed. Rounding the corner to section 2-4b, the characters discover a rusted iron door set into the end of the corridor. While the door is not trapped, it is a trap.

Thieves looking for traps must be precise when they describe what and how they are searching. An inspection of the door reveals nothing, no matter the roll. A search of the walls and ceiling around the door confirm that the stone is crumbly, much like the prior corridor. On a DC 20 Find Trap check, the thief has an intuition that opening the door could trigger a collapse.

**Area 2-3D – Vertical Shaft:** *Judge's note:* There is no initial read-aloud text for this area so that it isn't betrayed as an encounter. The shaft is 4' in diameter and 25' high. Characters can make out the flickering light of the burning coal seam above.

When the first PC reaches the peak of the shaft, pay close attention to player declarations. If the PC pauses, prior to climbing into the chamber, or if the player asks some form of, "What do I see above me?" pause and read the following: Flickering shadows betray crocodilian forms above.

However, if the players DO NOT declare any preparations—or simply declare that their PCs climb up into the chamber—they have a distinctly different encounter.

**Any effort to open the door causes the entire section of mine to collapse.** The risk posed to the PCs depends on their proximity to the door:

PC Location	Mine Collapse Result
Adjacent to 2-4c	4d20 [40] damage, DC 30 Ref save for half; PC is trapped beneath the rubble and begins to asphyxiate.
Between 2-4b and 2-4c	4d16 [32] damage, DC 25 Ref save for half; Luck check or PC is trapped beneath the rubble and begins to asphyxiate.
Between 2-4a and 2-4b	4d10 [20] damage, DC 20 Ref save to avoid. On a failed save, PC is trapped beneath the rubble and begins to asphyxiate.
Beyond 2-4a	Billowing cloud of dust and sand engulfs PC, momentarily blinding and choking the PC.

**Freeing Trapped PCs:** Without the aid of magic, it takes 1 hour to work through each section. So reaching a character trapped between 2-4a and 2-4b takes an hour, whereas it is three hours before the PCs can reach any unfortunate soul trapped adjacent to the door.

**Area 2-5 – A Sizeable Hanging:** This cavern reeks sweetly of death’s decay. An old crone’s mutilated corpse is splattered on the ground, with silver shears, needles, and thick gut thread strewn about.

*The back wall is flat, and a 20’ x 20’, yard-thick stone stands flush against it. The slab has iron guide rails on both sides, as if it could be lifted along the wall. Three chains run from the slab’s top up to a crossbar in the ceiling, and then dangle over, about 20’ above the floor; the hanging ends have metal collars with spikes facing inwards.*

*Against the left wall, a rickety table holds two glass jugs with stoppers; one is small and the other is medium-sized. An even larger jug is hugged by an ogre-sized skeleton, which sits on the ground near the table. All three jugs contain a luminescent, swirling white smoke, which occasionally forms a face as it dashes about. Opposite the table are three coffins, small, medium, and large. The latter two are roped shut, and vibrate as something pounds from within.*

This room’s objective is to pass through the stone slab’s secret door. The slab is too heavy to lift (about 100 tons, or 175 lbs/cubic foot) unless the party has some clever magic at their disposal (reversed enlarge, shatter, transmute earth, etc.). If someone wonders how in tarnation this slab could be lifted at all, and climbs up the slab to inspect how the chains are attached, they might discover that the chains actually do not raise the slab, but manipulate a secret door (see below). The ceiling and crossbar are 40’ from the ground.

The witch’s body has small containers with frog legs, bat wings, earth worms, etc., and a leather thong with a rabbit’s foot attached; this is worth 3 Luck points to the first person to touch it.

The small coffin (which is the only one not tied shut) has the preserved skin of a short bearded man; it’s been cut from belly button to neck so that it forms a “onesie” of human hide. The neck has gashes that seem to be caused by one of the spiked collars hanging above. The party can examine the skin with no ill effects.

If the rope is cut on either coffin, an un-dead skin horror bursts forth! The medium coffin has a normal-sized bearded man, but

## A REAVER LEAVES NO LOOT BEHIND

When commissioning encounters for the adventure, we solicited a number of dead ends: encounters that led nowhere and would end in certain doom if PCs were brazen enough to ignore the obvious signs of danger.

Area 2-3 was such an encounter. Areas 2-3a & 2-3b were the warning flags, leading up to deadly and unforgiving area 2-3c.

Due to vagaries of dungeon design, some of these dead ends needed to be converted to pass-through encounters. But in practice, the result was the same: cautious parties, perceiving the danger, could easily bypass the encounter avoiding loss of life or Luck.

In theory, these encounters would still serve their original goal. Player skill (recognizing an obvious threat and leaving it alone) would serve the PCs well!

... or so we thought.

Instead, like thieves to a statue’s gemstone eyes, so too were PCs drawn to the Sakrat Sart’s silver axe. Not one, but multiple teams threw caution to the wind in their lust to possess the weapon.

One of the most heart-stopping moments came during The Goat Men’s session. Cleverly, the party had tied a rope to the axe and then retreated up through the vertical shaft to area 2-3d. Before dislodging the axe, the party’s wizard cast *force manipulation*, with the intent of using the floating disk to wall off the base of the chimney.

Not knowing of Sakrat’s gaseous abyssal lung attack – poised to inflict the demon’s current hp in damage (85!) – the party explicitly left a gap between the disk and the chimney so that they could retrieve the axe.

The Goat Men pulled the axe free to an explosion of brimstone and hellfire. The demon erupted from its hateful prison and prepared to expel a gout of black death. The PCs, suitably terrified, scrambled to seal the chimney.

The judge called for an initiative roll.

The Goat Men won.

They sealed the chimney, arresting the demon’s breath and averting a certain TPK. The Goat Men hustled away down the corridor, never to dream of the accursed silver axe again.

his arms and legs hang off at the ends, as if wearing a skin-onesie that is a size too large. He has similar wounds around his neck, has stitching from belly-button to neck, and seems like his skeleton would fit the small coffin. Similarly, if the large coffin is opened by cutting the rope, than a large skin horror breaks free. This looks like the other two bearded men (but perhaps with a bit of ogre in the blood), and has the same neck wounds, stitching from belly to neck, and looks like his skin-onesie would fit the large skeleton (by the table), and that his skeleton would fit the medium coffin (and the skin within). When the



party opens one of the coffins, the large skeleton puts his jug down and moves to open the other coffin; this takes him one round if unimpeded.

**Un-dead traits:** The skin horrors, skeletons, and ghosts (see below) are un-dead, and thus can be turned by clerics. They do not eat, drink, or breathe, and are immune to critical hits, disease, and poison. As un-dead, they are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *paralysis* spells, as well as other mental effects and cold damage.

**Skin Horror (Medium Skeleton):** Init +5; Atk skinslap +5 melee (1d4+2 [5] / 2d4+2 [7] / 3d4+2 [9] frenzy); AC 16; HD 6d10; hp 33; MV 40'; Act 3d20 on single target; SP frenzy (number of damage dice increases with each successful attack in a round), damage reduction (-3/die, minimum 1 hp/die; fire-based attacks exempt), vulnerability (if inner skeleton is removed through severed stitches, then horror loses remaining hp), death throes (whoever removes skeleton must make a Luck check; the skeleton animates if the PC fails), un-dead traits; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +3; AL C.

**Skin Horror (Small Skeleton):** Init +5; Atk skinslap +4 melee (1d4+1 [4] / 2d4+1 [6] / 3d4+1 [7] frenzy); AC 16; HD 5d10; hp 28; MV 30'; Act 3d20 on single target; SP frenzy (number of damage dice increases with each successful attack in a round), damage reduction (-2/die, minimum 1 hp/die; fire-based attacks

exempt), vulnerability (if inner skeleton is removed through severed stitches, then horror loses remaining hp), death throes (whoever removes skeleton must make a Luck check; the skeleton animates if the PC fails), un-dead traits; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; AL C.

**Large Skeleton:** Init +3; Atk slam +5 melee (1d6+4 [8] plus stunning cold); AC 11; HD 7d10; hp 38; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP stunning cold (DC 10 Fort save or stunned and helpless for 1 round), un-dead traits, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

**Medium Skeleton (on failed Luck check):** Init +3; Atk slam +4 melee (1d6+3 [7] plus stunning cold); AC 11; HD 4d10; hp 22; MV 30'; Act 1d20, prioritizes PC who pulled skeleton from skin horror; SP stunning cold (DC 10 Fort save or stunned and helpless for 1 round), un-dead traits, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AL C.

**Small Skeleton (on failed Luck check):** Init +3; Atk slam +3 melee (1d6+2 [6] plus stunning cold); AC 11; HD 2d10; hp 11; MV 20'; Act 1d20, prioritizes PC who pulled skeleton from skin horror; SP stunning cold (DC 10 Fort save or stunned and helpless for 1 round), un-dead traits, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AL C.



The party must defeat the large skeleton and the two skin horrors. The idea is to get each of the skeletons in its properly-sized skin-onesie. The party can do this the hard way or the easier way. The hard way is treat this as any other combat (with brute force), though a high-powered turn unholy could help. The easier way is by grappling the skin horrors, which use their HD as the bonus to grappling's opposed roll, though human-sized PCs gain +4 to grapple the smaller skin horror. If multiple PCs wish to coordinate attacks and simultaneously grapple the same horror, then each participant makes an opposed roll; keep the largest unmodified result and add the sum total of all participants' Strength or Agility modifiers (whichever is greater). If a skin horror is pinned, a non-grappling PC can remove its skeleton by cutting open the stitching (using the silver scissors, a bladed weapon, etc.). Note that this does not count as a melee attack in the sense of possibly harming the grappling PCs. Another option is via two mighty deeds. A successful mighty deed can sever the stitches during combat, and then a subsequent successful mighty deed can remove the skeleton.

Once the skeleton is removed, the skin flops "lifelessly" to the ground. However, whoever removes the skeleton must make a Luck check. If he fails, then the freed skeleton animates and attacks the PC the following round. If the properly-sized onesie is put on the properly-sized skeleton, then that body gives the party no more trouble. Note that an animated skeleton (including the initial large one) must be reduced to 0 hp before it will "wear" its proper skin.

When a body is complete, the corresponding glass jar on the table vibrates, and the white smoke inside forms fingers that beckon the party over. If the jug is opened once a body is complete, then that body's spirit races out of the jug, and lifts its body to hang by the collar of the dangling chain. If a PC tries to open a jug before the body is completed, a face forms in the jar that shakes its head violently "no" to discourage the action. If the PC ignores the warning, then they must defeat the ghost that they've just freed.

**Ghost (up to 3):** Init +2; Atk paralyzing touch +6 melee (1d3 [2] plus paralysis); AC 12; HD 3d12; hp 19; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP paralysis (DC 14 Fort save or paralyzed for 2d3 rounds), absorb life (a successful paralyzing touch against an already paralyzed victim inflicts 2d4 damage, and heals the ghost for the same amount), vulnerability (immediately defeated if corresponding body is properly assembled), un-dead traits, immune to non-magical weapons; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

A defeated ghost flies to its proper skin, and waits for the corresponding skeleton to be inserted. Once the bodies are reassembled, and the spirits freed or defeated, then the hanging bodies' "spectral weight" pulls the chains in such a way to reveal a secret door in the slab. If the party hangs the bodies themselves, without freeing the ghosts, the weight is insufficient to reveal the door.

The door may be discovered by other means. Finding the door while searching at ground level requires a DC 20 Intelligence check, although this does not enable one to open it. However, a *knock* spell with a spell check of 30+ will open the door, whether or not it's been found. Alternatively, a PC who climbs to the top of the slab (DC 15 due to its smoothness) and inspects the chains may note the door-revealing mechanism (DC 25 Find Trap or Intelligence check). If the bodies are hanging without the ghosts, allow a +2d bonus for the check (d30 instead of d20). Once found, the mechanism may be manipulated to open the

door. The ghosts who are violently vibrating within their bottles will be most displeased with this solution, however.

**Area 2-6 – The High Spoils:** *The cavern extends up a steep, rough slope. Streams of water cascade down the slope, collecting in strange pools. An air of foreboding enchantment hangs over this place and the strange shimmering rainbows that hang in the wet air.*

The streams of cascading water are corrupted spoils, much like Pool C found in area 2-2, yet with one key difference: the cascading streams and plunging pools scatter a spray of the spoils in the air, affecting any that enter the chamber. Entering the wet chamber immediately causes a PC to recover 1d10 [5] hp and gain 1 point of Luck. (This effect takes place but once per character.)

The spoils are being harvested by a small warband of deavals: small humanoids, no more than 2' in height with large round bellies, short arms and legs, and nearly no neck. While small, the deavals are incredibly strong, and fight with tiny bows and wickedly sharp arrows. If the deavals are engaged in melee combat, they resort to biting their foes with their rows of sharp, canine-like teeth.

The deavals are collecting water from the streams that feed the spoils. The little people are incredibly stealthy, and unless the PCs are actively detecting invisible creatures, are invisible themselves, or have actively taken precautions against similar threats, there is no chance for the party to notice the deavals before they attack. The fierce deavals fire their arrows at the PCs, focusing their attacks on the single largest visible foe.

The deavals fight to the death. Worse, due to the spray of the cascading spoil, any creature slain in the chamber animates the following round and lunges to the attack. Regardless of whether the source creature is a PC or a deaval, for the purposes of the tournament, a ghoul always has the stats listed below.

Characters bitten by a ghoul must make a DC 14 Will save or be paralyzed, unable to move or take any physical action. A character can attempt the Will save once per round. Elves are not affected by this paralyzation.

The silvery creatures are un-dead, and thus can be turned by clerics. They are immune to critical hits, disease, and poison. As un-dead, they are immune to sleep, charm, and paralysis spells, as well as other mental effects and cold damage.

If the PCs withdraw from the chamber, the deavals give chase. Once free from the spray of the spoils, the slain creatures do not animate into silver ghouls.

**Deaval (8):** Init +1; Atk tiny bow +2 missile fire (1d4+2 [4]) or bite +1 melee (1d6+2 [5]); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp 9 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 100', stealth; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

**Silver Ghoul (one per slain creature):** Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 [3] plus paralyzation) or claw +1 melee (1d3 [2]); AC 12; HD 4d6; hp 12 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, paralyzation, infravision 100'; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.

**Area 2-7 – Dying for Plate:** *This passageway ends in an excavated chamber that has caved in, forming a steep ramp of rubble roughly 30' tall. Tremors shake the area as jets of black smoke hiss through openings of the fallen stone. 10' up the rubble's ramp, a human-sized foot protrudes and dangles limply. Only a third of its shin*

is visible, though it's obvious that the leg is protected by mithril plate armor in excellent condition.

It is obvious to PCs that the chamber is unstable. A dwarf knows that another cave-in is probably imminent, but is not sure whether there is enough time to fish out the body and its armor. The corpse is firmly pinned, and rubble must be cleared to get it out. However, there is a chance that more rubble will just roll down to undo the party's progress. Moreover, the ceiling begins to rain rocks.

Is the armor worth it? Any elves in the party would argue, "Most certainly."

Removing the body involves the following:

- It takes 120 points of cumulative Strength checks to remove the body; as many PCs may participate per round as are willing. Keep a running total of the Strength checks.
- In a given round, anyone who achieves a Strength check of 15 or more must make a Luck check (d20 roll less than or equal to Luck score) because they've moved a key boulder that is holding back a rock slide. If they fail, boulders tumble down from further up the ramp, damaging all PCs participating in excavation for 2d4 [4] damage (DC 15 Reflex save for half). Furthermore, the body is partially reburied, so 4d10 [20] points must be subtracted from the Strength checks' running total, though cannot reduce it below zero. So, if the party has a running total of 111 and then causes a rockslide resulting in a 4d10 roll of 20, then their running total becomes 91 (111-20). Only tally the total after the Luck checks have been resolved; achieving over 120 with outstanding Luck checks does not count!
- Once excavation begins, rocks from the ceiling begin to fall. On round 1, everyone in the room takes 1d3 [2] damage from falling debris (no save). On round 2, everyone takes 1d4 [3] damage. Continue moving up the dice chain (d5 [3], d6 [3], d7 [4], d8 [4], d10 [5], d12, d14 [7], d16 [8], d20 [10], d24 [12], d30 [15]) in subsequent rounds. After the d30 roll, the entire chamber collapses killing everyone within.

Note that clever use of magic can make this process go more quickly and more safely, though the odds will still most likely be stacked against the party. Should the PCs succeed in recovering the body, they find a human-sized (sorry, elves) suit of enchanted mithril full plate armor: +8 AC, -5' MV, check penalty -5, fumble die d12. Its enchantment has two additional effects (besides decreasing movement, check, and fumble penalties): the plate does not show dents, scratches, etc., and the wearer suffers a +2d penalty (e.g., d20 becomes a d30) when making Luck checks.

**Area 2-8 – Music of the Spoils:** As the PCs come within 100' of this chamber they can hear strange music, coming and going as the party travels through the tunnels. The music is expertly played; rhythmic cords and melodic harmonies dance in the air, getting louder as the PCs approach the music's source. As soon as the PCs open the door to this room, the music ceases. Read the following:

*Beyond the doorway is a large six-sided chamber with no apparent exit. Mounted on each wall is a different stringed musical instrument: a fiddle and bow, a guitar, a mandolin, a lute, a banjo made from a dried gourd, and an ancient zither. The silence of a just-played note hangs in the air.*



The six rustic instruments displayed on the walls of the room are worn, almost antiques, but made with a level of craftsmanship that is apparent even to the untrained eye. To PCs with musical or artisanal backgrounds they are singular works, but not of any known master they have come across. If the players ask, the number of strings on each instrument varies from as few as four to as many as a dozen with no discernable pattern.

Closer inspection reveals that there is an inscription written in an ancient version of the demonic tongue on each. PCs who understand Demonic and make a DC 15 Intelligence check—or thieves succeeding on a DC 15 Read Languages check—can translate the ancient glyphs as follows:

Instrument	Location on Map	Phrase
Fiddle	A	The Charming partner Strengthens the dance
Guitar	B	The Sleeping partner Speeds the cadence
Mandolin	C	The Still partner Frees the melody
Lute	D	The Weak partner Rejects the advance
Banjo	E	The Slow partner Wakes the rest
Zither	F	The Indurate partner Enlivens the step

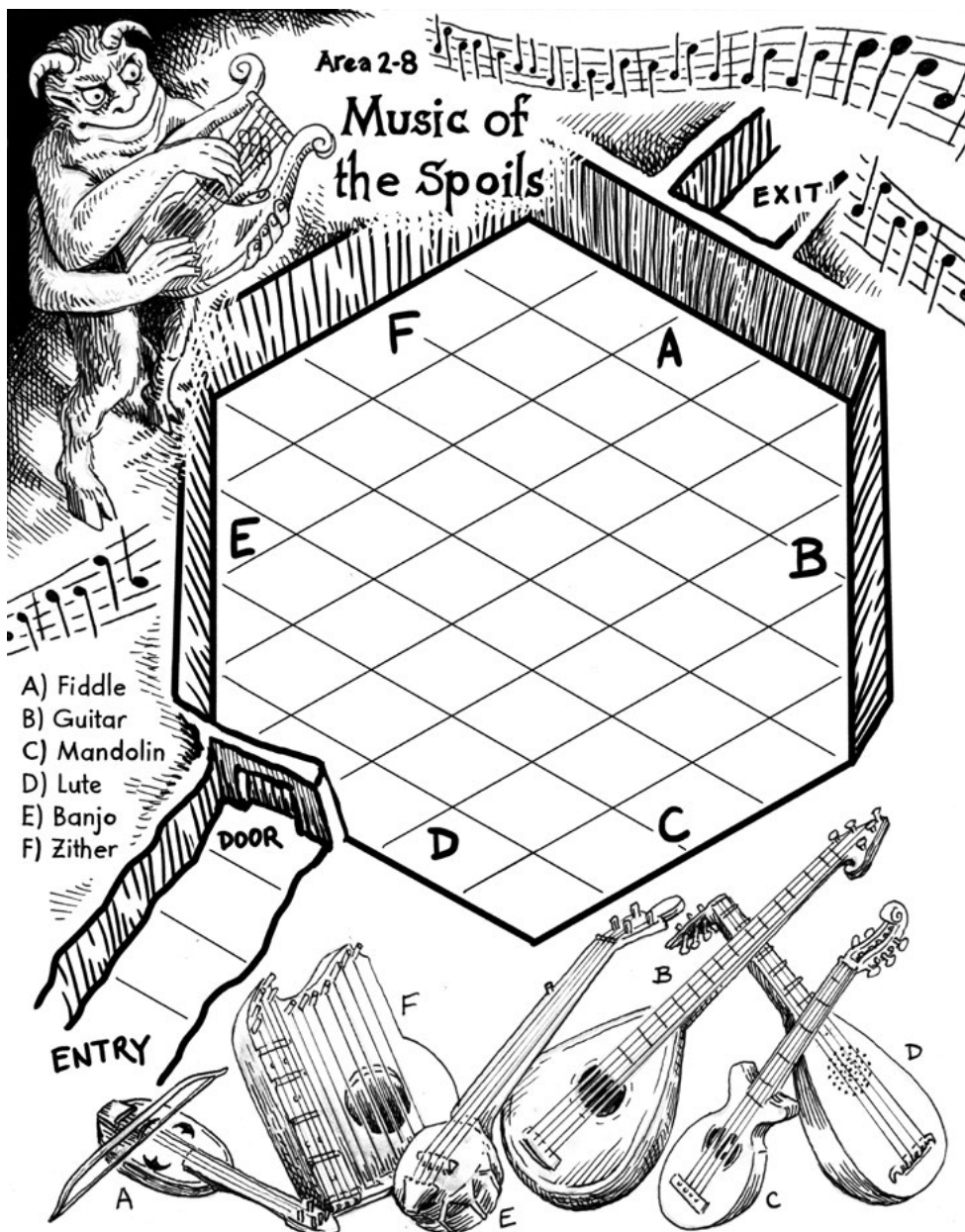
PCs entering the room can explore the chamber and even pick up and handle the instruments. As soon as a PC plucks a string, however, read the following:

*As soon as you play the instrument, a horned, cloven-footed creature with a large, toad-like mouth appears in center of the room. The creature carries a lyre-shaped instrument that its four arms play with astonishing skill, plucking the golden strings and filling the chamber with the strange rhythmic music.*

Each round, the horned demon attacks the PCs, using its magical lyre to lull its victims into a state where they can later be more easily eaten and digested. The demon can be directly attacked, but is normally immune to non-magical attacks (see below), and only when the PCs are playing an instrument can the creature be seen; otherwise attacks made against it have a 50% chance of missing due to its natural invisibility. Playing an instrument takes all of a PC's actions for a round, and a PC cannot both play an instrument and attack the demon.

**Mellifluous demon:** Init +4; Atk claw +8 melee (1d8+2 [6]) or bite +10 melee (1d10 [5]); AC 18; HD 6d12; hp 60; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP invisible unless music is played, musical spellcasting (+6 spell check), consume will, immune to non-magical attacks unless defeated in a musical duel, half-damage from spells, crit range 19-20; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +12; AL C.

d6	Melody Spell	Effect on Failed Save	Harmonic Instrument	Counterpoint Instrument
1	<i>charm person</i>	If the target is carrying an instrument, it plays accompaniment to the demon's music, adding +1d to the demon's next spell check. Otherwise the target attacks the nearest ally with its next action.	Fiddle	Lute
2	<i>sleep</i>	The target falls into a deep sleep and can only be awakened by vigorous shaking (requiring a full action by another PC).	Guitar	Banjo
3	<i>paralysis</i>	The target is unable to move or take any physical action for 1d3 [1] rounds. Attacks against immobilized targets receive a +1d bonus.	Mandolin	Zither
4	<i>ray of enfeeblement</i>	The target loses 1d8+1 [5] points of temporary Strength.	Lute	Fiddle
5	<i>slow</i>	The target's movement rate is halved, and it can take its normal actions only once every other round (with the first "skip" being its next activation). It automatically drops to the bottom of the initiative count. This effect lasts for 1d6+1 [4] rounds.	Banjo	Guitar
6	<i>turn to stone</i>	The target's body turns partially mineral, making it heavy and causing it to sprout rock-like protrusions from the flesh. The target suffers a -4 penalty to all attack rolls, Reflex saving throws, and initiative, as well as all skill checks involving mobility. This effect lasts for 1d6+1 [4] rounds.	Zither	Mandolin



The mellifluous demon can be temporarily turned by lawful clerics, causing it to lose all actions for the next round. For purposes of *ray of enfeeblement* and similar spells, it has a Strength score of 18. The demon is normally immune to non-magical attacks and only takes half damage from spells, but can be made vulnerable to physical attacks if defeated in a musical duel (see below).

Once per round, the demon plucks one of the lyre's six golden strings to play a spell-like melody, targeting one of the PCs with a +6 spell check. Roll 1d6 on the table above to determine which string is activated, with the targeted PC making a Will save vs. the spell check DC to resist.

Furthermore, all targets that can hear within 30' of the demon must make a DC 10 Will save or become enthralled, leaching 1d3+1 [2] temporary Personality to the demon as it consumes their will. Targets that take appropriate precautions to block the sound (e.g., stuffing wax in their ears) receive a +2 bonus to their save. When a PC reaches 0 Personality, his will is utterly consumed by the demon (see below). Personality lost in this way is recovered once the PCs leave the room or the demon is defeated.

**Counterspell refrain:** The instruments mounted in the room can be used to counteract the effects of the demon's music. Each instrument acts as a counterpoint instrument to a specific musical spell cast by the demon's lyre as listed in the table above. PCs holding an instrument are automatically aware of the



ability to duel the demon, but will not know which specific instrument counters the demon's music, though they may be able to deduce that information from the demonic text and based on the effect of each string on its target. Spellcasters making a 20+ spell check can recognize the specific melody spell that is being cast when the lyre is played, but only once its effect has taken place. Once recognized, the check does not need to be repeated for subsequent playing of the same string.

Only a PC holding an instrument can attempt a counterspell refrain. There is no limit to the number of PCs that choose to play an instrument; however, as noted above, only a single instrument counters a specific melody spell and playing an instrument takes all of the PC's actions for the round. Only the instruments in the room can counter the effects of the magical lyre—regular counterspells have no effect. To attempt a counterspell refrain, the PC makes a check and adds their Agility modifier to the roll. Spellcasters and those PCs with musical or artistic backgrounds roll a 1d20, whereas all others treat it as an untrained skill check and roll a 1d10. The demon's spell check is reduced by the result, reducing the DC of the Will save required to resist the effect of the melody spell. If the roll exceeds the demon's original spell check, the demon is outdueled, obviating the melody spell completely and making the demon temporarily vulnerable to physical attacks until the end of the next round. When the demon is defeated in a duel, it also nullifies the need for save against the demon's consume will ability.

As identified in the table, however, each instrument also acts as a harmonic instrument for a specific spell, making its effects harder to resist. When a PC plays a harmonic instrument in an attempt to counter the demon's melody, the PC makes a check as above, but the result is added to the demon's spell check and the subsequent Will save. Attempting to counter the demon's melody with either the non-counterpoint or non-harmonic instrument has no effect on the demon's spell check (players should only be informed about the lack of effect after the attempt).

*Example: Grodo the wizard picks up the fiddle and attempts to play a counterspell refrain as the demon plucks the fourth string. Because he is a wizard, Grodo rolls a 1d20 to play the instrument, adding his Agility modifier of +1 to the result. He gets a total of 11, reducing the demon's original spell check of 16 to 5, and requiring the target of the melody spell to now make a DC 5 Will save to resist the effects. Emboldened by his success, the next round, Grodo attempts to play a counterspell refrain when the demon plucks the first string. Since the instrument is now harmonic with the melody spell being played, this time the result of Grodo's check is added to the demon's spell check, increasing the potency of the demon's music.*

The demon's magic lyre itself can be targeted, requiring either a Mighty Deed of Arms, a spell that can be aimed with precision at a single target (*magic missile*, *scorching ray*, etc., but not area of effect spells like *lightning bolt*), or by a PC who spends 1 point of Luck to attempt a called shot. This Luck point provides no bonus to the attack roll—it simply allows them to try and hit the strings. The lyre is AC 12 and has 60 hit points. Each 10 points of damage dealt removes a particular musical spell from the demons repertoire, beginning with charm person and moving down the chart. Any attempts to play that melody automatically fail (treat as automatic success, as per counterspell refrain above).

The demon will not stop playing until it is defeated or utterly consumes the will of a single PC. Afterwards, it enters a diges-

tive torpor, turning to a stone-like form in which it cannot be harmed, and opening the hidden exit to the chamber. Any PC consumed in such a manner is forever lost.

**Area 2-9 – Shadders!** *Ahead is a dim, narrow tunnel that extends beyond your limited sight. Walls echo from the entrance, carrying strange mews and squeaks and pips from its dark depths.*

The tunnel is a dark, narrow passage that extends beyond the vision of the PCs. The unnerving sounds are caused by the passage of wind through small openings in the walls, like air being blown across a bottle by some unseen piper. PCs pausing to examine the passage before entering momentarily glimpse a shadowy figure standing sentinel, which vanishes when looked at directly. Each PC succeeding on the check sees only a single figure—furthermore, each PCs sees a *different* figure, though this should not be obvious unless they specifically say they are describing/comparing the creatures they see.

The creatures are shadders: former men cursed to be deformed and changed into abominable grotesques that can only be seen as dark outlines among the narrow cracks and crevices of the tunnel. When the PCs reach the tunnel, assign each one a number that corresponds to one of the shadders, using the table below. If there are more shadders than party members, any remaining shadders are unbounded (see below).

Each shadder is linked to a specific member of the party and will avoid attacking that particular PC. Any PC with magical vision, such as from casting *detect invisible* or *wizard sense*, sees a thin, silvery filament stretching between themselves and one of the shadow creatures on the wall. If exposed to a bright source of light (greater than that of a lantern), PCs may also make a DC 15 Intelligence check to see the semi-translucent strands.

Shadders are immune to attacks from anyone but the PC that they are linked to. PCs who discover the cords can see them vibrate and fray when they strike at the shadder they are linked to: otherwise, the PCs have to stumble onto this solution in the course of the combat. The cords themselves can be cut, severing the connection to the PC and allowing that shadder to be attacked by any party member. Each strand has AC 12 and 10 hit points. To attack a cord, the PC must specifically target it and either be able to see the filament (per above), or succeed on either a Mighty Deed of Arms with a result of 5+ or achieve a critical hit when making the attack roll. Strands can be cut by anyone, not just the PC they are connected to.

The shadders cannot be individually attacked from outside the tunnel, as they move between the flickering shadows too quickly to strike. The party can handle this encounter in two ways: by attempting to draw the shadders out, or navigating through the narrow tunnel.

As they abhor strong sources of light, the shadders can be lured to attack the PCs outside the tunnel by parties that extinguish all sources of light or cast *darkness* on their location. Also, while the shadders cannot be attacked individually, any attack that deals damage to an area will drive the shadders out of the tunnel in response.

PCs attempting the tunnel have a much different encounter. At most, two PCs can pass through the narrow confines side by side, and as they travel they are harassed by the shadders, which attack the PCs by leaping from the openings in the wall and skipping and flittering between the shadows cast from any

light source they carry, using their stealth and high initiative to gain the first strike. In combat, shadders will attack the rear-most PCs first, while the remaining fall on the front PCs in subsequent rounds when their backs are turned. Shadders are not limited in the number that can attack a single PC while within the tunnel due to the ability to walk between shadows (see below). Under these circumstances, targeting the specific shadder a PC is linked to will be difficult, and calling out a specific shadder to attack requires the PC make a Luck check for each attack.

d6	Shadder Appearance	Linked PC
1	Half-slug, half-man with bat-like wings and whip-like tail.	
2	Hulking headless biped.	
3	Bloated monstrous frog.	
4	Long ape-like arms and head the size of an orange set upon a thin and writhing neck.	
5	Worm-like form writhing on the ground.	
6	Dwarfed-legged ungulate with spikes along its spine.	

**Shadder (6):** Init +10 (surprise); Atk claw +5 melee (1d8 [4] plus special); AC 16 (AC 14 in bright light); HD 5d8; hp 25 each; MV 30' or SP; Act 1d20; SP surprise, un-dead traits, immune to damage from all but creature they are bound to, unclean touch, shadow walk; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will Immune; AL N.

Shadders are not true shadows, and are not affected by light, but in conditions of anything brighter than lantern light suffer a reduced AC as they are easier to see. Shadders are un-dead, and thus can be turned by lawful or neutral clerics. For purposes of ray of enfeeblement and similar spells, the shadders have a Strength score of 10. They do not eat, drink, or breathe, and are immune to critical hits, disease, and poison. As un-dead, they are immune to sleep, charm, and paralysis spells, as well as other mental effects and cold damage.

Shadders attack with a gossamer, mist-like touch that is nevertheless palpable and imparts a sense of unclean horror. With a successful attack, the target must make a DC 10 Will save or lose 1d4 [2] temporary Strength. If a PC reaches 0 Strength, the PC is forever lost to the shadows, cursed to spend the rest of eternity as a shadder themselves. When moving in darkness or shadows, shadders can flit between shadows and ignore attacks of opportunity from creatures. Exposure to strong sources of light as above prevents this ability to walk between shadows. While they are linked to a creature, only attacks from the creature they are bound to can harm the shadder. Unbound shadders or shadders whose links are severed can be attacked normally.



## REMEMBER THE HALFLING!

In Round 2, the Hammertoes were approaching the end of time for the round when they got to area 2-9. Spell-burned out and barely limping, they nevertheless decided to push into the dark tunnel ahead of them from where they could hear strange pips and mews emanating, knowing they had to keep going or risk being eliminated.

The party's halfling—by this point reduced to a bare 3 Luck—volunteered to enter first, relying only on his ability to sneak into the rough shadows to scout out any dangers. Despite his bravery, he immediately fell to the rapid strikes of the shadder creatures within the tunnel who were content to pick the party off one by one as they entered the lair.

The party was not inclined to take his death in vain, however, and the wizard, with a cry of, "For the halfling," completely burned down his remaining stats to get a massive spell check bonus on one final casting of *flaming hands*. The resulting inferno filled the tunnel with flames for both their dead friend and foes alike, and drove the shadders from their lair just before time was called, awarding the team enough points to advance to the final round, and ultimately win the tournament crown itself.

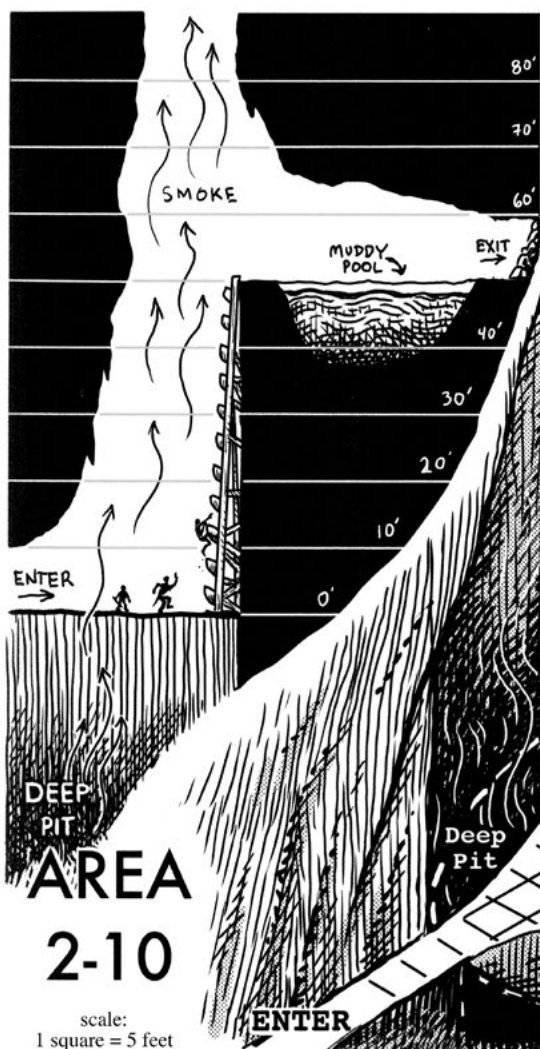
**Area 2-10 – A Gander at the Ganderbeast:** *This tunnel opens into a semi-circular shaft. To the left and right, smoke belches upward through chasms where the floor used to be, leaving an immeasurable fall to the coal seam's fire. Directly ahead, across a narrow portion of intact rock, a rotted wooden conveyor with ore buckets is affixed to a vertical rock face which seems to glisten with tiny beads of oil. The scarp ascends some fifty feet to a precipice, beyond which echoes the splashing of water and honking of geese.*

This encounter has two objectives: ascend the scarp and, once at the top, clear the rocks while dealing with the Ganderbeast.

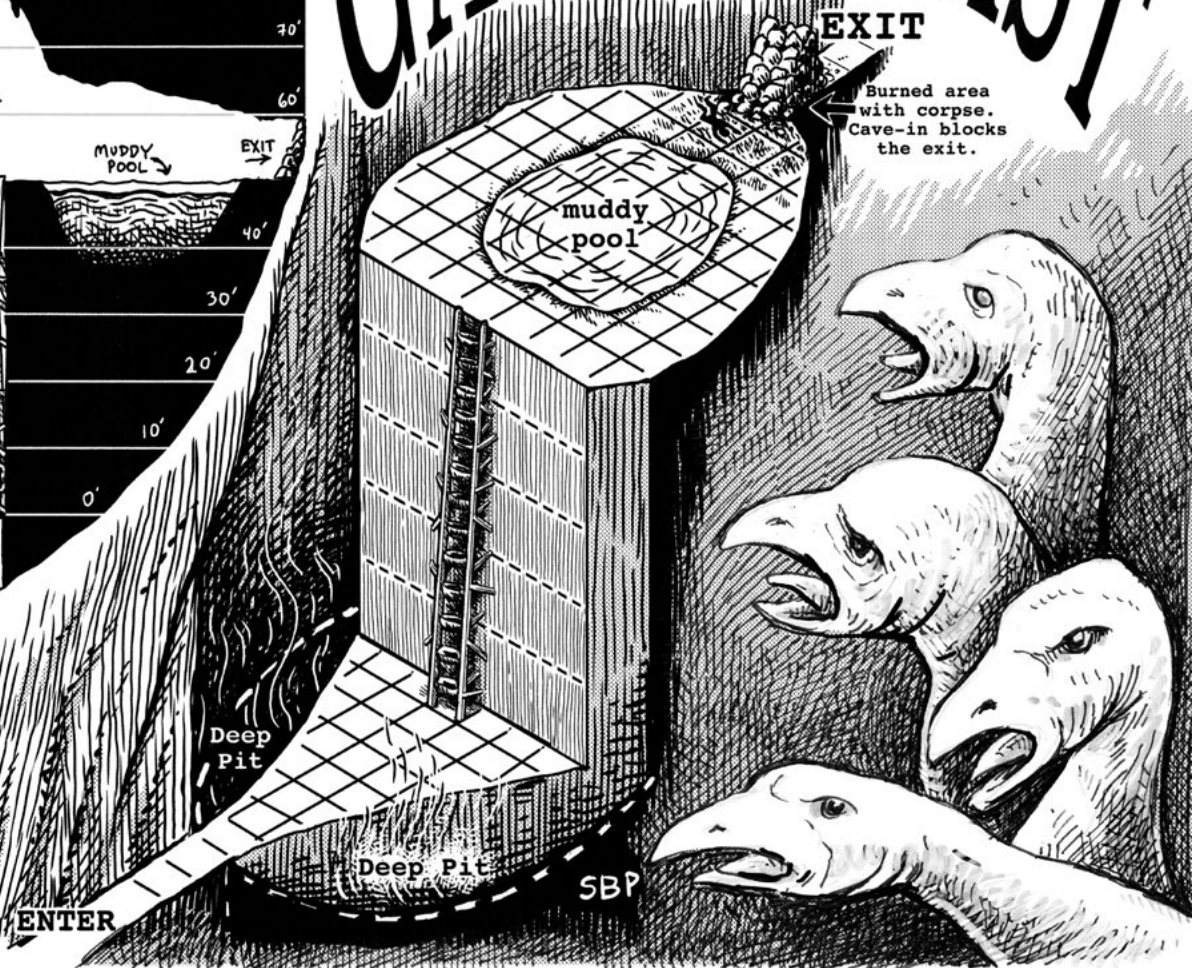
**Goal #1: Ascend the Scarp:** PCs can climb the rock face directly, but it's a tough climb (DC 15). It's also oily; the stone is oleaginous, and those climbing it saturate their armor/clothing with the (flammable) oil. A simpler solution is to climb up the rotted wooden conveyor (DC 7), but it has trouble bearing the weight. The first PC to climb rolls a Luck check with a d20, the second rolls a Luck check with a d24, the third with a d30, and any subsequent rolls are made with a d100. If one fails, they fall as the wooden framework breaks apart and becomes unusable. Note that a strategic use of the mending spell makes it a DC 5 with no Luck check required. Should a PC fall, roll 1d5 and multiply by 10' to determine the number of feet fallen. Falling damage is standard 1d6 [4] per 10', with every occurrence of a 6 resulting in a broken bone and a permanent loss of 1 point of Strength or Agility (player's choice). [In tournaments, where damage is standardized, call for a Luck check for each 10' fallen. On each failed check, the PC suffers a broken bone.]

An alternative is to climb the rock near the entrance, then work laterally across the shaft to the scarp's precipice. Climbers discover this rock is not oleaginous and easier to grip (DC 12), although those taking this route suffer a -1d penalty to the Climb

## A GANDER AT THE



# GANDERBEAST



check, due to the hot toxic smoke rising up the shaft. PCs falling while over the coal seam fire plummet to their deaths, with no recover the body check possible.

Read the following when the party reaches the top:

*Beyond the precipice, a chamber opens from the shaft and contains a stagnant, opaque, muddy pond. Six geese honk and glide in tight formation, though only their necks and heads are above the muck. Upon seeing the party, the ganders become quiet and drift to the pool's opposite side. A passageway has caved in across the chamber, though it seems like it could be cleared with a little effort. A deformed man's charred corpse lies in a scorched area of earth near the rubble; one hand grips a platinum jug, and the other a burned leather sack. A hatchet lies beside him.*

**Goal #2: Clear the Rocks While Dealing with the Ganderbeast:** The room can play a couple of ways, whether the PCs are more curious about the ganders or the corpse.

PCs may be (rightfully!) suspicious about the ganders. How did they get here? Why can't we see their bodies? The geese avoid PCs by the shore, and stay as far away as possible, either re-treating to the opposite shore or to the pool's center, depending on PC positions. The pool is steep and 20' deep, so PCs entering the pool must swim to reach to the "geese."

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Alternatively, the charred corpse may be more interesting than the ganders. The hatchet is a mithril hand axe (1d6 damage, range 10/20/30'). The platinum jug contains a mild acid which smells like rotten eggs and vinegar. Imbibing or touching the liquid causes 1 point of damage; the acid is critical for stopping the ganderbeast from regrowing heads (see below). The sack contains two severed heads of ganders, showing acid burns on the necks.

The ganderbeast attacks if any of the following events occur:

- PCs disturb the gander heads (throwing something, attacking...even kindly offering food!).
- PCs disturb the water more than 5' from shore (entering, using a 10' pole, etc.).
- PCs discover the two severed heads in the sack.

If any of these conditions are met, read the following.

*Those aren't geese! Rising from the muck is a beast with a grizzly bear's body and front claws, though its back feet are a webbed goose-bear hybrid. Instead of a bear's head, the monstrosity has eight stalks of gander necks and menacingly-hissing heads, though two of the eight have been severed. Its snakelike tail is capped by a large rattle, which shakes noisily.*



**Ganderbeast (Hillbilly Hydra):** Init +3; Atk bill bite +4 melee (1d3+2 [4] plus Luck drain) and 2 claws +6 melee (1d8+3 [8]); AC 16; HD 1d16 per head; hp 9 per head plus 9 hp for the tail; MV 20', swim 40'; Act 1d20 per head on a single target (or 1d4 firebreath) plus 2d20 claws; SP firebreath (roll 1d4 at start of round; on a 4, the ganderbeast sacrifices its bill bite attacks to breathe fire: 50' radius semicircle, 1d6 [4] damage per head, DC 14 Ref save for half), Luck drain (a PC hit by 3 or more bill bites in a round loses 1d3 [2] points of Luck, unrecoverable by thieves and halflings), stunning rattle (each round, all foes in melee range must make a DC 7 Will save or stand stunned and helpless for 1 round), unique crits (see table below), regeneration of heads at 2x rate unless acid or cold seals the wound, heal 1 hp/round per remaining head, uses d100 to save vs. paralysis and mind-affecting spells, immune to fire; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +9; AL C.

**Key Points for Ganderbeast's turn in combat**

- At the beginning of its turn, the Ganderbeast heals 1 hp per head (use the tracking table below).
- If a head has been severed, mark off rounds in which the wound is not burned with acid or cold. On the third round after severing, two heads and necks rapidly grow from the wound (with 9 hp each) and attack in the same round. The ganderbeast can grow an unlimited number of heads.
- Before attacking, roll 1d4 for the Ganderbeast. On a 4, it uses its firebreath where it can damage the most PCs. On a 1-3, it focuses all of its bite attacks on a single PC and tries to drain Luck.
- The Ganderbeast uses its claw attacks on any desired PCs in melee; these may be different from the target for the bite attacks.

**Key Points for a PC's turn in combat**

- Each round, a PC within melee range makes a DC Will save vs. stunning rattle.
- If a PC who is oily (from directly climbing the oleaginous scarp) is attacked with firebreath, he takes an ongoing 1d6 [3] fire damage each round until he extinguishes the fire (move action plus DC 14 Reflex save, or dive into pond).
- If a PC attacks a head, it is severed after taking 9 points of damage (use the tracking table below). Any excess or overflow damage is lost and does not wound the Ganderbeast. So, if one strikes a head for 11 damage, the Ganderbeast loses 9 hp and the head is severed. If a head has 2 hp left and is hit for 9 damage, then the Ganderbeast loses 2 hp and the head is severed.
- If a PC targets the body, then apply the damage to the head with the most hp, but treat the damage as if the head was attacked (overflow damage is lost, see previous bullet). PCs should note that the wound on the body magically transfers to the head.
- If a PC targets the tail, then treat the damage as you would a head. The tail is severed after 9 hp of damage, with overflow lost. However, the stunning rattle is negated (no more Will saves for melee PCs) and the tail does NOT regenerate.
- Area of effect attacks are able to target all the heads, and thus do not lose overflow damage.

**Ganderbeast Head Tracking Table**  
(regenerates 1 hp/round per remaining head; 2 rounds to regenerate two new heads from a severed neck unless acid or cold are applied)

Head	hp of Initial Head	hp of Regenerated Head's Double
1	9:	9:
2	9:	9:
3	9:	9:
4	9:	9:
5	9:	9:
6	9:	9:
Tail	9:	Does not regenerate

**Ganderbeast Critical Hit Table**  
(Roll 1d6 minus PC's Luck modifier)

Roll	Result
1 or less	Tugging bills rip off a chunk of flesh, inflicting +1d6 [4] damage.
2	Ganderbeast stomps on PC's foot, inflicting +1d8 [5] damage, and PC's movement rate is halved for the rest of the encounter.
3	Ganderbeast wraps the PC in a bear hug, inflicting +1d10 [6] damage. PC must pass a DC 14 Fortitude save or be winded, prone, and helpless for 1d3 [1] rounds.
4	Gander heads disarm the PC and throw his weapon 10' away (into pond if possible). Meanwhile, the beast rakes his weapon arm for +1d12 [7] damage.
5	A gander head plucks out the PC's eyeball, inflicting +1d8 [5] additional damage. PC suffers -1d penalty to all rolls requiring sight for rest of tournament level. May be healed with a 4 HD result of lay on hands.
6+	Ganderfrenzy! The beast pins the victim to the ground and repeatedly bill bites with a +1d bonus to attack until one misses. For every 3 consecutive hits, the PC loses 1d3 [2] points of Luck (unrecoverable by thieves and halflings).

This beast is tough to defeat. Ideally, the party will hold the beast at bay while one or two PCs rapidly clear away enough rubble to get out of the chamber (the beast is too large to follow). Each round, require Strength checks for PCs clearing the rocks, and keep a running sum of the results. With a sum of 20, enough rubble is cleared for 1 PC to exit per round. With a sum of 40, two may exit per round. With a sum of 60, all the rubble is cleared.

The worst way to handle the room is to fight the beast to the death; it is possible, but extremely resource-draining, and may result in a few dead PCs. A party might avoid combat by going straight

to the rubble and clearing it without doing any of the things to provoke the Ganderbeast (see above). In this case, for each round of clearing rubble, whoever has the largest Strength check must make a Luck check. If they fail, the Ganderbeast attacks.

If a PC dives to the bottom of the murky pool's center, they find a magic buckler shield. The shield adds 2 to AC, has no check penalty, and enables a d100 for saves against fire.

**Area 2-11 – Escape from the Shudder Mines:** *The narrow corridor widens into a long broad corridor that slopes down to a pair of tall stone columns. Blue lightning crackles as it arcs between the columns.*

*The vast chamber is lit by dancing beryl flames that limn the walls: the residual phlogiston that has haunted you and your companions through so much of this hellish venture. Set throughout the chamber are strange stone mounds resembling cairns. Intermittently, the cairn gouts strange plumes, which are immediately set alight the phlogiston, producing clouds of noxious fumes that hang about the floor of the cavern.*

*Nearby, at the head of the cavern, a band of monstrous crocmen huddle together, studying the cairns and their strange plumes.*

The crocmen are attempting to activate the portal at the far end of the chamber. Despite their crude efforts, the crocodilians are successful, causing a portal to spring to life between the two pillars. The very moment the PCs enter the chamber, they spy glimpses of a sunlit world flickering between the columns.

With the portal activated, the crocmen begin to cautiously move toward the portal (taking a total of 10 rounds, if uninterrupted). If all the crocmen escape, the portal closes behind them, leaving the PCs trapped in the Shudder Mines forever. It is up to the PCs to stall or distract the crocmen in order to escape through the portal before it closes.

**Judge's note:** The PCs must simply exit through the portal. They need not defeat the crocmen to carry the encounter. The brutish crocmen stop their withdrawal to attack any PCs so bold as to harass them.

In addition to the crocmen, the PCs must contest the fiery plumes and their foul miasmas. Any character (including crocmen!) within 10' of an erupting plume must make a DC 10 Fort save or suffer 1d10 [5] damage. [For the sanity of tournament judges, assume the crocmen always fail this save.]

However, any character failing the save also suffers -1d to all their actions and -5' to their movement. **This second penalty only affects breathing characters.** If the PCs have a means of avoiding breathing the gases, they suffer none of the penalties. The crocmen – able to hold their breath underwater for hours – suffer heat and fire damage, but none of the action die penalties.

The action die and movement penalties are removed if a character avoids being hit by a plume for a single round. However the penalties remain (and can be cumulative) if the PC is simply hit by another plume (even if the save is made).

There is a pattern to the plumes (labeled A, B, or C on the main map). They cycle over the course of 10 rounds. If more than 10 rounds are spent here, the pattern begins again from #1.

Round	Plume(s)
1	A
2	C
3	A, B
4	C
5	B
6	A, C
7	B
8	B, C
9	A
10	A, B

Escaping the Shudder Mines is as simple as stepping through the portal. As long as not all the crocmen have escaped the PCs can still pass. (Simply slaying a single crocman is enough to ensure that the portal stays open long enough for the PCs to escape.)

**Crocman (5):** Init +3; Atk tail slap +5 melee (1d6+6 [10]) or great spear +5 melee or +3 missile fire (1d12+6 [13]); AC 16; HD 4d8+4; hp 21 each; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP crit range 19-20 plus bite for 1d12+4 [10] damage; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.





# ROUND 3: ESCAPE FROM THE PURPLE PLANET

The round begins with the PCs emerging through a phlogiston portal, arriving at the head of a tomb set at the base of the Ancestor Peaks, on the weirdling Purple Planet.

**General Features:** The interior of the tomb is chill and dry. The corridors are worked stone, and incredibly uniform. Except where noted, there is no ambient light. The PCs stir the dust with every step; strange mineral motes hang in the air, scintillating with blue light as they catch and reflect the PCs' light sources.

As in Round 2, it is left to the cleverness and wisdom of the PCs (or more likely their players) to deduce where the adventure is located.

**Player Start:** *The beryl portal fades. You and your companions stand in a small chamber carved from solid rock. The floor is sandy and the air is bitter, cool and dry. There seems to be but a single exit from this fell place: a stone portal before you.*

**Area 3-1 – Death By Orm Swarm:** *Something has burrowed a 10'-diameter tunnel into the tomb's wall. The passage proceeds into darkness, though branching tunnels are dimly visible. Small fist-sized tunnels pock the tube's rocky sides, and an alien skeleton lies about 40' within.*

This is a feeding warren for recently-hatched ormlings. The 40' to the skeleton (section A) is level ground. PCs inspecting the small tunnels pocking the tubes may make a Luck check. If successful, they hear movement deep within. On a natural 1 (the best result), they see shiny white teeth slowly mashing, just out of reach.

**Section A:** The skeleton of a two-headed hexapod is unreasonably clean, as if the bones have been scoured with a mild acid. Clouds of dirt erupt from the tunnel walls near the entrance, as countless mawed, red chitinous worms, thick as a fist and three forearms long, emerge and swarm toward you.

The skeleton is so clean because it was engulfed by a primordial slime, which was subsequently devoured by the ormlings. These fill the tunnel behind the party, and begin hunting the PCs. The party has 1 round before the swarm reaches them. If a PC uses an action to look at the ceiling above the skeleton, they see that a slime trail on the ceiling leads away from section A toward the downward sloping passage (to section B). Once discovered, this trail can lead PCs to the exit, though Intelligence checks are required at subsequent junctions (see section descriptions below).

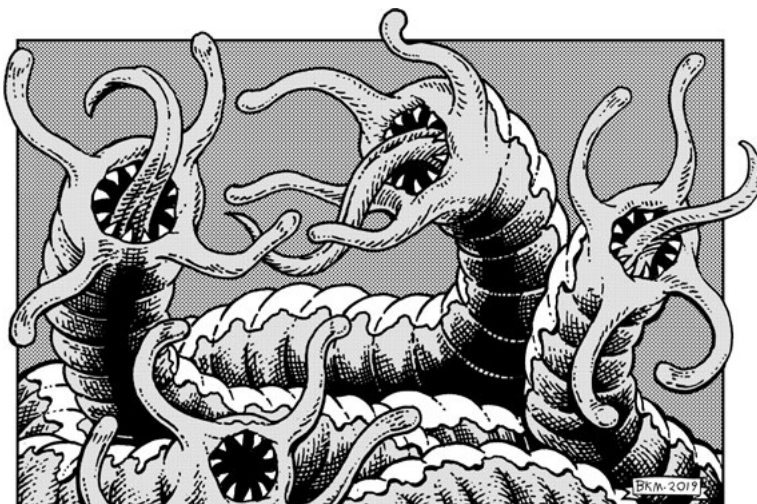
**Ormling Swarm:** Init +3; Atk maw (see table); AC 13; HD (see table); hp (see table); MV expands to next lettered section, including attack action; Act special; SP bites all targets within occupied region, half damage from non-area attacks, grows in power according to table below, special crit (inflict additional maw die of damage, including bonus modifier), no morale checks, infravision 30', sense vibrations 300'; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +2; AL C.

**Swarm Evolution Table**

Swarm's Rounds	Swarm Stats
1-2	Atk maw +2 melee (1d3 [2]); HD 4; hp 20
3-4	Atk maw +3 melee (1d4+1 [3]); HD 6; hp 30
5-6	Atk maw +4 melee (1d6+2 [5]); HD 8; hp 40
7-8	Atk maw +5 melee (1d8+3 [7]); HD 10; hp 50
9+	Atk maw +6 melee (1d10+4 [9]); HD 12; hp 60

**Swarm expansion:** Each round, the ormlings expand their area to one of the next lettered sections on the map. For example, from section A, they may expand to either section E or section B. If they choose B, then the following round they may expand to section C or H. The creatures may expand and attack in the same round. The swarm becomes more powerful as rounds pass, so use the swarm evolution table above. Note that the swarm is not a finite volume of creatures that moves through the tunnels; it is a limitless mass of ormlings that expands into the region via the fist-sized tunnels that are everywhere within the warren. Once the swarm has grown into a region it stays there, continuing to expand in whatever direction necessary to follow the PCs. If the PCs stand their ground, then the ormling brood expands 40' beyond them, attempting to surround their prey. It may be helpful to think of the ormlings as a fluid slowly seeping in through the walls and flooding the passages. The judge is encouraged to lightly shade his map with pencil as the swarm expands.

**Swarm withdrawal:** If the swarm is reduced to 0 hp, remaining ormlings withdraw into their small tunnels for half the number of rounds the swarm had grown, rounding up. For example, if the swarm had expanded for 5 rounds before being defeated, then it withdraws for 3 rounds. During the withdrawal period, the party may move freely. After the withdrawal period has elapsed, the swarm emerges 40' from the party's location, on the side that will drive the PCs toward the warren's center. However, it restarts at its weakest "round 1" level, rather than its level when defeated.





# ROUND 3: ESCAPE FROM THE PURPLE PLANET

Scale:  
1 square  
= 5 feet





**Moving through the swarm:** A PC who uses a standard action to fight, and a move action to move, is only attacked once per round by the swarm. A PC who uses both actions to move through the swarm is attacked twice per round. If a PC withdraws from the swarm to move into an unoccupied area, then the swarm gets a free parting blow, though the PC can use both actions for movement to get away. If a PC runs, then he may double his movement rate at the cost of -2 to his AC until his next turn.

**General Strategies:** The PCs may employ various strategies to gain an advantage. They will undoubtedly think of more clever solutions than these, but here are some guidelines, nonetheless.

- The swarm cannot traverse the ceiling or the upper halves of the walls, so any magical effect which enables flight or walking upside-down (e.g., *spider climb*) are helpful.
- A wall of force (e.g., *force manipulation*) can block a passage, but the swarm will enter from the tunnel's walls around and beyond it. However, restart the swarm at its weakest "round 1" level if it has to resort to circumventing an obstacle in this fashion.
- The swarm is hungry! It will be distracted for 1 round per 1 HD of live sacrifice (e.g., *animal summoning*, *monster summoning*, or another PC). For non-living food offerings, the swarm must fail a DC 11 Will save to be distracted for 1d3 rounds. If a cleric uses food of the gods, then the swarm must save vs. the spell check result. If the spell check is 20-

29, the swarm is distracted for 2d3 rounds, and 3d3 rounds for spell checks of 30+.

- A thief may try to climb along the walls to get above the swarm (DC 13 Climb Sheer Surfaces check), but the ormlings still come out of the walls, nibbling at him as they fall. He must pass a DC 12 Fortitude save each round of climbing. If he fails, he falls into the swarm below him.

Obviously, PCs can fight or run. The problem is that there are forks and branches within the warren, but there's only one exit (besides the entrance through which the party entered). If the PCs hit a branch with a dead end, then they have to backtrack and most likely fight their way through the swarm, which is getting larger and more powerful by the round. The encounter requires cool heads that don't give in to panic. The difference in speeds between armored and unarmored PCs could split the party if players freak out and do not stick together. On the other hand, splitting the party is an efficient way to find the exit quickly, but it leaves separated PCs to deal with the swarm. Of course, the party can choose to stick together and be gated by their slowest member (who may be the plate-laden dwarf with MV 10').

Below are the warren's sections, with brief summaries and changes in elevation to relate to the map. All slopes are moderately steep, with grades ranging from 10 to 30 degrees.

**Section A:** As detailed above, it takes 1 action to look above the skeleton and notice the slime trail on the ceiling. The passage slopes up to section E and down to section B.

**Section B:** It takes 1 action to try to find the slime trail on the ceiling (DC 12 Intelligence check); if successful, the trail extends toward sections A and H. The passage slopes up to section A, down to section H, and down to section C.

**Section C:** Shaft in the ceiling (10' up) extends 40' (steeply, though not vertically) to section F. DC 10 to climb; roll 1d4 and multiply by 10' to determine distance fallen, and roll 1d4 falling damage for every 10' (not 1d6 because sloping sides help slow descent). Passage slopes up to section B and down to section D.

**Section D:** Large downward vertical shaft that does not have ormling holes in the side. If a PC pulls a "Pippin Move" and throws something down the hole or begins to climb down it, then the mother orm emerges from the shaft in 1d4 + PC's Luck modifier rounds. The mother orm made these shafts and feels everything within. However, she prefers that the tasty morsels that are the PCs feed her ormling brood, thus she does not pursue the party past section C.

**Mother Orm:** Init -5; Atk 4 paddles +3 melee (1d4 [3]) and maw +3 melee (1d12+5 [11]); AC 15; HD 8d12; hp 48; MV 45'; Act 5d20; SP swallow whole (if 2 or more paddles hit same target, 1d5 [3] damage/round, freed by inflicting 15 damage with bladed weapon or successful mighty deed), infravision 60', sense vibrations 600'; SV Fort +3, Ref -4, Will +3; AL C.

**Section E:** Passage slopes down to section A and up to section F.

**Section F:** 10' hole in floor with shaft descending 40' to section C (see above for climbing/falling information). PCs can leap across (DC 10 Strength check) or sidle along the sides (DC 10 Agility check); armor check penalties apply for both cases! The passage descends to section E and proceeds on level ground to section G.

**Section G:** Dead end! A mostly-devoured corpse of a beast man lies here, with his hand still gripping the handle of a closed bronze box. Whatever is within the box is glowing, and smells like rotten eggs. If PCs open the box, glowing stink bugs fly away at MV 30'. PCs can follow the glow, but if they fall behind, they can still follow the smell. The bugs fly unerringly to the exit following the route G, F, C, B, H, I, K, M.

**Section H:** It takes 1 action to try to find the slime trail on the ceiling (DC 13 Intelligence check); if successful, the trail extends toward sections B and I. The passage slopes up to section B and proceeds on level ground to section I.

**Section I:** It takes 1 action to try to find the slime trail on the ceiling (DC 14 Intelligence check); if successful, the trail extends toward sections H and K. If a dwarf asks if she can smell gold, have her make a Luck check. If successful, she smells gold toward section K. The passage proceeds on level ground toward sections H and J, and slopes upward toward section K.

**Section J:** Dead end! A mostly-devoured corpse of a beast woman lies here, and a crystalline scroll case is nearby. The case contains a map showing her path from the exit, to M, to K, to I, to J (see Handout F).

**Section K:** It takes 1 action to try to find the slime trail on the ceiling (DC 15 Intelligence check); if successful, the trail extends toward sections I and M. If a dwarf asks if she can smell gold, she smells gold toward section M. The passage proceeds on level ground toward section L, downward towards section I, and upwards toward section M.

**Section L:** Dead end! A mostly-devoured corpse of a beast man lies here, with his hand still gripping half of a crystalline statue of a beast woman. A successfully cast locate object focuses on the statue's other half directs the caster toward the exit.

**Section M:** It takes 1 action to try to find the slime trail on the ceiling (DC 16 Intelligence check); if successful, the trail extends toward section I and the exit. If a dwarf asks if she can smell gold, she smells gold toward the exit. The passage slopes down to section K and upwards to the exit.

**Exit:** *You've survived! A large gold statue of a being with a crystal-like body radiates an aura of safety and comfort. But, even more comforting is the large, bronze, circular door that can close on the worm-cursed den beyond. Three crude flint weapons, dagger, axe, and short sword, sit at the statue's feet. Double doors lead out of the chamber.*

The PCs can easily shut the circular door to keep the swarm away. The three crude weapons may be taken, but they impose -1d to damage (1d3 for the dagger, 1d5 for the axe and short sword) and shatter on a critical hit. They were left in offering by the kith who died (sections G, J, and L). If a PC leaves a weapon for the statue, he is healed 1 HD worth of damage. If he takes the weapon away, he suffers twice that which he was healed. He may take another offered weapon without penalty, however.

**Area 3-2 – Fear is the Mind Killer:** When the players open the door to this room, have each player write down a specific physical object that comes to their character's mind. This is the "Stay Puff Marshmallow Man" test, so don't let them spend a lot of time on it, as the actual object is not important as is the association with a specific PC. After recording the objects, read the following:

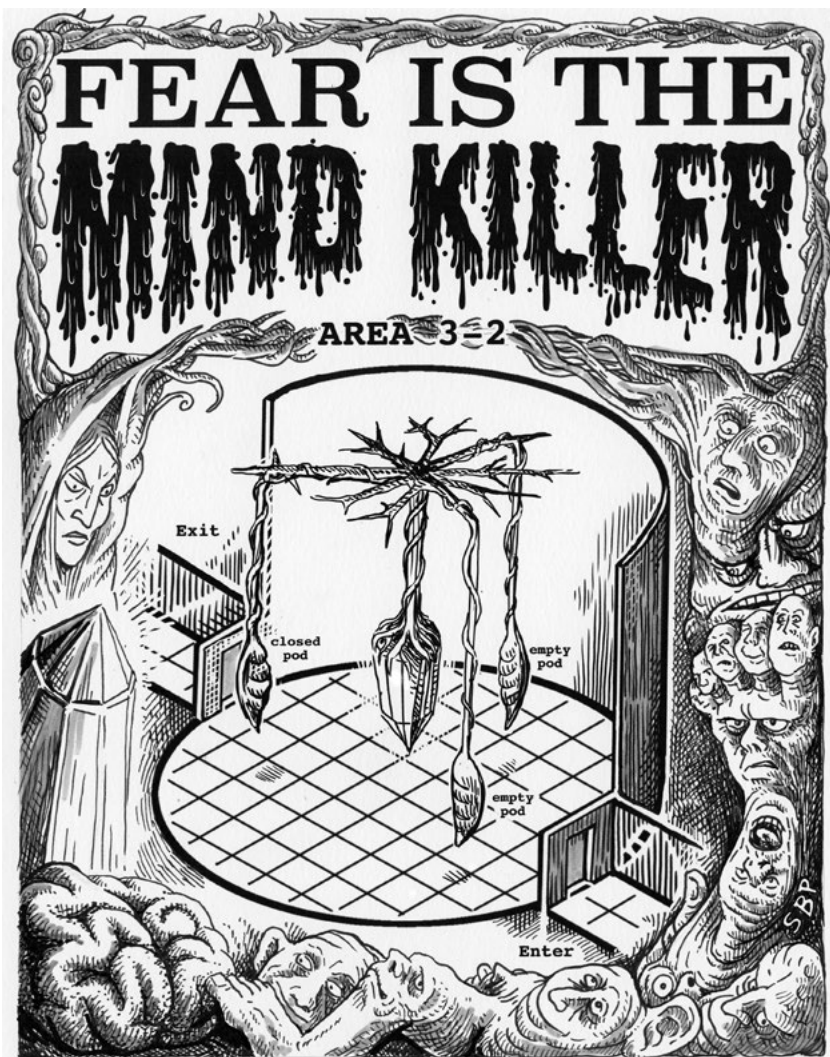
*As you enter the room, an intense pain stabs through your head. When it passes, you see a strange crystal obelisk floating in the center of this cylindrical chamber. Snake-like tubes emerge from the top of the ferrule that crowns the gemstone, connecting it to three smooth artifacts shaped like enormous seed pods that hang from the ceiling. Scattered around the floor of the room are several small, toy-like objects. As you watch, the objects begin to animate, slowly circling the crystal in a swirling dance.*

The obelisk is a psychic resonator once used by the long-dead ascended master located in one of the pods to stimulate her cognitive abilities (see below). Lacking proper mental training, PCs approaching the monolith experience an unchecked psychic expansion. The obelisk can be shattered with a total of 75 hit points of damage; however, each strike sends out waves of resonate psychic pain, causing each PC to suffer 1d8 [4] damage from the resulting mental agony.

The objects scattered throughout the room are immaterial thoughts, manifesting within the room as harmful psychic actualizations of the PCs' deepest memories. Each object appears as a small, child-sized version of the object named by the players when they entered the room, but animate with a memorizing dance-like motion that carries the object in a tightening orbit around the crystal.

PCs that suspect the mental nature of the room can attempt to "will" the objects away one at a time, by making a Will save vs. the DC of the Intelligence of the PC that created the object. PCs who attempt to grab an object not created from their own memories see their hands pass through them without effect. If a PC touches their own heirloom, it disappears—and a nearby





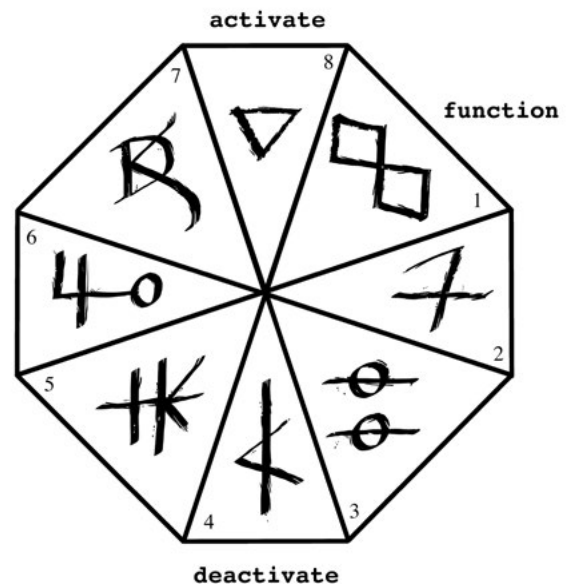
wall or portion of the ceiling immediately appears to dissolve into floating chunks of rubble that rapidly accelerate upwards into the sky, as a huge version of the object touched accelerates towards the party. All PCs must make a DC 15 Reflex save or take 2d6 [7] damage as the object falls/rolls/cuts, etc. into them as it passes through the room. After crossing the room, the transformed object reappears and the fractured wall/ceiling appears solid again.

Finally, starting one round after the PCs enter the room and every two rounds after, the orbital dance of a random mental object takes it into contact with the crystal, transforming it into a thought thing – a creature made of the focused mental energy of the PCs.

**Thought Thing:** Init +4; Atk varies +4 melee (2d6+4 [8]); AC 22; HD 6d10; hp 30 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to critical hits, immune to poison and mind-affecting spells, half damage from fire or cold attacks, half damage from non-magical attacks, susceptible to mental-based attacks; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will Immune; AL N.

Thought things cannot be turned. For purposes of *ray of enfeeblement* and similar spells, a thought thing has a Strength score of 16.

A thought thing materializes as a huge crystallized humanoid, textured with the appearance of whatever the player wrote down (e.g., a comic book becomes a thought-thing with skin



made up of comic book panels, or a cat's-eye marble is marbled skin). Physical attacks against the thought thing have to overcome the PCs' own mental barriers to hit them, as represented by its high AC; attacks below the AC value seem to pass right through the thought thing.

If a PC dies in the room, his heirloom object also disappears, but any items transformed into thought things stay.

The seed-shaped pods are weirdling relics used by the ascended master who built this room to convey her mind across space and time. Two of the pods are currently open; one is sealed. PCs entering one of the open pods can activate it via a set of runes on the inside. Show players **Handout G** (see Handout G2 for judge's key).

**Brain-Pod:** Three of the eight runes inside respond to being pressed. Activate: rune 8 (top center); Function: rune 1 (right side, adjacent to rune 8); Deactivate: rune 4 (bottom center).

To activate, a PC must select rune 8. Once activated, the pod seals, and any PC inside is immersed in a blue saline solution that blocks all physical sensory input. When they open their eyes they "see" mental lines connecting the crystal to all the objects in the room, including the thought things and objects. PCs in the pods can "pull" on a line to inflict 1d10 psychic damage to a single target creature (see below).

To use the pod, rune 1 must be pressed. If a rune other than 1 or 4 is triggered once the relic is activated, there is a 10% cumulative chance that the relic malfunctions. It begins to radiate searing heat; anyone inside the relic takes 1d8 [4] points of damage per round, until rune 4 is touched, deactivating it. If the relic isn't deactivated by the end of 1d20 [10] seconds, it detonates, hurling shards of molten metal 30' in every direction and inflicting 1d12 [7] points of damage to any character caught in the blast (DC 10 Ref save to avoid).

"Pulling" on a line connecting one of the heirloom objects before it touches the obelisk renders it inactive, enabling it to be retrieved by the PCs. With each use by the untrained PCs, there is a cumulative 5% chance of the creation of an alternate universe that manifests as a growing sphere that overlaps the room and causes the PC inside the pod to disappear; should this hap-

pen, all others must make a DC 15 Will save not to be sucked in as well.

The third pod is currently closed and filled with blue fluid. PCs can open the pod by inflicting 10 points of damage to the glass enclosure, causing the fluid to wash out into the room. Within the pod is the desiccated body of an ascended master. PCs searching her tattered robe find a key to the exit door, along with 1d3 [2] greenstone shards.

**Area 3-3 – Dead Fall:** *The passageway ends before a pair of massive wooden doors, gilt with hammered gold, copper, and some strange metals you've never before seen. Carvings depict a treasure train of humanoids bearing great baskets as they march behind a mighty sarcophagus borne aloft by strange beasts of war.*

As wary PCs are right to expect, these gilded doors are indeed a trap. However, accurately detecting the trap is tricky, and disarming it, near impossible.

Judge's note: Pay very close attention to how and what the players declare their PCs are inspecting and searching:

Searching the doors reveals no trap, though a DC 25 Find Trap check does reveal that the doors are a trigger of some sort. The trap itself is a descending wall, some 35' behind the PCs, near the head of the corridor.

Characters inspecting the ceiling at the head of the corridor readily (DC 10 Find Traps) discover the descending wall. The wall can be disarmed with a DC 30 Disable Trap check.

Any action disturbing the gilded doors triggers the descending wall. It takes two rounds for the wall to seal off the hall. Characters passing beneath the wall on the first round easily escape. Those attempting to escape beneath the wall during the second round must make DC 10 Agility saves or be crushed beneath the wall for 5d10 [25] damage.

The wall is destroyed if it is dealt 150 points of damage; it can also be hoisted with a DC 30 Strength check. Up to 5 other PCs may add their Strength bonuses to the effort.

On the third round, the ceiling begins to descend. It takes 3 rounds to reach the floor; anything remaining in the hall at the end of the third round is irretrievably crushed and slain.

**Area 3-4 – Tomb of the Gribb-Kith Mummies:** *This passageway is blocked by a segmented metal door which must be raised vertically.*

Once PCs raise the door...

*This cylindrical room appears to be an alien tomb. The circular steel floor is suspended over a gently-undulating brass substance, though four narrow walkways reach the chamber's smooth rock walls. The floor's center has a circular dais, 1' high and 3' in diameter, with indentations for a left and right humanoid foot. A waist-high obelisk stands on the edge of the disk, with silver channels running from the obelisk, along the floor, and to each side of the entryway. A similar silver channel lines the bottom of the entry's raised door.*

*A metallic net of thick wire stretches from the walls, roughly 35' above the floor, with numerous bones dangling from it like wind chimes. A 5'-square hole in the net's center is aligned above the floor's dais, and a red chitin walkway extends from the hole to a door high on the wall, on the opposite side of the net from the floor. This walkway is lined by fifteen winged mummies hanging upside-down, above the net.*

## A TALE OF TWO DISAPPROVALS

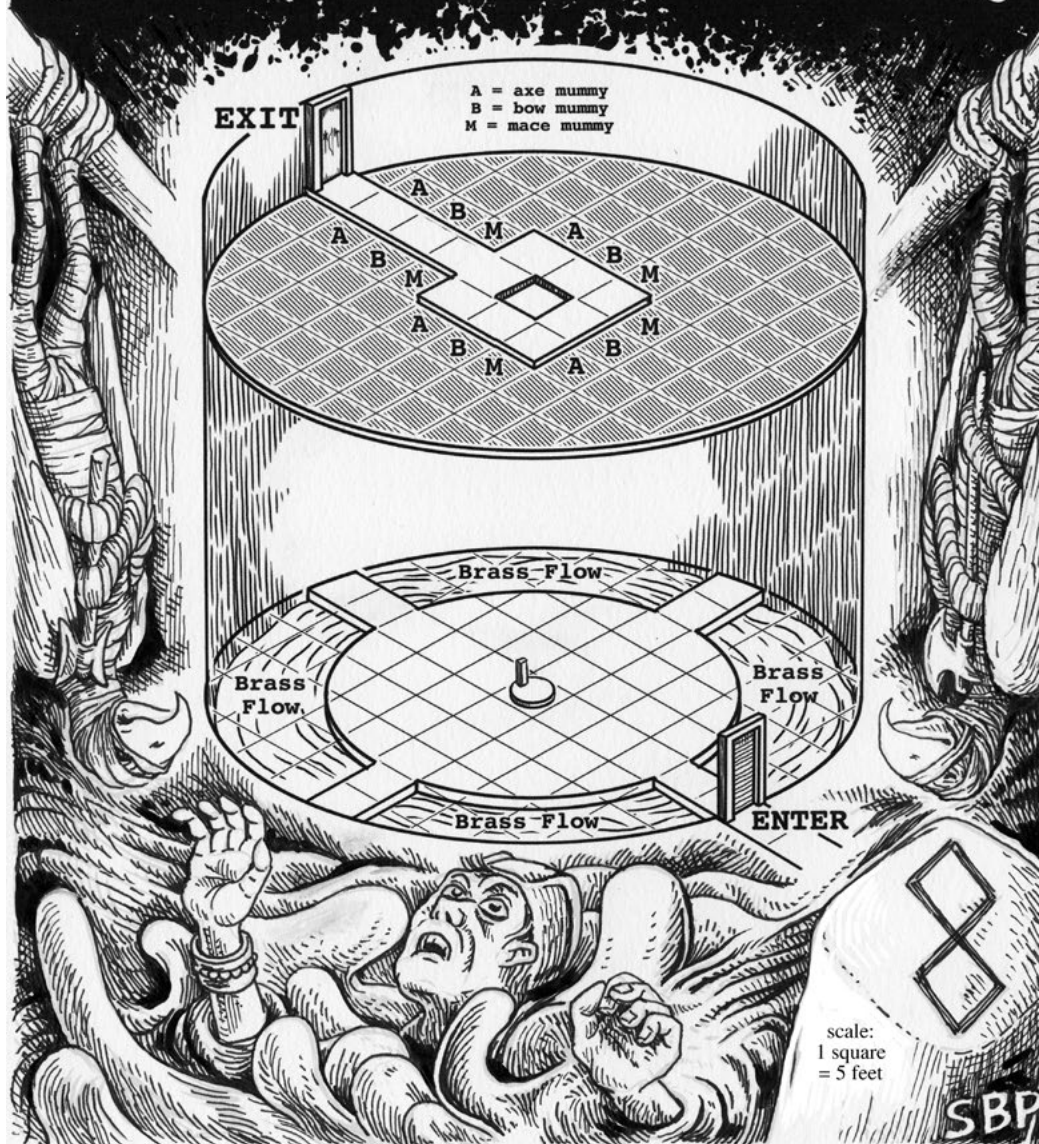
In my mind it is a curious, and surprising, fact of the first Gen Con DCC RPG tournament that none of the teams invoked divine aid or called upon a patron to rescue them when faced with a do-or-die situation. Despite my best attempts of salesmanship and reminding players at the beginning of the round they have that last-ditch option, I think many teams were scared away by the unspecified point penalty such actions would incur, despite the even-greater threat of a TPK. This year I was rewarded with not one, but two instances of teams using this 'Hail Mary' of tournament gaming options, though with two radically different outcomes.

In the Frigid Hive encounter (area 1-5), the Herculoids were faced with an additional challenge of slowly succumbing to the cryogenic fluid despite the worst of the cold effects being blunted by the efforts of the cleric. Even as they half-blindly made their way through the encounters, it became clear that, one by one, the characters were going to slowly freeze before they could reach their objective on the other side of the room. Knowing it was a matter of life or death—and the early end of the round for the team—the cleric once again made a critical play, deciding to call upon divine aid and pleading with the gods for assistance. Making his check, he was rewarded with a +3d to his next roll, which was to recast *resist cold and heat*, knowing only a truly divine result could completely protect the party. The table fell completely silent as the cleric picked up the d30 and proceeded to roll it. When the dice came up with a natural 30, I literally fell over in shock—and joy—as the team erupted into cheers. Thus protected, the Herculoids were able to push through the rest of the encounter effectively immune to the worst of the creatures within.

Perhaps the gods were called on one too many times. In the finals of Round 3, the Lords of Sarcasm were reaching the end of their Luck. The team, known for its humor and infectious role-playing, made it to area 3-2 and became embroiled in a desperate struggle against the encounter's thought-creatures. As PCs fell and rose, only to fall once more, the party's cleric's multiple attempts to lay on hands entered him into a cruel downward spiral of failed disapproval that curtailed his ability to even heal the party. Seeing the party's dwarf fall once more and realizing he only had seconds to reach him before he bled out, true to his team's spirit and character, the cleric decided to do whatever he could to attempt to save his ally. As with the Herculoids, he invoked divine aid and was answered with a +3d to his next roll, one last desperate attempt to lay on hands and rescue his companion. Unlike the Herculoids, however, the roll came up short and the dwarf was left to his fate, and ultimately so were the Lords of Sarcasm. While they eventually made it through the encounter, it was the start of the end for the team, who went on have another critical die result decide the fate of their team—this time to determine the finals tie-breaker!

# TOMB OF THE GRIBB-KITH MUMMIES

## AREA 3-4



This room has two objectives: safely reach the net's walkway above, and then successfully open the upper door.

If the lower level's door is closed the "silver channel" circuit is complete, and the dais' obelisk lights up. The obelisk has but a single rune; however, this rune matches the "function" rune from area 3-2. (This is an important clue to parties that might have missed out on the series of pod symbols.)

Those inside the room may activate the obelisk which has a rune on its top. If someone has their feet in the dais' indentations, and presses the rune, then the 3'-diameter dais levitates off the floor, ascending 20' per round. Activating the obelisk locks the floor's door, which is impervious to mundane opening attempts (a knock spell check of 22+ will work, however). On the second round, the disk rises through the net's hole and stops. Pressing the rune again has no effect. The levitating disk is lowered if a similar rune is pressed on the opposite side of the upper door (see below). The disk is meant for only one passenger, and is unstable otherwise. If more PCs try to crowd onto

the 3'-diameter circle, then every rider makes a Reflex save. The highest roll stays on, and the rest fall off after the first round of ascent (20' to the floor, 2d6 [6] falling damage).

The brass flow, which resides beneath the floor, is the chamber's guardian. It is a sentient life form that alters its volume elastically, as well as its viscosity and hardness. On the round following the obelisk's activation, the brass flow oozes out from beneath the floor and begins to flood the chamber. The chamber fills at a rate of 2' per round. Halflings and dwarves begin drowning after two rounds (over 4' deep), whereas all other races begin drowning after three rounds (over 6' deep). The flow does not condone swimming. It creates surges, vortices, and even creates hands to pull on submerged victims. Swimming or "treading flow" when the depth is deeper than one's body height (4' or 6') requires passing a DC 14 Strength check, but armor check penalties apply; passing the check allows movement at half the normal rate. Otherwise, the flow prevents lateral movement, pulls the victim to the floor, and attempts to drown them (see below). Of course, strategic use of the *enlarge* spell can negate this hazard if targets are over 12' tall (the maximum flood depth). Should the floor's door be opened while the chamber is being flooded, the brass flow retains its shape and does not enter the corridor.

**Drowning:** The brass flow tries to force its way into victims' mouths and noses. Each round a PC is submerged, she must roll a DC 14 Fortitude save. If she misses, she must subtract from her Stamina the difference between 14 and her modified roll (e.g., if she rolled an 11 she subtracts 3 from her Stamina). If her Stamina reaches 0, she dies (there is no "bleeding out" stage). Once a living victim is free of the flow, lost Stamina regenerates at 1 point per round of complete rest. The brass flow voraciously digests dead PCs 2 rounds after their death. Recovering the body checks are impossible once this has occurred.

Unlike its tendrils (see below), the main body of the brass flow is impervious to damage. Nonetheless, it has two vulnerabilities: there is only a finite amount of it, and it will follow PCs up the walls. This can be exploited. The flow's finite mass limits how far it can follow PCs up the walls while also flooding the chamber. If climbers are laterally spread out (more than 15' apart) then use the following guidelines:



- 4 climbers: Flow climbs up to 20' along the wall but cannot flood the chamber.
- 3 climbers: Flow climbs up to 30' along the wall but cannot flood the chamber.
- 2 climbers: Flow climbs up to 30' along the wall and floods the chamber up to 4' deep.
- 1 climber: Flow climbs up to 30' along the wall and floods the chamber up to 8' deep.
- 0 climbers: Flow floods the chamber up to 12' deep.

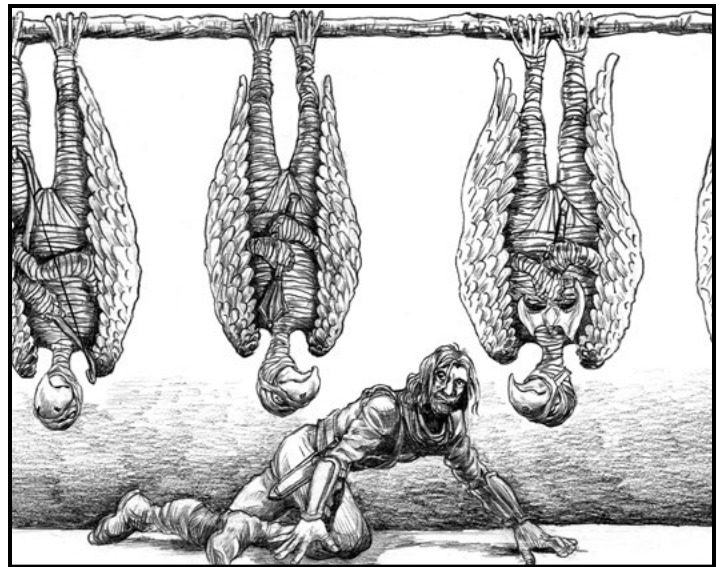
Thus, 2 climbers on opposite halves of the room will constrain the flooding depth to 4 feet, effectively preventing human-sized allies from drowning. There are four areas in the room where the wall is directly accessible (three if the door is still open). The climbing excursions of the brass flow have smoothed the walls, making them DC 16 for climbing checks up to the net (35' up), where they are safe from tendrils attacks. However, climbers within the flow's range (see above) suffer attacks from brass flow tendrils (one from each of the four sections along the wall). If a climber falls (either from a tendrils dislodge attack or from missing a climbing check), then the fall occurs at the end of their movement. If the climber falls into the flow (which may have begun flooding the chamber), the falling damage is 1d5 per 10' rather than the standard 1d6. Note that tendrils attack climbers regardless of whether the obelisk has been activated. Also, should one manage to open the upper door, the flow retreats beneath the floor and remains there as long as the door is open (see below).

**Brass Flow Tendril (up to 4):** Init +5; Atk smash +5 melee (1d6 [3] plus dislodge); AC 14; HD 3d10; hp 17 each; MV climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP dislodge (if tendrils smashes a climbing target, they must make a Fortitude save vs. DC 10 + inflicted damage, or fall to floor), death throes (regeneration: a defeated tendrils takes 3 rounds to heal itself), retreat (withdraws beneath floor if upper door is opened), immune to paralysis and mind-affecting spells; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AL N.

A PC who climbs to the net may hang-climb along its underside to reach the central hole. However, if they disturb the (enchanted) hanging bone charms, then a gribb-kith mummy animates. A PC must pass a DC 15 Agility or Sneak Silently check in order to reach the hole without disturbing the charms. Otherwise, roll 1d3 to determine what type of weapon the animated gribb-kith mummy yields: (1) axe; (2) bow; (3) mace. PCs fighting while hanging from the net suffer -1d to attacks and grant their attackers +1d to hit.

**Gribb-Kith Mummy (up to 12):** Init +2; Atk axe +4 melee (1d8+2 [6]) or bow +3 missile fire (1d6 [3], range 100') or mace +4 melee (1d6+2 [8]); AC 14; HD 2d12; hp 13 each; MV 30' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP damage reduction 2, double damage from fire, un-dead traits, un-dead crits (U/d6); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; AL C.

The mummies are un-dead; they do not eat, drink, or breathe, and are immune to critical hits, disease, and poison. As un-dead, they are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *paralysis* spells, as well as other mental effects and cold damage. They can be turned by clerics; a successfully-turned mummy surrenders its weapon and resumes hanging upside-down from its perch. A gribb-kith mummy targets the PC who disturbed it, and one with a bow



will utilize flight to attack out of melee range, tearing off strips of its wrapping and instantly forming arrows from them.

Once the PCs reach the net's walkway, read the following (modifying the number of mummies if some have already awakened):

*Fifteen winged bird-man mummies hang upside-down with taloned feet clutching perches. Each has its arms folded around a single weapon: an S-curved axe, a recurved shortbow, and a double-moon mace. The macabre sentinels line the red chitin walkway, which ends at an iron door. Although the door has a strange key-hole, it also has three large indentations, each of which matches one of the mummies' weapons.*

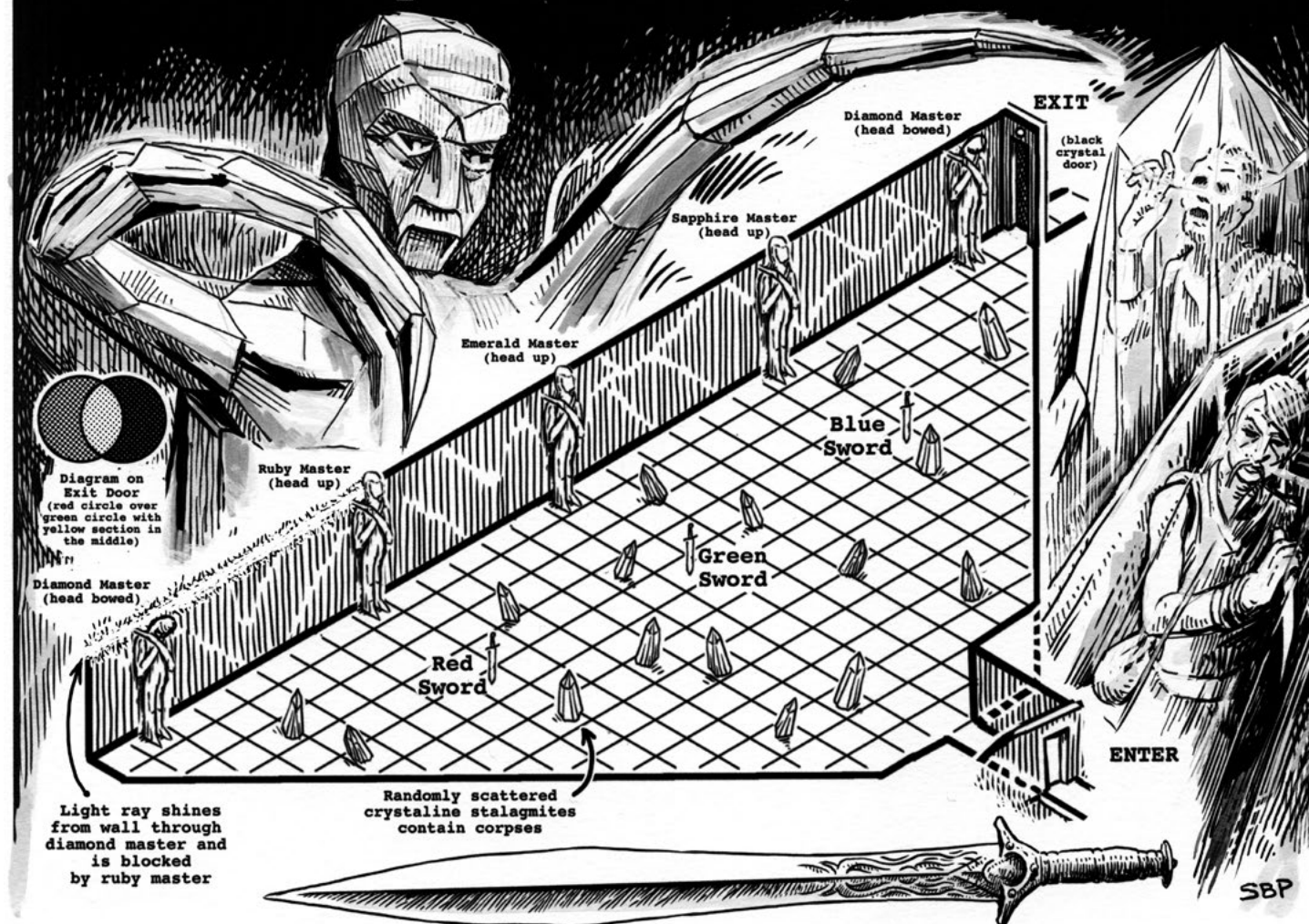
The door is "simply" opened by placing one of each type of the mummies' weapons within the door's indentations; the weapons remain there when placed. However, getting a mummy's weapon without animating it is difficult. One must remove the weapon carefully (DC 17 Agility or Pick Pocket check)—otherwise the mummy animates and attacks. If a PC damages a mummy that is not animated, then either six or the remaining mummies (whichever is less) animate and attack. Roll randomly as above to determine their weapons.

There are alternative ways to open the door. A DC 30 Pick Lock check will manipulate the alien lock. Also, a *knock* spell with spell check of 30+ will bypass the door's enchantments and open it.

Opening the door causes the brass floor to retreat beneath the floor, reducing its depth at 2' per round, and it will not reenter the chamber as long as the upper door is open. As mentioned above, the opposite side of the door has a glowing glyph that is the same as that found on the obelisk. If the rune is pressed when the dais has already ascended, it descends to the floor. If the dais is still on the floor, then the disk ascends (and subsequently pressing the obelisk's glyph will make it descend).

Clever PCs may employ magical flight, *ropework*, *levitate*, *spider climb*, etc., to reach the net's hole without experimenting with the dais. It is conceivable that a single (lucky and/or agile) PC who ascends through the hole could open the upper door and "disarm" the brass flow for subsequent PCs to safely ascend from the floor...as long as they do not disturb the mummies!

## AREA 3-5: Sepulcher of the Crystalline Masters



### Area 3-5 – Sepulcher of the Crystalline Masters:

This triangular chamber is brightly illuminated with variegated light streaming through crystals of all shapes, sizes, and colors embedded in the ceiling. Five crystalline alien forms stand 25' tall along the wall, their long whip-like arms folded against their bodies. The leftmost and rightmost figures are white diamond-like crystal and hold their heads bowed, each with a short sword of the same white crystal embedded in its leg. The intermediate figures look like colored gems, and from left to right appear as ruby, emerald, and blue sapphire, though each has a head made of black opaque stone. These three hold their heads erect with eyes glowing menacingly. A beam of bright white light streams from the left wall, over the bowed head of the white crystal alien, but is blocked by the black head of the red one. On the right wall, next to the rightmost white crystal form, is a hole similar to the one from which the light emits. Beneath it is a closed, black crystal door, which bears a diagram of a red circle overlapping a green circle, with the intersection colored yellow. Crystalline stalagmites of red, green, and blue rise from the floor in no particular pattern; each contains the corpse of a previous visitor. Various weapons of wood, steel, bronze, and alien metals lie shattered on the floor. Three crystalline short swords hover in the air, 3' off the ground and 20' in front of each colored being. From left to right, the swords glow red, green, and blue, respectively.

The room's objective is to get through the locked black crystal door by directing the light through the hole above it. Unfortunately, the middle three crystalline masters' high-held heads

block the light's path. The PCs must transform each of these three to white crystal using the crystalline swords (see below). When turned to white, a master submits and bows its head, allowing the light to pass above it. PCs may try to find a way to redirect the light around the masters and into the hole without defeating them; this can work, but the masters gain +1d to attack such audacious interlopers who have their attentions turned away from their own defense.

With the exception of the two diamond masters at the ends, a crystalline master begins attacking when a PC approaches within 30' of it. Each master is immovably fused into the wall, although it can attack with its whip-like arms and weirdling eye-rays.

Judge's note: In the stat block below, pay extra attention to the special abilities "crystallize" and "weapon shatter." The former negates recover the body checks, and is the reason the room is littered with bodies encased in crystalline stalagmites.

If a PC chooses to remain immobile without attacking for a round, she may use one of these crystalline bodies as cover, adding 4 to her AC.

**Crystalline Master (3):** Init +3; Atk whiparm +5 melee (1d8+2 [6], 15' range) and weirdling eye-rays +5 missile fire (3d4 [6] plus crystallize, 150' range); AC 18; HD 6d12; hp 43 each; MV 0';

Act 2d20; SP crystallize (a PC reduced to 0 hp or less when hit by an eye-ray becomes crystalline and unrecoverable), weapon shatter (a non-magical weapon that inflicts damage makes an unmodified saving throw with DC equal to damage inflicted; upon failure, the weapon shatters), unique crits (see tables below), immune to paralysis, uses d100 to save vs. mind-affecting spells; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +8; AL N.

**Critical Hits for Whiparm Attack:**  
Roll 1d4 and subtract victim's Luck modifier

Roll	Result
1 or less	Master whipstrikes weapon arm; 1d4 [2] additional damage and sends weapon flying 30' behind the assailant.
2	Master whipstrikes solar plexus; 1d6 [3] additional damage. Victim must pass DC 16 Fort save or fall prone and helpless, gasping for air, for 1 round.
3	Master whipstrikes eye; 1d8 [4] additional damage. PC suffers blindness in that eye for rest of tournament level (-1d penalty to all rolls requiring sight). May be healed with a 4 HD result of <i>lay on hands</i> .
4+	Master entangles leg of opponent, lifts him up, and slams him against the ground; 1d10 [5] additional damage. Master makes another whiparm attack against the victim with a +1d bonus (d24 action die).

**Critical Hits for Eye-ray Attack:**  
Roll 1d4 and subtract victim's Luck modifier

Roll	Result
1 or less	Weirdling ray causes legs to go partially numb; victim takes 1d4 [2] additional damage and suffers -2 to AC for remainder of tournament level. May be healed with a 1 HD result of <i>lay on hands</i> .
2	Weirdling ray causes large crystals to grow in teeth and jaw; victim takes 1d6 [3] additional damage and suffers -1d to all checks requiring speech (including spell checks). Crystals are permanent unless removed by force (2d6 damage).
3	Weirdling ray causes a crystalline orm to constrict the victim, doing 1d8 additional damage. Each subsequent round, the victim is held immobile and suffers 1d4 [2] damage until he passes a DC 18 Strength check. An ally may shatter the orm, but this damages the constricted PC for an additional 1d8 damage.
4+	Weirdling ray causes a crystalline detonation centered on the victim, who suffers 1d10 [5] additional damage. All allies within 30' suffer 1d6 damage unless they pass a DC 14 Reflex save.

As indicated by the shattered remnants on the ground, mundane weapons may break when used against the masters (see "weapon shatter" in stat block). The key is to use the crystalline short swords, as indicated by the inert diamond masters each having a white one impaled in its leg. But things are never so simple. In order to get a master to turn white and bow, it must

be defeated with a sword of its complementary color. This is a "simple" colored light puzzle: red + cyan = white; green + magenta = white; blue + yellow = white. Note this is color addition, which is the way light mixes, and the way RGB monitors produce colors (green + blue + red = white). This is in contrast to color subtraction, which is how mixing paint works, in which case blue + yellow = green rather than white. The diagram on the door shows a red circle overlapping a green circle, with the overlapped region colored yellow. This hint that red + green = yellow indicates colored light mixing rather than paint mixing.

Each crystalline sword is magical, though does standard 1d6 damage with no bonus to attacks (Strength modifiers and deed dice apply), and is considered a trained weapon for all character classes. The swords change the color of their glow depending on which master they strike; this is detailed in the tables below. The tables follow these basic rules:

- Striking a master with a sword of the same color inflicts damage upon the wielder instead of the master, and the sword does not change color.
- If a sword is the complimentary color of the master then it does 2d6 damage, and it and the master turn white upon a successful strike.
- A white sword does 2d6 against a non-diamond master, but 3d6 against a diamond master. It fuses to a diamond master that it defeats (0 hp or less).
- If a non-defeated diamond master is struck with a colored sword, the sword will change color to the PC's choice.
- Otherwise, a sword of any other color does normal damage, and changes color each time it hits.

If a master is reduced to 0 hp by a means other than a white sword, then it no longer attacks. However, it neither changes to white nor bows its head, but it will not retaliate as PCs attack it with variously-colored swords (PCs gain +1d to attacks since it's helpless). Such an already-defeated master instantly submits once it turns diamond (white).

The way the sword changes color follows the simple color wheel, but for ease of play we present a table of colors for each master below. To help the players track the weapon changes, the judge is encouraged to supply visual aids—chits, poker chips, or even crayons—and place the appropriate color in front of a player as their PC's sword changes hue.

Ruby (Red) Master	
Sword Color	Effect
White	2d6 + STR + deed damage; sword remains white.
Red	1d6 + STR + deed damage is reflected back to PC; sword stays red.
Green	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns yellow.
Blue	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns magenta.
Cyan	2d6 + STR + deed damage; sword and master turn white.
Magenta	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns red.
Yellow	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns red.



### Emerald (Green) Master

Sword Color	Effect
White	2d6 + STR + deed damage; sword remains white.
Red	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns yellow.
Green	1d6 + STR + deed damage is reflected back to PC; sword stays green.
Blue	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns cyan.
Cyan	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns green.
Magenta	2d6 + STR + deed damage; sword and master turn white.
Yellow	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns green.

### Sapphire (Blue) Master

Sword Color	Effect
White	2d6 + STR + deed damage; sword remains white.
Red	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns magenta.
Green	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns cyan.
Blue	1d6 + STR + deed damage is reflected back to PC; sword stays blue.
Cyan	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns blue.
Magenta	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword turns blue.
Yellow	2d6 + STR + deed damage; sword and master turn white.

### Diamond (White) Master

Sword Color	Effect
White	3d6 + STR + deed damage; master submits once defeated; sword fuses to master.
Non-White	1d6 + STR + deed damage; sword telepathically asks PC, "My wielder, what color do you prefer?" Sword changes color to PC's choice.

The challenge here is that if someone sticks to the same enemy with the same sword, they'll never defeat it. See that a cyan sword is needed for the ruby master? But the only way to get a cyan sword is to attack either the green or the blue master. The same is true for the other masters. Assailants will either need to switch weapons or targets. A combatant who disengages from a master to fight another is subject to an immediate whiparm attack from the previously-engaged master, unless sufficient precautions have been taken (e.g., a successful mighty deed that enables withdrawal). Note that "I'm carefully backing away" is not a sufficient precaution. If a PC decides to give her weapon to another without actually handing it to him (throwing it, sliding it, etc.), then require her to pass a DC 14 Agility check. Failure indicates that something happened to cause the weapon to go off-target; the intended PC will need to take a move action to retrieve it.

Once all masters have been turned to diamond, the light ray can pass over their bowed heads and into the hole above the black crystalline door, unlocking it. The crystalline door has an alien-shaped keyhole, and may be opened with a thief's Pick Lock skill, but is DC 40 (yes, forty) to do so, and takes 3 rounds to complete; do not ask the player to roll the check until the three rounds have elapsed. As above, crystalline masters gain +1d (d24) to attack a lock-picking thief that is not focused on defense.

## THE DEMISE OF THE HAMMERTOES

By the time they reached area 3-5, Team Hammertoes had been reduced to a mere two players — who, coincidentally, were among the team's youngest players.

The Hammertoes were representing Gaming Honors, whose motto, "Honor your Players, Honor your Game," was never more true than in the third and final round of the tournament. The elder members of group quickly solved the puzzle, but not a word was spoken to the boys. Instead, the young men were left to strive on their own against Terry Olson's maddening color puzzle.

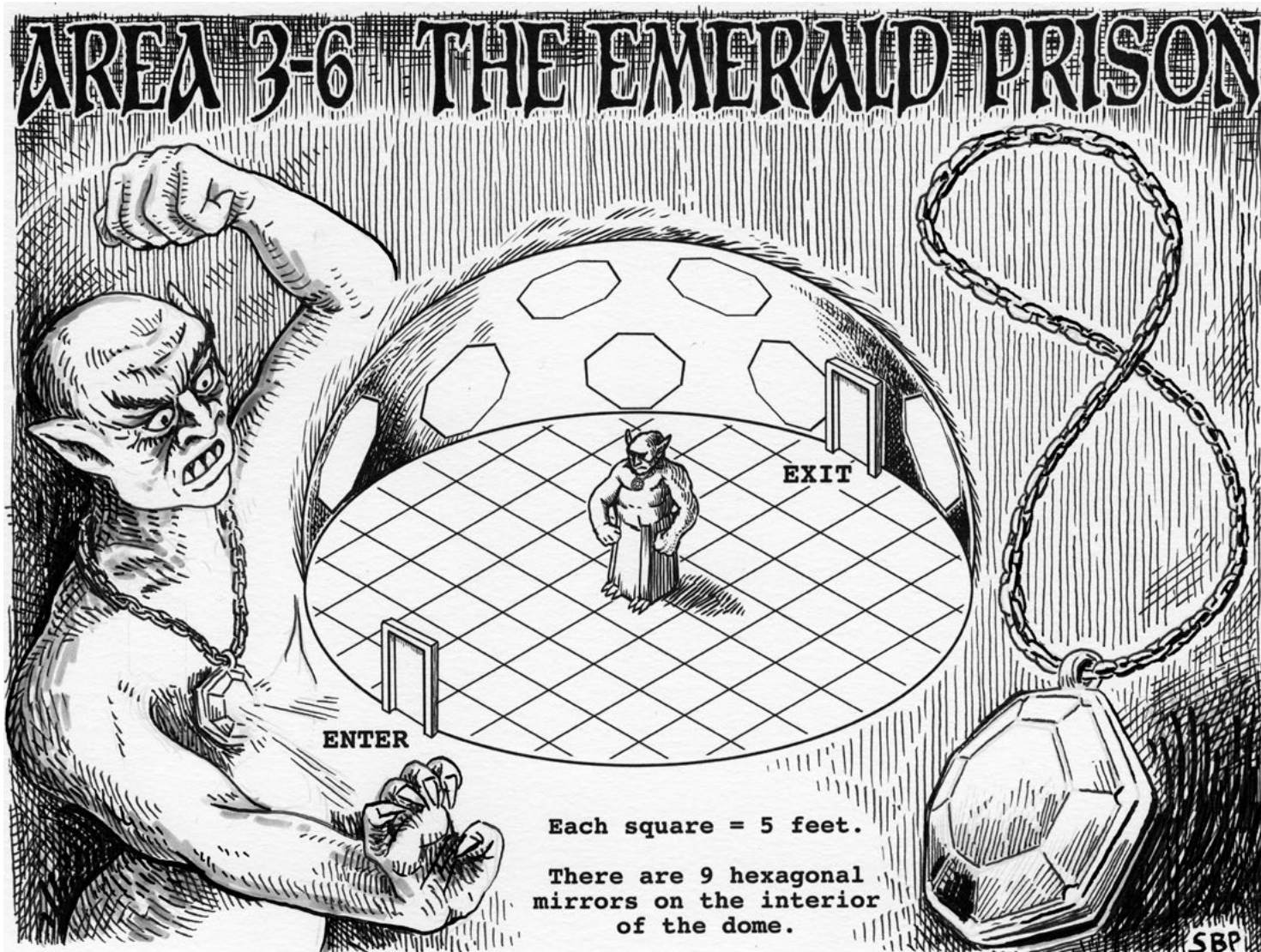
The dwarf died first, leaving a wizard alone in the darkness, facing off against the towering crystalline masters. The last Hammertoe fought to the end, hurling himself against the masters with grim melancholy.

Unknown at the time, his determination was to be rewarded at the conclusion of the tournament. This same player won the final dice off against the Lords of Sarcasm, carrying the Hammertoes to victory.

**Area 3-6 – The Emerald Prison:** A large domed chamber opens before you, dominated by a huge glooming statue of a bestial creature, its lower body and legs enclosed within a tapering pillar-like term from which clawed feet protrude. A great greenstone pendant hangs from the creature's neck on a copper-red metal chain. The walls and ceiling of the chamber are lined with eight-sided mirrors, each of which contains a reflection of the greenstone gem, causing the room to be filled with multifarious emerald light. A single closed door lies on the far side of the room.

This whole chamber acts as a kind of Dyson sphere for trapping and re-focusing the energies of the greenstone as part of some long-dead ascended master's strange weirdling artifact. There are a total of nine mirrors in the room, each roughly 5' in diameter and spaced 10' apart. Six of the mirrors are located on the walls of the chamber while the remaining three are embedded in the ceiling 15' above the floor.

The creature is a kith-like beast made of living stone, set here to guard the greenstone gem and now long forgotten. Any attempts to open the exit, or to harm the creature, pendant, or mirrors triggers the beast's wrath. Enclosed within its term, the creature cannot move, but it can attack targets within 10' with the clawed slabs on the ends of its massive arms as the greenstone gem pulses with light that shoots out at PCs in the room. The gem acts as a rayrifle, causing the PCs to appear to be disintegrated to their companions, though in actuality they are absorbed into the gem itself.



**Greenstone pendant:** Attacks on living creatures ignore any armor bonuses to AC and non-living objects are unaffected. Living targets must make a DC 15 Fortitude save to avoid being disintegrated into the gem. On a successful save, the target takes 1d16 [8] damage. Living targets wearing chain or plate mail receive a +5 bonus to the Fort save.

PCs failing their save appear to be outlined as green silhouettes before vanishing into nothingness and re-appearing as two-dimensional reflections in one of the room's nine mirrors. Each round, PCs trapped in the gem take 1d4 [2] points of temporary Stamina damage as the weirding shard saps their vitality. PCs reduced to 0 Stamina are completely absorbed into the gem and cannot be recovered. Trapped PCs can only be freed if the gem or mirror they appear in is shattered (see below).

The creature is a fearsome opponent; however, the greenstone it wears can be shattered with enough damage. The gem has AC 15 and 30 hit points, but only takes half damage from magical attacks due to its weirdling nature. Attacking the gem directly requires either a Mighty Deed of Arms, a spell that can be aimed with precision at a single target (*magic missile*, *scorching ray*, etc., but not area of effect spells like *lightning bolt*), or by a PC who spends 1 point of Luck to attempt a called shot. This Luck point provides no bonus to the attack roll; it simply allows them to try to hit the gem.

Alternatively, the PCs can attempt to destroy the mirror-like artifacts on the walls, causing the greenstone to lose power, and ultimately deactivating it. For each mirror that is destroyed, the damage from the greenstone ray on a failed save is reduced by -1d until the stone is fully disabled. The mirrors do not shatter easily, however. Each mirror has AC 20 and only shatters if struck with 15 or more points of damage in a single attack. When they shatter, the mirrors explode, releasing any trapped PC who appears within the mirror and sending piercing shards that cause 1d6 [3] points of damage to the PC and anyone within 20' (DC 15 Ref save to avoid).

Creative PCs might also hit upon the solution of covering the mirrors instead of destroying them. The mirrors can be blocked by any object large enough to cover its entire surface, causing the greenstone gem to diminish in power as above.

Any PCs trapped in the gem when it is disabled or destroyed are freed. The exit door is controlled by a panel of runes which can only be activated if the greenstone gem is disabled.

**Living stone:** Init +4; Atk stone fist +10 melee (2d8+2 [10], 10' reach) or greenstone ray +6 missile fire (see text); AC 18; HD 12d10; MV 0'; Act 2d24; SP immune to critical hits, immune to poison and mind-affecting spells, half damage from fire or cold attacks, half damage from non-magical attacks; SV Fort +12, Ref +0, Will Immune; AL N.

The living stone cannot be turned. For purposes of *ray of enfeeblement* and similar spells, it has a Strength score of 20.

**Area 3-7 – Warsuits of the Godkings:** *Through the torn opening in the wall is what appears to have once been a treasure chamber that was looted long ago. From the hallway, you can make out the dim outlines of several large statues.*

This was once the resting place for treasures accumulated by the Ascended Masters. However, all that remains now is a scattering of ancient coins. Standing watch over the empty chamber are what appear to be several towering statues covered in a thick coat of stone dust—the accumulation of many thousands of years.

The statues are actually 12'-tall exo-suits, six in all. They are currently deactivated; characters brave enough to search the ominous chamber discover that a small dusty hatch in the back of each "statue" is open. The hatch doubles as a ramp that leads up to the cockpit area. The cockpit interior is standing room only. There are only two recognizable buttons on the dash: one green and the other red. When the green button is depressed, the suit immediately powers up, the back hatch closes, and several needle-tipped tubes shoot out from all directions into the PC. Soft black foam fills the compartment, sheathing the pilot entirely—except for the PC's face, onto which a form-fitting mask with large goggles is placed. When the red button is depressed, the cockpit clears. (It does nothing if already empty.) Either process takes one action by the pilot to perform.

When worn, the suits absorb damage first. Once a suit is "slain," it automatically powers down. Characters cannot cast spells or wield weapons from inside the suits, nor can PCs take any action requiring stealth or fine motor skills (e.g., picking locks). Characters can, however, deal out and soak a great deal of damage.

**Exo-Suit (when worn/activated):** Init +2; Atk mechanical fist +7 melee (3d8+8) or hydraulic punch +5 missile fire (3d10+10); AC 20; HD 12d8+12; hp 60; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP pilot bonuses, immune to cold, poison, half damage from fire; SV Fort +12, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

**Pilot Bonuses:** Add the PC's Intelligence modifier to these exo-suit stats: Init, Atk, AC, Ref save, and Strength checks.

**Area 3-8 – The Way Home:** *The corridor opens into a wide, vaulted gallery supported by thick pillars. In the center of the hall is a high dais; atop the dais, a strange silver pedestal topped with glowing sigils. The fell witch Haera stands before the pedestal, surrounded by her dread crocmen.*

*Across the chamber is a pair of portals, both glowing brightly with phlogiston. Through the first portal, you can see your goal: Äereth! Through the second portal, you can make out a writhing mass struggling to pull itself into this world.*

*Between you and the portals stand the White Witch and her crocodilian guards. Blood shall spill before you and your companions escape this hellish world!*

The crocmen do their utmost to prevent the PCs from passing through the portal. Haera is attempting to complete the summoning that she began so long ago (and so many worlds away). If she is successful in bringing her patron, Rrhurantifax, through the second portal, it will mean the doom of the PCs.

Unfortunately for the PCs, the ritual has atop the dais has been completed. All Haera needs to do now is hold off the party for three rounds. At the beginning of the 4th round, the demon Rrhurantifax enters this plane, and on the 5th round it begins to lay waste to nearly every living creature in the chamber, with the sole exception of Haera.

There are a handful of ways for the PCs to stave off the arrival of the demon; outside of the tournament, judges should reward in-game thinking and logic. Some of the more common solutions are detailed below:

- **Cleric spells:** On a failed saving throw, Rrhurantifax is susceptible to *banish*, and is potentially cast back through the portal. On a 34+ spell check for *binding*, the cleric has the chance to dominate the demon. Similarly, suitably-powerful casting of *word of command* might cast the demon back across the planes.
- **Arcane spells:** A 24+ spell check on *ward portal* is sufficient to erase the portal from existence; however, any lesser casting is immediately destroyed by Rrhurantifax, delaying the demon for but a single round. *Binding* functions as the cleric spell of the same name (see above). Finally, a 25+ spell check on *dispel magic* is sufficient to close the summoning portal.
- Students of DCC lore may recall a certain Mighty Deed of Arms wherein a brave young warrior attempted to cast a demon back through a portal. Rrhurantifax is a horrific opponent: a deed die of 4+ is required to accomplish the great feat of returning it back to the hells that first birthed it.
- With the proper commands, the dais can close or open a portal at will. However, using the proper rune depends on player skill, not character Luck. Atop the dais are runes that correspond directly to those found in area 3-2 (and the function rune in area 3-4). The dais is already activated. To close the summoning portal, the PCs must simply press the Function rune. Touching the Deactivate rune causes the dais to deactivate, but leaves the portals intact. Of course, Haera and her crocmen do everything in their power to prevent the PCs from tampering with the dais.
- **Destroy the portal:** While brutish, if a portal is dealt 500 points of damage, it collapses under the planar weight and is effectively destroyed.

Note that, unlike at the start of the adventure, simply slaying or distracting the White Witch is insufficient to end the spell. The rite has already been concluded—all that remains is for Haera to await her patron's arrival. Haera and her henchbeasts do everything in their power to buy their master the time it needs.

**Haera the White Witch:** Init +4; Atk claw +2 melee (1d4-1 [2] plus 1d4 [2] Sta) or spell; AC 9; HD 6d6; hp 32; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP counterspell (1d20+8), spellcasting (+8 spell check: *charm person, color spray, magic missile, magic shield, polymorph, scare*); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +8; AL C.

**Crocman (4):** Init +3; Atk tail slap +5 melee (1d6+6 [10]) or great spear +5 melee or +3 missile fire (1d12+6 [13]); AC 16; HD 4d8+4; hp 21 each; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP crit range 19-20 plus bite for 1d12+4 [10] damage; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

**The Coming of Rrhurantifax:** Beginning on the 5th round, the roiling mass of Rrhurantifax fully crosses the threshold and be-



gins to indiscriminately attack everything in the chamber. Only Haera is spared its terrifying assault. Assign a number to each crocman, PC, and NPC in the chamber and roll randomly each action to determine which character is targeted by the horror.

Rrhurantifax (rur-rue-ran-ti-fax) is an extradimensional being from the nothing where space and time do not exist. The roiling mass of Rrhurantifax is hard to avoid, as its ever-changing form crashes around the room like hurtling waves, battering the unfortunate PCs every round they remain in the chamber.

Coils of impossible geometries act like disembodied tentacles streaming through the air able to reach any target in the chamber. Anyone struck directly by one realizes that they move straight through the target without leaving a mark but the victim feels that they had been sliced through by thousands of tiny, razor-sharp, geometric-shaped cookie cutters. A PC reduced to 0 hp by this attack ceases to exist.

The demon can make up to 4 attacks per round, but these should always be randomly distributed amongst the living creatures within the chamber.

Note that the demon-thing is immune to non-magical attacks, even those originating from the exo-suits. Warriors and dwarves may find themselves hard-pressed to think of ways to deal the beast damage; if ever there was a time to exercise creativity with Mighty Deeds, this is that moment.

Finally, there is one cold comfort offered by the arrival of the demon: its ancillary, Haera, stands transfixed in slavish exaltation and ceases to take actions so long as Rrhurantifax “lives.” Of course, if the demon-thing is somehow defeated, she hurls herself into suicidal combat in an effort to slay those who would destroy her powerful patron.

**Rrhurantifax, Horror from Beyond:** Init +0; Atk overwhelming roiling mass +17 melee (10 [5], DC 20 Ref save to negate) or tentacle of impossible geometries +12 missile fire (3d10+10 [25]); AC 20; HD 12d12+38; hp 150; MV 40'; Act 4d24; SP immune to all non-magical damage, demon traits; SV Fort +12, Ref +0, Will +17; AL N.

**Fleeing to Áereth:** Finally, if the PCs can somehow evade Haera and her minions, they need not engage with Rrhurantifax at all. To escape the Purple Planet, the PCs must simply make it to the first portal and pass through. Against all odds, the PCs have triumphed!

Though anti-climatic, this has few negative consequences for convention games. However, in campaign play, Rrhurantifax and any surviving devotees certainly pursue the party to Áereth, wrecking untold havoc on the PCs' home world.



## CONCLUSION

*You and your companions are cast through the portal, shearing both time and space! Your senses are overwhelmed by a thunderous roar, as the rush of phlogiston threatens to tear you atom from atom.*

*Then all is silence. The night air cools your brow, and familiar stars shine once more in the heavens. You are surrounded by high standing stones – the strange monoliths that heralded your journey cut dark forms against the sky.*

*Have you triumphed? Have the White Witch and her otherworldly master been laid low for good? The alternative is almost too much to contemplate. With amazed laughter, you and your companions pull yourselves off the scorched earth. You have survived the phlogiston and a hundred different worlds, and somehow lived to the tale.*

*Will the horrors you defeated seek revenge? The notion exhausts you... After all, a warm hearth, a hot meal, and a new day beckon. There will be time enough to face down whatever fiends dare ride upon the phlogiston.*

