

# D.A.P.N.!

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

*Featuring:*  
Demon Snake of Balmorphos  
Cannibal Tiger-Women of Tsaru  
Portal to the Plane of Improbability  
...and other weirdness

CONTENT ADVISORY

ADULT THEMES

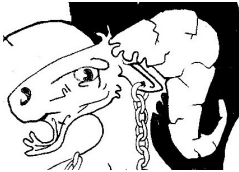
SBP



# D.A.M.N.E.D.

Spring/Summer 2018  
Volume 2: Issue 1

## DCC Adventure Magazine and News



This issue is just madness.  
Madness, all the way down.



### CONTENTS

| Pg  | Article                                                    |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3   | From the DAMNed Pit                                        |
| 4   | News from Around the Fire                                  |
| 5   | d14 Rumors and News                                        |
| 6   | Third Party Spotlight — Thick Skull Adventures             |
| 7   | Artist Spotlight — Feliks RK Pyron                         |
| 12  | The Demon Snake of Balmorphos — Daniel J. Bishop           |
| 36  | Third Party Spotlight — Divinities and Cults, Dan Osarchuk |
| 40  | Portal to the Plane of Probability — Cory Gahsman          |
| 50  | Zatima Xel Barca — Eric Hoffman                            |
| 55  | Bestiary: Cropfolk! — Lee Murphy                           |
| 57  | Ar-Mammon, Lord of Hidden Treasure — Ari-Matti Pippo       |
| 60  | Geas and Taboos — Daniel Vance                             |
| 64  | Cannibal Tiger-Women of Tsaru — Paul Wolfe                 |
| 108 | Party of the DAMNED! — Jason Sholtis                       |

## THE DAMNED

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**Stefan Poag** — Cover artist

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**Cartography by:** David Persinger, Claytonian, Randy Musseau, Paul Wolfe

**Writing by:** Daniel J. Bishop, Stephen Newton, Dan Osarchuk, Cory Gahsman, Eric Hoffman, Lee Murphy, Ari-Matti Pippo, Daniel Vance, Paul Wolfe, Jason Sholtis

### GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

**damn-mag@mysticbull.com**

Shoot us a note, and we'll include it in the next issue. Just make sure you put **"Okay to Print"** at the end of your message.

This issue is supported by a web enhancement, available for free in PDF form at the Mystic Bull Games website: [www.mysticbull.com](http://www.mysticbull.com).

There you'll find some content that fell out of this issue, including *Halfmen of Hirsute Hollow*, an adventure by Jason Hobbs and illustrated by Craig Brasco.

Enjoy!

COMPATIBLE WITH  
**DCC  
RPG**



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# FROM THE DAMNED PIT

## Foreword from the Publisher

This issue of D.A.M.N. Magazine is bittersweet for me. While I managed to run my first successful crowdfunding campaign to add a little spark to this season's issue, I lost a friend along the way. Michael Fantin, a guy that Brenda and I met at GaryCon and looked forward to hanging/gaming with each year, took his own life on May 16<sup>th</sup> of this year. We, along with a lot of you in the DCC community, were devastated. Frankly, I didn't know Michael that well – but every time I sat down with him to game or shoot the bull, he was happy, engaged... You were always the most important person in the conversation to him. This issue is dedicated to Michael. He was, simply, a good soul.

I've said this to many folks and posted it publicly – if anyone out there needs help, I am always open to talk, anytime. I can set up a Google Hangout in seconds or you can e-mail me directly – paul@caffeine.net — and I'll send you my cell phone number. If you don't want to talk to me, talk to someone — The national suicide hotline: 1-800-273-8255. I love all you people, and I don't ever want anyone to have to go through what Michael and his family went through this year.

Overall, there have been challenges with this issue, no doubt about it. When I set out to put a new D.A.M.N. Magazine together, I'm typically not under any sort of time pressure. I solicit content, write my own stuff and slowly gather art, as needed. This was a different experience, altogether. I had most of the content assembled before the crowdfunding completed, but then ran into problems, especially with my own adventure. Lots of re-thinking and re-writing after getting feedback from a few folks. So, instead of a late-May release, we're here at a late-August release.

Hopefully, it was worth the wait. Daniel's adventure, *The Demon Serpent of Balmorphos*, is the first installment of the *Balmorphos Dungeon* – I believe the first published mega-dungeon for the DCC RPG ruleset! Maybe I'm wrong – I think Purple Duck converted theirs... but close! My adventure, *Cannibal*

*Tiger-Women of Tsaru*, is a connected (not sequel... not prequel) adventure to *The God-Seed Awakens!* Along with those, we have Cory Gahsman's first published adventure, *Portal to the Plane of Probability* (go DM Cojo!), and a collection of content from Eric Hoffman, Ari-Matti Pippo, Daniel Vance and others. Near the back of this book, you'll also find the first installment of Jason Sholtis' DCC comic, *Party of the DAMNED!*

It's a packed issue. Content-dense. I hope you can use all of it, and I hope you'll shoot us feedback on how awesome it all is and what you'd like to see in future issues.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for your support. The crowdfunding campaign was humbling — you guys are awesome. Check the end of this issue for a full list of supporters.

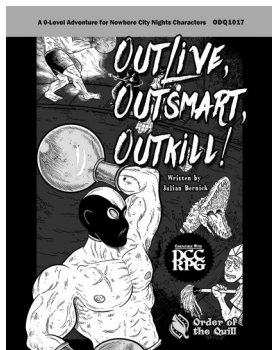


Michael Fantin

October 8, 1971—May 16, 2018

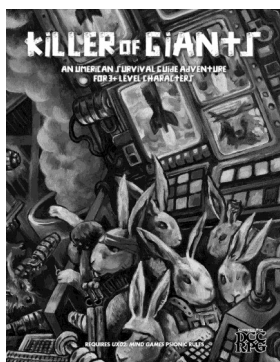


# News From Around the Fire



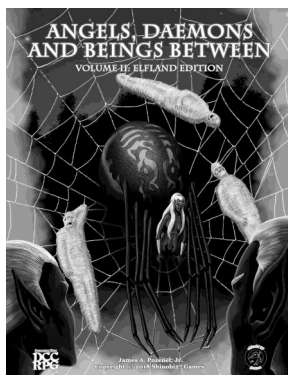
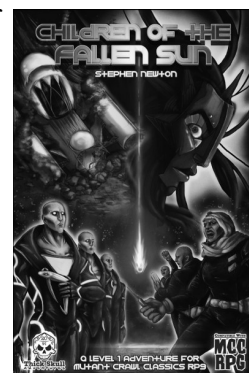
**Outlive, Outsmart, Outkill!** — A great 0-level funnel for Nowhere City Nights setting from Julian Bernick! Get in there and kill your buddies. Available at RPGNow/DriveThru and Goodman Games' site (Softcover/PDF — 24 pages — \$2.50 - \$4.99)

**The Gongfarmer's Almanac 2017** — Another EIGHT issues of some of the best content in the DCC community! This series is focused on areas of Pandemonium. And it's all free! Find it on RPGNow/DriveThru in PDF. Hit up the Gongfarmers Local #282 on G+ for details on physical copies.



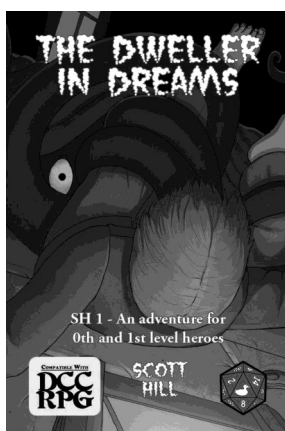
**Killer of Giants** — Adventure by Forrest Aguirre from Shield of Faith Studios' Umerican Survival Guide setting. For 3rd level characters. Available at RPGNow/DriveThru and Goodman Games' site. (Softcover/PDF — 50 pages — \$4.99 - \$11.99)

**Children of the Fallen Sun** — The first 3PP adventure for Mutant Crawl Classics from Stephen Newton and Thick Skull Adventures. Available at RPGNow/DriveThru and Goodman Games' site (Softcover/PDF — 62 pages — \$4.99 - \$14.99)



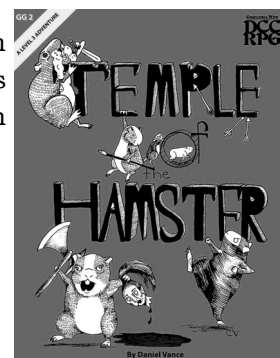
**Angels, Daemons and Beings Between: Elfland Edition** — A passel of new patrons from the land of the elves! By James A. Pozenel, Jr and Shinobi 27 Games. We covered this last issue, and it's a beautiful book. Available at RPGNow/DriveThru and Goodman Games' site (Hardcover/PDF — 180 pages — \$15.99 - \$29.99)

**Crawl-thulhu** — A two-fisted zine of Lovecraftian Horror! By John Potts. Available at RPGNow/DriveThru and Goodman Games' site. (Softcover/PDF — 38 pages — \$3.00 - \$8.00)



**Dweller in Dreams** — A 0-level to 1st level adventure from Scott Hill and Daniel Bishop. Published by Purple Duck Games. Available at RPGNow/DriveThru. (Softcover/PDF — 44 pages — \$6.00 - \$10.99)

**Temple of the Hamster** — Wacky 3rd level adventure from Daniel Vance at Vance Games. Daniel has an article in this issue! Available at RPGNow/DriveThru and Goodman Games' site. (Softcover/PDF — 38 pages — \$9.99 - \$12.99)



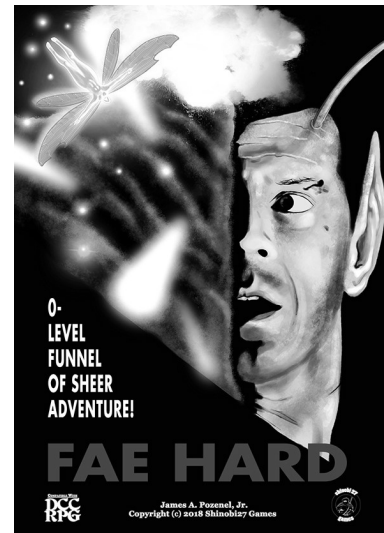


# D14 RUMORS AND REPORTS

| D14 | RUMOR OR REPORT                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Goodman just picked up another license for a future product — little known Appendix N author Agatha Christie! Look for the British Mystery Crawl Classics (BMCC) Kickstarter any day now. (Probable)                           |
| 2   | Kent Landis is looking for some new blood to play some DCC in the Edinburgh / McAllen Texas area. (Seems plausible)                                                                                                            |
| 3   | Slug men and giant tapeworms whittled down Chris Lauricella's group of 12 as they braved the Sanctum of the Snail! (True)                                                                                                      |
| 4   | A field guide to the man-apes emerged from the keeper of the great Sanctum (find it at <a href="http://knightsinthenorth.blog">knightsinthenorth.blog</a> for yourself!)                                                       |
| 5   | Jonathan Snodgrass (Jon S) is set to release Star Crawl! Look for it in your favorite online venue soon! (True)                                                                                                                |
| 6   | A lonely GM has found the secret of the Frost Ones, once called the non-PC "frost man" within the folio of fiends. Check it out at the lonely GM's tower ( <a href="http://lonelygm.blogspot.com">lonelygm.blogspot.com</a> ). |
| 7   | A marsh ghost lurks somewhere outside the settled lands...oddly in a marsh. The great repository of the Appendix M has all the details ( <a href="http://appendixm.blogspot.com">appendixm.blogspot.com</a> )                  |
| 8   | Hamish MacGruber was last seen falling from the pinnacle of an elf-mound with a stupid look on his face. (Fae Harder)                                                                                                          |
| 9   | At the GaryCon Cultural Exchange™ Sean P. Kelley got in a huge fight...mostly with his own hair. (Totally True).                                                                                                               |
| 10  | John Senz Jr played his first DCC RPG game at GENCON 2018. Welcome to the madness, John! (True)                                                                                                                                |
| 11  | Brendan LaSalle received a great honor from the Dark Master, himself. Was it everlasting life? Free beer unto the mortal and immortal realms? An award for being an awesome DCC judge? (None know the details)                 |
| 12  | A cabal of wizards, each from their dispersed lairs, labor to craft yet another tome detailing supernatural patrons — when will mere mortals receive this new wisdom? (Spring 2019?)                                           |
| 13  | It is said that the great adventuring parties of the Lords of Sarcasm and the Hammertoes emerged from a dungeon far to the north and had to do final battle with each other for supremacy. (The Hammertoes won)                |
| 14  | Worst kept secret that can now be told (heard on G+): Lead writer for DCC Dying Earth is D.A.M.N.'s-own Marc Bruner! (Definitely true — see Marc's awesome adventure in last issue.)                                           |



Cultists before the Great Gong!



Yippy-Ki-Yay Flowerplucker



All Bow to SPK's Hair

# Third Party Spotlight: Thick Skull Adventures

Stephen Newton says he was “one of the first” third-party publishers for DCC RPG, but I really think he was the first. *Attack of the Frawgs* was advertised in and released simultaneously with the original DCC core rulebook. I know that he was an inspiration to me and spurred me to launch Mystic Bull Games and then publish our very first book, *In the Prison of the Squid Sorcerer*. And that’s why I call him the grand-pappy of the third-party publishers. I met Stephen in person for the first time last year at GaryCon, and he’s just as cool as his many adventures. Well, grand-pappy is first again! *Children of the Fallen Sun* was released almost simultaneously with Mutant Crawl Classics RPG and is the first third-party published MCC RPG adventure. Maybe ‘ole grand-pappy will inspire another wave of third-party folks to the blasted wastelands and crazy mutations of the apocalypse.

## **Tell us about *Children of the Fallen Sun*.**

CotFS is a 1<sup>st</sup>-level adventure for Mutant Crawl Classics RPG. It’s a story about a crashed “sky ark” of the ancients (spoiler alert... it’s a space ship). The PCs are asked by their village elders to go check it out. In addition to all the usual mayhem that comes with exploring the tech of the ancients, the PCs get to interact with some of the survivors of the wreck. Things are not as simple as they might appear, however. The PCs quickly realize that several competing factions on the ship may have actually caused the crash.

## **What was your inspiration for the adventure?**

In the 80s during my “golden age of gaming,” I played *Gamma World* third-most after D&D and *Top Secret*. I’m a huge fan of the post-apocalyptic genre. In addition to the movies and books that most people reference, I also played a lot of interactive fiction and cRPGs, so CotFS was probably influenced as much by *Planetfall* by Infocom and *XCom* by Microprose as it was by Niven & Pournelle’s *Lucifer’s Hammer* or Stephen King’s *Dark Tower* series.

## **When did you become involved with MCC RPG?**

Jim Wampler’s MCC RPG project was probably the worst-kept secret in terms of officially unannounced projects – he’d alluded to it multiple

times as a host on the podcast *Spellburn*. At that point, I hadn’t worked with Jim on any projects – later on we’d collaborate together on several of the road crew tournament adventures. I just sent him a message and said, “Hey I’m a fan of the genre! Is there any way I could get a sneak peek at the rules?” Jim was incredibly generous and receptive to the idea. Over the next several months, he’d send me early manuscripts, and I’d give him feedback – it was incredibly rewarding. Through that process I pitched him my ideas for a trilogy adventure series, of which CotFS was the first. He gave me great feedback all through the development process.

## **When and where can I get it?**

I ran a Kickstarter back in November, and all of those backers received their copies in April. The book is on sale now — the PDF is available on RPGNow, and print copies are available through Goodman Games’ online store, Noble Knight, and Game Kastle.com.

## **What’s Next for Thick Skull Adventures?**

Thick Skull’s next product will be *The Last Will and Testament of Obediah Felkner*, a DCC RPG adventure in an old-west setting. I’ve done lots of playtesting with it, most recently at GaryCon 2018, and I always have fun running it. It doesn’t require David Baity’s *Dark Trails* or Stormlord Publishing’s *Black Powder*, *Black Magic*, but I’ve playtested it with both of those systems.

I’m also excited to announce that I’m writing this year’s Halloween adventure for Goodman Games. I had a great time writing *They Served Brandolyn Red* for Goodman back in 2015; horror is one of my favorite genres. I presume that adventure will be available around Oct 2018.

## **Final Random Question: Are the rumors true you’ve managed to include a giant beaver in each of your adventures?**

Almost all of them! They first appeared in *Frawgs*, and have been referenced, even if just as a casual mention, in almost all adventures I’ve published since. They’re becoming something of a signature Easter Egg for me!



# Artist Spotlight: Feliks RK Pyron

We sat down with Feliks RK Pyron, freelance illustrator seen most recently in Thick Skull Adventures' *Children of the Fallen Sun*.

Feliks RK Pyron lives in Morgantown, West Virginia, pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree at West Virginia University. Feliks is a mixed media printmaker working to critique our experience with fantasy and fiction and branches those ideas into their work as a freelance illustrator. Their illustrations are a blend of digital painting, watercolor, and ink.

**You are a recurring artist for Thick Skull Adventures, including doing the cover for the latest adventure Children of the Fallen Sun. What was the process you used for designing the cover of that adventure?**

So, I like to keep things pretty open, but for illustration I think my biggest goal is giving things the larger-than-life effect the author has in their head. Stephen Newton and I have worked on illustrations before, but this was our first cover together. Stephen told me some references he was looking at, I added a few more- like the clustered, scifi golden days posters. I designed a few very rough composition drafts, focusing on key visuals in the intro: the description of the aliens, the crimson streak in the sky, for example. Just to get a feel. Stephen has some experience in Photoshop, so he sent me back a conglomeration of the rough drafts into exactly what he wanted and I took it from there.

One thing that I really wanted to happen was the overbearing presence of HERA. I love villains, and she's a star character, so making her huge and grandiose in perspective to everything else was just natural. She's sleek, but still has some ornateness and intensity to her befitting the goddess of the same name. Since she's an AI, she doesn't need a body, so the floating head idea ended up being her final form. I took some liberties with the ship- since it is HERA's- and the rest fell into place. I just trust my gut and experience as an artist to make all the little details and still give them weight for people who look long enough. The Redman is holding a screwdriver like device you find on the ship, there's something lurking in the door of the ship- little things like that.

**How did you first become involved in illustrating for RPGs?**

I've done commissions in the past, such as illustrations of people's campaign characters and had my own projects but was never involved in official name-brand campaigns. Stephen and I met at a family gathering- Stephen is actually a very very distant, removed cousin? Very distant. We got to talking about his projects, I showed him some of my work, and we talked. This was quite a few years ago. I got my first project, which was illustrating the massive and disgusting fleshless Blood Golem. I'm a huge horror fan, so I knew exactly how to handle it. I wanted this thing to be terrifying! Stephen loved it, and we've just kept working on projects since then. I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity one small illustration turned into.

**What is the process you undertake when designing an illustration for an adventure?**

The author and I get to talking. I will do several composition drafts- just for proportions. I look for three things in creating- dynamism, variety, and storytelling. Can I tell something about the figures' backgrounds and the perils of their current location? Is my eye moving across the page and back again? Is this setting or characters I've made "default," or am I being inclusive? Once I get the OK on the composition, it's time to get in the details. If it's black and white, I do the initial layers by hand in ink to get that organic, high contrast look, and then finish up everything with some pizazz in Photoshop. Digital painting is just like normal painting. Start with the largest layers, maybe a key, get the colors, and add finishing touches.

**Who are some of the artists that inspire you?**

I love rich textures, halos, and gross things, that sort of step away from the graphic nature of the medium and bridge the gap between art and illustration. My favorite illustrators are Tobias Kwan and Anthony S. Waters for those reasons. Other contemporaries I look to are Tyler Jacobsen, Finlay Cowan, and Kristen Liu-Wong.

**What would you like to see more or less of in RPG art?**

More variety! We're dealing with aliens, monsters, and the whole breadth of humanity itself in an environment where there are no rules. Constantly, the only characters that are presented in a huge variety of bodies, levels of disgusting, and personalities, are male. Especially in contrast to the skimwear and highly sexualized proportions of general female protagonists. Make your women gross! Throw in some ambiguous or queer characters! The idea of gender suffers greatly under the capabilities of fantasy; it's lame enough on real earth, who's to say the concept would even exist in another world? At least give everyone realistic armor and clothing if you have to.

**What is the best way to reach you if someone wants to discuss commissioning you for art?**

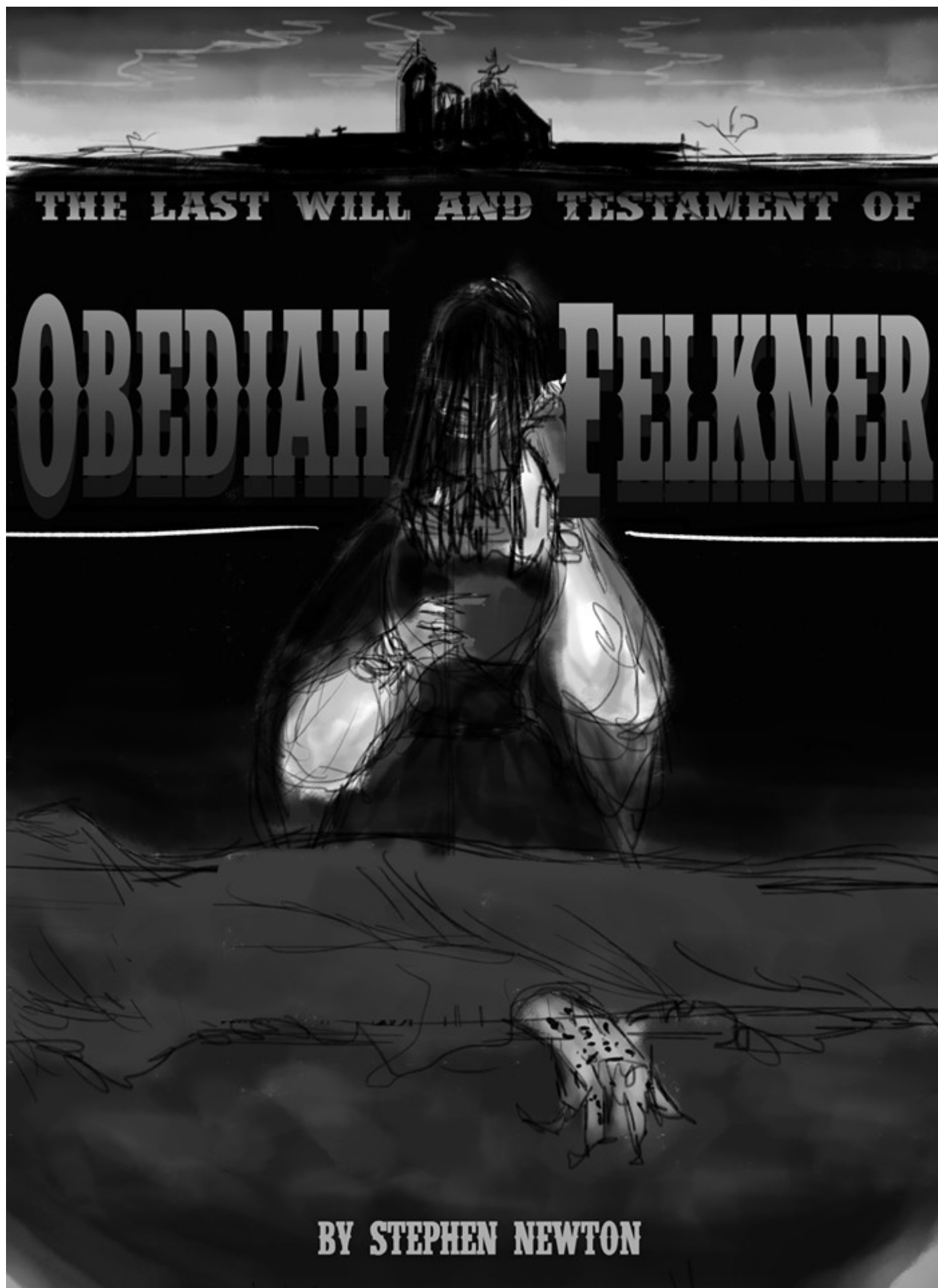
I can be reached at [frkpyron@gmail.com](mailto:frkpyron@gmail.com)! You can also follow me on Instagram, [@goodluckpotion](https://www.instagram.com/goodluckpotion), or check out my website, [frkpyron.com](http://frkpyron.com).





HELL  
IS THE  
LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES





Enjoy this “teaser trailer” of Stephen’s upcoming adventure. On the opposite page, check out Feliks RK Pyron’s sketch cover. It’s a great time to be alive in the gaming community when this much creativity is exploding from our third-party community! — Editor.

## THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF OBEDIAH FELKNER

A Western-themed adventure for Dungeon Crawl Classics by Stephen Newton

Coming in 2018

### SUMMARY

On a cool evening in the town of Los Castores, a lawyer summons a small group of strangers into his office. Obediah Felkner, a prominent resident and landowner, has recently passed away, and surprisingly the strangers have been named his beneficiaries. Mr. Felkner’s stake to a quicksilver mine is about to become theirs.

However, the lawyer says Felkner’s will contains a peculiar precondition: the only way that deed to the mine can be transferred is if the party collects a holy relic known as the *Hand of San Roque* before dawn and delivers it to Mr. Felkner’s grieving widow. The artifact is rumored to be hidden somewhere in the old San Roque Mission, abandoned by the Spanish almost 40 years prior.

And should they refuse? The lawyer points out they too have contracted the same disease that took the life of Mr. Felkner, and the retrieval of the relic is their only hope if they wish to survive the affliction.

### PLAYER START – WELCOME TO LOS CASTORES...

*The Lawyer, flanked by the Widow, The Muscle, and the Madam, stood over a well-dressed dead body lying in repose.*

*“Despite appearances to the contrary,” the lawyer said gesturing to the mottled corpse in front of you, “All of you may safely trust that Mr. Felkner fell to his death a mere two days prior.”*

*Old Obediah Felkner, one of the most prosperous landowners in Los Castores, lay half-covered on a table looking like a strip of lean jerky stuffed into a new suit. His pock-marked skin was withered, and his hair was yellow and brittle like straw. You couldn’t be sure if it was the twilight streaming through the window, or the illness which claimed his life, but his skin was a ghastly shade of purple.*

*The stranger next to you spoke up. “And what exactly do y’all want from us? I had nothing to do with him dyin’.” You recognized The Lawyer and those joining him, but the others called into the office with you were strangers.*

*The bespectacled lawyer continued. “Mister Felkner has generously bequeathed each of you a substantial grant of land, as well as making you all partial owners to his quicksilver mine.”*

*That gave you all pause—such a sum would be worth a fortune!*

*“However,” he continued. “Before such largesse can be claimed, a rather peculiar condition must be satisfied. Before the sun rises, you must bring the Hand of San Roque—a trinket idolized by the papists and hidden away in the old abandoned Spanish mission—to his crypt to be buried with him.”*

*Now you were skeptical. The old San Roque Mission was boarded up and abandoned when the Spanish secularized the missions over 30 years ago. In fact, rumors claimed it had become a plague pit after it was closed. Before you could voice your concerns, the lawyer continued, “And sadly I must advise you that the pursuit of said relic grants more than the aforementioned generous monetary gains. The trinket is also the key in preventing you from succumbing to the same ailment that felled Mr. Felkner.”*

*With that, the lawyer nodded towards your arms, and looking down, you noticed that your skin had started to break out in black pustules. Suddenly you felt very cold and very afraid.*





# DEMON SERPENT OF BALMORPHOS

By Daniel J. Bishop



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The original version of this adventure appeared in the third (and final) issue of *Dragon Roots* magazine. It had been intended as the first part of a three-part series written for 3.5-era rules. Even then, though, I was making attempts to get back to the game's Appendix N roots, and making monsters mysterious was part of what made the adventure work. The other two parts, *The Wilds of Balmorphos* and *The City of Xandrath*, never saw the light of day, and will be written from my original notes directly into DCC content.

*The Wilds of Balmorphos* deals with a series of caverns that is essentially a wilderness, lying between the Upper Levels and the City of Xandrath.

*The City of Xandrath* is the lair of the Azith, a city composed of ancient crypts, replete with hidden passages, strange cults, and a foul god-thing (Kul'Amaric) who periodically clambers up from the Well of Darkness to hunt.

This adventure is intended for low-level characters, although some encounters may initially be well beyond their ability to deal with. The adventure was conceived as part of a sandbox setting, where the *Wilds of Balmorphos* and the *City of Xandrath* could be used as part of the backdrop of other adventures.

## BACKGROUND

Balmorphos Dungeon is located in a forested expanse of rocky hills. It was here that the magician Balmorphos built his tower, wishing for seclusion in which to pursue his experiments. He delved beneath the tower, creating chambers for his work, as well as for his servants and guardsmen. Although he was at first unaware of the natural caverns in the area, he eventually broke into them. Discovering the area now known as the Wilds of Balmorphos, he

established contact with first the Merlews and then the Azith.

From the Azith, Balmorphos learned many dread secrets of necromancy and demonology. At last, through a botched ritual, he summoned a demon into the body of what would grow into the Balmorphos Serpent. For many years, Balmorphos kept the Serpent as a servant, but the Spawn of Kul'Amaric came for the wizard one night as he prowled the streets of Xandrath, and Balmorphos was slain. The earth heaved, the tower fell, and the entrance to the underground passages was laid bare. The wooded hills around where the magician's tower once stood are now the hunting ground of the Balmorphos Serpent, which is locally feared as a dangerous beast.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

Getting the characters involved in this area might be difficult. Because the judge absolutely must give them sufficient warning about the Balmorphos Serpent, players might hesitate to send their characters here, and rightly so. Nonetheless, PCs are nothing if not foolhardy when prodded in the right way, and there are hooks that might help convince the PCs to explore Balmorphos Dungeon:

**Following a Failed Expedition:** If the PCs have relatives who entered this dungeon, but didn't leave, they might have good reason to look around. It is recommended that the remains of any such expedition be located in **Level One, Area 3**. This presents the players with the knowledge that there is more to explore beyond the lair of the Balmorphos Serpent without raising undue expectations of finding living expedition members to rescue. After returning the bodies to their home base, the characters may return to find out what is behind those doors.

**Balmorphos' Journal:** The magician's journal contains information about exactly what the

Balmorphos Serpent is, and would be very useful in slaying it. This is useful if the PCs want revenge on the creature (if they were following a failed expedition, for example). The journal also contains spell information that may be of immense value to a wizard or elf. Alternately, a wealthy, but not physically imposing, NPC might offer a ransom for the journal's recovery because he seeks revenge against the Serpent. Balmorphos' journal is located in **Level One, Area 30**.

**The Dragon's Fangs:** This legendary cache of gemstones includes rubies, sapphires, and emeralds, some as large as a man's forearm. That Balmorphos had them is well known; what happened to them after his tower fell is unknown. Though PCs may be lured by the rumor, the Dragon's Fangs are located in the City of Xandrath, the third installment of this adventure.

**Entering through the Wilds:** The second installment of this adventure, *The Wilds of Balmorphos*, includes a few methods of getting to the surface world from the wilderness caverns. It is quite possible that PCs who avoid taking on the Balmorphos Serpent might enter through one of these exits, and thus take on the Upper Levels from below.

**Wait Until Higher Level:** There is nothing wrong, in a sandbox setting, with the players deciding that some challenges are beyond their abilities to meet. In this case, you can build up stories of the depredations of the Balmorphos Serpent over several sessions, as the PCs adventure and gain experience. When they are ready for Balmorphos Dungeon, the dungeon will be ready for them.

## STAGING NOTES

If you intend to use the upper levels of Balmorphos Dungeon without using "The Wilds of Balmorphos" or "The City of Xandrath", the gates on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level can lead to anywhere you desire. If you have a megadungeon campaign that you wish to use, for example, this dungeon can lead directly into that megadungeon. If you wish, you can use the Upper Levels with the city, creating your own area in between. The later parts of this series, in particular, are designed to be expanded by the judge, so that you can introduce whatever elements you like to the setting.

Making this dungeon work well relies upon the players experiencing an important transition in how they view the area. When the PCs first come to the dungeon, they are liable to treat it as any other adventure location. As they deal with the dangers found herein, they discover that the dungeon is inhabited by colonists *from below*. These colonists are creatures that the PCs can deal with, with a smaller or greater degree of success. Most importantly, the colonists view the dangers that the PCs have faced thus far to be **relatively safe** in comparison with what lies in the wild caves beyond. Achieving this shift in perspective is the key to making the setting come alive.

## ADVENTURE START

*The tower of the wizard Balmorphos has long since fallen to ruin, but legends have grown about the great wealth to be found below.*

*A vast and uncanny snake, known as the Balmorphos Serpent, haunts the wooded hills where lies the tower ruin. In any event, accounts of the vast bronze-scaled snake leave little doubt that it is a foe well beyond your current prowess.*

*Nonetheless, it is not the Serpent you have come seeking, but the treasures which may hide in the ruined passages beneath the tower. Wise folk know that not everything that can be killed is worth the risk of battle! The Serpent is known to hunt by night and rest by day, so you have made your way here under cover of darkness.*

*You can see an arched stairway beneath the tower ruins. Great riches or sudden death await!*





## LEVEL ONE

This level can be subdivided into several areas:

**Areas 1-5** may be considered part of the Lair of the Balmorphos Serpent. Although the creature cannot get past the doors, its presence has prevented other creatures from exploring these areas for many years. Characters attempting to flee from the Serpent might easily become trapped in **Areas 4** or **5**, where hopefully they have enough food or water to survive until the Serpent leaves its lair, or enough power to actually slay the thing. There are no wandering monsters in this region.

**Areas 6-14** are largely controlled by the smoke rats that lair in **Area 10**.

**Areas 15-31** comprise a watery expanse, where half-submerged rooms have become home to blood pirhana swarms. Merlews from the Wilds of Balmorphos are sometimes sent up here to capture fish for the Azith; they in turn are preyed upon by the Ancient Horror that patrols this region.

**Areas 32-34** are held by the Azith, and Merlews are stationed here to prevent creatures from traveling into the Wilds of Balmorphos.

### AREAS 1-5: LAIR OF THE BALMORPHOS SERPENT

**1. First Landing:** *The arched stairway goes down about 25 feet at a 40° angle, ending in a space about 20 feet square, with a vaulted ceiling 12 feet high. The walls are covered with rust-colored moss and lichen, except where they have been scraped clean by the passage of an enormous serpent. Where there is no moss, you can see moist rivulets of water seeping down the ill-fitted stone walls. To the northwest, you can see another archway, where another flight of stairs leads down further into darkness. As with the steps you just descended, these seem worn and cracked as though by frequent passage.*

The steps to the northwest are wider than those that led into this area, but not as steep, descending at an angle of about 20°. The stairway is arched to a height of 12 feet, and goes downward some 35 feet. A pair of boots is discarded along the left-hand (southwestern) wall, about three quarters of the way down the flight. There is still a rotted human foot in the left boot.

The rust-colored moss is harmless, and exists by consuming the stone itself. This weakens the stone

so that flakes of its surface can be pulled off wherever the moss is found.

**2. Second Landing:** *The stairway enters another landing, again about 20 feet square and vaulted to a height of 12 feet. An archway in the west wall leads to a third flight of stone steps. Jumbles of bones and cast-off bits of detritus lie in the corners of this area. The uneven flagstones sag in the middle of the floor, as though from subsidence in the depths. You can hear the distant trickle of water from somewhere deep underground. The whole area smells of dry reptile musk, rotting meat, and sulfur.*

There is a 70% chance that the Balmorphos Serpent is in its lair (**Level 1, Area 3**) during the day, and a 30% chance at night. If it is in its lair, and the PCs make excessive noise here, it attempts to come silently up the stairway to the west (Int check vs. +2 to avoid surprise).

The detritus in the corners of this room include bones, cast off skins from the Serpent, bits of dropped gears, and the large dry pellets of waste from past victims that the Serpent couldn't digest. This last consists mainly of fur and animal bones, although there are a few human and one elf skeleton as well.

Some items of note can be found among the debris: the hilt and blade shards of a medium short sword that shattered on the Serpent's hide (its pommel is of worked ivory, worth 25 gp), seven iron pitons, a chain shirt in one of the waste pellets that passed through the Serpent unharmed, and a somewhat rusty mace. The cast-off skins appear to be made of almost translucent metal, but are brittle and crumble to the touch. Characters who search thoroughly may find a heavy silver signet ring worth 25 gp with a successful Luck check.

**3. The Serpent's Lair:** *There is a great reek of dry mustiness and a rotten-egg sulfur smell wafting up from below as you go down the stairs. The steps lead into a larger space, some 30 feet to a side. There are ironbound doors in the center of the north and west walls. To the south, a 5-foot alcove leads to a similar door. None of these exits has seen recent use – the cast-offs of the Balmorphos Serpent would make this impossible. They lie undisturbed around the corners and edges of this room – great shining loops of translucent sloughed skin, bones, and the almost mummified pellets that are the huge snake's droppings. A palpable sense of evil hangs in the still,*

*close air, as though unseen and malevolent eyes are watching this place even now.*

Unless the PCs have made excessive noise coming down the stairs, there is a 70% chance that the Balmorphos Serpent is here during the day, and a 30% chance at night. The Balmorphos Serpent is a 50-foot long viper with hard brass scales and a head shaped like a blunt arrowhead. Its eyes glow red in the darkness. It smells of reptile musk, but its hissing breath reeks of sulfur (not unlike the smell of a struck match or rotting eggs). Its body is, at its widest point, easily as large as a man. When resting or in combat, its coiled body takes up an area roughly 15 square feet, and it can strike 10 feet away from its central body mass. Transparent green venom drips from its fangs. See below for statistics.

The ironbound doors leading from this chamber are 2 inches thick, and requiring a DC 20 Strength check to open. The door to the south is also locked (Pick Lock DC 15). The key to this lock can be found in **Area 33**.

Anyone examining the cast-off skins note that they smell faintly sulfuric, and that there seems to be a brassy sheen to the skin overall.

There are several items of interest to be found in this chamber: 3 short swords, 2 longswords, a spear, a shield, a backpack (contains 6 pitons, a small hammer, and two torches), a small pouch (15 sp, 207 cp, and three small agate gems worth 25 gp each), and a battered metal flask that contains three doses of a *healing draught* (restores 1 HD per dose; this potion is light green with a scent like cinnamon and a slightly metallic taste). Searching takes time, and there is a non-cumulative 5% chance per minute that the Balmorphos Serpent returns to its lair (if away) while the PCs are here. A lookout automatically spots the creature's glowing red eyes as it rushes down the final stairway.

If the PCs hear the Balmorphos Serpent coming, they can attempt to pass through one of the doors in this room and spike it shut. If they do this, the Balmorphos Serpent remains in its lair for three days, waiting for them to return. Although it has the strength to open the doors, it doesn't have the intellect to do so.

**The Balmorphos Serpent (demon-possessed giant snake):** Init +4; Atk bite +8 melee (3d6 plus poison); AC 20; HD 6d10+24; hp 57; MV 20' or climb 20' or

swim 20'; SP poison, breath weapon, half damage (fire, cold, acid), vulnerable to electricity (x2 damage), death throes (demon released); SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Wil +8; AL C.

The Balmorphos Serpent can breathe a 30' long cone of poisonous gas, with a 30' base, once every 2d4 rounds. This causes 1d8 damage to creatures caught inside the cone, and an additional 1d4 temporary Strength damage (Fort DC 10 to avoid). Its deadly venom causes 1d3 points of temporary Stamina damage with each bite, plus a DC 16 Fort save. Failure indicates death in 1d3 rounds.

The Serpent is possessed by a Type III demon, which is released if the serpent is slain, appearing to crawl from the Serpent's mouth (getting larger as it does so). This demon will only linger upon the material plane for 1d5+2 rounds after being freed from the giant snake, as it has neglected its home and family for far too long. If the PCs engage it in combat, it wails about how it missed its larvae's first days in the learning crèche, how it misses its mate, and how its investments have been neglected for far too long. The demon itself appears as a bronze-covered armadillo that stinks of sulfur. It attacks with poisonous claws, which drip venom identical in appearance to that of the Balmorphos Serpent, but which only causes an additional 1d5 damage on a failed DC 18 Fort save. Worse, victims of its bite are drained of 1d4 XP if they fail a DC 20 Will save. This lost XP cannot reduce a character's level, but it does need to be re-earned in order to gain a new level.

**Type III demon:** Init +4; Atk claw +12 melee (1d6+4 plus poison) or bite +8 melee (1d4+6 plus XP drain); AC 20; HD 7d12; hp 66; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP poison, XP drain, demon traits (speech, telepathy, infravision 120', cast *darkness* with +12 to spell check, immune to weapons of +2 or less enchantment or natural attacks of creatures with 5 or less HD, can teleport back to home plane, half damage from fire, cold, acid, electricity, and gas), crit range 18-20; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Wil +8; AL C.

The hide of the Balmorphos Serpent is worth 150 gp for its metal value, and 450 gp as a trophy if removed intact (requiring a DC 15 Intelligence check; remember that characters without appropriate occupations roll this check using 1d10). Each failure by 5 or more damages the skin, removing 3d6 x 10 gp of value.

**4. Long-Abandoned Room:** This area is approximately 30 feet wide and 40 feet deep. The vaulted ceiling 12 feet above you is obscured by ancient, dusty cobwebs that wave in the stirred air from opening the door. About 20 feet into the room, the floor has fallen about 5 feet, leaving a ragged broken edge. The ceiling is relatively whole, but you can see deeply cracked unworked stone where the walls splintered and twisted. The whole room seems slightly skewed. The floor is strewn with shards of rock and old pottery.

There is nothing of interest here.

**5. Old Barracks:** The door opens into a dusty space some 30 feet wide and 40 feet deep, vaulted to a height of 12 feet. This room was obviously once a barracks used by those who guarded the entrance to Balmorphos' underground fortress. The collapsed wooden frames of several cots line the west wall. Rusted metal racks for weapons are bolted to the eastern wall, although whatever weapons they once held are long since gone. A dank hole about a foot-and-a-half in diameter is bored into the floor. Presumably, this was once used as a well, or to eliminate waste.

The well in the corner has no lip built up around it to prevent folk from falling or sliding into it. It drops 30 feet into swiftly flowing water. In days past, this was used both for waste elimination and for drinking water, as the underground river carried away any waste materials.

Searching the collapsed wooden frames of the beds uncovers a small chest, which is still locked (Pick Locks DC 10). The chest was once protected by a poison pin (Find Trap DC 10, Disable Trap DC 15), but the poison long ago lost its potency. (In the event that a PC gets pricked with the pin, though, the judge should still require a Fort save as though the poison were still active). Within, wrapped amid an old moth-eaten tunic, is a leather pouch containing 15 sp and a small vial. The vial contains two doses of the poison that once guarded the lock: by wound, 1d6 damage plus DC 14 Fort save or 1d4 temporary Stamina damage. The poison is a viscous grey substance that smells slightly of mushrooms.

## AREAS 6-15: SMOKE RATS

There is a 1 in 6 chance of a wandering encounter in this region every turn. Such an encounter will be with 1d4-1 smoke rats. If no smoke rats are



encountered (i.e., the d4 comes up a "1"), the encounter is instead with a lone Merlew. Merlews cannot be encountered in **Areas 10, 11, 13, or 14**, and will always attempt to flee if possible. Smoke rats flee if injured in places they cannot regenerate.

**Merlew:** Init -1; Atk bite -1 melee (1d3) or bronze handaxe -1 melee (1d6-1); AC 10; HD 1d6-1; hp 3 each (or roll); MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', amphibious, light sensitivity, bronze weapons; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L.

Merlews are the servants of the Azith, amphibious pale yellow humanoids who view their masters as demigods. They dislike bright light and take a -1d to all rolls in light brighter than torchlight. Their archaic-looking weapons are made of bronze, deforming on either a natural "20" or "1", in addition to any other effects, reducing their damage die by -1d on the dice chain until repaired.

**Smoke rat:** Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1 plus disease); AC 13; HD 1d6+2; hp 6 each (or roll); MV 30' or climb 20' or swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (Fort DC 7 or additional 1d6 damage), gaseous form, regeneration 1/round if in contact with water; cold susceptibility, death throes; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

Smoke rats are giant rats roughly 2 feet in length, not including their tails. They have the ability to assume gaseous form at will once every hour, and can maintain that form as long as they desire. A smoke rat regenerates 1 hp/round if it is in contact with a body of water or is in an area of mist, steam, or fog. The rat actually (and visibly) draws substance into its body to affect this healing. Any sort of cold-based attack slows smoke rats, so that

their speed drops by 10', and all their d20 rolls suffer a -1d penalty for 3 rounds. Finally, when a smoke rat dies, its body bursts, releasing a nauseating cloud of greyish-green vapor. Those within 5' must succeed in a DC 10 Fort save or have their rolls reduced by -1d on the dice chain for the next round.

Creatures in gaseous form cannot make physical attacks and are immune to most non-magical attacks. Although gaseous, smoke rats still appear rat-like, roughly retaining their normal body shapes. They can, however, effectively fly at half their normal movement.

**6. The Skewed Hallway:** *About 20 feet down the hallway to the west, you can see signs of some ancient upheaval. Rubble lies upon the floor, where the hallway tilts to the left at an angle of about 12° as far as the eye can see. The walls here are covered in a thick growth of shaggy grayish moss, which hangs down as much as five feet from the ceiling in some places.*

The tilted section is 65 feet long, ending shortly before the stairs leading into **Area 15**. The rubble and tilted floor make this hallway treacherous: the judge should call for Reflex saves (DC 10) if characters try to move at more than half their normal speed here. The DC increases by +1d6 if characters attempt to run or perform similar moves. Failure means the character falls prone, but no other damage occurs.

The concealed door to the north is hidden by a heavy growth of moss. The merlews know it is there (having discovered it from the other side) but are always careful to replace the moss if they pass this way. Because the door is so difficult to open, it is seldom used (DC 15 to locate; Strength DC 10 to open) The walls are moist behind the moss, and the door is both swollen and warped.

**7. Smoke Rats:** All of the doors leading into or out of this room have had holes chewed through them. Because the smoke rats can become gaseous, these are all fairly small holes; the biggest is no more than three inches in diameter.

*The door leads into a room 30 feet square, with an ironbound wooden door in the center of each wall. The doors are barely visible due to the thick coating of shaggy grey moss covering the walls and ceiling. The floor is slick with water that drips from the moss*

*hanging so low overhead that it would scrape the brow of a tall man as he entered the room.*

Searching this place uncovers the shards of old pottery urns in the northwest corner, although nothing of value is found.

Anyone who spends more than five rounds in this room encounter three smoke rats that drift through the holes in the eastern door in gaseous form. The rats attack anyone they find in this room. If one or more of the rats is killed, the remainder become gaseous on their next action and seek to escape north or east (whichever door is closest). The water on the floor is not sufficient to allow the rats to regenerate.

**Smoke rats (3):** Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1 plus disease); AC 13; HD 1d6+2; hp 6,6,5; MV 30' or climb 20' or swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (Fort DC 7 or additional 1d6 damage), gaseous form, regeneration 1/round if in contact with water; cold susceptibility, death throes; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

**8. Granary:** The door leading into this room has had holes chewed in it. Because the smoke rats can become gaseous, these are all fairly small holes; the biggest is no more than three inches in diameter.

*The door opens into a short hallway, 10 feet wide and 10 feet long, which leads into a room some 15 feet deep and 50 feet north to south. The floor, walls, and ceiling are cracked from the movement of the earth, and the pottery urns that once lined shelves along the walls have fallen and cracked open, revealing piles of moldering ancient grain. The room smells musty from both mold and thick rat droppings that cover the floor and shelves.*

In the far corners hide three smoke rats, in gaseous form. It requires a DC 15 Intelligence check to notice them; they are automatically discovered if the room is searched. These rats avoid combat if possible; if the party remains in this room more than 1 minute, they attempt to flee (still in gaseous form). Only if they are unable to flee (for example, if the party has stuffed up the holes in the door), or if the party returns after they have resumed normal form, will they fight.

**Smoke rats (3):** Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1 plus disease); AC 13; HD 1d6+2; hp 7,6,6; MV 30' or climb 20' or swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (Fort DC 7 or additional 1d6 damage), gaseous form,



regeneration 1/round if in contact with water; cold susceptibility, death throes; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C

There is nothing of value here.

**9. Grotto of the Stream:** The door leading into this room has had holes chewed in it. Because the smoke rats can become gaseous, these are all fairly small holes; the biggest is no more than three inches in diameter.

*The door opens into a mist-filled grotto, a natural cave with a stream rushing along its eastern wall. The air is warm and wet, and the stones glisten. The stream pours out of a natural arched passage in the northern part of the room. There is at least a good three feet of airway over the stream where it issues into the room.*

This water is very warm, being fed by hydrothermal vents upstream, and no more than a foot-and-a-half deep. Three smoke rats hide here; they require an Intelligence check (DC 20) to notice before they attack. Because they can regenerate in this room, injured rats do not immediately flee. However, if one or more rats are slain, the survivors attempt to flee up the tunnel to **Area 10**, bolstering the ranks of the rats in that area. During this time, they continue to regenerate, so that they are liable to be fully healed if and when the PCs enter **Area 10**.

**Smoke rats (3):** Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1 plus disease); AC 13; HD 1d6+2; hp 8,6,4; MV 30' or climb 20' or swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (Fort DC 7 or additional 1d6 damage), gaseous form, regeneration 1/round if in contact with water; cold susceptibility, death throes; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C

The arched passage to the northwest is filled with water to a depth of 2 feet, and has 3 feet of air space over the water. Creatures taller than 5 feet must hunch over to navigate the passage upright. The passage also goes upward at a gentle angle. The slippery floor, combined with the moving water, means that characters must make Reflex saves to walk here: DC 10 to walk at half speed; DC 15 to walk at normal speed. Moving faster than this is impossible. Characters must also make Reflex saves (DC 10) to attack or perform any other violent movement. If a Reflex save fails, the character cannot take the specified action. If the save fails by

5 or more, the character falls into the water and moves 1d3x5 feet back toward **Area 9**.

To the south, the river passes under solid stone, with no air space. Characters can attempt to swim the 30 feet to **Area 12**. The flow of water makes this easier than it normally would be, so that swimmers need only to make a DC 5 Strength check to succeed. Of course, they must also hold their breath while navigating the passage.

There is nothing of value in this room.

**10. Smoke Rat Lair:** See **Area 9** for details on the watery passage to this area.

*The tunnel emerges into a warm natural cavern, seemingly about 30 feet in diameter, the ceiling glistening at a height of about 20 feet above you. The stream cuts through the center of the room, exiting through a narrower tunnel directly ahead. To your left, you can see two natural passages leading from this room. The whole area is filled with steam from the water, which has grown warmer as you passed up the tunnel. Masses of yellow and red fungi cling to the walls.*

The steam conceals six smoke rats (Intelligence DC 15 to spot), that attack fiercely to defend their lair. If four or more of the rats fall, the survivors flee, becoming gaseous and heading downstream all the way to **Area 13**. In this fight, any rat that is injured but not slain becomes gaseous until its regeneration has restored it to full hit points, at which time it returns to the fight. Any characters that flee will be pursued by the entire pack of surviving rats.

**Smoke rats (6):** Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1 plus disease); AC 13; HD 1d6+2; hp 8,7,6,6,5,4; MV 30' or climb 20' or swim 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (Fort DC 7 or additional 1d6 damage), gaseous form, regeneration 1/round if in contact with water; cold susceptibility, death throes; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C

The river tunnel to **Area 11** is worse than that from **Area 9** to **Area 10**. The grade is steeper, and the water three feet deep with an air space of only 1 foot, so that creatures taller than 4 feet must hunch over to navigate the passage upright, taking a -1d penalty on the dice chain to all Reflex saves and attack rolls, and losing any Agility bonus to AC.

Characters must make Reflex saves to walk in the river tunnel: DC 15 to walk at half speed; DC 20 to

walk at normal speed. Moving faster than this is impossible. DC 15 Reflex saves are required to attack or perform any other violent movement. Spellcasters require a Will save (DC 10) to cast spells. If a Reflex save fails, the character cannot take the specified action. If a Reflex save fails by 5 or more, the character falls into the water and moves 1d5x5 feet back toward Area 10.

The main tunnel to the west is also very steep, and can only be taken at normal movement speeds (although no Reflex saves are required).

**11. Trinkets & Treasures:** During daylight hours, small holes in the ceiling allow some light to filter into this cavern. These same holes allow the smoke rats to enter and leave Balmorphos Dungeon at will. The holes large enough to drop trinkets through, but the largest is no more than six inches in diameter, passing through about 12 feet of stone, earth, and tangled roots to reach the surface.

*This natural cavern is about 40 feet north-south by 25 feet east-west. The river hugs the northern wall. The remainder of the cavern is littered with shiny of once-shiny junk – belt buckles, bits of nail, forks and butter knives, and the like, as well as many coins, tarnished by the moist air or green with verdigris. There is probably much of value here, if it can be identified as such, and if it is properly cleaned and polished.*

The smoke rats are not exceptional in being attracted to shiny objects, and it should surprise no one that going through their “treasure” horde uncovers a great deal of useless junk. Much of what is found here includes metal buttons, grommets, small shards of glazed pottery, bits and pieces of cutlery, and other fairly worthless stuff. However, there are a great many small coins and other objects gathered here as well. PCs can easily gain a small horde of 1,200 cp and 657 sp. There are also three items that can be found by searching for at least a turn and making a successful Luck check.



| 1d3 | ITEM FOUND                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | A small cache of 27 gp.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2   | A corroded bronze dagger. Runes etched into the blade identify it as <i>Barrowbane</i> in the language of serpent-men. This is a Chaotic +1 dagger which is a bane to the un-dead, being treated as a +2 weapon against such creatures. Further, un-dead creatures struck by <i>Barrowbane</i> must succeed in a DC 20 Will save or suffer an additional 1d10 damage per successful attack. Even un-dead normally immune to attacks that require Will saves can be affected. The wielder can detect un-dead within 40' when grasping the dagger's hilt. <i>Barrowbane</i> can communicate via simple urges and has an Intelligence of 5. The corrosion doesn't affect its statistics.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3   | <p>A silver ring of protection +1, wrought to resemble a chain of linked stars. The wearer gains a +1 bonus to AC and all saving throws. There is a cumulative 1% chance each day that the ring is worn that a Type I demon will appear and demand the ring's return. This chance is reset to 1% if the ring is not worn for a full month.</p> <p><b>Mabtophis, Demon of the Chained Stars:</b> Init +1; Atk Sting +2 melee (1d5 plus poison); AC 11; HD 4d12; hp 27; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', poison (1d3 temporary Agility damage plus Fort DC 15 or fall in enchanted slumber for 1d5 days), cast darkness (+4 to spell check), half damage from non-magical weapons and fire; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0, AL C.</p> <p>Mabtophis appears as a man-sized ant with a shaggy, eyeless goat's head. Despite being eyeless, it senses creatures around it within 60' via infravision. If it is not given the ring, it attacks whomever holds it. If given the ring, it immediately returns to its home plane. If the demon is destroyed, the ring may be worn for 1d6 months of game time before the bureaucracy of Hell notices and assigns another demon to its recovery. At this time, the chance of a demon appearing is reset to a cumulative 1% per day.</p> |

Anyone who tries to swim north discovers that the water passes under the stone, with no air space. It requires a DC 10 Strength check to move at half normal speed each round, but it is over a mile before the river reaches the point where it plunges underground. Before it reaches half that distance, the water encounters superheated stone from a hydrothermal vent, raising the temperature of the water to near the boiling point. Characters attempting to pass through this tunnel encounter at least two rounds of near-boiling water, which caused 10d6 points of damage per round. Lesser amounts of damage occur as a character approaches this area, hopefully providing adequate warning of what is to come.

**12. Cavern of the Pool:** The door leading into this room has had holes chewed in it. Because the smoke rats can become gaseous, these are all fairly small holes; the biggest is no more than three inches in diameter.

*The door opens into a rather large cavern, at least 30 feet deep and 60 feet from north to south. A stream comes from the north and exits to the south, leaving a pool of perhaps 15-feet in diameter in the room. Along the west wall are piled barrels, buckets, and rope – these appear to have been gnawed into or through by many rodent teeth. The air is heavy with a fine mist that glistens off walls and floor.*

To the north and south, the river passes under solid stone, with no air space. Characters can attempt to swim to **Areas 9** or **13**, but this isn't an easy task (especially the swim to **Area 13**). To the north, the flow of water impedes movement, so that swimmers need to make a DC 10 Strength checks to reach **Area 9**. To the south, the flow of water makes the swim easier than it normally would be, but swimmers still need to make three DC 5 Strength checks. Of course, in both directions swimmers must also hold their breath while navigating the passage (approximately 30 feet to **Area 9**, and 75 feet to **Area 13**).

**13. First Hidden Cavern:** See **Area 12** for details on swimming to this cavern. This area is lower than **Area 12** by approximately 10 feet.

*The river emerges into a pool in a dark cavern. The water became chillier as it passed through the stone tunnel, and in this room the air is cold enough to set your teeth chattering.*

Hypothermia is a real danger here, unless swimmers can get out of their wet clothes and into something warm and dry. If they can make light (or see in the dark), they can see that over the years broken barrels and other bits of wood have floated downriver, to wind up as flotsam on its banks – certainly enough dry wood for a fire. If the players do not think of it, the judge is certainly within his rights to tell the players that, if their characters do not warm up, they will very likely die.

**Hypothermia:** A character takes 1d3 immediate points of temporary Stamina damage. Fort save (DC 15) every 10 minutes to avoid an additional 1d3 points of temporary damage to Strength, Agility, or Stamina (player's choice). A character who is able to warm up recovers 1 point of ability damage per 5 minutes spent warming, up to half the temporary damage taken. A successful DC 10 Fort save at this time allows the PC to recover all remaining damage from hypothermia over the next 10 minutes. Otherwise, it recovers at the normal rate of 1 point per day.

Swimming back to the north is more difficult than reaching this cavern, requiring three successful DC 10 Strength checks, with any failures pushing the character back toward this cavern and adding to the successes the character must make. They must still hold their breath for the 75 feet required to reach **Area 12**.

If any smoke rats fled down this passage, they will be encountered here. These smoke rats do not suffer from hypothermia, but they are slowed by the cold (as described on page 18).

In the area marked with an "A" on the map, what at first glance appears to be a waterlogged human cadaver has apparently washed ashore. This is actually an Azith from the city of Xandrath, and examination reveals that it has unnaturally pale skin covered with fine snake-like scales. It is obvious that that the Azith was born blind. It wears pale yellow robes and nothing else. However, as soon as anyone touches the body, it animates as an undead creature and attacks.

**Azith cadaver:** Init +5; Atk claw +2 melee (1d4+1 plus disease) or bite -3 melee (1d6 plus disease); AC 13; HD 2d12; hp 13; MV 30'; Act 3d20; SP disease

(Fort DC 12 or suffer 1d3 temporary Agility damage), immunity to cold, reanimation, sense living 60', un-dead traits; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +3; AL C.

When reduced to 0 hp, the un-dead Azith is not destroyed. Rather, it regains 1 hp per round, reanimating when it reaches full hit points in 13 rounds. Only burning the corpse prevents this reanimation.

**14. Second Hidden Cavern:** *This cavern is approximately 30 or 40 feet in diameter, with more than half of the cavern taken up by a pool along the eastern side. It is even colder than where you emerged from the river – so cold that you can see your breath form in great clouds before you, and a thin layer of ice has formed around the edges of the pool, where the water moves less violently. Near where the water rushes off to the southwest, someone or something has built rough cairn made of several dozen human skulls. The skulls are yellow-brown with age.*

The cairn of skulls is ancient. If the skulls are closely examined, their sloping foreheads and pronounced canines show them not to be the skulls of modern humans at all, but rather of something that became humans over millennia of evolution. There are 150 skulls in the cairn; each worth 5 sp or more to a collector.

Buried beneath the cairn is a mummified creature without a living counterpart anywhere in the world. It appears humanoid, three and a half feet in height, with four arms and an oversized head. Its shrunken eyes seem alien – almost insect-like (although, if pressed, one cannot tell exactly *why* they should seem so). It has only three fingers and a thumb on each hand.

This corpse would be of great value to a collector, who would pay 500 gp or more for it. However, any character that is within 30 feet of the corpse for more than 10 minutes becomes disquieted. It seems almost as though the body is watching him with malevolent intent. The character begins to sense that the body is not dead, but only in some form of hibernation. After the first 10 minutes, and every hour thereafter, a character that remains within 30 feet of the body must make a Will save (DC 10) or suffer a cumulative -1d penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws for each save failed, until the character has spent at least 1 hour away

from the corpse. The corpse has 30 hit points and ignores the first 5 points of damage from any attack.

The thing wears a robe of fine, shimmering white cloth that would fit a halfling. Though the material is not magical, it is well-preserved and difficult to tear and damage. The robe grants a +2 bonus to AC without a check penalty or increase of Fumble Die. This bonus does not stack with other armor. A broad silver circlet worth 75 gp spans its head; if a human attempted to wear it, the circlet would fall to his shoulders, the span being too great for a human head. On the first finger of the lower left arm, there is a simple golden ring (worth 15 gp). On the middle finger of the upper right arm is a similar ring made of electrum (apparently worth 25 gp, but the wearer gains a +2 bonus to saves vs cold effects and ignores 5 points of damage from cold).

To the south, the stream passes under solid stone, with no air space. Characters who attempt to swim this way find that the passage becomes narrower and faster – it takes only a DC 5 Strength check to move 30' going southward, but it requires a DC 15 Strength check to do the same heading north. The river goes many miles before there is another air pocket. What brave adventurers might find there (if they survive the journey) is beyond the scope of this adventure.





## AREA 15-31: THE WATERY EXPANSE

**Areas 15 to 31** are partially filled with water, to an average depth of two feet. This water is scummy and hard to see through, concealing the floors of this entire region. It is unlikely that any character would be so foolish as to drink from this water intentionally. However, in the event that a character does so, he must succeed in a DC 16 Fort save after 1 hour or take 1d4 temporary Strength damage due to parasitic infection. One hour after this, he must make another Fort save (DC 10) or be permanently blinded.

There is a 1 in 6 chance of a wandering encounter per turn spent in this area. In the event of a wandering encounter, roll 1d12 and consult the following chart. In addition, if any creature takes damage while in this area, there is a 25% chance that a blood piranha swarm arrives in 1d6 rounds.

| 1d12 | ENCOUNTER                                                           |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | A random character is exposed to scarlet foot.                      |
| 2-4  | A patrol of 1d6+1 merlews is encountered.                           |
| 5-6  | 1d4 merlew fishermen are encountered. They attempt to avoid combat. |
| 7-8  | A blood piranha swarm is encountered.                               |
| 9-11 | A distress cry rings out — it comes from an Ancient Horror.         |
| 12   | The Ancient Horror                                                  |

**Scarlet Foot:** This is a fungal infection contracted in warm water. Fort DC 10 or the character suffers painful lesions which reduce movement by 5' and cause 1d3 temporary Agility damage (Agility cannot be brought below 3).

**Merlew Patrol:** Patrolling merlews are well aware of the blood piranhas in this area and know that any injury might precipitate an attack. They are interested in finding the thing that is killing them in this region (the Ancient Horror) and are more than willing to talk rather than fight. The merlews know of the exit through their "swamps" into the Wilds of Balmorphos and are more than willing to show characters the way back to the surface if they are willing to hunt the Ancient Horror for them. They can also explain the danger of the blood piranha swarms.

**Merlew:** Init -1; Atk bite -1 melee (1d3) or bronze handaxe -1 melee (1d6-1); AC 10; HD 1d6-1; hp 3 each (or roll); MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', amphibious, light sensitivity, bronze weapons; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L.

**Merlew Fishermen:** Merlew fishermen are non-combatants that flee any encounter. Like the Merlew patrols, they know that something has been preying on them in this region, and they know the dangers of the blood piranha swarms. They use nets to fish here, but these nets are not suitable for combat. AC 10; hp 2 each.

**Blood Piranha Swarm:** The characters find themselves amid a blood piranha swarm. This is not necessarily dangerous unless they are injured. Blood piranhas can scent blood anywhere in this region, and enter a feeding frenzy when encountering injured creatures.

**Blood piranha swarm:** Init +5; Atk swarming bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 3d8+9; hp 16 each (or roll); MV swim 70'; Act special (1d20 vs all targets); SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space, half-damage from non-area attacks, water provides +4 bonus to saves vs. fire effects and reduces damage from fire by half; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will -2; AL N.

**Distress Cry:** The party hears what sounds like a merlew distress cry. This is actually the Ancient Horror, trying to lure in prey. If characters follow the distress cries, they will be ambushed by the Ancient Horror.

**Ancient Horror:** This creature lairs in **Area 22**, and is a set encounter in **Area 25** (unless already slain). It is a brain-like ball of mauve matter, some three feet across from which eight long blood-red tentacles sprout. It has dozens of orange-yellow eyes spaced irregularly around its body and a large beak-like (but flexible) mouth filled with dagger-like fangs. It is able to mimic any sound it hears and is intelligent enough to understand common and demonic speech. The Ancient Horror climbs above the surface of the water, where it is in no danger from the blood piranha swarms. However, injuring it causes its blood to fall into the water, with the standard 25% chance of attracting a blood piranha swarm in 1d6 rounds.

**Ancient Horror:** Init +2; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1d4+1 plus grab and constriction) or bite -1 melee (1d8+1); AC 16; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; MV 40' or climb

20'; Act 6d20; SP infravision 60', grab, constriction, mimicry, spell mimicry; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; AL C.

If a tentacle hits, the Ancient Horror holds on, constricting for an automatic 1d4+1 damage each round. A character can escape with an opposed Strength check (vs. +1). The Ancient Horror gains a +2 bonus to this check for each additional tentacle grabbing the same character. If two tentacles grab a character, the Ancient Horror can lift the PC out of the water to make a bite attack. If two tentacles grab a halfling, or four grab another character, the creature can move with its prey at half its normal speed.

If a spell is cast in the presence of the Ancient Horror, it can immediately attempt to mimic it, either attempting to cast the same spell or to counter the spell cast. The Ancient Horror rolls spell checks with 1d16+3 and can only do so on a round where it did not bite. It can only mimic one spell per round and must do so on the round the spell is cast. This does not count against its Action Dice. The judge may use this ability to have the Ancient Horror engage casters in a spell duel while using its tentacles against more martial foes.

There is only one Ancient Horror. If it is eliminated as a random encounter, it cannot be encountered again.

**15. The Watery Expanse:** *At the end of the hallway, a stair descends some 15 feet into a large, water-filled room. The water is covered with blackish-green scum, making it impossible to tell the depth. The wall is arched to a height of 12 feet, with 2 ½ foot diameter pillars running along the east and west walls. Another passage, 10 feet wide, and arched to a height of 10 feet, leaves this room opposite the one you entered from.*

This room is 30 feet by 70 feet; depending upon their light source, characters might not be able to see the far north and south walls (and hence, the exits on those walls). There are merlew bones on the floor in various parts of this room, which the PCs might feel (a 1 in 6 chance of coming across a merlew skeleton each time this room is crossed). These merlew have been slain by a blood piranha swarm, and the bones show some evidence of this. Whenever a merlew skeleton is discovered, there is a 1 in 6 chance that a bronze handaxe can be discovered nearby.

**16. Northern Room:** *The passage goes only 10 feet, leading into a room some 15 feet deep and 30 feet wide. The area is vaulted to a height of 12 feet.*

This was part of a temple complex once. Although it is covered by the water, there is still an altar stone near the center of the north wall. A bronze dagger is in the water not far from the altar; it has no special value.

**17. Western Room:** *The passage goes only ten feet, entering into a room some 30 feet wide and 15 feet deep. The water here is dark and brackish, and greenish-black slime drips irregularly from the walls and ceiling into the water. You can see another passage to the north, a dark arch five feet wide.*

Most of the slime in this room is harmless. There is, however, a patch of deadly green slime over the archway to the north, which drips on the unwary. This patch is more brightly colored than the remainder of the slime, which canny PCs may notice.

The green slime makes an attack roll with a +0 bonus. If it hits, it deals 1d6 points of temporary damage to Strength, Stamina, and Agility (player decides where the damage is taken) while it devours flesh (Fort DC 10 or one point of damage to every ability affected is permanent). If it does not hit due to armor, it destroys 1 point of AC bonus each round. If a character is still wearing the armor 1 round after the AC bonus equals 0, the green slime automatically hits the character as the remaining armor is devoured. Green slime can be scraped off during the first round of contact with no further damage done, but after that it must be frozen, burned, or cut away (dealing damage to the victim as well). Green slime destroys organic material and metals, but does not damage stone.

Due to the slime, the Climb DC of the walls in this room is 20.

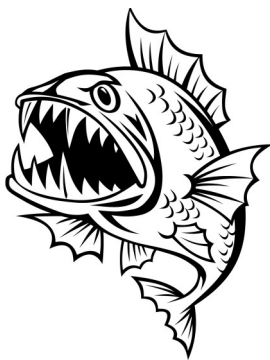
**18. Jumbled Stones:** *The passage goes only five feet before opening on a chamber some 25 feet wide 15 feet deep. Part of the ceiling collapsed here long ago, leaving a ragged hole in the ceiling stones and piling jumbled, slimy blocks into the water here. Pale limpets can be seen growing on some of these rocks, as well as small blind albino crayfish, whose long antennae quiver in the air.*

These blocks and stones fell from the ceiling a very long time ago, when Balmorphos' Tower fell. Although the falling blocks were not a trap, they acted like one, for by chance they collapsed upon a hapless adventurer. One of his legs, now nothing more than rotting bones, still protrudes from the pile of stones. This is beneath the surface of the water and is not immediately obvious.

If characters perform four man-hours of labor to uncover the bones, they discover what treasure yet remains with the fallen: a tarnished silver short sword, a gilded ring with a small glass "ruby" worth 5 gp, a small soapstone owl on a rusted iron chain worth 5 sp, and a rotting leather purse holding 45 sp and 125 cp, which is nearly ready to fall apart. The adventurer was human. Uncovering his remains is loud, heavy work, and the chance for an encounter doubles during this period.

The ragged hole in the ceiling was caused by fallen blocks and unworked stone. There is nothing interesting within, nor does it reach to the surface.

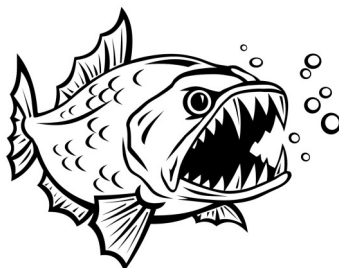
**19. Blood piranhas Swarm:** *The hallway enters into an arched chamber some 12 feet high. Narrow pillars line the east and west walls, each pillar being four feet from the wall and three feet apart. Water drips from the ceiling, and trickles along the walls and pillars. Already, small stalactites have begun to form from the ceiling blocks in long, narrow tubes no more than a quarter inch in diameter. Indeed, the ceiling looks rather like a forest of needles.*



There are fourteen pillars; seven along the east wall and seven along the west. Characters cannot necessarily see all of the passages linking this room as a result of both the pillars blocking their view and the size of the room. The judge will have to determine what entrances can be seen on a case-by-case basis.

Characters entering from the north should certainly see the southern entrance if they can see that far away (40 feet), and vice versa.

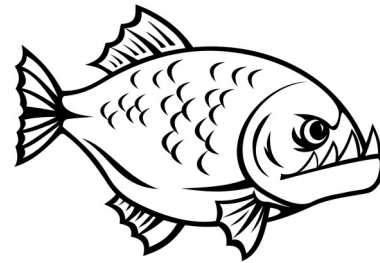
This room is occupied by a blood piranha swarm when the party first enters it. The blood



piranhas are hungry, but do not attack unless provoked or the water is bloodied. The fish are difficult to spot from outside the room, but individual fish can be noted if characters spend a round or two searching.

**Blood piranha swarm:** Init +5; Atk swarming bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 3d8+9; hp 20; MV swim 70'; Act special (1d20 vs all targets); SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space, half-damage from non-area attacks, water provides +4 bonus to saves vs. fire effects and reduces damage from fire by half; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will -2; AL N.

The Climb DC of the walls in this room is 20 due to the water running down the walls and columns.



**Blood Piranhas:** The purpose of the blood piranha swarms is to increase the sensation of danger, as well as the actual danger, of exploring the Watery Expanse. The players should be constantly reminded that it is difficult to see what is below the water level. They should be told about feeling things with their feet – slimy stones, old bones, etc. – even where such things are not explicitly described in the text. In addition to the blood piranha swarms, they can see individual fish, hear the soft *plop* of a fish that takes something from the water's surface, etc.

The blood piranhas are here to remind the PCs that they can be attacked from below *at any time*. This reminder is more important than the actual attacks. It also makes the players think to look *down*, so that the Ancient Horror will be more effective when it strikes from above. Blood piranha swarms that do not attack help create a feeling of danger without actually damaging the PCs. Of course, there is nothing wrong with an actual attack, either – remember that the swarms attack injured characters, and allow a merlew to be stripped to its bones before the PCs' eyes!

Blood piranhas have a savory pink flesh that is highly prized by the Azith.

**20. Western Gallery:** *The passage goes ten feet into a chamber some fifteen feet deep and forty feet wide. The chamber is vaulted to a height of 12 feet, the ribbed arches of the vault spaced every ten feet along the eastern and western walls.*

The floor in this gallery is uneven, slanted downward to the west, so that by the western wall the water is fully three feet deep. This makes the footing in this area even more treacherous than in the rest of the section. Moving at more than half normal speed requires a Reflex save (DC 15). Failure means that the character cannot move that round; failure by 5 or more means the character slips, becoming totally immersed in the water. In this event, a second DC 10 Reflex save is required to avoid drinking any of the water.

**21. A Cry for Pity:** *The passage enters a chamber that spans 30 feet from east to west and 25 feet from north to south. In the center of the east and west walls, five-foot wide arches lead out of this room. There is a ten foot wide passage entering through the center of the north wall.*

When the characters enter this room, the Ancient Horror in **Area 25** uses its mimic ability to try to entice them toward it. Because it is used to merlew fishermen in this area, it sounds like a merlew crying for help.

There is nothing of interest in this chamber.

**22. Lair of the Horror:** *The corridor goes 15 feet into a smaller chamber, some 15 feet to a side. The walls are damp with trickling rivulets of water. The ceiling has partially collapsed, leaving a jumble of stones piled up along the northeast corner. The room is otherwise 12 feet high.*

Any examination of the stones or the water uncovers a multitude of merlew bones, which the tentacle horror in **Area 25** has hidden in this room (although not hidden well). There are enough bones for 12 complete skeletons. The walls of this room have a Climb DC of 20 due to the running water, but characters can easily clamber up the fallen stones to reduce the climb by seven feet. The ceiling collapse revealed a hitherto-unknown space, a cramped passage 10 feet above the ceiling that leads into an otherwise sealed natural cavern roughly 15 feet long, 10 wide, and 5 feet high. The passage itself is only three feet in diameter and goes

northwest a distance of 25 feet before reaching the cavern.

This cavern is the lair of the Ancient Horror that is currently hunting in **Area 25**. If the party has encountered and injured the horror, but not slain it, it will have retreated here, where it will attempt to hold the passage against intruders. See the Random Encounters on page 23 for statistics. If characters spend enough time in the cavern, the Horror is certain to return (if it is still alive).

The Ancient Horror has dragged many victims to this cavern over the years, and the interior is littered with the bones and goods of over two dozen Merlews. Searchers can find six small bronze handaxes, and a helmet, as well as 5,342 cp and 324 sp scattered throughout the cavern.

**23. Merlew Fishermen:** *This chamber is 40 feet long from north to south, and fifteen feet east to west. Within it are half a dozen small humanoids, pale lemon in color, with fishing nets. Their sallow faces look like a cross between that of a goblin and a frog. Most of them seem to be engaged in fishing using their nets – they have several woven baskets for caught fish – but one is sitting on a bit of fallen stone with its boot off, examining a painful looking foot. The skin of its foot is red and cracked. Two passages lead into the room from the west, and one passage from each of the north, south, and east.*

These merlew are fishermen. One is suffering from scarlet foot, and only has a Move of 10'. They are noncombatants (AC 10, 2 hp each), but if attacked they scream loudly to attract attention from **Area 31**. They are in this room because there is a swarm of blood piranhas here, and the merlew are well aware that the fish will enter a blood frenzy if blood is spilled. As a result, at even a hint of combat they flee north in a panic if at all possible, as it is the fastest way to get out of the water, leaving their baskets of fish behind. The merlew with scarlet foot, of course, is limited as to how fast he can flee, and is more than a little worried that his wounds will bleed.

**Blood piranha swarm:** Init +5; Atk swarming bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 3d8+9; hp 15; MV swim 70'; Act special (1d20 vs all targets); SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space, half-damage from non-area attacks, water provides +4 bonus to saves vs. fire effects and reduces damage from fire by half; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will -2; AL N.



**24. Old Library:** *The tunnel enters a chamber some 25 feet north to south and 15 feet east to west, with an entrance to both the south and the west. The ceiling is vaulted to a height of 12 feet. Ancient shelves of oak and iron once lined the walls of this room – some twisted remnants still emerge from the water or are bracketed to the wall in twisted rows. This once was a library, and the shapes of a few water-logged tomes can still be made out beneath encrusted mold and fungus.*

Hidden among these books is the *Manual of Ygg'drath*, which is still legible due to its magical nature. The *Manual of Ygg'drath*, written in the tongue of demons and bound in bluish-green metal plates, provides mental exercises designed to allow the mind to overcome the infirmities of the body. Reading the *Manual* requires a full month, and, if the reader can succeed in a DC 20 Intelligence check at the end of this time, he gains a +1 bonus to Strength and Stamina, as well as a +2 bonus to Will saves. However, should another read the *Manual of Ygg'drath* and succeed in understanding its occult methods, these bonuses pass from the previous reader to the new reader, while the previous reader suffers a greater corruption that cannot be mitigated by Luck. The book cannot be destroyed.

In addition, there is a book with etched brass plates that contain formulae for the following wizard spells: *find familiar*, *patron bond*, *sleep*, *invisible companion*, *demon summoning*, and *transference*. This spellbook was covered with leather, which has mostly rotted away, making the title illegible. Because it contains 3<sup>rd</sup> level spells, this book would be attractive to rival wizards, and wise characters will keep it hidden.

In the center of the north wall, a hidden panel can be pushed to release a catch that allows it to swing open (Intelligence DC 15 to find). The hinges squeak horribly for lack of oil. The panel is trapped with an eldritch rune that causes a character opening it to fall asleep unless a DC 16 Will save succeeds. Although this isn't normally a dangerous trap, a lone character can suffer a significant risk of drowning. A character that falls asleep due to the trap automatically swallows water, and may contract parasites as described on page 23. If the character fails a Luck check, falling into the water doesn't wake her, and she drowns if unattended. In

this case, the sleep lasts for 1d3 turns. Otherwise, the character automatically wakes from the water, and is disoriented (unable to take any action other than rising from prone) for one round.

Behind the panel is a one foot square cubical space containing an oiled leather purse containing 270 gp and 324 sp of an ancient style, and a *potion of water walking* (this potion is clear, but bubbles and smokes when uncapped; it smells and tastes of burnt cork, allows the imbibor to walk on the surface of any liquid as though it were solid ground for 2d5 turns).

**25. Lurking Horror:** *The passage enters into a pillared hall some 25 feet square, with an archway in the center of the north, south, and west walls. Water drips from the rafters some 15 feet above the submerged floor.*

If it hasn't already been slain, the Ancient Horror is lurking here among the rafters, where it may surprise those who fail to look up. The Horror is smart enough to flee back to its lair (**Area 22**) if reduced to 10 hp or less.

**Ancient Horror:** Init +2; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1d4+1 plus grab and constriction) or bite -1 melee (1d8+1); AC 16; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; MV 40' or climb 20'; Act 6d20; SP infravision 60', grab, constriction, mimicry, spell mimicry; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; AL C.

See page 23 for details on combat abilities.

**26. Skewed Chamber:** *The passage enters a 25-foot square room with an arched passage leading out from the center of each wall. Water drips constantly from great cracks in the ceiling. The whole room seems skewed to the south, as though the ground shifted after it was built.*

The southern half of the room is actually 4 feet below the northern half of the room, and the water is correspondingly deeper (6 feet deep). The water is 4 feet deep where the east and west passages leave this room. Moving across this room faster than half speed requires a DC 10 Reflex save near the northern end of this room, a DC 15 Reflex save in the center, and a DC 20 Reflex save near the south. Those who fail slip and are submerged in water. A submerged character must succeed in a Luck check or swallow water, exposing the PC to parasitic infection, as described on page 23.

The water in the eastern and western corridors is 4 feet deep, and the floor is likewise uneven. Normal movement in this area also requires a DC 15 Reflex save (as described above). The water in the southern passage is 6 feet deep where it exits this room, but is 8 feet deep by the time it reaches **Area 28**. This means that a character must dive below the level of the archway to even enter **Area 28**. There is no chance of swallowing water when submerging voluntarily. It is not possible to walk at faster than half speed in the southern passage, and even this requires a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid slipping.

**27. Eastern Room:** *The passage goes only about ten feet, entering into a room 25 feet wide and 15 feet deep. The whole room is submerged in about 4 feet of water, scum from which scuds up against the south and west walls in thick banks of slime.*

There is nothing of interest in this room.

**28. Mutated Snapping Turtle:** *The passage leads into a square room, about 25 feet to a side. The vaulted ceiling is only two feet over the depth of the water, which has reached a depth of 8 feet. Because of the deep, scummy water, it is difficult to see anything in this chamber.*

This area is the lair of the most dangerous creature in the Upper Levels of Balmorphos Dungeon: a mutated snapping turtle which has grown to gigantic proportions. This creature feeds most often on blood piranhas and is always hungry. The merlews know that something lurks here, and avoid this area; although they are unlikely to mention it unless specifically asked (they are far more concerned with the Ancient Horror, which moves about as it hunts them). The creature has grown until it can no longer leave this chamber and is now 20 feet in diameter. It is albino and blind, with large cataracts over its eyes, and its legs are misshapen from lack of use. Because it cannot fit through the doorway to this chamber, it cannot pursue characters beyond...but it is always starving, and ready to attack anything that it can.

This can be an extremely deadly encounter if the PCs commit to this battle, especially as the creature can stretch its neck up to 10' (that can reach outside this room). Even discovering that this monster here can be deadly – a kind judge can have the creature target an NPC or animal if there is one available. A “near miss” encounter, where the gigantic head comes snapping up out of the water,

can provide a good scare. The PCs may also see the turtle's vast yellow-white bulk moving ghost-like under the water before it has a chance to attack. Finally, you could just use the encounter as is, and accept that at least one of the PCs is liable to die here.

Clever players might find a way to defeat the turtle by making use of the fact that it is trapped in this chamber. Missiles or spells can be lobbed into this chamber, for example, from outside the reach of the turtle. The turtle is physically slow and mentally dim, but will eventually be able to take cover in the northwest corner of the room.

Although there is no treasure in this room, characters that defeat this monster will be regarded as great heroes by the merlews, and even the Azith will treat them with grudging respect for the next three months.

**Giant mutated snapping turtle:** Init +2; bite +8 melee (2d6+6); AC 18; HD 9d8+42; hp 123; MV 5' or swim 10'; Act 1d20; SP sense prey in water 120', can bite targets up to 10' away, swallow whole 18-20; SV Fort +15, Ref -4, Will +7; AL N.

If the turtle hits with a natural 18-20, it swallows its target. The target automatically takes 2d5 damage per round and can attack with a small weapon from inside, with -1d to attacks and +3d damage.

**29. Empty Room:** *The passage enters a room some 25 feet wide by 15 feet deep, with an arched doorway in the center of the north wall. The room is vaulted to a height of 12 feet.*

There is nothing of interest here. The water is 4 feet deep. However, due to the earthquake that shook this region decades ago, there is a two-foot step when a creature passes into the north passage (which means that the water is only two feet deep there). The first character to pass this way discovers the step the hard way, unless he is very cautious – a DC 12 Reflex save is required to avoid falling prone.

**30. Second Old Library:** *This area is 25 feet wide and 10 feet deep. It was obviously once a library – stone and rotted wooden shelves line the walls. Many of the wooden shelves are covered with grayish-green mold and purple mushrooms. Leather and bone scroll cases can still be found on several shelves, as well as moldering and waterlogged volumes bound in leather and wood.*

Most of the books and scrolls here are completely destroyed. However, several items can still be found here:

**A trio of bone scroll tubes** that are still sealed against moisture. Two of them hold wizard spells; the third is filled with 75 gp worth of gold dust. The first scroll contains *magic missile* (spell check made using 1d24+6; this scroll can be reused until the spell fails, at which time it is consumed by mystical blue flames that cause 1d12 damage to anyone holding the scroll). The second scroll contains *force manipulation* and *invisible companion*. The second scroll is signed by Balmorphos and (gamely) warns of dire consequences to any other who would use them. The scroll can be used three times (which spell is cast does not matter), using the reader's normal spell check, after which the words fade from existence.

What seems to be a **book made with thin copper plates and wooden covers bound with rotted and peeling black leather is actually a box**. Within is the *chime of silence*. When struck, instead of ringing, it creates a zone of absolute silence with a 60' radius around the chime. This silence lasts 1d3 turns and moves with the chime. It should be noted that striking the chime effectively "blinds" the Azith for the full duration of its effect.

Upon a high shelf, **an oiled leather bag holds a leather-bound journal** with waterlogged pages that are still mostly legible. This book is the wizard Balmorphos' journal on the Balmorphos Serpent. Any creature that spends one full week studying the journal can make an Intelligence check (DC 15). If successful, that creature gains a +1d bonus to attack rolls and damage against the Balmorphos Serpent. In addition, the journal describes the Serpent in basic terms, including its brass scales, its poisonous breath, and how it is possessed by a demon.

**31. Long Hallway:** The description of this area assumes that the PCs are travelling from the south. If this is not the case, adjust accordingly.

*The passage widens to a fifteen foot wide pillared hallway, extending as far as you can see. The roof is vaulted to a height of 12 feet. Millions of narrow, pipe-like stalactites line the ceiling.*

There are six merlew guards loitering on the stairs at the north end of this hallway, led by their

commander, Shalla Burra, a female merlew warrior. As soon as they hear the PCs splashing in the darkness, they demand that they halt and identify themselves. The merlew guards are edgy and nervous, in part because of the blood piranhas, and in part because they know something has been preying on their fisher folk. Because they guard the Azith holding, they cannot easily flee an encounter. Given the opportunity, they are more than willing to parley. If they can, Shalla Burra passes the authority to deal with any matter up to "Lord" Urtokki (**Area 33**). Of course, initial parley is better where your spears spill blood into the water far away, so they only allow one character to come forward to speak, initially.

Deep fissures in the walls, below the surface of the water, allow the blood piranhas to swim in from some other, deeper, cave complex. These fissures are water-filled and too narrow for the merlews to fit into them, although clever players might find the means to explore them. What lies beyond the fissures is likewise beyond the scope of this adventure. Because of these fissures, there is a 75% chance that blood spilt in this area attracts 1d3 blood piranha swarms, the first arriving in 1d6 rounds, and any additional swarms arriving each 1d3 rounds after the previous swarm (see page 26 for statistics).

**Shalla Burra, merlew warrior:** Init +5; Atk bite +3 melee (1d3) or bronze handaxe +5 melee (1d6-1) or javelin +6 ranged (1d6-1); AC 13; HD 4d6-4; hp 15; MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', amphibious, light sensitivity, bronze weapons; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L. Linen cuirass (+1 AC, d6 Fumble Die), bronze handaxe, 2 bronze-tipped javelins.

**Merlew guards (6):** Init -1; Atk bite +0 melee (1d3) or bronze handaxe +0 melee (1d6-1) or spear +0 melee (1d6-1) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6-1); AC 11; HD 2d6-2; hp 8,8,6,5,5,1; MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', amphibious, light sensitivity, bronze weapons; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L. Linen cuirass (+1 AC, d6 Fumble Die), bronze handaxe, bronze-tipped spear, bronze-tipped javelin.

#### **AREA 32-34: GUARDIANS OF THE AZITH**

This area is occupied by the Azith commander, Urtokki (called "Lord" by the merlews). There are no wandering monsters here, although the creatures

described may move around as the judge desires. This area should be heavy on role-playing. It is the PCs' first contact with a living Azith, and how this area is handled directly affects the players' enjoyment of the City of Xandrath.

**32. Merlew Chamber:** *This chamber is some 25 feet east-to-west by 20 feet north-to-south. Within can be seen a dozen rudely made cots, each with a mattress of pale grasses that smell rather marshy. Four Merlews are sleeping in various cots. A barrel of spears stands in the southeast corner. Bronze axes and linen cuirasses lie on the floor near the occupied cots. In addition to the entrance from the south, there is a 10-foot wide archway to the east.*

These four sleeping merlews are statistically the same as those in **Area 31**, except that they wear no armor (and are thus AC 10) and have no weapons at hand. The barrel contains a dozen spears and javelins. There are several fishing nets and creels under some of the bunks.

**33. "Office" of "Lord" Urtokki:** *This is a 20-foot square chamber, vaulted to a height of 15 feet. A pillar in each corner supports the vaulting. There is a 10-foot wide archway in the center of the north, south, and west walls. A 10-foot diameter alcove in the east wall contains a wooden bench and a wooden couch covered with soft grey pillows. The whole room smells faintly of incense.*

This is where the Azith commander, Urtokki (called Lord Urtokki by the merlews) receives guests. When the PCs first arrive, he is probably on **Level 2**, and they will have to wait 1d20+10 minutes while a merlew is sent to summon him. He arrives from the north passageway. Urtokki is blind, as are all Azith (save one). Because he makes his way through the world using hearing and scent, he tilts his head to the side when listening or weaves his head from side to side in an almost serpentine manner. Urtokki is hedonistic and cruel, as are all Azith, and he may linger over the scent of female (or, if you prefer, male) PCs. It is important, if you intend to use the City of Xandrath, that the players understand fully both that the Azith are disturbing, and that the Azith are not necessarily immediately hostile. The Azith are emotionally cold most of the time, but they are sensualists. They are intelligent, but degenerate in the use of that intelligence. Theirs is a civilization gone very far into decline. Azith have unnaturally pale skin covered with fine snake-like scales.

Urtokki believes that the Azith are the oldest race of humans. One result of this is that Urtokki is pleased that his great city, Xandrath, will be visited by "more primitive" humans. He is considering the PCs as potential breeding stock for his people, and as potential sacrifices to Kul'Amaric and its Spawn. Of course, he is too canny to tell the PCs this outright. He is a member of the Order of the Fallen Chamber in Xandrath. The Azith do not, in general, avenge their own, but the Order will certainly take an interest in anyone who slays Urtokki, if they learn of it, when the PCs arrive in Xandrath. If Urtokki is slain, any remaining merlews in the Upper Levels do their best to avoid the PCs, and certainly act as guides to save their lives.

Because he cannot see, Urtokki's clothing is mismatched according to color – the Azith match their clothing by feel and scent. As a result, his outfit is garish, and much of the fine embroidering is not done in such a way as to be obvious to the eye.

Urtokki has a pouch containing three nauseating green and mauve beads, the *tears of Kul'Amaric*, which can be thrown within 40' to create a silent explosion of force, which is combined with a strong sea-salt odor. In addition, Urtokki carries a ring of keys that opens all of the locks on **Level Two**.

**"Lord" Urtokki, Azith sorcerer:** Init +2; Atk bronze khopesh sword +4 melee (1d8+2) or tear of *Kul'Amaric* +6 ranged (3d6 blast; 10' diameter; Fort DC 10 for half), or spell; AC 13; HD 6d8; hp 24; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP sense surroundings within 40' by sound, spells; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +7; AL L.

Spells (+6 bonus to spell checks): *Choking cloud*, *force manipulation*, *magic missile*, *spider climb*, *ventriloquism*, *ray of enfeeblement*, and *strength*.

**34. Gateway to Level Two:** *The passage leads to a thirty-foot square chamber, vaulted to a height of 12 feet. Beyond an archway in the center of the west wall, stairs lead downward into darkness.*

The stairs descending at an angle of about 20° for 35 feet, then reach a 10-foot-square landing before continuing to the north for another 35 feet. The stairway is arched to a height of 12 feet. An archway at the end of the stairs leads into **Level Two, Area 35**.

## LEVEL TWO

This level is completely controlled by the Azith and merlews. As a result, there is no wandering encounter chart. If the judge desires, it is possible to encounter merlews going about their business anywhere on this level. It is also possible, especially on later visits, to encounter additional Azith visiting the garrison.

**35. Entry Hall:** *The stairway enters into a long hallway, some thirty feet wide, heading north in a vaulted arch some 12 feet high. You can see several doors to the east and west. The hallway is held up by unadorned pillars, each about 2 feet in diameter, spaced every 10 feet down the hallway, about 5 feet from the east and west walls. The ceiling is heavy with cobwebs and snarls of old spidersilk.*

There is nothing of interest here. The webs are merely evidence of poor housekeeping – Urtokki cannot see them, after all, and the merlews cannot easily reach them.

**36. Storage Rooms:** There are six of these rooms, each roughly the same. Each of these doors is locked (Pick Locks DC 10); Urtokki carries the keys on a ring (see **Area 33**).

*This is a twenty foot square room, about 10 feet high. Shelves line the walls containing sealed clay pots, and similar clay vessels are piled in the center of the floor, along with several rough sacks.*

These rooms contain stores used by the merlews, or blood piranhas in oil being packed to take to the city of Xandrath. Characters searching these areas discover a great deal of foodstuffs (some of it going off): dried and pickled fish, salted meats, vegetables and fruits (both raw and preserved), cooking oil, preserving oil, wine, beer, clean fresh water, flour, herbs, spices, and the like. The rooms toward the south and west are packed with materials used by the garrison; more of the blood piranhas are packed to the north and east, for easy access to the Great Gate.

The exact amount of goods available at any given time, as well as the amount that PCs can gain by selling them, is left to the judge. Cooking and preserving oil heat, but do not catch fire as easily as lamp oil.





**37. The Curtain of Falling Water:** At this point in the corridor, water pours down from the ceiling, forming a thin, but somewhat loud, “curtain”. Although it reflects light (and therefore is a true “curtain” to characters using torches or similar light sources), the water is thin enough that infravision can be used to see through it. The noise of the “curtain” blocks the Azith’s sensitive hearing, so that Urtokki believes this to provide a form of privacy. A character standing next to the curtain gain a +2d bonus to any check to avoid being noticed by the Azith.

Grooves cut into the floor channel the fallen water under the walls and away.

**38. Bedroom:** The door is locked (Open Locks DC 15); Urtokki carries the key on a ring (see **Area 33**).

*This is a 20 foot square room with a ceiling height of 10 feet. It is dominated by a large bed, with dull grey covers of undyed natural wool. There is also a large wardrobe, a desk, and a chair. Pegs on one wall hold various cloaks, robes, and a small leather whip. There is a brass chamber pot near the bed.*

This room is where Urtokki spends most of his free time, and is where he probably is when the PCs first enter **Area 33** (see **Level One**). There is some small chance that one or more PCs will be invited into the bedroom privately. Should this occur, it is probably best to draw the curtains on the remainder of the encounter!

The desk is used by Urtokki for writing poetry in volumes of thin wood sheets bound with metal. Urtokki writes with an iron pen that is essentially a thick knife/awl allowing him to make marks on the wood. Azith letters are series of dots similar to Braille in the real world, so that the letters can be read by touch. Urtokki’s poetry is universally bad... and there are at least a dozen volumes of it.

The wardrobe contains Urtokki’s extra clothing. A false bottom hides a leather bag containing 300 gp and 4 *potions of healing* (each of which can heal 2 HD; these potions are greenish with a lemony scent and taste).

The whip is too small to cause damage.

**39. Dining Room:** *This room contains a long, low table of polished wood and six wooden chairs upholstered with seat cushions of undyed cloth. A*

*large wooden frame to the north holds stacked pottery plates, leather cups, and tarnished-looking forks, knives, and spoons. An open doorway leads to the west.*

There is a fair chance that Urtokki might invite one or more PCs to dine; if so, this is where they eat. Merlews serve dishes of pickled and breaded fish, dark wine, and a spiced meat that tastes something like beef or mutton. This meat is *pratha*, a creature native to the Wilds of Balmorphos. The *pratha* is similar to a small musk-ox with a thick, wooly coat. The wine is sweet with a slightly oaken flavor – it is made with a brown fungus called *marhu*.

The silverware is worth 1-2 sp per piece, and there are 6d6 pieces at any given time.

**40. Kitchen:** *This large room is obviously a kitchen, dominated by a large fireplace. There are several long, low tables, as well as a standing beehive oven for cooking bread. Ropes tied to hooks in the low ceiling hold sausages, cured meats, and similar things. Large cracks in the ceiling, seemingly natural, allow the smoke to escape, but the air here is thick.*

There are usually three Merlews here. During mealtimes, more Merlews are present to help in serving. These are non-combatants (AC 10, 2 hp each). There is no treasure here, although there are several brass chamber pots.

**41. Barracks Room:** *This is a thirty-foot square room, with a thick pillar in the center. Twenty cots are spaced, roughly evenly, around the walls.*

Roughly 1/3 of these cots are being used at any given time. This is where the merlews sleep who are not on guard duty at Areas **43**, **44**, and **45**. The merlews who are neither sleeping nor on guard duty are either performing other duties for “Lord” Urtokki (running messages, serving in the dining room, etc.), or off pursuing their own interests (sneaking an extra meal, fishing on **Level 1**, etc.). The merlews here are statistically the same as the merlew guards at **Area 33**, except that they wear no armor (and are thus AC 10), and bear no weapons. When the merlews change shifts, they are forced to exchange armor and weapons.

**42. Cells:** Each of these areas is locked (Pick Locks DC 15). Urtokki carries the keys to these cells on a ring(see **Area 33**). Each cell is 10 square feet, with a ceiling height of 8 feet.

**43. The Great Gate:** *The corridor leads to a large portcullis, some 10 feet wide and 12 feet high, made of rust-marked iron. Beyond the gate, you can see a dark, flat shelf of natural rock – obviously part of a large natural cavern. The gate is guarded by six merlew warriors. A large winch to the north allows the portcullis to be lifted, accessing the cavern beyond.*

There is a counterweight that aids the merlews in lifting the heavy gate. If the stop of the winch is taken out, or the chains are broken, the portcullis slams down immediately, causing 5d6 damage to any creature in its path (Reflex save DC 15 for half; any creature rolling a natural “1” on this save is pinned by the gate, causing a –4 penalty to attack rolls and AC while pinned, and preventing all movement – escape can be accomplished with a DC 20 Strength check).

**Merlew guards (6):** Init -1; Atk bite +0 melee (1d3) or bronze handaxe +0 melee (1d6-1) or spear +0 melee (1d6-1) or javelin +1 ranged (1d6-1); AC 13; HD 2d6-2; hp 6,6,5,4,4,3; MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', amphibious, light sensitivity, bronze weapons; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL L. Studded leather armor, bronze handaxe, bronze-tipped spear, bronze-tipped javelin.

It is very likely that, by the time the PCs reach this area, the merlews are far more concerned about what might be beyond the Great Gate than they are about the PCs. They spend long minutes scanning the darkness of signs of movement before opening the portcullis. The caution shown by the merlews should give the players some idea that the caverns beyond are dangerous.

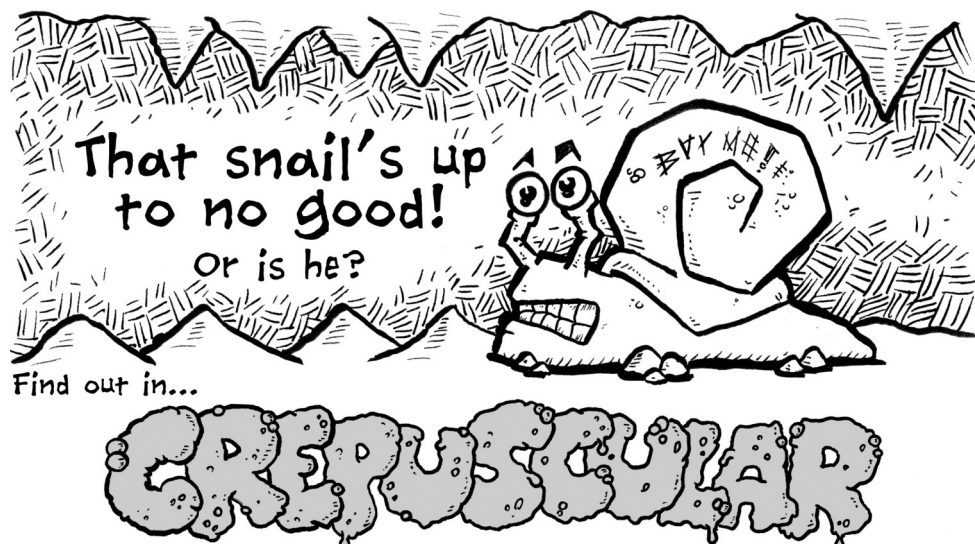
Beyond the gate is the first part of the *Wilds of Balmorphos* – a series of wild caverns between the Upper Levels of Balmorphos Dungeon and the *City of Xandrath*. This region will be detailed in an upcoming issue of **D.A.M.N. Magazine!**

**44. Postern Gate:** This gate can be locked (Pick Locks DC 15), but usually is not. The key is on the ring carried by Urtokki (see **Area 33**).

*This passage ends in a stout, iron-bound wooden door, barred by a strong beam. Two merlew warriors guard the door.*

This is the postern gate to the Wilds of Balmorphos. The Merlew warriors are statistically identical to those in **Area 43**, with 6 hp each.

**45. Arrow Slit Niches:** These passages lead up to cul-de-sacs where arrow slits look out over the region beyond the Great Gate. Two short bows and two dozen arrows are kept in small barrels in each arrow slit, but the arrow slits are not usually manned unless something attacks the Great Gate from the Wilds of Balmorphos.



**An adventure-zine for Dungeon Crawl Classics**

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# BALMORPHOS DUNGEON

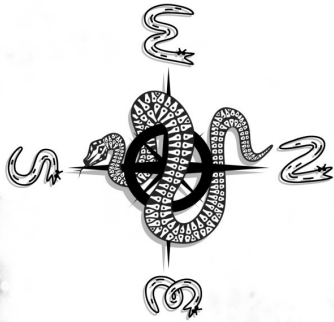
## LEVEL ONE



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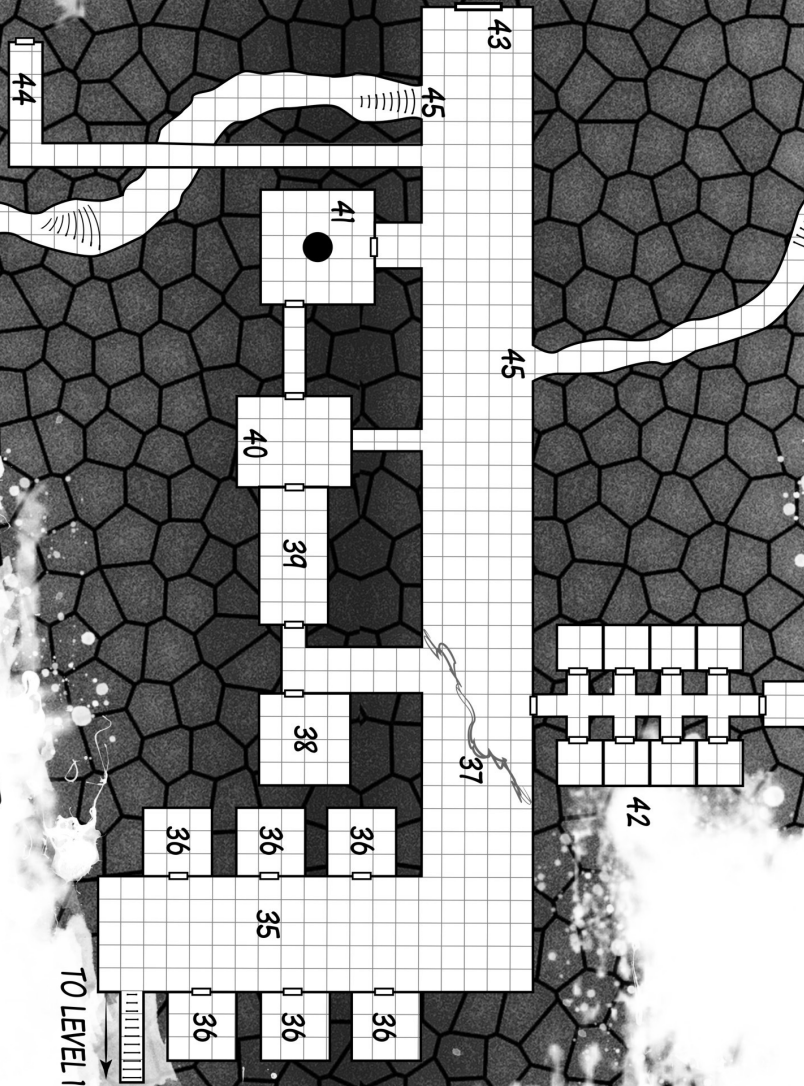


# THE WILDS OF BALMORPHUS



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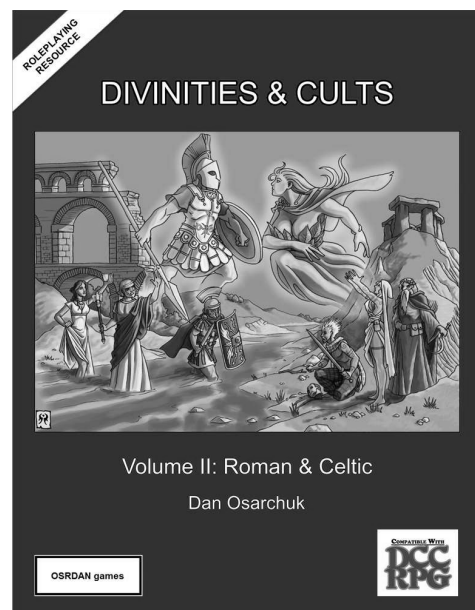
**BALMORPHUS  
DUNGEON  
LEVEL TWO**



# Third Party Spotlight: Divinities & Cults

David Osarchuk writes about gods. Inspired (like many of us) by Deities and Demigods back in the day, Dan crafted his own tome of divinely-purposed deeds: Divinities and Cults. I've picked up both extant volumes, and they really add a lot to the culture of your campaign – even if you file the serial numbers off the more recognizable gods from various real-world cultures. Each volume covers a group of gods from two cultures, providing information on how clerics serve that god, as well as a mess of new optional rules, related encounters, some demon lords... the whole series is a fantastic resource. Volume III is currently available in the Labyrinth Lord ruleset, but Dan is converting that volume to DCC RPG as I write this. Go check his stuff out at [www.divinitiesandcults.com](http://www.divinitiesandcults.com).

This preview features Ukko, a Finnish god from Volume II: Roman & Celtic and includes a specialized cleric class called the Shaman of Ukko. Volume I: Greek & Norse is also available for DCC RPG. Go grab it.



by: Dan Osarchuk

## SHAMANS OF UKKO

**Shamanism:** Though shamans of Ukko follow him above all others, they are animistic, communing with various spirits and gods at different locations in order to gain their powers each day. After 1d6 turns of making offerings, chanting, drumming, and/or achieving trance states, they can gain one of the following benefits depending on where this communion takes place. The benefit can then be used wherever the shaman goes, up to once per day per shaman level:

*Mountain:* Gain a +4 Strength or Stamina bonus for 1d6 rounds.

*Forest:* Be able to speak with animals or gain immunity to natural attacks for 2d6 rounds.

*Water:* Be able to breathe water and swim at double speed or speak with water spirits for 2d6 rounds.

*Sauna:* Gain a +6 Personality bonus when dealing with Finns (and similar types) or ignore temperature extremes for 2d6 hours.

*Field:* +2 to all rolls when casting a healing or divination-related spell.

## TENETS OF UKKO

- ◇ Honor your elders and ancestors.
- ◇ Honor the spirits.
- ◇ Honor the land and animals.

**Special:** Ukko is served by shamans (who follow these rules) rather than by standard clerics.

**Allowed Weapons:** Warhammer, axe (any), spear, club

**Allowed Armor:** Leather, hide, or padded

**Holy Symbol:** Sky, Lightning, Hammer

**Turn Unholy:** None



*Graveyard:* Be able to leave one's body and travel in spirit (ethereal) form at triple speed or be able to see spirits and other ethereal beings for 2d6 rounds.

*For example, if a 1st level shaman communed in a forest, then he could either gain the ability to speak with animals or be immune to natural attacks once per day, no matter where he is when he calls upon the power.*

Shamans of Ukko can also access different types of spells depending on where they commune each day (see Spells).

## Healing Side-Effects

Shamans of Ukko call upon spirits of place to lay on hands and cast restorative spells just like clerics do. Then, depending on the type of spirits present, they will be better at healing certain ailments more than others.

In the case of ailments that the spirit is good at healing, the spell works automatically for its full amount, unless the type of spirit would have a particular dislike for the shaman (see below).

In all other cases, the shaman must bargain with the spirit, requiring a successful Personality check, modified by how respectful the shaman has been to such spirits (per the judge), in order for the spell to work at all. If successful, all spell checks and effects are rolled normally. If not, then the healing fails.

| D12   | HEALING SIDE-EFFECTS                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-2   | <b>Mountain Spirits:</b> good at healing wounds from iron, other metal, or stone weapons, as well as from falls and other rugged perils.                                                                   |
| 3-4   | <b>Forest Spirits:</b> good at healing wounds from natural attacks or wooden weapons, as well as dealing with poisons and other sylvan dangers.                                                            |
| 5-6   | <b>Water Spirits:</b> good at healing diseases and paralysis, acid or gas attacks, curses, blindness, deafness, along with any other would-be permanent ailments.                                          |
| 7-8   | <b>Sauna Spirits:</b> good at healing diseases, as well as damage or other ill effects from the elements, including elemental magic.                                                                       |
| 9-10  | <b>Field Spirits:</b> good at healing harm from supernatural methods (including magic), along with restoring bravery, mental faculties, and even level loss, thanks to the presence of smiling Ukko above. |
| 11-12 | <b>Graveyard Spirits:</b> good at attempting to heal those who are bleeding out or near death, though those healed then have a 50% chance of coming back 'different' (evil)!                               |

To randomly determine what spirits are present, roll 1d12. Otherwise, select based on what kind of place the shaman is in when he casts the healing spell.

*For example, if a shaman is imploring the local water spirits to cure a disease, then the healing would work automatically. If it was a wound from a sword cut, then he would need to bargain with them first.*

## SPIRIT TYPE

If unsure how respectful a particular shaman has been to a spirit that's encountered, determine what type of spirit it is beyond just the type of place where it dwells. Nature spirits will be more commonly encountered (naturally), though others could also be just as fitting (e.g. bear totems on mountainsides, forest fey, a fair maiden bathing in the water, ancestral graveyard spirits, etc.) In any case, roll 1d20:

See Divinities and Cults: Volume II for more details on spirit types and how their motivations might fit (or not fit) with a particular shaman. If they are especially congruent or incongruent in outlook, then the judge might award some additional boon or even have the spirit attack the shaman instead, making the interaction more than just a Personality check to facilitate healing.

| D20   | SPIRIT TYPE |
|-------|-------------|
| 1-2   | Ancestral   |
| 3     | Angelic     |
| 4     | Demonic     |
| 5     | Elemental   |
| 6-7   | Fair Maiden |
| 8-9   | Fey         |
| 10-17 | Nature      |
| 18-19 | Totemic     |
| 20    | Undead      |

## Divine Tests (Replaces Disapproval)

Great Ukko would test the shaman and his willingness to honor the gods and the spirits. Use these results instead of those for disapproval in the DCC RPG core rulebook:

| DIVINE TEST RESULTS |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-4                 | <p>The shaman takes a -1 penalty per divine test result to all his rolls (-1 to -4). It lasts until he spends at least 1d3 hours communing with the spirits and/or gods in a particular type of place. Roll 1d6 to see where he needs to go.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[1] Mountain spirits/ Ukko, Ilmatar</li> <li>[2] Forest spirits/ Tapio, Tellervo, Mielikki</li> <li>[3] Water spirits/ Ahto, Kylikki</li> <li>[4] Sauna spirits/ Ilmarinen, Akka</li> <li>[5] Field spirits/ Ukko, Peko, Paivatar, Kuutar</li> <li>[6] Graveyard spirits/ Tuoni, Tuonetar, Loviatar, Kalma</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 5-11                | <p>The spirits require placation, causing the shaman to lose access to some of his spells (50% chance for each one). Roll 1d6 and consult the list above to see what spirits of place need to be interacted with. Then roll 1d6 again and consult the table below for each spell lost to determine what the shaman must do in order to regain it (note that the spell cannot be cast again until he does so!)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[1] Assist and protect any elders or animals found at that type of place for 1d3 hours.</li> <li>[2] Leave fitting offerings for the spirits there (things that such beings would enjoy, per Judge).</li> <li>[3] Drum and dance at that type of place for 2d6 turns. The shaman also has a 50% chance of hallucinating for 3d6 turns afterwards, as well as attracting a random encounter.</li> <li>[4] Travel in astral form to the spirit world version of that place, taking 2d6 turns while the body lies comatose, also causing 1d2 damage to one of the shaman's ability scores (determined at random).</li> <li>[5] Battle a being or endure a peril in the area for 2d6 rounds, taking 2d6 damage.</li> <li>[6] It is actually a Finnish god or goddess who must be placated. Roll 1d6 again twice to see what else has to be done to regain the spell. Additional results of '6' should then be rolled thrice, etc.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 12-16               | <p>A spirit possesses the shaman or a nearby person, animal, or object. Though the one possessed will now benefit from special bonuses, the shaman must also make a Will save to resist acting in a way that the spirit would promote- whether from direct influence or by whomever or whatever it is possessing. What is more, the one possessed also experiences the restrictions the spirit might have (see Divinities and Cults: Volume II).</p> <p>First, roll 1d6 to see who or what is possessed. Note that even if the shaman is not himself possessed, the affected individual or object will stay with the shaman for the duration, attempting to affect his actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[1-2] The shaman</li> <li>[3] The closest person in a random direction</li> <li>[4] The closest animal in a random direction</li> <li>[5] The closest object (including plant life) in a random direction</li> <li>[6] A random possession that the shaman is carrying</li> </ul> <p>Then roll 1d8 to determine the type of possessing spirit and commensurate benefits the host receives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[1] Ancestral: gain the 1st level abilities of a random character class</li> <li>[2] Angelic: gain +4 to AC, saves, and rolls made against evil beings</li> <li>[3] Demonic: gain +2 to saves, attack rolls, and damage</li> <li>[4] Elemental: gain immunity to harm from the elements and +2 to damage</li> <li>[5] Fey: may reroll saves, initiative, and spell checks once per round, but must keep 2nd result</li> <li>[6] Nature: gain +1 to all rolls made outdoors, +2 if it matches a particular type of place (mountain, forest, etc.)</li> <li>[7] Totemic: gain +4 to one ability score that matches the type of totem and also +10' speed</li> <li>[8] Undead: gain +2 to AC, saves, and hit points unless in direct sunlight</li> </ul> <p>This arrangement lasts for 1d6 hours the first time this test occurs, 1d6 days the second, 1d6 weeks the third, etc. Note that Fair Maidens usually don't possess people or objects that aren't already hot women.</p> <p><i>For example, the first time a shaman experiences this test, his sock might become possessed by a demonic spirit, granting him the listed bonuses, but also attempting to make him engage in acts of evil (as well as experiencing any other demonic restrictions) for the next 1d6 hours. The next time, the shaman himself might become possessed by a nature spirit for the next 1d6 days.</i></p> |
| 17+                 | <p>The shaman slips into the spirit world to undergo a journey or even seek out the Sampo. He is gone for one day per Divine Test result over 16. Those with the ability to travel to Otherworlds may attempt to find him before then (a base 10% chance of success per caster level). Otherwise, he takes 2d12 hit points of damage for each day he's gone; that is, if he survives!</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## SPELLS

Shamans of Ukko have access to the following magic. Those who can see spirits will notice them at work when a shaman's spell is cast.

| LEVEL | SPELL                                                                                                                                            |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Blessing, Detect Evil, Holy Sanctuary, Paralysis (appears as a spirit holding the target), Protection from Evil, Second Sight, Animal Summoning* |
| 2     | Banish, Cure Paralysis, Neutralize Poison or Disease, Restore Vitality. Snake Charm, Invisible Companion*, Locate Object*, Consult Spirit*       |
| 3     | Exorcise, Remove Curse, Spiritual Weapon (held by a phantom), Planar Step*                                                                       |
| 4     | Dispel Magic*, Wizard Sense*                                                                                                                     |
| 5     | Breathe Life*                                                                                                                                    |

## SPELLS OF PLACE

Shamans of Ukko can also access additional spells depending on where they commune each day. As described under Shamanism, the process takes 1d6 turns, allowing the shaman to gain a special benefit. Communion also grants him access to 1d3 bonus spells of levels he can cast that day, determined at random. Note that shamans can thereby gain a different selection of spells from two different forests, different fields, different mountains, etc., reflecting the great variation in the animistic world of gods and spirits in which they live. Consequently, mountains grant the highest level spells since it is the main dwelling place of Ukko, where he reigns at a point so high in reality that those who visit there must kneel.

*For example, a 3rd level shamaness communes on a mountain. Once 'finished', she not only gains the ability to add 4 to her Strength or Stamina for 1d6 rounds up to three times that day, but she also gains access to 1d3 Mountain spells. Her judge can then determine which ones she gains from that mountain, selecting randomly from the six 1st and 2nd level spells, since those are the ones she can cast.*

| SPELL | SPELL (MOUNTAIN)                                                                                                                   |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Word of Command, Feather Fall*, Enlarge*                                                                                           |
| 2     | Lotus Stare, Stinging Stone, Strength*                                                                                             |
| 3     | Polymorph* (self; avian forms only), Gust of Wind*, Alpine Bond (as Bottomfeeder Bond*, but works with mountain creatures instead) |
| 4     | Bolt from the Blue, Transmute Earth*, Shield Maiden*                                                                               |
| 5     | Weather Control                                                                                                                    |

| LEVEL | SPELL (FIELD)                                                                           |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Food of the Gods, Ventriloquism*                                                        |
| 2     | Eternal Champion*, ESP*                                                                 |
| 3     | Phantasm*, Meadow Bond (as Bottomfeeder Bond*, but works with field creatures instead), |

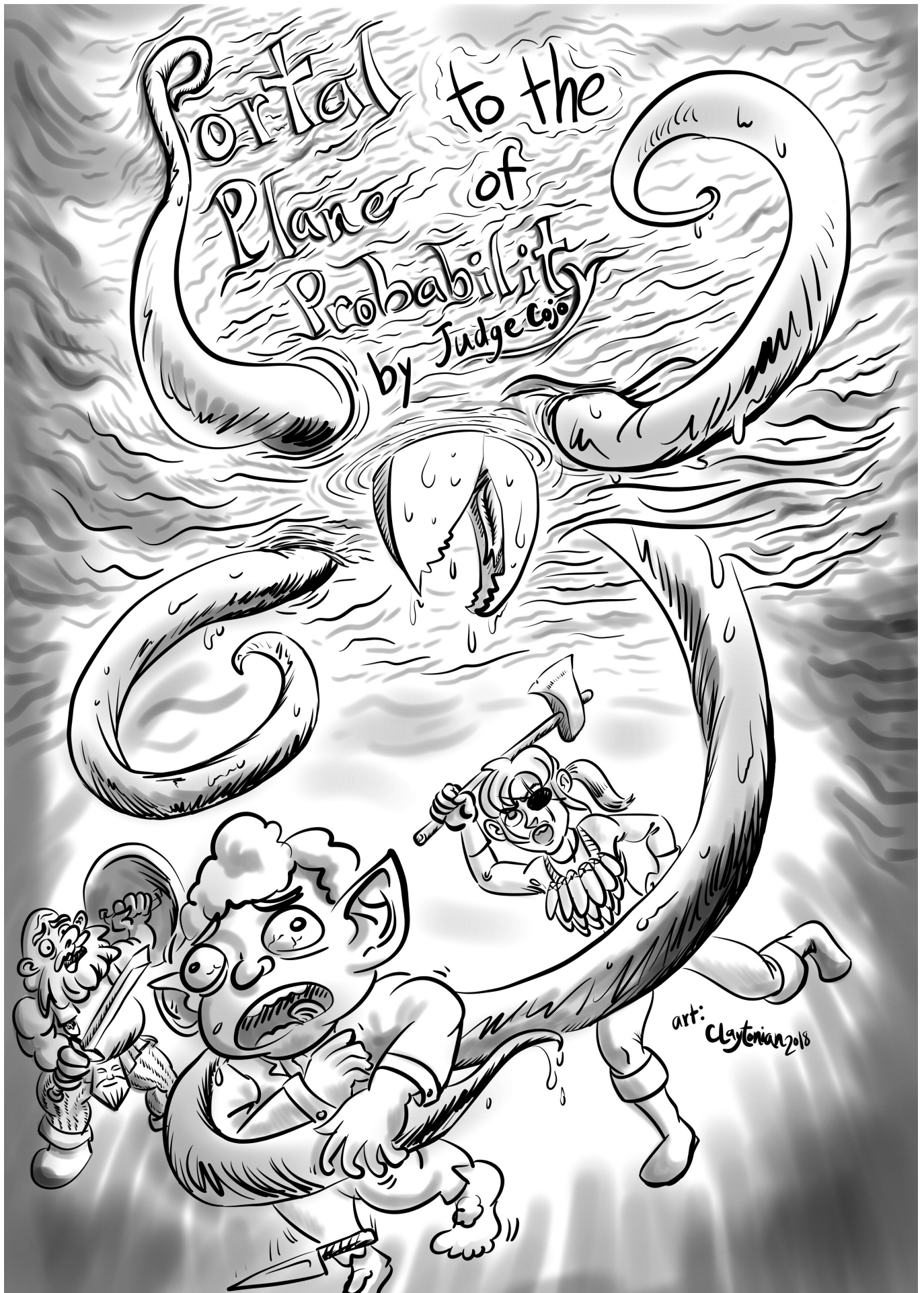
| LEVEL | SPELL (GRAVEYARD)                                                                                               |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Darkness, Chill Touch*                                                                                          |
| 2     | Curse, Ray of Enfeeblement*, Scare*                                                                             |
| 3     | Speak with Dead, Transference*, Dismal Bond (as Bottomfeeder Bond*, but works with graveyard creatures instead) |

| LEVEL | SPELL (WATER)                                                                                                       |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Detect Magic, Tadpole Transformation* (appearing fish-like or amphibian)                                            |
| 2     | Magic Mouth*, Water Breathing*                                                                                      |
| 3     | Polymorph* (self; aquatic forms only), Aquatic Bond (as Bottomfeeder Bond*, but works with water creatures instead) |

| LEVEL | SPELL (FOREST)                                                                                                            |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Nythuul's Porcupine Coat* (appears as thorns), Forest Walk*                                                               |
| 2     | Wood Wyrding, Spider Web*                                                                                                 |
| 3     | Polymorph* (self; sylvan animal forms only), Sylvan Bond (as Bottomfeeder Bond*, but works with forest creatures instead) |

| LEVEL | SPELL (SAUNA)                                                                    |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Resist Cold or Heat, Charm Person*                                               |
| 2     | Detect Invisible*, Fire Resistance*                                              |
| 3     | Slow*, Heat Bond (as Bottomfeeder Bond*, but works with 'hot' creatures instead) |

(\*) Treat as the patron or wizard spell, except for any changes noted, as well as using the shaman's Divine Tests in the case of a spell check of natural 1.



**By:** Cory Gahsman

*In memory of Michael Fantin...the first person to encourage me to write this adventure. You will be missed!*

This adventure is designed for 4-8 4th level characters.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Last of a previously noble line, the wizard Jarkavian's mind snapped after years of lonely seclusion. In his madness, he enacted a last-ditch plan to prevent the extinction of his family by opening a portal to the Plane of Probability, hoping to harness probability magic and bring the statues of his ancestors to life. Unfortunately for those that live nearby, such as the town of Milford's Bluff, probability magic makes things...weird.

### PLAYER BEGINNING:

The PCs start on the road nearing the town of Milford's Bluff (or any town that the characters frequent for rest, supplies, and the like):

*It has been a long journey, but the land around you begins to look familiar. The summer sun warms the brown gorse at the roadside where field mice rustle at your approach. A group of them break from cover, scattering across the path. One mouse stops and sits back on its haunches to bravely stare at you as you approach, but something else is odd: Its tail grows from its forehead. Thinking it an aberration, you scan the other mice, but they suffer from the same affliction.*

*Ahead a small bridge arcs over Darlin Creek, but the water below appears cloudy and white instead of crystal clear. The smell of buttermilk fills your nostrils as a flock of small birds fly by backwards and upside-down. You hurry ahead fearing that danger has befallen Milford's Bluff. Maybe that much needed rest will have to wait. As you round the bend, your party stops in its tracks. The entire town is gone! But, directing your eyes up, you see that Milford's Bluff now floats about 60 feet above the ground and hovers there upside-down. Before complete panic sets in, you notice that the townsfolk move about the streets, seemingly unaware of their plight.*

Judge's Notes: In addition to its odd orientation, an impenetrable invisible bubble surrounds the

town, preventing entry from this side. The party can get the townsfolk's attention, however, and can communicate with them. They are aware of the oddity, however, after some panic, they eventually just went back to their lives. Any conversation with the townsfolk reveals 1d5 rumors:

**Judges Note:** If you are using a town known to the party, they are aware of Jarkavian – an old wizard well-known to all those in the town – and the location of his castle, just a few miles away. The wizard is known for being eccentric, but otherwise harmless.

| ODDITY RUMOR TABLE |                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| D5                 | RUMOR                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1                  | The wizard Jarkavian, who lives a few miles outside of town was here a week before the change and was acting very strange. (TRUE)                                                                                         |
| 2                  | Varley the local sage, died the day before the change, and his death was a portent of this evil the befell them. (FALSE...this was simply a coincidence)                                                                  |
| 3                  | Other strange things occurred prior to the change, including the local fishermen catching fish that had human-like eyes. (TRUE)                                                                                           |
| 4                  | Thoralia, the town's old maid is said to have been practicing witchcraft, and may have been the cause...although she denies it. (FALSE...she was not practicing any witchcraft, only trying to learn some simple spells). |
| 5                  | Stokal, the proprietor of the general store was the only one to speak with Jarkavian on his last visit, and says that the wizard was mumbling something about "needing more luck." (TRUE)                                 |

### JARKAVIAN'S CASTLE ENCOUNTERS:

Jarkavian's castle stands on a cliff edge overlooking the Sea of Ingots (or other sizeable body of water in your campaign world). The approach is easy enough...

#### 1. APPROACHING THE CASTLE

*As you approach the gate, an odd energy fills the air – not malevolent, but certainly unsettling. As the gate comes into view, you quickly realize that the iron bars look odd – each is a shimmering, transparent column of water.*

The PCs may pass through the bars of water without incident. If they seek another way into the keep, none is found. The walls stand 100' tall and the roof seems to have no aperture.



**Adventure Mechanics:** Because the castle is inundated with energy from the Plane of Probability, the luck mechanic works differently in the following ways:

- Any halfling in the party loses his ability to share Luck. This ability shifts to the character with the highest Luck score, who is NOT a halfling, until the portal closes. In place of the Luck sharing ability, the halfling magically gains one spell-like ability for the duration of the adventure. Roll the spell randomly and allow the halfling to use that power as a trained spell check (1d20), but using his Luck modifier instead of Intelligence to adjust the spell check. The character does not add class level to the check.
- For a thief, the Luck die takes on strange variability. Whilst in a room in the castle with an even number (i.e. Area 2), the thief's Luck die is rolled at +1d. When in an odd-numbered room, the Luck die is rolled at -1d. The only exception is the Portal Room (#12). When in the Portal Room, the thief's Luck die is rolled at +2d due to the intense forces of luck contained in the room.
- Rolling the body checks are inverted. When a "dead" character's body is rolled over, they must roll OVER their Luck score to recover.

## 2. GRAND FOYER

*This once proud entryway has fallen into a depressing state of disrepair. Moth eaten banners of the family crest hang from the ceiling, and a layer of dust covers the floor. Footprints lead off to a large oak door in the center of the north wall. Another sturdy door lies to the west. In each corner of the foyer stands the life-size marble statue of a person in elegant clothing. Each is likely one of Jarkavian's ancestors, since they bear the unmistakable pointy nose common to his family.*

The western door leads to a short hallway, blocked by a cave-in. The statue in the northeast corner wears a beard composed of actual hair. This statue detects as magical with the *detect magic* spell (DCC RPG rulebook, pg 260), though no details are revealed at any spell check result. The other statues appear to be normal, if masterfully carved, marble statues.

## 3. BATHING CHAMBER

*A large circular pool stands empty in the center of this room, 10' in diameter and four feet deep. Cotton towels lie folded on shelf along the south wall, and a table next to the pool holds jars with paper labels. A marble statue stands in the southwestern corner.*

The water from the pool is suspended 30' above on the ceiling due to probability magical energy coursing through the place. Characters only notice the hovering pool if they actively search the room, or specifically say they are looking up.

The statue in the corner is of Jarkavian's great-great-great uncle who was quite a practical joker in his day. It randomly sticks its tongue out, attempting to distract the party from noticing the pool on the ceiling.

The pool has become a gateway for a Kismet Kraken (see below), a fierce alpha-predator native to the oceans of the Plane of Probability. The kraken reaches through the pool-gateway with a tentacle 1d4+1 rounds after the party enters the room. If the party is surprised, the kraken receives two attacks the first round and +8 to initiative the following round, instead of +4. Once defeated, the kraken's tentacles dangle lifelessly from the water on the ceiling.

**Kismet Kraken (1):** Init +4; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1d8 + entangle), beak +7 melee (2d12); AC 17; HD 8d8; hp 49 ; MV 0' (reach 50'); Act 4d20; SP entangle the target on successful hit (STR DC 20 to escape. If unable to escape after two attempts the target is pulled within range of the beak). SV Fort+6, Ref +3, Will +4; AL C.

## 4. JARKAVIAN'S QUARTERS

*This room is clearly the living quarters of someone who doesn't spend much time keeping the place clean. Cobwebs dangle from the corners of the room, and dust lies on most of the once fine furnishings. The bed is unkempt, and dirty plates with stale motes of food litter the desk that sits opposite the bed. A bookshelf crowded with large books stands against one wall. A small footlocker sits at the end of the bed.*

The books are mundane – on scholarly topics that are of little interest or value, however, a careful search of the books (which requires 30 minutes of

rifling through them) reveals two sheets of parchment that contain spells: *eldritch hound* (DCC RPG rulebook, pg 211; Caster level 6; spell check 22) and *haste* (DCC RPG rulebook, pg 221; caster level 6; spell check 22)

The footlocker contains only musty robes and clothing. There is a secret door on the south wall sealed with a *ward portal* spell (DCC RPG rulebook, pg 160; caster level 6; spell check 18).

## 5. JARKAVIAN'S LABORATORY

*This large room contains several long tables covered with strange devices and contraptions. Hefty tomes lay open upon the tables and upon the desk in the northwest corner. Shelves line the walls crammed with all manner of wizardly spell components in vials and jars. A sprawling parchment covers the south wall etched with anatomy diagrams of various animals common to this region. A small table in the southwest corner holds a glass display case. A strangely carved sword lies within it.*

The inventory of spell components is quite impressive, and an eldritch caster can find most common or uncommon spell components, with a bit of searching. The books are about various magical experiments, and one appears heavily annotated by the wizard. This book, *Probability Mechanics of the Material Plane*, describes various rituals and experiments to test probability. Spellcasters that study this book and the annotations determine that Jarkavian tried to

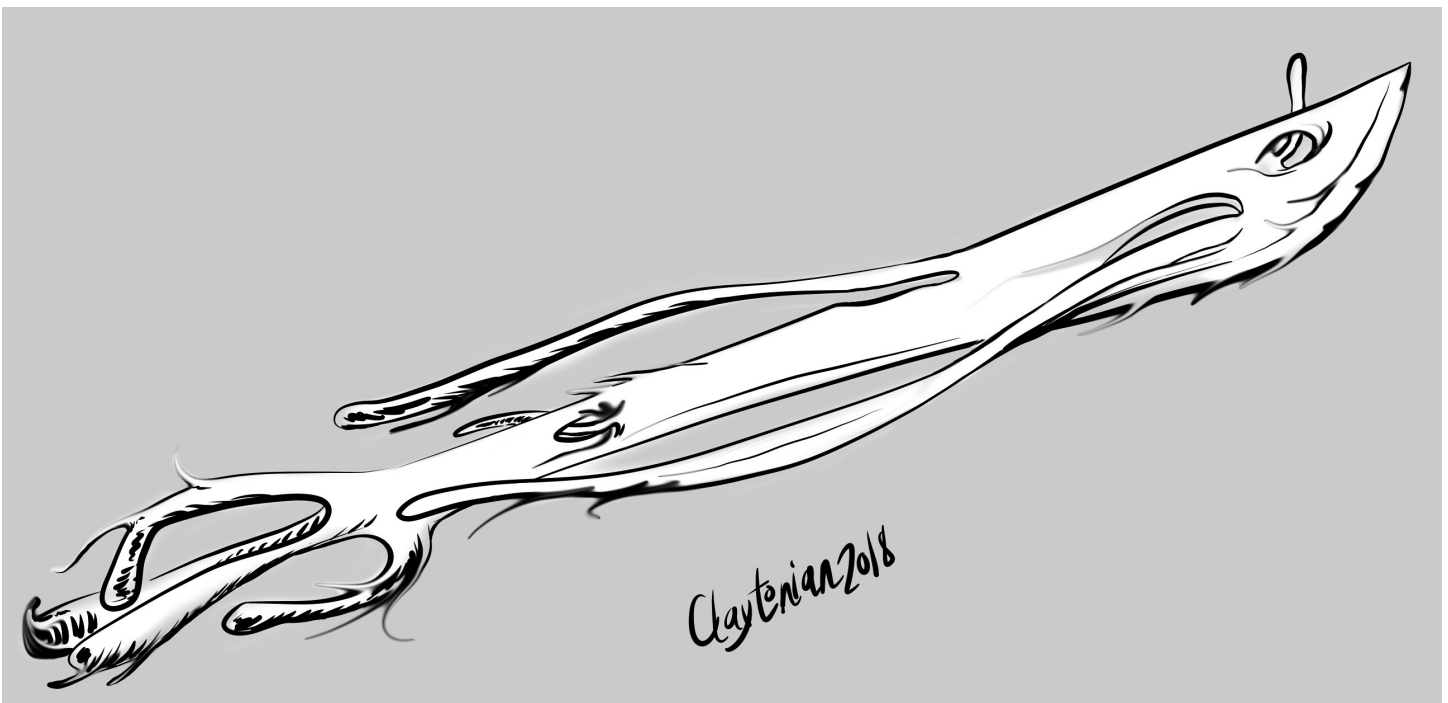
open a portal to another dimension where luck and probability energy originates (and likely succeeded).

Jarkavian created the sword, which he calls the *Chaos Blade*. He periodically experiments on it, trying to uncover its secrets.

**The Chaos Blade:** A highly ornate longsword, curving metal bands twist and intertwine in a jumbled, random manner to form the *Chaos Blade*. The appearance of this sword leaves no doubt that it is imbued with a Chaotic energy of primordial origin. If a player uses the sword for attack, they must first roll a d16 on the following table.

**NOTE:** Characters wielding the sword who are of Chaotic alignment receive a +2 bonus to this roll, while Lawfully-aligned characters suffer a -2 penalty.

| THE CHAOS BLADE! |                                        |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|
| D16              | RESULT                                 |
| ≤2               | -2d for the attack die.                |
| 3-5              | -1d for the attack die.                |
| 6-11             | Use the character's normal attack die. |
| 12-14            | +1d on the attack die.                 |
| 15+              | +2d on the attack die.                 |



## 6. THE GRAND BANQUET HALL

*This enormous dining hall contains a 70' long mahogany table surrounded by chairs, many of which are tipped over. The west wall of this chamber has collapsed. Beautifully carved oaken doors stand in the north, east and south walls. Murals on the walls depict the local countryside in a variety of seasons. An oversized marble statue stands in the northeastern corner of the hall.*

After 1d3 rounds, the northern door bursts open, and discombobu-noids pour into the room.

**Discombobu-noids (10):** Init +2; Atk punch +1 melee (1d6), or as weapon +2 melee; AC 15; HD 3d10; hp 18 each; MV 60'; Act 3d20; SV Fort+1, Ref +2, Will -1; AL C.

Natives of the Plane of Probability, they have traveled to the castle via Jarkavian's portal. Five arms sprout from the creatures: two connected to the shoulders, one to their cube-shaped heads and one each from the center of the back and chest. Discombobu-noids may wield up to three weapons at once and have three legs allowing them to move very quickly. Their eyes are in the palms of their hands – the creatures reserve two of their hands to see with during combat.



The statue is of an ancestor of Jarkavian's who enjoyed hunting and sport; he cheers and exhorts both sides to fight to the death for his entertainment.

## 7. KITCHEN

*Foodstuffs spill off shelves and tables onto the floor of this kitchen. Cooking utensils hang from the walls, and a cold hearth sits on the north wall. A large barrel occupies the southeast corner of the room.*

The food in this room is moldy and stale. The barrel has been used as a latrine by the discombobu-noids, who have been living in this room. If the barrel is investigated, or if the characters spend more than one round here, they draw the attention of dangerous intestinal parasites, the kogalia, living in the discombobu-noids' waste.

**Kogalia (3):** Init +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6 + infestation); AC 18; HD 2d8; hp 14 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP Infestation (Fort DC 16; see below); SV Fort+3, Ref +4, Will -3; AL C.

The kogalia are intestinal worms that can grow up to five feet long and half an inch in diameter inside the intestines of their host. They are an epidemic in the Plane of Probability, and many denizens are infected. When the kogalia attacks, it implants microscopic live young in the wound, which move through the bloodstream directly to the victim's intestines. Victims receive a Fort save (DC 16) to resist the parasites. Those infested must make a Will save (DC 16) each time Luck is spent or received. On a failure, half of the spent Luck are devoured by the parasites (round down).

The parasites can be detected as magical and may only be cured by magical means, such as divine aid, the *neutralize disease* spell (DCC RPG rulebook, pg 277), 3+ hit dice of healing via a cleric's lay on hands ability, and the like.

## 8. LIVING QUARTERS

**A) Mundane Quarters:** These rooms once served as quarters for servants. Unless otherwise noted, each is furnished with a bed, chair, desk and table, as well as a thick layer of dust.

**B) Light Monster:** Furnished like the others, a bizarre creature from the Plane of Probability, has taken up residence. The qualist, a shimmering form composed of multi-colored light, darts around the room.

**Qualist:** Init +6; Atk +4 light beam (luck vampirism; range 10'); AC 18; HD 3d8; hp 16; MV 100'; Act 1d24; SP Luck vampirism (Will save DC 22 or lose Luck), immune to non-magical damage, resistant to magical weapons (1/2 damage); SV Fort+2, Ref +7, Will +1; AL C.

The qualist attacks by firing a beam of multi-hued light that, on a successful attack roll, drains Luck (Will DC 22). The qualist attacks the character with the highest Luck score the first round, draining 1d4 Luck. The next round, it attacks the character with the next highest Luck score, and if successful, drains 1d6 Luck. The creature continues this progression, each successful attack draining +1d Luck from its victim. Each point of Luck drained heals the qualist an equal number of hit points. Though immune to non-magical attacks, and resistant to damage from magical weapons, other magical attacks (such as spells and spell-like effects) affect them normally.

**C) Secrets:** Similarly furnished as the other living quarters in this area, this room also contains two animated busts – both ancestors of Jarkavian. The statues bicker and fume at each other, continually.

Though the busts may address the characters, usually to complain about the other, they provide no useful information. Both laugh hideously if the characters are affected by the rune (see below).

A rune protects the secret door in the north wall (*runic alphabet, fey*; caster level 6, AL chaotic, spell check 32; Effects: Fly back 3d20 feet, 1d8 damage). **NOTE:** The rune is invisible and permanent – see the DCC RPG rulebook, pg 227). Additional magic protects the secret door, rendering it invisible to common searching, though a *detect magic* spell reveals it and possibly the presence of the rune (DCC RPG rulebook, pg 260).

**9) Balcony** – *This wide, covered balcony provides a majestic view of the Sea of Ingots. Two overstuffed chairs sit close together with a low table between them, holding two empty cups and an empty glass pitcher. Two marble statues flank the entry, one*

*depicting a regal looking gentleman and the other a smiling woman. Both statues are clearly shedding tears that pool at their feet.*

The statues depict Jarkavian's parents, who weep for the madness that has taken hold of the wizard. A locked drawer in the table (pick locks DC 15) holds a spyglass, a small book of meditations and velvet-lined silver ring box holding two *gestalt rings*.

**Gestalt rings** are magically linked to the forces of probability. The first *gestalt ring* worn bestows two permanent Luck points on the wearer. When someone dons the second ring (the same character or another) a powerful magical bond links the rings and wearers. When one (or the same person if both rings are worn) spends Luck points, the other takes equivalent hit point damage. Only a *dispel magic* (spell check 32+) spell allows the rings to be removed, though their enchantment remains.

## 10. THE MASTER'S CHAMBER

*Once-fine furniture and luxurious linens decorate this large room, though all is now worm- and moth-eaten. A bed, desk, chest of drawers, two sitting chairs and a large bookcase decorate this expansive room. All were once fine, but now appear dilapidated. A marble bust of sits on a pedestal against the south wall.*

This room once belonged to Jarkavian's parents, though he avoids it due to the intense melancholy it brings him. The desk, chest of drawers and bookcase contain musty paperwork, clothes and rotted books, respectively. The bust depicts the family's progenitor, Markolias, who immediately addresses anyone that enter the room. Bored and a bit mad, Markolias reveals the following information to the party if questioned:

- ◇ Jarkavian has opened a portal to the Plane of Probability, hoping to bring the statues of his ancestors to life (TRUE).
- ◇ Jarkavian is a kind-hearted, old man who would never hurt anyone (FALSE. Although once true, this is no longer the case...see area 12).
- ◇ Jarkavian has crafted several magical items which are powered by probability energy (TRUE...although Markolias does not know

their location).

- ◇ Markolias is saddened by Jarkavian's inability to accept his fate, and worries that the portal will cause, ever growing consequences to the material plane, and may eventually grow to engulf the world (TRUE).
- ◇ He believes that the portal can be closed by use of a powerful *knock* spell (DCC RPG rulebook, pg. 175) (FALSE).

## 11. THE PORTAL ANTECHAMBER

*Prismatic light spills from the southwestern exit to this sprawling natural cavern. A ten-foot tall humanoid monstrosity stands in the center of the space, seemingly composed of shifting base elements – one arm composed of liquid mud, the other of red-hot rocks, legs of spinning ice crystals and sparkling copper-colored gas. The head swivels toward the entrance, its three eyes composed of rainbow light. A cavity in the center of the creature's chest swirls with infinite colors that crash together erupting strange energies.*

The probability elemental was conjured by Jarkavian to protect the portal (see area 12) and attacks any who enter the cavern.

**Probability Elemental:** Init +1; Atk punch +3 melee (1d12), or special +5 ranged; AC 19 (AC 22 for the chest cavity); HD 8d12; hp 77; MV 20'; Act 3d24 (2 punches and one special attack per round); SP (see below); SV Fort +7 Ref -2, Will +5; AL C.

The probability elemental is composed of various base elements that combine to form liquid mud, fiery rock, frozen air, and gaseous light. The creature channels these strange elemental combinations and fires them out of its chest cavity, once per round – and can channel each twice per day. The cavity can be targeted by a Mighty Deed of Arms, though the strange probability energies that flow through the cavern make it more difficult – the attacker must roll a 5 or better on the deed die against an AC 22. The cavity can sustain 20 points of damage before it is blocked. If the probability elemental expends its elemental energies for the day, or the cavity is blocked, it rushes to area 12 and enters the portal to recharge.

When reduced to zero hit points, the probability elemental erupts, shooting elemental shrapnel throughout the room, dealing 2d16 damage in a 60' radius (Ref DC 16 for half damage).

### Probability Elemental Attacks!

- ◇ **Mud slide bolt:** +2 missile fire (2d10 and Ref save or -50% movement rate)
- ◇ **Blizzard blast:** +3 missile fire (2d8 cold damage)
- ◇ **Fire rock bullets:** -1 missile fire (2d14 fire damage)
- ◇ **Choking copper cloud:** +1 missile fire (2d8 choking damage and Fort save DC 18 or take additional 2d14 damage as the copper solidifies in their lungs).

## 12. PORTAL TO THE PLANE OF PROBABILITY

*This small cavern dances with scintillating, rainbow light emitted from a prismatic orb floating in the center of the room. Several shadowy, hunched humanoid forms move through the light and in a multitude of voices, shout, "I know you have come to close the Portal, but I won't let you! To do so, is to commit genocide of my entire family! Please, don't condemn my ancestors and I to eternity!"*

**NOTE:** See the sidebar on the opposite page for more information on running Jarkavian for this encounter.

### CLOSING THE PORTAL

The PCs may close the portal with a *dispel magic* spell (spell check DC 28), or at the judge's discretion, via divine aid or the assistance of a supernatural patron. If the portal is left open, probability energy continues to affect the world in an ever-widening circle and evermore strange creatures wander out. Characters that enter the portal arrive in a place where probability flows in an ever-fluctuating stream, unpredictably. Judges are encouraged, after a brief sojourn in this strange realm, to throw the PCs through another portal and into a campaign of their choice. Probability energy could cast the party to the Purple Planet, the dark city of Nowhere City Nights, Lankhmar, Umerica...or one of your own making.



# THE WIZARD JARKAVIAN

Once a humble, country sorcerer, Jarkavian succumbed to madness driven by the realization that his noble line ends with him. A failed magical experiment claimed the life of his only son, and the wizard spent the last few years frantically researching a way to secure his and his family's legacy. After stumbling onto a ritual related to good fortune, he opened a portal to the Plane of Probability. Believing that he can harness this power to bring life to the ancestral statues in his home, he has pursued the secrets of probability unto madness.

Jarkavian pleads with the PCs to leave him and his experimentation in peace, even as he attempts to blast them with his formidable magical arsenal. He fights to the death to defend the portal, but may become amenable if the party promises to help him lessen planar side-effects. Play him as raving madman to a pitiable basket-case from one moment to the next.

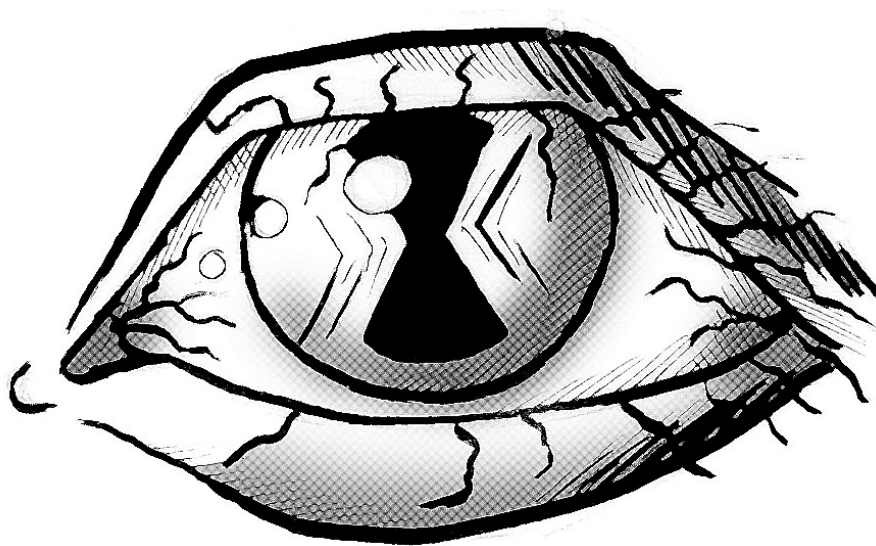
**NOTE:** In some playtests, parties have tried to negotiate with and/or subdue the mad wizard – believing that he could be cured of his obsessions, while others believed him to be too much of a threat and too far gone to be allowed to survive.

**Combat Notes:** Alerted to the party's presence during the fight with the probability elemental, Jarkavian cast *mirror image* (spell result 26-29; 8 mirror images; DCC RPG rulebook, pg 182) and *magic shield* (spell result 28-29; DCC RPG rulebook, pg 146). Though he initially attempts to negotiate with the party, he fights to the death to protect the portal. He casts *haste* on his first combat round, and then attempts to summon help from the probability portal – treat as the spell *monster summoning*, which draws in discombobu-noids (see area 6). He continues unleashing arcane fury upon the party until he is near death or his spells are expended, at which point he throws himself on the mercy of the party, claiming that to close the portal is akin to genocide of his family line.

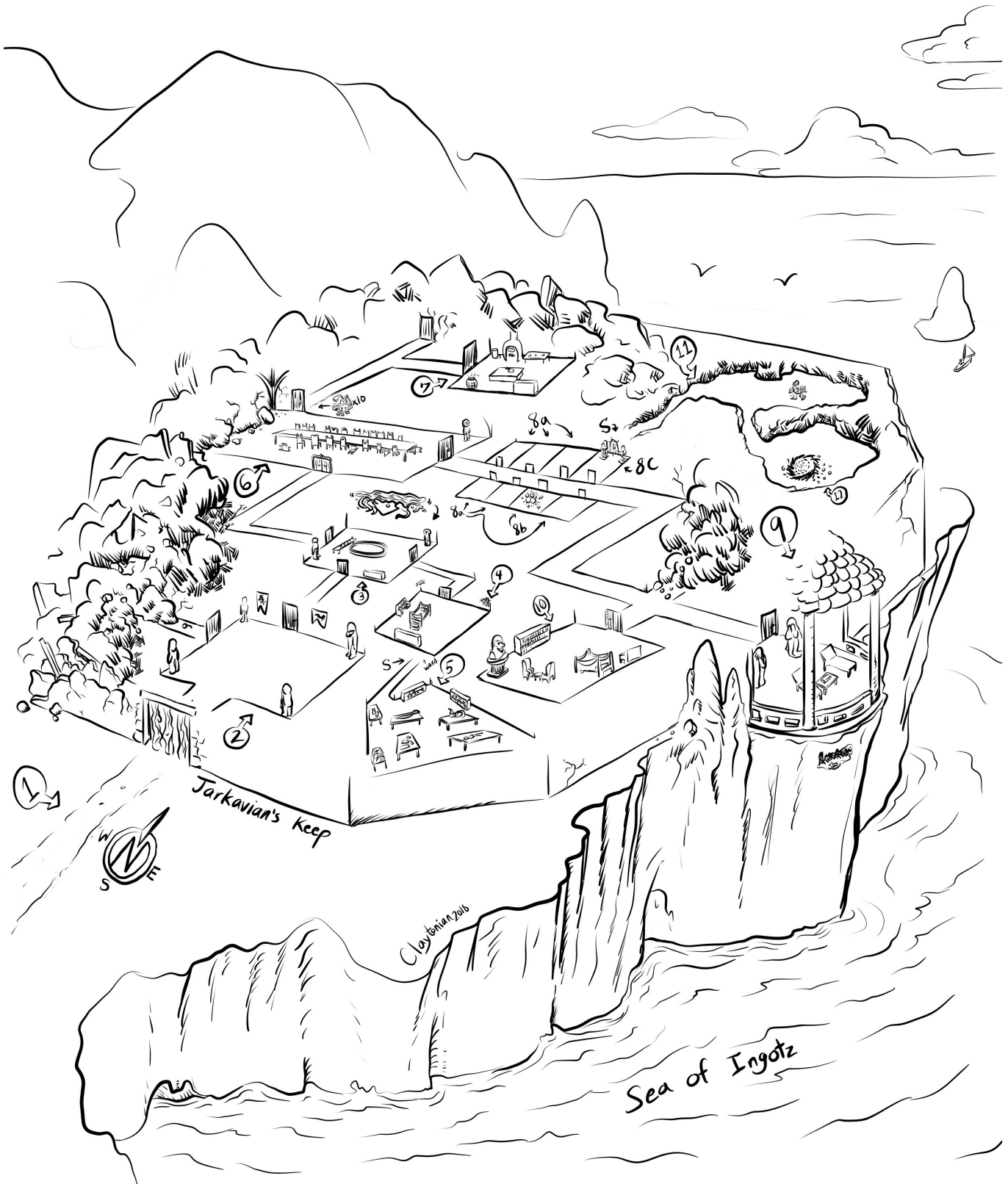
**Jarkavian (high-level wizard):** Init +3; Atk 2 spells; AC 17 (*magic shield* +4); hp 51; MV 20'; SP spellcasting (see below), statistics enhanced due to probability energy exposure; Act 1d20 + 1d16; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +9; AL C.

Equipment: Spellbook and wizard robes.

**Spells:** Spell check +10. Spells known: *magic missile*, *color spray*, *scorching ray*, *shatter*, *mirror image*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *haste*, *lightning bolt*, *fly*, *planar step*.



# JARKAVIAN'S CASTLE MAP



The image is a black and white collage featuring several DCC RPG book covers and a central logo. The logo at the top left is a circular emblem with a stylized figure of a person in a hood and cloak, holding a sword, with the text "shinobi27" above it and "games" below it. The book covers include:

- CURSE OF MISTHOOD**: Features a large, dark, hooded figure.
- ADVENTURE IN THE SHADOWS**: Features a large, dark, hooded figure.
- THE REVELATION OF MULMO TENTACLED EDITION**: Features a large, dark, hooded figure.
- ANGELS, DAEMONS AND BEINGS BETWEEN VOLUME II: ELFLAND EDITION**: Features a large, dark, hooded figure.
- THE TROLLS OF MISTHOOD**: Features a large, dark, hooded figure.
- ANGELS, DAEMONS AND BEINGS BETWEEN EXTENDED OTHERWORLDLY EDITION**: Features a large, dark, hooded figure.
- FEAST OF THE PRESERVER**: Features a large, dark, hooded figure.

At the bottom, there is a banner with the text "Available now at [RPGNow.com](http://RPGNow.com)" and "Follow us: [shinobi27games.blogspot.com.au](http://shinobi27games.blogspot.com.au)".



By: Eric Hoffman

# ZATIMA XEL BARCA

Once an ifreet of notoriously diabolic persuasion, Zatima Xel Barca visited fire and death upon the ancient nomadic peoples of her home plane. As if those nomadic peoples didn't have enough troubles in their miserable lives, a demonic horde invaded, destroying all over a few centuries of debauchery. Though Zatima fought the demons, they eventually captured her and dragged her back to their fiery plane. Kept as a demonic slave for a millennium, the creatures visiting tortures upon her that are unthinkable. Her endurance of these horrors caught the attention of an archdemon, and Zatima Xel Barca became his consort, learning many of his secrets before killing him and usurping his reign. Zatima Xel Barca appears as a 7' tall naked human female with the head of a goat. Strange body piercings and ropes of gold chains adorn the demon ifreet and a hellish red and black flame dances in her open left palm. The demon queen moves in disturbing, jerky motions as she jumps unevenly through space and time.

## ZATIMA XEL BARCA: INVOKE PATRON RESULTS

|       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12-13 | Zatima is unimpressed and sends the least of her boons. The caster's eyes burn with an inner fire for 2d4 rounds, making enemies hesitate before attacking him. There is a 25% chance any creature targeting the caster chooses another target, instead. If no other viable target is available, the enemy loses its attacks for that round.                                           |
| 14-17 | An angry red flame appears in the caster's hand. The caster can hurl the flame at a target up to 50' away for 2d6 damage.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 18-19 | Haunting desert music emanates from the firmament, causing all enemies of the caster within 30' to make a Willpower save or be hypnotized for 2d3 rounds.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 20-23 | An angry red flame appears in the caster's hand. The caster can hurl the flame at a target up to 50' away for 2d6 damage. The flame reappears in the caster's hand at the beginning of each round for 2d4 rounds.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 24-27 | A cocoon of flame surrounds the caster protecting him from physical attacks for 2d5 rounds. The flames are extremely distracting and cause a -1d penalty on the casters action dice for the duration.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 28-29 | Zatima Xel Barca appears and whispers words of power into the caster's ear for 1d5 rounds. The caster regains any lost spells for the day and gains a +5 on +1d to spell checks during this time.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 30-31 | 3d6 Demonic Dervishes appear and fight the caster's enemies for 1 hour. They remain within 50' of the caster during this time.<br><br><b>Demonic Dervish:</b> Init +0; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d8), short bow +1 missile (1d6); AC 14; HD 1d8; MV 40'; Act 1d24; SP None; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL C.                                                                           |
| 32+   | Zatima Xel Barca appears in all her disturbing splendor. Enemies of the caster within 100' must make a Willpower save or be smitten by Zatima. The demoness instructs those smitten to obey the caster – leaving them under the caster's control for 1d4 days. Any command that is totally against the creature's nature or obviously suicidal has a 50% chance of breaking the spell. |



## ZATIMA XEL BARCA: PATRON TAINT

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | The caster's eyes glow an angry red in low light or darkness. He receives infravision 20' but -1 Personality. On a second result the caster grows short goat horns from the top of his head. On a third result the caster's entire head turns into that of a goat, and he loses the ability to speak human languages. |
| <b>2</b> | The caster changes sex. On a second result the caster becomes a hermaphrodite.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>3</b> | Zatima Xel Barca's capricious nature rubs off on the caster. On any successful spell check, there is a 5% chance that the caster changes his mind at the last second and casts a different spell at random. On any subsequent result the chance increases by 5%.                                                      |
| <b>4</b> | Zatima Xel Barca is displeased with the nature of service the caster provides her. One randomly determined spell that the caster knows is deleted from his memory for all time. It is replaced by a randomly chosen spell. The caster may never relearn the lost spell.                                               |
| <b>5</b> | The caster is given a fleeting glimpse of the tortures suffered by Zatima Xel Barca at the hands of her demon captors. The caster develops a random sexual perversion.                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>6</b> | Sustained contact with Zatima begins to break the caster's mind. She loses one spell (randomly determined) that can never be relearned. On a second, and any subsequent result, the caster loses more mental faculties and suffers a permanent loss of 1d2 Intelligence                                               |

## ZATIMA XEL BARCA: SPELLBURN RESULTS

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | The caster must apply a hot flame to his flesh. The smell is nauseating and in addition to the stat loss the caster must make a Fortitude save (DC 8) or be nauseous for 1d3 rounds, suffering a -1d to all rolls. The nausea starts the round after the spellburn.                                                                                           |
| <b>2</b> | The caster contorts in ways the body was not meant to. The resulting pain manifests as stat loss.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>3</b> | The heat and confusion of the ifreet home plane surrounds the caster, momentarily. The drain is manifested as stat loss. In addition, anyone within 5' of the caster must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or take 1d4 points of heat damage.                                                                                                                       |
| <b>4</b> | Blood sacrifice is required; a half pint for every 2 points of spellburn. If the caster drains 2 pints, she must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or pass out for 1d3 hours. The DC goes up to 16 if the caster drains 3 pints. If 4 or 5 pints are drained, the caster automatically passes out and must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) or die in 1d4+CL rounds. |

## WINDS OF GEHENNA

**Level:** 1 (Zatima Xel Barca) **Range:** Varies **Duration:** 1d4+CL rounds **Casting Time:** 1 action **Save:** None

**General:** The caster calls upon a weak connection to the home plane of the ifreet, creating hot and swirling winds to appear in an area for a limited time.

**Manifestation (1d4):** (1) Dust and sand swirl in the area of effect; (2) heat waves in the area of effect; (3) ghosts of the damned circle in the area of effect; (4) translucent brimstone falls through the area of effect.

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>     | Lost, failure and patron taint                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>2-11</b>  | Lost. Failure                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>12-13</b> | The caster conjures a 20' diameter area of heat centered no further than 60' away. The temperature is that of a hot desert day, capable of melting ice or giving relief from extreme cold.                                                                                                                       |
| <b>14-17</b> | The caster conjures a 20' diameter area of heat centered no further than 60' away. Creatures that stay in the affected area for a full round take 1d2+ CL points of damage.                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>18-19</b> | The caster conjures a 20' diameter area of heat centered no further than 90' away. Creatures that stay in the affected area for a full round take 1d4+CL points of damage. Missile weapons fired through any part of the area of effect have a penalty of -2 to hit due to the shifting winds and waves of heat. |



| Winds of Gehenna, continued... |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>20-23</b>                   | The caster conjures a 20' diameter area of heat centered no further than 90' away. Creatures that stay in the affected area for a full round take 1d6+CL points of damage. Missile weapons fired through any part of the area of effect have a penalty of -2 to hit due to the shifting winds and waves of heat.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>24-27</b>                   | The caster conjures a 30' diameter area of heat centered no further than 200' away. Creatures in the area instantly take 1d6+CL points of damage each round. Missile weapons fired through any part of the area of effect have a penalty of -2 to hit due to the shifting winds and waves of heat.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>28-29</b>                   | The caster conjures up to three 20' diameter areas of heat centered no further than 200' away. Creatures in the affected area instantly take 1d6+CL points of damage per round. Missile weapons fired through any part of the area of effect have a penalty of -2 to hit due to the shifting winds.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>30-31</b>                   | The caster conjures a 40' diameter area of heat centered no further than 500' away. Creatures in the affected area instantly take 1d8+CL points of damage per round. Normal missile fire through the affected area is impossible.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>32+</b>                     | <p>The caster conjures up to three 20' diameter areas of heat centered no further than 1000' away. Creatures in the affected area instantly take 2d6+CL points of damage per round. Normal missile fire through the affected area is impossible. There is a 25% chance that a minor fire elemental appears in each of the affected areas. The elementals attack any creatures within in the area of effect for the duration of the spell. The elemental disappears at the end of the spell duration.</p> <p><b>Elemental, Fire:</b> Init +3; Atk burning touch +6 melee (2d6); AC 18; HD 4d8; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP vulnerable to cold and water, elemental traits; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AL N.</p> |

## DEMON SERVANT

**Level:** 2 (Zatima Xel Barca) **Range:** Varies **Duration:** Varies **Casting Time:** 1 turn **Save:** None

**General:** The caster summons forth a minor demon that serves in any capacity the caster desires for the duration of the spell. A lesser effect may be chosen if the caster desires.

**Manifestation (1d4):** (1) A frog-like demon that walks on two legs (gains swim 30'); (2) an azure mantis-like demon; (3) a mechanical ape-man; (4) an obese humanoid with cloven hooves and tiny wings for ears (can fly 10'); (5) a tall, thin zombie with metal shards sticking out of its body (+1 damage per die); (6) a scaled bear-shaped demon that walks upright and has the head of a Rhinoceros (can gore at double attack bonus and +2 damage per die instead of 2 claws).

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>     | Lost, failure and patron taint                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>2-11</b>  | Lost. Failure                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>12-13</b> | Failure, but the spell is not lost.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>14-17</b> | <p>A Demon Servant appears to serve the caster for 1 hour.</p> <p><b>Demon Servant:</b> Init -2; Atk 2 claws +2 (1d6+2); AC 14; HD 1d8+2; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP Infravision 100', darkness (+4 spellcheck), Half damage from non-magic weapons; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +4; AL C.</p> |
| <b>18-19</b> | A Demon Servant appears to serve the caster for 1 day.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>20-23</b> | A Demon Servant appears to serve the caster for 2 hours and the casting time is reduced to 1 round.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>24-27</b> | A Demon Servant appears to serve the caster for 1 day. It has 2d8+2 HD and AC 16.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>28-29</b> | A Demon Servant appears to serve the caster for 1 day. It has 3d8+2 HD and AC 16.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>30-31</b> | Two Demon Servants appear to serve the caster for 2 hours. Casting time is reduced to 2 rounds. Each has 3d8+2 HD and AC 16.                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>32-33</b> | A powerful Demon Servant appears to serve the caster for 1 day. It has 8 HD, AC 18 and attacks with +8 melee for 2d6+3 damage.                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>34+</b>   | A very powerful Demon Servant appears to serve the caster for 1 day. It has 14 HD, AC 20 and attacks with +10 melee for 2d8+3 damage.                                                                                                                                                 |

## ZATIMA'S DISJOINTED DIMENSIONAL STRIDE

**Level:** 2 (Zatima Xel Barca) **Range:** Varies **Duration:** CL+1d10 rounds **Casting Time:** 1 action **Save:** See below

**General:** The caster channels the schizophrenic existence of Zatima Xel Barca for a short time, gaining resistance to certain attacks, causing confusion to enemies and possibly bypassing physical obstacles. The caster can cease the spell at any time.

**Manifestation (1d4):** (1) The caster blinks in and out of existence; (2) The caster seems to move randomly and sporadically, sometimes in slow-motion, other times very fast; (3) The caster flickers like an old black and white television; (4) The caster appears translucent, and smoke billows from the eyes, ears and mouth.

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>     | Lost, failure and patron taint                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>2-11</b>  | Lost. Failure                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>12-13</b> | Failure, but the spell is not lost.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>14-17</b> | The caster gains a +4 to Fortitude and Reflex saves for the duration of the spell. Physical attacks have 20% miss chance.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>18-19</b> | The caster gains a +4 to Fortitude and Reflex saves for the duration of the spell. Physical attacks have a 40% miss chance.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>20-23</b> | The caster gains a +6 to Fortitude and Reflex saves for the duration of the spell. Physical attacks and spell-like effects have a 60% chance to be ineffective. Additionally, the caster may move through up to 3' of organic material (wood, living creatures, undead, etc.).                                                  |
| <b>24-27</b> | The caster gains a +6 to Fortitude and Reflex saves for the duration of the spell. Physical attacks and spell-like effects have an 80% miss chance. Additionally, the caster may move through up to 6' of organic or inorganic material (wood, flesh, stone, metal, etc.).                                                      |
| <b>28-29</b> | The caster gains a +8 to Fortitude and Reflex saves for the duration of the spell. Physical attacks and spell-like effects have a 90% chance to be ineffective. Additionally, the caster may move through up to 12' of any material except those created by magic more powerful than this casting (higher initial spell-check). |
| <b>30-31</b> | The caster gains a +8 to Fortitude and Reflex saves for the duration of the spell. Physical attacks and spell-like effects have a 90% chance to be ineffective. Additionally, the caster may move through up to 25' of any material except those created by magic more powerful than this casting (higher initial spell-check). |
| <b>32-33</b> | The caster gains a +8 to Fortitude and Reflex saves for the duration of the spell. Physical attacks and spell-like effects are 95% ineffective. Additionally, the caster may move through up to 50' of any material except those created by magic more powerful than this casting (higher initial spell-check).                 |
| <b>34+</b>   | The caster dimension hops at such a frequency that no attacks or effects originating from any one dimension are effective. The caster passes through any substance, except those created by magic more powerful than this casting (higher initial spell-check).                                                                 |





By: Lee Murphy

# BESTIARY: CROPFOLK!

Whether the result of malignant druids, foolish farmer-sorcerers, or possibly a random spark of magic, cropfolk are the result of an arcane evolution of cultivated plants that have developed some feral intelligence. And they are tired of being eaten! The creatures rise from their hummus beds to smash, squash, rip, tear and to try out some human salad, maybe with a side of vinaigrette. Cropfolk use Crit Table M (Core Rules), are typically of neutral alignment (but sour disposition) and have limited treasure.

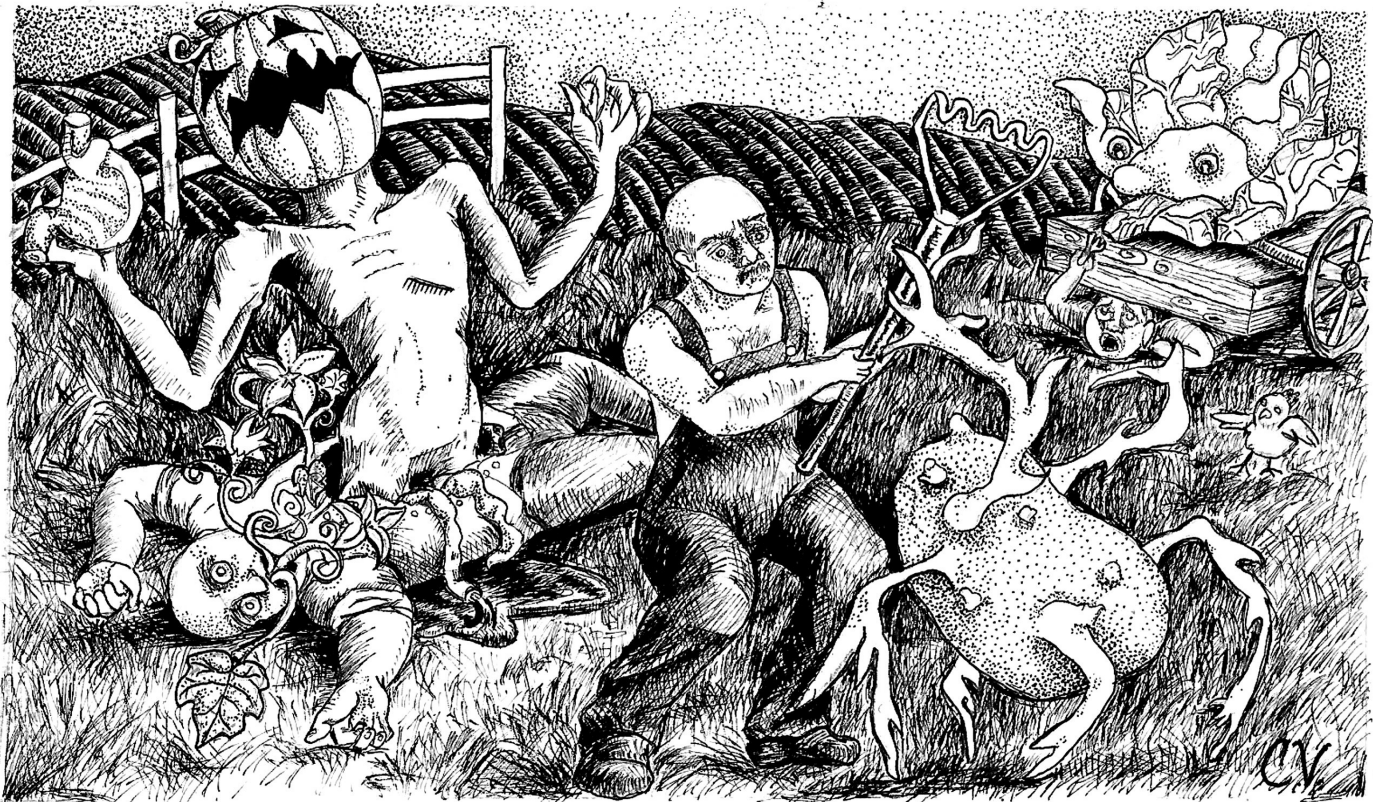
## CROPFOLK (PUMPKEN)

When arcane pumpkin seeds settle into the head of a humanoid corpse, pumpken are the result. Often they lie dormant until some enemy happens by at which point they quickly grow, rupturing the corpse's head. The resulting vile pumpkin head (complete with angry face) insinuates its vines into the host body, allowing it to manipulate the limbs in a jerky, horrific fashion. Other vines sprout from the host body

producing several flowers, allowing the pumpken to launch projectile seeds. Pumpken can also wield human weapons, though typically only semi-dangerous farm implements are available. When the pumpken reaches 0 hit points, its host body falls apart, though the pumpken can drag itself to another corpse or to safety where it awaits another host.

**Pumpken:** Init +0; Atk weapon +0 melee (damage by weapon) or seed +3 ranged (1d4; 20'); AC 10; HD 1d6+2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from piercing and bludgeoning weapons, immune to *sleep* and *charm*, *germinate*; SV Fort + 0, Ref +0, Will +4; AL N.

**Germinate:** Humanoids slain by a pumpken seed become a host for it. In 24 hours, the seed becomes a sprout that takes over the host body, ruptures its head and then wanders the fields seeking revenge for thousands of years of pumpkin pie and hot spiced beverages mislabeled as "pumpkin" flavored.



## CROPFOLK (DEATH SPUDS)

Death spuds seem to be formed from the collective angst of nearby humanoid children who refuse to eat their potatoes. The waste from the prepared vegetables, typically the skin and “eyes,” reform into a monstrous horror. The eyes of death spuds sprout tentacle-like limbs allowing it to quickly ambulate like an octopus on the sea floor. The spud uses these tendrils to immobilize victims and then drain their delicious fluids. Care must be taken not to cut spuds into pieces, since these grow into more (and angrier) death spuds given enough time.

**Death Spud: The Creature with a Hundred Eyes:** Init +0; Atk grab +2 melee (Strength DC 12 to escape or *drain fluids*: automatic 1d3 damage per round); AC 10; HD 1d6+2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from piercing and bludgeoning weapons, immune to *sleep and charm, regenerate, drain fluids*; SV Fort + 0, Ref +0, Will +4; AL N.

**Regenerate:** Spuds regenerate from pieces left over after they are killed. This process takes 1d3+2 weeks. Their remains must be burned or frozen to prevent reanimation.

## CROPFOLK (SOUR KRAUT)

None know what causes a simple cabbage to go sour, but what is known is that these hearty heads of green continue growing – outpacing their non-sour counterparts – until they reach the size of a full-grown cow. Many farmers, thinking they'd grown a prize-winning cabbage, have found themselves in a mortal struggle of ridiculous proportions. Sour kraut are not mobile, however their root systems erupt from the earth in a 30' radius, grappling their prey and stuffing victims into the sour kraut's massive toothy maw. They hardly discern edible from inedible matter and eagerly eat anything that comes into their reach (though they eschew vegetable matter). Anything indigestible is later ejected in a flotsam of crushed junk, although treasure can sometimes be found in these pellets. So dexterous are cannibal cabbages that they have a chance to eat any projectile fired at them (rock, arrow, spear, etc) by making a Reflex save (DC 10). Magical projectiles or anything on fire foils this ability.

**Sour Kraut:** Init +0; Atk entangle +3 melee (1d6 per round); AC 10; HD 1d8+2; MV 0' (30' reach); Act 1d20; SP half damage from piercing and bludgeoning weapons, immune to *sleep and charm, entangle*

(Strength or Agility DC 12 to escape), eat projectile (Reflex DC 10); SV Fort + 2, Ref +0, Will +4; AL N.

## CROPFOLK (TOMATO HYDRA)

A tomato hydra is formed when farmers allow their tomatoes to rot in the fields. The creatures stand upon four legs formed from the tomato plant stalk and have 5d6 heads with vicious eyes and wicked teeth hungry for animal flesh. They snarl and swear, throwing taunts at their enemies and threatening to devour any who behold them. Each head has 4 hp and each acts on a 1d20 action die. The hydra may willingly detach up to half its heads, which continue to attack until destroyed. When three-quarters of the heads are destroyed, the tomato hydra retreats so that it may recuperate – growing new heads at a rate of one every three days.

**Tomato Hydra:** Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 1d6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP 5-30 heads; SV Fort + 4, Ref +6, Will +2; AL N.

**Decapitated Tomato Head:** Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d3); AC 16; HD 1d6; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort + 4, Ref +6, Will +2; AL N.

## CROPFOLK (RUTABAGA JACK-O-LANTERN)

Though a generally unassuming vegetable, easily grown and hearty, the rutabaga has a long history of association with magic. In the autumn, farmers often carve the vegetable into lanterns to stave off evil spirits. This arcane influence from the spirits of the dead grant some rutabaga jack-o-lanterns animation and strange powers. The creatures are capable of channeling that inner spark into a deadly hell flame used to roast its victims.

**Rutabaga Jack-O-Lantern:** Init +4; Atk *corpse candle* ranged (see below); AC 15; HD 1d8; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP *corpse candle*, cast spells as a level 1 wizard (1d3 spells); SV Fort + 0, Ref +4, Will +6; AL N.

**Corpse Candle:** Attacks in a line 5' wide and 1d6 x 5' long, doing damage equal to their hit points (Reflex save DC 12 for half damage).



# Ar-Mammon, Lord of Hidden Treasures

By: Ari-Matti Pippo



Ar-Mammon, Lord-Warden of Hidden Treasure and the Heart of Witchfire is a relatively young demon in the grand scheme of balance. He rose to take over his domain after the old powers of Law and Chaos receded, brutally carving a demesne through subterfuge, murder and lies. Born from the union of a nameless, mortal witch-queen from the high north and an antediluvian *ifrit* lord known as the Golden Panther of the Desert, Ar-Mammon straddles the cleft between the time of the Old Gods and the Age of Man as only a demi-god or semi-demon only can.

Ar-Mammon is most often described as a large, jagged, man-shaped shadow. A wide, golden grin hovers where his face would be. A number of multicolored will-o-wisps, languidly float around his imposing figure.

Wherever a witchfire marks the spot of hidden hoard, whenever a will-o-wisp lures hopeful delvers to their doom, there is Ar-Mammon, grinning his golden grin from the deep darkness. Those brave enough to petition him may gain valuable secrets in trade for their sacrifice, but the power of Ar-Mammon stems from the greedy heart of hellfire, and pacts made with him burn his supplicants just as often as they reward them.

Ar-Mammon is universally reviled by dwarves and elves, as he lays claim to their lost safeholds and treasure troves through the ancient Right of Domain. Graverobbers, greedy wizards and unhinged antiquaries are his favorites, often currying additional benefits from their fickle master.

Ar-Mammon's sign is the Golden Grasp, made by extending the little finger and the thumb, with the remaining fingers grasping a gold coin: when invoking his favor the supplicant is expected to make this sign to signal their allegiance and subservience. The Sigil of the Golden Grasp may sometimes be found on gold pieces hidden as sacrifice to this demon of greed and darkness.

**Patron Bond (Ar-Mammon):** Elves and dwarves roll the spell check for *patron bond* at -5 to the result; this penalty applies whether they are casting the spell or just receiving it as a target.

Characters of suitable occupations, such as graverobbers, moneylenders or lorekeepers (judge's discretion) roll the spell check for *patron bond* at a +5 to the result; this bonus applies whether they are casting the spell or just receiving it as a target.

The caster of *patron bond* may sacrifice 100 gp (or equivalent in treasure) for +1 to the spell check: this may be done multiple times and there is no upper limit to this expenditure. The treasure must be sacrifice by hiding it in a remote, obscure location during the casting of the spell. Only the caster may know the hiding place, and upon completion of the ritual they sacrifice this knowledge to their patron, expunging the information from their memory for all time.

**Invoke Patron (Ar-Mammon):** Invoking Ar-Mammon requires at least one free hand, as the caster is required to make the sign of the Golden Grasp in order to commune with the demon. Spell check results above 20 require the sign to be made with both hands, otherwise the result caps out at 20 regardless of the actual figure. **NOTE:** The invoke patron table reflects this spellcasting cap. See (\*) below.

| AR-MAMMON: INVOKE PATRON RESULTS |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12-13                            | Ar-Mammon enhances the caster's senses and gives them intimations of nearby treasure. The caster detects gold and gems within 100', similar to a dwarf's sense of smell. Smaller concentrations of treasure may be detected within 40'. Additionally, their instincts are greatly honed, giving them a +4 bonus to checks for finding hidden treasures. The effect persists for 6 turns, and the caster may default to this result from any higher roll.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 14-17                            | Ar-Mammon sends a witchlight to guide the caster (see below for stats and behavior). The witchlight is completely under the caster's mental control, although its communication and intelligence are limited. The witchlight persists for 1d4+2 turns until it returns to the nether.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 18-20*                           | The caster taps into Ar-Mammon's ancient <i>ifrit</i> roots, wrenching fire from their patron's greedy soul. The caster's hand alights in blue witchfire, with which they can smite their enemies. The effect lasts for 1d5 turns, and using the fire is a ranged attack made at an additional CL+5 attack bonus and dealing 1d8+CL damage on a successful hit. Casters that receive additional action dice may continue to attack with the witchfire if other actions require a single hand.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 21-23                            | Ar-Mammon floods the caster's third eye with visions of treasure and greed. The caster can smell any valuables within 150' feet easily, with smaller treasures discoverable on ranges as low as 60'. <b>NOTE:</b> This effect pertains to anything valuable, not just gold and gems. Their instincts are immensely improved, giving them a +8 bonus to find hidden valuables nearby. Finally, they may spend 1 turn in meditation to receive colorful visions leading them to hidden caches within any enclosed space they are in (Judge's discretion, usually a general direction marked with a flickering, neon-light path in darkness). The effect lasts for 12 turns, and the caster may default to this result from any higher roll. |
| 24-27                            | The caster calls forth one of the <i>ignis fatuus</i> : a young will-o-wisp, foolish and aggressive (see below for stats and behavior). The creature is mostly under the caster's control, and obeys their mental commands to the best of its impetuous ability. The <i>ignis fatuus</i> persists for 1d7+2 turns until it burns out and disappears.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 28-29                            | The caster's hands light up with the flames of greedy witchfire. The effect lasts for 2d5 turns, during which the caster may make two ranged attacks with their base action die. These attacks are in addition to their other actions, as long as these other actions don't require the use of a hand (i.e they may move or cast spells). The attacks with the witchfire are ranged attacks with an additional CL+5 attack bonus, and deal 1d10+CL damage on a successful hit. The effect lasts for 2d5 turns.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 30-31                            | Ar-Mammon allows the caster the service of one of his will-o-wisps (see below for stats and behavior). The will-o-wisp is under the caster's complete mental control, and communicates with them telepathically. The will-o-wisp stays on this plane for 1d10+2 turns before it dissipates without a trace.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 32+                              | Ar-Mammon allows the caster to tap into the burning leylines connecting all that is hidden and coveted. They gain an acute insight into anything valuable nearby, being able to sense valuables within 500' with an unerring instinct. They can automatically discover any hidden riches near them just by focusing for a turn. Additionally, their meditation and dreams are plagued by visions and memories of treasures and hidden valuables within 100 miles of their location (roll a secret INT check and decide based on the result how useful the dreams are, judge's discretion). This effect persists for 1d7 days.                                                                                                             |



## AR-MAMMON: PATRON TAIN

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | The caster's forefingers wither and cringe, permanently, resulting in -2 on any rolls requiring manual dexterity. If this result is rolled a second time, their middle fingers suffer the same fate and the penalty increases to -4. When this result is rolled a third time, their ring fingers suffer the same fate, increasing the penalty to -6; additionally they suffer a powerful urge to hold a gold coin under their twisted fingers in each hand.                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>2</b> | The caster is pulled and pushed by insufferable greed. They have a strong urge to haggle whenever forced to purchase things, and usually palm a few coins for themselves when given the chance. If rolled a second time, they become furtive and guileful in their dealings, attempting to benefit their own coin purse in any way they can. If rolled a third time, they suffer from a powerful need to hide their wealth, preferably in secret stashes.                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>3</b> | When rolled the first time, the character's face is twisted by a powerful rictus: they can only stop grinning through great effort, causing them a -2 to Personality checks. If this result is rolled a second time, the caster's teeth take on a marked golden sheen, glinting strangely in all conditions. If rolled a third time the caster's eyes and facial features disappear, leaving behind a grinning visage of golden teeth, and causing an additional -8 to all Personality checks.                                                                                                                        |
| <b>4</b> | The caster becomes haunted by shadows, enjoying their time in the dark far more than open daylight. Their surroundings seem dull and muted to those around them, and they feel uncomfortable in direct sunlight. If rolled a second time, they gain complete infravision up to 100' or their infravision is doubled, whichever is better. If rolled a third time, they can only comfortably exist in muted light or darkness, suffering a -10 to all rolls in open light conditions. They seem to be made of darkness and shadow and appear scary and strange to those around them.                                   |
| <b>5</b> | On the first occasion of this result, the caster gains an insight into the nature of fire and burning: they can light and extinguish candle-sized flames on a whim. When rolled a second time, they feel affinity towards all fire, especially against the backdrop of darkness: they suffer a -2 to all rolls if not near a burning flame. If rolled a third time, the caster is always followed by a fickle witchlight (see stats and behavior below): the creature is enamored with the caster, but not under their control in any way (control may be exerted over the creature however, on a situational basis). |
| <b>6</b> | The caster gains the touch of gold: the first time they handle any amount of valuable metals or gems, they have a 5% chance of adding up to 20% to the value of the treasure they touch. The second time this result is rolled, they have a 10% chance of doing the same. If this result is rolled a third time, the caster has a 50% chance of turning anything and anyone they touch into the target's value in coin (only rolled once, but rolled once for everything; judge's discretion).                                                                                                                        |

## AR-MAMMON'S SERVANTS

Ar-Mammon's servants are sentient witchfire, demonic elementals from between the concepts of flame and shadow, brought forth by their Lord-Warden's greed.

**Witchlight:** Init: +6; Atk: a little flame, +6 melee (1d3); AC: 16; HD: 1d4+2; MV: fly 40'; Act: 1d16; SP: elemental traits (apart for HD), fiery attack, treasure sense 10', light environment as a candle; SV: as summoner.

Witchlights are tiny elementals of greedy fire, crafted from *ifrit* hellfire to lure foolish travelers to their doom. They are too young to have the telepathic powers of their elder will-o-wisps, but follow the desires of their summoner as best they can. If brought within a short distance of a hidden treasure, the witchlight hovers there expectantly, urging their master to discover the hidden secret. When frustrated, witchlights set things aflame to gain their master's attention.

**Ignis Fatuus:** Init: +8; Atk: a flame, +8 melee (1d6); AC: 18; HD: 1d8+4; MV: fly 50'; Act: d20; SP: elemental traits (apart for HD), fiery attack, "treasure" sense 30', light environment as a torch; SV: as summoner.

*Ignis fatuus*, or the "foolish fires," are youthful fire spirits grown out of the burning greed of teenagers everywhere. They earn their power through dancing over the fertility rites of the Old Gods, frolicking above the meadows where the new generation of peasants is seeded during the Midsummer rituals. The *ignis fatuus* see fornication and excitement as equally valuable treasures to gold and gems, and thus their treasure sense may be a little skewed. They are impatient and aggressive in their desires, much like badly trained but happy dogs in the service of their summoner.

**Will-O-Wisp:** Init: +10; Atk: witchfire, +10 melee/ranged (1d8); AC: 20; HD: 1d10+6; MV: fly 60'; Act: 1d20+d14; SP: elemental traits (apart for HD), fiery attack, treasure sense 40', light environment as a large lantern, willful; SV: as summoner.

The will-o-wisp is the song of burning greed, brought manifest through the element of dying fire. It is a magnificent desire, calling earthen men to their doom. It is the flame of the past, marking the sites of ancient treasure. The will-o-wisp denounces service, and is a powerful force on its own, just as easily leading its summoner astray as obeying their commands. Despite this, it is capable of telepathic communication with its summoner, and will mostly try to follow their commands, to the best of its ability.

**NOTE: See the D.A.M.N. Magazine — Spring/Summer 2018 Web Enhancement for more Ar-Mammon!**



VANCE



# GEAS AND TABOOS

Corruption is a sore spot for many who like to play wizards. The feeling that a character might be one random roll away from a result that just does not work with a character's design is unpalatable for some players. However corruption does add an element of balance to the enormous power given to wizards. And it gives spice to the game. The addition of Geas and Taboos to the system is an attempt to give players more control over the fate of their wizards without eliminating the consequences of fumbles. Essentially, when a wizard would normally incur corruption, they are given the option to take a geas or a taboo instead. A geas is a mental compulsion and a taboo is a mental constraint. Instead of corruption wracking the physical form of a wizard, the magical energies are constrained into compulsions and limitations, which warp the wizard's psyche. These obligations and prohibitions empower the enchantments holding the powers of corruption at bay. However, should either be broken the powers of corruption rip through the wizard's body. Because of the nature of the enchantments, and the powers involved, the power of corruption is actually increased when this occurs. Minor corruption becomes major corruption, major corruption begets greater and the powers released from greater corruption will warp a wizard's body beyond comprehension, probably killing them. If a wizard breaks a greater geas roll on the table below. Even with its limitations, geas can liven up the game and give wizards more dimension and character. The great thing about a geas or a taboo is the control it gives the wizard. The wizard is free to choose any appropriate enchantment to hold back the chaos of the miscast spell. It is even possible for a wizard to design a new geas or taboo (with the permission of the judge, of course).

## TABOOS AND GEAS TO REPLACE MINOR CORRUPTION (d30)

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | The wizard must always wear a specific color (and only this color) to make the enchantment hold.                                                                                                                                |
| 2  | The wizard is forbidden to enter a specific place. Entering this location shatters the enchantments keeping corruption at bay.                                                                                                  |
| 3  | The use of certain weapons release the binding holding corruption at bay.                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4  | The wizard may not eat a specific food or imbibe a type of drink. Doing so starts the fires of corruption, which burn through the body.                                                                                         |
| 5  | The wizard must consume certain foods, tinctures or even small amounts of poison with every meal to keep corruption at bay.                                                                                                     |
| 6  | Humor feeds the powers of corruption; if the wizard tells a joke the binding spells fail.                                                                                                                                       |
| 7  | The wizard's speech becomes entangled with the spell. They must now speak in rhyme to avoid tearing the spell.                                                                                                                  |
| 8  | The binding spell is very susceptible to certain movements. If the wizard waves their hands in the air like they just don't care, the spell is broken. And so, they may never dance.                                            |
| 9  | Musical vibrations disrupt the spell. Purposefully listening to music or playing musical instruments disrupt the binding and release the powers of corruption.                                                                  |
| 10 | The binding spell is tied to a secret. If this secret is disclosed the spell breaks.                                                                                                                                            |
| 11 | The power of love shatters the enchantments that keep the wizard safe.                                                                                                                                                          |
| 12 | The wizard has tied this spell to their name. If they utter their name again, the spell breaks.                                                                                                                                 |
| 13 | The power of the enchantment is tied to doorways, gates and openings. Entering a doorway backwards seems to protect the magic of the spell. If an entryway is entered normally, the enchantment frays and corruption rushes in. |
| 14 | The power of the binding comes from the wizard's strength of character; any falsehood destroys this fragile magic. The wizard must always speak the truth.                                                                      |
| 15 | Too much metal absorbs the enchantment. The wizard must avoid using metal tools or proximity to large quantities of metal.                                                                                                      |

## TABOOS AND GEAS TO REPLACE MINOR CORRUPTION (d30) (CONTINUED)

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>16</b> | Water washes away the wizard's feeble binding. Although the wizard is probably safe from the rain, they may not cross running water (except by bridge or boat).                                                                                                           |
| <b>17</b> | The vibrations of the opposite sex absorb the power of the enchantment. If the wizard touches a member of the opposite sex, the binding evaporates like steam and corruption roars in.                                                                                    |
| <b>18</b> | The corruption is so draining that the enchantment keeping it at bay must be continually renewed. The wizard must constantly mumble enchantments to keep the corruption at bay (while awake). This does not affect other spell casting or actions.                        |
| <b>19</b> | The wizard's spells are life-linked; if the wizard kills an animal, a wave of necrotic energy destroys the enchantments.                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>20</b> | The binding is linked to the universal fire; if the wizard snuffs a flame the enchantment is likewise snuffed.                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>21</b> | The binding is weak; the wizard must steal an object to enchant each moon. This stolen item must then be buried or the enchantment fails.                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>22</b> | The wizard weaves their spell into the lives of trees. Each growing season the wizard must plant at least one tree and weave the spell into it. The tree's will holds the spell for a year and a day, but if the tree falls, corruption washes over the wizard in a wave. |
| <b>23</b> | The wizard must keep his toes unrestricted. Wearing shoes or other foot bindings constrains the magic, and the spell fails.                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>24</b> | The enchantment is tied to a group of people (like children, a local group of peasants, or the like). If the wizard must not allow any of the protected group to come to harm while in their presence, or the binding fails.                                              |
| <b>25</b> | Mundane activities blunt the magic of the spell. If the wizard prepares food or performs other chores the spell breaks.                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>26</b> | The binding has been tied to a specific word. If the wizard utters this keystone the spell shatters, and the corruption is released.                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>27</b> | Greed is the antithesis of the spell; the wizard must never accept payment or reward, or corruption ripples across their soul.                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>28</b> | Bestial activities sully the wizard's magic and weaken their spells. All base undertakings (sex) must be avoided, or the binding spell withers away.                                                                                                                      |
| <b>29</b> | Agency is the key to this spell. As such, the wizard may never be carried or ride an animal. If the wizard allows themselves to be carried the spell fades.                                                                                                               |
| <b>30</b> | The spell is woven into every oath the wizard takes. Breaking one breaks the others.                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## TABOOS AND GEAS TO REPLACE MAJOR CORRUPTION (d20)

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | The enchantment binds the wizards tongue. Straight speak becomes impossible. and the wizard must speak in riddles to avoid breaking the spell.                                                                                             |
| <b>2</b>  | The life's blood of a living creature must be spilt to cast the spell that caused the corruption. If the wizard casts the spell without sacrifice, corruption pours in.                                                                    |
| <b>3</b>  | Golden objects absorb magical vibrations. If the wizard own or carries gold, it erodes the binding spell.                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>4</b>  | The binding spells draw so much power that the wizard must augment their strength with enchanting music. A musical instrument must be used while casting any spell, or the power drain destroys the enchantment holding corruption at bay. |
| <b>5</b>  | The power of the wizard's magic demands equilibrium. To bind corruption, something else must be freed. The wizard must free every bound or enslaved creature encountered or risk the spell's failure.                                      |
| <b>6</b>  | Certain objects and animals disrupt the magic of the enchantment; to avoid the loss of the binding spells these things must be attacked without hesitation.                                                                                |
| <b>7</b>  | Order and law are the core of the wizard's strength and the keystone for the binding spell walling away corruption. If the wizard ever knowingly violates a law, the spell fails, and the corruption rolls free.                           |
| <b>8</b>  | Bravery is the keystone for this spell. If the wizard ever refuses a challenge or duel, the binding spell splinters.                                                                                                                       |
| <b>9</b>  | The corrosive power of the truth destroys the mercurial nature of the wizard's magic. If the wizard ever speaks a true statement, the enchantments dissolve, leaving the wizard defenseless to corruption.                                 |
| <b>10</b> | The binding spell is extremely fragile, and magical runes of protection must be drawn while casting spells to safeguard it. If this is not done, the enchantment shatters.                                                                 |

### TABOOS AND GEAS TO REPLACE MAJOR CORRUPTION (d20) CONTINUED...

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11 | The vibration of other magics disrupt this sensitive binding spell. The wizard may not use (or carry) magical objects without the risk of corruption breaking free.                                                                                       |
| 12 | The binding spell needs constant maintenance or it frays. To preserve the spell, the wizard must ritually sacrifice 5 gp of items every month.                                                                                                            |
| 13 | The magical fires within must be maintained with mundane fires without. The wizard must start at least one uncontrolled fire per week or the binding fails.                                                                                               |
| 14 | The delicate life-linked spell cannot handle the touch of death. If the wizard touches the dead or any mortal remains, the spell fails.                                                                                                                   |
| 15 | The binding spell is affected by ambient magic found in certain locales. The wizard must avoid these spaces, or the spell fails.                                                                                                                          |
| 16 | The wizard has mind-locked the corruption away. They cannot remember the past before the binding spell. The wizard's spells are unaffected, but their memory is gone almost as if a <i>forget</i> spell was cast. This binding may be voluntarily broken. |
| 17 | To gain the power to forge the binding spell, the wizard must sacrifice a spell. If the spell is ever cast again, the binding spell explodes in a torrent of chaos and corruption.                                                                        |
| 18 | This enchantment is woven into the life force of all animals. To protect the binding, the wizard must protect all animals encountered or risk the failure of the spell.                                                                                   |
| 19 | The crude flatulent magics of clerics must be avoided, as their fumbling idol magic disrupts the delicate balance of the binding spell.                                                                                                                   |
| 20 | The wizard is time-locked; they must avoid being outside at certain times or risk the binding spells.                                                                                                                                                     |

### TABOOS AND GEAS TO REPLACE GREATER CORRUPTION (d16)

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | The stink of cruelty and base vibrations from mundane weapon are disruptive to the magical energies involved. If the wizard uses or carries weapons, the binding spell might break.                                                        |
| 2  | The binding has so weakened the wizard that they must use blood magic to bolster their spells. The wizard must draw runes in blood to cast spells. (the blood may not be older than a day).                                                |
| 3  | Silence is the keystone of this spell. Speaking breaks the binding spells and sends the powers of corruption cleaving through the wizard's soul. The wizard must learn to cast spells another way (through dance or drumming or whatever). |
| 4  | In return for the request to hold corruption at bay, the wizard is also bound to grant requests from others. The wizard may never refuse a properly worded request, or otherworldly powers withdraw their support.                         |
| 5  | This spell is moon-locked and its power is at its weakest during the dark of the moon. To offset this frailty, the wizard must sacrifice one sentient creature during this time or the binding fails.                                      |
| 6  | The wizard has called upon the power of Vodyanoi to power this spell. One creature must be drowned each week to maintain Grandfather Drowner's favor.                                                                                      |
| 7  | Bravery is the keystone of this spell. If the wizard ever retreats from a foe, the binding crumbles.                                                                                                                                       |
| 8  | Fey powers were evoked to power this enchantment. These powers are fickle and only by cherishing them above all else may corruption be staved off. The powers demand the sacrifice of any loved ones, present and future.                  |
| 9  | The spell burns with ethereal fire; only by adding the fuel of another life can the spell be maintained. The wizard must burn a living sacrifice to death for the binding to last another fortnight.                                       |
| 10 | The wizard insists that nudity maintains the power of their spells, and they warn that the powers of corruption can only be appeased by their nakedness.                                                                                   |
| 11 | The wizard powers this binding through self-sacrifice (the judge randomly determines one spell that the wizard may no longer cast). If the wizard insist on casting this spell, corruption takes hold.                                     |
| 12 | Humility is the keystone of this spell. To power the enchantment, the wizard has taken a vow of poverty. The wizard may only own the bare necessities of life and may never keep wealth or property.                                       |
| 13 | The wizard's powers are weakened by life force of their kin. The wizard must hunt out their family members and murder them to maintain the efficacy of the binding spell.                                                                  |
| 14 | Self-reliance is the keystone of this spell. To maintain the enchantment, the wizard may never accept help from another.                                                                                                                   |
| 15 | Music disrupts the gentle balance of the ethers. To protect the binding spell, musicians must be killed on sight.                                                                                                                          |
| 16 | This life-linked enchantment frays should the wizard ever use magic to kill.                                                                                                                                                               |

**Check out the D.A.M.N. Magazine — Spring/Summer 2018 Web Enhancement for more Geas and Taboos!**







Cannibal Tiger Women of Tsaru challenges 4-8 DCC RPG characters of about 3<sup>rd</sup> level. Finding themselves cast through the dimensions to an apocalyptic environ dominated by Akavala, a world-devouring tree, the characters must distinguish potential allies from Akavala's servitors seeking to subjugate ever more sentient creatures to their master's will. And, likely, they seek a way home from this hellish realm.

Consider this adventure the spiritual successor to *The God-Seed Awakens!* Neither characters nor the judge need be familiar with that adventure, nor should it necessarily be played before or after this one. However, should characters complete that adventure, the mysterious portal that opens when the God-Seed is destroyed presents a perfect opportunity to throw them against a fresh threat from the Ravenous Tree. Aside from that, it's your campaign. Get them there via giant skull-shaped spaceship, fever dreaming in Marlinko or any other method that you can devise.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In other times and other dimensions, the god Akavala dominated the world of Tsaru, appearing as a great, world-spanning tree. Through the eons, worshippers became unwilling servants as the Ravenous Tree consumed more and more of the world's resources and required defense against those that rebelled against its power. Generations lost to time experienced the final breaking of the world, as Akavala burst out of its shell and expanded, reaching out to devour Tsaru's many moons. Now as the tree's runners race toward the life-giving sun and other worlds beyond, all that

remains of Tsaru are the "shattered isles" — great hunks of mantle ripped asunder and entangled in Akavala's many branches. Each shattered isle presented in this adventure is protected by some artifact or spell — those that live there resist the Ravenous Tree and her servitors with all their power. And all believe that from the great phlogiston, some power, beast, god or magic can save them.

This adventure concerns three such "tribes." The fhyrian — tiger-women that live upon the Red Jungle, a shattered isle protected by the Temple of the Shifu. The Hive and its mind-ants residing within the petrified skull of the Kong, a destroyed super-weapon built by the departed thal ape-scientists. And Theriseus, the Worm Queen — a creature raised from squirms of marrow worms that dwell in Kong's shattered forearm standing as a grim tower in the ruins of the Great City.

Confused? Good. Let's begin.



## How Do I Start?

The majority of this adventure is a crawl — not necessarily a hex-crawl, since there are no hexes and not really a point-crawl, though I guess it's closest to that.

Labels aside, I like to start every adventure and session with what the characters can perceive, and then I let them figure it out. Crawls are all about exploration and discovery — just because the characters are on a tree that spans a solar system, doesn't really change that. Depending on how you got them here, they may immediately need to find resources — food and water, maybe healing, and a place to rest their heads. Seeking out those resources leads to information and likely conflict.

You could take a more direct approach by choosing something from the encounter table and starting the party *en media res* — personally, my favorite way to open a session is with a brief intro and then “roll for initiative.”

But, you know your group best. The most important feature of a crawl — hex or point or whatever — is providing the toolbox and trusting that the judge knows what to do next.

## THE BOUGHS OF THE RAVENOUS TREE

*You stand on furrowed ground cut through with canyons that seem miles deep, but it is the expanse around you that seems truly displaced from reality. In the vermillion twilight lurks a presence of incomprehensible size. Defined by cirrus appendages that snake off in every direction, here encircling a jagged “island” of land — there like shadowed filaments webbing and rupturing even a faraway moon — and by the great black shadow of what can only be the trunk and boughs and grasping canopy of an unimaginably vast tree spreading wider and farther, consuming all that it encounters. You stand upon its boughs, and in your mind, you hear the whisper, “Akavala. Akavala.”*

The main boughs of Akavala stretch out into the phlogiston, some as wide as continents while others twist and grope like creepers in the jungle, ever reaching for more matter to devour. Traversing the length and breadth of the Ravenous Tree could comprise many campaigns. For the purposes of this adventure, the action is localized to three branches that connect the Red Jungle, The City of the God-

Arm, and the Broken Lands of Kong. Upon these boughs roam servitors and random beasts, as well as those that could provide the party succor, and more importantly — information!

## CRAWLING THE BROKEN WORLD

The surface of Akavala is weird. Ambient light is the color of an early dusk. From the character's perspective, the bark of the tree appears as a jagged and broken expanse of land — paths twist through mighty canyons with raging rivers and entire ecosystems of plants, animals, fungi, and the ever-present servitors — sentient humanoids that serve the Ravenous Tree.

Air, gravity, and all the expected physics of a planet exist as the characters travel through this madness, though the damnable eternal twilight remains. One exception: If the characters reach 100' or so above any surface of the tree, they slip into the phlogiston between worlds and quickly expire. Only specially crafted vessels or powerful magic allows living things to traverse this deadly region (a fact they may learn from the Ketlunders — see the Ketlunder Harbor section).

From anywhere upon the boughs, the characters can faintly see the three shattered isles — though they alternately seem hundreds of miles away or just over the next ridge.

## TRAVEL AND EXPLORATION

Upon foot or mounted, travel is slow — paths are rare and the party must often climb either into or out of a “canyon” to find a path that goes the direction they seek. Time and distance, however, are strange upon Akavala — thus the map on the opposite page has no scale. Judges are encouraged to set their own pace — should the characters venture from the Broken Lands of Kong to the Red Jungle, set a random number of days for the journey. If they venture back to the Broken Land, set a different random number of days.

Food and water, as well as supplies for crafting things like torches, rope, and the like may be found while the party travels. The details of various living things are left intentionally vague — but characters engaged in gathering food encounter small, nutritious animals and edible plants and fungi wherever they go.

# THE SHATTERED ISLES OF TSARU



## ENCOUNTERS

Three encounter tables are presented below – one for general areas outside of the Red Jungle, one for the path to the City of the God-Arm and one for the region leading to the Broken Lands of Kong. Feel free to roll or choose for these encounters, as is your want.

| ENCOUNTERS UPON THE BOUGHS |                      |                      |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 2D6                        | RED JUNGLE           | CITY OF THE GOD-ARM  | BROKEN LANDS OF KONG |
| 2                          | Ketlunder Scroungers | Ketlunder Scroungers | Ketlunder Scroungers |
| 3                          | Fhyrian War Party    | Helot Slavers        | Mind-Ant Scouts      |
| 4                          | Refuge               | Refuge               | Refuge               |
| 5                          | Random Beast         | Random Beast         | Random Beast         |
| 6                          | Monoculoid           | Monoculoid           | Monoculoid           |
| 7                          | No Encounter         | No Encounter         | No Encounter         |
| 8                          | Servitor War Party   | Servitor War Party   | Servitor War Party   |
| 9                          | Nanoceph Hunters     | Myrmidon Patrol      | Phylogost Assassins  |
| 10                         | Random Beast         | Random Beast         | Random Beast         |
| 11                         | Cyst                 | Cyst                 | Cyst                 |
| 12                         | Special              | Special              | Special              |

### Servitors of Akavala

When the Ravenous Tree is but a seed, its near mindless servants gather powerful creatures and humanoids from the invaded world, encase them into cells within the seed and convert them to the service of Akavala. As the seed sprouts, these servitors flood out and subjugate the peoples of the invaded realm. As the tree grows, the servitors live upon her surface as loyal defenders, protecting Akavala from those that would oppose her rule.

Though some servitors are found in all areas of the tree, the boughs connecting each of the shattered isles are home to unique servitors selected or bred to undermine the creatures and artifacts protecting these anomalies.

**Cthoul Mindlord (1):** Init +4; Atk spear +3 melee (1d8+1) or mind-science (see opposite page); AC 15; HD 4d10; MV 30; Act 1d20; SP Mind-science, +1d to all saves against magic, immune to mind affecting spells; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +6; AL C.

Hailing from a dimension of horrors, the cthoul rule over all servitors in this region of Akavala. Found in war parties or holed up in a cyst, at times solitary cthoul are sent on special missions – such as hunting down an alien party of adventurers and dispatching them.

Using their mind-science to dominate, confound, and destroy their enemies, cthoul mindlords are cruel masters in the service of Akavala. Each mindlord has a 1d6+1 mind-science abilities on , and each power requires a Mind-Science roll (1d20+6; DC 12) to successfully activate. On a failure, it loses the power for a day and is stunned for 1 round – only able to move at ½ speed. When successful, the save DC equals the cthoul’s Mind-Science roll.

### INTERACTING WITH THE NATIVES

Each encounter should bear the chance of some level of interaction. Even with Akavala’s servitors, characters might glean some clue that could direct them to other potential allies, shelter, supplies, or a specific locale detailed later.

So, how do you run your “reaction rolls?” Personally, I love the B/X method – it’s quick, it’s simple, and you get results that you can improvise without being directive. To port that to DCC RPG, I just use a Personality check against and let the result dictate the reaction. Don’t lean too heavily on this — it’s called a roleplaying game for a reason.

| CHECK RESULT | NPC                                  | MONSTER                  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1-5          | Offer Refused (-1d on future checks) | Immediate Attack         |
| 6-11         | Offer Refused                        | Hostile (-1d next check) |
| 12-14        | Negotiation                          | Uncertain/Ignore         |
| 15-19        | Negotiation (+1d on next check)      | Curious (+1d next round) |
| 20+          | Offer Accepted                       | Enthusiastic Friendship  |

| CTHOUL MIND SCIENCE ABILITIES |                     |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1d7                           | ABILITY             | DURATION      | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 1                             | Empathic Shield     | 1d4+4 rounds  | Any who attempt to attack the cthoul must make a Will save. On a failure, the attacker loses the intended action die. On a success, the cthoul still receives a +4 to armor class.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 2                             | Transformation      | 1d3+4 turns   | The cthoul takes on a humanoid form up to twice or down to half its size and weight. Those that initially view the cthoul make a Will save. On a failure, they can never see through this particular mental illusion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3                             | Id Lash             | 1d3+4 rounds  | The cthoul forms a mental lash with which it can attack intelligent creatures. Each round it may strike (+4 attack; Range: 30'; 1d3+1 INT damage) against the opponent's Intelligence score as its armor class. If the opponent is reduced to 0 intelligence, the victim must make a Will save or fall under the complete control of the cthoul.                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 4                             | Ego Broil           | Instantaneous | The cthoul strikes any victim's mind within its sight. On a failed Will save, the victim takes 1d3+1 Personality damage and is stunned for an equal number of rounds. If the opponent is reduced to 0 Personality, the victim slips into a coma and can only be healed through magical means.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 5                             | Psychosomatic Blast | Instantaneous | Often used as a last resort, the cthoul sends out a wave of psychic energy that disrupts all living things in a 30' radius. All affected must make a Fortitude save or suffer from neuro-electric paralysis which lasts for 1d3+4 rounds. Those that pass the save are stunned for 1 round. The cthoul suffers its own mental shock and must make a Will save against its own Mind Science roll. On a failure, the creature is knocked unconscious for 1d3+4 rounds. Otherwise, it is unaffected (and typically escapes). |
| 6                             | Sense Neurofeedback | 1d3+4 turns   | The cthoul detects living things with an animal's intelligence or higher in a 30' radius sphere. It can sense invisible creatures, and the power penetrates through the living wood of Akavala.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 7                             | Psycheportation     | Instantaneous | The cthoul pulls its body into a mental plane and moves up to 100 miles away from its current position. It can only move to a point that it can see or knows intimately. There is a base 1% chance that the cthoul re-enters reality within a solid object.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |



#### WHAT ABOUT LANGUAGES?

If your game must maintain linguistic verisimilitude at all times, consider the environment thrust upon the characters. All sentient races upon Akavala have some form of limited telepathy. The fhyrians maintain empathic connection to their battlecats, mind-ants link up to form bigger, badder swarms, all the servitors are telepathically connected to Akavala and, likely, a nearby cthoul, etc. When the party meets a group of natives for the first time (and against any adventuring party's nature) they attempt to parley, have one among the group make a Personality check (DC 10). If successful, the character can replace one of their existing languages with the language of the native group. If failed, another character can try this the \*next\* time the party meets that native group.

Or you can do like me and pretend this is any world/nation/dimension in Star Trek, any appendix N book, comic book, etc. Everyone just seems to speak your player's native language. Maybe with a funny accent.

**Marak shock troops (5d6):** Init +1; Atk by weapon +2 melee (by weapon+2) or by weapon ranged +3 (by weapon); AC Variable; HD 2d10+5; MV 30' (base); Act 1d20; SP +1d to all saves against mind-affecting spells; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +3; AL C.

Marak shock troops are the ubiquitous meat shields in the service of the cthoul and Akavala. The creatures know no mercy, no surrender, and never sway from their duty.

Marak outfit themselves with a variety of armors and weapons suited to the mission at hand.

**Monoculoid (1):** Init +0; Atk None; AC 12; HD 2d6; MV 30' (fly); Act 1d20; SP mindless, detect living creatures in a 50' radius sphere; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

These strange, monocular beings float over the surface of Akavala and report back to nearby cthoul all that they see. They are otherwise mindless, hovering never more than 10' above the ground, detecting living creatures in a 50' radius sphere. Note that the creatures can see further than 50' and constantly report back their visual stimuli, as well. The controlling cthoul must be within a 10-mile radius of the creature, though they can control up to four of them simultaneously.

**Myrmidons (3d6):** Init +2; Atk spear +4 melee (1d8+2) or javelin ranged +4 (1d6+2; 30/60/90); AC 15; HD 3d10+3; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP +1d to all saves against mind-affecting spells, +1d when fighting helot; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

Cthoul created the hulking myrmidons to hunt and destroy the Worm Queen's helot servants. The myrmidons roam the bough nearest to the City of the God-Arm and may be found in servitor war parties in these areas. They are rarely found within the city itself – the helots kill them on sight.

**Nanoceph (3d4):** Init +4; Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8+1) or hand crossbow ranged +4 (1d4+poison; 20/40/60); AC 16; HD 4d8+2; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP +1d to all saves against mind-affecting spells, +1d when fighting fhyrians, stealth +5; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C.

The cadaverous, articulated nanoceph hunt the fhyrian tiger-women. Perfectly adapted to the Red Jungle, they are most often found within that bloody place or roaming the bough nearest it in war parties. There is a 1 in 6 chance that a group of





nanoceph also have a slithering horror in their party. They spread a powerful poison on the darts used in their hand crossbows (Fort DC 15; 1d6 damage and then 1d3 STR per round, thereafter). They use speed and stealth to their advantage, attacking from ambush (+5 to stealth rolls) and then displacing to hide and attack again.

**Phylogost (3d6):** Init +3; Atk scimitar +2 melee (1d8) or blowguns ranged +3 (1d3/1d5+paralysis poison; 20/40/60); AC 13; HD 3d5; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP +1d to all saves against mind-affecting spells, +1d when fighting mind-ants, natural chameleon; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C.

The ophidian phylogost roam the Broken Lands of Kong, and the bough area nearest to it, hunting mind-ants and seeking artifacts of the thal to bring back to their cthoul masters. The creatures blend into their surroundings like chameleons. Unmoving, they are almost impossible to detect (Luck DC 20) and only a little easier when they move at half-speed (INT DC 15). The creatures smear their blowgun darts with a poison specifically created to paralyze the mind-ants (Fort DC 15). Used against any other living creatures, the poison is less effective (Fort DC 10). The paralysis lasts 1d4+2 rounds, in either case.

**Slithering Horror (1):** Init -2; Atk tentacle bulb +4 melee (1d4 + fiery fluid) or super-heated ejecta +4 ranged (2d4 – fiery fluid, 10/20/30'); AC 14; HD 6d8+3; MV 30', Swim 20'; Act 3d20; SP fiery fluid (2d4 damage per round for 1d4+1 rounds unless smothered; water extends the fluid's effects for 1d4 rounds), fiery skin (1d4 damage, touch; extended contact immolates inflammable material), immune to heat-based attacks, Track +5; SV Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +4; AL C.

Minions of Akavala captured slithering horrors upon some rusted steel battle world in a dimension of war. Subsequently bred as trackers, scouts and assassins, the creatures continually report back to their minders all that they see, encounter and defeat.



A sixty-foot long worm-like creature, the slithering horror attacks with its many tentacles – each tipped with a glowing bulb that disgorges super-heated fluid upon an enemy. The worm can also spit its fiery fluid up to 30' away at one target, though the creature cannot exude fluid from its tentacle-bulbs that round. The skin of the slithering horror likewise burns those that touch it and may set fire to inflammable materials nearby. As expected, the creatures are immune to heat-based attacks, both magical and mundane.

#### SERVITOR WAR PARTY

Cthoul mindlords gather servitor war parties for specific missions – to seek out and destroy large groups of fhyrians, helot or mind-ants and most often to recover lost thal artifacts. Typical war parties are detailed on table below, depending on the region, though most often the bulk of the group is made up of marak shock troops. Cthoul accompany these war parties rarely, and only when the group's goals are to recover major artifacts.

| SERVITOR WAR PARTY   |                 |                                  |                            |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| BOUGH AREA           | CORE TROOPS     | ADDITIONAL FORCES                | SPECIALS                   |
| Common (Any)         | Marak (4d6)     | Cthoul (2 in 6)                  | Monoculoid Scouts (1d3)    |
| Red Jungle           | Marak (4d6)     | Nanoceph (3d6); Cthoul (1 in 6)  | Slithering Horror (1 in 6) |
| City of the God-Arm  | Myrmidons (3d6) | Marak (2d6); Cthoul (1 in 6)     | Monoculoid Scout (1)       |
| Broken Lands of Kong | Marak (2d6)     | Phylogost (3d6); Cthoul (2 in 6) | Random Beast (1 in 6)      |

## LOCATIONS

Though parties may find temporary shelter within the coulees and caves upon the surface of the Ravenous Tree, there are two specific types that may serve as more permanent shelter – though within each may lurk a threat to be neutralized first.

## CYSTS

Scattered across the face of Akavala are sanctuaries peopled by her servitors. These cysts comprise several chambers, often workshops, storage and living quarters, though some may contain shrines, dungeons and laboratories for the cthoul. In rare cases, these spaces are empty or occupied by creatures other than servitors.

## GENERATING A CYST

To generate a cyst facility, follow these steps:

1. Roll 2d4 on the What's the Deal With This Place? column.  
You get a facility type and a die or dice notation.
2. Roll the die/dice indicated on the Number of Chambers column.  
You get a number of chambers and two die/dice notations. The first notation is the die/dice to roll on the Who Lives Here? column. The second notation is the number of times to roll on that column.
3. Roll the die/dice indicated, the number of times indicated on the Who Lives Here? column.  
Bacon.

| CYST GENERATION TABLES |                                        |                    |                    |                               |                         |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ROLL                   | WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS PLACE? (2D4) | NUMBER OF CHAMBERS | WHO LIVES HERE?    | WHAT ELSE IS HERE? (1D6)      | WHO ELSE IS HERE? (1D6) |
| 1                      |                                        | 1 (1d4; 1d2)       | Cthoul (1)         | Thal Artifact                 | Fhyrians (2d4)          |
| 2                      | Stronghold (2d6)                       | 2 (1d4; 1d2)       | Marak (2d6)        | Slithering Horrors (1d3)      | Kethunders (1d3)        |
| 3                      | Laboratory (1d8)                       | 3 (2d2; 2d2)       | What Else is Here? | Prisoners (Who Else is Here?) | Mind-Ants (1d3)         |
| 4                      | Listening Station (1d4)                | 4 (2d3; 2d2)       | Monoculoid (1d3)   | Random Beast                  | Helot (2d4)             |
| 5                      | Outpost (2d4)                          | 6 (1d6; 2d3)       | Marak (4d6)        | Connected Cyst                | Valru (1)               |
| 6                      | Bolt Hole (2d2)                        | 8 (1d6; 2d3)       | Marak (6d6)        | Secret Refuge                 | Someone Else?           |
| 7                      | Sanctum (1d2)                          | 10 (2d6; 2d4)      | Marak (6d6)        |                               |                         |
| 8                      | Shrine (1d4)                           | 12 (2d6; 2d4)      | Marak (5d6)        |                               |                         |
| 9                      |                                        | 9 (2d5; 2d3)       | Myrmidons (2d4)    |                               |                         |
| 10                     |                                        | 7 (2d5; 2d2)       | Unoccupied         |                               |                         |
| 11                     |                                        | 5 (2d4; 2d2)       | Who Else is Here?  |                               |                         |
| 12                     |                                        | 46 (2d6; ?)        | What Else is Here? |                               |                         |

In addition to the results above, cyst facilities contain enough supplies to support the occupants. Judge's discretion on treasure, portals to another plane, color TVs and the like.

**NOTE:** The What Else Is Here? and Who Else Is Here? columns are only used if those results come up as a result on the Who Lives Here or What Else is Here columns. If it's too confusing, just make it up.

Thal artifacts found are typically large, unique machines (and of the judge's devising; 4 in 6), such as massive weapons, monitoring stations or esoteric control consoles. Others are standard thal artifacts — see the Thal Artifacts sidebar later in this section.

## REFUGE

Like cysts, refuges are secure areas within the skin of Akavala – perhaps a cyst abandoned by the servitors, a bolt hole carved out by mind-ants, or just a naturally formed shelter with ready resources. These places are only very rarely occupied by servitors, though other sentients or random beasts may currently lair there.

### General Refuge Notes

Non-servitors are generally guarded; refuge is hard to find on Akavala. For servitors, roll on the Cyst Generation

Table: Who Lives Here? column. Secure Chambers are sealed by a hidden or reinforced door, allowing occupants to relax their guards. Connected cysts or other refuges are hidden behind secret doors. Similar to cysts, thal artifacts found within a refuge are typically large installations of the ape-scientists' leftover living machines — and of the judge's devising (5 in 6). Others are standard thal artifacts, as indicated on the Thal Living Artifacts table later in this section.

| REFUGE GENERATION TABLES |                          |                            |                            |                         |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| ROLL                     | NUMBER OF CHAMBERS (2D4) | WHO LIVES HERE? (2D4)      | WHAT ELSE IS HERE? (2D4)   | ANYTHING SPECIAL? (2D3) |
| 2                        | 1                        | Ketlunders (1d4)           | Corpses                    | Connected Refuge        |
| 3                        | 3                        | Fhyrians (2d3)             | Discarded Equipment        | Secure Chamber          |
| 4                        | 5                        | Mind-Ants (2d6)            | Edible Plants and Fungus   | Nope                    |
| 5                        | 7                        | Nothing                    | Nothing                    | Nada                    |
| 6                        | 4                        | Helot (2d4)                | Nothing                    | Nothing                 |
| 7                        | 2                        | Random Horror (1d4)        | Fresh Water                | Connected Cyst          |
| 8                        | 1                        | Servitors (See Cyst Table) | Discarded Weapons or Armor | Thal Artifact           |

## OTHER SENTIENTS

Major artifacts located within the three shattered isles provide protection from Akavala to three dominant species – the fhyrian tiger-women, the helot wormwalkers and the mind-ants. Others are refugees that have managed to find some shelter on the Ravenous Tree, such as the Ketlunders and the valru.

**Escaped Servitors (Choose)**– On very rare occasions, servitors break free from their controlling cthoul and Akavala. When this happens, the creatures are outcasts – hunted by servitors and the factions of the shattered isles. These escapees sometimes (1 in 6 chance) gather together in small groups, but are most often encountered alone. Any of the sentient servitors (excepting the cthoul) may wander the Ravenous Tree seeking answers to their twisted fates.

**Fhyrian Tiger-women (2d6):** Init +4; Atk bronze-tipped spear +3 melee (1d7+1) or bronze sword +3 melee (1d7+1) or javelin +4 missile fire (1d6+1, 30/60/90) or claws and bite +4 melee (1d3+1/1d4+1); AC 15 (12); HD 3d8+3; MV 40'; Act 1d20 or 3d16 (claws and bite); SP Hide and move silently +6; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will -1; AL L.

The fhyrians often gather in scout or war parties (called ambushes) seeking out servitors or artifacts upon the boughs of Akavala. Only encountered in the Red Jungle and connected bough, these groups have a 3 in 6 chance of being mounted on their ferocious battle-cats. Fhyrians have strange names describing their natures, their accomplishments or their proudest abilities. (Examples: Stalker in the Red Night, Eyes Afire, Roaring Throat, and Drinker of Her Enemies' Blood)

**Battlecats (armored):** Init +6; Atk claws +10 melee (1d4+2) and bite +8 melee (2d4+2); AC 16; HD 7d8+2; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP Leap (up to 60'), Disembowel (4d4 rake damage, automatically, on two successful attacks in a round); SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +4; AL L.

Battlecats are massive feline creatures that serve as mounts for fhyrians. The fhyrians armor their battlecats with thick leather plates and decorate them with wild painted patterns, brands, beads, and the heads of their enemies. A fhyrian is bound to her battlecat and they communicate through an arcane empathic link. **NOTE:** The creatures cannot leap or disembowel while carrying a rider.

When encountered within the Red Jungle, alone, they are solitary and irascible creatures that defend their territory to the death. They are also unarmored (AC 14, MV 50', AL N).

## THAL ARTIFACTS

Akavala consumed almost everything when Tsaru shattered, however, certain artifacts persisted, usually falling into the hands of the servitors. Most of these items are the techno-magical creations of the thal ape-scientists, who left Tsaru once it was clear that the Ravenous Tree would win.

Thal artifacts require experimentation and often some mental link to operate. Any character can attempt to operate and control an artifact. For those that require mental linking, a character

unskilled in telepathy rolls a d10 for the check. Once a link is established, some artifacts require a control check for each use. A normal failure on either check can be retried after one round, however each time a failure occurs on a link or control check, the critical failure range increases by 1 (like a cleric's deity disapproval range). A critical failure always occurs on a natural 1 and on any critical failure, the user rolls a 1d4 for every point of the failed roll on the Artifact Mishap table.

## THAL LIVING ARTIFACTS

| ROLL | ARTIFACT                          | LINK DC | CONTROL DC |
|------|-----------------------------------|---------|------------|
| 1    | Magic Item<br>(as per Core Rules) | N/A     | N/A        |
| 2    | Strange Tool                      | 5       | 5          |
| 3    | Black Goggles                     | N/A     | 8          |
| 4    | Squiggly                          | 8       | 5          |
| 5    | Handtool                          | 5       | 5          |
| 6    | CHUD                              | 5       | 5          |
| 7    | Claw                              | 8       | 5          |
| 8    | Bounder                           | 10      | 10         |
| 9    | Parasitic Armor                   | 10      | 10         |
| 10   | Special                           | Varies  | Varies     |

## THAL ARTIFACT DESCRIPTIONS

| ITEM            | ARTIFACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Black Goggles   | Dropper bottle filled with black liquid. When dropped in the eyes, the substance hardens in 2 rounds providing infravision (60') for 2d4 rounds. Black goggles also ward off gaze attacks and other vision-based attacks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Squiggly        | Semi-intelligent ooze that fits over the hand. With successful mental control, it fires a bolt of hot plasma at the range of a short bow (1d8+1 damage)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Handtool        | A crustacean that fits over the hand. If controlled, its many legs act as fine tools (Thieves' tools: +2 to checks)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CHUD            | A hand-sized insectoid that emits a steady series of buzzes as it detects servitors within a certain range. Base range is 20', increased by 20' for every 5 points above the base control DC. A DC 20 control check detects undead and invisible opponents in an 80' radius. These are indicated by a different tone.                                                                                                                                 |
| Claw            | Semi-intelligent ooze that fits over the hand. With successful control, it extrude 6" long claws (+1 attack; 2d4+1 damage)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Bounder         | An insectoid-ooze hybrid creature about the size of a motorcycle. The user inserts their hands into two orifices, and, once mental contact and control are established, the vehicle hovers 2' off the ground and can be driven and steered. The rider must maintain physical contact with the bounder, but may remove their hands from the control orifices. The bounder travels up to 100' per round and cushions the rider from up to 100' of fall. |
| Parasitic Armor | A semi-intelligent ooze that, when linked and controlled, covers the user's body like a thick, translucent suit. The armor provides +8 AC with no movement or skill penalties. Additional control checks provide the user infravision (90') and any thal weaponry and tools may be integrated into the armor.                                                                                                                                         |

## THAL ARTIFACT MISHAPS

| ROLL | MISHAP                                                                                               |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | Item inoperable for 2d10 rounds.                                                                     |
| 2    | Link/Control check DC increases by 1, permanently.                                                   |
| 3    | Item inoperable for 2d10 turns.                                                                      |
| 4    | Must re-link with item for each use.                                                                 |
| 5    | Item inoperable for 2d10 hours.                                                                      |
| 6    | User cannot control item more than once per hour.                                                    |
| 7    | Item inoperable for 2d10 days.                                                                       |
| 8    | Item fuses to user, becoming permanently attached. Appendages used to control artifact are consumed. |
| 9    | Item inoperable, permanently.                                                                        |
| 10   | As result 8, but item spreads to nearby tissue.                                                      |
| 11   | Item detonates (6d6 damage)                                                                          |
| 12+  | As result 10, but item attempts to take over the user's mind (Will save DC 15).                      |



**Ketlunder Space Pirate (2d3):** Init +2; Atk electro-sword +3 melee (2d4+stun) or blazer pistol +4 ranged (1d6+fire; 20/40/60); AC 12; HD 2d6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; AL N.

The Ketlunders hail from a faraway world they call Ketlund. Pirates by nature, they ply the phlogiston in their stone-shaped vessels seeking plunder and adventure. The Ketlunders found on Akavala are of a single crew – led by Boskone, the space-vampire captain (currently a prisoner of the Hive). Any encountered know of the Ketlunder harbor (detailed later) and of their captain's fate. **NOTE:** There are only 43 Ketlunders left on Akavala, counting their captive captain.

Ketlunders found away from their vessel are always mounted on creatures they call gulpers – huge anuran things that propel them quickly, if uncomfortably across the tree's surface. They flee from most fights, though they may lay down covering fire with their blazer pistols before leaping away on their beasts. When pressed, their electro-swords are quite effective, dealing damage and stunning their opponents (Fort DC 8). Their signature blazer pistols, though short on range, shoot out a pellet of super-heated plasma that may catch inflammable materials (including characters) on fire (Reflex DC 8). Those that catch fire suffer 1d4 damage per round until the fire is smothered by water or other methods. Both weapons only function 1d3+2 times before falling inert – though the electro-sword still deals 1d4 damage when not powered. These items are recharged by the propulsion crystals found on their vessel.

**Gulpers:** Init -2; Atk massive maw (swallowed whole); AC 16; HD 4d8; MV 10', Leap 40'; Act 1d20; SP Leaping attack; SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +2; AL N.

Gulpers attack by leaping at their prey and swallowing them whole – beasts up to the size of a full-grown bull may be thus devoured. On a successful attack, the victim must make a Reflex save (DC 5+attack roll) or be gulped into the creature's armored gullet. Those holding a small piercing weapon (dagger, short sword, etc.) may



attack the insides of the thing, though its stomach lining is thick (AC 15). Any damage done to the inside of the creature forces it to spit up its prey. Otherwise, the victim begins to suffocate, losing 1d3 Stamina per round until dead. Gulpers' digestive juices are weak and the creature will not swallow another meal for 3d6 weeks after devouring a sizable creature. The things are not found native to Akavala – they are imports from one of the Ketlunders' many ports-of-call.

**Helot Wormwalker (4d6):** Init +1; Atk scimitar +2 melee (1d6+2) or foul spew (see below); AC 14; HD 1d6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP foul spew, +1d when fighting servitors; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

The helot, or wormwalkers, serve the Worm Queen in the City of the God-Arm. Like their monarch, the helot evolved from marrow worms that crawl through the God-Arm. Though small, these beasties are found in greater numbers than other non-servitors upon Akavala. When hard pressed, the creatures spew a foul mix of fluids, coating all in a 20' long cone (10' wide at its apex). Those caught in the spray must make a Fortitude save (DC 11) or suffer from debilitating nausea. Victims lie doubled over, retching for 1d3+2 rounds. Helots can only spew forth this foulness once per day. Myrmidons are immune to this filth.

**Mind Ant (4d4):** Init +2; Atk mandibles +3 melee (1d3) and sting (automatic on successful bite; 1d3+poison); AC 15; HD 2d6; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP mind blast, hivemind, control lesser crawling things; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; AL L.

Mind ants are large eight-legged insectoid creatures that move across the Broken Lands of Kong on obscure missions of the Hive. Their massive heads sport two clamping mandibles and an exposed brain-like organ covered in a sheer, nearly impenetrable dome. If they successfully bite an opponent, they automatically sting, which injects a fiery paralytic poison dealing damage and rendering the victim rigid with pain for 1d3+2 rounds (Fort DC 14). When encountered in groups of 6 or more, the creatures can spend a round linking brains, which manifests as green-white lightning, and then blast a group of opponents with wave of psychic energy. The wave manifests as a cone 30' long and 15' at its apex. Any caught in this area suffer crushing fear (Will DC 14) and either flee at best speed, dropping anything held, or cower if they cannot flee. Finally, in this mind-linked configuration, mind ants can control various lesser crawling things that live nearby. Most often, these are swarms insectoids, reptilians, anurans, and others. The group can control up to a quarter of their HD in crawling things, directing them to attack an area (see below).

**Mind Ant-Controlled Swarm:** Init +5; Atk swarming bite automatic (1 per HD; sting); AC 11 (+1 per HD); HD (special)d8; MV 20'; Act special; SP attack all targets in a given area, half damage from non-area attacks, sting (Fort DC 5 or additional 1d4 damage), double damage from fire or acid-based attacks, slowed by cold-based attacks; SV Fort +0, Ref +10, Will -2; AL N.

When a group of mind ants takes control of a swarm, it forms in 1d3 rounds and attacks as directed. The size and collective power of the swarm increases depending on the number of mind ants controlling it – the swarm has a quarter of the collective HD of the controlling mind ants (minimum 3HD). The swarm's hit dice also dictates its size – covering 10' cubed area for every HD assembled (minimum 30' diameter). Any within this area are automatically bitten and stung each round, though magical protections, such as the *magic shield* spell, reduce their damage by the magical protection bonus.

**Valru Arachnoids (1d4):** Init +3; Atk claws +5 melee (1d6) or by weapon +5 melee or ranged; AC 14; HD 3d8; MV 30', climb 30'; Act 4d20; SP spells, +1d when fighting servitors; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2; AL N.

Valru arachnoids were natives of Tsaru before the coming of Akavala. Their population was almost wholly subjugated by the seed's minders and sent off to other realms to defend the Ravenous Tree's growing seeds there. The few that escaped this fate wander the surface of the tree, gathering in monastic groups and contemplating existence. Though they are generally aloof, the valru have been known to help one group of non-servitors or another, as it suits them and to enigmatic purpose. They fight Akavala's servitors with a singular vigor.

Valru arachnoids are hunched 7' tall spider humanoids that move around on either two or four legs. Their main set of four arms can use tools, weapons, and the like, though they often use a pair for locomotion, especially when climbing. Two long, articulated appendages protrude from their backs. These cannot wield weapons or tools, but the razor claws help the creature climb, as well as defend itself.

Any valru encountered has a 1 in 6 chance of possessing arcane (3<sup>rd</sup> level wizard) or idol (2<sup>nd</sup> level cleric) abilities. Those of the wizard persuasion are patron bound to an arcane entity known as the Mindhead – though none know of its power or how much of it is channeled through its servants. In either case, arachnoids make spell checks at +6 to the die roll.

## NATIVE REACTIONS

**Fhyrian's** default to aggression. If made friendly, they insist on taking the party to the Red Jungle and their matron.

**Helot** are opportunists — if they outnumber the party, they attack to capture and enslave, taking their slaves back to the City of the God-Arm.

Despite their names, **mind ants** are near-mindless, and generally attack without mercy. Though near their native lands, they may bring captives to the Hive.

**Valru** generally avoid confrontation, but act on the will of the Four Wizenened Ones (see the Black Tomb section).



## RANDOM BEASTS

Strange creatures roam Akavala's surface and the shattered isles, adapted to their environments to hunt and kill. Many were confined within Akavala's seed only to break out and breed. Others are escaped experiments of the cthoul mindlords. The Ravenous Tree's ecosystem is alien and varied and so too are the creatures found there.

| RANDOM BEAST GENERATION TABLES |                        |                                |                                   |                                     |                                |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ROLL (2D4)                     | TYPE<br>(ROLL ONCE)    | LOCOMOTION<br>(ROLL 1D2 TIMES) | SIZE<br>(ROLL ONCE)               | ATTACKS<br>(ROLL AS YOU LIKE)       | SPECIAL*<br>(ROLL AS YOU LIKE) |
| 2                              | Chimeric               | Immobile                       | Gargantuan<br>(10+ HD; AC 9+2d4)  | Multi-limbed<br>(2d3+1; Roll Again) | Mind Control                   |
| 3                              | Humanoid               | Flying                         | Small<br>(1d2 HD; AC 9+1d3)       | Ranged                              | Blood Drain                    |
| 4                              | Beast                  | Normal                         | Medium<br>(1d4 HD; AC 9+1d4)      | Slam                                | Poison                         |
| 5                              | Plant                  | Very Fast                      | Medium<br>(1d4 HD; AC 9+1d4)      | Slash/Bite                          | Acid                           |
| 6                              | Insect                 | Slithering                     | Large<br>(2d4 HD; AC 9+2d4)       | Slash/Bite                          | Ambush                         |
| 7                              | Ooze                   | Relentless Stalking            | Large<br>(2d5 HD; AC 9+2d5)       | Immobilizing/Grab                   | Ability Drain                  |
| 8                              | Undead<br>(roll again) | Phasing                        | Tiny, swarm<br>(2d3 HD; AC 9+1d2) | Only Special Attacks                | Ensorcel                       |

### TYPE

**Chimeric** — Creature is of multiple types. Roll 2d2 times on Type, ignoring further Chimeric results.

**Humanoid** — Human-like creature that may have some intelligence (1 in 6). Otherwise, low intelligence. Roll again on Type, ignoring Humanoid.

**Beast** — Somewhere between a mammal, reptile and amphibian. Also, hungry. 1 in 6 are armored (+1d4 AC).

**Plant** — Carnivorous and seeking Seymour.

**Insect** — Chittering, creepy and also crawly. 3 in 6 are armored (+2d2 AC).

**Ooze** — See the DCC Core Rules for ideas. Oozes always have at least 1 special ability.

**Undead** — Living dead random horror. Roll again on Type, ignoring Undead result. Standard undead traits.

### LOCOMOTION

**Immobile** — All attacks are ranged or special.

**Flying** — 3 in 6 fly 1d3x10' faster than normal speed.

**Normal** — 30' movement.

**Very Fast** — 30' + 1d6x10' movement. +2 Init.

**Slithering** — 20'+1d3x10' movement. +1 Init.

**Relentless Stalking** — 30' +1d3x10' movement. stealth +1d6+3; Attacks when opportune.

**Phasing** — 20'+1d6x10' movement; +4 AC

### ATTACKS

**Multi-limbed** — Action dice equal to half of limbs.

**Ranged** — Damage 1d3 + 1d per 2 HD; Range 30'

**Slam** — Damage 1d3+1d per 2 HD

**Slash/Bite** — Damage 1d3+1d per 2 HD

**Immobilizing/Grab** — STR check DC 9+1 per 2 HD

### SPECIAL

**Mind Control** — Will save DC 9+1 per 2 HD

**Blood Drain** — Damage 1+1 per 4 HD per round

**Poison** — Fortitude save DC 9+1 per HD

**Acid** — Damage 1d3+1d per 2 HD; Half that per subsequent round.

**Ambush** — Stealth +10; Init +1 per HD

**Ability Drain** — Will or Fort save DC 9+ 1 per 2 HD

**Ensorcel** — Pick a spell or spells. Do your thing.

## THE KETLUNDER SAFE HARBOR

The party may stumble upon the Ketlunder harbor or be brought here by Ketlunders encountered elsewhere.

The harbor is located somewhere on the bough connecting the Broken Lands of Kong to the other shattered isles in this region of Akavala. Judge's discretion on where and when the characters discover it.

Within a forested rift covering a massive cyst in the surface of Akavala lies the inoperable phlogiston vessel of the Ketlunders, the *Major Daison*. Only forty-three souls remain of a crew that set out from Ketlund seemingly an age ago. Currently, the group is commanded by First Mate Bonny Charlotte. The captain, Boskone, set out to the Broken Lands of Kong on a rumor about a cosmotronic energy source to fuel their vessel. He has not returned (see sidebar). Other than wander the boughs searching for supplies, the space pirates spend most of their time lamenting their fates and drinking quickly depleting stores of space whiskey.

If the Ketlunders trust the party (see the Interaction sidebar near the beginning of this adventure), they may be offered sanctuary – but only if they agree to help the pirates leave this place. Though the pirates have never heard of the party's home, Bonny Charlotte pledges to help them return if the party helps the Ketlunders leave.

If the party are enemies of the Ketlunders, the space pirates attempt to capture them. Prisoners are locked in the hold of the *Major Daison* and interrogated. The more they know, the longer they live.

**Ketlunders (~30 at any given time):** See previous entry for combat statistics.

**Bonny Charlotte, Ketlunder officer:** Init +1; Atk thal claw +4 melee (1d8+1) or thal claws (ejected) +4 ranged (2d6; may hit up to two targets within 10' of each other; range: 30/60/90); AC 15; HD 4d6; hp: 11; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP thal artifacts; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N.

Bonny Charlotte found a thal artifact – she calls it a claw – a semi-sentient crustacean that fits over her forearm and made mental contact with her. During her initial experimentation with the artifact, it

consumed her forearm and fused itself to her nervous system. Its exoskeleton is slowly growing to cover her torso and shoulders. Upon mental command, the thing extrudes four 6" iron-hard claws. With a second command, she can fire the claws at up to two targets within 10' of each other.

The space pirates keep and breed gulpers, the strange anurans that they ride awkwardly across the boughs of the Ravenous Tree.

**Gulpers (~20):** see previous entry for combat statistics.

### WHAT THE SPACE PIRATES KNOW AND WANT

The Ketlunders have been here, by their estimate, about a year. About nine months ago, Captain Boskone took a party onto the Broken Lands of Kong following up on rumors of cosmotronic energy in that area. A lone crewman, fatally injured, returned to tell a tale of large insectoids that rived their minds with strange magicks and of a giant figure composed of millions of tiny insects that directed these horrors. All are said to reside within the bestial petrified skull the size of a mountain. This survivor disclosed that Boskone is now a prisoner of the Hive (see the Broken Lands of Kong).

The Ketlunders have encountered most sentients upon Akavala. They maintain a strained peace with the fhyrians, but avoid the others. Servitors are hunted when found, or, if in force, led away from the pirates' vessel and sanctuary.

Bonny Charlotte and her crew want two things: Their captain back and a source of cosmotronic energy.

If the characters agree to rescue Boskone, Bonny Charlotte ensures they have a weeks' supply of heliosalts for their likely starving captain (who is incidentally a space vampire). If made friendly, the First Mate also sends 1d3+1 Ketlunders and mounts.

### WHAT THE HECK IS COSMOTRONIC ENERGY?

None know where cosmotronic energy originates, but it powers many techno-magical devices used by various races across this dimension. Appearing as a glowing blue liquid, the only source of cosmotronic energy upon Akavala is within the Skull of Kong (see the Broken Lands of Kong section).

## THE BLACK TOMB

This locale is detailed in the D.A.M.N. Magazine Spring/Summer 2018 web enhancement.

The alignment of lost ley lines, heartbeat of the dying sun, or some other arcane process connects all valru arachnoids and, at random times throughout their lives, draw them to the Black Tomb.

The Tomb lies within a forgotten cyst that seems to have no specific locale — appearing and disappearing by some esoteric alignment of living things upon the surface of Akavala. Rumored to be packed with thal artifacts, the Four Wizenen Ones watch over the Black Tomb.

## THE CITY OF THE GOD-ARM

*Though not as impressive as described, the once great city lies below you – only a few hundred tumbledown buildings lean against each other across narrow streets. A colossal tower dominates the wreckage, canted as if under a great weight. Its apex sheared off in jagged violence, the surface of the tower glistens darkly.*

In a time lost to Akavala's horrors stood the city of Merethed – Jewel of the Golden Plains. What history remains of this once shining place hides within the few crushed structures and fractured streets firmly in the grip of the Ravenous Tree. All that holds back annihilation rests within the God-Arm, a massive thal living machine covered in black chitin plates that once served as weapon for the living construct called the Kong.

## PLAYING THE CITY

The Worm Queen and her helot wormwalkers control the city and the God-Arm now. The wormwalkers and their hunter beasts constantly patrol the broken streets and surrounding boughs and branches, making it unlikely that the PCs approach or enter the city undetected. Should they bypass these patrols, the party could find a secret refuge within the ruins or nearby, but every cranny hides some random beast (see the Encounters section). Servitors are never encountered here unless they come in full invasion strength. The Worm Queen and her servants meet these

incursions with ferocity, beating back Akavala's best.

## THE WORM QUEEN AND THE BLUE TEMPLE

In the center of the ruins, beneath the God-Arm, stands the Blue Temple, nothing more than a stone foundation and a few columns hanging over a reeking lake.

The God-Arm leaks a semi-phosphorescent blue-green liquid – vile effluvium of fluid from the dying artifact and the waste of many thousands of marrow worms that crawl through the living machine's tissue. The fluid gathers in a fissure at the artifact's base. Sinking to almost 100' in depth, the pool connects to passages and chambers within the God-Arm. Deep below, Theriseus enacts rituals that birth helot wormwalkers and their hunter beasts, as well as conferring with the marrow worms that slide through the God-Arm's innards.

Characters brought to the Blue Temple, either as prisoners or envoys, watch as the helot execute a complex ritual. Minutes later, the worm queen rises to enact her will upon them.

**Theriseus, the Worm Queen:** Init +4; Atk necrotic claws +10 melee (1d7+7; necrosis) or necrotic bite +10 melee (1d4+7; necrosis) or entangling entrails (special, see below) or gaze attack ranged (special; see below); AC 20\*; HD 10d12; hp 81; MV 30' or swim 50'; Act 3d20; SP necrosis (Fort DC 20), entangling entrails (STR or AGI DC 15), gaze attack (Will DC 20; charmed), infravision (90'), Immunities (see below), Threat range 18-20, summon marrow worms; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +15; AL N.

Formed in the squirms of marrow worms living within the God-Arm, Theriseus emerged as a powerful god-demon. About 40' long, the Worm Queen is a horror to behold – her skin is sunken against her alien skull and torso, and her entrails coil and squirm like giant maggots at her middle. Her sinuous lower body is heavily scaled in iridescent purple and ends in a wide fluke.

When struck by the Worm Queen's claws or bite, characters must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer from necrosis. This disease consumes the outer layer of skin and hair over the course of 1d3 weeks forming a gelatinous, stinking shell. The character lies in stasis for another 1d3 days before emerging as a marrow worm. The disease can only be cured with a "4 dice" result on a cleric's lay on

## WHAT DO WORM QUEENS WANT?

No matter the helot's attitude toward the party, Theriseus sees only opportunity – clearly outsiders. She questions the party imperiously, digging in to any answers that include the Ketlunders, movements of the cthoul, specifically, and interactions with the Hive or the fhyrians (she has a special dislike for their matron, Her Roars Topple the Enemy). Finally, if the party shares that they have seen the Black Tomb (see the Encounters section), she immediately demands all details.

**NOTE:** Theriseus considers the Shifu anathema. Anyone obviously marked with the Chosen of the Shifu (see The Red Jungle section) is killed outright. Additionally, if the group mentions *Khara-Tum*, she calls for her wormwalkers. The party is confined in a secure place and constantly guarded by helot. The Heart of the Star is a god to her and her servants – they consider the God-Arm merely a vessel to this holy relic. The party's fate, at this point, is up to their own ingenuity, but they will not likely regain the Worm Queen's trust.

If the party can ingratiate themselves to the Worm Queen, and convince her they are not in the service of the Ravenous Tree, she offers them a deal. Within the Skull of Kong, is a small pedestal made from an unknown metal and marked with symbols she believes is related to *Khara-Tum*. If the party travels the Broken Lands of Kong and returns this pedestal to her, she promises them riches, protection, and passage from the grip of Akavala (she can only provide the first two). (see area KB-2; The Skull of Kong).

Depending on Theriseus' attitude after this discussion (see the Interaction sidebar near the beginning of this adventure), she may send a group of up to 1d4+2 helot wormwalkers to assist.

Queen automatically hits with both her claws and bite each round.

She can use all her action dice in a round to summon 1d6 marrow worms from the Blue Pool. They arrive in 1d3+1 rounds. The Worm Queen must be within in sight of the Blue Pool to do this. The creatures fight at her command, unwaveringly.

Theriseus is immune to non-magical weapons and natural weapons from any creature of less than 5 HD. She takes half-damage from fire, acid, cold, electricity and gas. She has specific vulnerability to the energies of thal artifacts, however, taking 1½ damage on attacks from such weapons.



hands or other supernatural means devised by the judge.

Those that meet her enchanting alien eyes must make a Will save (DC 20) or be charmed (as *charm person* result 18-19)

An opponent struck by two of Theriseus' physical attacks in a round is also entangled in her squirming entrails. The victim must make a Strength or Agility check (DC 15) or the Worm

**Helot wormwalkers (3d10+20):** See complete combat statistics in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree: Encounters section.

**Hunter-Beasts (2d20+10):** See complete combat statistics in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree: Encounters section.

**Marrow Worms (1d6):** Init +2; Atk latching bite +4 (1d4+1; blood drain, entangle, constrict); AC 14; HD 3d8; MV 20' or swim 50'; Act 1d20; SP blood drain (1 STA damage per round), entangle (STR or AGI DC 14), constrict (1d6+1 damage per round); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; AL N.

Marrow worms are thin, flatworms, 10' long, that attack by latching on with a painful bite. Much like a lamprey, the creatures suck blood from their prey. Once attached, they entangle the victim in their corded, filmy coils and constrict until expiration.



## THE GOD-ARM

As Akavala's sprouting seed expelled her many servitors resolved on conquering Tsaru, thal ape-scientists began constructing a mighty weapon to repel the invader from within. They named this living machine the Kong – and formed it in their image: a mighty ape warrior with symbiotic weapons systems and an unquenchable rage. Though it fought the servitors and the young Ravenous Tree to a standstill at the Battle of Merethed, the Kong was ultimately defeated and its body devoured by servitors leaving only a giant chitin-covered arm upon the battlefield. The people of Merethed moved the mighty relic to the city center, believing that the spirit of the Kong still lingered and would protect them from Akavala's unceasing hunger. They were partially right – The God-Arm protected a section of the city, which now lies ruined and encircled by the

hungering boughs of Akavala. The tree cannot consume this shattered isle until the God-Arm is destroyed.

The God-Arm is a 300' tall organic tower-like structure covered in plates of glistening black chitin. The top of the arm is sheared off in great jagged pieces of chitin and rotting black flesh that constantly streams blue-green fluid.

Unless otherwise noted, the spaces within the God-Arm are strangely organic – its chambers and passages rounded and composed of a dark, striated spongy material that sometimes flexes, quivers or pulsates. A blue-green film lingers on anything that touches these surfaces – walls, floors, apertures. The place is warm, damp and smells of rot and musk.

The artifact may be entered in three ways: The secret

While there are a thousand reasons that player characters decide to do the impossible, the only motivation to enter the God-Arm covered in this adventure is to retrieve *Khara-Tum, the Heart of the Star* – either at the behest of the flyrians (see the Red Jungle section) or the Ketlunders (see the Ketlunder Harbor section). Only two individuals within this adventure know of the secret hatch (area GA-1): **Boskone**, the Ketlunder captain currently held by the Hive and **Makog**, the last living thal ape-scientist (see the Broken Lands of Kong for both). Judges may develop other seeds, leads or reasons, and I wish you luck.

hatch (GA-1), a shaft from the blue pool that connects to the worm tunnels (GA-0). Additionally, PCs can reach numerous worm tunnel openings by climbing 300' to the jagged apex of the artifact, but that is likely madness.

## **GOD-ARM KEY**

**GA-0 Blue Pool Shaft** – It is unlikely that the PCs enter the God-Arm from this shaft, however, they may end up exiting from it. Swimming down to the shaft entrance requires three successive Fortitude saves (DC 12, 15, 20). On any failure, the character begins to drown and expires in a number of rounds equal to the Stamina score. In addition, swimmers risk alerting Theriseus to their presence (base 1 in 10 chance per turn, though you should increase this to “inevitable” if there’s a lot of thrashing about or other shenanigans).

**GA-1 Secret Hatch** – Characters that lack arcane means of flight must find a way to reach the hatch, located 120' up the outside edge of the arm. Climbing requires equipment, such as ropes and pitons, on the slick chitin surface and likely attracts the attention of the helot and Theriseus. Thieves can climb the outside of the arm without gear (DC 20).

Indistinguishable from the surface of the arm, the hatch cannot be casually spotted, but can be found if searching the exact area (DC 15). Once found, it is easily popped open, issuing a stench of rot and musk. Beyond is a narrow, pulsating passage which leads to a corrugated shaft rising 150' at a steep angle. Climbing the shaft is slow (1/4 speed), but not dangerous – though the dark fleshy rings between the ridges occasionally throb and palpitate.

**GA-2 Chamber of Bundles** – The shaft opens into the floor of this large space, once used by thal technicians to inject nutrient fluids into the living machine’s circulatory system. Filmy connective tissue attaches thick bundles of faintly pulsing capillaries to the walls and ceiling. Burrowed behind these venous structures are several marrow worms lapping the God-Arm’s life-giving fluids. The creatures slumber and only come alive if discovered.

**Marrow worms (6):** hp 19, 16, 18, 14, 12, 18

Hidden under a bundle of veins near the shaft entrance lies a brown chitinous bulb. The thing looks every bit like the egg case of some horrible creature but is in fact a forgotten toolbox left behind by a thal ape-technician. Within lie a collection of cryptic tools, a cloth bundle that proves to hold a spoiled lunch and a random thal artifact (see the Thal Artifact sidebar earlier in this adventure).

The entrance to another corrugated shaft may be found in the ceiling, 20' above. The vein bundles are easily climbed though they flinch and bunch when touched.

**GA-3 The Devoured Hall** – The shaft rises another 30' and dumps into a canted passage that extends left and right into darkness. Hundreds of holes breach the passage walls, ceiling and floor leading to a maze of worm tunnels.

Lingering here draws the attention of 1d3 marrow worms (1 in 6 chance per turn).

**GA-4 The Worm Tunnels** – Marrow worms burrow through the flesh of the God-Arm seeking veins on which to drink and chambers to lay their egg clutches. The tunnels left behind twist and intertwine, some forming pockets, while others connect to the Devoured Hall (GA-3), the shaft to the Blue Pool (GA-0), and the Chamber of the Heart (GA-5). Rather than a traditional dungeon, this portion is run as a point-crawl. While random tables determine what the characters find and encounter, judges are encouraged to control the randomness at their leisure.

As the characters wander through the worm tunnels, check for an encounter every three turns (or when it suits you).



| WORM TUNNELS ENCOUNTER TABLE |                    |                      |                  |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| ROLL (2d3)                   | ENCOUNTER          | CHAMBER              | DISCOVERY        |
| 2                            | Discovery          | Tumor                | Thal Artifact    |
| 3                            | Helot (2d6)        | Egg Chamber          | Ketlunder Corpse |
| 4                            | No Encounter       | Empty                | Passage          |
| 5                            | Marrow Worms (2d4) | Sanctuary            | Helot Pods       |
| 6                            | Chamber            | Chamber of the Heart | Heart Glove      |

## ENCOUNTERS

**Helot** – Wormwalkers encountered here are freshly born (90% of the time) and instinctively seek the shaft to the Blue Pool. They are unarmed and fight only if attacked (fists +2 melee; 1d3+2 damage).

**NOTE:** They can be followed to the shaft if the characters are seeking exit from the God-Arm.

Rarely (10%), a patrol of fully formed wormwalkers may be found here, sent on some esoteric mission by the Worm Queen. They are fully armed, accompanied by 1d3 hunter beasts and attack intruders on sight.

Any helot found here can lead the party via the most direct route to either the Chamber of the Heart (area GA-5), the Devoured Hall (area GA-3), or the exit shaft to the Blue Pool (area GA-0). None provides this information willingly unless ensorcelled, however.

**Marrow Worms** – When encountered, marrow worms are typically slumbering – lapping from some discovered vein. There is a 1 in 6 chance that any worms encountered are moving through the worm tunnels. The creatures immediately attack to defend their home.

## CHAMBERS

The worm tunnels occasionally intersect a natural cavity or room designed by the thal ape-scientists for maintenance of the artifact. When a room is encountered, roll again on the Worm Tunnel Encounter table above to determine if there are occupants or connected chambers. There is a 1 in 6 chance of that a Discovery may be found within a chamber. Multiple chambers may be connected by ridged shafts, short passages or apertures covered in loose connective tissue (detected as secret doors).

**Tumor** – The characters stumble into a reeking, mutated pocket of quivering dark flesh. The cyst immediately spasms and contracts, flooding the

area with caustic black fluid. Upon entry, roll initiative (the tumorous chamber rolls with a +3). Those characters with an initiative score higher than the tumor may make a Reflex save (DC 15) to clamber out of the constricting entrance. Any that remain must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or be splashed with acid (1d6 damage per round until washed off). The acid eats through organic material, such as clothing, backpacks, spear shafts, leather armor and the like, destroying one random piece of equipment per round. After the first round, characters left inside may attempt to pry open the entrance (Strength DC 15) – weapons and other similar tools used add a +2 to the roll.

**Passage** – A fleshy passage or corrugated shaft exits the room and may connect to another pocket. Roll 1d8: 1) Another chamber; 2-6) Passageway continues 7) Devoured Hall (GA-3) 8) Blue Pool Shaft (GA-0)

**Egg Chamber** – Marrow worms hollow out pockets within the God-Arm to lay clutches of eggs. There is a 1 in 6 chance that 2d3 marrow worms also lie in this chamber. The characters find 2d50 round transparent eggs in the clutch, each about 10” in diameter with a faint blue yoke hovering in the center. The eggs are nutritious; each count as a daily ration of both food and water, though they are an...ahem...acquired taste.

**Sanctuary** — Some forgotten cavity proves to be safe for a time. Provided the PCs have sufficient provisions, they can remain here until the judge gets bored with inaction.

**Chamber of the Heart** – The characters reach one of the entry orifices to Heart Chamber (GA-5).

## DISCOVERIES

Within the passages and cavities of the God-Arm lie certain artifacts and discoveries which may assist the PCs.

**Artifact** – The thal technicians and scientists that built what eventually became the God-Arm left behind certain curious tools and devices. Most are so inscrutable as to be useless, but others’ purposes may be gleaned from experimentation. Refer to the Artifacts sidebar located in the Encounters section earlier in this adventure. Or make up your own. It’s your game.

**Ketlunder Corpse** – A sortie of Ketlunders, under secret orders from Boskone, ventured to the city, managed to evade detection by the helot and their queen, and made it in through the secret hatch. They all died ingloriously in the worm tunnels. When found, there are 1d3 corpses (a total of 10 may be found within the tunnels). Roll 1d3 times on the Ketlunder Corpse Equipment table to determine what they carried.

| KETLUNDER EQUIPMENT |                           |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| ROLL (2d4)          | GEAR                      |
| 2                   | Electro-Sword (Uncharged) |
| 3                   | Power Crystals (2d3)      |
| 4                   | Rations (3d4)             |
| 5                   | Nothing                   |
| 6                   | Also Nothing              |
| 7                   | Blazer Pistol (Uncharged) |
| 8                   | Thal Artifact             |

**Weapons** – Ketlunders carry an electro-sword and/or blazer pistol. When found here they are drained of their power. Electro-swords may be used unpowered, but only deal 1d4 damage on a successful hit. When powered, electro-swords deal 2d4 damage, and the victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 8) or be stunned (-1d on all action dice for 1 round). Blazer pistols deal 1d6 damage and victims must make a Reflex save (DC 8) or catch fire (1d6 damage per round until extinguished).

**Power Crystals** – Ketlunder equipment uses power crystals to operate. These tiny clear gemstones glow with the intensity of a torch and each provides 5 charges to an electro-sword or blazer pistol. Stored within small velvet pouches, 2d3 may be found. Prolonged exposure to a power crystal can be detrimental. Each hour a crystal is held outside its protective pouch or weapon, the bearer must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) or lose 1 Strength, Stamina or Agility (randomly determined). In addition, natural healing is impossible if touching a power crystal.

**Nothing and Also Nothing** – There's nothing.

**Thal Artifact** – The Ketlunders roam the boughs and shattered isles seeking thal artifacts they believe could repair their phlogiston vessel. Refer to the Thal Artifacts sidebar located in the Encounters section earlier in this adventure. Don't make up your own. This is my game.

**Helot Pods** – After an esoteric ritual deep within the Blue Pool, the Worm Queen sends her clutch of marrow worms back into the God-Arm to gestate. They cluster together, forming translucent pink pods where they reform into helot wormwalkers. These pods are 75% likely to be in some stage of development. Otherwise, fresh helots are emerging in squalling, congealed glory. Freshly born helots do not fight unless attacked (fist +2 melee; 1d3+2) and after a time, pack up and instinctively move to the exit shaft leading down to the Blue Pool.

**Heart Glove** – The thal artifact the Ketlunders call the *heart glove* was carried with the clandestine group sent to recover *Khara-Tum*, and then promptly lost in the tunnels. The glove is a translucent green gelatinous mass vaguely shaped like a hand. If a PC touches it with bare skin, they may attempt to link with it (DC 8). If successful, the user immediately feels a flood of telepathic images related to the *Heart of the Star* – a glowing, molten mass that fell out of the phlogiston and onto the surface of Tsaru as Akavala devoured it. If the user successfully controls the artifact (DC 10), the glove leads the PC through telepathic promptings by the most direct path to one of the many orifices protecting the Chamber of the Heart (GA-5).

**GA-5 Chamber of the Heart** – A protective layer of tissue surrounds the ovoid cyst where *Khara-Tum*, the *Heart of the Star*, resides. The entry orifice is located at the bottom of the heart chamber. Sealed against entry, this aperture opens only via magic (such as a *knock* spell) or by touching the *heart glove* to it. Other methods, such as hacking at it with a sword, activate defensive fluids – a spray of foul mist in a 30' radius. Those caught in the mist must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or suffer 3d10 damage and be struck blind (the eyes literally boil from the head). On a successful save, the damage is halved and eye boiling is avoided. **NOTE:** Attempting to breach the walls of the protective chamber results in the same defensive action. Either may be successfully breached with more than 60 points of damage from a single attack, magical or otherwise, though the chamber's defensive fluids still fire off.

The interior of ovoid cyst reeks of decay. The ceiling and walls drip cancerous black fluid, which stands in puddles on the mushy black floor. A glowing red gemstone hovers in the center of the room, about

10' above this mess. Coiled under it is the hydrazoan beast; it protects the heart with its life.

**Hydrazoan Beast:** Init +6; Atk lashing tendrils +8 melee (1d6; drain fluid) or engulfing pseudopods +8 melee (engulf) or shocking tentacles (1d3; paralytic); AC 18; HD 6d12; hp 53; MV fly 20'; Act 3d20; SP drain fluid (Strength DC 18, see below), engulfing pseudopods (engulf limb or head; Strength DC 18 to escape; see below), shocking tentacles (Fort DC 18; paralyzed 1d8 rounds); SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +8; AL N.

Formed from marrow worms mutated and fused by the fell energies emanating from *Khara-Tum*, the hydrazoan beast is a confusing collection of tentacles, pseudopods, and ganglia-like tendrils attached to a red-veined golden bulb. The pseudopods squirm and "flower" when the thing attacks, while its tendrils lash in all directions seeking to pull victims into its short, stinging tentacles.

When the tendrils strike, they embed in flesh, dealing immediate damage (1d6) and then begin to drain Stamina (1 per round). Once embedded the tendrils flex, pulling the victim into range of the

beast's pseudopods and tentacles. Victims can break free of the tendrils with a successful Strength check (DC 18). The pseudopods flower open, attempting to engulf a victim's limb (75%; random limb) or head (25%). An engulfed limb is unusable, though if holding a small weapon, the PC can deal automatic damage to the beast each round. Additional pseudopods target other limbs or the head of the victim. If the head is engulfed, the creature loses 1d3 Stamina per round due to suffocation and constriction until killed. Victims may attempt to escape with a Strength check (DC 18), though for each limb held, the check is made at -1d. If the head is engulfed, the check is at -2d. The creature's tentacles automatically strike anyone within 5', stinging the victim and causing paralysis (1d6 rounds; Fort DC 18). Paralyzed victims are wrapped up in tendrils and drained of fluids before being completely engulfed by the thing's pseudopods.



## **KHARA-TUM, THE HEART OF THE STAR**

*Khara-Tum* emanates a foul energy that warps all that it touches. Those that touch the heart without adequate protection (the *heart glove* is the only known proof against *Khara-Tum*'s energy, but judge's discretion, otherwise) must make a Fortitude save each round (DC 20) or suffer from corruption, starting with minor corruption. Each failed save results in a step up to more vile corruption (see the DCC RPG Core Rules: Corruption section).

The "gemstone" does not appear to have any powers — it is used to power the pylon vessel (see the Broken Land of Kong). It's true powers are manifest when married to *Havoc*, the golden baton found within the Temple of the Immortal Shifu (see the Red Jungle section).

## **AFTERMATH**

When *Khara-Tum* is removed from the ovoid cyst, the God-Arm quakes and rumbles. After a turn, those inside begin to sense motion as the relic tears itself from its mooring and flies toward the Skull of Kong. The trip takes three hours, and the God-Arm gently lands next to the giant skull. See the Broken Land of Kong: Aftermath section for more information.

Viewed from outside the relic, the giant arm tears itself from the ground and drifts off into the phlogiston in a cloud of dust and fire. The complete destruction of the shattered isle known as the City of the God-Arm begins immediately. Thousands of hungry branches snake out from the surrounding boughs of the Ravenous Tree and tear through the mass of earth, ripping it asunder. Those caught in the city are instantly killed — thrown into the phlogiston with the hulking pieces of what remains of doomed Tsaru.

## **THE BROKEN LAND OF KONG**

When the servitors of Akavala defeated the Kong, they devoured what flesh remained of the beast and threw its bones into a great canyon, not knowing that those same bones would become relics, protecting the surrounding land from the Ravenous Tree's hungry branches. When Akavala broke the world, the Broken Land of Kong stood, testament to the ape-scientists' power.

A sentient swarm of chittering things, simply called the Hive, rules this rocky and precipitous land, residing within the skull of Kong. Mind ants, servants of the Hive, patrol the broken land, using powerful mind-science to protect their master from servitor invasion. Those that wish to journey to the skull must climb down sheer cliffs or discover precarious paths to the verge of doomed Tsaru.

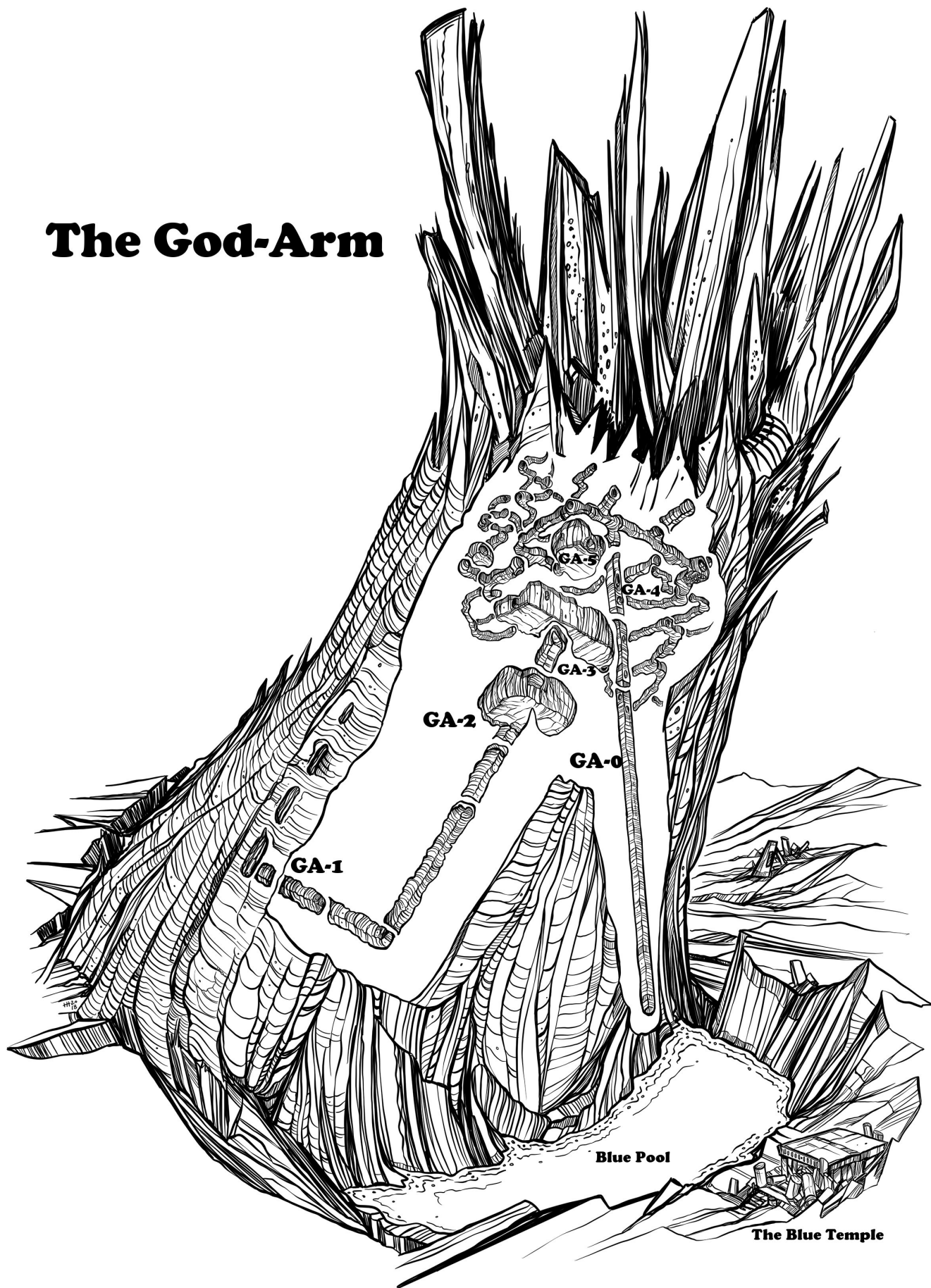
### **WHY ARE WE IN THIS DAMNABLE PLACE?**

The characters may stumble into the Broken Lands of Kong while wandering the boughs, be directed here by the Ketlunders in search of their captured captain, come as prisoners of the mind ants, or seek the arcane pedestal at the direction of the Worm-Queen. Finally, if they removed *Khara-Tum* from the God-Arm, they may have arrived here as surprised passengers of that relic. If this is the case, refer directly to the Skull of Kong section. Otherwise, refer to the Crawling the Broken Lands section.

## **CRAWLING THE BROKEN LANDS**

The Broken Lands of Kong are vast and, while nowhere near the scale of the boughs of Akavala, judges should use similar discretion as the PCs travel through this precipitate place. Time and distance still flex and contort. From one vantage the Skull of Kong may appear to be just a mile or so away, from another, it recedes into the distance. Even faster methods of travel, such as flight, teleportation or the like, seem to be affected by the strange energies of this place, at the judge's whim. In other words, if the journey remains interesting to the players, let it continue until it is not. The Conditions and Encounter tables can assist in lengthening or shortening the tedium, as is your want. As a guideline, roll on the travel conditions and encounters table once per "active" period and

# The God-Arm



once more on the encounter table per “inactive” period — night and day being but a memory upon the damnable vermillion twilight of Akavala’s reign.

From the vantage of the boughs, the Broken Lands appear as one vast cliff face descending into the phlogiston, likely unassailable. However, once moving down the escarpment, parties find navigable paths, hidden underground passageways and even a gently sloping field here and there. The beasts that lurk here are perfectly adapted to life on the verge. Twisted brush, hardy vines and various lichens, moss and fungi cling to rock faces and cluster in cool caves. Here and there small streams pool and spill over the edge.

### BUT, I’M HUNGRY!

Characters may discover food and potable water while traveling or even when making camp for an extended rest. The going is slower while they are foraging, but if desired, any character with appropriate outdoor skills or experience may make an Intelligence check (DC 10) to find 1d3 days worth of rations, as well as a similar supply of fresh water. While in camp, the Intelligence check is DC 15. Food gathered comprise small strange creatures, fungi, and edible plants – all of which spoil 3 days after being gathered, unless you want to run a food preservation simulation...hey...it’s your game!

#### CONDITIONS AND ENCOUNTERS IN THE BROKEN LANDS OF KONG

| ROLL<br>(2d3) | TRAVEL CONDITIONS | ENCOUNTERS        | SPECIAL TRAVEL CONDITIONS  | SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS   |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 2             | Special           | Refuge            | Rocks Fall...              | Outcast Servitors    |
| 3             | Trail             | Mind-Ant Patrol   | A Slip and Maybe a Fall... | Ketlunder Sortie     |
| 4             | Normal            | No Encounter      | Supplies                   | Phylogost Scouts     |
| 5             | Rugged            | Random Beast      | Bones of the Kong          | Servitor War Party   |
| 6             | Encounter         | Special Encounter | Strange Passage            | Makog, the Last Thal |

### TRAVEL CONDITIONS

While traveling, the characters must pick paths down the steep and treacherous cliffs, all that remains of the canyon where the bones of the Kong rested when Akavala broke the world. Each day, roll on the Travel Conditions table. If a Special or Encounter result is rolled, the characters otherwise experience “normal” travel conditions.

**Normal** – Moving through the broken lands is slow and arduous. Characters move at ½ speed but encounter no particularly dangerous conditions.

**Trail** – It’s a good day! The party finds a wide trail that descends at a relatively gentle slope. Characters move at double normal travel speed.

**Rugged** — Steep switchbacks, gaps in the path, dangerous scree and the like slows the party. In addition to moving at only a ¼ speed for the day, each character must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or suffer a tumble or other minor mishap (1d6 damage). At the judge’s discretion, a natural 1 on this Reflex save may result in a more serious injury, such as a broken bone or sprain that slows progress, or even lost equipment.

### SPECIAL TRAVEL CONDITIONS

**Supplies** – Characters discover a cache of food and water (2d6 days). There is a 1 in 6 chance that other goods are found, such as backpacks, tools or mundane equipment.

**A Slip!** – Someone’s feet slides out from under them, and they careen to the edge! The character with the lowest Luck score must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or slide over the edge of a precipice, falling 1d3x10 feet and taking 1d6 damage for each 10 feet fallen. In addition, the character must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) or suffer a serious injury (judge’s discretion).

**Rockfall** – Somewhere above the party something shifts. A minor avalanche barrels down the cliffs. All in the party must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or suffer 3d6 damage. If a natural 1 is rolled on the saving throw, the character falls (as previous entry).

**Strange Passageway** – The party discovers a cave mouth leading to a gently sloping and winding tunnel. The seemingly natural corridor doubles the party’s speed for 1d3 days of travel. There is a normal chance of encounters as well as a chance to



find food and water, however, travel conditions do not change until they emerge. There is a 1 in 6 chance that the passage emerges within 1d3 days of Kong's skull.

**Bones of the Kong** – The party discovers a massive petrified bone (or piece of bone) protruding from a rubble pile, embedded into a cliff face, or the like. Those that move to within 100' of the discovery feel unnerving energy surround them – like static electricity – though it is harmless. Minute arcane runes cover the surface of any bone discovered. Spellcasters may study the runes for 1 turn to determine the nature of the spell. By sacrificing a spell (losing it for the day), the spellcaster can enact a ritual using various passages within the runes. The ritual requires one hour and with a spell check (DC 20), the bone and every living thing in a 100' radius teleports to the skull of the Kong. On a failure, the caster suffers no ill effects (clerics do not suffer an increase in deity disapproval). However, rolling a natural 1 on the spell check causes the bone to suddenly erupt from its rocky grave and shoot off toward Kong's skull. Everyone within 100' radius must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or suffer 3d6 damage from shards of rock and arcane concussion.

## ENCOUNTERS

The desolate and precarious broken lands hide creatures foul and, occasionally, fair, as well as other secrets. Each day, whether traveling or at rest, roll (or choose a result) on the Encounter table.

**Refuge** – Like those found on the boughs of Akavala, the party finds a secluded valley, a hidden cave or other site that serves as a semi-permanent shelter. With plentiful food and water nearby, the party can rest for 1d6+2 days without further encounters. When found, roll on the encounter table again to determine if the refuge is occupied (ignoring further Refuge results). In addition, there is a 1 in 6 chance that a thal artifact is discovered. Refer to the Thal Artifacts sidebar in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section for details.

**Mind Ant Patrol** – The servants of the Hive dutifully patrol the expanse of the Broken Lands of Kong, rooting out servitor invaders and other trespassers, as well as seeking out holy sites (the bones of Kong) and thal artifacts. A typical patrol comprises 3d4 mind ants. When encountered,

trespassers suffer a -1d to any Personality checks to interact with the beasts – they are especially alert and defensive when in their home territory. A patrol may (1 in 6) have 2d4 prisoners and/or (1 in 10) a thal artifact – in which case they are heading back to the skull of Kong.

See Encounters in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section for full combat statistics for the mind ant.



**Random Beast** – The creatures that live in the broken lands are hardy and agile, lurking within rockfalls and caves or leaping from cliff to cliff seeking prey. Refer to the Random Beast table in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section for generation of a random beast.

## SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

Travelers may rarely encounter servitors or others that have similarly wandered (or invaded) the broken lands.

**Outcast Servitors** – Servitor creatures freed from their slavery to Akavala sometimes find refuge in the broken lands. Those found are almost always

solitary – larger groups risk attention of the mind ants, though there is a 1 in 10 chance that 2d3 escaped servitors have gathered together in a nearby refuge. In addition, there is a 1 in 10 chance that an outcast (or group) have found a thal artifact. At the judge's discretion, outcasts may know about a nearby locale of interest (bone of Kong, strange passage, or the like) or have encountered other groups on the encounter table, recently.

**Ketlunder Sortie (2d4)** – Deep in their cups of space whiskey, groups of Ketlunders often get it into their heads that they can save Captain Boskone from his captivity. Once they sober up, the survivors generally lose heart but end up lost upon the treacherous paths through the broken lands. There is a 1 in 6 chance that a group of Ketlunders have found a refuge and a 1 in 10 chance that they've discovered a thal artifact. At the judge's discretion, these hapless groups may have discovered other locales of interest or recently encountered others in their travels.

**Phylogost Scouts (2d6)** – The ophidian phylogost roam the Broken Lands of Kong and the boughs nearest to it, hunting mind-ants and seeking artifacts of the thal to bring back to their cthoul masters. Any given group may have mind ant trophies (1 in 4), prisoners (1 in 6) or thal artifacts (1 in 10). If any of these conditions are true, they are generally harried and moving quickly to leave the broken lands. Details on the phylogost may be found in Encounters in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section.

**Servitor War Party (varies):** War parties rarely brave the treacherous conditions and unrelenting mind ants to invade the broken lands, however, when they do, they are moving to secure a thal artifact (or have already secured one – 1 in 10 chance). These groups always include one cthoul mindlord. Refer to the Servitor War Party table in Encounters in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section for details on these war parties.

**Makog, the Last Thal Ape-Scientist** – When the great Kong fell to the forces of Akavala, the thal ape-scientists built a mighty vessel and left doomed Tsaru, vowing to return with evermore mighty science to defeat the Ravenous Tree and restore the world. Ages have passed since that time and none have waited more patiently than Makog. A stooped and ashen humanoid ape, Makog wanders the

Broken Lands on a continual pilgrimage to the scattered bones of Kong. A master of stealth, the PC with the highest Luck must make a Luck check (DC 15) to even spot him when he is encountered. Otherwise, Makog observes the party for a time, shadowing their every move. If he determines they are worthy of his assistance (at the judge's discretion), Makog presents himself at a safe distance.

The ancient ape-man knows the twist of every trail, location of every refuge, and path of every mind ant upon the broken lands and is an invaluable ally – especially if the characters seek to enter the skull of Kong to rescue Boskone and/or take the Stone Pylon. Under no circumstances will he reveal the secret of the bones of Kong or disclose the location of thal artifacts.

**Makog:** Init +4; Atk disruptor stave +4 melee or ranged (1d4 + special; 30') or psionic spike +4 ranged; AC 15; HD 6d4; hp 15; MV 30', climb 20'; Act 2d20; SP mind science, stealth +10, thal artifacts (see below), immune to magical ranged attacks; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +8; AL L.

The ape-scientist wears a thal artifact – a symbiotic insectoid breastplate that adds +3 AC and protects him fully from magical ranged attacks – including *magic missile*.

Makog discovered his disruptor stave in a refuge upon the boughs of Akavala – once an enclave of the valru arachnoids. The weapon is a 6' long, 2" diameter red crystalline rod. The disruptor discharges cosmotronic energy, either as part of a melee attack or in a 30' long beam. Anyone struck with the disruptor beam must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or have one limb paralyzed for 1d4 hours (randomly determined). The stave requires Makog to sacrifice hit points (equal to the damage dealt). If the stave falls into the hands of the PCs, the bearer loses points in a randomly determined physical attribute equal to the damage dealt by the stave when used.

Makog can also use his psionic spike to directly attack an opponent's mind. This attack uses the opponent's Intelligence or Personality score as the DC (essentially mental armor class). Unless the opponent is particularly evil – such as the servitors of Akavala – Makog uses his less lethal mind science powers.

| MIND-SCIENCE OF THE THAL MAKOG |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ATTACK                         | EFFECT             | RESULTS                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Cerebral Dystrophy             | Mental Overload    | Will save (DC 14) or lose 2d3 Intelligence; If reduced to 0, victim falls unconscious until Intelligence heals naturally. Spellcasters must make a Will save (8+Int damage) or lose 1 spell, permanently. |
| Parasitic Apathy               | Indifference       | Will save (DC 15) or lose the will to fight (or do anything, really) for 2d6 rounds. Those that touch the afflicted are also overwhelmed by ennui (on a failed save).                                     |
| Perceptive Obstruction         | Targeted Blindness | Will save (DC 15) or the victim cannot see 1d3 selected objects for 1d3+3 turns. Typically Makog uses this power to confuse his enemies and escape.                                                       |
| Chimerical Sojourn             | Sleep              | Fortitude save (DC 14) or victim falls asleep for 1d3+3 turns. Character receives a vision with specific insight (judge's discretion).                                                                    |
| Enthrall                       | Charm              | Will save (DC 15) or charmed, as result 14-17 <i>charm person</i> spell.                                                                                                                                  |

## THE SKULL OF KONG

Upon the very precipice of the broken lands sits the petrified skull of Kong, like a massive rocky hillock, its empty eyes staring into oblivion.

The skull is home to the Hive, a collective intelligence composed of every manner of crawling thing. The Hive fills the two hemispheres of Kong's braincase, helixes of its collective swarm reaching out to caress the Stone Pylon in esoteric ritual.

The area around the skull for half a mile is almost clear of encounters. The mind ants never approach closer, bringing their found artifacts and slaves and waiting for the Hive to acknowledge them. As the party nears the skull, any encounter indicated is with a group of 6d6 mind ants. Each patrol holds a group of 2d6 prisoners and might (1 in 10) possess a thal artifact.

Within the half-mile "neutral zone" there is a 1 in 6 chance per hour that a detached swarm of the Hive is encountered, either moving to retrieve the mind ants' prizes (5 in 6) or returning to the skull with them (1 in 6). In either case, the Hive swarm confronts intruders, though not necessarily with violence.

**Hive Swarm:** Init +4; Atk mind science (see below); AC 17; HD 8d8; MV 40', fly 20'; Act 2d20; SP Immune to slicing and piercing weapons, half damage from blunt weapons, +1 die damage from fire, acid or other caustic attacks, smoke vulnerability; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +12; AL N.

Still mentally connected to the whole, a Hive swarm physically detaches from the collective

colony to undertake tasks for the greater Hive. Composed of millions of tiny beings – insects, reptiles, amphibians, even small mammals – the swarm can cover up to a 90' diameter spherical space and moves as a single entity, though parts of it may crawl and other parts fly. The swarm can form any appendage required of its task, bridge great gaps, and move through minute cracks and apertures by expanding and contracting, as needed. The Hive swarm eschews physical confrontation, preferring to blast opponents with various mind sciences (see the Hive Mind Sciences table). Its multitudinous form flows around most physical attacks, though it takes some damage from blunt force trauma. Particularly vulnerable to fire and caustic substances, it suffers +1 die of damage to such attacks. Smoke and gases cause the swarm to fall into confusion. Saving throws against these effects are at -1d, and if failed, cause the swarm to disperse, though the individuals return to the main Hive after a few hours.

### WHEN MINDS COLLIDE!

Two creatures attacking each other with mind science follow special rules. All attack bonuses are based either on Intelligence or Personality (whichever is better). For creatures without stated ability scores, they use their Will saving throw bonus for all attacks. For defense, the Intelligence or Personality score is used as the DC (or mental armor class). For creatures without stated ability scores, they use their Fortitude a bonus to Armor Class (10+Fortitude bonus).

| MIND-SCIENCE OF THE HIVE SWARM |          |                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ATTACK                         | EFFECT   | RESULTS                                                                                                                                            |
| Psychal Hysteria               | Fear     | Will Save (DC 18) or flee for 1d6+3 rounds.                                                                                                        |
| Ego Pollution                  | Amnesia  | Will save (DC 18) or lose all memory for 1d3+3 turns; Spellcasters must make a Will save DC 8+effect length or forget 1 random spell, permanently. |
| Spiritual Venom                | Poison   | Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer 1d3 damage per round to random physical ability for 1d3 rounds.                                                   |
| Subliminal Oppression          | Paranoia | Will save (DC 18) or convinced that allies are enemies.                                                                                            |



## SKULL OF KONG KEY

To reach the Skull of Kong's interior, characters must climb to one of three entrances. Climbing the upper mandible of the skull to the eyes (KB-1) requires a Strength or Agility check (DC 15) due the precarious nature of the skull's position at the edge of the broken lands. A failure indicates the climber falls 1d6x10 feet (1d6 damage per 10' fallen) and must make a Reflex save (DC 15) or slide off into oblivion.

Climbing to the secret entrance through the left ear canal (KB-4) is easier (DC 10), however, it is impossible to detect from the ground. The characters may have learned of its existence from the Ketlunders (rumored) or from Makog. Either way, finding the secret entrance, after climbing to the area, requires an Intelligence or Luck check (DC 15). The right ear canal is completely blocked by debris.

The passages within the skull are composed of smooth petrified stone. Unless otherwise noted, these passages soar to a cathedral-height of 60' or more.

**KB-1 The Eyes** – The eyes of the Kong appear as colossal cave openings limned with a phosphorescence visible from within 60' or so. The dim light issues from sensory appendages connected to an enslaved sentient slime that occupies both chambers. The slime appears as a thin gauze of moss-like growth until the party enters one of the openings. Once inside, the slime extrudes multi-limbed pods that attack intruders until neutralized (see below).

**Slime Pods (1d3 per round):** Init +2; Atk slime tentacles +3 melee (1d6+2); AC 14; HD 3d6; MV 0' (Reach 30'); Act up to 3d20; SP scintillating spray, mind-affecting vulnerability; SV Fort +5, Ref -4, Will +0; AL N.

Slime pods attack with their extruded tentacles, reaching up to 30' away. When fighting, they emit a phosphorescent gas that bursts into brilliant colors every 1d3 rounds. Anyone within 20' of the display must make a Reflex save (DC 13) or be dazed by the overstimulation of light. Those affected suffer a -1d to all action die and cannot see well enough to target a ranged attack (magical or mundane) beyond short range. The effects last for 1d3+2 rounds. The sentient slime (of which the pods are part) is

particularly vulnerable to mind-affecting magic – spells such as *sleep*, *charm person*, *command*, *phantasm*, and the like. It suffers a -1d to saving throws to such effects and on a failure, is neutralized for 1d3 turns.

**KB-2 The Slumbering Mystic** – The secret door to this chamber is only detectable via magical means (such as the spells *detect magic* or *detect invisible* or via a magic item).

A short, cramped passage connects to a similarly cramped multi-chambered space. In the back alcove a humanoid figure, partially covered in calcite, sits upon a short pedestal. The creature possesses a sloped, cone-like head, tiny mouth, gaunt torso and gangly limbs.

When someone approaches within 10', the figure's eyes snap open, and it attempts to make telepathic contact (Will save DC 15). If it fails, it tries with each party member in turn. Once connected, it mentally repeats "*What is the state of the vessel?*" until the receiver can answer (Intelligence check DC 8; non-telepaths must roll a d10 on the check). Any response unrelated to the "state of the vessel" causes the being to repeat the question. Related responses have the following effects:

- *Fine, Ready, Good, etc.* — The figure closes its eyes and breaks mental contact.
- *Bad, Repairs, Fuel, etc.* — The figure closes its eyes. A panel opens in the pedestal revealing a tube filled with glowing blue viscous liquid. A secret passage through the floor opens, leading to a hatch in the side of the pylon vessel.
- *I don't know, etc.* — The figure responds, "Determine the state of the vessel and return."

The transparent cylinder contains cosmotronic energy used to fuel and repair inter-phlogiston vessels. The pylon vessel (KB-7) however is in perfect working order and is fully fueled. The characters may have been directed to find cosmotronic energy by the Ketlunders. If Boskone is with the party, he immediately recognizes (and covets) the stuff.

If the being is attacked, it emits an instantaneous mental shriek that deafens (permanently) and disorients (2d4 turns) everyone within the skull of

Kong (Fortitude save DC 20). The Hive is particularly vulnerable to this onslaught. On a failed save, it dissipates for 3d4 days before reforming. Otherwise, attacks against the strange being automatically succeed. The creature has 15 hit points.

**NOTE:** The pedestal is composed of rare star material that is proof to all but the most devastating of magical or mundane attacks – with an AC 22 and 350 hp – it remains unharmed unless a single attack deals more than 15 points of damage. The pedestal can be moved, however, and is the item coveted by the Worm Queen (see the City of the God -Arm section)

The secret hatch leading to the pylon vessel (KB-7) passageway can be detected and opened with a Luck check (DC 20).

**KB-3 Prisoners** – Prisoners are kept in narrow hollowed out chambers within the petrified bone. An energy field secures the entrance, controlled by a crustacean-like control panel embedded in the wall. To deactivate the field, the user must insert a hand into a pulsating orifice within in the thing's thorax, make mental contact (DC 10) and then exert control (DC 10) (see the Thal Artifacts sidebar in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section). A natural 1 rolled on either of these checks indicates that the thing consumes the user's hand up to mid-forearm, dealing 1d6 damage and permanent Stamina damage (1d3). Smashing the "control panel" does not deactivate the field and triggers a psychic alarm that alerts the Hive to intruders.

The dungeon chambers hold several prisoners (as determined by the judge) destined to be devoured by the Hive (KB-5), their bones and viscera used to adorn the beloved Stone Pylon. Boskone, the Captain of the *Major Daison*, Ketlunder space pirate, and (incidentally) a space vampire, also resides here. His current state of un-life has confused the Hive and thus he's remained undevoured, though he is severely weakened due to an extended lack of heliosalts (the only sustenance for discerning space vampires).

**NOTE:** If any characters were captured by the mind ants, they are kept here for 1d3+1 weeks and are then devoured by the Hive. Their bones and viscera nicely decorate the Stone Pylon.

## THE SPACE VAMPIRE CAPTAIN

Boskone started his adventuring life as a phlogiston navigator on a scout ship for the Grand Dominion – a worlds-spanning Empire with far-flung colonies throughout this dimension. Fed up with his job, he jumped ship and signed on with a group of outlawed archeologists (i.e. tomb robbers). It was deep within the Pyramid of Untold Hate that he encountered Malefarious, a space vampire entombed for his many crimes against sentient species. The creature supped his soul leaving the *panecros* virus in its place. Though the virus compels his hunger for heliosalts (found in the blood of all sentient creatures), Boskone resists transferring his disease to others — keeping a supply of refined heliosalts in his cabin on the *Major Daison*. **NOTE:** The party may have a supply of heliosalts, if they've come to the skull at the behest of Bonny Charlotte (see the Ketlunder Safe Harbor section).

His only goals at the moment are to escape the clutches of the Hive, obtain cosmotronic energy to fix his phlogiston vessel and find some heliosalts to curb the hunger that threatens to consume him. He is amenable to any help the PCs can give him in any regard.

**Boskone, Space Vampire Pirate:** Init +4; Atk fists +8 melee (1d10+4) or bite +8 (1d4+4; consume life essence); AC 17; HD 5d10; hp 1 (35); MV 30' fly 50'; Act 2d20; SP Immunities, mesmerize, phase shift; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +8; AL N.

Though currently injured, Boskone is a formidable foe when healthy. In addition to his great strength and durability, he is immune to most natural forms of energy (fire, electricity, cold, etc), as well as poison, diseases, and all mundane weapons. The space vampire takes half damage from magical forms of these energies, as well as all forms of acid. Magical weapons of +1 or better, natural silver, or any blessed weapon harm him normally, in addition to the energies of thal artifacts.

In combat, the space vampire fights with any weapon, but prefers pummeling with his great fists. When an opponent is down or otherwise beaten, Boskone can bite them, consuming their life force (1d3 Stamina or 1 HD per round). Consuming life force heals the space vampire 1 HD per Stamina point or HD consumed. The space vampire's hit points cannot otherwise heal naturally or magically.



Those that meet the space vampire's eyes must make a Will save (DC 18) or fall under his command completely. When hard pressed, Boskone can phase through solid objects at his normal flying movement speed for up to 4 hours, though he must consume heliosalts before regaining the ability.

#### **A VERY HUNGRY SPACE VAMPIRE**

Currently, Boskone suffers from deprivation, and his powers are muted. His immunities remain, but his physical attacks are at -1d (attack and damage). He can neither phase nor mesmerize in his current state. The unceasing hunger also makes him unpredictable. Each day in the party's company, he must make a Will save (DC 18) or turn on them, intent on sucking heliosalts from one PC and then fleeing back to his vessel. He fights this urge to the best of his ability and shares the danger with the party. Indeed, he is also eager to find a source of cosmotronic energy. If the party possesses some, or mention that they know where to find it, Boskone receives a +4 to his saving throw.

**KB-4 The Ubiquitous Secret Way** – The secret door into the skull's ear canal is well hidden (Luck DC 15) and requires a pick locks check (DC 18) to open. The stone door may be broken open with heavy tools, but this immediately alerts the Hive to intruders.

**KB-5 The Hive** – Within the left and right hemispheres of the skull's braincase rests the Hive. Composed of billions of insectoids, reptiles, amphibians and even strange mammals, the Hive's collective consciousness seems ultimately focused on communing with the stone pylon. If it becomes aware of the PCs, the creature sends out 3d6 hive swarms to cut off escape and corral the party back to the Hive where it determines their intentions and, if necessary, exacts its punishment.

The Hive has no combat statistics. If threatened in its reverie, it sends out 1d3 hive swarms each round to attack the party, intent upon subduing them. Other than the mental attack by the calcite creature in KB-2, the greater Hive seems unaffected by mundane, mind-science or magical attacks.

**KB-6 The Stone Pylon** – A smooth dull black granite pedestal stands between the two hemispheres of Kong's skull, appearing completely out of place with the craggy, petrified bone. Most

#### **PLAYING THE HIVE**

When addressing the PCs, the hive extrudes a humanoid figure composed of millions of its progeny and speaks in a language common to the party. Though it is not immediately hostile, if the party has freed prisoners, exhibited violence against its hive swarms or are known to have entered the stone pylon, it attacks with its mind sciences, immediately.

Otherwise, it attempts to recruit the party to undertake various tasks meant to weaken or destroy servitors on the boughs near the broken lands (or within it). Details of these tasks are left up to the judge, but should entail killing cthoul, destroying cysts, and/or recovering or destroying thal artifacts. Characters could use this goodwill to bargain for Boskone's release, as well as shelter and protection for a time. The Hive has no motive other than to remain unmolested while it communes with the energies emitting from the stone pylon.

**NOTE:** The Hive has no knowledge of the secret chamber or the crawlway into the stone pylon – it merely “feels” waves of cosmotronic energy from within it. Should the characters possess cosmotronic energy (see area KB-2), the Hive would do anything to possess it.

often it crawls with the “arms” of the Hive, reaching out in communion. The pylon can be neither marked, nor broken by any known means – and such attempts would immediately alert the Hive. What is not apparent is that the pylon worshipped by the Hive is actually a phlogiston vessel buried in the skull of Kong, its control room reachable only through a secret passageway from area KB-2.

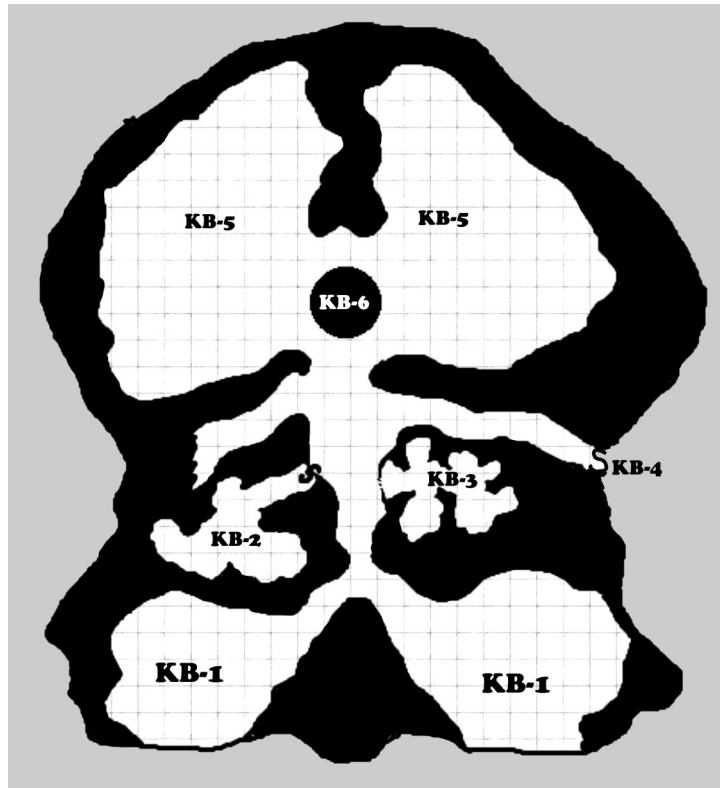
#### **THE PYLON VESSEL**

Once discovered, the side hatch to the vessel is easily opened:

*The cramped, dark chamber suddenly springs to life. Various living machines crowd the walls – strange arthropods and colorful, translucent oozes – quivering, whirring and pulsating with phosphorescence. In one corner stands a stone receptacle holding a clear tube full of bubbling pink liquid. Three reclined couches stand facing a short, stone pillar. A head-sized arthropod-ooze hybrid hangs over each couch suspended from ganglia-like cables.*

See the Stone Pylon sidebar on the next page.

# The Skull of Kong Map



## ACTIVATING THE PYLON VESSEL

The pylon vessel requires three things to operate:

- ◇ *Khara-Tum, the Heart of the Star*, which is inserted into the stone control pedestal.
- ◇ Three PCs must each pull one of the control machines onto their heads, make contact (DC 10) and exert control (DC 10) (see the Thal Artifacts sidebar in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section). Once done, one of the pilots controls the flight path, one controls the speed/acceleration, and one controls various engineering tasks such as fuel levels, damage control, and the like. Each character's consciousness is drawn into a holographic representation that provides information and controls.
- ◇ Cosmotronic Energy – The vessel is currently fueled up for approximately one week of operation.

When the characters understand the operation of the vessel, it can be powered up and launched from the Skull of Kong. See the Aftermath section for more information.

## AFTERMATH

When the characters activate the pylon vessel, it bursts from the top of Kong's petrified skull and rockets into the phlogiston.

Those watching below observe an awesome sight:

*Great plumes of dust and rock gout from the broken lands below. Large stone objects – bones...petrified bones – rocket across the land and crash into the ground near the great skull of Kong, seeming to assemble on their own. The great God-Arm, restored, floats up to attach onto the skeleton's right shoulder. After a time, the mighty skeleton stands, towering over shadowy swarms of mind ants fanning out in all directions. Reaching down, the skeleton rips the petrified skull from its perch and sets it home. The great Kong looks up, its hollow eyes burning with rage, and roars – the sound heard even through the skin of the pylon vessel. Around him, the stones of the broken lands fracture in zigzagging rifts and fissures and then begin sliding off into oblivion. The Kong, unconcerned, leaps away, catching one of the snaking boughs of Akavala, brachiating off into the distance.*

# THE RED JUNGLE

*The monotony of descending and climbing the great rifts in the surface of the Ravenous Tree suddenly give way, revealing a miles-wide marshy jungle far below. The red leaves of the jungle trees seem to hiss and moan in the damp miasma. Far away, near the center of the jungle, a gleaming beacon stands on a bare hill. A temple or shrine, perhaps? But, only death lurks down there among the red leaves.*

The Red Jungle is the demesne of the fhyrians, called cannibal tiger-women by some (though not in their hearing) and feared even among the servitors for their ferocity. Mounted upon their battlecats, an ambush of fhyrians in full charge is an unassailable force. However, within the Red Jungle, they creep and stalk, hunting intruders and patrolling their borders against servitor incursions.

The Red Jungle is a shattered isle protected from the final breaking of Tsaru by the Temple of the Immortal Shifu, a god said to have descended as Akavala's strength grew unbounded upon the world. The Immortal Shifu united many of the peoples – fhyrian, thal, and others lost to the apocalypse – and was there for the final battle when Akavala broke the back of the collective army, destroyed the thal's great Kong and hurtled on toward Tsaru's doom. In the final battle, the Immortal Shifu was turned to stone and cast into the multiverse by a

coven of cthoul wielding a powerful artifact called *Havoc*, a golden baton that once held *Khara-Tum*, the Heart of the Star. In the ensuing chaos, *Havoc* was believed lost within the marshes of the Red Jungle – the servitors seek it, believing it to be the only weapon that can destroy the defenses of the Temple of the Immortal Shifu.

## SLOGGING THE RED JUNGLE

Beneath the wine-dark canopy of the jungle, travel is nightmarish and slow. Each “day,” roll on the Travel Conditions table. Encounter checks should be considered every few hours, while traveling or attempting to rest within the Red Jungle.

### WHAT BRINGS US TO THIS HELLISH PLACE?

The characters may be drawn to the Red Jungle for several reasons. Judges may choose to start the party here when they arrive. They could be in the company of allied fhyrians met on the boughs of Akavala, or they could be prisoners of the tiger-women. They may have wandered here and sought shelter under the blood-red leaves of the jungle. Finally, they may have heard rumors of *Havoc*, and its powers of control over dimensional portals. If in the company of fhyrians, refer directly to the Fhyrian Clanmoot section. Otherwise, refer to Slogging the Red Jungle.

CONDITIONS AND ENCOUNTERS IN THE RED JUNGLE

| ROLL<br>(2d3) | TRAVEL CONDITIONS | ENCOUNTERS        | SPECIAL TRAVEL CONDITIONS | SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS    |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2             | Special           | Refuge            | Tar Pits                  | Battlecats            |
| 3             | Game Trail        | Fhyrian Ambush    | Corpses                   | Princess Death Face   |
| 4             | Normal            | No Encounter      | Supplies                  | Nanoceph Trackers     |
| 5             | Morass            | Random Beast      | The Mighty River          | Servitor War Party    |
| 6             | Encounter         | Special Encounter | Impassable                | Threst, Valru Outcast |

## TRAVEL CONDITIONS

**Normal** – Dense undergrowth clings to legs and marshy undergrowth sucks the life out of every step. Those with special skill at survival may make an Intelligence check (DC 15) every half-day to quicken the party's pace, but failures land the group in a hopeless mire, necessitating backtracking to firmer ground. Overall, the party moves at ½ speed but encounter no particularly dangerous conditions.

**Game Trail** – Creatures move through this area with some regularity – perhaps to lush feeding grounds or a freshwater stream. The trail heads in a direction desirable and seems to avoid bogs and other hazards. Characters move at normal travel speed, however, such trails are often patrolled by hunters. Double the frequency for encounter checks for the day.

**Morass** – The party wanders into a particularly boggy area with no apparent path to firmer ground.

Those with survival skills may make an Intelligence check (DC 18) to avoid the worst of it. On a failure, each character must make a Strength check (DC 10) or slip into an unseen bog. Each round thereafter, the victim must make a Fortitude save (DC 9+1 per round) or drown. Characters are not able to save themselves – they must be dragged out by another character. Otherwise, the party makes scant progress for the day and cannot naturally heal – no solace from the jungle is found.

## SPECIAL TRAVEL CONDITIONS

**Tar Pits** – Dotting the undergrowth of the Red Jungle, lurk great pits of steaming tar. The character with the lowest Luck score must make a Luck check or become hopelessly mired. There is a 1 in 6 chance that some other creature is likewise mired or waits nearby for an easy meal. The tar deals 1d4 damage per round (due to intense heat) and requires 25 Strength points to successfully extricate mired characters. **NOTE:** Without rope, vines or other equipment, those that attempt to rescue a mired character take 1d4 damage per round and must make an Agility check (DC 15) or become mired themselves.

**Corpse** – The party comes across a fresh corpse of a traveler or native creature. Roll or choose one from the encounter table. **NOTE:** Party members bearing equipment or weapons belonging to dead fhyrians suffer a -1d to Personality checks when dealing with the tiger-women.

**Supplies** – A cache of dried food, gourds full of fresh water, or other supplies are found. There is a 1 in 6 chance that this cache is found within a refuge (see that entry).

**The River** – A mighty river runs through the Red Jungle, originating at the Temple of the Immortal Shifu and draining off the shattered isle into the phlogiston. Following the river doubles the frequency of encounter checks, but, should the characters construct a raft or other watercraft, they enjoy double their normal movement. Should they happen to head toward the terminal end of the river, they'll get quite a surprise.

**Impassable** – A deep ravine, broad swamp, or other natural obstacle prevents progress for the day. Double the chance of an encounter while in this area.

## ENCOUNTERS

Native wildlife is almost always hostile – seeking to eat or escape from anything encountered. Those not native to the Red Jungle are likely attempting to leave the place as soon as possible. Very rarely, the cthoul dispatch small war parties or groups of nanoceph trackers on very specific missions. None of these servitors last long under the wine-dark canopy of the Red Jungle.

**Refuge** – Like those found on the boughs of Akavala, the party finds a rare cave, dilapidated platforms in the trees or another protected site that serves as semi-permanent shelter. With plentiful food and water nearby, the party can rest for 1d6+2 days without further encounters. When found, roll on the encounter table again to determine if the refuge is occupied (ignoring further Refuge results). In addition, there is a 1 in 10 chance that a thal artifact is discovered. Refer to the Thal Artifacts sidebar in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section for details.

**Fhyrian Ambush (2d6)** – The tiger-women live in familial groups of 3d6 members called ambushes. When not called to a clanmoot, ambushes of fhyrians wander the Red Jungle seeking invaders, signs of the inevitable return of the Immortal Shifu or are simply camped and at their ease. These groups are always mounted on battle-cats. Fhyrians have strange names describing their natures, their accomplishments or their proudest abilities. (Examples: Stalker in the Red Night, Eyes Afire, Roaring Throat, and Drinker of Her Enemies' Blood)

**Battlecats (armored – 1 per fhyrian, or unarmored -- 2d4)** – Battlecats in the company of fhyrians are armored and serve as war mounts. If encountered in the wild, the beasts are unarmored and highly aggressive.

**NOTE:** See the fhyrian and battlecat entries earlier in this adventure for more detailed combat statistics.

**Random Beast** -- The creatures that live in the Red Jungle specialize in camouflage and ambush attacks. Most are insectoid or reptilian, though a fair number of carnivorous plants may be encountered. Refer to the Random Beast table in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section for generation of a random beast.

**Nanoceph Trackers (3d4)** – Small parties of nanoceph brave the boundaries of the Red Jungle, hunting their arch-enemies – the fhyrians. There is a 1 in 6 chance that a group of nanoceph also have a slithering horror in their party.

**NOTE:** See the nanoceph and slithering horror entries earlier in this adventure for more detailed combat statistics.

**Servitor War Party (varies)** — War parties rarely enter the bounds of the Red Jungle. When found, they move to secure a thal artifact (or have already found one – 1 in 10 chance). These groups always include nanoceph scouts and one cthoul mindlord. Refer to the Servitor War Party table in Encounters in the Boughs of the Ravenous Tree section for details on these war parties.

**Threst, the Valru Outcast** – The valru arachnoids wander the length and breadth of Akavala seeking enlightenment or on esoteric missions for the Wizeden Ones. Threst was one of these wanderers, but became obsessed with finding *Havoc*, the cthoul artifact that killed the Kong and broke the will of Tsaru's collected armies. If encountered, Threst travels through the jungle canopy and, curious, shadows the party for a time. If he determines that they are worthy (judge's discretion), he presents himself at a safe distance to parley. If made friendly, the outcast spider-man implores the party to assist him in finding *Havoc*, sharing the lore of the artifact to entice them to action. Threst is known to the fhyrians, and though they find his obsession to be foolhardy, often invite him to their clanmoots.

**Threst, Valru Outcast:** Init +3; Atk claws +5 melee (1d6) or by weapon +5 melee or ranged; AC 14; HD 4d8; hp: 21; MV 30', climb 30'; Act 4d20; SP spells, +1d when fighting servitors; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2; AL N. See the valru entry earlier in this adventure.

**Princess Death Face** – The heir to clan leadership, Princess Death Face travels the jungle with her ambush hunting servitors and other interlopers to the fhyrian domain. In addition to the princess and her battlecat, four tiger-women ride with her, also mounted and ready for war. When encountered, ambush Death Face approaches the party aggressively, but can be treated with. If made



neutral, the princess warns the party away from the Red Jungle, forcibly escorting them to its borders if necessary. Made friendly, the fhyrians reluctantly escort the party to the clanmoot, grumbling about missing out on servitor blood.

**Ambush Death Face, Fhyrian Ambush:** (Stalker in the Red Night, Eyes Afire, Roaring Throat, and Drinker of Her Enemies' Blood) (4): hp 20x3, 19

**Princess Death Face, Fhyrian Tiger-Princess:** Init +4; Atk bronze-tipped spear +5 melee (1d7+2) or bronze sword +5 melee (1d7+2) or javelin +4 missile fire (1d6+2, 30/60/90) or claws and bite +6 melee (1d3+2/1d4+2); AC 15 (12); HD 4d8+3; hp 26; MV 40'; Act 1d20 or 3d16 (claws and bite); SP Hide and move silently +6; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +0; AL L.

**Battlecats (5):** hp 32, 30, 37, 31

**NOTE:** See the fhyrian and battlecat entries earlier in this adventure.

## FHYRIAN CLANMOOT

Though the fhyrian ambushes spend most of their time patrolling the Red Jungle, they all gather each fortnight at the Temple of the Immortal Shifu. The ambushes answer to a single clan matron, Her Roars Topple the Enemy. She is supported by her daughter, Princess Death Face, and the clan seer, Whispering Death.

If the characters come to the Temple of the Immortal Shifu, either escorted by the fhyrians (as guests or prisoners) or somehow reach the temple undetected by the fhyrians, they are immediately brought before Her Roars, who resides on the temple hill.

### THE CLAN MATRON

Her Roars is a hoary fhyrian, her grey-white fur crisscrossed with battle scars. Her age has not dampened her ferocity – she is still a savage, competent leader – and a patient one, for a tiger-woman.

The matron and her seer question the party closely about their presence within the Red Jungle, their alliances and the method of their arrival. Both know much of the nearby regions – including both the Broken Land of Kong and the City of the God-Arm. Both have fought and parleyed with the various inhabitants of those shattered isles, as well as the Ketlunders and valru mystics.

Should the characters play this encounter intelligently, they may gain the grudging trust of the fhyrians.

### THE THREE TESTS OF THE SHIFU

The Three Tests of Shifu have long been used as a ritual of passage for young tiger-women to become full members of an ambush. The strange thing about the Three Tests of Shifu is that, though the fhyrians know the names of each test, only two have ever been discovered. It is this third test, The Test of Deception, that Whispering Death believes the outwalkers will discover and unwind, revealing the true coming of the Shifu.

The fhyrians allow the characters to prepare, rest, recover spells and the like, but the clan matron becomes impatient if they linger beyond a hunt or two (how else do you measure time in a land of eternal twilight?).

### DEALING WITH THE CLAN

The fhyrians believe that the Immortal Shifu, a savior defeated by Akavala, is set to return, leading a final assault against Akavala and restoration of Tsaru to its past glory. The tiger-women are quite mad. However, this could work to the characters' advantage. Should the party shift the fhyrian attitude to friendly, Whispering Death becomes convinced that they are champions of the Shifu, drawn to shattered Tsaru to herald his return (see the Interaction with the Natives sidebar in the Crawling the Broken World section). If this occurs, the ambushes demand that the newcomers be given the Three Tests of the Shifu.

It is possible that the party bears *Khara-Tum* – meaning they could also arrive to the Red Jungle piloting the pylon vessel (from the Broken Lands of Kong) or aboard the *Major Daison* in the company of the Ketlunders. These events solidify the fhyrian's belief that the characters are heralds to the Immortal Shifu and implore them to take the Three Tests.

Finally, they may have learned from Threst that *Havoc* resides within the temple. And the only way in is to take the Three Tests.

So, there you have it. Not a railroad at all. Just a system of rails all leading to the same place.

Asking among the fhyrians, each character can pick up one rumor concerning the tests with a DC 15 Personality check. Judges should determine if their party might need hints, prodding or a clue-by-four to assist them in the coming tests. None believe that *Havoc* resides within the temple — this is just the ravings of the mad valru, Threst.

### THE RITUAL OF BEGINNING

The clan assembles when the party is ready, and Whispering Death recites the *Lurk of Our Clan*, an epic poem that describes the distant history of the fhyrians, through the sprouting and takeover of Akavala, the coming of the Shifu who bore *Khara-Tum*, atop the golden baton *Havoc*, and the doomed war that led to his defeat and disappearance. The final lines describe the breaking of Tsaru and the forming of the shattered isles – all that remains of a once rich, teeming world (see Adventure Background).



## THE TEST OF FANGS AND CLAWS

The characters gather beside the wall of the temple; the clanmoot arrayed behind them.

*Standing so close to the Temple of the Immortal Shifu, you can barely perceive the top of the towering structure. The golden walls crawl with carved figures, some as small as insects and others warring giants, dragons, and all manner of chimerical beasts and humanoids. Whispering Death approaches the wall and reaches her hand out to touch a tall humanoid figure, a woman with the head of a saber-toothed cat. The seer recites a brief ritual in an ancient language.\**

*The figure shimmers with a greenish light and then steps from the wall. After a beat, she speaks: "The champions are chosen, and the battle is joined."*

*With a second flash, this time of golden light, you find yourselves in a ruined and deserted arena deep in the Red Jungle. Vines and leaves clutter the rotted stone terraces that encircle the place, and the red-leafed canopy blots out the twilight sky. The white sand floor of the arena, however, is clear and clean. The golden, lion-headed humanoid stands at one end of the arena, her claws now bared. The suffuse light of the jungle shimmers around her and duplicates begin to emerge. They roar in unison and charge.*

\* Those that speak elven recognize the cadence and can infer some of the meanings. A *comprehend languages* spell cast at the 20-23 result or above reveals the words of the ritual:

*In battle we are tested. In war we are clarified. By our own claws and fangs, let the Ravenous Tree be devoured upon itself.*

The characters appear in the arena with their armor and clothing. Weapons, magical items and other equipment are missing. Claw weapons, enough for two per character, lie in the sand and may be quickly fitted over the hands (1d4 damage; as dagger for weapon proficiency).

**Golden Humanoid (1 per PC):** Init +4; Atk claws +4 melee (1d6) and bite +4 melee (1d6+2); AC 16; HD 2d10+4; hp 18 each; MV 40'; Act 2d16; SP Immune to critical hits, all saving throws versus magic +2d, immune to mind-influencing spells and mind sciences; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +10; AL L.

The golden humanoids generally circle their prey, attempting to strike at more vulnerable members first. Otherwise, they wield their claws and bite with singular ferocity.

## AFTERMATH

If the humanoids are defeated, all dissolves in golden light, and the party returns to the clanmoot as if no time had passed. The golden humanoid figure has returned to the temple wall bearing new scars from her recent combat.

Each character that slew a golden humanoid (reduced it to 0 hit points) with nothing but their own skills and prowess, including magic and the like, receives a battlecat of their own and honorary membership into the fhyrian clan. The cats wander in from the jungle over the next day and bond with their new masters.

If the party is defeated, their bodies return and each may attempt a recover the body check.

## CLUE TO THE SECRET TEST

During the combat, characters may detect that one of the golden humanoids is slightly different (Luck check): Upon its brow is carved the faint mark readable only by thieves with a successful Read Languages check. It means simply *Shadow* (see area TC-1 for more information).

## THE TEST OF HEART AND FAITH

The second test comes to the party after some time. Kind judges might wait until the group recovers from the fight with the golden humanoids.

*The ambushes gather and again Whispering Death approaches the golden temple, circling to a graven image of a simple peasant woman rolling out dough. She touches the figure and recites a short ritual. Upon completion the figure slides away revealing a staircase down into darkness.*

Like the previous ritual, the language seems to be some progenitor of the elven tongue to those that speak it. A *comprehend languages* spell cast at the 20-23 result or above reveals the words of the ritual:

*Our faith is tested by the Immortal One who passed from this world to find our heart. The shadow lurks at our borders and the Enemy cries.*

If the characters choose to enter the stairway, proceed to area TC-1. If they refuse, the fhryrians' attitudes immediately shift to hostile. Though they do not attack, Her Roars assigns her daughter's ambush to the party, and they are escorted from the Red Jungle to one of the nearby boughs and told to never return.

**TC-1 – The Choice of Faith or Heart** — *The stairs end in a 10' wide hallway. A cool breeze flows from the chamber ahead and a low rumbling is heard.*

When the characters enter the room:

*The far wall of this room large room is breached, falling away into a chasm. To right and left stand black stone doors. Writings and images are carved into the walls rising 20' above to a cathedral arch.*

The writings espouse various devotions and describe rituals associated with a multi-formed god. Strangely, some aspects of this god are familiar to clerics and wizards of the party. They may make an Intelligence check (DC 12) to piece together a clue from the writings – the effort takes 1d3 turns. On a failure, the clue is pieced together, but takes an additional 1d3 turns: *Of faith, the deity demands of the devoted. Of heart, the voice of the devoted compels the laity.*

Thieves, using their read languages ability (DC 12), can discern another message among the writings: *By shadow and cunning, faith may be subverted. Beyond is the true reward of the believer.*

Carved into each black door are single indecipherable runes. Only a *comprehend languages* spell discerns their meaning: The left door reads *Faith*, while the right door is carved with *Heart*. Thieves examining the left door also notice a second rune — the selfsame mark found on the golden humanoid in the first test — with a successful Find Traps check (DC 12)

A cleric can open the left door by simply touching it, however, their deity disapproval range immediately increases to 10. To open the right door, the cleric must successfully cast *word of command* at the door.

**NOTE:** Casting *word of command*, or any other significant noise in this room awakens the stone beast lurking in the chasm (area TC-1a).

**TC-1a – The Chasm** — The chasm breaches the far wall, dropping 30' down to a natural passage – where lairs the stone beast.

**Stone Beast (1):** Init –2; Atk +4 Fists (1d8+3); AC 18; HD 5d12; hp: 44; MV 20; Act 2d20; SV Fort +6, Ref –2, Will +2; SP Non-magical weapons used against the stone creature have a 50% chance of breaking if damage is dealt. On a critical hit or fumble, the weapon automatically breaks.

Composed of loosely connected rocks, the stone beast's eyes blaze an unholy blue as it rumbles toward its foes. When destroyed, its stones collapse revealing a handful of blue-green gemstones (250 gp).

A hidden ledge 20' above the floor (Luck check to notice) leads along the left wall, but ends after 30'. This ledge becomes the only means of escape from area TC-2, should the characters trigger the trap there.

At the back of the stone beast's lair, a second cliff drops 60' to a raging underground river. This river emerges from the hill on which the Temple of the Immortal Shifu stands.

**Area TC-1b – The Test of Faith** — *This wide, domed passage ends in a curved wall painted with indecipherable iconography. A tall white stone statue depicting a hunched and twisted creature stands in this space. A gleaming golden replica of the Temple of the Immortal Shifu sits on the statue's head.*

If any character other than a cleric enters this room, a booming voice directs the character to leave while the black stone door begins to slowly close. After 3 rounds, the black door seals and cannot be opened or broken by any means.

**NOTE:** Thieves may sneak into this room by making a successful sneak silently check. Halflings, similarly, may enter with a successful sneak & hide check (DC 15).

The statue recounts in a mellifluous voice a moral dilemma: A priest in a country far away ministered to villages in the countryside. One day, a group of five villagers arrived at the temple, each suffering from the Red Death – a virulent disease that is always fatal. The priest possesses the only cure, a concoction of rare herbs, however, she only has five doses – and now she has been exposed. Does she allow a villager to die, so that she may live?

There is no right or wrong answer to this dilemma – however, should a cleric answer against their own faith (judge’s discretion), all party members must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or be struck with the Red Death. The disease is fatal in 1d6 rounds – though the cleric may use lay on hands to cure the disease, as normal. **NOTE:** Should the party have more than one cleric, only one may attempt to cure the disease – attempts by other means fail, automatically.

If the statue feels that the cleric answered from their faith, the character becomes a Chosen of the Shifu (see sidebar).

The secret door may be detected with a concentrated search (at least 1 turn) and a successful Luck check – however, unless the searcher has successfully evaded the statue’s detection, the door to this chamber begins closing (as above) sealing anyone left inside for all eternity. The secret door is locked (DC 15) and trapped (DC 15) with a magical bell that immediately alerts the statue to the attempted ruse.

**NOTE:** If the secret door is opened without triggering the trap, the statue falls inert.

### CHOSEN OF THE SHIFU

The Chosen of the Shifu receives the following:

- +1 Luck (permanent)
- A faint brand in the shape of the Temple of the Immortal Shifu appears in a prominent place. The brand glows bright green within 100’ of the servitors of Akavala. Servitors target the character in any combat situation, typically for subdual and capture.
- Only the Chosen of the Shifu may safely hold *Havoc* with *Khara-Tum* attached.

**TC-2 – The Test of Heart** — *A winding passage slopes down to a long, domed chamber with a wide alcove on the far side. A low pedestal composed of black glass stands in the center of the room holding a black glass bowl. Within the bowl are hundreds of small green gemstones.*

If a single gemstone is taken from the bowl, a stone wall drops over the entrance and the room begins to rotate counter-clockwise, causing the walls and

ceiling to break apart (detected as a trap, DC 18, but cannot be disabled). Those within must make a Reflex save (DC 9+1 per round) each round or be struck by falling debris (2d6 damage). With a successful Intelligence check (DC 9), a PC can determine that the alcove on the far side of the room appears to be the safest. Sheltering here requires a Reflex save every *other* round to avoid falling debris. After 1d4+2 rounds, this alcove is positioned against the secret ledge in area TC-1a. A small exit, 10’ up the wall, aligns to this ledge, but the exit can only be detected with a Luck check. The room collapses completely 1d3+1 rounds after the room stops rotating, killing everyone left inside.

**TC-3 – The Test of Cunning and Shadow** — *An alcove extends into right wall of this large square chamber. Four doors stand in the far wall, each with a complex and unique lock.*

Each of the four doors is locked (from bottom to top: DC 15, DC 10, DC 10, DC 18). The two center doors are also trapped (DC 15 to detect and disable – see below).

A short message is written behind each door – readable by a thief with a read languages check.

**Door 1:** *Recite with me in hidden speech...*

**Door 2:** *You should have brought a coat!*  
**(Icy Blast Trap:** 10’ long cone; 4d4 freezing damage; Fort DC 15 for half damage.)

**Door 3:** *Goodbye!*  
**(Teleport Trap:** The subject is teleported to area TC-3a.)

**Door 4:** *...the waghalter’s prayer for long life, good luck, and great fortune.*

For each line of the waghalter’s prayer that the player can invent, spoken in Thieves’ Cant, one of the locks on the trap door (area TC-3b) audibly unlocks.

The secret door to area TC-3a can only be opened from this room – if found with a successful Luck check and a concentrated search. If the passage is entered, the door slams shut.

**TC-3a Bees** — At the back of this short passage stands a statue depicting a beautiful maiden.

When someone stands before the statue, it utters a riddle: Golden treasures I contain; Greedily, my soldiers guard. Kept in a labyrinth where no man

walks; Yet they steal it with smoke and masks. All I'm left is to build my treasure anew. (*Beehive*)

If the riddle is answered correctly, a swarm of bees boils out of the statue's mouth.

**Bee Swarm:** Init +3; Atk Stings (automatic; 1d3/round + poison); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 16; MV N/A; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; SP Poison: Lose 1 STA each round (Fort DC 9+1 per round attacked); Smoke calms the swarm after one round, though it quickly fills this small passage, necessitating a Fort save (DC 9+1 per round). On a failure, the victim falls unconscious, and loses 1d3 STA per round until removed from the area or dead.

**TC-3b Secret Passage** — The trap door is easily detected if searcher's specify they are searching the ceiling, however, four iron bars secure the door and are only removable via the waghalter's prayer in area TC-3.

Beyond is a narrow, 3' tall passage and a second hidden trap door (DC 17). The first person in line triggers the trap door, falling into area TC-4 (6d6 damage), unless precautions are taken.

**NOTE:** Movement for any characters larger than a halfling is at ¼ speed (crawling) and single-file.

**TC-4 Havoc** — *This large, vaulted chamber holds the massive exoskeleton husk of a dead, wyrm-like creature. Diaphanous wings lie detached from the body, as does the husks of various legs, antenna, feelers and other strange appendages. A golden rod, about 4' long, pierces the detached bug-like skull of the creature. Golden coins, bejeweled trinkets and other offerings lie heaped under the body.*

The secret passage enters the room 60' up the wall.

**Judge's Note:** Determine your rules for climbing under duress. Once Xolzin begins to animate, characters are likely going to try to leave at best speed. If they haven't prepared a way out (i.e. securing a rope, ready *fly* or *levitate* spells, etc.), this room could turn into a death trap.

The tomb of the Shifu's mount, Xolzin, is also the final resting place of *Havoc*, a divine artifact of great power. The creature – an insectoid dragon-like thing – merely lies dormant. If *Havoc* or any items under its body are removed, it begins to animate.

Each round after animating, Xolzin's exoskeleton begins to knit together, gaining one new attack per

round (claws, bite, wings, and then breath weapon). During the process, the undead Xolzin takes half damage from slashing or piercing weapons and is immune to fire, cold and other energy attacks (magical or mundane) as well as poisons, and mind-controlling spells. With a successful Mighty Deed, an attacking appendage may be knocked free from the beast, requiring another round for that attack to be available. Its attacks reach anyone within the room, though it can blast its breath weapon into the secret passage.

**NOTE:** If the characters attack the dormant body, bashing it to dust, even that coalesces into a vengeful bug...dragon...thing.

Fully assembled, the creature bursts through the ceiling of the chamber triggering a complete collapse (Ref DC 10+1 per round; 2d6+1d6 per round damage).

**Xolzin, Undead Assembling Bug...Dragon...Thing:** Init +11; Atk claw (x4) +12 melee (1d8); bite +12 melee (1d12); wing buffet +12 melee (2d12); AC 21; HD 11d12 (94 hp); MV 0'; Act 6d20\* SP see below; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +11; AI N.

**Breath Weapon (50% chance per round; 3/day):** Type (Electric); Save (Ref 21); Damage (As Xolzin's hit points or half with save); Shape (Line; Strikes any in the line).

**Special:** Fear (DC 20); Magic resistance (spells 50% failure); Immune to poison, mind-control spells, fire, cold and other energy attacks (magical or mundane); half damage from slashing or piercing weapons;

**NOTE:** Xolzin, once whole again, may move through the phlogiston between worlds. Any that ride on its back (such as the bearer of *Havoc* and *Khara-Tum*) are immune to the destructive effects of that place. Further adventures are left to the imagination of the judge, though Xolzin's first order of business is to find its lost master, the Immortal Shifu.

The room contains about 10,000 gp in coins, jewelry, and other valuable items, though the weight likely makes removing it from here impossible once Xolzin begins to attack.

## HAVOC AND KHARA-TUM

*Havoc*, the golden baton of the Immortal Shifu, possesses massive power meant to combat the Ravenous Tree and any that threaten the world of

Tsaru. Unfortunately, that power is muted without *Khara-Tum* mounted on the baton's head.

**NOTE:** Any spellchecks made with *Havoc* receive a +10 bonus in addition to the character's level and Personality bonus. The caster may spellburn on any required spellcheck. Those not *Chosen by the Shifu* must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) each time *Havoc* is used. On a failure, the subject loses 1d6 Stamina, permanently, though the lost Stamina adds to the next attack and damage rolls or the spell check – whichever is applicable.

#### **Powers of *Havoc*:**

- +4 attack; 1d10+4 damage; deals 3d6+4 damage to servitors of Akavala on a successful hit.
- *Fly* (at will; +10 spell check)
- *Protection from Evil* (constant; spell result 30-31)

#### **With *Khara-Tum* Attached:**

- *Magic Shield* (at will; +10 spell check)
- *Magic Bulwark* (3/day; +10 spell check);  
**NOTE:** This effect also foils attempted attacks via any mind science.
- *Bolt from the Blue* (3/day; +10 spell check)
- *Planar Step* (3/day; +10 spell check)
- Call Xolzin (at will; Summons Xolzin to the bearer's service)

If ever *Havoc* is removed from this dimension, the artifact separates from *Khara-Tum* and both fly through the variegated universes searching for their true master – the Immortal Shifu.

## **AFTERMATH**

If the characters successfully leave the temple, the fhryrians accept the party as their own. Battlecats emerge from the jungle over several days, each bonding with a different PC. They are honorary clan members for life.

Otherwise, results vary based on the party's triumphs:

**Chosen of the Shifu** – The character is worshipped as a near-god. The clan matron and seer take direction from this character

without question – though orders that go against the clan's aims (i.e. destruction of Akavala, restoration of the Immortal Shifu, etc) eventually cause them to rebel.

**Bearing *Havoc*** – With or without *Khara-Tum* attached, the very ground begins to quake when *Havoc* is brought out of the temple. Great fissures snake out from the clanmoot hill and over the next hour, the temple first begins to rise – and then from the ground bursts the bestial head of the guardian of the Shifu – a gargantuan beast that claws its way free and lumbers off to do battle with Akavala and her servitors.

Once the guardian is free, the Red Jungle begins to implode. The characters have just enough time to reach one of Akavala's boughs before the shattered isle dissolves into the phlogiston. Should they possess the pylon vessel or have joined the crew of the Ketlunder vessel *Major Daison*, it is a simple matter of flying away into the vermillion twilight of the unknown.

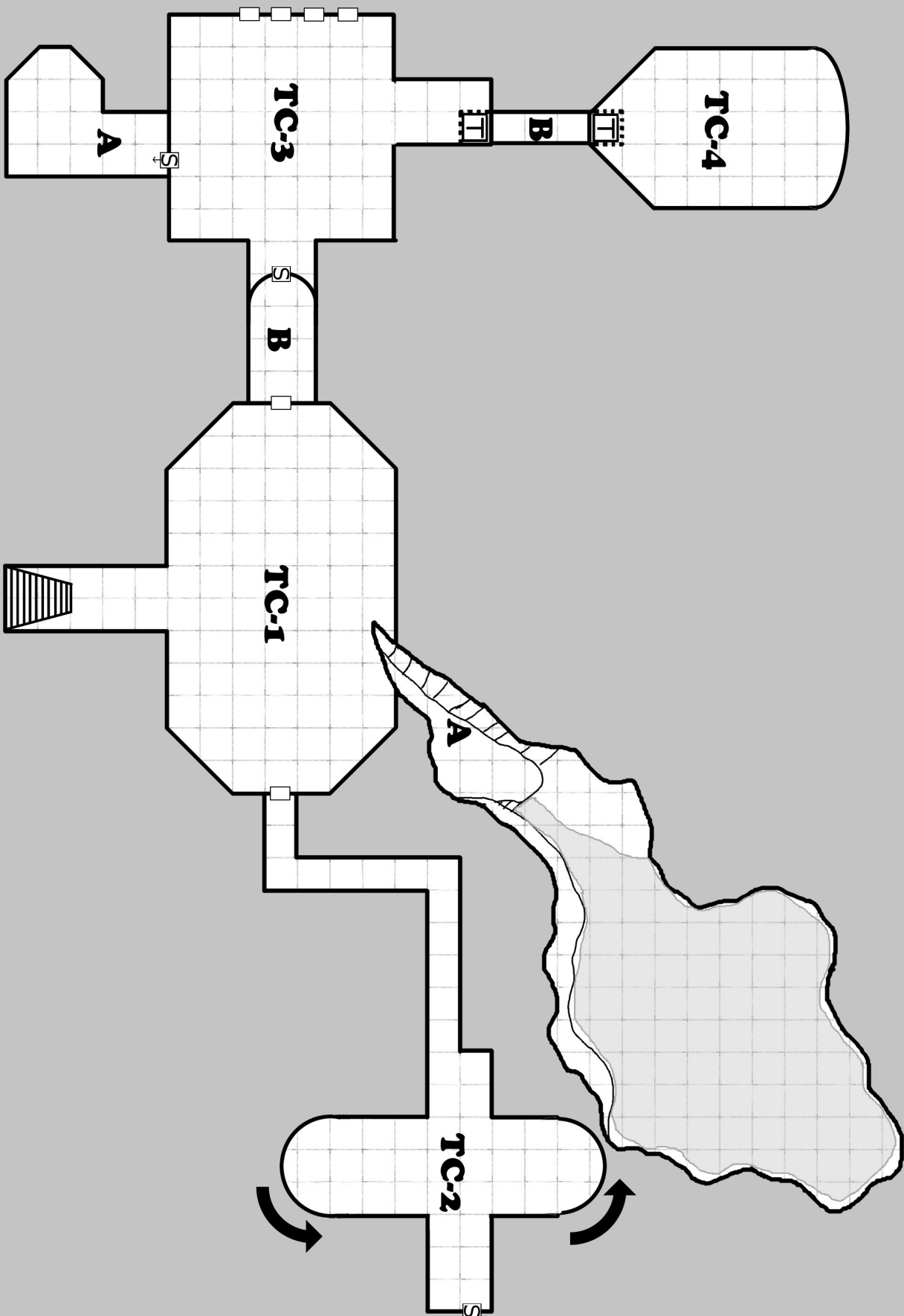
If the characters have likewise freed the Kong from its resting place, these great kaiju are variously seen smashing into the boughs of the Ravenous Tree and digging into its heart, bent on its destruction.

*Fin.*





# Test of Faith, Heart and Shadow Map





the tower of the bat on the bluffs above the forest of transgression, currently occupied by the sorcerer qalakros and his forces of evil.



SIRE!  
YOUR SPY BAT'S RETURN BEARING  
ILL TIDINGS!

WHAT?  
YOU MUST  
BE JOKING!  
ENTER!

PARTY OF THE  
DAMNED

FORGIVE ME SIRE, BUT YOUR BARBARIAN CHAMPION  
HAZMAX THE IMPALER HAS FALLEN IN SINGLE COMBAT  
WITH THE WITCH QUEEN OF THE BEWILDERLANDS!



AND WHAT  
OF HER UNHOLY  
UTILITY BELT?

STILL  
SNUGLY ABOUT HER WAIST,  
YOUR MAGNIFICENCE.



WRONG ANSWER!

FROOOOM!

several underlings later...



I NEED MORE BARBARIANS!  
GO! TAKE MY FLYING CARPET AND  
THIS AMULET OF COMMAND! DO NOT  
RETURN UNTIL YOU HAVE SECURED  
ME A NEW CHAMPION!

BUT EXCELLENCY,  
YOUR MANY BRILLIANT  
SCHEMES HAVE DEPLETED  
THE LOCAL CLANS...

SILENCE  
AND BEGONE!

and so the underling  
departs, scouring the realm  
for one of mighty thews, with  
reflexes like a jungle cat,  
both fearless and  
ferocious...



a fortnight  
later...



AND SO!  
MY UNDERLING HAS  
RETURNED...



HE **MUST** HAVE  
SUCCEEDED ADMIRABLY...  
ELSE HE WOULD **NOT** HAVE  
RETURNED **AT ALL**.  
I FULLY EXPECT TO  
BE **DAZZLED!**

SIRE! THE PICKINGS WERE SLIM! I WAS FORCED TO CHOOSE QUANTITY OVER QUALITY. BUT  
PERHAPS WHERE A SINGLE BARBARIAN FAILED...



I'M NO  
BARBARIAN.

ME NEITHER!

POINK!

GUARDS! EXECUTE THIS  
UNDERLING AT ONCE!

next:  
the  
funnel begins



## WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

D.A.M.N. is a resource by and for the DCC RPG community, and we want your input, your content, and your creativity to be front and center. Read the submission guidelines below and consider helping us make this resource the best that community has to offer.

### WHAT DO WE NEED?

We're looking to feature game content of any kind in the DCC RPG milieu. Have a spell? Monster? Patron? Set-piece encounter? Short adventure? Send over your **concept** and **expected word count**. Keep in mind that we're looking for relatively short pieces—generally less than 3,000 words, and most much shorter. Unsolicited submissions will be reviewed, and you will hear back quickly whether what you have is what we need for an upcoming issue.

**We also need art** - we most often request specific art, so if you're an artist, send over a link to your portfolio and your contact info. Understand that we have a fairly aggressive schedule for the magazine, so timelines are generally pretty short (about a month to deliver art pieces requested). Our biggest need is in black and white line art (obviously). But, every issue needs a color cover.

### WHAT DO WE PAY?

For content, expect about \$3.00 a page (about a \$0.01 a word). When we accept a concept, we'll provide you with a quote for the completed content.

We pay market rates for interior black and white and color cover art. We will put out bids for art for each issue and a delivery date.

### WHO OWNS MY CREATION?

You do! We're paying for the right to feature your work in the magazine. We'll always ask your permission to do anything outside the magazine with your creation (including using your content to promote the magazine).

### WHO DO I TALK TO?

Send your pitches and art introductions over to [damn-mag@mysticbull.com](mailto:damn-mag@mysticbull.com). We have issues to fill for 2018, so get those ideas over to us!





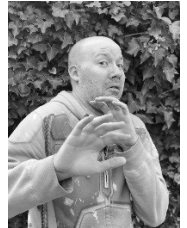
# Those with the DAMNed Pen



**Cory "DM Cojo" Gahsman** started gaming with the Mentzer red box, and quickly branched into other games, primarily AD&D (1st and 2nd editions), Robotech, Rifts, Star Frontiers and Marvel Super Heroes. He left the hobby in the late 90's, but was pulled back into it by listening to gaming podcasts such as Roll for Initiative and Save or Die. He is a high school social studies teacher, and has three children who have found a love of gaming, just like their dad. Between playing with his kids, his school lunch club, and engaging with the DCC RPG community, he continues to find his life enriched thanks to RPGs.



**Lee Murphy** is currently on the run from cosmic horrors; if seen, please tell him to come home. The Cropfolk article is Lee's first appearance in D.A.M.N. Magazine — hopefully we'll see a lot more from him.



**Dan Osarchuk** is the author of *Divinities and Cults* and a number of other books. See his website: [www.divinitiesandcults.com](http://www.divinitiesandcults.com).

Formerly/Maybe-again, one-half of Stormlord Publishing, **Eric Hoffman** has written some stuff here and there for DCC RPG and other old-school rules systems, including *Treasure Vaults of Zabad* and the weird western DCC fanzine *Black Powder*, *Black Magic*.



**Jason Sholtis** is a badass artist and writer. He wrote the *Dungeon Dozen*, as well as *Operation Unfathomable* — an adventure in *Knockspell* magazine and a greatly expanded version for *Swords & Wizardry* and DCC RPG. His art has graced many an OSR publication, and they are better for it. Jason wrote a crappy bio, so we can write whatever we want here. We'll be nice, though. You can check out his stuff at [roll1d12.blogspot.com](http://roll1d12.blogspot.com).

Not everyone gets to live in Canada, where the temperature rarely rises much above 30 degrees (because we use centigrade!). **Daniel Bishop** lives there with his partner and his three children (two of whom are adults). He's been doing this (gaming) since Christmas of 1979 when he encountered the Holmes Basic blue boxed set. He once ate a whole lemon on a bet to get access to the *Dungeon Master's Guide* before he had his own. When not writing adventures or playing games, Daniel enjoys camping, hiking, and wrassling bears in the Great Outdoors.



**Ari-Matti Pippo:** Cultural anthropologist, game designer and founder/editor of the *Knights of the North* blog. Currently stuck in the north... indefinitely.

**Daniel Vance** was raised by wolves in the wilds of South Dakota. He teaches art and loves games, long walks on the beach and spark plugs. His alignment is Chaotic Neutral. Daniel recently published his first adventure for DCC RPG: *The Temple of the Hamster*. Go get it. It's cool.



**Paul Wolfe** is really tired and this is the last thing he has to do before this issue is completed. He does stuff for things and still hasn't combed his hair. Check out his stuff at [www.mysticbull.com](http://www.mysticbull.com).

# ENJOY THE ISSUE?



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**TWO MINDS**

**ABOUT IT!**

**LET US KNOW**

**TODAY!**

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# D.A.M.N!

DCC RPG ADVENTURE MAGAZINE & NEWS

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