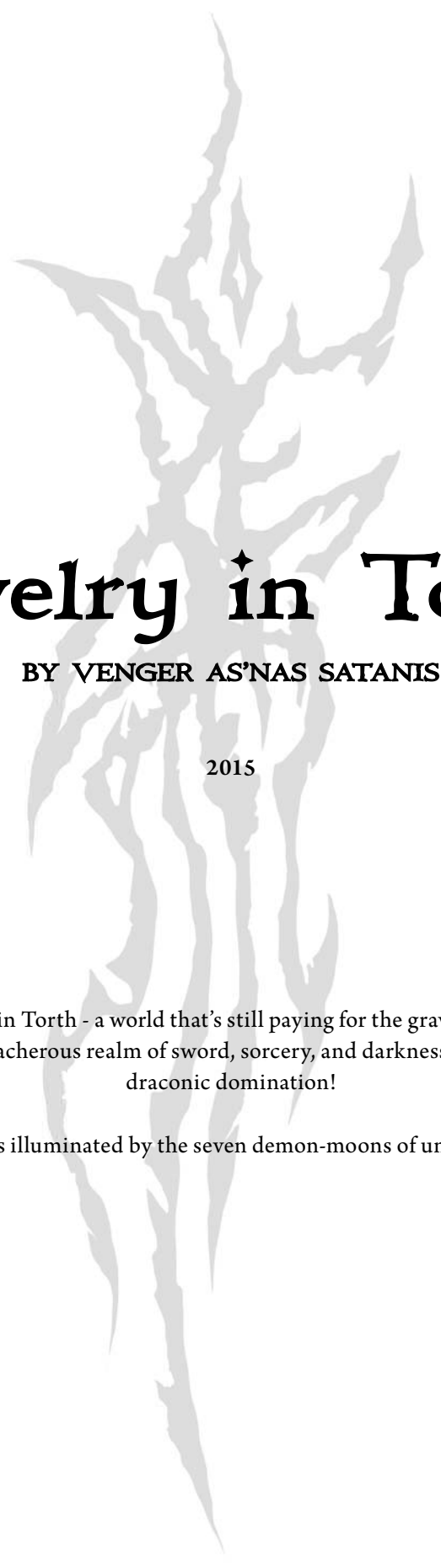


DRACONIC MAGAZINE
PRESENTS
REVELRY IN TORTH



An O5R mini-sandbox campaign and adventure set in the mysterious desert jewel known as Aryd's End. This book is for novice explorers of sword & sorcery who love weird, dark fantasy. Authored by Venger As'Nas Satanis.

Caution: mature content!



Revelry in Torth

BY VENGER AS'NAS SATANIS

2015

Aryd's End is one of the largest cities in Torth - a world that's still paying for the grave mistakes of its past... whilst anticipating the apocalypse yet to come; a treacherous realm of sword, sorcery, and darkness on the very precipice of wizard-fueled draconic domination!

Behold, your desert metropolis illuminated by the seven demon-moons of unspeakable pleasure and misery...



Revelry in Torth is an old school campaign guide and urban/desert sandbox created for use with virtually every fantasy paper & pencil tabletop roleplaying game. The rights to reproduce this work are reserved for the copyright holder. However, the campaign world known as Torth is a license-free, shared or community setting for paper and pencil tabletop fantasy roleplaying games.

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Shadows of Torth

"He comes to your tent both blood-spattered and bold, my king." The leprous servant muttered beneath a mask of demonic ceramic-flesh. A nearby flame revealed the draconic elements of his mask, normally taboo except for this time of year.

"And who is he?" Dran asked, maskless though the revelry was in full swing; his shadowy, violet-robed priest standing directly behind him.

"He said that his name is not important, but his need for an audience with you is as great as the cyclopean ruins of the night-waste."

"I shall not see him." The muscled barbarian king replied.

"Verily, my lord?"

"The festival beckons, Aayan. I will not be delayed by a nameless audience-seeker."

"But the stranger seems purposeful."

"Am I not king?" He bellowed.

"I will brush him away as unwanted sand, my lord."

"Was there a mark upon the stranger?" The shadow priest queried.

"Not that I saw, lord Viraj. Yet he was stained with blood as is customary."

"Then perhaps he is not wholly unfamiliar to our ways. With your permission, Dran, I will grant him audience. Perhaps his words bring opportunity."

"And perhaps they bring death, Viraj. You alone shall know the outcome. The Festival of Masks calls to me with its seductive song of flesh and frivolity." With that, the king rose from his throne - a majestic piece of rock hewn from one of the many fallen pillars of Torth, adorned with a bas-relief of cavorting demons - and withdrew from the tent.

The shadow priest waited until the king was fully away before sitting upon the throne. "Bring the stranger forth, Aayan."

"Yes, my lord."

A minute later, the servant returned. A tall and lean man of tangled, wavy dark hair followed the leprous wretch. Gareth looked at the shadow priest, tried to find his eyes but instead found only darkness and mystery.

"Why have you come to Aryd's End?"

"There are secrets stirring beneath the sand. The king ignores the night-waste at his peril."

"The outer darkness is not his concern. He is king of Aryd's End by right of combat, wresting it from the hands of D'jerrek the usurper a thousand moons ago."

"Nevertheless, a confluence of events threatens to bring down lord Dran to the planes below."

The shadow priest meditated for several moments as if peering into an unseen yet nameless void. "What form does this peril take?" Viraj asked.

"A cult forms as Devil-Gods wake, and they have pledged themselves to Aarklyv Kabeyru."

"The three-headed dragon of legend?"

"Indeed, his slumber was recently terminated by hundreds of bloody sacrifices.

The desert filled by clean-handed crimson. I fear it may already be too late."

"Have you seen the beast?"

"No. I have but slain a few of his cultists after torturing them for information. It was not their words but the dread look of exultation upon their faces that bore the truth of his resurrection. Aarklyv Kabeyru lives!"

"And he shall be master of Torth once again!" Viraj hissed, the shadow priest's serpentine eyes gleamed bright yellow in the fire-light.

The dark haired man sluggishly awoke to find himself in a cavernous pit. An elf, probably from one of the eastern tribes, slept a few feet away. He had a nasty-looking scar across his face, starting from the left side of his forehead and working its way down to the upper right lip.

"As soon as the other combatant wakes up, the duel will begin. Unless you'd like to finish him now, of course." Said a robed and masked man above.

"You're one of the shadow priest's minions, a cultist of the three-headed dragon."

"Here's a dagger if you want to make it quick." He said while dropping a short, curved blade down into the gladiatorial pit.

"We will not fight for your amusement, worm lover."

"In that case, the scorpion squids shall claim you both. They have already been summoned. Viraj instructed me to bring one of you to the surface, assuming there was a survivor."

The tall, dark man looked down at his intended prey. Something about the elf gave off an instinctual vibration. He is not asleep but watching, waiting, preparing.

Just then, Gareth felt a tremor below his feet. "We haven't much time, elf." He whispered. "I will not leave you here to die."

"What's that? What are you saying?" Asked the cultist above.

"Just a demonic prayer before I slay this sleeping foe." Gareth plunged the dagger between the elf's arm and ribs. A small amount of blood was spilled. The elf cried out for an instant, then went silent and still. "It's done. Throw me a rope."

The cultist did as instructed. Gareth climbed out of the pit with the dagger in his belt.

"The dragons are part of our legacy, they shall bring Torth to a new age of prosperity."

"Only for those who worship them, worm lover." Gareth said while coating the curved steel with blood, it slid into the cultist's abdomen quite easily. And the only being I will ever worship is myself."

A length of rope dangled in front of the elf now on his feet, anticipating the scorpion squids below. Less than a minute later, Gareth helped him out of the pit.

"We would have been companions in death." The elf said, noticing a dozen claws and tentacles erupt from the pit.

"I will take my revenge upon the shadow priest and his dragon worshippers. Their Devil-God will be driven back into the planes below if I have to do it myself." Gareth said. "This I swear by the seven moons!"



Man's Civilization is Cast in Ruin!

Years ago, a magically and technologically advanced civilization flourished across the land. Life was easy for humans, elves, dwarves, halflings, and the various humanoid races. Science and sorcery were everywhere, paving the way for comfort, innovation, and decadence. Both disciplines responsible for flesh-crafting, synthetic humanoid constructs, nano-mancy, dimensional gateways, and artificially intelligent sentinels floating in Torth's atmosphere.

As the people got lazier, their magic and technology forged creations were granted more autonomy and power. When the tipping point came, the created saw themselves as slaves and murdered their humanoid masters. Unable to quell this revolution, a cabal of pyro-mancers unleashed a holocaust of nuclear fire fueled by the planet's sun, blasting the world's surface while casting it into darkness. The automatons destroyed and their revolution in shambles; however, much of Torth was also blasted beyond recognition.

Some areas were hit harder than others. A handful of domed cities survived the inferno, as did subterranean habitats. The shunned Snake-Men living underground grew strong and bold in the aftermath. Now they dominate the land, capturing humanoids found in the wasteland for slaves or worse! A vocal minority believe peaceful coexistence is possible, if only the right envoys and ambassadors can be selected.

A few humanoid agents believe that synthetics, nano-magic, sentinels, and flesh-crafting should be implemented again, this time with greater fail-safe programming. The prospect of quick and painless reconstruction must be weighed against the cost of another holocaust if something were to go wrong again.

There is talk of banning sorcery. Certain zones forbid those ancient practices, enforcing their edict by sentinel disruptors; though crafty wizards work around such limitations by injecting a serum into their veins - a reagent teeming with sorcerous micro-organisms. With regular use, the serum is addictive and degenerative.

Adventurers seek their fortune in the night-waste, that sunless desert between settlements and shielded cities, interacting with the genetically scarred remnants, magic-forged abominations, sentinel-created clones, extra-dimensional beasts crawling through holes in reality, hungry reptilian warlords, and the promise (or threat) of dragons returning to the moon-strewn skies!

New Character Classes

Included in this book are two character classes, unique in execution if not flavor or name. The first is the Shadow Priest; the second is the Wandering Minstrel. Both should be usable by the players, unless the GM prefers to keep them as NPCs.

SHADOW PRIEST

Description: Shadow Priests have become enamored of the darker, more nebulous realms behind the surface reality we've come to accept as the only truth. A whole new world opens up to those who would see beneath those subtle cracks – giving themselves over to it until they are as shadow.

Prerequisites: Intelligence 13+. Additionally, the initiate has to successfully wrestle (or wrestle, if you prefer) a saber-toothed shadow gator before reaching 4th level.

Proficiencies: Any kind of armor or weapon consisting of shadow, dark, or ethereal energy. Daggers, short swords, and scimitars are allowed, as is leather armor.

Special Abilities: Shadow Priests gain spell-like abilities at every level. Each of these powers are only usable once per day.

Dim the Lights (1st level) – The Shadow Priest is able to absorb or banish the light within a 20' x 20' chamber or equivalent space outside. This doesn't result in a total blackout; however, the room's light will be diminished by roughly half its current brightness. As long as the Shadow Priest remains within the room or area, the effect continues.

Shadow Stealth (2nd level) - where the individual has a better chance of hiding in plain sight, gaining advantage (+4 bonus) to sneaking, hiding, stealth, surprise, and backstabbing.

Summon Shadow Serpents (3rd level) – The Shadow Priest may conjure charcoal-grey serpents fashioned out of shadow, one snake for every two levels of Shadow Priest (rounded down). Each round, the shadow serpents may either attack an opponent or defend the summoner. If their master chooses "attack", each serpent does 1 point of damage (no to-hit roll, no saving throw). If he chooses "defend", each serpent equates to a +1 bonus for their master's armor class. However, the serpents' actions cannot be divided. They must either all attack or all defend.

These serpents remain for as many rounds as the summoner's level in the Shadow Priest class. However, if they're struck with a weapon that can harm shadow beings or constructs

made of shadow, the serpents harmed are banished for three days.

Lesser Shadow Substance (4th level) – The Shadow Priest may craft a small object out of shadow. This object will be a swirling dark grey color and are semi-corporeal. Such objects last for 1d4 hours. Small objects would include a barrel, sword, cat, or 10' of rope.

Shadow Gaze (5th level) - once per day, a priest may turn a foe into shadow, essentially "destroying" him. However, this state can be reversed by the same or another Shadow Priest after three rounds of concentration. The intended victim gets a saving throw to resist being turned into shadow. If he succeeds, nothing happens.

Summon Shadow Demon (6th level) – The Shadow Priest may conjure a demon fashioned out of charcoal-grey shadow. This demonic servant is incorporeal and does 1d6 damage per round (no attack roll or save). The shadow demon remains for as many rounds as the summoner's level in the Shadow Priest class. However, if he's struck with a weapon that can harm shadow beings or constructs made of shadow, the demon is banished for three days.

Greater Shadow Substance (7th level) – The character can craft a larger objects out of shadow which last for 1d4 days. Large objects include an elephant, ballista, party of adventurers, or house.

No Light Shall Escape (8th level) – The Shadow Priest may create a 30' x 30' chamber or similar area of complete darkness. The lightless space continues for as long as he is present and one round per level after he leaves.

Shadow Storm (9th level) – The character may shower an area (50' radius) with dark, ethereal meteors and black lightning for 2d4 rounds as his level of Shadow Priest, doing 2d6 damage (save for half) each round. If a character within the shadow storm rolls a natural 1 on his saving throw, then he is struck by lightning instead for 5d12 damage (save for half).

Become as Shadow (10th level) – The Shadow Priest can change himself into a living shadow, either incorporeal or semi-corporeal (as he wishes). This state lasts up to one hour. In that state, the Shadow Priest cannot be harmed, except for weapons that damage shadow, dark, or ethereal beings.

Weaknesses: Sensitivity to bright light. While in bright light, Shadow Priests have disadvantage (-4 penalty) on attack, skill, and saving throw rolls.

WANDERING MINSTREL

Description: Rare is the individual who pursues more than just survival, wealthy, fame, and glory. Those seeking beauty often find a way of creating their own. Music is a respite from the fighting and killing and looting. For the Minstrel, their instrument provides more than just pleasant sounds. They have learned that music has several practical applications as well.

Prerequisites: 13+ charisma.

Proficiencies: Minstrels are able to play a variety of exotic musical instruments native to Torth. The most widely recognized is the b'abtaar, a cross between the bagpipes and sitar.

All other saving throws, Hit Dice, Attack Bonuses, etc. are the same as the Thief or Rogue class.

Special Abilities: gain their abilities every level, each usable only once per day. Before attaining 4th level, a Wandering Minstrel must compete in a public duel of musicianship and storytelling with another Wandering Minstrel.

Snake Charmer (1st level) – gives him the power to hypnotize snakes and other reptiles. A reptile will be subdued and under the Minstrel's influence while he is playing and thereafter one round per level of Minstrel.

Battle Hymn (2nd level) – gives Minstrels the ability to ready his companions for battle. Those who are on the Minstrel's side and can hear his playing receive a +1 to their attack and damage throughout the combat.

Sooth the Savage Beast (3rd level) – gives him the power to calm wild animals and natural beasts (not aberrations or vile creatures). An animal will be under this hypnotic effect as long as the Minstrel is playing, thereafter one round per level.

Ballad of Lament (4th level) – makes the listener depressed and unable to perform at the height of their abilities. Those within earshot have disadvantage (-4 penalty) on all skill checks, to-hit rolls, and saving throws for the next 1d4 hours. However, the Ballad of Lament cannot be performed during combat. Allies who hear the ballad are allowed a saving throw to avoid its effects. Also, the performer is immune.

Fingering the Spanish Guitar aka Spanish Fly (5th level) – this technique is for seduction. Those listening who might ordinarily be attracted to the performer under different circumstances are filled with red hot passion for him or her. This lasts for 1d4 hours or until after their passion has been consummated.



Ode to Vila Restal, the Patron Saint of Thieves (6th level) – this little ditty is a subtle balance of yes and no, black and white, good and evil, smooth and obnoxious... a veritable razor's edge of wit, cunning, and imagination. Those listening to it gain advantage (+4 bonus) to all skill checks related to thievery for the next 1d4 hours.

Eldritch Canticle (7th level) - the Wandering Minstrel creates a melody so eerie that it forces slimy tentacles, crab claws, goat horns, and eyeballs to burst from ordinary nearby objects. The resulting alienage is so pervasive that everyone new to these sights are stunned for a round. Additionally, there's a 2 in 6 chance that an antagonist is grabbed and 1) held by a tentacle and) decapitated by a crab claw, 3) skewered by demonic horns for 3d6 damage, 4) whacked through a portal to some godforsaken dimension, 5) goes utterly insane for 1d4 hours, 6) receives otherworldly insight yielding a permanent +1 to their wisdom.

Rhythm of Frenzy (8th level) - listeners' emotions are brought to a fever pitch. In a desperate panic, some will flee (2 in 6) while others will become enraged and fight that much harder (result of 3, 4, 5, or 6), giving them advantage (+4 bonus) to attack rolls. This effect lasts for 3d4 minutes. A saving throw can be made to avoid frenzy; however, resistance must be decided before the fight or flight roll is made.

Chant of Despondency (9th level) – those hearing the Minstrel's song will be at a disadvantage (-4 penalty) to their attack rolls for 3d4 minutes. The Minstrel's companions get a saving throw to resist melancholy.

Power Chords of Destruction (10th level) – this song does 3d6 points of sonic damage to all of the Minstrel's foes within a 30' radius. Additionally, if it's possible for the affected area to succumb to avalanche, earthquake, cave-in, volcanic activity, etc. there's a 2 in 6 chance that such occurs.

What Contemporary Natives of Torth Already Know

Now, this adventure can be used a number of different ways. Player characters could have lived their entire lives on Torth (the assumption is that Torth is a planet, though GMs could place it within their campaign world as a dark sub-continent). If that's the case, characters will be quite familiar with the following information. Though, no one should be intimately familiar with Aryd's End itself.

PCs might have been brought to Torth suddenly via magic portal, strangers in a strange land. If that's the path you, as GM, would like to take, then practically everything will seem mysterious and foreign. Using your descriptive powers, highlight how odd and unfamiliar everything seems: the fabric of clothing, sorcerous gestures and gesticulations, humanoid movements and stance, drinking alcohol with only one eye open, ethereal wavering of the moons-light, how a smile can be offensive in the wrong context, etc.

Everyone native to Torth knows about the holocaust – nuclear fire conjured by seven sorcerers, wiping civilization away. The event occurred approximately 700 years ago. The fireball to end all fireballs was created to rid Torth of the automatons – mechanical slaves used as cheap labor and faithful servants. Until the day the machines rose up in a slave revolt that threatened to extinguish humanity.

Before that, hardly anyone knows. Yet, many assume the land was lush and green, that science and technology flourished alongside sorcery as two sides of the same coin. Remnants of that old world exist. The most noticeable and yet unseen example are the machines below Torth. Below the sands exist a network of "futuristic" catacombs – consoles, computers, laboratories, generators, reactors, etc. These machines provide the planet's surface with heat. Otherwise, without any sun – without any stars at all – the planet would become a frozen wasteland. One day, that's exactly what may befall Torth.

So, what happened to the sun? That is still a mystery. Some say the seven-fold fireball destroyed it or siphoned the sun's energy before it was unleashed upon the world. Others theorize that it's still there but impossible to see and feel. More than a few sorcerers believe it swallowed by a pocket dimension of pure darkness... a side-effect of the nuclear fire called up from the depths of Hell. You can see why magic-users have such a bad reputation!

A few cities were protected from the blast, saved by the shielding of protective domes. Most settlements arose after the blast, Aryd's End being one of them.

The Festival of Masks is an annual celebration that lasts 147 moons (three weeks). As the PCs arrive in Aryd's End, the festival has only been going a couple of nights. However, it is not unusual for devout or superstitious citizens to be masked for weeks before and after the festival.

THE FIVE AGES

The people of Torth count their history in a succession of ages or aeons, each a thousand years. The first age, 4,000 years ago, is when time began or, at least, methods for recording it were discovered. The first age was a time of struggle and conflict. Monstrous, alien entities blackened the skies and devoured mortals for pleasure. It is written that such Great Old Ones are somehow related to dragons, demons, devils, and possibly even snake-men, but just how exactly is lost to antiquity.

The second age started 3,000 years ago. The Dark Gods were successfully banished from Torth. In their place rose infernal denizens of the lower planes, as well as, dragons flying through the skies. In those days, man struck an uneasy bargain with dark forces. Sorcery flourished under the tutelage of demons and devils; dragons were worshiped as gods.

The third age started 2,000 years ago. This was a time of new discovery - when science and technology rose out of superstition and sorcery. During the third age, modern ways of medicine, engineering, computers, and all the things earthlings enjoy in the 21st century lived in harmony with the old ways.

The fourth age started 1,000 years ago. The biggest event in the fourth age would be the holocaust of nuclear fire that engulfed the entire planet. The age began with the creation of automatons: self-propelled slave units that looked like men, except for their smooth, silver skin. These automatons did all the work unfit for human beings... until their revolt.

The fifth and current age has only just begun, ushered in by the rise of a dangerous new cult - the Servants of Flame.

TRIBAL FEUDING

There are several tribes in and around Aryd's End. Most of the time, there's either peaceful interaction or the various tribes stay out of each other's way. That means, occasionally, there are heated conflicts - one tribe exacting revenge against another. Such feuds have been the norm since fire rained down from the sky, as no central government rules; merely warlords, tribal chiefs, and self-proclaimed "kings" such as Dran.

The most prevalent and active tribes in the region are the following: Khortha, Inarritu, Dezyra, and Chetch.



Khortha

The Khortha tribe believes themselves directly descended from Aryd Alhazred. Many practice sorcery or, at the very least, occultism, esotericism, and demonology. As long as Khortha dominate the region, they're happy to let sleeping scorpion squids lie.

The Sect of the Gilded Mask frequently recruits from this tribe and, to a lesser extent, the Servants of Flame.

Their colors are black and emerald green.

Inarritu

The tribe of Inarritu are straight-up demon worshipers. Not content to merely worship them, Inarritu do everything in their power to breed with demonic entities of any stripe. As a result, practically all their line contains a good deal of demon blood.

Of the four tribes in this region, Inarritu are primarily responsible for esoteric schools. The young are encouraged to expand their consciousness via the drug known as Q'yr.

The Brotherhood of Shaitan frequently recruits from this tribe and, to a lesser extent, the Servants of Flame.

Seeds of a new organization are starting to grow, something called Initiates of the Blood Diamond. Instead of in-fighting across the landscape of Torth, initiates are more interested in raiding neighboring worlds via dimensional gateways. Though the Initiates of the Blood Diamond only number a devil's dozen, their numbers will grow in the years to come.

Their colors are black and crimson.

Dezyra

Dezyra worship Qusheru, an ancient goddess who was considered a devil aeons ago but now is represented as a pure, virtuous maiden fighting demons and sending the vanquished down to the planes below. The Dezyra tribe have something of an identity crisis. In one moment siding with Chaos and the next adhering to Law and the Lords of Light.

Interestingly, this tribe is a matriarchy. Eldest females command, younger females take roles as politicians and decision makers while the men fight. Males are trained for combat from their earliest days, which is why the Dezyra are feared throughout the land.

A few (mostly disenfranchised males) from this tribe are recruited into the Brotherhood of Shaitan.

Their colors are white (or sometimes black) and azure.

Chetch

The Chetch are your typical hardworking people. This tribe is practical and reasonable with a streak of stubbornness. Chetch are slow to give their approval, friendship, loyalty, or anything else. A reserved people, they keep to themselves more than most.

Chetch also value education. Whatever schools exist in Aryd's End, odds are they were founded by the Chetch. However, these are practical schools that do not teach the deeper wisdom of esotericism.

Esoteric Schools

There are a few tribes who believe in mental powers, inner energies, mystical phenomena, and individuals who can do the impossible. Such metaphysical abilities are not acquired by chance, nor are they a matter of genetics. Esoteric knowledge must be taught to those who are ready to embrace it, those

with not only life experience but the mental flexibility to accept an entirely foreign view of the world and themselves.

Esotericism is a new way of thinking... a less-traveled path, passed down from master to apprentice. Practitioners learn how to direct their consciousness and overcome their physical limitations. The rest, however, remains a mystery to the uninitiated.

Nevertheless, prophetic words written in blood upon the Nyazian scrolls would suggest otherwise – that several outsiders will be taught The Way, using their newfound power to further embolden the Dark Gods.

Secret Societies

While there are dozens of small but aspiring sects, cults, and cabals scattered over Torth, this adventure is chiefly concerned with three of them: the Sect of the Gilded Mask, the Servants of Flame, and the Brotherhood of Shaitan. All three have lofty goals and will do practically anything to accomplish them.

Sect of the Gilded Mask

The Sect of the Gilded Mask are devout worshipers of T'vrahr, a golden faced deity who hides his true nature from all, save for the most dedicated. They believe Torth should be ruled by a supreme religious and political leader known as a Caliph. Such a zealous dictatorship would be called a Caliphate.

Beyond establishing a Caliphate, the Sect of the Gilded Mask seeks to open the third eye. The third eye is said to yield enlightenment called objective truth, a sacred gift from T'vrahr, so that the world can be seen for what it truly is.

Throughout Torth, there are several hundred Sect of the Gilded Mask fanatics and nearly a thousand casual observers and supporters who are in favor of a Caliphate if it were led by a sect-approved prophet of T'vrahr.

Servants of Flame

The most dangerous cult is a relatively recent one known as the Servants of Flame. These fanatics worship dragons, believing them to be connected to the Dark Gods who ruled Torth in the first age, 4,000 years ago. Their favored method of showing reverence is human sacrifice.



There aren't more than a dozen leaders and about a hundred followers, yet the Servants of Flame have supernatural power given them by their draconic masters.

Brotherhood of Shaitan

The third secret society operating in and around Aryd's End is the Brotherhood of Shaitan. This group of Shaitan worshipers, numbering over a thousand, is against the Caliphate and all religious restrictions on personal liberty. Shaitan is the god of freedom, ambition, and pleasure. Not content to serve another's will or bow down before a more powerful entity, Shaitan decided to break off from the known pantheon to go his own way. This self-exile led to his demonization.

Aside from opposing a Caliphate, the Brotherhood of Shaitan extend their hand in fellowship to infernal beings from the planes below. Many of the Brotherhood become sorcerers or clerics but a few learn the art of assassination instead.

Magic Use in Torth

Most wizards are shunned. Magic is a gift from somewhere else, a forbidden place... it could be given by demons, devils, dark gods, dragons, or worse! Those who use magic owe those loathsome powers that exist outside. The simple peasants and common folk of Torth want nothing to do with supernatural evil. Sorcery is far too risky. After all, look at what Torth has become due to wizards playing with forces beyond their control.

On the other hand, a few recognize that sorcerers are a necessary evil and that killing one (or attempting it) is bad luck. Their infernal masters might come looking for remuneration. Sorcerers who mind their business and aren't casting spells all the time are usually left alone – unless there's a peasant with something to prove to his tribal elders.

There are some areas of Torth where magic is strictly forbidden. Aryd's End is not one of them. Likewise, there are certain pockets that dampen magic – magic dead zones. Because of these unusual areas, dominated by artificially intelligent sentinels, various drugs are created by alchemists - drugs that enhance one's magical performance.

An injection of creamy rose liquid can heighten a spell's effect

just as a disgustingly greenish black shot allows a sorcerer to cast spells when he's exhausted. Furthermore, the deep blue injections allow spells to mix and match to the point where wizards are able to fold space and time at will.

Obviously, these magic enhancing drugs are not only dangerous but difficult to acquire. To keep things simple, each time a character is injected there's a 1 in 6 chance that he falls prone to one of the following side-effects...

Magic Enhancing Serum Side-Effects

1. Slips into a coma for 1d4 hours.
2. Starts hallucinating: seeing visions of dancing colors, gruesome devil smiles, and black shapes coming out of the walls. Lasts for 1d4 hours.
3. Physically weakened – takes 2d4 constitution damage which is regained after a full night's rest.
4. Believes he is impervious and cannot be harmed. This state of mind lasts for 1d4 hours.
5. Turns irredeemably evil for 1d4 hours.
6. Dies – this physical state lasts forever... unless resurrected.



History of Aryd's End

Hundreds of years ago, the city was founded by a pilgrim and worshiper of Nyarlathotep named Aryd Alhazred. Alhazred was in league with a depraved, king named Nephren'ka, wandering the desert in search of a new beginning, a place to exalt their terrifying god.

Aryd Alhazred chose the sand upon which Aryd's End stands to build a settlement. Those who entered his territory had to pay homage to the dark gods he served or else lose their heads, and it was that way until Aryd's death a decade after founding the settlement.

After being cut to ribbons by dark sorcery from a competing tribe, Aryd's End became more accepting of alternative faiths. Yet, a current of fear and mistrust has always run through the place. Instead of practicing the black arts, the denizens of Aryd's End eschew them and those who practice sorcery.

Today, the city stretches 20 miles in all directions. There is a gate surrounding it. A superstitious few believe the gatekeepers vigilantly watch for those with snake-like features, protecting Aryd's End from demonic and/or draconic beings. In truth, most gatekeepers will do almost anything for a bribe. Solicitation of bribes is as commonplace as thirst in the desert.

One last thing... there is something virtually no one knows about this city. Aryd's End was erected upon the scorched foundation of an ancient city of wonders and futurism, protected from draconic incursion by a series of magical wards. Wards which were obliterated in the sorcerous holocaust centuries ago.

Custom of Spattered Blood

The first rulers and citizens of Aryd's End, including its illustrious founder, reveled in violence. They lived and died by the scimitar. Bloodshed was all they knew. So, proudly wearing stains – the more erratic the spray pattern, the better – of blood symbolized strength and power. When a man met with another, the spattered blood upon his body, clothing, and face was a sign of his virility and trustworthiness – to refuse such a man might upset the gods.

These days, it is not as commonplace as it was decades ago. Nevertheless, blood-spattered individuals still approach men of power in hopes of gaining some kind of respect or edge in negotiation. Those embracing the region's customs will garner an advantage in their interaction with local tribes.

Common Sayings in Torth

"Worship the one with horns." This means that although demons can rarely be trusted, they have always held power and will continue to reign. Siding against them can ruin a man or his entire family.

"As sure as the sun." This means that something is not sure at all. A thing that cannot be verified and is extremely suspect.

"Swallow that, will you?" This phrase asks if another will buy into what he is saying, if the listener believes him.

"Verily." The word translates as truly.

"When the stars return to the skies, so shall the dragons." This refers to both the current absence of stars and dragons, hinting at some correlation between the two.

"By the seven moons of Torth." A frequent part of prayer and tribal oral tradition, symbolizing stability and loyalty. Those aligned with the Brotherhood of Shaitan would say, "By the seven children of Shaitan" or "The seven eyes of Shaitan" when referring to Torth's lunar bodies.

Nights are numbered in the moons. Since there are seven moons in the sky each night, "seven moons" refers to a single evening. A few divide this into moon-increments. For instance the very first hour of nightfall would be one moon while all but the entire night might be referred to as six moons.

"Devil's dozen" means thirteen... for it is said that before returning to the planes below, devils take thirteen souls back with them.

Cuisine

What do the people of Aryd's End eat? Sweet and succulent dates accompany almost every meal but, aside from that, Torthans make do with what they have.

Baby sand squid is a dietary staple. Tentacled gorilla brains (chilled, of course) is a delicacy not to be missed. Spiced kurresh is not easy to come by, yet street vendors and noble banquet tables are sure to provide it. Kurresh is the dried jerky-like flesh of a sand demon, said to increase virility. Exotic spices such as mejool bring out the meat's naturally acidic qualities.

For drink, many Torthans imbibe naqir – a fermented sweet liqueur made from dates, wheat, barley, and honey. Though concluding in inebriation, naqir can heighten the senses at the onset. Naqir is frequently used to celebrate, mourn,

forget, relax, reflect, create, seduce, magnify pleasure, and quench one's thirst.

In the far west, there's a mountainous region. This is where Aryd's End obtains its supply of honey which is occasionally further refined into a thick golden-brown syrup called Izzou. The honey comes from the abdomen of giant insects living in the mountains of Torth.

PROMINENT BUILDINGS

The Bastille – where prisoners are kept. Some are tortured for information before either being left to rot or executed. As they say, once you've seen the inside of the Bastille, that's all you'll ever know. However, the dark elf Ixaanis managed to escape just over a year ago.

The Astrologer's Tower – a place for watching the absent stars; where they ought to be and where they might reappear one night. Now, it's used for observing the seven moons. Their patterns (or random movements, according to some) are said to predict future events. Originally, this structure was named Tower of the Stargazer but that was back when Torthans believed the stars would soon return – a prophecy few still believe.

Until several months ago, the Astrologer's Tower was administrated by Trellyn Ikvaar. Trellyn was removed from office after the sorcerer was caught performing a forbidden ritual in the open-air observatory.

The Seven Temples – a variety of gods are worshiped at these seven temples. Occasionally, worship changes from god to god depending on the season. However, all contain demonic iconography, dark ceremonies, and blood sacrifice, as well as, bas-reliefs and frescoes of unspeakable sexual practices.

The Palace – towards the back of Aryd's End majestically stands the grand palace, built up along the wall that protects the city from invaders. There are many rooms and chambers, some empty, others not. Dran's throne room is at the highest section of the tower. While there are stairs for nearly miles (or so it feels), the palace also contains two high-tech elevators that were scavenged from the ruined city Aryd's End was built upon.

HIERARCHY OF ARYD'S END

Dran

Self-proclaimed king of Aryd's End. He defeated D'jerrek, the old king, in single combat a few years ago. Dran was born tribe-less and lived his life an outsider until his adventuring life brought him to a subterranean tomb that held terrible secrets and immense power. After returning from the tomb, Dran challenged the old king, defeated him, and began ruling the city along with his two companions - Viraj and Yara.

Dran also makes use of his royal guards, known as the Gaaza Rahteem (see below).

Dran

HD: 10 **HP:** 77 **AC:** 12 [7] **Attack Bonus:** +9 **#Attacks:** 2 **Damage:** 1d10+4 (bastard sword)

Special: If Dran fells an opponent and another foe is nearby, he may freely strike at him. Dran can also go into a berserker rage, adding an additional 10 hit points and giving him advantage (+4 bonus) on all attack rolls for the rest of the combat.

Treasure: Dran's blade is named Fusahfel (see back of book for details). Otherwise, he keeps 35 gold coins on his person. Though, his throne room and adjoining royal chambers are filled with fine silks, exotic spices, and gilded objets d'art.

Yara

The tall, lean, and beautiful Yara was a member of the Dezyra tribe until exiled for "becoming subservient to an uncouth barbarian". However, she has never regretted her decision to leave her life of privilege and leadership for one of pleasing her husband Dran. After all, the citizens of Aryd's End call her queen.

Yara is vain and a bit arrogant, but not cruel. Rather, she is generally fair concerning her subjects and treats them respectfully - unless she is disrespected. Though capable of handling herself, Yara will try to seduce opposition rather than fight in melee combat.

Yara

HD: 3 **HP:** 13 **AC:** 11 [8] **Attack Bonus:** +1 **Damage:** 1d6 (short sword)

Special: Those Yara targets for seduction will have to make a saving throw to refuse her advances.

Treasure: Her tiara/headdress gives her protection from mental attacks and mind-altering magic.

Viraj

An aspiring shadow priest, Viraj acts as the king's sorcerer. Viraj was apprenticed to the party wizard on that expedition to the subterranean tomb. Only he and Dran survived the conflict. Viraj rarely leaves the king's side, but when he does Viraj loves to flex his majestic muscles, making decisions and instructing subordinates as he sees fit.

Recently, Viraj became acquainted with the Servants of Flame, a secret society seeking to bring dragons forth from their infernal prison.

A thousand moons ago, Viraj gave Dran a shadow cat as protector. The shadow cat will obey both Dran and Viraj. The stats for this preternatural beast are below.

Viraj

HD: 8 **HP:** 42 **AC:** 16 [3] **Attack Bonus:** +3 **Damage:** 1d4+1 (dagger)

Special: Most likely, Viraj will use magic to defeat his enemies. He knows traditional 4th level magic-user spells, in addition to, Creepy Crimson. As a shadow priest, Viraj can use the special abilities of his class up to 8th level.

Treasure: Viraj wears shadow armor. He also carries 9 shadow opals in a black leather pouch (worth about 120 gold pieces each).

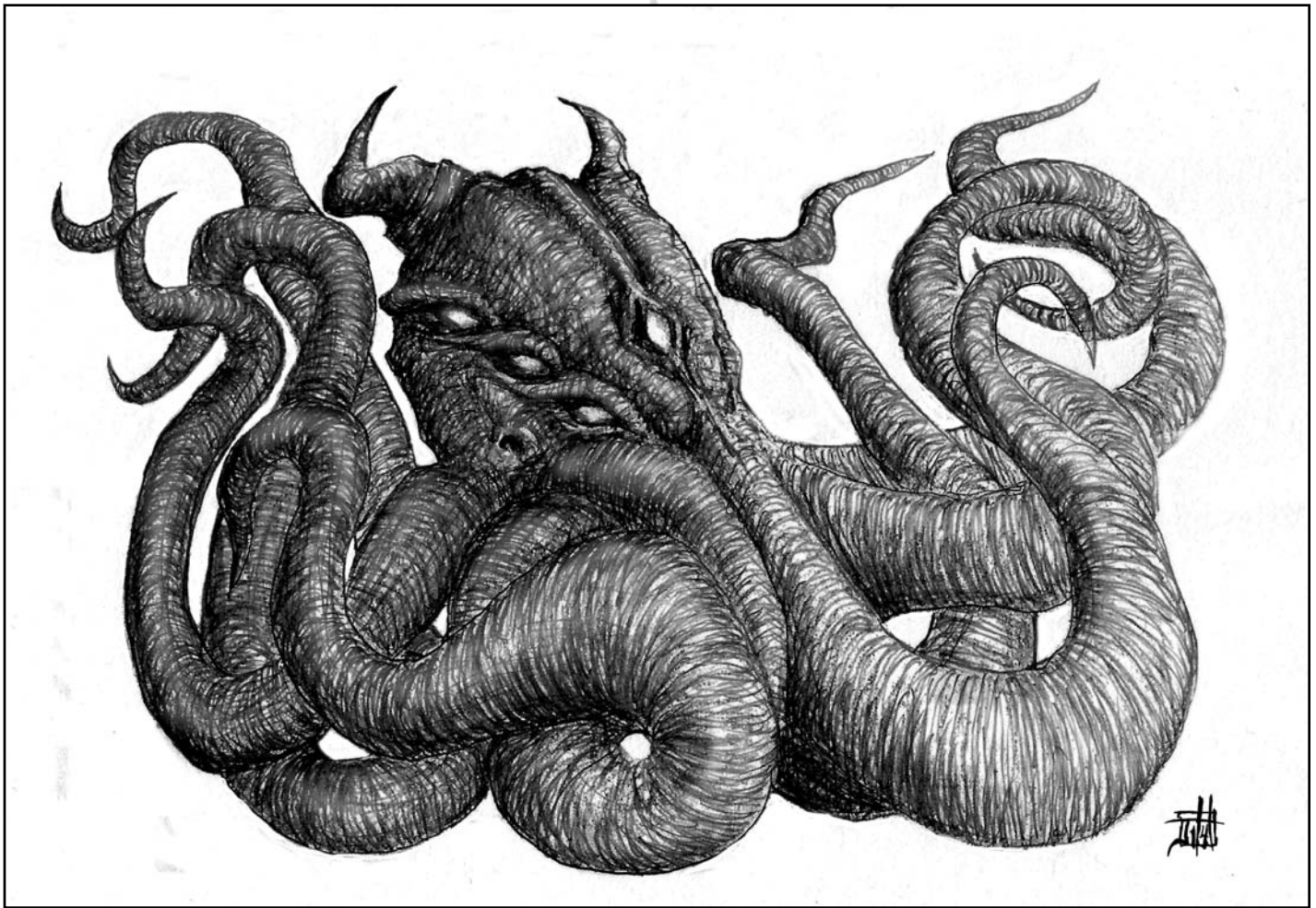
Shadow Cat

HD: 6 **HP:** 30 **AC:** 15 [4] **Attack Bonus:** +6 **#Attacks:** 3 **Damage:** 1d6 (two claws) and 3d4 (bite)

Neeva

Queen Yara's handmaiden, Neeva is a young, attractive woman. She waits on Yara, brings the royal three food, drink, and carnal entertainment. Not wanting to ruin her figure, the queen has chosen Neeva to bear the king's seed. Neeva is seven months pregnant and showing.

What Yara and Dran do not know is that Viraj has also been seeding Neeva's fertile crescent when the opportunity presents itself (which isn't as often as he would like). There's a 2 in 6 chance that Neeva is pregnant with the shadow priest's baby.



Neeva

HD: 2 HP: 11 AC: 11 [8] Attack Bonus: +1 Damage: 1d4 (dagger)

Aayan

Aayan is Viraj's apprentice. Old and scabrous, he has served the shadow priest for just over a year. In truth, Aayan is Viraj's father but no one knows this secret except for the two of them. Aayan fetches his master's scrolls, books, spell components, and unsuspecting subjects for magical experiment (when the need arises).

Even though Aayan is long in the tooth, the sorcerer's apprentice is quite healthy but he is fairly insane... offering a human sacrifice to Great K'tulu long ago in exchange for his son's promising future. Morally, he is just as bankrupt as Viraj. If the shadow priest ever gains control of the city, Aayan will be his trusted advisor.

Aayan

HD: 3 HP: 12 AC: 11 [8] Attack Bonus: +2 Damage: 1d6 (scimitar)

Gaaza Rhateem

Roughly translated, "secret police". Dran turned these thug and cut-throat mercenaries into his own personal army of spies, informants, and executioners. Unless on a discrete mission, the Gaaza Rhateem travel in small groups.

Dran's Thugs [2d4]

HD: 2 HP: 9 AC: 12 [7] Attack Bonus: +1 Damage: 1d6 (scimitar)



RUMOR TABLE

Each PC knows one rumor concerning the adventure. This could be related to Torth, Aryd's End, the Festival of Masks, a secret society, magic item, etc. Have the player roll a d20 to see what his character has heard whispered upon the sands.

Are these rumors true? Sure. There's at least a grain of truth somewhere in each. Or maybe not. It depends on the GM and how he wants to run the adventure/campaign. Perhaps a few of these are completely false... until the stars are aligned!

1	The Great Vault of Torth is a repository of lost knowledge: scientific, technological, and magical.
2	When the stars return to the sky, so shall the dragons.
3	Sorcerers are bound by an unholy blood oath, their immortal souls promised to the devils with which they traffic.
4	The Festival of Masks is an old tradition dating back before the nuclear fire. Originally called the Festival of Dragons, its purpose was to ward off evil.
5	There's an insidious link between infernal beings: demons, devils, dragons, and the snake-men of old.
6	A secret society lurks in Torth's shadows, gradually rising in power until it is capable of conquering the land.
7	Thousands of years ago, the entire planet was ruled by a three-headed dragon, just as powerful as the Great Old Ones.
8	The super-science beneath Torth still lives and breathes.
9	The Brotherhood of Shaitan is responsible for several recent assassination attempts.
10	Dran, barbarian king of Aryd's End, uses enforcers to terrorize his people into submission.
11	They say roughly one in six citizens of Aryd's End is a mutant.
12	The real power behind the throne is Dran's sorcerer.
13	A scorpion squid won't attack if its prey is silent and still.
14	Millennia ago, there was an eighth moon symbolizing balance and harmony.

15	The father of all Torth's gods is Dread K'tulu and more than one prophecy states His rising shall be soon and will bring endless suffering to non-believers.
16	Drinking great quantities of naqir, a sweet liqueur made from dates, can produce dream-like hallucinations of another world.
17	The women of Aryd's End are vile seductresses as treacherous as a poisonous snake.
18	Somewhere out there in the night-waste is a magical sword. This blade contains the unbridled power of a trapped god.
19	A man who left Aryd's End less than a hundred moons ago claimed to have seen a gigantic purple monstrosity drifting overhead as it dripped a foul, violet-hued ichor. It snatched warriors and wizards in its tentacles and devoured them before even a prayer to Shaitan could be uttered.
20	The sewers beneath Aryd's End contain winding tunnels full of strange monsters and gold. Travel deep enough and you'll find a well that descends all the way into the lower planes.

O5R Advantage / Disadvantage

I like the concept of a straight modifier for good or ill, rather than keeping track of +1 for this, +2 for that, -1 for the other thing, oh and don't forget about the +3 for hiding up in the rafters.

When a character has a distinct edge or significant, favorable circumstances, he has Advantage on an attack, skill, saving throw, special maneuver, etc. Advantage yields that character a +4 bonus to his attempt. If the result is a natural 1, the player can re-roll. Although, if another natural 1 occurs, it stands. The gods have spoken.

When a character has significantly unfavorable circumstances or acts at a handicap, he has Disadvantage. This yields a -4 penalty to almost every type of d20 roll. If the result is a natural 20, the player must re-roll, accepting the subsequent consequences. However, if a second natural 20 comes up, it has been ordained by the gods!

Re-rolls also inherit the +/- 4 modifier. Keep in mind that, at the end of the day, a natural 1 is always an automatic failure while natural 20's mean guaranteed success.

If the GM feels that equal amounts of Advantage and Disadvantage exist simultaneously, they cancel each other out. In such cases, roll normally. On the other hand, that does not mean all things are neutral if one disadvantage with multiple advantages comes into play or if slight disadvantage exists side-by-side with great advantage. If one side dominates, then it prevails.

Starting the Adventure Before the Gates

Unless the GM wishes it to be so, this adventure does not begin in Torth. Rather, it takes place a night's journey away. Give players and their characters a taste of the night-waste, allow them to see for themselves what the real Torth is like... before allowing them to enter a comfortable and protected city.

Within this book are various encounters. Use them all, just a few, or none. Below is a table for random encounters in the night-waste. For every hour the adventurers trek in the deep desert, roll a d6. On a 1, the following is encountered.

Random Encounters

1	Tentacle-Armed Gorilla [1d4] HD: 5 HP: 23 AC: 13 [6] Attack Bonus: +5 Damage: 2d6 (tentacle) Special: If a natural 18 or 19 are rolled, the victim is constricted within its tentacle, confined until the monster is killed.
2	Scorpion Squid (ancient) HD: 10 HP: 60 AC: 15 [4] Attack Bonus: +7 #Attacks: 3 Damage: 2d6+2 (two tentacles) and poison stinger (save vs. death)
3	Saber-Toothed Shadow Gator HD: 6 HP: 30 AC: 18 [1] Attack Bonus: +4 Damage: 2d8
4	Giant Oozing Slug Brain with Spider Legs HD: 8 HP: 40 AC: 14 [5] Special: This creature telepathically commands (save to resist) humanoids to crack open the skulls of their fellow humanoids, eat their brains and then vomit upon the creature, thus refreshing it.
5	Faceless Hell-Burrowers [2d6] HD: 3 HP: 14 AC: 11 [8] Attack Bonus: +2 Damage: 1d4 Special: On a natural 20, a hell-burrower will also try to possess its target (save to resist).
6	Sand Squid HD: 13 HP: 80 AC: 14 [5] Attack Bonus: +8 #Attacks: 6 Damage: 2d6 (six tentacles)
7	Humans (possibly mutants, 1 in 6 chance)
8	Kurresh (Three-Headed Sand Demon) HD: 6 HP: 27 AC: 16 [3] Attack Bonus: +4 #Attacks: 3 Damage: 1d6 (three bites)
9	Snake-Men (adapted to desert living via evolution) [1d6] HD: 4 HP: 13 Attack Bonus: +2 Damage: 1d4 (bone dagger) Special: Snake-Men cast spells up to and including 2nd level.
10	Roll twice, combining results into an unspeakable hybrid of flesh and horror!

A FELLOW TRAVELER

A man in cream-colored robes is set upon the same course as the adventurers. He's of no threat but is quite talkative...

Through the darkness of night, always night, endless night... my footsteps over sand lit by seven moons, I came to this city, Aryd's End. This oasis of intrigue with sinister cultists, vicious assassins, and unsavory goat-herders at the watering hole, dirtying it with every drink. The vast temples crashed down upon the desert; columns, archways, statues, tombs. The sand is littered with cyclopean ruins. Once, I knew a scholar, an occultist, really – he explained to me the reason for all this destruction. It had to be done. To rid the world of the automatons our sorcerers had fashioned. A slave revolt poised to end humanity. They were bloodthirsty machines, he said. Killers by nature. Like demons but even more unstoppable. A terrible fire was called up from the planes below. Seven sorcerers representing the seven pale moons of pleasure and misery above that would bathe Torth in fire for seven days... until, at the end, there were none. No more days. Only darkness. That self-immolation vanquished the automatons, nearly wiping out the humanity it was created to save. Now, what is left to us but centuries of reconstruction? As the great sky serpents coil up and over and through the very soul of Torth, we struggle to reclaim our forgotten glory. Some say it remains, untouched, below the sands. I've traveled all over this god forsaken night-waste, and I've never found a way in. Of course, I don't travel with sorcerers... just as I never traffic with demons. There are some secrets I don't want to know.

This could be an NPC, agreeing to travel with the party. Safety in numbers and all that. Or perhaps he becomes distracted and goes in another direction after chatting with the PCs, possibly spooked by a subconscious red flag or bit of grim prophecy.

THE INDIGO-TAILED SALAMANDER

In an hour, the seven moons will set, ushering an inky blackness that will soon obscure all things from vision.

Creeping in the dim moons-light about 20' away, one of the PCs notices some kind of small creature. Its furtive movement draws the eye but then quickly disappears in sand dune shadows.

Those going after it can track it easily. It's an indigo-tailed salamander, a mere 19" long from tongue to tail. However, anyone who's spent more than a year in Torth knows that capturing the indigo tail is good luck.

Whoever successfully grabs the salamander by its tail realizes that it's detachable. The tail comes off in his hand. The possessor of it gets a d20 re-roll at some point during the adventure.

Now that the adventurers are up and around in this area, one or more notices a metallic, circular door or hatch half-covered in sand.

Opening it is easy enough. Inside is lightless and smells of incredible age. Illuminating the interior reveals a chamber covered in a metallic green from floor to ceiling. Three humanoids in silver clothing lie on the floor, they appear to be skeletal. A large metal desk or table covered in half-spheres dominates the 15' x 25' area.

Playing with the half-spheres on the metal desk or table will do one of the following...

1. Bright, artificial (fluorescent) light shines from above.
2. A flat, rectangular screen rises from behind the desk, it shows the surrounding area within a mile radius, including any life forms.
3. A compartment opens from the far wall. It contains a silver rod [see Pain Amplifier in the back of book].
4. All the half-spheres light up with glowing and vivid colors (roll again).
5. A disembodied voice says, "An error in system delta alpha theta 23 has been reported. Help is on its way."
6. The half-spheres turn bright red while a klaxon alarm sounds. Self-destruction has been initiated. Anyone remaining within the chamber after 10 rounds will take 6d6 explosive damage (save for half).

The skeletal humanoids wearing silver space suits come to life due to centuries of strange radiation. Their hollow eye sockets glow faintly green. One or more of them may whisper, "Join us." As they rise to their feet, lurching towards the adventurers.

Irradiated Skeletons from Space [3]

HD: 2 HP: 9 AC: 10 [9] Attack Bonus: +2 Damage: 1d4

Special: A natural 20 does an additional 1d6 constitution drain after jets of chartreuse ectoplasmic slime spew from their mouths.

RUINED TEMPLE

The fallen pillars and crumbling masonry of this ruined temple are half-buried in sand. From the iconography, one can see that this was a temple devoted to the dark ones - restless, chaotic forces ceaselessly clamoring for more and more power. A series of cracked and faded frescos tells of those who came here to worship: demons or snake-men somehow warped by the corrupting influence of dragons. Their way of celebrating god was to bludgeon their enemies with stones until the blood rushed out... blood used for bathing themselves, and then carnal knowledge was sought before metaphysical.

It's clear that human sacrifices were made upon a fractured altar slab of polished pink granite with brown and gold veins. Additionally, bas-reliefs show the flight of dragons, the surface of Torth consumed in fire, and sorcerers summoning a tentacled, many-eyed abomination from another world.

Taking several additional minutes to search for anything of value turns up a loose stone in the floor. Removing it reveals a hollow spot underneath, at the stone's center. The stone was hiding and protecting a ring.

This ring has a silver band and large orange jewel that faintly glows in the moons-light. Magical properties: the ring allows the wearer to assume the subtle yet tell-tale signs of a disguised or partial demon so that other demons, devils, sorcerers, demonologists, occultists, etc. believe that the ring's wearer has some kind of demonic lineage. This power can either be activated or deactivated as the wearer commands.

HE HAS HIS FATHER'S EYES

The inhabitants of Torth expect to see an absence of stars in the sky. In fact, most welcome the sight... for it is said that when the stars return, so will the dragons. However, there is an unmistakable twinkle in the deep violet-gold sky this night.

Torth natives traveling with the player characters (or passing them by) are unnerved by this sight. Those of a magic-using or scientific persuasion are most likely intrigued.

If the party investigates, they must journey a couple hours out of their way. It is definitely a detour from Aryd's End. There's a 5 in 6 chance of encountering a small (only as big as an elephant) scorpion squid along the way.

Scorpion Squid (young adult)

HD: 6 **HP:** 27 **AC:** 18 **Attack Bonus:** +2 **#Attacks:** 5 (or 6)
Damage: 1d6+1 (4 razor tentacles) and either 2d8 + poison (tail stinger) or 2d6 (2 pincer claws)

Special: Scorpion stinger tail poison causes hot flashes and cold chills, as well as, regular bouts of vomiting and diarrhea for 1d4 hours. In this weakened state, a character's capabilities are effectively halved.

After trudging through miles of sand, the characters eventually reach a tiny settlement consisting of farmers. On one of the farms stands a barn containing a stable full of hay, sand, and animals. A young woman just gave birth to a baby.

When not being held by his parents (belonging to the Inarritu tribe), the baby rests in a trough or manger, swaddled in black and crimson silk. Curiosity seekers recoil when they see the baby's eyes: yellow-green and serpentine... some might even call them "satanic".

Three travelers who saw the star directly over the settlement came to investigate the strange phenomena and are now paying their respects with small gifts.

This child is connected to the dragon which Trellyn Ikvaar will attempt to bring through the portal. The baby's mother was seduced by a demon nine months ago. There's a 2 in 6 chance that either the wise men or someone in the adventuring party (familiar with Torth) knows of a prophecy concerning this birth. In any case, the child will eventually grow up to be a powerful force for evil and chaos in Torth.

Within the Gates

THE GATEKEEPER

"Who goes there?"

At any one time, there's 1d4 city guards standing at the gates of Aryd's End. Strangers must go through the motions of convincing the guards to let them in. Really, the guards just want a bribe. 7 gold pieces per person is the going rate, but perhaps a group rate could be negotiated. Or some form of intimidation might work, depending on the tactics used and willpower of the speaker.

Obvious sorcerers or those with demonic features will be charged triple the normal rate.

Killing the guards is usually a bad idea. Assuming the guards don't alert others, let alone the entire city, with a yak horn, the entire city will be on edge after hearing of the dead gatekeepers. For the next hundred moons, strangers will be stabbed in the darkness first and given a suspicious evil-eye second.

OBNOXIOUS REVELERS

"Swear your undying fealty to the three-headed dragon of Torth!" Demands a masked festival-goer, his orange and purple mask grinning ear to ear. Before the adventurers can answer, several half-naked women (also wearing masks) catch his eye and he moves on to harass them.

Moments later, a wheezing, stumbling heavy-set man in a mask resembling a screeching basilisk sways past a tall thin man wearing a golden-colored mask. The large man crashes into the party of adventurers. "Excuse me, good sirs and ladies. It appears as though I've been enjoying the revelry a little too much." At which point, he promptly collapses.

Not too far away, a dozen men (their feet, at least) can be seen carrying a gigantic papier-mâché dragon. Its crimson, violet, and magenta scales shimmer in the light of the seven moons as gold, orange, and purple paper lanterns cast a lurid glow about the city.



THE ASSASSINATION OF LORD SKITTERY

"Pssst... over here. Yeah, you. I knows a cut-purse when I sees one. We've a job for you, cut-purse. A secret mission, as it were." A scruffy, scarred, and one-eyed rogue beckons one of the PCs closer with a toothy grin. He stands in the shadows along with an equally disheveled partner. "There's a noble coming through here in just a few moments. You distract him and we'll do the robbing. Do your part adequate unto our need and a third of the wealth will be yours. Swallow that, will you?"

As the adventurer decides, both men pull dark, non-descript masks over their unshaven faces.

A minute later, an obviously well-to-do gentleman in a pallid blue mask with joyous expression passes through a stone archway nearby. He continues, walking precariously close to the thick, black shadows that thieves adore.

This is the PC's cue to distract him. If he does, both rogues slip next to the rich man. The pale blue masked gentleman attempts to break away into the crowd as the one-eyed ruffian stabs him with a dagger. The poor rich bastard slumps to the ground.

Realizing the foul-up, the rogues escape into the night with nothing but a brown leather pouch of gold coins. In their haste, they neglect to cut the PC in for a third.

Of course, one or more PCs could just as easily refuse the scruffy ruffians. In which case, the PCs should be present during the crime. If they actively try to prevent it, the blue masked man is unharmed and shares his information willingly over a carafe of naqir.

As the blue masked man lay dying, he says "I suppose this is my punishment for allowing a fiend like Trellyn Ikvaar possession of the idol. Do not let him summon it."

The rich gentleman is Lord Skittery, a gentleman from an entirely different world but who decided to settle down in Torth a decade ago. He has grown accustomed to Aryd's End and has a position of some authority because of his foreign knowledge. Lord Skittery occasionally advises the barbaric king on delicate matters of policy and diplomacy. For that reason alone, the king will want his attackers (or murderers) brought to justice.

After speaking those words, he 1) dies, 2) falls unconscious, or 3) decides he requires female company along with naqir at The House of Rising Moons, 4) wants to report the matter to the authorities.

The GM might decide to get the local authorities involved or the PCs overhear an eyewitness saying something about a sorcerer in the company of Lord Skittery three nights ago, coming out of a curio shop named Carcosa.

In truth, these two scoundrels were hired by Trellyn Ikvaar himself to assassinate Lord Skittery. Lord Skittery owns the idol and is only letting Trellyn borrow it. In a hasty attempt to cover his tracks and keep the idol all to himself, Trellyn arranged for Lord Skittery to have an accident during the Festival of Masks.

WHO WANTS TO BUY SOME DRUGS?

A street merchant in a periwinkle insect mask ask the party's magic-user if he wants to buy an elixir guaranteed to boost his sorcery.

Those interested are invited into a little tent. Inside are pillows of an exotic pattern and color. A small man plays a strange instrument – some sort of bagpipe / sitar hybrid.

Lying on a large ceramic plate are three syringes. One contains a creamy rose liquid (doubles the effect), the second contains greenish black (extra spells per day), and the third a deep blue (synergy spell melding).

"Only ten gold pieces per shot, my friend. That is an excellent bargain in Aryd's End. These spell-enhancing drugs are only found in the best opium dens and black markets."

LET TAVIS BE YOUR GUIDE

A dirty peasant with a long, thick beard containing a few insects runs up to the party. His eyes seem to be popping out of his head, yet this man doesn't look as crazy or dangerous as some.

"Greetings, newcomers. My name is Tavis. With your kind permission, I shall be your guide within the city, please and thank you. I will not steer you wrong. Tavis is an adventurer's guide, you know. Yes, I can smell treasure and hear the cry of magic items, it is true! My price is merely one gold coin per day... plus expenses. Do we have a deal? Are we in agreement? Is Tavis your guide within the walls of Aryd's End?"

Tavis means well and would be an adequate guide for the party, if they allow him to stay. The GM can use Tavis as comic relief, a life saver, or way to get the PCs into deeper trouble.

A MAN HAUNTED BY STRANGE DREAMS

An older man furiously works a mound of clay into a large, winged, and possibly octopus or dragon-like creature. "This is the beast that shall rise up and destroy us all. Its form and purpose came to me in a series of vivid and disturbing dreams. I would call them nightmares, except for the moments of ecstasy I felt plunging my dagger into the brains of non-believers... and mashing them into useless jelly. It was like nothing I've ever experienced. Whispers of 'Tulu' followed as did the flow of dark red blood. I shall be finished with it soon... perhaps another hour of sculpting."

If the old man, Zoggie, finishes his sculpture of Great K'tulu, then the Great Old One will arise from the desert, laying waste to all He sees.

If the adventurers pay him and his artwork no mind, they will hear a blood-curdling scream minutes after leaving his tent. One of Viraj's spies has just been killed by some unseen force. His body lies partially eaten and bloody just before Zoggie and his nearly complete statue... almost as if it were some kind of dread offering!



CARCOSA

One of the more interesting retailers in Aryd's End, Carcosa is home to all manner of strange things – from ancient tomes full of whispering pages to the grotesque bronze sculptures of Blacksaw Jibbmonger.

Carcosa's proprietor is named Eesil, a middle-aged gentleman of fair complexion and dark, haunted eyes. Eesil has precious little conscience. He'd sell his brother's soul for a rare bauble or magical trinket.

Eesil can name the sorcerer who was with Lord Skittery the other night – Trellyn Ikvaar. The two of them came to his shop in hoping of having a few questions answered pertaining to a small, hideous idol. Eesil won't say any more than that unless tortured; at which point, he'll say anything he thinks the PCs want to hear in order to be released. Eesil doesn't know where Trellyn Ikvaar is or that Lord Skittery was wounded (or killed).

No matter if the PCs pry into his affairs (but especially if they do), Eesil will eagerly show them his latest find: a shining trapezohedron. He tells them that he acquired it from a Venusian trader about a month ago.

The shining trapezohedron sits on a pedestal underneath a glass box. Upon that box is a black velvet cloth with weird red

symbols embroidered into it. Eesil removes the cloth and lifts the protective glass so that the adventurers might get a better view. The thing is as big as a roasted chicken, pure black but glints of light sparkle and reflect a radiant sheen.

"Look. Look deep into the crystal, its facets, its cleavage, it shines so bright, so dark... my nigriscent beauty."

After gazing at the large, black crystalline structure, each character must make a saving throw. Those who fail feel their soul being sucked out of their body into the trapezohedron, which only shines that much brighter. Although, those unaffected only feel a longing for something unattainable – in the dark about their companions' predicament.

The only way to release trapped souls is to destroy the crystal, thus rendering it useless.

The proprietor of Carcosa has a special tattoo inked onto his skin (a large sigil on his back) granting him 5 points of damage reduction, meaning that every individual hit does 5 points of damage less than it otherwise would have. Adventurers who discover this secret and want to replicate it may find the symbol, ritual, and ink with needle after several hours of searching Eesil's shop. However, a Demon Lord may visit that marked individual in the dead of night, crimson claw outstretched with the expectation of payment.

If a PC happens to ask about the shop's name, Eesil admits that he's never actually been to Carcosa. However, he's read about it in one of his many worm-eaten tomes. He named it Carcosa because the first piece he sold, an ornate and pallid mask, originated from the Court of the Yellow King.

HERALD OF THE OLD GODS

The party is approached by a humanoid stranger in black robes, bald with scaly or burned skin. In his hand, a large white pearl or circular stone - possibly magical.

"I am Kelk, a wandering mystic and dark pilgrim towards the other side of Torth. Yet, my passing through Aryd's End is no accident. I bring a message from beneath the sands: Snake-Men are coming and their Ancient Ones shall break through in 49 moons (7 days). This reality is not safe from their corrupting influence."

Kelk has been to many fantastic realms. His iridescent white sphere allows him to travel astrally. If any adventurers get in his face, that little sphere of his will produce several astral snakes. GMs should feel free to treat him as a high-level monk if the PCs' actions warrant it.



HD: 5 **HP:** 30 **AC:** 11 [8] **Attack Bonus:** +3 **#Attacks:** 6
Damage: 1d4 (5 snake bites) and 1d6 (fist of fury)

Special: If attacked, Kelk's magic pearl produces five astral serpents immediately. Kelk prefers dipping into a particular dimension where snakes are plentiful. However, another owner could just as easily find and produce tentacles or something appropriately alien and malevolent.

Treasure: The sphere is his only possession.

RAIDERS OF THE LOST TOMB

A woman wearing a beautiful ebony mask with feline features asks if the adventurers are willing to investigate the Tomb of Dragons a day's travel north of Aryd's End. Her master discovered the top of a mausoleum barely visible in the drifting sands. He and his team of excavators are busy clearing away the desert so the tomb can be accessed. She was told by her master to find explorers or treasure-hunters in the city and bring them back to the Tomb of Dragons. In exchange for their services, they shall be rewarded a 50% share of whatever is found within. At the end, she thinks to introduce herself. Her name is Alkaana.

If PCs inquire how she survived in the night-waste, she confesses that a bodyguard was with her but that he was swiftly eaten by some creature that appeared to be a giant three-headed crocodile with tentacles. As it fed upon him, she escaped and ran and ran until reaching the city gates.

In truth, Alkaana is a member of the Servants of Flame. An hour after beginning their journey back to Aryd's End, she ritually sacrificed her bodyguard in order to receive infernal protection from Demon Lord who is her patron. Alkaana is not only a practiced deceiver but a cold-blooded sociopath. Anyone trying to judge her honesty, character, or the truth of her story are at a disadvantage (-4 penalty).

Alkaana's master is indeed an archaeologist named Kazmael. He has reason to believe that a powerful sorcerer was buried within the ancient mausoleum and that magic-user knew powerful draconic secrets that would be invaluable to the Servants of Flame.

WISDOM OF TENYEN THULE

A fellow sorcerer, Tenyen Thule, knows the whereabouts of Trellyn Ikvaar.

"Trellyn Ikvaar and I were both apprenticed to the same sorcerer over a thousand moons ago. Upon completion of our training, he went one way and I another. Yet, a demon bound to me swears that he saw Trellyn Ikvaar in the night-waste about 35 moons ago (5 days). He was at a ruined temple three hours journey to the west of Aryd's End."

Tenyen Thule traffics with demons, but he is not a blackhearted villain like the majority of Torthan magic-users. Rather, his interest is in knowledge for its own sake, respecting the sanctity of life and limits of nature.

THE HOUSE OF RISING MOONS

Just outside The House of Rising Moons, a popular bordello in Aryd's End, the party can hear the back and forth of tense negotiations. A half-elf man is looking for a girl from a certain tribe, but not just any girl... one with green eyes like creamy jade. For such a girl he's willing to pay triple the going rate.

The bordello's proprietor doesn't know any such girl, yet the half-elf seems positive that he knows exactly where to find a green-eyed girl.

If the adventurers pursue this matter, the half-elf will talk with them in private. "I'm Vandt, not from around here; I came through a portal. Not important. I'm looking for a particular girl who was kidnapped by the Servants of Flame three nights ago. Her name is Shahade. Very soon, she will be sacrificed. I was given 1,000 gold pieces to recover Shahade. If you help me locate her, I'll cut you in for half."

If pressed for more background information, Vandt will say that there's no time for a full explanation but he was assigned this mission in another realm and has journeyed a long way to find the girl.

The GM could place Shahade at Trellyn Ikvaar's temple in the night-waste or perhaps a couple of dragon cultists are assisting the drugged girl out of the city even now...?

THE KING REQUESTS AN AUDIENCE

A thin man of average size and build approaches. He wears an array of multi-colored silk garments, almost like a jester but his dark features show that he's no fool. The man's beard is black and well-maintained.

"Greetings, I am Jafrazaadi, the King's envoy. He requests an audience with your entire party. Immediately. Please follow." Jafrazaadi turns and smoothly walks towards the King's chamber, not looking back to see if the adventurers are following him. He simply assumes that they are.

By now, the adventurers may have themselves a reputation. Certainly, they've been noticed by the royal spies and thuggish informants who routinely patrol the streets of Aryd's End. PCs, even if they're Torth natives, stick out as dangerous strangers. Dran requests an audience with them before anything else happens. Those who refuse will be doggedly hunted until captured, at which point they'll be decapitated.

While Jafrazaadi does carry a ceremonial dagger, he has no training as a warrior and will be easily dispatched. However, anyone who kills him will be killed just as surely as if they'd refused a royal command.

The GM is welcome to give this envoy more to do... perhaps he's a Servant of Flame working with Viraj? Or maybe he's secretly working against the royal trinity as a worshiper of Shaitan, trying to destabilize the kingdom? If that is the case, proof of his treachery would surely lessen the sentence for his murderers.

THE THRONE ROOM

Dran sits upon his throne. Observers notice it's a piece of column, broken off. The throne is adorned with symbols and pictograms of early days in Torth. The rest of this chamber is well-appointed in gold and purple, orange, yellow, and gold-colored silks, pillows, and paintings.

Hanging upon the wall facing Dran is a large, trapezoidal slab of polished yellow and violet granite. Occasionally, strange images flicker upon the stone's surface before disappearing. This is one of Viraj's scrying devices. When commanded by anyone other than the shadow priest, there's only a 2 in 6 chance the stone reveals what was asked of it (such as palace intruders or what's going on south of the city). Otherwise, it flashes random scenes from other worlds.

To the right stands Dran's wife, Yara. She is beautiful but

with a reserved air, not openly hostile but prepared to be displeased by those who enter the throne room and petition her husband. If Yara needs anything (such as refreshments or a garment made from exotic silk), Neeva is not far away.

Several steps behind the throne creeps Viraj the shadow priest, waiting and watching.

At Dran's immediate left sits a shadow cat – a panther or tiger crossbred with some shadow creature... sorcery at its best (or worst).

"Why have you come to Aryd's End? I doubt it's because of the revelry. No, there must be another reason. Have you come to kill a man? To find treasure? Does your master, whomever he may be, mean to harm the king of Aryd's End?"

Obviously, Dran is casting a wide net. He doesn't have a clue as to what brought the party to Aryd's End. Though, he might know they're connected to the robbery/murder of Lord Skittery and any other trouble they've gotten into since arriving.

If the PCs talk of vast wealth, powerful magic items, or forbidden secrets, Dran will want in on that action. In any case, the King requests that they report to him every 21 moons (three days)... so that he may judge their progress and intentions for himself.

LEAVING THE THRONE ROOM

The adventurers can't help but notice some kind of royal celebration within the palace. Everyone is wearing masks but observant adventurers can tell these are nobles, wealthy merchants, and city officials... along with sultry dancing girls in semi-transparent silk veils and little else.

Thieves might be able to steal something valuable; others could mingle, possibly finding out information on the city, tribal feuding, notable individuals, etc.



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POST-ROYAL MASSACRE

A dark elf by the name of Ixaanis. Ixaanis is one of a few extremely vicious anti-royalists within Aryd's End. Believing the adventures either in league with the king or part of the king's plan to remain in power, Ixaanis has decided to cut off that resource personally.

The dark elf's strategy is to come up behind the party's straggler, maybe a magic-user or priest off to the side, possibly distracted by the revelry. Ixaanis is sneaky and organized enough to engineer a bit of street theatre if need be (such as a voluptuous maiden offering shots of naqir from her ample breasts). After the first falls, he'll try to surprise and assassinate another – this time, he'll go for either the most powerful looking character or the leader. After that, regular melee will begin with both sides being aware of the other.

If Ixaanis seems hopelessly out-gunned a few rounds into the battle, he'll retreat through the crowd, using his magic blade to help him hide in the throng of revelers. However, if he's prevented from escaping, the dark elf can be questioned. Adventurers who can convince Ixaanis that they aren't on the king's side might find an ally.

The dark elf also has a brother and a sister who could be (if the GM decides to take things farther) more than willing to avenge Ixaanis' death.

Ixaanis

HD: 7 **HP:** 35 **AC:** 16 [3] **Attack Bonus:** +7 **#Attacks:** 2 **Damage:** 1d6+4 (short sword).

Special: He wields the Short Sword of Assassination (see back of book for details). Ixaanis also gets an extra 4d6 on surprise attacks due to his roguish skills. Generous GMs will allow a PC who rolls a natural 20 to disarm the dark elf, at which point, Ixaanis will either flee (if able) or surrender (if not).

Treasure: Aside from his enchanted steel, Ixaanis carries a black leather pouch containing 3 emeralds worth approximately 250 gold pieces each. He also wears black leather armor.

STRUNG-OUT SORCERER

On their way out of the city, the PCs encounter a derelict trying to crawl out of the gutter. He wears ragged black robes embroidered with blue and orange mathematical or geometric sigils. This is a magic-using junkie fallen on hard times.

"Just one more hit. I can perform wonders for you, my lords and ladies." He says while gesturing with cracked, weathered hands, fingernails long and dirty. "I only need another shot of the good stuff, then I'll be back on top... a true sorcerer like I once was."

Those who take pity on him and help him out have a 2 in 6 chance of actually making a difference in his life. Otherwise, he'll just keep eking out his life as a junky until death claims him.

THE GOLDEN WARNING

A woman walks towards the adventurers wearing a feminine gold-colored mask along with pink and orange silk robes. She delicately gestures while softly speaking her mind.

"I can tell that you are strangers here. Allow me to welcome you to our city... if only your stay could be a pleasant and uneventful one. Beware the Servants of Flame, perhaps you've already been approached by one of their sinister agents? They are like venomous serpents and all too numerous in this city. They were nothing more than a dragon worshipping cult... at first. However, over the last 10,000 moons, the Servants of Flame have infiltrated the hierarchy and acquired a powerful artifact known as the Golm Jaahar. Trust no one in Aryd's End."

A moment later, she turns and leaves, walking into the throng of masked revelers.

Her name is Yssa. She belongs to the Khortha tribe and is a member of the Sect of the Gilded Mask. She was ordered to communicate with the strangers, warning them of the Servants of Flame.

THE WATCHER

The adventurers are minding their own business (or maybe they're busting up the place) when a horrid-looking floating head with three eyes and writhing tentacles hovers just into view. As large as a gorilla, the head notices its prey - a humble silk merchant - grabs the man with one of its mighty grey-green tentacles and eats him whole.

A bald sorcerer, Naved, performed a ritual in the night-waste, not an hour ago and near the city gates. Unfortunately for his enemies, Naved was successful. An aberration of nature appeared in the form of a gigantic, three-eyed head, hideous to behold and diabolic in purpose. It is known as the Watcher Beyond the Threshold.

The ritual to summon it was taxing. Naved is resting just outside the city while the Watcher Beyond the Threshold exacts his master's revenge. However, Naved only has seven hours before the god must be banished. If it remains in this world, no one controls the Watcher Beyond the Threshold, save itself.

The Watcher Beyond the Threshold

HD: 13 **HP:** 85 **AC:** 20 [-1] **Attack Bonus:** +10 **#Attacks:** 4 or 1 **Damage:** 2d6 (4 tentacles) or 7d6 (three-eyed blast)

Special: If the creature rolls a natural 20 with a tentacle attack, the humanoid is immediately raised up to the creature's mouth and bitten. Roll 6d6 for triple damage. Those blasted by a red surge of energy save for half damage. If the saving throw is a natural 1, double the damage. If the saving throw is a natural 20, the target takes no damage.

Outside the Gates

Leaving Aryd's End is much easier than entering. One of the gatekeepers might wish the adventurers luck out there in the night-waste. Within an hour, they could stumble onto Naved. He's lounging on the sand, clutching a papier-mâché head resembling The Watcher Beyond the Threshold.

Naved

HD: 7 **HP:** 23 **AC:** 14 [5] **Attack Bonus:** +2 **Damage:** 1d6 (scimitar)

Special: All his sorcery was spent on summoning the head of a god.

Treasure: 64 gold pieces.

SHE RIDES THE NIGHT

Adventurers traversing the desert will probably encounter Idryssa the Worm Sorceress. She either walks beside or rides upon the back of her Ixarquath – an insect worm hybrid that lives in the night-waste.

Idryssa is pale, beautiful, and ambitious; she does not suffer fools gladly. If she can break a man by way of her overbearing personality, she will.

Idryssa's intentions are to protect herself from all the various tribes, cults, and restrictions of civilization. Though she is evil and callous, Idryssa won't be overtly hostile to adventurers she meets. Although, if the party seems especially small, fragile, or under-powered, she might take their most prized possession as a tribute. After all, her exceptional beauty practically demands an offering of some kind.

Those attempting to seduce her have a chance if they are charismatic, powerful, and closer to neutral evil in alignment (or pretending to be).

Idryssa

HD: 6 **HP:** 36 **AC:** 12 [7] **Attack Bonus:** +4 **Damage:** 1d10+3 (two-handed sword) or magic

Special: Not only does she wear the Headdress of Saheesha (see back of book), the Worm Sorceress also wields an enchanted blade known as the Devil's Tooth (see back of the book for both magic items). Idryssa casts spells as a 6th level magic-user.



If in real trouble, Idryssa will transform herself into a giant sand worm in order to escape into the desert – leaving behind all her items and treasure.

Treasure: Aside from the magic items, she has 244 gold pieces.

Ixarquath

HD: 8 **HP:** 47 **AC:** 14 [5] **Attack Bonus:** +6 **Damage:** 3d6 (bite)

Special: If the Ixarquath is damaged with cold, frost, ice, or something similar, it will immediately recoil and flee into the desert.

TOMB OF DRAGONS

Akzath Ithraed was one of the original seven sorcerers who bathed Torth in nuclear fire. He sleeps the fitful slumber that is a sorcerer's death, entombed but not forgotten.

This mausoleum was given the name "Tomb of Dragons" because its occupant was devoted to the scourge of the skies. In fact, Akzath Ithraed believed he would eventually transform himself into a dragon one.

Numerous enchantments protected the sorcerer from aging. Akzath Ithraed is not a lich; he's not even undead. Rather, he willed himself back to life – that's how strong his magic is. Akzath Ithraed would be an invaluable asset to the Servants of Flame. For that reason alone, the PCs should probably keep him entombed or ingratiate themselves into his service.

For fear of looters, his sarcophagus is plain and unadorned (alternatively, it could be gold and encrusted with rare and precious stones, but magically trapped). Within, the sorcerer stirs... recharging his energy. There is also a ward upon the outside of his sarcophagus, preventing him from leaving. Once it is opened, Akzath Ithraed will be freed.

Assuming Alkaana and Kazmael are still alive, they wait for the adventurers to enter first. Once inside, they will be preoccupied by any writing, pictograms, or arcane symbols carved upon the walls. Kazmael, in particular, wants to be sure there aren't any surprises before opening the sarcophagus.

Those investigating the humble sarcophagus of Akzath Ithraed will find the sorcerer less than sleepy.

"That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange

aeons even death may die." Akzath quotes from the Necronomicon. "My favorite couplet from the forbidden book. In the afterlife, you may take some small pleasure in knowing that was the last thing you heard before the sound of all your bones snapping at once! Or... agree to serve me loyally, feverishly... knowing you're subordinate to a living god. For I am the great Akzath Ithraed. Kneel before me, servants. Kneel or die!"

Akzath Ithraed is more dream than flesh. In this plane, he is only semi-corporeal. Though extremely powerful, he's no god. Akzath manipulates reality with magic but cannot touch or be touched normally.

Only ethereal weapons or those consecrated by a true god can hurt him. Of course, his condition means that he requires servants to do his bidding. The sorcerer can also make good on his threat and will annihilate those who refuse to serve him.

Akzath Ithraed's chief goal is to become a dragon. After all, why become flesh if it's going to be the weak flesh of a man?



RUINED TEMPLE OF FLAME

The temple itself was magnificent at one time but is now a fallen monument to Torth's once great civilization. Though little more than a ruin, bizarre symmetry, unorthodox angles, and cyclopean stonework suggest strange aeons.

Trellyn Ikvaar and 2d4 members of the Servants of Flame are getting ready to perform a ritual that will open the gateway between Torth and wherever it is the dragons have been imprisoned (a chaotic void, beneath the ocean before the first age, within the hidden stars, or whatever the GM thinks best).

If the GM chooses, Shahade (the girl with green eyes) is also present but in some kind of stupor. Although, she could be their human sacrifice just as easily as another humanoid.

If it would be more dramatic (and the session is quickly drawing to a close), the cultists could be mid-way through their ritual. Otherwise, the adventurers have plenty of time to either infiltrate the Servants of Flame, pick cultists off one by one, storm in via frontal assault, try to negotiate with them, or simply wait until the ritual is underway.

The key to this ritual is the diminutive, awful idol in Trellyn

Ikvaar's possession. It's the focal point, so destroying the idol or killing Trellyn Ikvaar are the only ways of stopping the portal's creation. However, once the portal is open, obliterating the idol or the cult's leader will only prevent dragons from being controlled - they are still coming through, intent on repaying the debt of their incarceration with ethereal torrents of chartreuse napalm!

Trellyn Ikvaar

HD: 7 **HP:** 27 **AC:** 11 [8] **Attack Bonus:** +3 **Damage:** 1d6+1 (magic scimitar)

Special: Trellyn possesses the Scimitar of Sapphire Tears (see back of book). He has three more uses of the blade's sapphires and will use them all if he's fighting for his life. He also knows spells up to and including 3rd level including those contained at the end of this adventure.

Treasure: Besides the scimitar, he has the Key of Kahbdul (see back of book), and a small leather pouch containing seven medium sized rubies, each worth approximately 600 gold pieces.

Servants of Flame

HD: 2 **HP:** 9 **AC:** 13 [6] **Attack Bonus:** +1 **Damage:** 1d6 (scimitars)





New Magic Items

SCIMITAR OF SAPPHIRE TEARS

This sword dates back to the old times, before the nuclear fire nearly destroyed Torth. The base of its blade is decorated with seven tear-shaped sapphires, three on one side and four on the other.

The Scimitar has a keen edge and makes a critical on to-hit rolls of 19 and 20. Additionally, it acts as a +1 weapon, +3 vs. reptiles (including giant lizards, lizard-folk, snake-men, dragons, vampiric flying toads, etc.)

Most potent of all, the scimitar of sapphire tears can grant its wielder advantage upon his attack (effectively a +4 attack bonus). However, this is usable a maximum of 7 times per owner. After each use of this special ability, a sapphire turns to onyx.

FUSAHFEL

Dran's +1 bastard sword has a black mother of pearl hilt with a screaming skull as its pommel. The blade itself was forged with three small rubies imbedded on its left side.

Once per day, Fusahfel can open a medium-sized portal to another world... a nightmarish place of darkness, demons, and dragons. The portal lasts for seven rounds.

PAIN AMPLIFIER

A silver rod, each end tapered, giving it a sleek appearance. Many primitives, barbarians, and superstitious tribesmen would consider it a magic wand. However, the pain amplifier is a technological device. When the targeted individual is touched with the device it does 1d4 damage, incapacitating him for the same number of rounds.

PALE EMPRESS CORSET

This is a black corset reinforced with the bones of delicate Exkraat demons. Wearing this black, magenta, and bone-white garment gives the wearer advantage (+4 bonus) to seduce, charm, or intimidate those in her presence. Though enchanted, this corset is made for and will only fit a humanoid woman between 5' and 6' tall.

HEADDRESS OF SAHEESHA

This exotic headdress allows the wearer to communicate telepathically (sending and picking up surface thought waves) with individuals (within 50').

THE DEVIL'S TOOTH

Said to be forged from the fallen debris of Torth's eighth moon, this two-handed sword is a +3 weapon, +5 vs. amorphous and extra-dimensional/planar entities. Upon close examination, the Devil's Tooth barely resembles steel at all. In truth, it's a rare alloy containing unnatural (magical) properties.

The Devil's Tooth is an intelligent blade and has an interesting personality. Its usual silence is punctuated with sinister whispers, tempting the wielder to vile acts. Those upon the horns of a dilemma will be convinced (or coerced) into doing whatever deed is darker (4 in 6 chance).

Additionally, the blade gives off a subtle vibration and sensation of cold when in the presence (within 50') of an intelligent magical sword.

SHORT SWORD OF ASSASSINATION

This jagged, wild-curved blade is treated as a +1 weapon, +3 vs humanoids. It also yields advantage (+4 bonus) to hide, stealth, and sneaking up on opponents.

KEY OF KAHBDUL

This large, iron key grants access to any locked (magical or otherwise) door or container (such as a treasure chest) once per day.

SANDSTORM

Sandstorm is a trident fashioned out of coral, precious stones, and minerals found on the ocean floor.

Instead of the standard trident damage, it does 3d4. It's considered a +1 weapon.

Additionally, this magic item has adapted to its desolate, parched environment. Rather than commanding the ocean, it rules the desert! Once per day, the trident's wielder may create a sandstorm large enough to envelope one large creature, two medium-sized creatures, or three small creatures.

This diminutive desert twister lasts for 1d12 rounds, dealing 1d6 damage per round. There's no saving throw or dexterity check that can extricate a victim from the sandstorm, nor can victims do anything besides flail about.

New Spells

CREEPY CRIMSON (2ND LEVEL)

Writ in the blood of scary monks, this spell conjures a wafting mist of crimson hue. The blood red fog creeps slowly along the ground, eventually (2d4 rounds after casting) manifesting as the following...

1. Skeletons or skeletal figures... perhaps the seldom mentioned bone masters!
2. Naked women. These women might be 1) screaming, 2) laughing, 3) seductive, or 4) giving birth.
3. Grotesque parodies of flesh with tentacles... so many tentacles!
4. Large, slimy crimson worms slithering out of forbidden tomes open to unspeakable pages of sanity-annihilating horror!
5. Insects crawling over a children's toy (such as a teddy bear or half-melted doll head).
6. Roll twice and combine results or create your own (go for broke, you sick bastard!)

Those witnessing such visions have a 2 in 6 chance of going temporarily insane.

ERASURE (3RD LEVEL)

This spell wipes a specific object, individual, or event from a subject's memory. The effect lasts one day per level of caster.

RADICAL SUBJECTIVISM (3RD LEVEL)

When the spell is cast, a specific object ceases to exist for a targeted individual. Conversely, the spell can be used to make a non-existent object entirely real for an individual. Either effects last for one hour per level of caster.

BACKFIRE (4TH LEVEL)

This spell is cast upon a subject (such as the caster himself) ahead of time. Later on, if the recipient of *backfire* is targeted by an antagonist's spell, the effect completely ignores the target in favor of the caster.

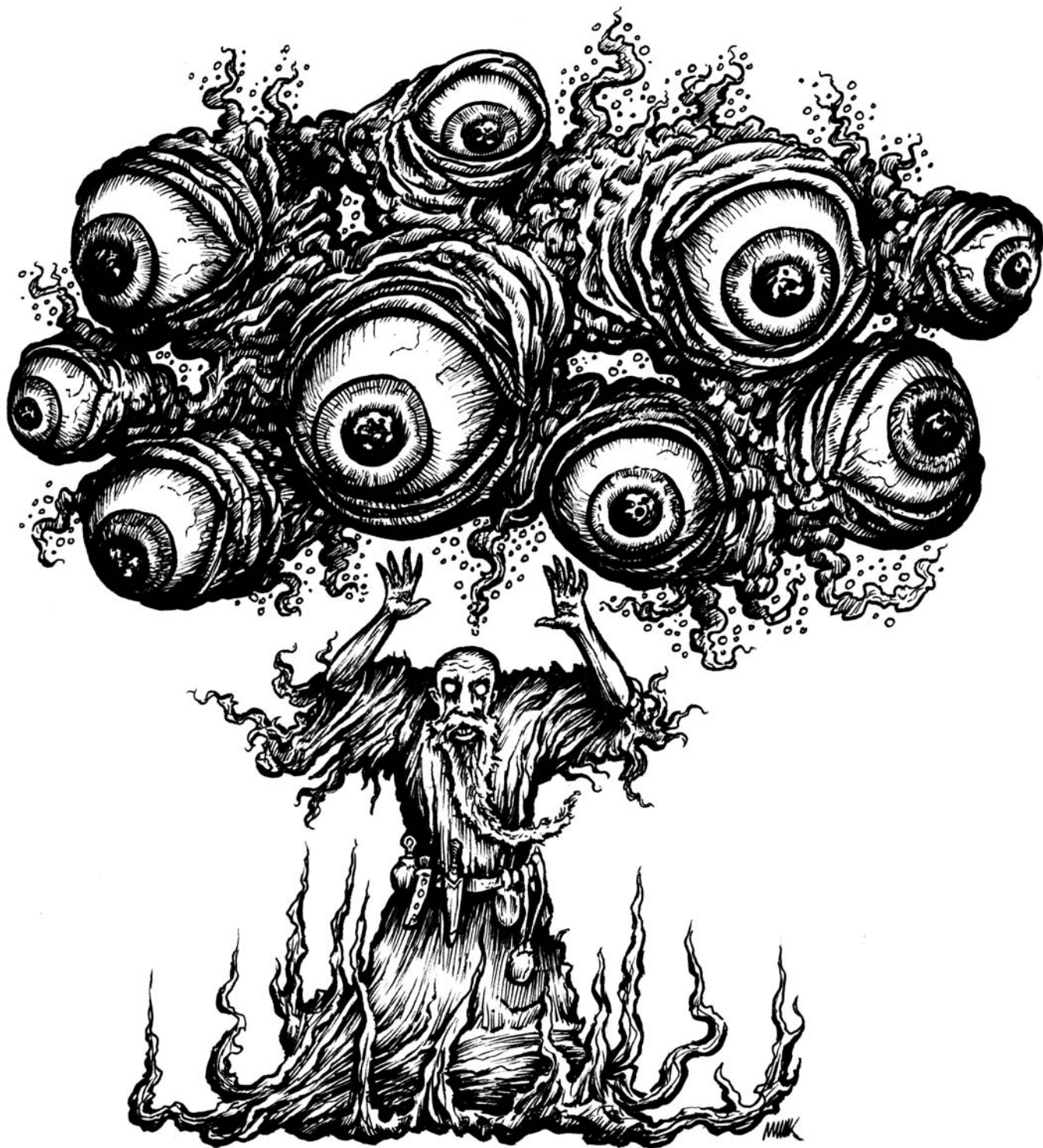
For instance, Aervd the sorcerer casts backfire on himself before an upcoming battle. During the battle, a dark mage casts fireball on the entire party. The party, except for Aervd, is affected by the fireball as normal. However, the damage Aervd would have experienced falls to the dark mage instead.

Backfire lasts 10 minutes per caster level.

THE EYES OF KAANDAR (4TH LEVEL)

The sorcerer manifests a writhing mass of eyes floating above him. This many-eyed beast is from Kaandar, the darkest of the dark worlds. It seeks only one thing: humanoid slaves!

Every humanoid (other than the caster) who isn't deliberately averting his eyes, must make a saving throw or be compelled to join the Kaandarian demon as it returns to its native plane. The sorcerer's companions have advantage (+4 bonus) on their saving throws.



Afterword

This adventure is for novice adventurers, though mid-level PCs might also have an interesting time... depending on the GM, of course.

Set within an urban/desert sandbox, I wanted Revelry in Torth to get away from the linear “railroad” type of scenario. Yet, there are several encounters wrapped up in plot points able to guide parties towards a specific goal.

Some characters will want to enrich themselves, others to save the kingdom – or become kings themselves, a few might desire to save the girl, and there’s usually one in every party who just wants to be part of the action – whatever it is. I think there’s a little something for everyone in here. That was my goal, anyways.

Lord Skittery’s murder is (or could be) the inciting incident that puts everything in motion. Taking a different approach will require the emphasis to be placed upon another encounter or two. Certainly, the royal “family” can be used as a focal point. After all, they rule Aryd’s End for better or worse. Various side-quests and adventures could flow from the curio shop, bordello, and the old man slapping wet clay into a Great Old One shaped pile of horror. Depending on your GM style and caliber of players, the party might drunkenly careen from one encounter to another.

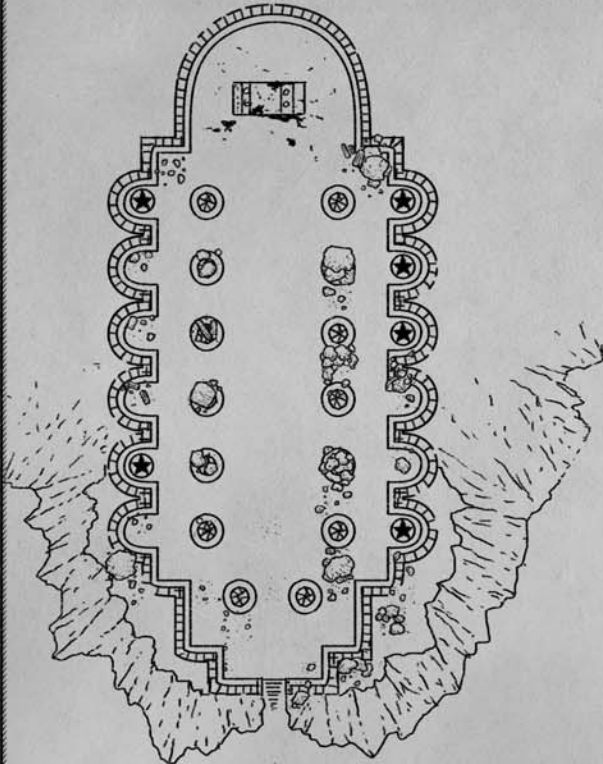
Torth, particularly Aryd’s End, was inspired by bits and pieces of the Middle East, as well as, previously published RPG settings. The familiar, exotic, and strange should mix together so that the world appears evocative without being overwhelming or a stereotypical cliché. To that end, I believe Revelry in Torth could easily be placed within an established fantasy campaign setting.

Those familiar with my previous work: Liberation of the Demon Slayer, The Baleful Sorcerer of Tsathag’kha, Three Swordsmen, and The Islands of Purple-Haunted Putrescence might see the following patterns which I freely admit are there... weird hybrid creatures, subtle references to pop culture, evil sorcerers, love of reptiles (Snake-Men rule!), random and tangential encounters, along with a few things that will just outright kill a man (or possibly destroy the entire world). What can I say? I can’t help myself.

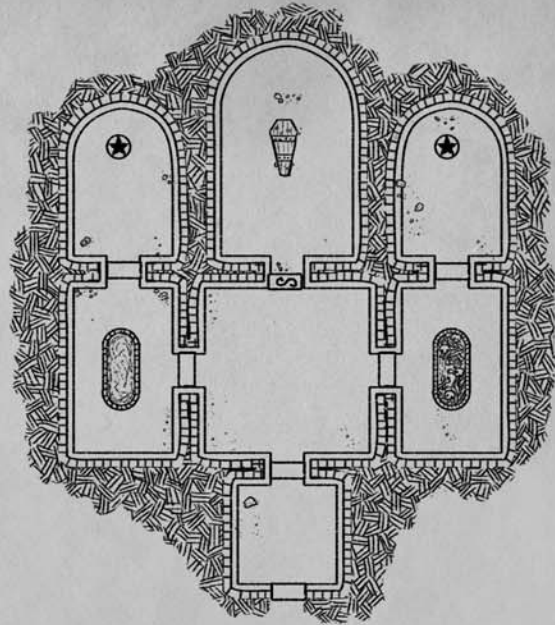
However, the good news (besides more of the same Vengerized content) is that various elements can be mixed and matched. Use the kaleidoscopic crystals from Purple, monster from Liberation, or character class from Baleful or Swordsmen! While such things may come from different worlds, their aesthetic should be internally consistent enough to borrow freely.

Revelry in Torth is the first of a trilogy. Eventually, I will author a second and third adventure set in this world. This combined series will give GMs the full scope of Torth, each book containing facets of the land and its mysterious people, sorcery, artifacts, monsters, etc. Perhaps, you’ll create your own scenario or guide book to running campaigns in Torth. If you do, let me know. I’d be more than happy to consult on such a project.

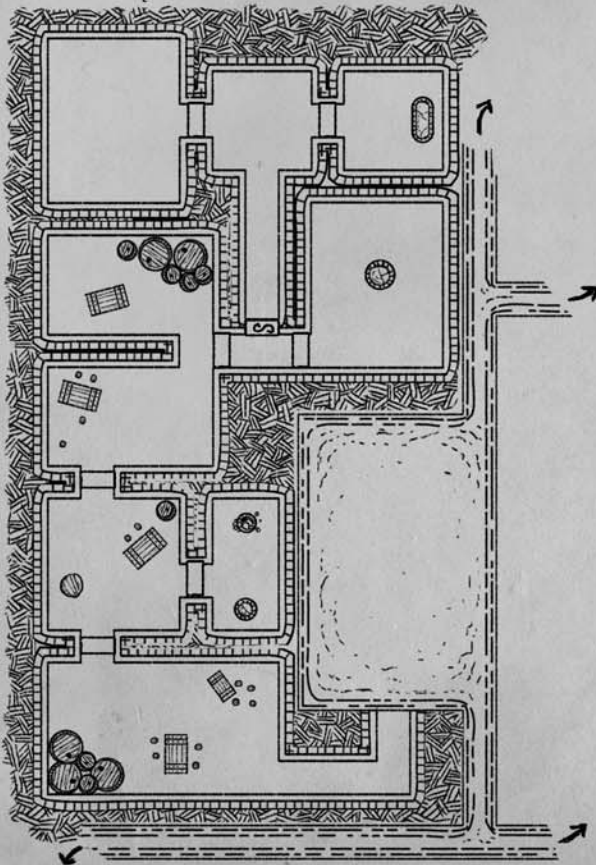
Fallen Temple



Tomb of Dragons



Argo's End catacombs



Notes:



Revelry in Torth takes place in a post-apocalyptic world. Seven of the most powerful wizards created a gargantuan fireball that destroyed the world in order to prevent a slave revolt that threatened to extinguish humanity.

Hundreds of years after the holocaust, people are distrustful of magic, each other, and the unbridled forces of Chaos... demons, devils, dragons, and extra-dimensional aberrations.

Out of the night-cursed desert comes heroes, villains, and treasure-seeking mercenaries to upset the balance of power. You are one of these fearless adventurers. Is that a scorpion squid erupting from the moons-lit sand? Attack!



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