

Echoes From **FOMALHAUT**



E. M. D. T.
First Hungarian
D20 Society

Issue #06:
**The Gallery
Of Rising
Tombs**

E.M.D.T. 58

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Echoes From FOMALHAUT



Issue #06: “The Gallery of Rising Tombs”

by Gabor Lux

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Published by Gabor Lux, sole prop., Kiraly Str. 39, 7621 Pécs, Hungary
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ISBN 978-615-5902-21-5

The zine you are reading right now holds one of the reasons Echoes From Fomalhaut came to be. City adventures have always held a particular fascination for me: **The City of Thieves** and **Kahré – Cityport of Traps; City State of the Invincible Overlord** and **Jakálla**. In time, I developed and published my own, most notably **Zothay** and **Khosura** (the latter of which I hope to re-release some time). Sometimes I wonder if this zine has a few too many cities in it (you be the judge). But this one, I have been meaning to publish for several years – and now is finally the time!

The City of Vultures is a city I have developed over the course of three campaigns (one ongoing), and tested some more via convention games. It is located on the world of Fomalhaut, but it is in a sense its own closed world – ancient, inward-looking, and decidedly claustrophobic. This is a place of cruel and grotesque customs, widespread paranoia, decaying streets and all-pervading conspiracies. It is a fantasy of oppressive modern cities against an imaginary Technicolor backdrop – part film noir, part conspiracy thriller, and all sword & sorcery adventure.

Unlike city supplements which describe their locales through an extensive location key, the City of Vultures would be too overwhelming to capture that way. Instead, it is built on three pillars. One is a comprehensive system of city encounters (published separately in **The Nocturnal Table**) for street-level adventuring. The second is a series of writeups on the city's conspiracies (published in subsequent issues). The third consists of the city's Underworld complexes and adventure sites, of which The Gallery of Rising Tombs is the first collection. This is a modular treatment, and it is my hope that you can choose how to mix and match the modules to suit your own campaigns. As always, the decision is yours.

Gabor Lux
Pécs, 24 september 2019



The Wandering Glade

adventure module for levels 4-6

Playtesters: Gabor Acs (Phil the Terror of Turkeys, halfling Archer/Thief 3/3); **David Barsony** (Silver Olaf Thorwaldson, northman Cleric 3 of Edoran of the Triune Moon); **Istvan Boldog-Bernad** (Armand the Scumbag, human Assassin 5); **Kalman Farago** (Drohlaf Haffnarskørung, northman Barbarian/Thief 3/3); **Laszlo Feher** (Lafadriel Hundertwasser, elf Fighter 5); **Gabor Izapy** (Drusus the Historian, human Magic-User 5).



Background

A labyrinthine enchanted forest hiding secrets from before recorded history, the Wandering Glade appears periodically in different corners of the land. Those who know the deeper woodlands do not usually seek this place, and most shepherds and woodsmen know a futile charm or two to prevent it from seeking *them*. In times long gone, the Glade's exact course was known among the ancient druids, who had buried their wisest in these bewitched forests. Sometimes, stepping through its boundaries is as easy as going off trail to follow a crooked path, having a strange dream of trees and wildflowers, or visiting an old circle of stones at the right time. Sometimes, no effort will succeed. Sometimes, the Glade *does* seek you. Getting out is another matter altogether.

Entering, exiting and walking the Glade

Many **entrances** lead to this place, all of them obscure, and most symbolic in some manner.

- Pilgrims of the Lunar Path (c.f. **Echoes #04**) have the most reliable method of reaching it, but entry is never guaranteed. Those who walk the Lunar Path have **1:2** of entering the Glade at some point of their journey (this voids the pilgrimage).
- A band of brigands from the village of Merkadon (Isle of Erillion, hex **0603**) have found a permanent gateway from the nearby forests, and have established a foothold in the Glade (**26**) to prey on those who are trapped therein.
- The Glade can also swallow up those who become lost in the deep woods, and druidical places are sometimes connected at the right time (**1:12** on either occasion will do).

No matter the way of entry, it deposits the company at a random point of the Glade.

There are three **exits** from the forest labyrinth.

- One path (**1**) *always* leads to the Forest of Departures (**0703**), and it is guarded by the brigands who make lair in the centre of the forest.
- The Clearing of Secrets (**18**) has eight paths leading to eight distant corners of Erillion.
- Finally, following Morag's Way (**5**) in a clockwise direction from beginning to end (**25** to **6**) without straying from it, and performing a sacrifice of sap, flowers and blood before the Wooden Face there allows travel to any wooded spot on the isle. At three points, those walking the road will be tempted: once by an undiscovered but promising path; once by a threat blocking the way; and once by a mysterious image just a little way off. Breaking the itinerary voids the road's weird, and no further attempts shall succeed.

Navigation follows existing trails. There are no precise distances in the Glade. Each stretch of path takes approximately half an hour to walk (mounts must be lead due to the dense vegetation). **Random encounters** within the glade (**1:6**) follow the “**Faerie and sylvan settings**” table (forest) in Appendix C, treating all “Men” as brigands. Check for encounters for every stretch of path (between locations *and* intersections), when the company strays off path, and three times per night unless a secluded spot is found. Berries, wild game and water are abundant in the forest.



The brigands from Merkadon

These fellows have the appearance of unkempt woodsmen. They are mostly short-statured and ill of visage, some hunchbacked or otherwise deformed due to intermarriage. They hail from the village of Merkadon, known all over the isle for its rangers and huntsmen. Few outsiders know of the locals' traditions of feeding sacrifices to the thorns and oaks – a custom once practiced by few, but recently revived by the village's new master. Brellonek, He Who Laughs (M-U 9) had once stumbled out of the wild forests raving and stark naked, proclaiming the era of the New Peace. From then on, man and forest would coexist in harmony; and it would be kidnapped outsiders who would shed their blood to uphold the peace. Accordingly, an advance camp (**26**) was established in the focus point of the Glade, the location of the sacrificial ceremonies.

The brigands are superstitious, and regard the Glade as a sacred location. Following their old saying, “*Raise no axe on faerie tree; if its blood you take, with your own shall your debt repay*”, they will abstain from damaging local wildlife, or meddling too deeply with the forest's mysteries. However, they will mislead, extort, rob or kill travellers based on their perceived strength. They move skilfully in the undergrowth, and know a few shortcuts between the main trails. They prefer to surround their victims by surprise.

Brigands (1d8*5/90): HD 1; AC 8 (leather); Atk axe 1d6 or spear 1d6 or 2*shortbow 1d6; ML 8; AL CE.

Hp	6	6	5	5	1	1
	8	1	5	5	7	8
	5	7	8	8	4	8
	2	7	3	4	7	7
	4	1	6	2	1	<u>2</u>
	8	7	8	5	1	8
	3	6	2	7	8	5
	3	4	1	5	7	2
	4	7	1	2	3	4
	3	6	6	3	7	4
	8	2	1	7	4	1
	4	4	8	1	3	6
	2	6	3	8	4	7
	6	2	3	1	4	2
	7	3	1	2	2	7

Evil scouts (4): Ranger 3; AC 6 (chain shirt); Atk longsword 1d8 or 2*bow 1d6; Spec surprise 3:6, +3 damage vs. civilised men, tracking; ML 8; AL CE; hunting horn.

Hp	13	15	17	18
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Evil coursers (3): Ranger 4; AC 6 (chain shirt); Atk longsword 1d8 or 2*bow 1d6; Spec surprise 3:6, +4 damage vs. civilised men, tracking; ML 9; AL CE; hunting horn, *potion of healing*.

Hp	19	20	20
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Evil trackers (2): Ranger 5; AC 6 (chain shirt); Atk longsword 1d8 or 2*bow 1d6; Spec surprise 3:6, +5 damage vs. civilised men, tracking; ML 9; AL CE; hunting horn, golden torc (120 gp), *potion of healing*.

Hp	23	21
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Brughalt: Ranger 6; AC 3 (*chainmail* +2); Atk longsword +1 1d8+1 or 2*bow 1d6; Spec surprise 3:6, +6 damage vs. civilised men, tracking; ML 10; AL CE; silver-inlaid hunting horn (350 gp), iron key to the Druid Grave, *potion of extra-healing*, *potion of animal control*, *potion of fire resistance*.

Hp	30
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Within the Glade

1. Path to Merkadon: This trail is always guarded by **30 brigands** beyond the usual force, making sure no one escapes in this direction. The brigands will ambush weak-looking groups (preferring to take some victims for sacrifice), and mislead stronger ones by suggesting another (false) way. Further to the west, **corpses** are strung up in the trees, sacrifices to “the New Peace”. Not much later, the trail disappears; but those who press on into the dense forest will eventually find themselves in the Forest of Departures, not far from Merkadon (hex **0703**).

2. Mossy forest: This place is found at three identical locations in the Glade. Sickly dark oaks are laden with veils of dense moss, which also covers the nearby boulders and tree stumps. The very forest seems to be breathing here. **3d10 mossmen**, small, mindless, shambling creatures composed of mossy earth guard the path, only retreating from those who appear to be “of the forests”. No matter how many times they are defeated, a new group will be here on subsequent visits.

Mossmen (3d10): HD 1-1; AC 7; Atk sticks and stones 1d4; Spec rot (anyone killed by the mossmen decomposes within 8 hours), mindless; ML 6; N.

Hp	1	6	7	5	6	3
	2	5	4	3	5	2
	5	6	2	3	3	3
	3	6	1	1	2	2
	3	3	7	2	2	6
	3	5	4	4	7	5
	7	6	2	1	1	4
	2	6	3	3	5	6
	1	3	1	6	1	1
	2	5	2	2	2	1

3. Stone circle: A small, overgrown stone circle containing heaps of **antlers**. Sign of a deer's antlered skull is surrounded with a **runic inscription**:

::ᚦᛁX+::ᚦᛒᚱᚢN:ᚦI+ᚦᛒM+::XᚦᛒPMR::
("SIGN SHOW, KINSMEN GATHER")

Showing the **horned sign** (an ancient druidic hand gesture) summons **1d12 deer spirits** from the dark woods, who will gather here to drink blood, and their thirst sated, reveal dark secrets.

Deer spirits (1d12): HD 3; AC 5; Atk bite 2d4 + weakness or antlers 1d12; Spec weakness (save vs. death or $\frac{1}{4}$ Str lost, die at 0), silver or +1 to hit, afraid of silver; ML 9; AL CE.

Hp	11	5	13	16	10	20
	18	10	16	15	11	18

4. Old well: Moss grows on an ancient well. An abandoned **campsite** has a bedroll, haversack and tanned pelts, all rotted to uselessness. Descending down the well reveals four stone snake heads first, then a **bearded face** carved above the water line, crowned with a wreath of oak leaves. The face conceals a secret door, and opens to the **horned sign**. The mouth also hides a keyhole, opened with the iron key (held by Brughalt the brigand leader at 26). It can be picked at -20%, but destroys lockpicks on a failed attempt. Beyond the door lies the **Druid Grave**.

5. Morag's Way: This old stone road forms a spiral within the Wandering Glade. It is an ancient construction, half broken and half overgrown, but still shows a clear path through the forests. Like its companion in the Valley of the Witching Way (**Echoes #02**), it serves as a transportation device for those who walk its full length clockwise, avoid the temptations that would mislead them, and perform sacrifice at the end. At night, all encounters along the road are with Morag's hounds. Midway along the road, a **standing stone** stands in a clearing littered with old, half-buried animal bones. The inscription reads:

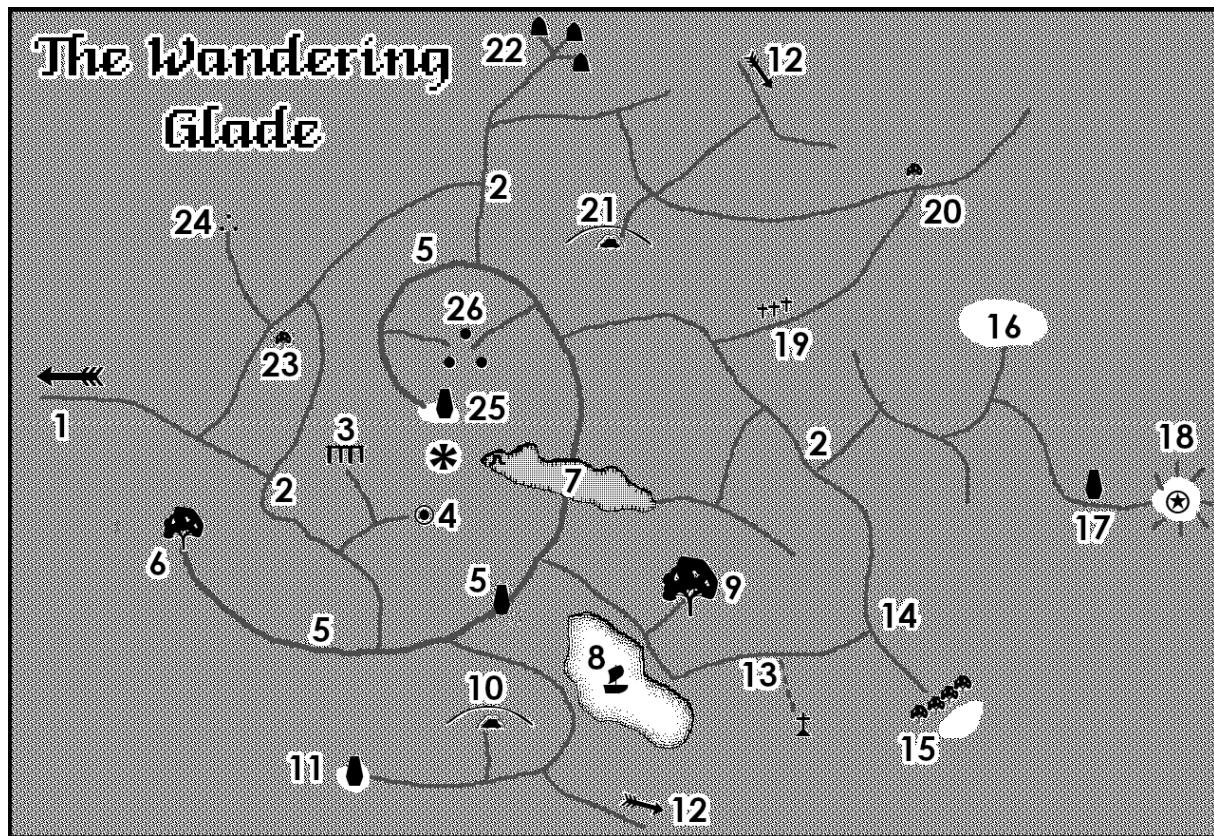
::ᚦI+M:ᚦRᛏRᚢN::
::MᚢXᚦ:ᚦRᚢR::
::MᚢRᚢR+::LᚢRᚢM::
::ᚦI+LᚢR+X:ᚦRᚢR::

("WIND FOLLOW, DOGS BAY, MOON CHASE, MORAG'S WAY")

This clearing is haunted by a pack of **24 skeletal hounds**. They have **1:6** to come out during the day, and **1:2** at night. The pack is inhabited by a collective feral spirit, forever cursed by the old hero Morag to run along the road "until they can devour the moon". The spirit knows the road's secret, but will not tell without good reason. During the day, the pack can be kept away with an offer of fresh meat; by night, they are bolder and prefer live flesh. Until their curse is lifted, they will reappear again and again.

Skeletal hounds (24): HD 1; AC 7; Atk bite 1d6; Spec howl of the pack (save vs. paralysis or miss first round); ML 9; AL LE.

Hp	4	3	6	1	2	1
	7	7	5	1	3	3
	4	7	4	6	6	6
	8	5	7	3	6	2



6. Grove of the face: Serene grove of wildflowers and plentiful berries. A majestic old oak's knots have formed a gnarled face; two thick roots look like they might be vestigial arms. The roots cradle a small, mossy pool. The growth on the tree is a **killer mimic**, which attacks if the pool is desecrated. It regrows within one month if killed. The **pool** is magical: those who have walked the full length of the spiral road may offer a sacrifice of sap, flowers and blood to open an enchanted gateway among the trees. Those passing through can travel to any wooded location of their choice on the Isle of Erillion; without a concrete idea, the destination will be random.

Killer mimic: HD 9; AC 7; Atk bite 3d4; Spec adhesive, camouflage; ML 9; AL N.

Hp 38

7. Chasm: The road is bisected here by a yawning 60' chasm. Rotting beams and tattered ropes mark the remains of a bridge, but crossing is bound to be more challenging. Lurking around in the undergrowth is the insane magic-user **Nyctagran**, who fancies himself the chasm's guardian. He has placed a *magic mouth* on a **large boulder**, which issues a challenge to passing travellers to sacrifice their treasures to the deeps in exchange for the right to pass. Otherwise, he ambushes them from the shrubs when they are sufficiently divided crossing through.

Nyctagran lives in a **crevasse** at the chasm's western end, which can be approached by a secret trail and a treacherous climb. He has a simple cot, a cauldron and firewood, his spellbook, and an old bronze cauldron with 3000 copper pieces enchanted with *fool's gold*. Buried in a shallow depression under his cot are the real goods: 1750 ancient electrum coins, a 750 gp golden necklace, and an old birchbark mask. The **relief of a bearded face** crowned with a wreath of oak leaves is embedded within the wall, identical to the one at 4 in all respects. Nyctagran has not found a way to open the secret door it guards, or ventured into the **Druid Grave** beyond.

Nyctagran: Magic-User 5; AC 2 (bracers AC 2); Atk -; ML 8; AL CE; *scroll of dispel magic*. Spells: 4/2/1; 1: detect magic, feather fall, jump, magic missile, read magic, sleep, ventriloquism; 2: audible glamour, darkness 15' r; levitate; 3: dispel magic, lightning bolt.

Hp 13

8. Lake of the Unburied Son: Still, leaden waters perpetually shrouded in shifting plumes of fog. A large **funeral barge** drifts in the middle, guarded by **4 wraiths** wearing fine garbs, and a **spectre king** who warns approaching strangers: “Only he who knows the wisdom of the times may see the *Unburied Son*. Only he who possesses the Egg of Time may bring the gift of new life! This is a forbidden place, older than your destiny!”

The barge bears the intact body of the **Unburied Son**, a young prince from an era time forgot, brought here by his grieving father under the effects of a poison that cannot be cured. His touch, even in this state, is the equivalent of a *heal* and *remove curse* spell; he wears a regal *cloak +2, plate +2*, a 2000 gp ruby ring, and clutches *the horn of ages*. Heaped around him are old riches; 2100 ancient electrum coins, a 700 gp golden jug filled with old incense, and 800 gp worth of splendid brocades embroidered with silver and gold.

Spectre king: HD 7+3; AC 2; Atk touch 1d8 + 2*LVL; Spec drain, +1 or better to hit, immunities; ML 12; AL LN.

Hp 39

Wraiths (4): HD 5+3; AC 4; Atk touch LVL; Spec drain, silver or +1 to hit; ML 9; AL LN.

Hp 26 23 26 27



The horn of ages: This corroded old bronze horn is decorated with the ornaments of a bygone people. A bard can blow it easily, and fighting classes with a 10% probability per level. Those within a short conical range must save vs. death or feel the weight of years, aging 4d6 years and losing $\frac{1}{4}$ their Strength (as *ray of enfeeblement*). The Strength loss lasts for the rest of the day, but the aging is permanent. Using the horn more than once per week has a cumulative 20% chance of affecting the character blowing it at double strength.



9. Great oak tree: A giant of another age, its tallest branches looming high above the other treetops. A moss-covered pile is a dormant **shambling mound**, striking if disturbed. A cave mouth opens from between the roots, leading down to a small **grotto**. A **pool** of silvery water fills much of the small room. Three round rocks carved with old spiral patterns stand in the water, and there are small gifts of pretty rocks, 8 sp, small crystals worth 50 gp, and other knick-knacks on the perimeter. The pool functions as an *augury* once per day (76% to foretell whether a future action will bring weal or woe).

Shambling mound: HD 8; AC 0; Atk limbs 2d8; Spec suffocation 2d4 rounds, immune to fire, grows from lightning, weapons $\frac{1}{2}$; ML 10; AL N.

Hp 36

10. Giant cave: A low hill, once a burial mound, is now the lair of **4 hill giants** (Fritz, Grinzel, Carl and Fredrick) and their pet **owlbear**. Their cavern complex consists of an entrance guarded by the owlbear, a common room centred around a hearth and a giant-sized table, a bedroom for Fritz and Grinzel, a storeroom, and a latrine above a garbage pit inhabited by an **otyugh**. The **mantelpiece** in the common room is decorated with trophy heads: magic-user (with pointy hat), fighter (with *helm of opposite alignment*) & cleric, as well as *the staff of Mellor* (M-U only staff +1, *knockspell* 3/day), now used as a makeshift backscratcher. A **chest** in the bedroom contains 350 ancient electrum coins, 350 gp, 2**potions of healing*, and a *dagger of venom*.

Hill giants (4): HD 8; AC 4; Atk club 2d8 or thrown rock 2d8; ML 8; AL CE; bags: Fritz: 250 gp, 4 bear paws, rake head comb; Grinzel: hard cheese wheel, sheepskin, "string" (50' rope); Carl: wolf pelt, BIG mushroom, wolf meat; Fredrick: drinking horn, skinning knife, BIG dice.

Hp	46	31	34
	29		

Owlbear: HD 5+2; AC 5; Atk 2*paws 1d6 and beak 2d6; Spec 18-20 hug 2d8; ML 9; AL N.

Hp	33
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Otyugh: HD 9; AC 0; Atk 2*tentacles 1d12 and bite 1d4+1; Spec grapple (1d3+1/r, +2 to hit, open door checks to escape), disease, never surprised; ML 10; AL N.

Hp	31
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11. The Wedding Stone: Flowers and blueberries on a tiny clearing surrounded by thorn-choked woods. A **youth and a maiden**, both dressed in bridal clothes and both dead of a single stab wound, are tied to an ancient **standing stone** with chains and fresh flower garlands. The boy wears a 180 gp golden circlet on his brow, while the girl wears a white, embroidered *cloak* +1. Those who would part them or break their chains unleashes them as **corpse wolves**, undead lycanthrope monsters. They pursue relentlessly until conclusively destroyed.



Corpse wolves (2): HD 6; AC 5; Atk 2*claws 1d4 and bite 2d4; Spec lycanthropy, *hasted* once they taste blood, silver or +1 to hit, revives 1d3+1 turns after slain, surprise 1:2; ML 11; AL CE.

Hp	21	30
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12. Enchanted trail: This trail connects two distant parts of the Glade via a dimensional link.

13. The grave of Illegorn: An invisible beast crashing through the forest can lead on a secret trail to a secluded spot marked with a gravestone before disappearing. The **gravestone** is marked with a heart, a drop of blood and an oak leaf, as well as the inscription, "ILLEGORN THE HUNTER: WANDERER OF THE WOODS, BOW YOUR HEADS BEFORE THIS WANDERER, AND THUS CONTINUE YOUR SOJOURNS." Paying respect at the grave summons Illegorn's shade for a short time. He knows the **horned sign**, a now forgotten druidical hand gesture, which can often unveil hidden things in the deep forests. The grave contains Illegorn's body, still wearing a green cap with a precious 3000 gp emerald pin from the faerie courts.

14. Mistletoe trees: Mistletoe has attacked several trees here, and turned their branches into a slimy mess. **Green slime** has 1:3 to land on 1d3 characters unless precautions are taken.

15. Hidden clearing: Trail ends in impenetrable **wall of trees**. Showing the **horned sign** (or using some other appropriate method – fire & axe don't suffice) parts the wall to reveal a pleasant clearing surrounded with a slight golden glow where time itself seems slower. This place is safe for rest, and supplies 2d8 *enchanted berries* each day (heals 1 Hp each, spoils quickly). A casual search turns up a golden sickle (120 gp) and 10*arrows +2 lost in the grass.

16. Scented meadow: Wide, sunlit meadow carrying the powerful scent of the boughs which grow here. **2d6 giant butterflies** have been attracted to the pleasant odour, and more will be present on subsequent visits. They only attack if disturbed. A druid, ranger or skilled herbalist can collect the **boughs**, yielding 2d6*100 gp worth of incense after drying.

Giant butterflies (2d6): HD 2; AC 8; Atk tongue 1d4 + poison (1d4+1 r, 0/15 Hp); Spec irritant pollen 3/day (save or -2 to hits), immune to mind-affecting; ML 6; AL N.

Hp	7	6	11	8	6	7
	5	14	10	12	11	10
	10	9	5	9	7	9

17. Marker: A large boulder overgrown with wild roses and poppies bears a faded **inscription**:

::←↑PM:NFTMMRITX:XTRFM::
::↑PM:KTMFRITX:MP:HMKRM↑H→::
(„←THE WANDERING GLADE
THE CLEARING OF SECRETS→“)

18. The Clearing of Secrets: Meadow with birdsong, ivy and wild roses. Eight narrow trails in the directions of the compass disappear into the undergrowth. The statue of a bearded old man in simple robes stands before a large boulder. The **trails** are exits from the Wandering Glade, and lead to eight distant corners of the Isle of Erillion. Showing the **horned sign** before the **statue**, the boulder rolls aside to reveal stairs descending into the **Druid Grave**. This entrance spans a considerable distance due to a dimensional anomaly, and *replaces* the one at the chasm (7): on a single visit to the Glade, only one of them may be found. Below the statue is a forgotten treasure pit: a golden sickle (120 gp), dried mistletoe, 18*arrows +2, and 2*potions of healing.

19. Burial site: Thirteen mounds of earth with fresh green saplings growing on them. The mounds hide the bodies of woodsmen, staked through the heart with the sprouting roots. They rise as **13 ghouls** if the burial site is disturbed.

Ghouls (13): HD 2; AC 6; Atk 2*claws 1d3 and bite 1d6; Spec paralysis; ML 7; AL CE.

Hp	8	14	10	10	5	6
	10	14	5	11	10	2
	12					

20. The Stalking Tree: Elm tree has been inscribed with the rune “↑” (T). This tree will “follow” the company, and be found standing at every subsequent intersection they visit in the Glade.

21. Sabretooth cave: Bones litter the entrance of a dark, mossy cave smelling of rot and animal bodies. The cave is inhabited by a mated pair of **2 smilodons** with 2 cubs. Faded cave paintings on the walls depict stick figures being crushed by dark trees.

Smilodons (2): HD 7+2; AC 6; Atk 2*claws 1d8 and bite 2d6; Spec +2 to bite, 40' leap, rake with rear legs on two claw hits (+4 to hit, 2d4 each); ML 11; AL N.

Hp	27	26
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22. Spiral stones: The path forks in three directions, leading to a **trio mossy boulders** gravened with mesmerising spiral patterns that seem to meander in several directions at once. Those who try to study the spirals must save vs. spells or experience nausea and fainting (spellcasters lose all spells). Those who succeed can roll their “chance to know spell” to learn one of three druidic spells on a one-use basis: *invisibility to animals*, *pass without trace*, and *obscurement*.

23. The Gathering Trees: A tangle of knotted trees fused into one, whispering ominously. Here and there can be seen the outlines of faces or bodies, as if trying to break free.

24. Face of stone: An old bas-relief of a crudely graven, bearded face lies under a mossy overhang, flanked with two statuettes of pixies with drawn bow and arrow. An **inscription** reads:

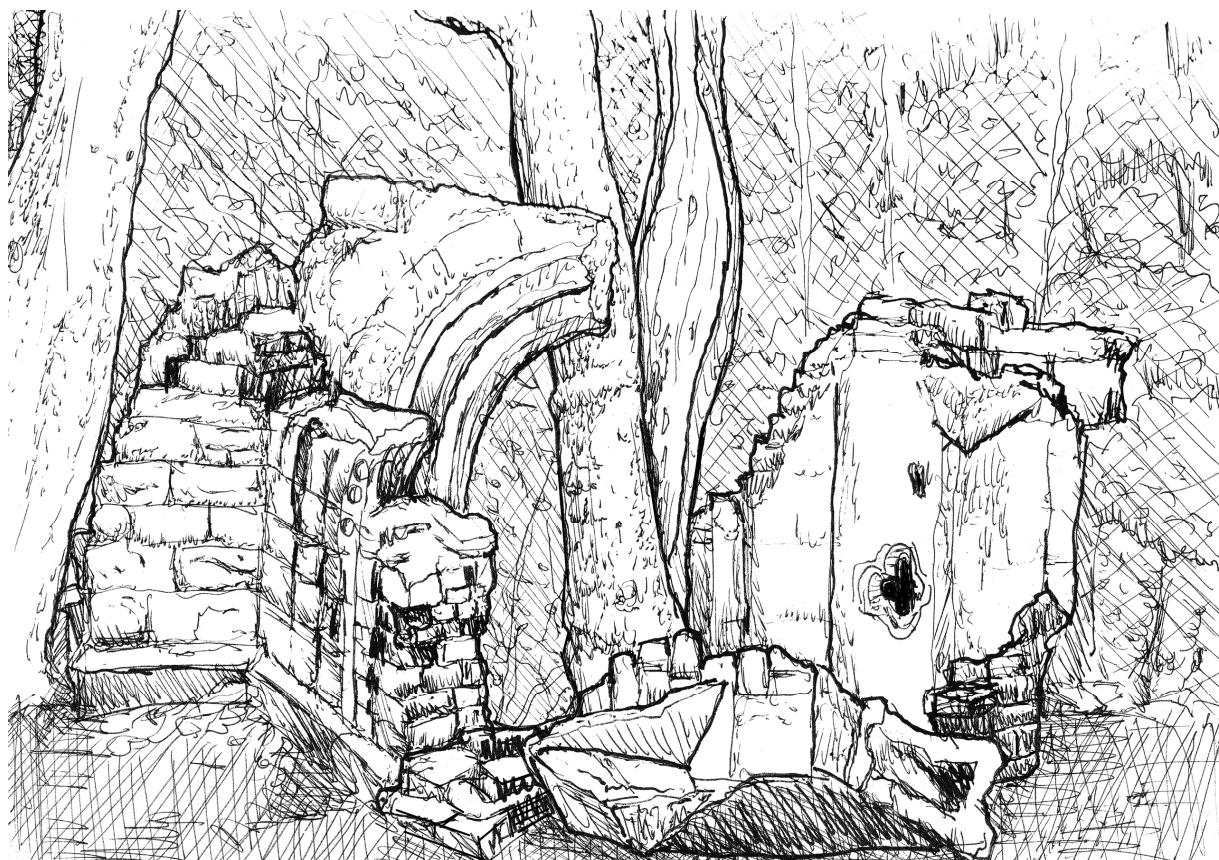
:::I†:NIMM+HX:NFR:↑PR:KR↑P:BM:↑R MN::
:::PMR:NMR:MR:NFM:↑PRN:PR↑:H↑RFR:†M↑::
:::XIP↑H:MP:HFK:B1NMM:R+M:B1MM:BM:MM::
:::R+M:↑PRN:PR↑:MMKFR:PI↑PMR:X1NMM::

“IN WIDENING WAY THY PATH BE TROD
FOR WEAL OR WOE THOU SHALT STRAY NOT
GIFTS OF SAP, BLOOM AND BLOOD BE MADE,
AND THOU SHALT DEPART HITHER GLADE”

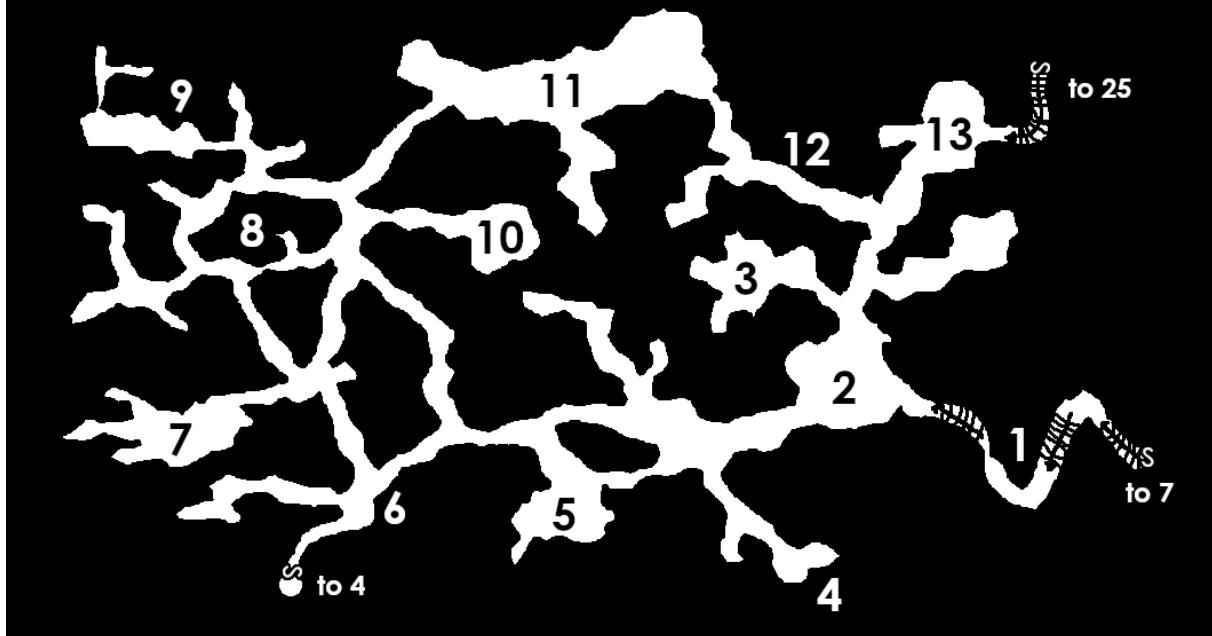
The **statuettes** are wound up traps which launch golden needles (save vs. poison, but the stuff is inert, and only produces a green discolouration around the wound), and the **face** breathes a paralytic gas (save vs. poison, 2d12 turns). The eyes of the visage are quartz crystals (50 gp each), but the real treasure is a 500 gp *moss opal* embedded in the forehead. This stone contains a liquid moss concentrate which will spread out and overgrow everything in a 300' radius.

25. Obelisk: Thick **fungi** have spread over the clearing in shades of cream, orange and teal (one patch is a group of **shriekers**, alerting the bandits at **26** if provoked). A stone **obelisk** is marked with an inscription reading :::M M R F X H: N F R :: (“MORAG’S WAY”). Showing the **horned sign** before the obelisk, it shifts aside to reveal stairs down to the **Druid Grave**.

26. Brigand camp: The overgrown ruins of a small monastery serve as the makeshift camp site of the **brigands from Merkadon**. Their leader, **Brughafft** has posted lookouts and lights watchfires at night. The place also serves as a site for human sacrifices, performed at night by firelight in accordance with various moon phases. To this end, the brigands keep **6 prisoners** kidnapped during their raids in a locked, intact side-building. Brughafft occupies the former abbot’s quarters, where he also keeps the band’s treasures in locked footlockers: 5000 sp, 700 gp, 4 gemstones (10 gp, 500 gp, 350 gp, 200 gp), 1000 gp medallion with wolf’s head and inset ruby eyes, a *potion of healing*, and a *scroll of druid spells* (cure serious wounds, produce fire).



The Druid Grave



The Druid Grave

No one among the living knows of the burial site beneath the labyrinthine Wandering Glade, and very few have visited it since its old masters. This is a place of great power, close to the elemental realms, and infused with raw and unshaped natural forces. The ancient druids had used it as one of their strongholds, where their greatest held court and were eventually buried with reverence. With their passing from Eriillion, the caves now serve as the grave of their order.

1. Overgrown passage: Zigzagging cave passage descends into the underearth, choked with big leafy plants, flowering vines and wild berries. The walls seem to breathe as a living being. There are **5 killer vines** hidden in the greenery. They do not attack those who have used the **horned sign** to enter the dungeon.

Killer vines (5): HD 4; AC 5; Atk vines 1d6 and grab; Spec strangling 2d6/r, immune to mind-affecting; ML 12; AL N.

HD	16	26	16	15	14
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2. Subterranean meadow: Soft, pulsing light permeates an underground chamber, illuminating a field of blooming flowers. Multi-coloured pods nod in a warm breeze and dandelion seeds drift on their small parachutes. Trees stand by the walls with green leaves; one in the centre is in full bloom, bearing succulent purple fruits (1d6+1, as *potion of healing*). The flowering tree is a **trent**, set here to guard the underworld realm. It will not let intruders pass without good reason (although it shares its fruits with benign and respectful travellers), and it can animate two **trees** to defend itself.

Trent: HD 10; AC 0; Atk 2*limbs 3d6; Spec vulnerable to fire, animate trees; ML 12; AL CG.

Hp	52
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Trees (2): HD 8; AC 2; Atk limbs 1d12; Spec vulnerable to fire, sleep; ML 12; AL N.

Hp	37	36
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3. Trees of the deep earth: Twisting black roots (**3 killer vines**) grow upwards from the earth in this small grotto, water dripping on the ceiling. Their sap is a source of feverish visions.

Killer vines (3): HD 4; AC 5; Atk vines 1d6 and grab; Spec strangling 2d6/r, immune to mind-affecting; ML 12; AL N.

Hp	20	18	19
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4. The Subterranean Throne of Interment: Here stands a stone **throne** decorated with leering skeletons and skulls. Fools sitting on it must save vs. death or decompose into soft humus.

5. Grotto of the dead: Roots on ceiling. A shaggy, antlered **elk horror** roots among decaying corpses it has dug up from the soft earth. The undead monstrosity walks upright, and howls like the damned. There are dead bodies all around, some intact, and some one with the earth.

Elk horror: HD 7; AC 4; Atk 2*antlers 1d8 and bite 1d12; Spec vomit bile (save or retch uncontrollably for 1d4 rounds), turned as spectre; ML 10; AL CE.

Hp 34

6. Overgrown passages: Leaves and vines block these passage almost fully; water drips from the ceiling. Some of the **vines** have poisonous thorns: anyone passing through carelessly takes 2d4 Hp, and must save vs. poison (1d6 turns, 0/16 Hp).

7. Icy grotto: Snow and ice crystals cover ever surface. Glittering clusters of **winterflowers** bear tiny pods (94*10 gp gems), but characters handling them carelessly must save vs. stone or freeze to death. Melting the ice destroys the pods as well.

8. Mantis caves: Slowly shifting and moving passages; green grass and fresh strawberries on floor, walls and ceiling; side passages choked with vegetable matter. **3 giant praying mantis**.

Giant praying mantis (3): HD 5; AC 3; Atk 2*claws 1d10; Spec vorpal claws decapitate on 20, immune to mind-affecting, surprise 2:6; ML 10; AL N.

Hp 23 28 28

9. Graves of the old priesthood: Flowers cover four **burial mounds** marked with engraved headstones: the names are **ABERAN**, **HAUWOR**, **ERTHORIC** and **GRANNARL**. An empty grave has been left unused; the headstone here reads **NYNNIAW**, and a smaller inscription has been added underneath: **THE LAST**. These mounds are the graves of long-dead arch-druids, who rest uneasy in their shallow graves, and rise as **mummies** if tampered with. The grave goods are four golden sickles (4*120 gp), 1600 gp worth of gold jewelry, a 400 gp gold mirror, 2*potions of heroism, a potion of longevity, and a scroll of creeping doom.

Mummies: HD 6+3; AC 3; Atk hit 1d12 + rot; Spec fear, mummy rot, +1 to hit, ½ damage from weapons, susceptible to fire; ML 12; AL CE.

Hp 27 25 33 33

10. Summer grotto: Summer warmth permeates the orchard of small, twisted fruit trees in this orchard; bees buzz in the air. Sweet **sap** drips from spindly respirator roots (*potion of healing*, 1d3 doses can be collected). A group of **three stone satyrs** serves as a resting place for colourful butterflies. Four large **melons** in the grass have several tiny crystal seeds (400 gp total).

11. Violet field: Violets grow from the ground, walls and ceilings; birdsong and animal noises fill the air. Smell of sweet earth. Sparkling **crystals** embedded in the walls of S passage are 1300 gp total. Weird humming song from “beyond” passage breaks off if the crystals are removed.

12. Passage of growth: Lush green vegetation and fresh green stalks everywhere. Items made of vegetable matter grow at an exponential rate; wooden shields and weapon hafts sprout boughs laden with buds, rope turns into vine, etc. After 1 turn, the change is irreversible, and on turn 3, all such idems are rendered useless (magic items may save vs. magical fire equivalent).

13. Cave of offerings: Old goods scattered on floor; cave paintings animate as **5 deer spirits**.

Deer spirits (5): HD 3; AC 5; Atk bite 2d4 + weakness or antlers 1d12; Spec weakness (save vs. death or ¼ Str lost, die at 0), silver or +1 to hit, afraid of silver; ML 9; AL CE.

Hp 13 19 10 12 16

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THE CITY OF VULTURES

First campaign: Akos Barta, Andras Aron Salamon, David Sojtori

Second campaign: Gabor Acs, Kalman Farago, Laszlo Feher, Matyas Hartyandi, Gabor Izapy, Adam Tarnoczy

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In memoriam M.A.R. Barker

In the arid lands of Thasan, there rises the City of Vultures, a metropolis whose original name is now forgotten to all – forgotten even to the ancient slaves who are keepers to the library of Mirvander Khan. Under the wings of the vultures that circle lazily above its towers, the city shows signs of rot and decay. Even the rich palaces are crumbling, stuccoes fall, and statues are as worn stumps. The streets, redolent with sweet musk, rot and filth, are populated by an ill folk, considered evil of visage and wretched. In contrast, the people of the palaces are marked with calculating indolence and the world-weariness of inherited status. In between are craftsmen, merchants and petty officials: quick-witted and grandiloquent, but ultimately deceptive.

The dwellers worship a lot of demigods native and specific to the city; mostly unambiguously evil, or indifferent to human suffering. Yet there is strange beauty, too, and a spirit of nobility that lives in the hearts of all the city's inhabitants.

The city is ruled by a grand master of mirages and lies, Mirvander Khan (11th level Illusionist). The khan is an evil man befitting his domain, and in his throne room, his safety is protected by a golden cage and trained tigers. Yet some now whisper that he is afraid of a great weird he had seen in his enchanted mirrors, or the stupor of sedated dreams. Some say the final days are at hand.

In time, the city's armies have conquered all the surrounding lands, and subjugated foes and former friends alike. Now the city has no friends left, but its enemies are many. Open and proud sins among its inhabitants have aroused anger and contempt among the more orthodox nomads of the southern coast, who, under the banners of their new god, have sworn to conquer crumbling wall and gilt spire, and push the faithless into the sea. There is open war against the city, although not an intensive one: distance and terrain conspire to keep the foes apart, so larger clashes are not common. The grand armies away in their wasteland garrisons, the streets and plazas seem slightly empty, as if life was slowly leaving the crumbling metropolis. At night, the impression changes: from revelry and dance to illicit deals and gruesome murder, it is all out in the open – sometimes around the same corner.



Gods and demi-gods

Béthim Khanum: a female priesthood of aristocratic magic-users has risen to protect the bronze-domed burial palace (12) of this former imperatrix, and await her glorious return at the fore of a dead army. High priestess Sindokht Gulshan Lal is a well known name in high society.

The Worshippers of the Columns are ascetics often seen whirling around the tall, primordial columns scattered around the city, battering their heads against the stone until they fall unconscious. Prophesying in inarticulate screams, they sometimes lead the mob to do terrible deeds.

Ishab-Lambar, the new god of the southern nomads (once an ambitious high priest who had deposed his own deity, now only known as the Red God), was once tolerated in the city despite his moral certitude, but his worship was outlawed after Mirvander Khan had an ominous dream. Two nights and one day did the hunt for the worshippers last, and then finally was the faith eradicated. Yet ever since, more and more of the lower craftsmen have secretly thronged to its side, establishing the city's first self-help organisation, the White Hand (→).

The Worshippers of Jeng, who perform obeisance before a curtain-shrouded idol. The temple (14) is heavy with scented vapours and the smell of ashes, while nomad cultists with curved swords watch for those not of the faith. The worshippers are duplicitous, "letting the veil of Jeng fall before their nature". The cult of Jeng is the *de facto* state religion of the city, and Tormesk, the ancient high priest, is one of Mirvander Khan's closest advisors.

Karttekeza, the idealistic peacock-riding god in fact resides in the Citadel of the She-Sultan south of the city, but he has many followers among the fighting classes, and is popular for both valour and poetry.

Kéttki is a common good luck charm resembling a cross between a pangolin and a hedgehog, and his small idols are found in various forms over the city. Some of the more devoted worshippers have been known to flay themselves on the barbed spines, but this behaviour is atypical. No clergy or temple.

Kóthag: This six-trunked, elephant-headed deity originates from the deepest Underworld. His black-robed priests can read the fates of men from their cranial shape. For the unwary, this shape is sometimes human sacrifice, for Kóthag demands human brains from his worshippers.

Kwárü Khan: A former ruler who has degenerated into a black, wormlike horror with the powers of a demigod. At night, the Khan's form prowls the back alleys of the city, whispering horrid secrets to those who walk outside on the darkest nights. What he has to say is often incomprehensible or allegorical to several degrees. None are brave enough to worship him.



Mezeng, a secretive sect with origins outside the city, is known for its charity, and feeding the poor with mezexin, a purplish pudding-like matter recovered from a foreign world. Thanks to the efficacy of polymorphic cloning, mezexin is both nutritious and easily produced. It eventually becomes a part of human cells and vice versa. *Mezeng*'s high priestess is *Severia al-Tyraxus*, a stranger to the City of Vultures. The temple of *Mezeng* (15) is found in the Beggars' District.

Ozolba the Charnel God, sovereign in the town of Arfel (*Echoes* #04), is not technically outlawed in the City of Vultures, but his worship must take place in secrecy, since the Followers of *Dókh* (→) are hostile to any philosophy that does not properly dispose of the dead.

Sürü Miklári: the veiled priests of the god of rats worship in a dank under-temple (16) closed off from the world by copper grilles; sharing the company of the “little brothers”, thousands of rats. Rat's stench and sweet perfumes mingle with the smell of milk and tasty treats, brought in a multitude of clay bowls by the worshipping poor. The rats know “everything” that goes on in the City, and this knowledge is often worth its weight in the gold the priests extract for revealing it. Furthermore, the rats can also be sent against powerful enemies to be devoured. This service is rarely offered and only considered in exchange for a truly extravagant offer. The current high priest is *Khámish Avankári*.

Swahul the Prophet is a skeleton kept in a sealed iron casket, who prophesies through the metal sheath by mental transference. The temple of *Swahul* (17) is covered in garlands of flowers, and the gardens are known for a multitude of birds singing among the splendid, colourful frescoes depicting the dead. The current high priest is *Bozhawagh Khadarguat*.

Varkat Melnar: He is the god of joyful travellers, and his symbol is a grinning sun. His faith is basically benevolent, and is widespread among the lower merchant class.



The Societies

Deston: a secret society dedicated to weird harmonies, organised on the principle of terrorist cells. They employ oddly shaped, three-pronged metal tuning forks to produce their otherworldly tones, which are banned due to their danger to one's life, but sought obsessively by those who have partaken of it. The ranks of *Deston* reach from the most contemptible pariahs to the highest reaches of society; in fact, it spans all other conspiracies found in the city. The head of the organisation, and the only man to know the entire cell structure, is *Mirvander Khan*.

The Followers of Dókh are a powerful pariah-caste; it is their task to gather the dead and bring them to roofless towers within the city, where they will be “given back to the sky”, i.e. devoured by vultures. The bones are disposed of once they have been stripped of meat. The followers use brass chains to bind the dead (and those declared legally dead) to the interior walls of their towers. They wear cowled robes, as well as an indigo strangling cord around the neck. On their orgiastic rites, they are known to asphyxiate themselves or each other in their frenzy.

The Followers of Hachur Khan are dedicated to the service of the former child-king, cast off from the throne by the severe *Mirvander Khan* and put to everlasting torment. The constantly regenerating, mind-wiped body of *Hachur Khan* is torn every day by vultures, only to regrow by the next morning. His remaining followers have, however, secretly stolen into the tower where the body is kept, and recovered pieces of flesh which have now grown into a new race of men, beautiful of form and devoid of sin or intellect. The Followers of *Hachur Khan* are all high-ranking traditionalist aristocrats or their henchmen. No one knows their secret leader.

The Merchants of Death: these usurers are doing business with *Oolar's* time, a magical force that can prolong life indefinitely as long as it is recast again and again. They also deal in assassinations, and insurance against same. They live around the Courts of *Abulghazi Khan* (6).

Oom the Many is a secret society of illusionists, who have also infiltrated and taken over the Seekers of the Starry Sky (→). On their missions and gatherings, every member wears the face of Oom, the founder of the order. Therefore, Oom is immortal, and he may be anyone: a novice or a master of illusions.

The Society for Optimised Objectivism, a conspiracy overseeing Uugen's Market (4), is dedicated to upholding absolutely free market forces within their sphere of influence. They worship an ancient star vampire residing in a crystal globe; the "high priestess", An-Raydn, is one of the influential traditionalist aristocrats in the city, and is reputed to be a bit of a collector.

The Seekers of the Starry Sky is a philosophy in vogue among the well-born and affluent. In truth, the wisdom of the stars is a mirage created by illusionists, and the society is guided by Oom the Many (→) towards unknown purposes.

Warriors of the Tiger: this military brotherhood, based on strong familial ties but open to valorous outsiders who have proven themselves, is sworn to serve the Khan at all costs. Their faces are recognisable by painted scars, although they often employ face-covering iron masks to strike terror into their foes. Women in the family are not expected to take up arms, but it is considered honourable to do so, and a normal occurrence. Every second week, they walk the city with their trained tigers, killing freely those they come across or whose house they break into. The brotherhood resides in the Fortress of the Tiger (3), the former summer palace of Yanar Khanum. Their grandmaster, the Tiger Lord, is a secretive and withdrawn individual.

The White Hand, ostensibly a self-help organisation, is a network secretly dedicated to the worship of Ishab-Lambar (→). The network provides beneficial micro-credit to upstanding members (mostly craftsmen and lesser merchants) and those it seeks to convert; on the side, it hunts down thieves, and carries out secret assassinations against those judged to be sinful. The White Hand has been infiltrated by some opportunistic thieves, who use it for a front and a source of income.



The Customs

Burial Rites: In the City of Vultures, the dead are carried by the Followers of Dókh (→) to roofless towers (*DK*), where vultures feast on their bodies. The cleaned bones are then carried away and crushed unless a generous bribe is paid; the skulls of nobles are allowed to be taken back by their family as a matter of fact, and it is a typical custom among aristocrats to keep them as part of the family treasures. The previous custom of burying the dead in mausoleums and catacombs – often very elaborate – has gradually fallen into disuse and been eventually outlawed, although it persists in the nearby Arfel, City State of the Charnel God (*Echoes #04*). Note that those declared legally dead are treated as such, and dragged unwillingly into Dókh's vulture towers.

Custom and inertia: The history of the city stretches back to the dawn of recorded time, and precedence weighs heavy upon the present. Things are done in their long-accustomed way, or according to laws and procedures which are now without exact rationale. A palace may be left to rot and collapse because a decree had declared it inviolate; goods may be hauled along a meandering route to respect ancient agreements and codes. This attitude has shaped the people of the city in a myriad ways. Procedure, tradition and routines trump efficiency.



Gemstone teeth: The custom of replacing teeth with sharpened crystals or gemstones, once widespread, is now only found in a narrow faction of the aristocracy. The pointed predators' teeth lend these lords and ladies a bestial appearance, which some supplement with gemstone claws mounted on metal finger sheaths. As Mirvander Khan himself does not follow the custom, it has become a distinguishing sign of the conservative traditionalists, who are almost without exception cruel for cruelty's sake (as opposed to simple pragmatism, more typical of the Khan's followers). However, placing the skulls of the dead with their teeth in well-guarded family archives is a habit that survives in noble circles, and is granted exemption from the usual burial rites. Possessing a collection of skulls is a matter of prestige and familial responsibility.

The value of teeth is $2d6*100$ gp per individual, and they are all custom work: a gemcutter based in the city can readily identify the former owner (5:6). The theft or trade of skulls is unthinkable, and few smugglers will touch them. Every night, there is a cumulative 20% probability the thief will be visited in his dreams by the phosphorescent shades of skeletons with glowing teeth, one per 100 gp value. If the character is triumphant, or rolls a save vs. death at -6 to force himself to awaken, the probability is reset. The gnawed-on corpses of characters killed by the shades will be found the next morning with the glimmering teeth scattered next to their bodies.

Shades (2-12): HD 2; AC 7; Atk incorporeal touch 2d4; Spec ignores armour; ML 12; CE.

The Night of the Tiger: A dreadful custom of ancient origin, practiced by the Warriors of the Tiger (→). Every fortnight, groups of warriors roam the city with their trained tigers, killing those they find out in the open, or whose residence they break into. As the wealthy and powerful have strong gates and security devices, the victims are invariably from among outlanders and the poor.

Status and class: After slight reform over the last few Khans, there is still a gulf of difference between commoners and the aristocracy. Class roles are rigid and immutable; there is no social mobility or advancement, except the rare act by the great Khan appointing someone to a higher station (this has not taken place in living memory). A beggar can become a rich magnate, but he will never cease being a low-born; and no matter how low an impoverished noble might fall, her birth will always mark her as one of the elect.

Aristocrats can dispossess, punish or kill those below them at a whim as a matter of principle; the only boundaries being set by custom and the protective influence of other nobles (who might take offence or claim damages). In these uneasy times, it happens less often, and moneyed interests have risen to disrupt the status quo. But most people of the city act still obsequious as a second nature before anyone who looks and acts even slightly above their rank, although this flattery hides guile, and very often ingrained or even murderous resentment.

As a side-effect of this social system, appearances and illusions rule supreme. Clothes make a man, and someone wearing fine garb or the armour of the nobility, and speaking in their idiom shall be readily accepted as one of their own – as long as the pretender is not unmasked by a regrettable discovery or slip of the tongue.



The Places

The Beggars' District (5) encompasses the south-western section of the city. Here beneath the shadow of the Fortress of the Tiger are old, tall insulas inhabited by the poor and down-trodden. The only gate is well guarded and always locked for the night; beggars plying their customary trade are allowed to leave at sunrise, and must return to their domiciles by sunset. While the quarter's inhabitants are unfortunate, they possess a fierce pride in their ancient citizenship. Combined with their xenophobia and penchant for frenzied outrage at real or imagined slights, this often produces a murderous bloodlust against outlanders. The quarter is not safe for travellers during the day, and downright dangerous during the night.

The City of Outcasts (10) lies outside the southern gates. This stinking shantytown of tents, huts and improvised lean-tos is a refuge for pariahs and diseased animals; murder, the basest vices, and unthinking brutality are all commonplace, and accidental or intentionally set fires are not unprecedented. The inhabitants here, existing in a half-human state, are in mutual hatred with the city folks, as well as the fishing village on the seacoast.

The Courts of Abulghazi Khan (6): these streets and courts have no connection to the rest of the street system, and houses in the area have no windows or entrances facing the outer streets. Here, there is a perpetual full moon at night, and the pale sphere looks much closer than elsewhere. In the houses live ancient people who have outlived all: the “shareholders” and other beneficiaries of Oolar’s Time, now administered by the Merchants of Death (→).

The Fishing Village (11) also lies outside the city proper; half on the coast, and half on tall stilts connected by a network of walkways. The fishermen form one large family, ruled by a group of secretive elders withdrawn into a central hut. The villagers are hostile to the men of the Fisherman Lord (8) and vice versa; both groups are involved in smuggling.

The Fortress of the Tiger (3), which was originally built as the summer palace of Yanar Khanum, is by ancient rights the home of the Warriors of the Tiger (→), the military brotherhood sworn to Mirvander Khan’s protection. The walls of the fortress are as vertical stone cliffs, and its splendour is much unlike the teeming slums that lie beneath.

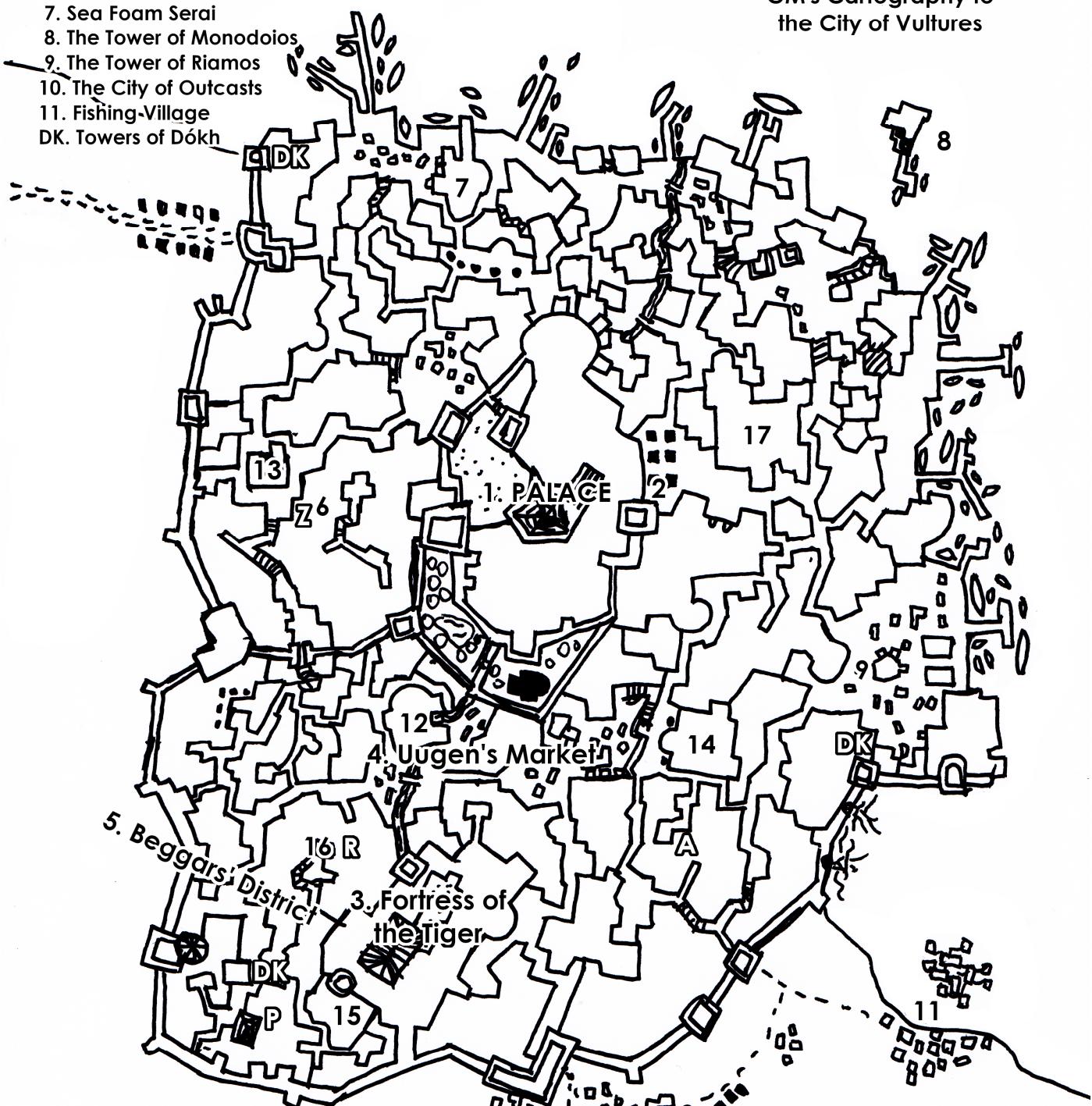
The Mouth of Mirvander Khan (2) is a monstrous stone idol standing by the eastern gates of the Palace (→). The crumbling terror rests its clawed paw on a stone block, and, if the current Khan is so willing, its throat will speak to the city (and will obey none other). Thus far, Mirvander Khan has never taken advantage of the opportunity.

LANDMARKS & LOCALES

1. The Palace
2. The Mouth of Mirvander Khan
3. Fortress of the Tiger
4. Uugen's Market
5. Beggars' District
6. The Courts of Abulghazi Khan
7. Sea Foam Serai
8. The Tower of Monodoios
9. The Tower of Riamos
10. The City of Outcasts
11. Fishing-Village
- DK. Towers of Dókh

THE CITY OF VULTURES

GM's Cartography to
the City of Vultures



TEMPLES

12. The Burial Palace of Béthim Khanum
13. The Temple of Delightful Scent
14. The Temple of Jeng
15. The Temple of Mezeng
16. The Temple of Sürü Miklári
17. The Temple of Swahul the Prophet
18. The Temple of the Spider

The Palace (1): an immense complex rising from the city like a mountain of stone. Its gardens are islands of calm and beauty in the tumult of sin; the northern palace towering above the harbour a network of antique living quarters. The highest point in the Palace is the ceramic-studded central tower. Way up, on a landing platform supported by beams of steel, rest glittering metal birds that can sail the skies.

Sea Foam Serai (7): The largest and busiest caravanserai in the city, an eccentric structure centred on an atrium beneath a large dome, with rooms off of the spacious galleries. Rotund and purple-robed, with the grinning sun of Varkat Melnar tattooed on his forehead, proprietor Skaganti is said to have a rumour and a job offer for every visitor... if they have the coin.

The Temple of Delightful Scent is not tied to any known deity; the only sacral object in the domed hall (13) is the slowly evaporating block of camphor-like resin, prepared from a mixture of spices and the fats of subaquatic creatures by diligent hands. Every morning when the gates are thrown open, there is a new quantity releasing its aroma. All, from flies to men, are drawn inexorably to the smell, which is most pleasant and has no apparent ill effect.

The Temple of the Spider (18) is found on a hill outside the city, and is considered abandoned – magical wards seal the polished steel gates, and mist obscures the round portholes.

The Tower of Monodoios (8) is a half-ruined tower jutting from the waters of the harbour, and is the nest of the bandit leader known as the Fisherman Lord, his thieves, and their extended, interrelated families. This is the strongest criminal organisation in the city.

The Tower of Riamos (9): This deserted structure had once belonged to the grand magician Riamos, whose wondrous mirrors are still found throughout the city. The doorway and windows are all bricked up, and the place has seen no visitors in many years.

Uugen's Market (4), a series of interconnected streets and courts, is found in the old quarter. Everything is on sale – hairy worms in crystal boxes, dried flowers that bring madness, slaves sold from cages and houses with barred windows, prophecies and dreams. Let the customer beware: while the wares are genuine, the hearts of the sellers are not; and he who is not cautious may become merchandise instead of buyer.

The Underworld: There are many sealed sections of the underworld; some from recent epochs, and some from before recorded history. More than a few of these complexes are connected beneath the surface via hidden passages and secret thoroughfares; and it is even hinted by the wise that the lowest layers are linked by some manner of ancient transportation system.

The entrances to these realms are all sealed or heavily guarded, and they are forbidden to visit under the pain of death. Captured tomb robbers are officially declared as one of the dead, and handed over to the Followers of Dókh (→). However, some Underworld sections are still patrolled or inhabited, and the masters of these domains would often rather have intruders killed on the spot than potentially have them betray their secrets. On the upside, most Underworld regions have no random encounters, at least not frequently.

The Underworld is categorised into different “layers”, representing depth relative to the street surface, and often marked on plaques surviving from old surveys. Layer VI is the deepest known to modern explorers, but unfathomable pits reach even deeper into tectonic depths. On the average, layers are 30' below each other. Uugen's Market and the Beggars' District are one level below the general city surface, and are counted as “Layer I”. The four major *discovered* Underworld complexes are as follows:

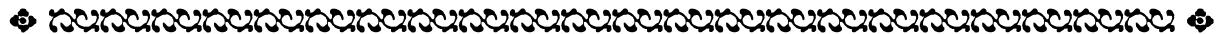
- *The Tomb of Ali Shulwar (A)*, which connects several sites just east of Uugen's Market.
- *The Mausoleum of Satrap Zeirus (Z)*, below the resting place of a mighty general. Its existence is relatively well known, but it is barely ever visited.
- *The Gallery of Rising Tombs (R)*, located under the Temple of Sürü Miklári.
- *The Catacombs of the Pariahs (P)*, located under the Beggars' Quarter. Unknown to most, it is linked to a sequence of ancient vertical pits under the Temple of Mezeng.



Three complexes are hypothesised but not known beyond conjecture. None of these labyrinths have known surface access, and they must be visited by traversing other Underworld regions!

- *The Lake That Cools the Machines*, below the Fortress of the Tiger, to which it is connected via secret passages (probably on Layers VII-VIII).
- *The Hidden World*, somewhere deep below the Mausoleum.
- *The Palace of the Dark Mirror*, right below the Palace, and whispered to be its terrible mockery. A place to be avoided!

Many other dungeons and oubliettes of lesser note exist throughout the city (mostly in the older quarters to the south).



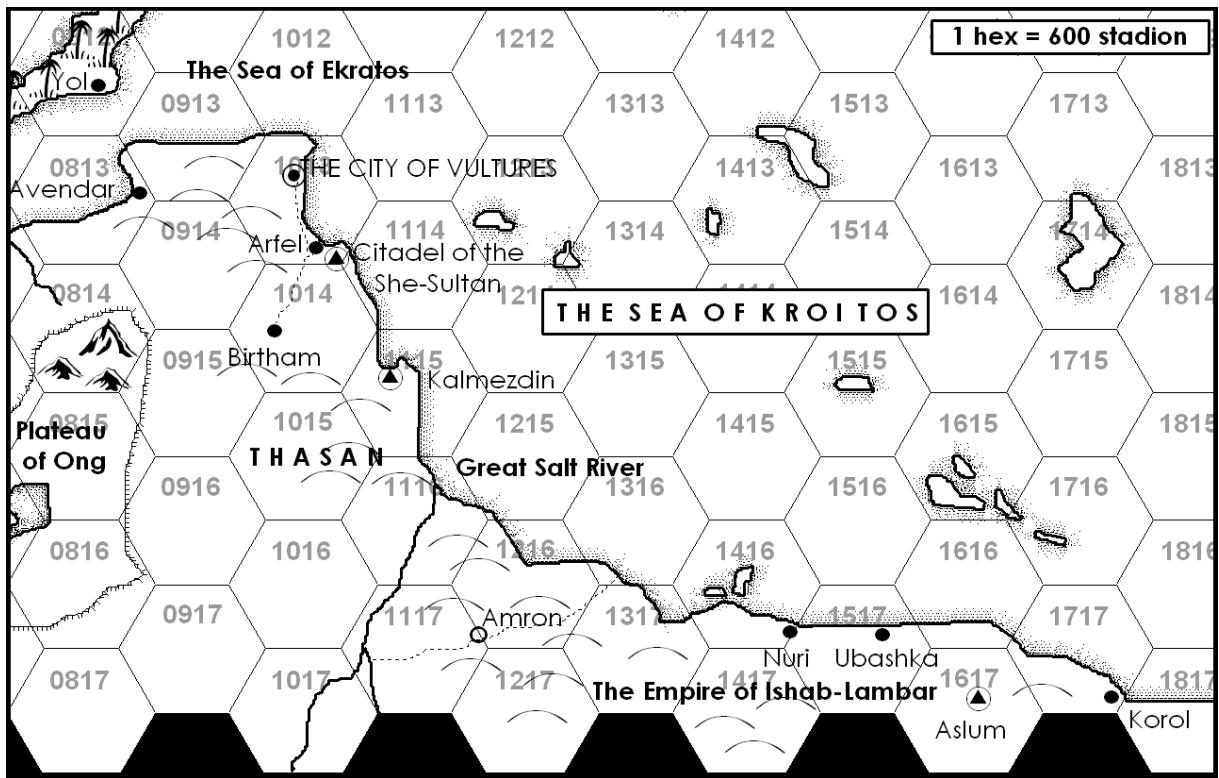
Beyond the City of Vultures

The lands of Thasan mainly consist of barren mountains and arid wastes, although there is no shortage of springs and smaller tree clusters. Pockets of life are omnipresent; from poppy-covered valleys to plateaus populated by exotic birds. The isles of the sea, in particular, are said to resemble paradise; although they often conceal hidden horrors of astounding ferocity. The City of Vultures rules this land from the town of Avendar to the Great Salt River; and from the coast to the Plateau of Ong. All within are tributaries or under military occupation.

South of the city, within a day's walk, broods *Arfel*, holy site of pilgrimage to the accursed cadaver-god, Ozolba. The degenerate, bloodthirsty zombie cult is based here in a rectangular temple complex. The gates are ever open, and the veiled priests may take whom they will within the limits of the walls, or any others whom they can outside. To refuse is a sin above all sins, with punishment too horrific to adumbrate. Arfel's withdrawn aristocracy rarely ventures outside their silent palaces, and the priesthood is above day-to-day-affairs; accordingly, the city is *de facto* ruled by the six Benevolent Seigneurs, a coterie of crime lords and potentates.

Next to Arfel rises a proud palace-fortress. The *Citadel of the She-Sultan* was built by an ancient ruler of the City of Vultures, and has fallen into the hands of the god Karttekeza by lucky coincidence. The well-stocked fastness is not only the centre of the faith and an occasional resting place for the god, but a place of succour from Ozolba's power – therefore, its mere existence is sacrilege to the zombie-worshippers.

Tiny *Kalmezdin* is a far less pleasant place as the last coastal fortress. Being posted here is considered exile by the garrison, as the place is dusty, hot and extremely boring. Even the slaves toiling away in the nearby copper mines are only required to work after sunfall. *Birtham* is a similarly small and unpleasant locale, regularly raided by the fanatical dervishes gathering in the nearby *Wasteland of the Apostates*. The viscous sap of the thorny bushes cultivated here are, nevertheless, valuable enough to pay for a garrison, slaves, overseers and accountants.



Avendar has lost much of its former splendour. Bloody showdowns between the followers of Pragmatic Incrementalism ("Subjective Truth") and Optimised Progressive Objectivism ("Objective Truth") have left considerable destruction in their wake. The conflict ended with the defeat and flight of the Objectivist faction, who subsequently established New Avendar on an isle in the eastern seas. Power is in the hands of the Universal Synod of Incrementators, an assembly where every taxpayer may vote with a weight proportional to his taxes. Votes are subject to purchase by the highest bidder, although they tend to go low for lack of competition. There are several smallish grottoes around Avendar; a place of ascetic loons, genuine prophets, charlatans and worse scoundrels in wait of hapless travellers.

The fortified island town of *Yol* lies outside the City's sphere of influence. Despite the rumours, no trace of the identically named amoeboid god or his worshippers is in evidence. *Yol* is the site of a well-stocked slave market, as well as a small amphitheatre. Some visitors venture here for fights and plays; but some come for uneasy dreams of distant stars.

The *Plateau of Ong* is an isolated highland wedged between Thasan and the Tridentos. Closed off from all directions, it is ruled by conniving, cruel monks who receive their instructions from a central island citadel. Foreigners may not expect anything good if they fall in the monks' clutches, and swift death is preferable to what awaits beyond the citadel gates. Nevertheless, this land is abundant in spices, perfumes and powders, and there is constant, if strictly controlled trade through approved channels.

The shallow valley of the *Great Salt River*, bisecting Thasan, is not inhabited on a permanent basis, although clashes between the City's armies and nomads do take place. Water and ground are heavy with bitter and useless salts, and the cliffs are known haunts for the needle-beaks, intelligent and ruthless birds of prey sheathed by magic-reflecting auras of golden radiance. Not far to the southeast stood Amron; once prosperous, now home to demons and ghouls. From Amron, an ancient road leads to the seacoast, and underneath uncaring waters.

Ishab-Lambar's empire extends to the southern coast and the wastes beyond. From a rag-tag collection of marginal city-states, the new god has forged an efficient implement of war; and spurred by stories of depravity and grand prices for the taking, his disciples are always testing the armies of the City of Vultures. Outside the towns lie nomad camps and

hidden brigands' strongholds. Some of the hills are forbidden to visit, for men have been lead astray by wandering lights and peculiar noises, and found later as drooling imbeciles.

The original home of the faith is located in the merchant towns of *Nuri* and *Ubashka*. Both are ruled by families, or more correctly, family patriarchs, all at least nominally faithful adherents of the new teachings: all dissenters have been exiled or thrown to the dogs. The latter is an unpleasant method of execution and public spectacle in *Ubashka*. Delinquents are lowered into a maze of empty cisterns, and must find their way out with multitudes of hunger-maddened dogs sent in their pursuit. No such entertainments are known in *Nuri*, where no unauthorised levity is permitted. Ceramic tablets with the town's once famous poetry have been removed from the great library, and built into newly erected fortifications.

The last relevant city-state is *Korol*, and it is the smallest of the three, found beyond the fortress of *Aslum*. It is populated by a poor and conservative folk, whose imagination is only concerned with building and decorating elaborate family cenotaphs. Only by threatening the destruction of these beehive-like structures could they be spurred to join the cause of Ishab-Lambar's new faith, and then with no small reluctance.



Inspiration

First among the works to inspire the City of Vultures and our campaigns therein is M.A.R. Barker's *Empire of the Petal Throne RPG*, with its combination of dungeoneering and city adventures; bizarre faiths and severe customs; and the legacy of ancient starfaring civilisations on decadent fantasy empires. I would be remiss not to mention Steve Jackson's *Kharé, Cityport of Traps*, whose grimy aesthetic has made an early impression on me – *Kharé* is a city where every mis-step can lead to an ugly and grotesque fate, and every building holds a dangerous discovery. Fritz Lang's crime thrillers, of which *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler* is the greatest, have been instrumental in the cloak-and-dagger atmosphere of our campaigns. These films may seem an unlikely fit, but their labyrinthine urban conspiracies and overall themes of fear, deception and control are perhaps the closest to the city's intended tone. *The Third Man*, Carol Reed's masterpiece about a shadowy post-war Vienna and its criminal underword is another contender. Closer still is *The Tiger of Eshnapur*, Lang's late colour spectacle, an adult fairy tale populated with scheming and cruel nobles, lavish maze-like sets, and man-eating tigers. Finally, while little of the City of Vultures is based on actual history or real cultures (and its Indo-Persian parallels are mainly a source of visuals and window-dressing), I have drawn much on *Harold Lamb's historical pulp stories*: his tales of Cossack and Muslim adventurers are not just wonderfully plotted, they are also a treasure trove of meticulously researched, colourful detail.





THE GALLERY OF RISING TOMBS

adventure module for levels 4th to 6th



Playtesters #01: Gabor Acs (Santiago di Lavellos, Fighter 6), Kalman Farago (Eidolon, Magic-User 5), Laszlo Feher (Vifranavaz, Illusionist 7), Adam Tarnoczy (Ambrosius, Fighter 7)

Playtesters #02: Istvan Belanszky (Nidu Porak, Magic-User 5, devoured by Gurakhán the Shadow Hydra along with several vials of acid in his backpack, which then killed Gurakhán from within), Istvan Galuska (Tamuz the Interpreter, Fighter 5, lost in the Underworld), Gergely Keresztes Nagy Antal (Zolamon Lector, Cleric 5 of Ozolba the Charnel God); Gabor Kovacs (Puchka Tenyo, Fighter 5); Uböl (NPC, exsanguinated by vampire bats).

Playtesters #03: David Barsony (Maziar, Illusionist 4), Istvan Boldog-Bernad (Farzan, Magic-User 4), Gabor Izapy (Hassan, Fighter 3), Janos Juhasz (Zahan, Fighter 3), Jozsef Kazar (Adarbahram, Fighter 4).

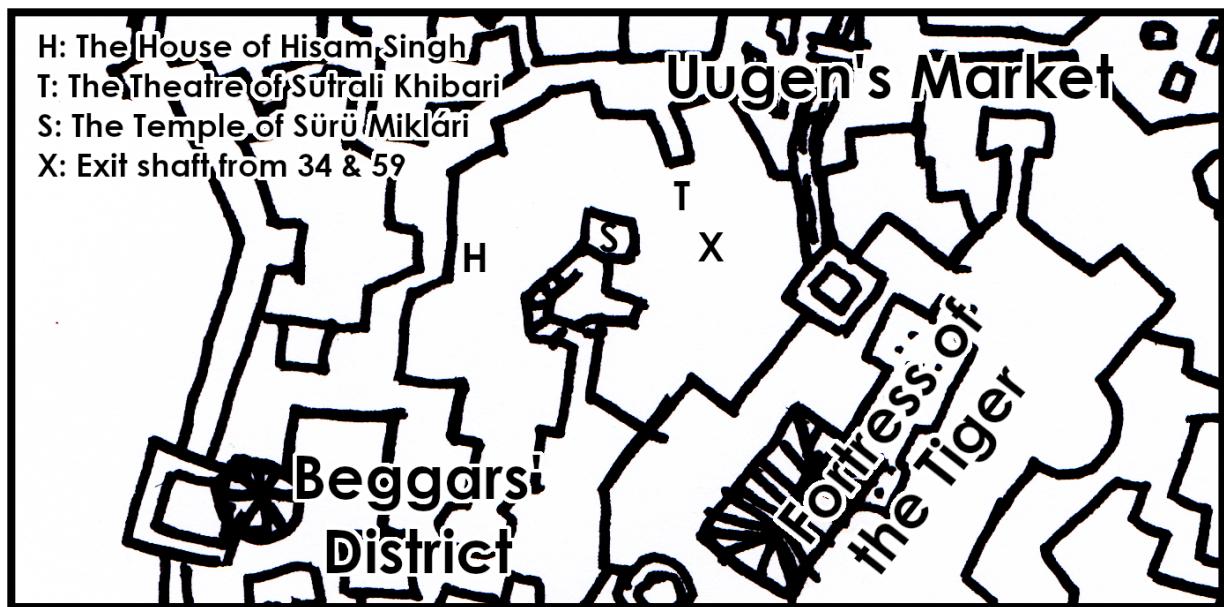


BACKGROUND

The Underworld beneath the City of Vultures hides countless mysteries, some forgotten, and some still mentioned in wild tales and whispered hearsay. Temples, burial vaults, and the secrets of bygone epochs slumber beneath the teeming alleys; forbidden to visit under the pain of death! The Gallery of Rising Tombs is one such site of the deeper layers, and of particular interest to sages and archaeologists. It is said that the resting places of five nobles from the city's founding period are to be found on a sub-level stocked with ingenious machineries; and also that these tombs are held aloft, "between heaven and earth". Such a place would be very lucrative to visit!

However, the Gallery is concealed in the Underworld, and the only direct way leads through the Temple of Sürü Miklári, the god of rats, whose veiled priests are themselves imprisoned behind impenetrable bars. Not even the bravest explorers would dare confront this mighty cult... not to mention the armies of rats Sürü Miklári would send against the temple's defilers. But there might be a secret way... Those who inquire discreetly may find out that there are no less than two rumoured side-entrances. One leads through a secret door in the storeroom of a disreputable caravanserai located in the Beggars' District, and another through a long-sealed portal found in the basement of a risqué theatre off of Uugen's Market. Somewhere down there, the treasures of the Ancients are there for the taking... hopefully still undisturbed!





THE HOUSE OF HISAM SINGH

The House of Hisam Singh is a seedy, low-class caravanserai just beyond the gate to the Beggars' District. It is a ramshackle old building built from loam and sun-bleached timber, only faded paint and the rotting stumps of carved wood ornaments reminding of a better past. Lodgings and simple fare are only 1 sp per night, but there are rarely any guests – the usual clients are the owner, the cook, and four locals absorbed in conversation. Proprietor **Hisam Singh** (Assassin 2) welcomes visitors with an outpouring of oleaginous hospitality, lifting his greasy bulk from a pile of cushions to offer fresh drinks, a warm meal, and comfortable beds.

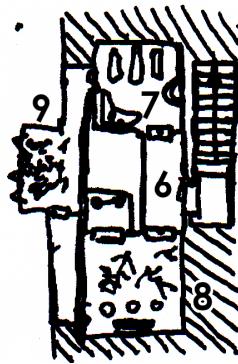
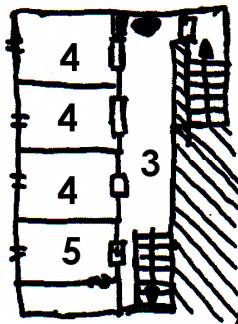
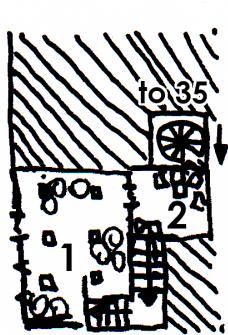
All of these fellows are snake-worshippers, who have a makeshift shrine upstairs, and also make occasional pilgrimages to the Underworld before the great serpent Vannaglakka (64). Hisam Singh denies any knowledge of a secret entrance, and calls attention to the official interdict on visiting such places, but spills the beans if hard pressed, caught in an act of wrongdoing, or bribed generously. He will then place several heavy crates to block the secret door behind an exploring party (bend bars roll required). Otherwise, he shows them their rooms (4), serves a generous meal with palm wine, and waits until they are asleep before his cultists descend from their upstairs lair for the kill.

Hisam Singh and the cultists (6): Assassin 2; AC 9; Atk 2*dagger 1d4 [+ poison (1 r, 0/12 Hp)]; surprise, assassination 0-1 55%, 2-3 50%, 4-5 40%, 6-7 30%, 8-9 15%; ML 8; CE; snake amulet.

Hp	12	10	6	13	11	12
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Robes and thick moustaches. Curved daggers produced from below clothes. Hisam Singh is the only one to use poison.





ROOFTOPS



1. Street-level common room. Low ceiling supported by crooked beams; greasy sheepskins, pile of pillows and hookah for Hisam Singh. Food is served on great brass platters. Creaking stairs. At night, the **cook** feigns sleep here.
2. Kitchen and storage behind patchwork curtain, stocked with pots, pans and foodstuffs. Secret door to downwards spiral stairs (Layer IV, 35) concealed behind pile of boxes and crates.
3. Heavy, stale smells and creaking floorboards; light beams through old wooden shutters (all nailed shut "to deter housebreakers"). Heavy brass vase next to NE door is rigged with thin wire to fall over if door is opened carelessly.
4. Dusty, claustrophobic rooms with wooden walls and old bunk beds, obviously seeing little use.
5. Locked room for single tenant, insane knife-grinder/murderer **Hojasp** (Thief 2), who only communicates through his locked door. In his delusions, Hojasپ sees himself as a noble lord, "a Warrior of the Tiger", killing in the name of the brotherhood. In a secret niche behind the wall, he keeps the mummified cadaver of his wife, and 2*120 gp gemstones as her eyes.

Hojasp: Thief 2; AC 8 (leather); Atk scimitar 1d8 or 2*dagger 1d4; Spec backstab*2, PP 35%, OL 29%, FT 25%, MS 21%, HS 15%, HN 10%, CW 86%; ML 6; AL CE, grindstone, 2d6 knives and daggers.

Hp 9

Furtive, nerves perpetually on the edge.

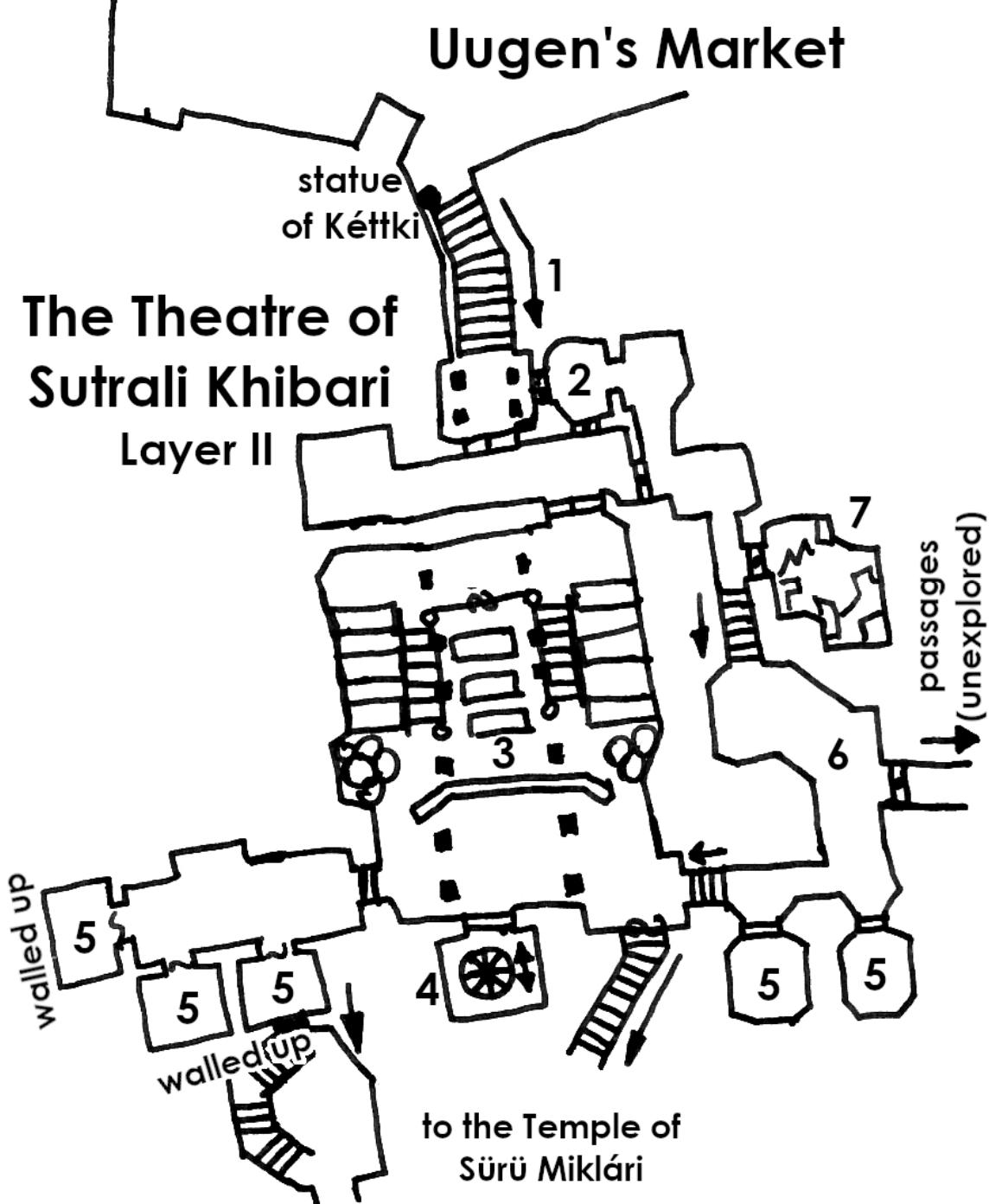
6. Both locked doors have poisoned knife traps (1d4, 1 turn, 0/12 Hp).
7. Sleeping quarters with dirty cots for 5 men. At night, **four cultists** are usually here.
8. Ritual room strewn with rags and mouldering bones before a snake idol and three brass bowls. Slithering sounds if standing deathly still – otherwise, man-sized **snake** under rags attacks from surprise! A **plaque** under the idol bears a prayer: "OH VANNAGLAKKA, YOU WHO DWELL UNDERNEATH THE CITY, MISTRESS OF THE UNDERWORLD, GUARDIAN OF THE WAYS, KNOWER OF MANIFOLD SECRETS, ETERNALLY BEAUTIFUL: LOOK UPON YOUR SERVANTS!"

Snake: HD 3; AC 6; Atk bite 1d6 + poison (3 r, 0/15 Hp); ML 9; AL N.

Hp 16

9. Secret balcony room contains the remains of several unfortunate travellers.

10. Upstairs quarters used by **Hisam Singh** (he is usually here at night!), comfortably furnished with old but decent objects. **Footlocker**, equipped with flaming gust trap (8/4 Hp), contains his treasures: 100 electrum, 300 gp, 15 gp serpent ring, **scimitar** -1, and notes revealing the location of the secret door. **Through the windows**, one can see the opposite rooftop with a decaying stone pyramid, and two crumbling stone monstrosities flanking a long-sealed brass portal therein. Carved letters on the lintel read: "THE PAVILION OF BADOK KHAN [Eye Lord], THE DREADFUL SPECTATOR. HIS REPOSE THOU SHALT NOT TROUBLE, OH THOU WHO ART WISE!" (Yes, it is precisely what it seems, but it is not detailed here).



THE THEATRE OF SUTRALI KHIBARI

This filthy underground den is a theatre specialising in shadow puppets, and lurid plays catering to tastes which are either base or indulgent and degenerate. The theatre is reputedly haunted by a terrible apparition who has a fondness for kidnapping the female lead at the height of a performance – this aspect of the perverse has drawn the attention of jaded aristocrats, who have been known to patronise the establishment. The crew consists of **17 players** and **4 thugs**, generally of ill visage and dishevelled appearance – all mortally afraid of the supernatural menace. Directrix and impresario **Barzhánu** (Thief 4), whose sordid pieces are reliable crowd-pleasers, rules her underlings through deceit and spiritual terror.

Players (17): HD 1; AC 10; Atk 2*dagger 1d4; ML 5; AL CN.

Hp	3	3	4	2	6	5
	1	6	7	6	8	4
	4	4	7	7	1	

Thugs (4): Fighter 2; AC 7 (studded leather); Atk club 1d6; ML 7; AL CN.

Hp	11	10	7	14
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Barzhánu: Thief 4; AC 10; Atk 2*dagger 1d4 + poison (3 r, 0/12); ML 6; AL NE.

Hp	16
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Trying to act imperious; mostly comes across as weaselly.

1. Garbage-strewn stairs lead down from Uugen's Market to a dirty courtyard (Layer II) and lacquered wooden entrance; beggars sitting on the steps. Faded canvases advertise the current plays: "THE BLEEDING SKELETON", "KWÁRÜ KHAN'S LOVER", "THE INDIGNITIES OF AZANDEH". **Ticket booth**, entry 1 sp (exclusive front row seats 2 gp)

2. Booth interior: Cash box, 50% of 2d4*10 sp, 50% of 1d6*5 electrum, 30% of 1d6*5 gp.

3. Auditorium sloping towards stage, low ceiling held by squat columns. Smell of sweat, human bodies and grease. There are great pillows for the front row seats. Secret door behind seats leads to costume storage (pearl-sewn vest is 240 gp). The **stage** holds painted cutout scenery obscuring the backstage areas.

A prominent **bas-relief** in the wall depicts a laughing skeletal monstrosity dressed in wild rags. This is the secret door used by **Uromén the Chortling Death (71)**, who has **1:6** to emerge during a spectacularly macabre play – no opening mechanism on this side, and the door is *wizard locked* (6th level). A **sliding panel door** opens to a backstage area (5).

4. Backstage: Props and scenery. **Spiral stairs** lead up to a watchman's hut, and an inner courtyard overlooking Uugen's Market, and deep down to a storage area connecting to the Underworld (Layer IV, **47**). This area gives the staff the creeps.

5. Players' dens: Junk, cushions and the pungent smell of cockroaches. These backstage "suites" are also available for private entertainment. Several dressing screens; two conceal walled-up archways leading to the Temple of Sürü Miklári (Layer III, **18** and **20**). In eastern-most room, **faded tapestries** conceal niche with ivory inlaid box (50 gp) containing board game figures and 50 sp.

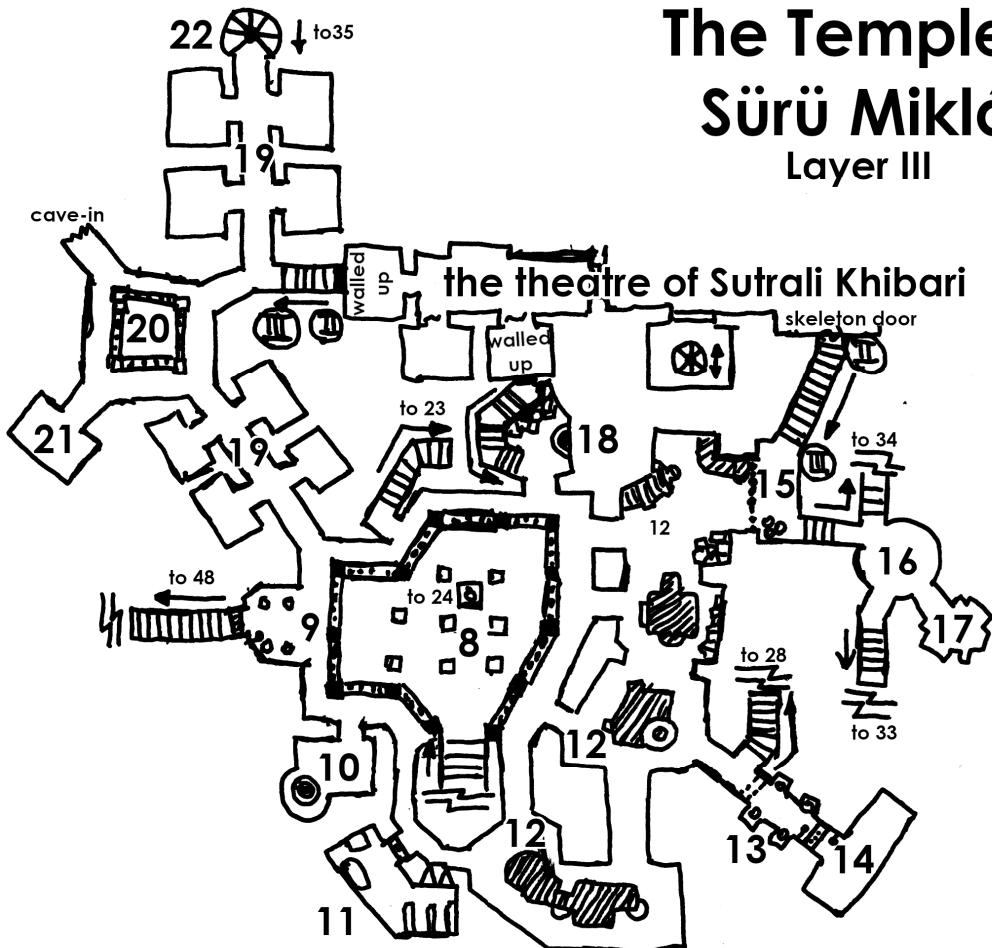
6. Storeroom: Mostly junk. **Locked iron door** leads to passages under Uugen's Market (to be discussed in a later instalment). Large **gong** has been rigged to strike if opened from other side.

7. Barzhánu's quarters: Dressing screens and plush carpets form a little maze in disorderly room smelling of perfumes (with a faint background hint of charnel rot). **Locked chest** contains 160 sp, 70 electrum, and a gilded sun mask (100 gp). **Loose floorboards** conceal the bloody clothes of a murdered lover, along with a 80 gp *pearl ring* – character must save vs. spell or put it on; his hands will automatically go for Barzhánu's throat if she is nearby (save vs. magic allows self-restraint for one round). Consistently grants 1d6 choking damage.



The Temple of Sürü Miklári

Layer III



THE TEMPLE OF SURU MIKLARI

Sweet musk, candle tallow, and the dreadful stench of rats mingle in the Temple of Sürü Miklári! The underground sanctum always lies open at the bottom of a zigzagging old stairway, yet the rooms beyond its antechamber are forever sealed – rows of brass bars block both entrance and exit. Once lowered through the single trapdoor, no initiate or thief may leave alive or dead – what the Temple claims, the Temple never releases.

The priests are a dour and unpleasant lot, clad in purple and black vestments covering their bodies, and veils and gloves to cover their faces and hands. Their voices are a chorus of susurration, and they slink furtively at the edges of the light... waiting for an opportunity to present itself. In addition to countless "little brothers" (24 rat swarms), there are 36 rat-priests (Cleric 2, no spellcasting ability) here, as well as high priest Khámish Avankári (Cleric 6).

The high priest, who wears gold-trimmed robes and no veil, is a greasy fellow with stubbled jowls and dark moustaches. He has spoken to the rats, and learned many things of the city through their reports (vague oracle 1:6 per hundredweight of gold); and he has the ability to send several rat swarms against a selected opponent (request granted 1:6 per 6 hundredweights of gold, within sensible limits), or to snatch a valuable guarded object (request granted 1:6 per 3 hundredweights of gold).

Rat swarms (24): HD 4; AC 5; Atk swarm 2d4; ML 6 (10 in temple); CE.

Hp	10	13	16	5	15	19
	8	10	14	14	17	14
	16	14	10	10	20	16
	15	13	15	13	9	15

Rat-priests (36): Cleric 2; AC 10; Atk 2*dagger 1d4 or flail 1d6+1; ML 12; AL CE. No spells.

Hp	13	15	5	7	7	10
	6	3	4	4	4	8
	4	8	9	2	10	4
	10	8	7	11	10	6
	9	2	11	13	6	11
	11	11	9	16	5	4

Khámish Avankári: Cleric 6; AC 10; Atk flail 1d6+1; Spec +1 vs. magic, command rats; Str 10, Int 15, Wis 15, Dex 12, Con 10, Cha 7; ML 12; AL CE; keys to this sublevel.

Spells: 5/4/2; 1: bless, command, detect magic, light, read magic; 2: augury, chant, hold person; 3: cause disease, prayer.

Hp 19



8. The Temple of Sürü Miklári: Rows of brass bars surround a richly ornamented marble hall of columns, oil lamps and braziers. Incessant rumbling of machinery. **Rats** and their filth are everywhere, as well as bowls of milk and countless baubles left by devotees. There are always **rat-priests** behind the bars, ready to receive ceremonial offerings in exchange for evil advice. A **trap door** represents the only entrance to the temple complex, dropping down to **43**.

9. Ceremonial stairs: **Inscription** above barred brass gate and rich onyx-inlaid marble stairs reads "THE MUSEUM OF SHERGIR LANI"; etched scrawl adds: "HARKHÚRID, THE SPRINGING HORROR". Four decayed **statues** with inscribed pedestals:

- "BANZESH OF THE DELIGHTFUL FACE"
- "ASPANDAD, THE MODEST BENEFACTOR"
- "RAMYAR, HE WHO IS DELIGHTED"
- "KHUSHNAM OF THE PLEASANT VISAGE".

10. Ritual bath: A marble chamber for ablutions. **Basin** bedecked with a hammered copper interior, filled with unholy water (and, often, bathing rats). **Inscription** on the perimeter reads: "THE BASIN OF SÜRÜ MIKLÁRI, THE CLEANSING ABLUTION. A PROTECTIVE LINE ON THE GROUND BEFORE THE FACE OF VANNAGLAKKA." (Someone who bathes here, and draws a circle with unholy water before Vannaglakka at **63**, shall come to no harm.)

11. High Priest's room: The quarters of Khámish Avankári are appointed with a wooden couch, a personal library and simple comforts. **Peepholes** in iron sheets allow observation of the temple perimeter. The inhabitants of the room are a few particularly fat **talking rats**, old in years and wise. They expect to be pampered and treated royally, but they are as helpless as newborn babes. If mistreated, they threaten intruders with the wrath of all city rats – "they know everyone".

A **brass box** standing on four rat legs contains 5 pearls (130 gp, 170 gp, 110 gp, 120 gp, 90 gp), and 3 burned-out laser cartridges. The small **library** is filled with religious works, and has mostly gone to rot. A **parchment** on a writing stand, titled "THE GREAT RELOCATION", is laden with a new prophecy written in red and blue ink: *"Doom is over the City! Mirvander Khan has beheld the Nightmare Prophecies in his dreams, and trembled! He has wrought a great counter-dream with Jeng, the Tiger Lord and Moonlord, but the Little Brothers declare they are of little faith. A new time shall come: THE GREAT RELOCATION, whereupon the empty Paradise of Satrap Zeirus shall be peopled by the children of Sürü Miklári."*

12. Machine room: Ancient, rumbling, whirring and grinding **machines** on the verge of falling apart. Holy chalk signs. Great leather belts are operated with hand cranks and pedals by the toiling **rat-priests**. **Rats** scurry underfoot, and are sometimes crushed as they are caught by the gears.



13. Corridor of the brass guardians: Four niches, **brass figures** with moustached faces hold curved scimitars in both hands. Two **portcullises** operated with single lever. On exiting room, handle must be pulled sideways to avoid both portcullises falling and the figures animating.

Brass guardians (4): HD 3; AC 5; Atk 2*scimitar 1d8; Spec immobile; ML 12; AL N.
 Hp 15 11 18 18

14. Treasury: Squeaking rats (**1d3 rat swarms**), filth and great packs of food. The rats have gnawed on the rich carpets and furniture, torn apart the silks and rich clothing, but have not harmed the metal: 3000 sp, 1000 electrum, 250 gp, 3 gemstones (80 gp, 300 gp, 20 gp), a 1700 gp gem-encrusted *scimitar* -2, and an *oil of etherealness*.

15. Side chamber: This back room is separated from the rumbling machines by a dusty **brass grille** (no way through). Smell of rats and oil, **three metal tuns** filled with machine grease.

16. Round chamber: In the middle, giant gear rests horizontally on a thick axle, with several more discarded by the walls.

17. Machine room: Ancient machines have been gutted and left to rust, with levers, cranks and spindles. Ancient inscriptions on brass plates read "ZEÉSH DOWN" and "ZEÉSH UP".

18. Storage: Machine parts and several sacks of food, partly eaten by scurrying rats. Water font in eastern wall.

19. Cells: Cramped, ill-smelling priests' cells with **4-6 rat-priests** each. Rags, dirty tapestries and an abundance of copper and brass dishes.

20. Priests' burial: Tall, vaulted chamber with a brass cage in the middle – only a small hatch from above allows entrance. Therein are cleaned bones and stinking scraps; stuck between the bars are oil lamps, rotting flowers and vials of perfume. This is the burial cage of the old priests.

21. The tomb of Khubal the Steadfast: The resting place of an old hero. Tiled floor, **glass sarcophagus** standing on six human-shaped metal legs. Therein is a **lump of old iron** in the shape of a human figure, with molten and uneven limbs. A plaque reads: "AYANGHÁT KHUBAL THE STEADFAST, WHOSE BODY IS THE ARMOUR OF THE BRAVE ONES". If touched, the iron lump groans, but exhorts the characters to turn his body into goodly armour (makes for a suit of plate +2). He was a contemporary of the Tiger Lord, and also imparts a final, disjointed warning before expiring: "*That accursed music... became the end of us all. There we were... Tahmuras the Crusher... the Tiger Lord... Vampánga had disappeared in the cataclysm...*"

22. Stairs: Stone plaque in the floor reads: "THE REALM OF KADURGHÁN".



THE LOWER TEMPLE

23. The Throne of Prayers: Scented candles, low arches. Chains encircle the painted wooden seat, fat rats play on marble checkerboard tiles. 1:6 of penitent priest or rats devouring intruder.

24. Columned hall: Trapdoor and iron rungs from the Upper Temple. A thick, dirty glass wall looks down upon the Punishment Sphere (40).

25. Observation room: Control room with ancient swivel chairs mounted on metal legs. Brass grille overlooks the lower machine room; small holes have been cut for the rats.

26. Storage: Stuck door. Rancid machine grease in metal tuns, toolboxes, a functional **blow-torch** (*burning hands* equivalent, 8/4 Hp, 2d12 charges), and five bulky, badly chewed up **overalls** bearing the sign “ΑΣΤΡΟΝΑΩ” (ASTRONAV). A metal **footlocker** labelled “THE PITS OF FIERY LANCES” contains several small canisters stamped “ΔΙΑ”, but the diambroid within has turned inert due to age and water damage.

27. Lower machine room: The lower sections of the great black machines labour tirelessly. Rattling drums, creaking disks and worn leather belts, sacred chalk signs. In control room (b), a group of **rat-priests** oversees the manufacturing process with gauge rods.

28. Disassembled machine: Its bulky shield has been lifted off to reveal a corroded interior filled with metal parts and molten glass beads.

29. Production line: Conveyor belt carries an endless series of stamped, perforated wafers (iron “punchcards” with pentagonal and hexagonal holes), collected in metal crates bearing the chalk sign “PALACE”. Southern **wells** are metal pressure pits with reading gauges, down to 64. **Eastern door** has been marked “FORBIDDEN SECTION”, and bears a double lock.

30. Spider nest: Inscription reads “THE ABODE OF KHOZIM”. Mouldy webs have caught multiple rats, and conceal **4 weavers in the vault**.

Weavers in the Vault (4): HD 4; AC 6; Atk bite 1d6 + poison (dead in 2d6 turns); ML 7; AL N.
 Hp 12 17 21 16

31. Cobwebbed chamber: No one has set foot here in many years. Inscription above descending stairway reads “THE OLD GENERATORS. FORTRESS OF THE TIGER, LAYER VIII. NO ENTRY WITHOUT THE BLESSED VESTMENTS”. (Note that Layer VIII is flooded with deadly radiation, and those who disregard the subsequent warnings have it coming!)

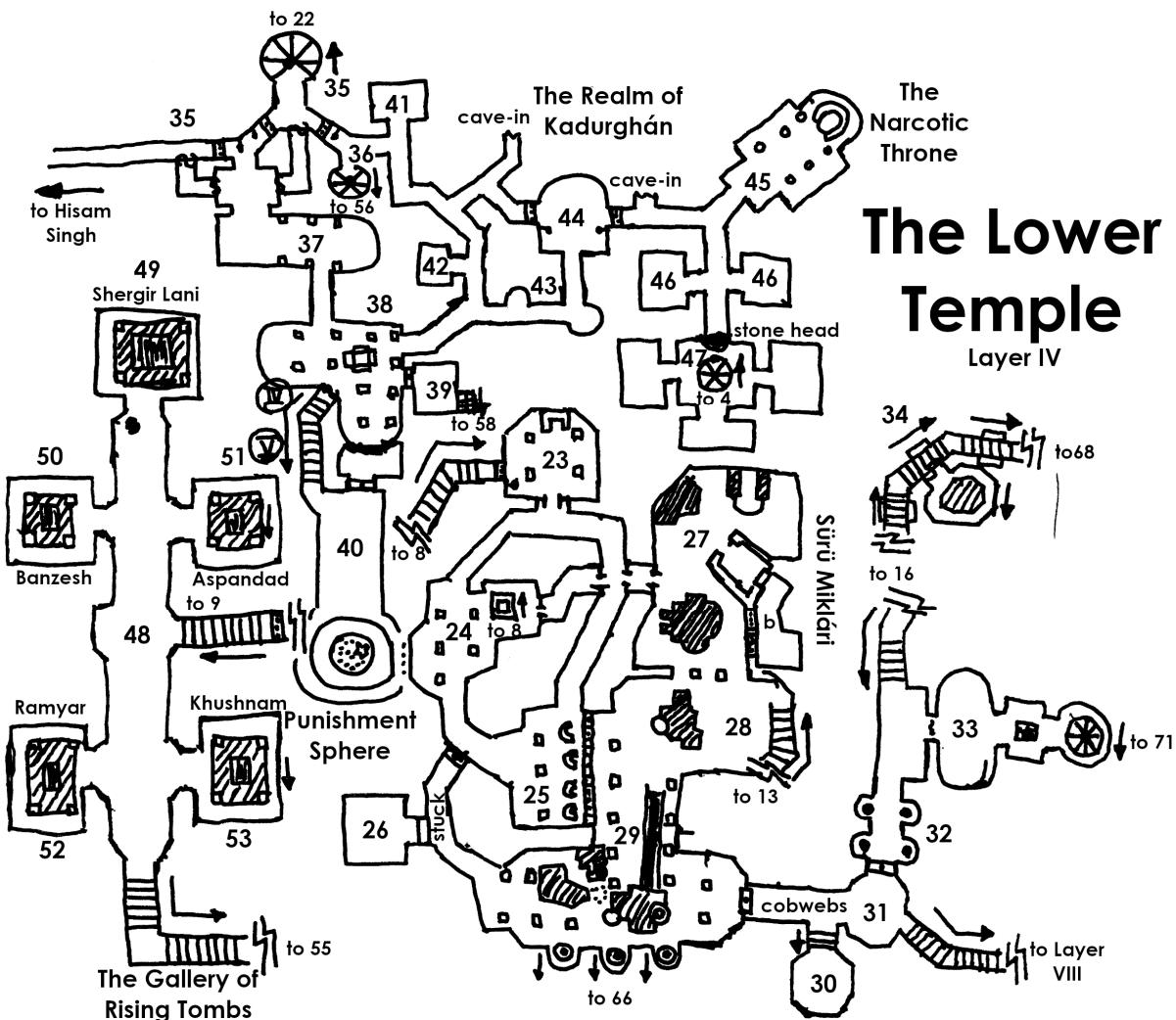
32. Statues: Four niches with **black marble statues** depicting simurgh. Each beast holds a plaque in its claws bearing a moon phase (clockwise from NE: waning, full, waxing, new). Inscription reads: “THE ETERNAL PRINCIPLE SHALL STRIKE DOWN HE WHO GOES AGAINST THE MOON, AND THUS MARCHES TO HIS DOOM”.

33. Anteroom: Floor plaque reads “THE HALLS OF TRIUMPHANT WEDDING”. Lone **statue** of a simurgh watches fresco of moon phases. Those straying from the right path (waxing – full – waning – new) shall be struck by an electrical discharge for 4d6 Hp (save vs. wands ½).

34. The Musical Stairs: Rows of **bas-reliefs** depict famous musicians of old – Banzoresh, Zamsan, Gulbadan, Dinaz, Sanover and Nazmin. The mouth of Dinaz still plays a mournful tune – **secret door**, drilled hole contains a mouth-harp. The deep shaft leads 30' downwards to the Cavern of the Pattern Bowl (59), and 120' upwards to a domed, nondescript building at the foot of the Fortress of the Tiger. The shaft is inhabited by **24 crimson vampire bats**.

Crimson vampire bats (24): HD 1; AC 7; Atk bite 1d4; Spec suck blood 2/r for 3 r max, disease (save or fatal in 1d12 days); ML 6; AL N.

Hp	3	1	8	8	8	7
	8	1	8	3	3	4
	5	1	3	3	7	1
	1	6	4	4	2	2



The Lower Temple

Layer IV

THE REALM OF KADURGHÁN

The Realm of Kadurghán, damned warrior, encompasses rooms 35–46.

- This sub-level is filled with a dense **red mist** slowly flowing through copper grilles in the wall; the floor is covered in a dusty rose-coloured residue. The mist is an euphoric poison gas, inflicting 1d3 Hp per turn, or every round if undertaking heavy exertion (e.g. running or combat).
- **Random encounters** occur 1:6 per turn with **2d6 horned ghosts** coalescing out of the mist, or 1:6 every second turn if the company is stealthy. **Kadurghán** himself is at (1d6)...: 1-3 sitting on his throne (45), 4-5 contemplating the Heart of Vernáti (38), 6 roaming the level! Should he be encountered, the intruders had better have a good reason to disturb his solitude.

Horned ghosts (2d6): HD 3; AC 7; Atk claws 2d4; Spec turned as shadow, incorporeal; ML 7; AL CE.

Hp	17	18	14	9	14	16
	18	19	12	13	11	8
	21	11	13	22	16	16
	9	16	8	12	9	17

35. Entrance: The red mists start to get thick here. Passage from below the house of Hisam Singh terminates in barred, ornate **brass portcullis**, the opening lever in plain sight beyond. Throwing the lever produces a loud screech as the gates open, and immediately results in a random encounter! A **fresco** depicts an iron mask surrounded by red clouds, with a painted inscription: "THE REALM OF KADURGHÁN: THE SWEET DELIRIUM". There are **two secret passages** to bypass the gates (and careful observers will note faint footsteps in the rosy dust). One of the passages contains a turbaned corpse wearing a snake amulet, still clutching a curved dagger and a broken lantern.

36. Spiral stairs: Inscription above arch reads "GURAKHÁN THE SHADOW HYDRA: THE COURT OF VANNAGLAKKA". Faint graffiti of serpent on the wall.

37. Fresco room: Stone plaque on the floor reads "THE RAPTURE OF THE HEART". Vivid, rose-coloured **frescoes** depict clawed black demons ripping open the chest of a reposing warrior resting on a rectangular glass block. One demon holds aloft the beating heart.

38. The Heart of Vernáti: Splendid, rosy marbles shot with cream cover the walls; the floor is a grand mosaic of wild greens and blues. Thin, curved columns rise to a domed ceiling 30' up, with grinning serpents' heads lit with flickering flames. Slipping light-headed feeling. Plaque on the floor reads "THE HEART OF VERNÁTI: KADURGHÁN'S SORROW".

A central dais holds an intricate **reliquary** constructed of thick cut glass panes held together by twisting brass bands. Therein is a red cushion bearing three potions marked with pictograms (heart – *philtre of love*, sun – *potion of heroism*, eye – *potion of clairvoyance*), and 4 gemstones (2 splinters at 10 and 50 gp, a small ruby worth 500 gp, and a wondrous, heart-shaped ruby worth 2500 gp – the Heart of Vernáti!) A complicated **serpent lock** seals the reliquary, consisting of two entwined serpents whose heads protrude outwards, and an inscription: "SERPENT LOCK THAT SEALS THE CASE / OPEN WIDE TO A COUNT OF SIX / HER HEAD TURNS WITH A SINISTER GAZE / WITHOUT HER NAME, IT'S ALL AMISS." The lock opens by twisting the left serpent's head six times leftwards and saying the name of Vannaglakka, or it can be picked open with two successful attempts. Failure in either case results in the serpent heads breathing poison gas on the thief (save or die). **Note:** Once Kadurghán learns of the heart's theft, he will swear bloody vengeance, then hunt down the fences first, and the company afterwards.

39. Workshop: Bloodstained stone block, knives and saws. Several hearts rest in glass jars on long shelves, but most have burst from the exertion of being placed in Kadurghán's chest. The smell of charnel rot wafts from a **floor grate**; 30' shaft drops down to **58**.

40. Punishment Sphere: Stairs lead down to area halfway between Layers IV and V. A glass observation window from **24** overlooks an enormous **sphere** bedecked with thick brass cables, and humming with sinister power. Large brass plaque on the base reads "PUNISHMENT SPHERE". A ladder leads up to a hatch, and a human figure is visible within. Calibration instruments and ornate, ancient **control panels** around the walls. The sphere's captive is broken madman **Abdul-Wahab Khurban**, who can only rant and rave if questioned. (e.g. "Deston! The Deston! No! The harmonies! Oh no!", etc.) Abdul-Wahab had lost his mind, after reporting on something unbearably horrific to Mirvander Khan. He is by and large useless, but as a former member of the secret police, might know some ways into the Palace.

41. Ossuary: Piles of bones by the wall. Broken spear hafts and tips.

42. Crypt: Corpses stuck in the wall on spears, one still twisting and clawing the stones.

43. Passage of skulls: Niches and recesses with piles of human skulls bearing elongated, "vampiric" incisors. Bodies in round room have decayed into coal and ashes.

44. Dancers' room: Frescoes with faded, black and red outlines of dancers. Carefully destroyed inscription around room perimeter.

45. The Narcotic Throne: Inscription above entrance passage reads: "THE NARCOTIC THRONE: THE COURT OF KADURGHÁN". Splendid throne room of red marbles, golden ornaments (1300 gp) and vivid tapestries. Princely black-and-cream checkerboard floor has been encrusted with centuries of grime.

Overlooking the room is a baroque brass **throne**, flanked by brass serpents exhaling pleasant aromas, fed by enormous glass tanks containing perfumes (2d6*100 gp each, but a heavy haul). There is also the smell of faint decay... **Lord Kadurghán**, wearing the ceremonial cobalt-blue armour of the Warriors of the Tiger. Kadurghán's face inky black as the darkest night, with ebony canines and glowing golden eyes, his hands misshapen, clawed paws. His breastplate also bears a small hinged cover over the heart.

Kadurghán, usually absorbed in his narcotic delirium to try forget his loss, is seeking a particularly strong heart that would not burst in the chest of a mighty super-hero like him. The heart that now beats within his bosom had belonged to his dead love Vernáti, who had killed herself so that he could live. In battle, he is joined by **2d6+ horned ghosts** (reroll and add on 6).

Lord Kadurghán: Fighter 8; AC 2 (plate, *cloak +1*); Atk 2*cursed sword -2 1d10+2 or claws 1d6+4 + LVL; Spec energy drain, hits at +2, silver or +1 to hit, turned as spectre; Str 18/77, Int 11, Wis 7, Dex 11, Con 14, Cha 9; ML 11; AL LE; 1000 gp tiger bracers.

Hp 47

46. Dressing rooms: Dusty, crumbling drapes and noble women's clothing; comfortable wooden couch. Boudoir with dried cosmetics and 350 gp of jewellery. Odd **dressing mirror** with lacquered frame is haunted by a faint, ghostly presence... the spirit of the vampire-mage Riamos, now trapped within the mirrors of his own tower (to be described in a later issue).

47. Scenery storage: Dark, damp vault beneath the Theatre of Sutrali Khibari. Sandbags and wooden scenery, most disused and some improbably old. Faint scent of the red mists. An enormous stone face blocks the entrance to the Realm of Kadurghán... there is no opening mechanism from this side, but Kadurghán's name or a *knockspell* will suffice.



THE GALLERY OF RISING TOMBS

This sub-level (**48-55**) is of great antiquity, constructed of a smooth, featureless marble slabs. The Rising Tombs are ornate metal burial chambers suspended on four powerful chains, hanging in 90' shafts bisecting Layers IV to VI. There are antique hoist mechanisms in the ceiling which would allow the tombs to be lowered, but the controls are now buried (collapsed passage E of **54**). Each metal chamber has three portholes allowing outside observation, and a locked metal door allowing them to be opened. Triggering the locking mechanism extends a small metal bridge connecting the chamber to the ledge.

Roaming the galleries is their appointed guardian, **Harkhúrid the Springing Horror**. This hunched skeletal monster walks on all fours like a prowling animal, and runs shambling and cackling at lightning speed as it goes for its victims. Harkhúrid has vampire teeth and may not be turned. He is as agile at climbing and jumping as a great ape. If downed, he reforms to fight again in 1d6+6 rounds. Harkhúrid's initial location is determined with **1d6**: 1-2 upper gallery (**48**), 3-4 lower gallery (**54**), 5-6 stairway (**55**), but he has good hearing, and will come to investigate loud noises.

Harkhúrid the Springing Horror: HD 6+6; AC 2; Atk 4*claws 1d6+2 and bite 2d4+2; Spec climb, jump 20', always wins initiative, revives in 1d6+6 r; ML 12; AL CE.

Hp 29



48. Upper Gallery: Dusty hallway illuminated by rectangular crystals embedded in the ceiling. Great **brass plaque** opposite stairs reads:

"THE GALLERY OF RISING TOMBS.
LAYER IV
THE MUSEUM OF SHERGIR LANI"

All undead in the gallery are turned as vampires!

49. The Tomb of Shergir Lani: **Plaque** on door reads "SHERGIR LANI", and glowing magical **glyps** underneath spell out the message "THE DELIGHT OF NEWFOUND MEETINGS" (explosive *runes*, 6d4+6 Hp, no save for reader). Within the chamber is a **mummified corpse** sitting on a brass throne in a royal blue cloak (800 gp). The body and cloak has been impregnated with a dust causing mummy rot. 300 gp silver dust in a brass bowl, 8*100 gp gold bars, glass ampules (*potion of cure poison*, *philtre of love*, *serum of truth* [imbiber cannot tell lies], *extra-healing*, *oil of blessings* [ritual significance or as spell]). Spellbook: 1: colour spray, sleep, ventriloquism; 2: pyrotechnics; 3: protection from evil 10' r, protection from missiles, tongues; 4: wall of ice; 5: conjure elemental, feeblemind.

50. The Tomb of Banzesh: **Plaque** on door reads "BANZESH OF THE DELIGHTFUL FACE". Banzesh, now a **wight** feigning death, wears splendid red and blue clothing (600 gp), and a sun mask (1200 gp) hiding a blackened skeletal visage with gemstone teeth (600 gp, see notes in city guide). 500 gp silver dust in brass bowl, 20*20 pt platinum disks, opal bracelet 350 gp.

Banzesh, wight: HD 4+3; AC 5; Atk claws 1d4 + LVL; Spec energy drain, breathe fire 1/2 rounds for 12 Hp (save 1/2), silver or +1 to hit, immune to sleep etc.; ML 12; AL LE.

Hp 23

51. The Tomb of Aspandad: **Plaque** on door reads "ASPANDAD THE MODEST BENEFACTOR". He is also a **wight** (15 Hp), but he has been securely bound with golden chains (800 gp). If the helpless form is "slain", his soul escapes through his mouth as a **wraith**.

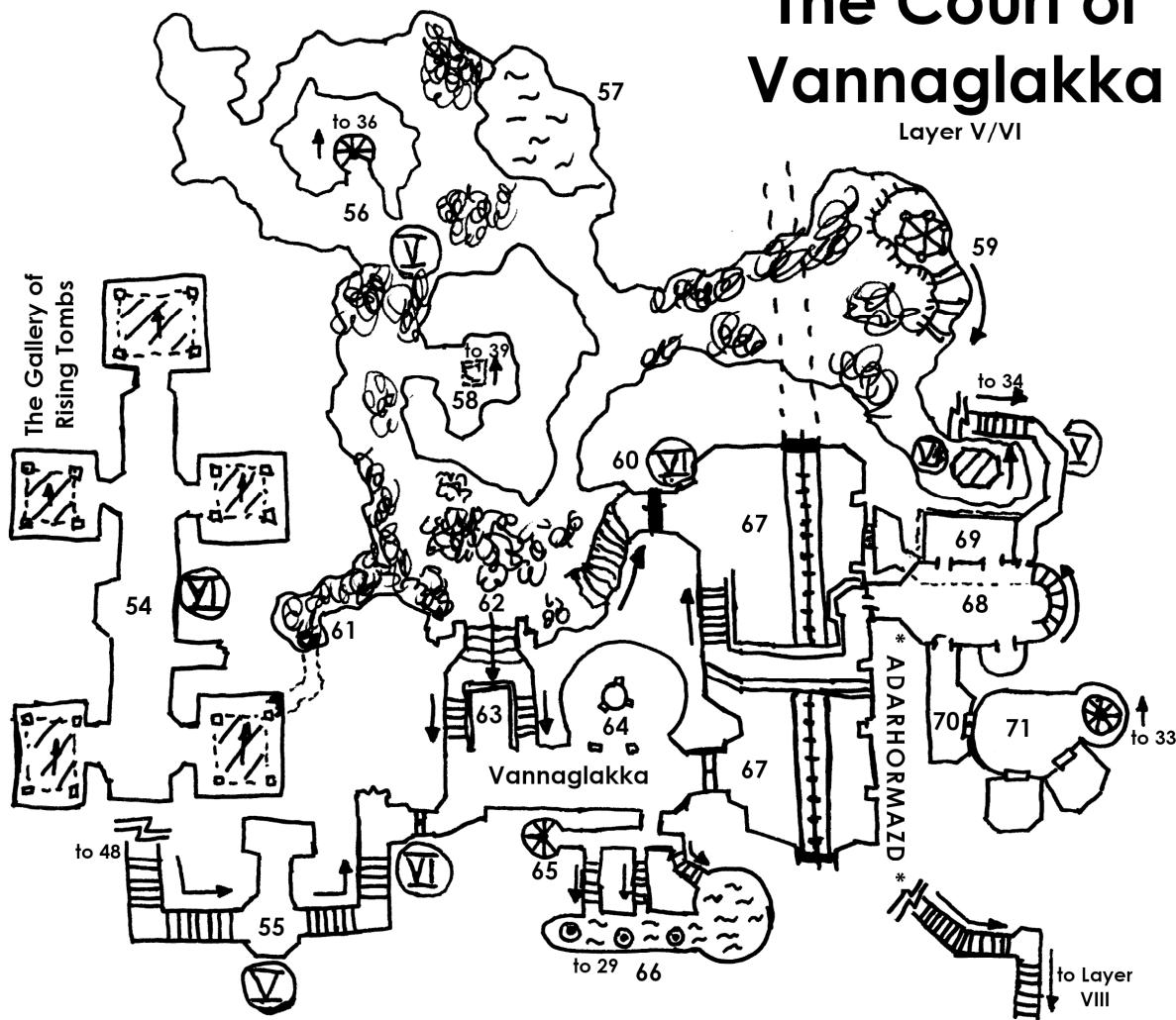
Aspandad, wraith: HD 5+3; AC 4; Atk touch 1d6 + LVL; Spec energy drain, silver or +1 to hit, incorporeal; ML 10; AL LE.

Hp 30

52. The Tomb of Ramyar: **Plaque** on door reads "RAMYAR, HE WHO IS DELIGHTED". Phosphorescent skeleton emitting a pale green radiance, wearing green glass jewellery. Ramyar is a **breathstealer**, and tries to run for it if brought before 1/2 Hp. 600 gp silver dust in brass bowl, 350 gp torc, *scroll of illusionist spells* (spectral force, Lankwiler's prismatic missile [combines magic missile with prismatic effects]).

The Court of Vannaglakka

Layer V/VI



Ramyar, breathstealer: HD 4; AC 5; Atk claws 1d6; Spec breathstealing (save vs. magic, breath is only returned once monster is killed), immune to cold and mind-affecting; ML 8; AL CE.
Hp 27

53. The Tomb of Khushnam: Plaque on the door reads "KHUSHNAM OF THE PLEASANT VISAGE". Beautiful feminine face on putrescent body with a slimy green tinge (**ghast**). 300 gp cameo, 1300 gp crown with small gemstones.

Khushnam, ghast: HD 4; AC 4; Atk 2*claws 1d4 + paralysis and bite 1d8 + paralysis; Spec stench (save vs. poison or -2), immune to cold and mind-affecting; ML 11; AL CE.
Hp 21

54. Lower Gallery: Dusty hallway, artificial lights in the ceiling have been extinguished. Great brass plaque in the floor reads:

"THE GALLERY OF RISING TOMBS.
LAYER IV
THE MUSEUM OF SHERGIR LANI"

Below every tomb chamber, a **stone plug** at the bottom of the shaft conceals a shallow pit with canopic jars worth 1d6*100 gp, containing petrified innards. Possessing the innards grants command over the inhabitants of the tombs, but their touch is mildly poisonous (save at +2 or retching over 1d6 turns causes 2 Hp/turn).

55. Landing: Faded painted sign reads "LAYER V". Square crystals in the ceiling provide a faint flickering glow.

THE COURT OF VANNAGLAHKA

Both the cavernous and artificial sections of this sub-level (56-66) are lit by rectangular crystal lights embedded in the ceiling. This artificial illumination is very sparse and faintly purplish in the dark caverns, which are filled with lush, leafy green vegetation. The air is humid and the walls glitter with dripping condensation in a warm hothouse environment. The caverns are guarded by **Gurakhán the Shadow Hydra (11-headed)**, who always lurks nearby (1:6 per turn, or when loud noise is made), but does not venture beyond **60 or 62**. Gurakhán's shadowy aubergine colouration and light footsteps give him a high surprise rating.

Gurakhán the Shadow Hydra: HD 11; AC 5; Atk 11*bite 1d10; Spec surprise 4:6, swallow smaller creatures on 20; ML 10; AL N.

Hp	57	//	8	8	8	8	8	8
	8		8	8	8	8	8	8

56. Spiral stairs: Inscription above arch reads "THE REALM OF KADURGHÁN". **1:3** of tracks in mud. Torn sacks with bloody scraps, sacrificial offerings from Hisam Singh's latest expedition.

57. Pool: A muddy water pool surrounded by a cluster of thick, rubbery **sea anemones**.

Sea anemones (5): HD 4; AC 6; Atk cilia 2d4 + paralysis; Spec slow, mindless; ML 12; AL N.

Hp	26	26	21	25	19
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58. Disposal pit: Shaft 30' below **39**. Rotting, torn limbs and human scraps swarming with **giant centipedes**. 400 gp platinum gorget with sapphires lost in vegetation.

Giant centipedes (14): HD 1/4; AC 9; Atk bite 1 + poison; Spec save at +4; ML 5; AL N.

Hp	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2
	1	2								

59. Pavilion: A hemispherical **geodesic dome** built from steel pipes rises on the outcropping. Letters carved in the stone wall read "THE PATTERN BOWL: RASHGÚLÁR'S GIFT", followed shortly by a marble **plaque** reading "HERE DID TORMESK, HIGH PRIEST OF JENG LEARN THE SECRETS OF CREATION ON HIS UNDERWORLD PILGRIMAGE". Below the plaque is a cavity with three pearls balanced on small alabaster pyramids (2*200 gp, 180 gp).

Below the dome is the **Pattern Bowl**. Carved from the most noble alabaster, it contains colourful mud in scintillant hues of blue, green, red and ochre. This mud is *the dust of creation*, the raw stuff of life, and will be found here every month. It can be shaped into 2d6 HD worth of living creatures. Roll under Int or Wis to determine success:

- On a failure by at least 6, the creature is malformed and perishes.
- On a failure, it is half-strength.
- On a success, its physical abilities are average for its type.
- On a success by at least 6, its abilities are outstanding, and it may have special capabilities.
- On a success over 12, the results are alarmingly impressive.

It must be noted that the relationship between creator and creature may not be entirely harmonious; and also that certain beings could be harder or easier to make.

The **shaft** in the SE cavern leads up to **34**, and then the surface (note **vampire bats**).

60. Gates: Massive iron gates weighing tons. The automatics are failing, and absent a **knockspell**, only the name of * ADARHORMAZD * may throw it open (1:2).

61. Burrow: Side cavern choked with dense vegetation. Bones have been picked clean by **10 giant centipedes** living in **crawlway**.

Giant centipedes (10): HD 1/4; AC 9; Atk bite 1 + poison; Spec save at +4; ML 5; AL N.

Hp	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2
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62. Gateway: Open gateway surrounded by respiratory roots clinging to mossy walls. Bone piles, footprints and blood; **1:3** of immediate hydra encounter. **Inscription** above arch reads "THE DEMESNE OF VANNAGLAKKA. THE STAIRS OF SACRIFICIAL PROGRESS."

63. The Stairs of Sacrificial Progress: Bas-reliefs of religious procession. Unless sacrificial offerings are held aloft, or someone is tossed forward as living sacrifice, anyone going down the stairs receives 1d3+1 attacks as 4 HD invisible hands strangle them (2d6 Hp).

64. The Demesne of Vannaglakka: Beneath a glittering mosaic dome, the thick body of the great serpent *** VANNAGLAKKA *** rests coiled around a large, shiny metal sphere, on a pile of treasure. Feeling of tension, faint humming from within sphere. Vannaglakka inquires which of the visitors will be her due, but a rich sacrifice of magic items will work (and a snake amulet has **1:3** to suffice). She can otherwise strangle intruders with her mere gaze or dash them against the walls with *telekinesis*. Her treasures are 3400 gp of digested and disgorged precious metals, 5 gems (400 gp, 45 gp, 300 gp, 450 gp, 2000 gp), and a *stone of weight* she has swallowed, and which bothers her mightily.

Vannaglakka is very wise, and she can answer the questions to three mysteries. She feels a contradiction within the City, and believes it to be ruled by a Great Lie, which is in truth self-deception. Some of those who have learned of its truth have gone insane, while some try to use it to their advantage by spreading it further.

The **sphere** is 15' in diameter, and stands on three short legs. There is a band running along its circumference, stamped with the letters "ΓΕΟΣΦΕΡΑ" (GEOSPHERA).

*** VANNAGLAKKA *:** HD 12 MAX; AC 0; Atk bite 2d8 + poison (save at -3 or die) and constrict 3d8 and tail slap 1d10; Spec strangling gaze ½ r (save vs. death or 3d6), *telekinesis* at will, immune to mind-affecting; MR 60%; ML 12; AL N.

Hp 96

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The GEOSPHERA: This device of the archaic cycles is one of the devices regulating the flow of energy through the Underworld and the City of Vultures. It is immovable and essentially impervious to harm, but it can be unlocked by those who possess the knowledge of the Masters of DESTON. Thus opened, the GEOSPHERA can be modified to function as a 15 megaton chromatic charge, activated when all similar devices in the Underworld are reset. The other GEOSPHERA are found at the following locations (all on the lowest accessible Layers):

- in the Garden of Vampánga below the **Tomb of Ali Shulwar**;
- in the Garden of Radiant Glory deep beneath **The Mausoleum of Satrap Zeirus**;
- opposite the Sapphire Lake below **The Temple of Mezeng**;
- in the middle of the Hall of the Under-Throne below the **Palace**.

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65. Spiral stairs: Inscription above arch reads "THE LAKE THAT COOLS THE MACHINES. LAYER VIII. NO ENTRY WITHOUT THE BLESSED VESTMENTS". These stairs lead down to Layer VIII (currently unmapped), whose waters are flooded with deadly radiation. Those who disregard the warning deserve what they get!

66. Flooded room: Defunct machinery stands in the chest-high water with a 20' deep part in the circular room. A **gelatinous cube** on the bottom has absorbed a great quantity of scrap metal. Well shafts lead up to **29**.

Gelatinous cube: HD 4; AC 8; Atk cube 2d4 + paralysis 5d4 r; Spec surprise 3:6, immune to cold, electricity, mind-affecting, polymorph; ML 12; AL N.

Hp 22

67. Station: Hall built of a smooth grey stone no longer known in the present era. Dusty, angular interiors, **overpass** over ancient magnetic monorail tracks. Massive iron gates seal the exits. Between the carved faces of demons, a grand, baroque **marble plaque** reads

* A D A R H O R M A Z D *
THE FIRE OF THE DIVINE ASPECT
THE FOURTH SACRAMENT

A **meta-droid** (c.f. **Echoes #03**), a bulky war machine of riveted yellow plates and sooty firing ports patrols the station. It has malfunctioned, its targeting system operating at a low efficiency.

The **monorail** can be summoned with one of the sacred names. When exclaimed, the carriage, a tube-shaped old brass vehicle with bizarre and demonic ornaments, arrives within 2d6 turns and departs one turn afterwards to its destination. The following sacred names have effect:

- * A D A R H O R M A Z D * : No effect (company is here).
- * A D A R B U R Z I N M E H E R * : The Garden of Vampánga (The Tomb of Ali Shulwar)
- * A D A R B A H R A M * : The Pits of Fiery Lances (The Temple of Mezeng)
- * A D A R G U S H N A S P * : The Fortress of the Tiger (station only)
- * A D A R K U R S H I D * : The Villa of Hyél Singh (outside the City, Tridentos **2406**)
- * A D A R M A R D * : The Great Stairway (The Mausoleum of Satrap Zeirus)
- * A D A R H Ó S H A N G * : The Grand Terminal (The Palace)

Meta-droid: HD 8+8; AC 0; Atk fist 1d12+2 or laser beam 3d10+ (as 2 HD monster); Spec laser 1/3 rounds, roll extra dice on 0, immune to mind-affecting, $\frac{1}{2}$ damage from cold, fire and electricity; ML 12; AL N.

Hp 59

68. Lounge: Waiting lounge decorated with mosaics of disturbing black and gold patterns. **Geometric design** on the wall is symbolic representation of monorail network.

69. Side room: Ceramic tile walls encrusted with limestone crystals. Purple glow-worms crawling over pitted surfaces.

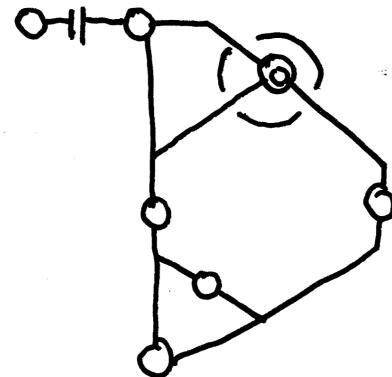
70. Entrance: Locked iron **door** with bas-reliefs of the dead. Inscription reads "THE HALLS OF TRIUMPHANT WEDDING". Lock is outfitted with finger-cutting blade trap (2d6 Hp).

71. The Halls of Triumphant Wedding: Canopied bed with bizarre carvings and shredded veils. Stucco walls splattered with blood; numerous gnawed-on, broken bones in side-chambers. **1:3 of Uromén the Chortling Death**, squatting and muttering insanely. Strewn about is 2d4*1000 gp worth of jewelry.

Uromén is a skeletal monster of dishevelled appearance, with long wild hair clinging to a bare skull, bloodshot green eyes sitting in empty eye sockets, vampiric teeth and sharp skeletal claws. He is a distant cousin of **Harkhúrid the Springing Horror (48)** and just as quick, but intelligent and of a much higher station! Noble Uromén serves as the seneschal of Kwárü Khan, the accursed former ruler of the city, who now dwells in the deeper realms beneath the Palace. He knows the secret byways of the Underworld (including the operation of the monorail network), and is willing to offer a pact in his lord's name... for a service. He desires the freedom of Sharmakár, the Spirit in Amber, who lies imprisoned in the stasis pits of the Temple of Jeng (37). In exchange, he will impart the sacred word to the Palace and the Grand Terminal, and arrange an audience with Kwárü Khan, blasphemous grandmaster of evil!

Uromén the Chortling Death: HD 6+6; AC -2; Atk 4*claws 1d6 and bite 1d12; Spec always wins initiative, *hold person* gaze $\frac{1}{4}$ rounds, immune to cold and mind-affecting, $\frac{1}{2}$ from lightning, +1 or better to hit, turned as vampire, MR 60%; ML 10; AL CE.

Hp 32





...: The Armoury :...

Ag's Arrows (250 gp): Iron-shafted arrows holding smouldering orange crystals. The arrows are +2, with +4 fire damage (maximum on undead and foes susceptible to fire). 1d10 are found at a time.

Arrows of the Night (1000 gp): Forged from the darkest night, they drain 2d6 Strength on a hit. Those reduced to zero must save vs. death or become undead shadows. 1d3+1 are found.

The Axe of Many Runes (2000 gp): Battleaxe graven with runic inscriptions. It is -3 to hit, but a natural 20 inflicts double damage - as do similar hits on the bearer. Usually found among the bones of its previous bearer.

The Blade of Lions (4000 gp): A *longsword* +2 of classical make. If the bearer flees from battle, it rusts and becomes non-magical - only a heroic deed can restore it, one plus at a time. Usually found rusty.

Bronwilt's Basher (5500 gp): This *footman's mace* +3 grants 18/00 Str and +1 Hp/level if the bearer is fighting against demons or devils.

Darkaxe (1200 gp): This is a +1 *battleaxe* manufactured from a dull black metal. It is cursed, and the bearer will wither into a wight in the span of 2d6 months.

The Dragon Blade of Kor (5500 gp): This *bastard sword* +3 has an enchanting effect on black dragons, who will seek out the bearer and follow with single-minded zeal.

Frogbringer (1000 gp): An ordinary-looking *longsword* +1, whose bearer will constantly be harassed by giant and killer frogs, even in his most intimate moments.

Mace of the Dark Flame (3500 gp): This heavy, soot-covered *footman's mace* -1 is sheathed in a halo of heatless flames in battle. On a natural 20, it sets victims on fire, burning with 1d6/r, and only extinguished with holy water or magic.

Medusa Stones (400 gp): Specially enchanted +1 sling stones, which petrify opponents on a natural 20 (save applies). 1d10 are found.

The Nails of Yulan (180 gp): These heavy cold iron quarrels are +3 vs. summoned and extra-planar beings. 1d10 are found.

Number Nine (1200 gp): These coveted *arrows* +3 separate to strike as 9 missiles (roll to hit nine times). Only a single one is found at a time.

Peacemaker (1000 gp): This arrow is equivalent to a *slay living* spell. 1d3+1 are found.

Raven's Beak (2500 gp): *Bec de corbin +1* forged from a shiny black metal. Wounds inflicted with the weapon bleed at a rate of 2 Hp/r until magically healed. The weapon's bearer receives no natural healing.

Serpent's Tongue (2000 gp): A *shortsword +1* in the shape of a serpent's tongue. It is an untrustworthy weapon, scoring an automatic hit on a natural 1, but sometimes robbing the bearer of his ultimate victories.

Sparkhammer (3500 gp): This *warhammer +2* unleashes a cloud of sparks when it strikes metal, causing 2d4 Hp - also affects bearer unless wearing heavy clothing.

Stone Eater (5500 gp): *Footman's pick +3*, particularly useful in mining - it breaks stones at double speed, and doubles damage vs. stone statues, golems, etc.

Stone Shafts (300 gp): These crystalline quarrels are naturally formed in the deep realms of elemental earth, receiving a natural +1 enchantment. 2d10 are found.

The Stone of Yor (2000 gp): A primitive stone knife (*dagger +1*) made of a material resembling amber. Once per day, it fills its bearer with the power of a great spirit, as *potion of heroism*.

The Sword of Barriers (3500 gp): This *two-handed sword +1* can raise a magical wall 1/day (*wall of fire, wall of ice, wall of stone & wall of winds*). Alternatively, it can generate a *prismatic wall*, but lose all supernatural capabilities in the process.

The Sword of Basilisks (5000 gp): A *longsword +1* that petrifies victims on a natural 19-20 (save applies), but the bearer is completely vulnerable to petrifaction (no save).

The Sword of Chaos (3000 gp): Forged from pure chaos, this barbaric two-handed sword is decorated with emeralds and rubies. Before every battle, roll 1d6 for power: 1: -3, 2: -2, 3: -1, 4: +1, 5: +2 6: +3. The sword is highly intelligent, capricious, and utterly dangerous.

The Sword of Dreams (3500 gp): This *bastard sword +2* can send nightmares against the desired target. The vi-

sions are so horrid that the subject must save vs. death, or gain no refreshment, and suffers 2d4 Hp damage.

Sword of the Four Winds (3500 gp): Four full-strength air elementals are trapped within this *scimitar +1*. Each of the elementals can be called on to serve the bearer once. There is a 5% chance all will be set loose, and bring utter devastation.

The Sword of Owls (2500 gp): This scimitar's handle is a semi-precious stone in the shape of an owl. The sword has no magic by day, but bears a +2 enchantment by night.

The Sword of Pharesm (3000 gp): Golden *bastard sword +1* marked with a red leather grip. The sword can be invoked (held up) to absorb spells cast at the bearer as *dispel magic*; but if the attempt fails, save is at -2.

Sword of the Radiant Sun (7500 gp): Drawing this *shortsword +2* surrounds the bearer with an aura of sunlight, which causes 2d6 Hp/r to undead in melee range, and burns vampires into ashes (save vs. breath).

The Sword of Vilet Kanebe (2500 gp): The damned blade of Vilet Kanebe is a *longsword -2*, but it transfers its curse on its first successful hit, thereafter functioning at +1 enchantment for the rest of the battle. If the bearer is slain, he crumbles into desert sand.

Trident of the Blessed Sea (2800 gp): This *trident +1* carries the favour of Poseidon; as long as its bearer performs regular sacrifice, he will never suffer misfortune at sea.

The Troubadour's Bow (4500 gp): +3 *longbow* with a golden string. Its sound is like a symphony, but only a master bard can make it sing - otherwise, it functions as a mundane weapon.



Zine Conventions

While much of old-school gaming originates from the same lineage, and its products remain largely cross-compatible, there is much devil in those details. Every table and every party has its own ideas and house rules, and it is a good idea to lay these assumptions out into the open. Therefore, the conventions governing this fanzine are thus:

- Unless otherwise noted, the materials published here were designed for **Advanced** rules.
- A thousand gold pieces is **worth a small fortune**. Monetary treasure is relatively scarce.
- Conversely, **XP for treasure** is gained through squandering it in hedonistic excess (or any kind of lavish spending which has no discernible benefit), with a ***5 multiplier**. If you adjust the treasure values, adjust the multiplier as well.
- **Level demographics** form a very flat pyramid: low-level NPCs (1st to 4th level) are commonplace, while mid-level ones (5th to 8th level) tend to be outliers – present in most communities, but never numerous. Few NPCs reach more than 9th level, and over 12th is almost unheard of.
- Magic is limited to **5th level spells** or lower. Magic items are limited to **+3**.
- Fighters can do **carryover damage**: when fighting grouped opponents, the damage remaining after a killing blow is transferred to the next opponent.
- **Roll-under morale** is in effect (see **Morale & Men** in **Echoes #01**).
- The **gods are limited in their powers**, but actively involved in the fate of the world.

Legal Appendix

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Prestigious Plunder

2003	EMDT 30 – The Tower of Manistrid #
EMDT 1 – The Garden of al-Astorion + 2008	EMDT 31 – Tempest Dreams #
EMDT 2 – SWORD & MAGIC	EMDT 32 – The Burial Chamber of Carnaic Arnoc #
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EMDT 8 – Broken Wastes +	EMDT 38 – Slaughter in the Salt Pits + 2014
EMDT 9 – The Unholy Secrets of Protoros #	EMDT 39 – Curious Marriage #
EMDT 10 – Strabonus + 2009	EMDT 40 – Until Dawn
EMDT 11 – The Menestratos School #	EMDT 41 – Ill-Gotten Merchandise 2015
EMDT 12 – Sea Lords + 2010	EMDT 42 – The Cloister's Secret #
EMDT 13 – Molonei +	EMDT 43 – The Serpent Girl and Other Stories #
EMDT 14 – Isle of the Water Sprites +	EMDT 44 – The Fools' Feast at Fürochen #
EMDT 15 – City Encounters # + 2011	EMDT 45 – The True Weapon Cache for the Helvetians' Delight # 2018
EMDT 16 – Towards Fomalhaut +	EMDT 46 – Echoes #01: Beware the Beekeeper! +
EMDT 17 – The Temple of Torments #	EMDT 47 – The Barbarian King (REVISED) +
EMDT 18 – The Barbarian King +	EMDT 48 – Echoes #02: Gont, Nest of Spies +
EMDT 19 – The Main Cities of Fomalhaut I. (+)	EMDT 49 – Echoes #03: Blood, Death, and Tourism +
EMDT 20 – Sea Demon +	EMDT 50 – Cloister of the Frog-God (HU) (+) 2019
EMDT 21 – City Encounters II: The Nocturnal Table +	EMDT 51 – The Enchantment of Vashundara (HU) #
EMDT 22 – In the Name of the Principle! +	EMDT 52 – Echoes #04: Revenge of the Frogs +
EMDT 23 – Below the City +	EMDT 53 – The Lost Valley of Kishar (HU) # +
EMDT 24 – Oolar's Time # 2012	EMDT 54 – Murderous Devices (HU) #
EMDT 25 – The Blood Drinkers of Yukum #	EMDT 55 – The Lost Valley of Kishar (EN) # +
EMDT 26 – Khosura: City State of the Four Myst. + 2013	EMDT 56 – Echoes #05: The Ench. of Vashundara +
EMDT 27 – Trials on Tridentfish Island +	EMDT 57 – The Nocturnal Table +
EMDT 28 – Feathers of Fire #	EMDT 58 – Echoes #06: The Gallery of R. Tombs +
EMDT 29 – The Ghost City of Arun-Kha #	EMDT 59 – In the Shadow of the City-God (HU) #
	EMDT 60 – Castle Xyntillan +

Indicates title written by guest author

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