

THE STYGBIAN GARDEN OF ABELIA PREM

A woman with dark hair and red lipstick stands in a dark, overgrown garden at night. She wears a dark, ornate dress with a skull headpiece and has extensive tattoos on her arms. The background is a dark, overgrown garden with a wooden building visible in the distance.

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The Stygian Garden of Abelia Prem

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To Trevor, Chip, Dean, Anne, Mark, & Stephen whose blood was the first to be spilt in this godsforsaken place.

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The Stygian Garden of Abelia Prem
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Designer's Notes

I never expected to write an adventure module. This thing came pretty much fully formed out of the blue. My original notes say:

The Stygian Garden of Abelia Prem:

This is a story of fantastic decadence. Lady aspires to create the greatest garden ever. Oracle speaks to her of the rarest flower, the STYGIAN ROSE, a mythical subterranean plant of tremendous beauty. She hires _____ to dig below her villa, seeking the rose. The pattern of digging is indicative of a rambling search (ref. the Winchester Mystery House but underground) She purchases stone guardians (gargoyles) to guard over her garden. These stone creatures break into factions after the lady's death (maybe). "Lay Beside Me" carved into sarcophagus where the lady's remains are. Lying on stone triggers something cool.

You'll see that I stayed pretty close to that original brainstorm. All that said, I can track the DNA of this adventure pretty easily.

Part of it is based on my own homebrewed version of the *House of Strahd* that I created in my teens after reading a review of the TSR module. It was a haunted mansion scenario where the mansion shifted back and forth between different periods of its troubled history.

Part of it is based on the song "Unforgiven II" by Metallica. I've always found that song's lyrical imagery very atmospheric and creepy.

The idea of an underground Winchester Mystery House helped me redefine the context and background of the adventure. I was also influenced by the grounds and structure of Bothwell Lodge near Sedalia, Missouri, a wonderful place that I visited several times as a kid.

This module took my play group (four to five 1st- and 2nd-level characters) four sessions to finish. In the end, it claimed the lives of two PCs and left the others with a terrible fear of statuary. It also provided enough wealth for them to level up a bit and eventually purchase their own manor.

Have fun!

Clint Krause
June 2015
New Orleans

Background

Abelia Prem was a peculiar woman. Born to a wealthy merchant family, she grew up with no desire unfulfilled. However, she did not inherit her family's lust for wealth. She had ambitions to be a scholar, a traveler, and an explorer of unknown places. Throughout her life she studied, remaining bookish and reclusive while her siblings engaged in the more typical mating rituals of the idle rich. When her parents left her a sizable inheritance, she built a secluded manor, a sanctuary of intellect away from what she saw as the crass, banal world around her.

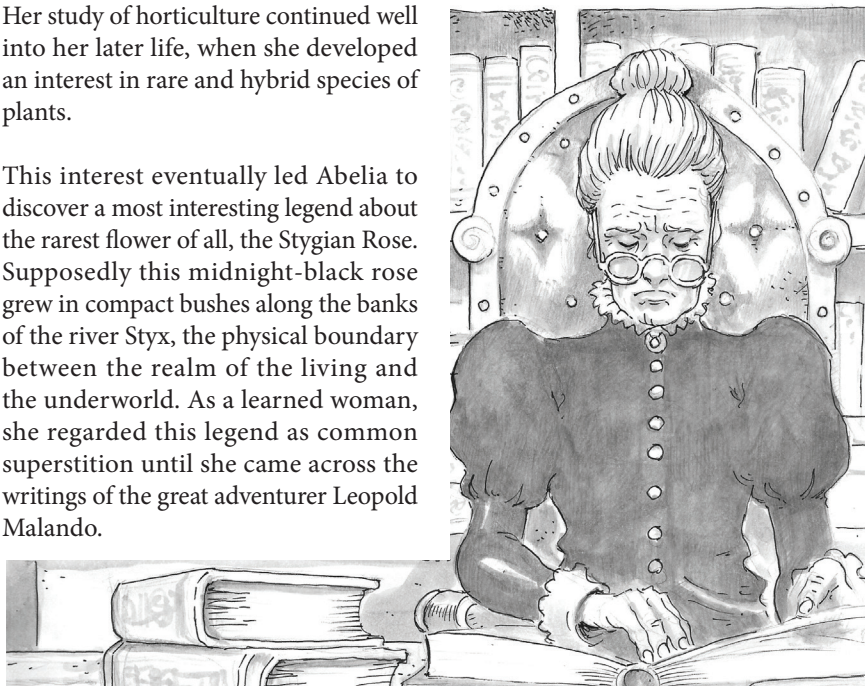
In her middle age she was known for hosting extravagant salon parties for the local nobles, scholars, and bardic colleges. Her gardens were considered the most extraordinary in the region. Her study of horticulture continued well into her later life, when she developed an interest in rare and hybrid species of plants.

This interest eventually led Abelia to discover a most interesting legend about the rarest flower of all, the Stygian Rose. Supposedly this midnight-black rose grew in compact bushes along the banks of the river Styx, the physical boundary between the realm of the living and the underworld. As a learned woman, she regarded this legend as common superstition until she came across the writings of the great adventurer Leopold Malando.

In his journals, Malando described a chthonic expedition wherein he not only found this plant, but used it to restore life to one of his dead colleagues.

Unfortunately for Abelia, this discovery occurred just prior to the dementia that claimed her mind in the last years of her life. She became obsessed with the prospect of finding the Stygian Rose and adding it to her world-renowned garden. She contracted a team of Dwarven diggers to tunnel below her gardens and search for the river of the dead. In the end, she may have found it.

Ten years ago Abelia Prem vanished without a trace, leaving her property abandoned. In the months prior to her disappearance, she suddenly released her servants from duty in a fit of dementia. Neither Abelia Prem, nor her team of Dwarves were ever seen again.



Rumors

1. Abelia Prem was respected among the local intelligentsia for her extravagant salon parties. [T]

2. Abelia Prem had an interest in strange plants and exotic statuary. [T]

3. Abelia Prem had quite a collection of valuable curios. [T]

4. The manor grounds are guarded by living statues. [T]

5. A few years ago, a wealthy merchant's son took his fiancée to the grounds and never returned. [T]

6. Prem's servants insisted she had gone senile in her old age. She fired them in a fit of madness. [T]

7. Prem's servants claimed that before they were fired, Prem hired a team of Dwarven diggers. [T]

8. A woman who lives in the region claims that Abelia Prem used to bring her pots of delicious honey. [T]

9. Abelia Prem never married and never accepted any suitors. [T]

10. Prem ordered many custom-made statuary from a sorcerer mason named Klavis Garavone. [T]

11. Prem's plants are sentient and roam the manor grounds at night. [F]

12. Abelia Prem was a vile sorceress who conducted animal sacrifices in her underground garden. [F]



Manor Grounds

Player Map



ILLUSTRATION BY TODD GAMBLE

Manor Grounds

Referee Map

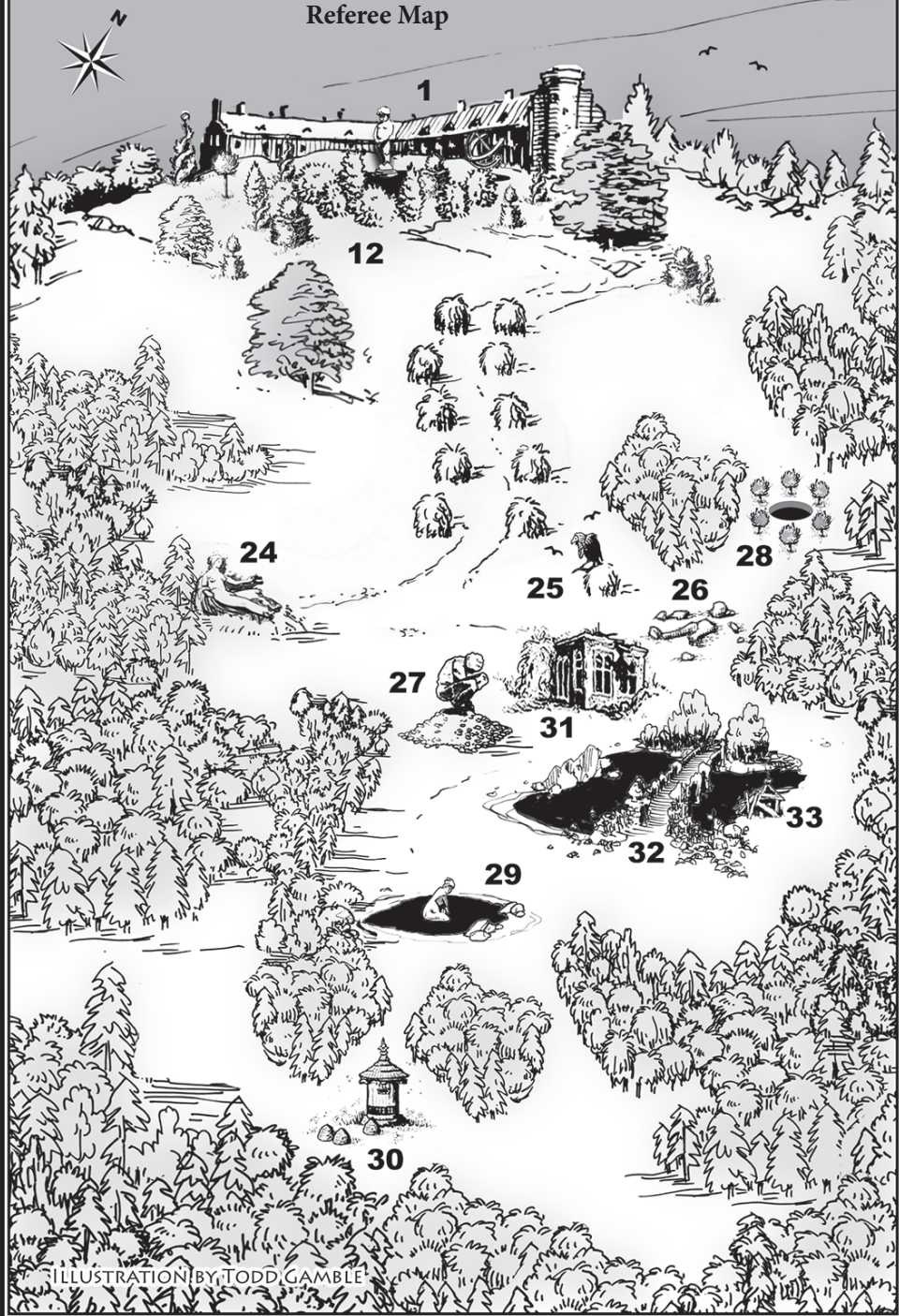
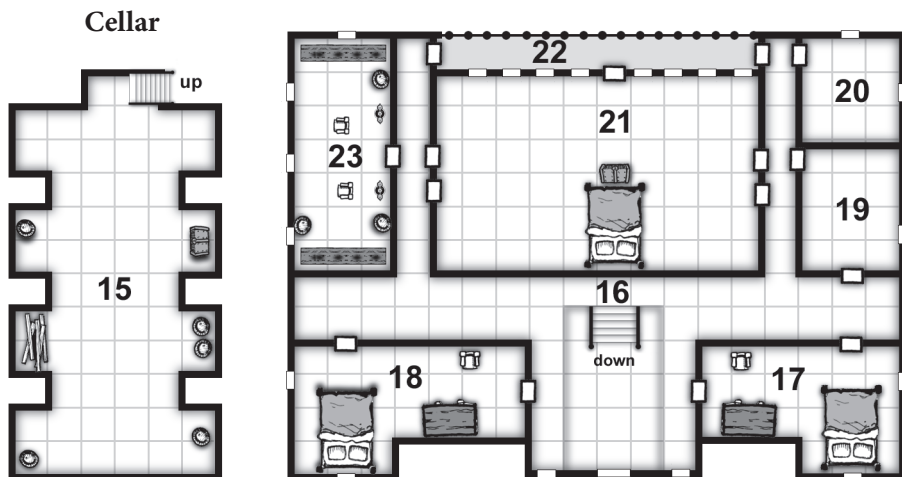
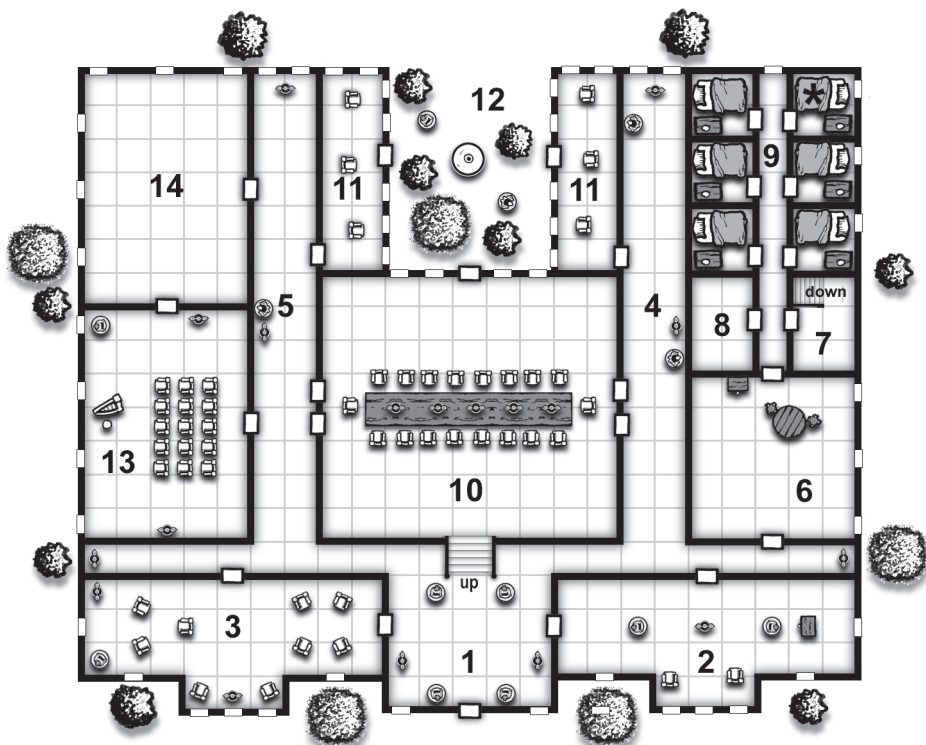


ILLUSTRATION BY TODD GAMBLE

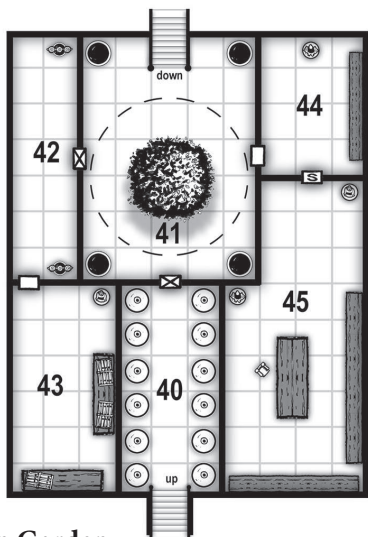
Manor Interior (Second Floor)



Manor Interior (Ground Floor)

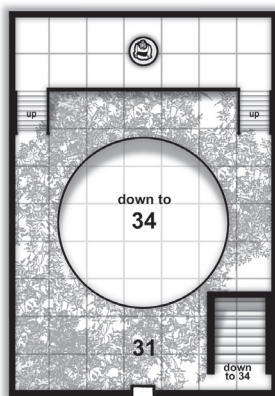


One Square = 5 Feet

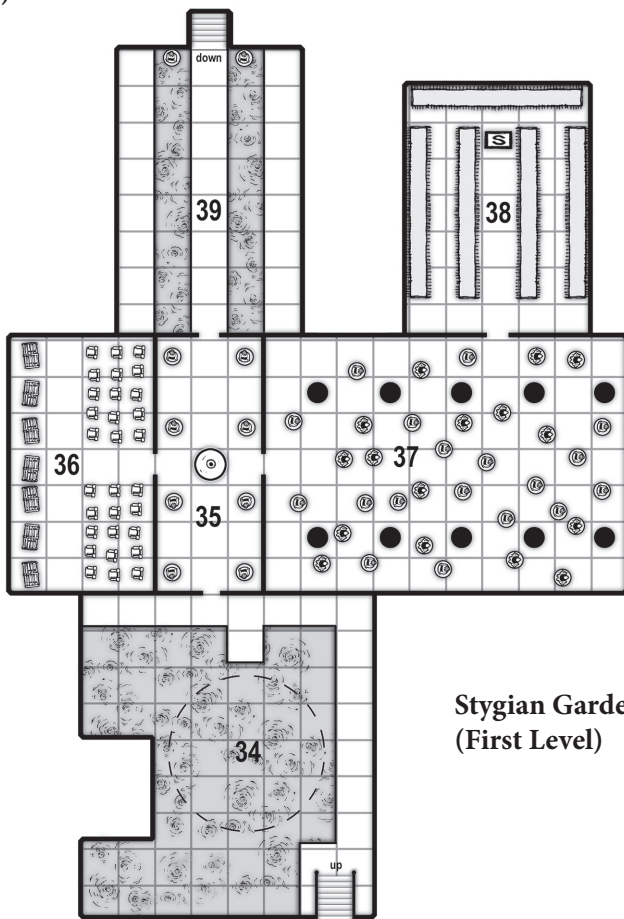


**Stygian Garden
(Second Level)**

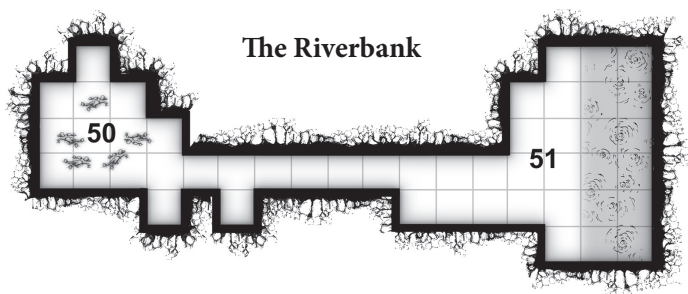
Atrium Interior



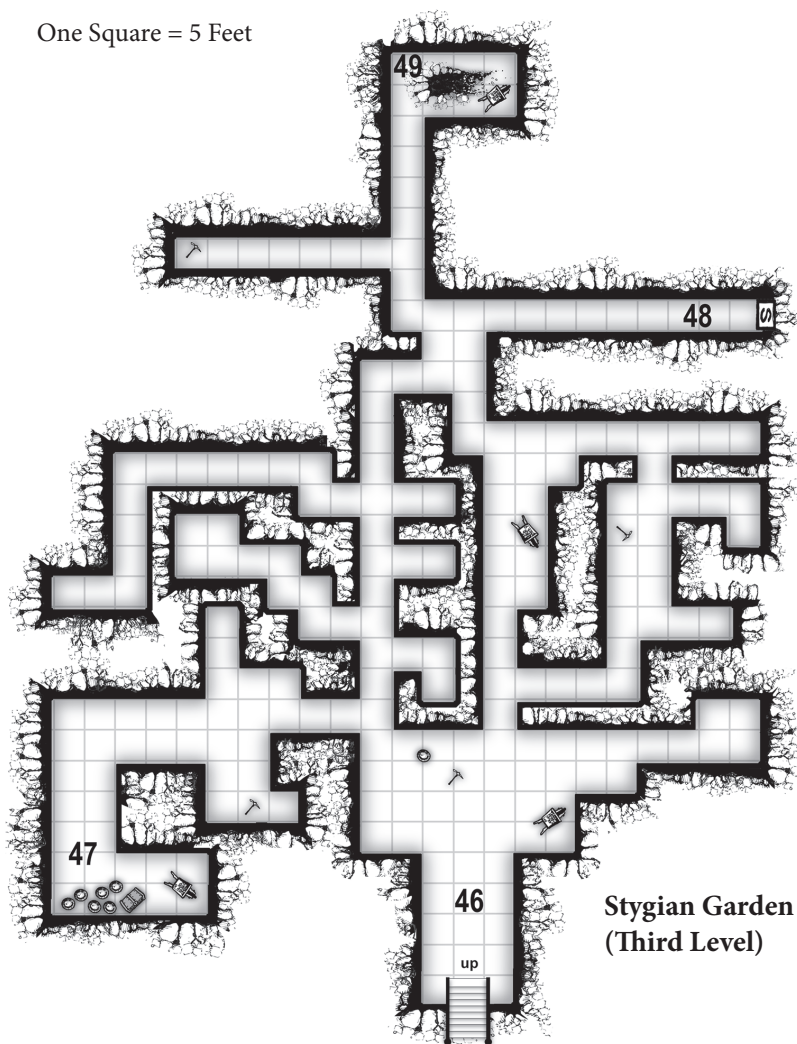
One Square = 5 Feet



**Stygian Garden
(First Level)**



One Square = 5 Feet



The Manor

General Notes Each window contains a pane of fine glass. About half are broken. Check for wandering monsters once every turn (10 minutes). Roll a d6. On a 1, roll again on the wandering monster table.

Wandering Monsters (1d6)

1. 1 Giant Spider
2. 1 Ivy Viper
3. 1d4 Archer Cherubs
4. The Marble Knight
5. The sound of stone grinding against stone coming from outside.
6. The Ghost of Abelia Prem (an unseen woman, softly humming to herself).

1. Foyer

The front door of the manor is carved with a complex floral pattern. It is slightly ajar. Inside the foyer are four marble statues of female forms with scarves loosely draped over their bodies. Near the door there are two candelabras, each of which holds three dusty, half-melted candles. In the center is a grand staircase that leads to the second floor. A second-floor balcony can be seen overlooking the room from above.

2. Library

Here is an extremely dusty library containing hundreds of books on many different subjects. There seem to be large sections devoted to horticulture, herbalism, and sculpture. There's also a thirty-volume collection of *The Journals of Leopold Malando* here. Volume 27 is missing from the shelf. There are two identical statues of toads near the center of the room.

3. Sitting Room

There are three small clusters of plush chairs arranged around the room. In the corner is a statue of a nude, male archer drawing an arrow from his quiver. Every window in this room has been shattered, and there is glass all over the floor. On a small smoking stand next to one of the chairs, there is an ornate ivory pipe worth 100sp.

4. Long Corridor

This corridor contains two stone statues: One is a little girl holding out her hands as if to receive a gift. The other is a great owl sitting on a tree stump.

5. Creaky Corridor

Halfway down this hallway, there's a statue of a Halfling with a sly grin on his face.

6. Kitchen

This was a workplace for Abelia Prem's servants. The kitchen has clearly been rifled through, and the cupboards are empty. A dumbwaiter in the corner of the room can be raised to area 19 on the second floor using a simple pulley.

7. Pantry

This large pantry has clearly been invaded by rats. A few dozen jars of pickled vegetables are the only things untouched by the vermin. An obvious wooden trapdoor in the corner opens to a narrow stairway leading to the cellar (area 15).

8. Broom Closet

This large closet contains several brooms, wooden buckets, scrub brushes, and feather dusters, all untouched for many years.

9. Servants' Quarters

Each of these rooms contains a dusty, well-made bed and a small wardrobe with a few articles of clothing in it (of a sort that would have been stylish for house servants about a decade ago). The bed with the asterisk is slightly disheveled, and there's an **Ivy Viper** hiding under the sheets.

IVY VIPER Armor 12, Move 120', HD1, HP2, Bite: save vs. poison or die, Morale 4

10. Dining Room

This once-grand dining room is now enveloped in massive spider webs. Eighteen chairs are still neatly arranged around a long oak dining table. A gilded chandelier (300sp) hangs above the table, completely enshrouded in webbing. Three **Giant Spiders** lurk throughout the webs, ready to attack anyone who enters here. Digging through the webbing will reveal four goat carcasses.

GIANT SPIDER Armor 14, Move 90', HD3, HP12, Venomous Bite 1d4 damage, save vs. poison or suffer 1d8 additional damage, Morale 12

11. Tea Rooms

Each of these rooms contain three plush chairs arranged to look out into the courtyard (area 12). All of the windows are broken.

12. Courtyard

This unkempt topiary garden is centered around a dried-up "peeing boy" fountain. A cherub statue and a stone sundial are nearby, partially concealed by long weeds.

13. Conservatory

Fifteen fancy chairs sit in slightly askew rows facing a large gilded harp. The harp is very large and unwieldy, but could be sold for 2000sp to an educated buyer. In the corner of the room there's a statue of a dancing satyr holding pan pipes.

14. Ballroom

This wood-paneled ballroom creaks and echoes with every step. Overhead, a silver chandelier (200sp) hangs at an angle, looking like it's ready to fall at any moment. One of the exterior windows is broken, and a tuft of weeds has grown through. A **Wild Goat** is grazing on the weeds and shitting on the floor.

WILD GOAT Armor 14, Move 120', HD1, HP4, Horns 1d4 damage, Morale 4

15. Cellar

This stone cellar smells of mold and rotting wood. It contains an empty wooden shelf, several empty wooden barrels, a **locked wooden chest**, and a **wine rack**.

Inside the Chest

If the lock is picked or broken, the chest is found to contain a golden rose worth 500sp. This is a discarded gift from one of Abelia Prem's would-be suitors.

The Wine Rack

This rack contains about a hundred bottles of common drinking wines. Most have turned and are worthless. There are five drinkable bottles remaining, worth 2sp each.

16. Second Floor Corridor

A creaky hallway, at one end is a statue of a whale being harpooned by an Elfin seaman in a rowboat. At the opposite end is a statue of a sphinx with its forepaw outstretched and strange glyphs around its mane.

17. Guest Room

This finely decorated bedroom is coated in a layer of dust. There is a statue of a cloaked woman in the corner of the room. Against the wall is a large wardrobe that contains old bed linens and a statuette of a golden lion worth 100sp.

18. Guest Room

This fine bedroom is marked with what appears to be the remains of a campfire. A burned rug shows through to scorched floorboards underneath. The bed here is unmade. In the corner of the room is a large ceramic vase painted with a floral motif worth 50sp.

19. Servants' Station

This room contains a wooden table. There's a dumbwaiter in the wall that leads down to the kitchen (area 6).



20. Linen Closet

This room is lined with shelves containing stacks of old bed linens. There's a cricket hiding away in here. It will chirp noisily, but will likely be impossible to find.

21. Master Bedroom

This opulent bedroom is dominated by a large canopy bed. There is a **Wild Man** in the bed. The room also contains a large **wardrobe** and a **vanity**.

The Wild Man

This disheveled squatter is dressed in ill-fitting silken bedclothes (which he looted from Abelia Prem's wardrobe). If alerted, the wild man will act as a terrified woman whose bedroom has been invaded. If attacked, he responds in kind.

WILD MAN Armor 12, Move 120', HD2, HP6, Punch 1d2 damage, Morale 7

The Wardrobe

Once-fashionable women's clothes are lying in heaps along the floor. These have obviously been rifled through.

The Vanity

On Abelia Prem's vanity there is a bottle of perfume infused with Love-Me-Not (see pg 21 for details). This has the same effect listed for the plant and contains enough for fifty uses. There is also a fancy silver hairbrush worth 100sp.

22. Garden Balcony

This damaged wooden balcony overlooks the courtyard (area 12). The balcony is spotted with a number of small irregular holes, and several of the rails are missing, apparently burned or melted off. Anyone spending more than a few moments here will draw the attention of a **Grotesque Spouter** who roosts just above on the edge of the roof. The spouter will remain on the roof and unleash its acid spout on any unfortunate souls below. Each time it spouts there is a one in six chance that the balcony collapses, dumping everyone on it twenty feet into the courtyard below (area 12).

GROTESQUE SPOUTER Armor 18, Move 60, HD5, HP30, Acid Spout 2d10 damage once every d4 rounds (range 10/20/30), save vs breath weapon for half damage, Morale 12

23. Green Room

This room is decorated with peeling, pale-green wallpaper. There are bookshelves lining the walls. Most of the shelved books here pertain to gardening, botany, farming, and other forms of horticulture. There is a small writing desk in front of the window. On the desk is volume 27 of the **The Journal of Leopold Malando**. Next to that is **The Green Ledger**

The Journal of Leopold Malando

This is a hand-copied, leatherbound edition of the 27th volume of the journals written by renowned explorer, Leopold Malando. In it he describes his discovery of a strange, black flower which he calls “The Stygian Rose.” He claims that his expedition under the

catacombs of Un-Kar led his party directly to the banks of the River Styx (which he believed to be the precipice of the underworld). On the suggestion of one of his attendant sages, Malando stuffed the black flower into the mouth of his fallen companion, an unnamed porter who was killed in a rockslide earlier that day. According to Malando the porter immediately drew breath and was miraculously restored to life. Malando goes on to request that his patron (Queen Lorean the 72nd) provide funding for additional expeditions under Un-Kar to find more of these amazing plants.

The Green Ledger

This well-bound, green covered journal contains Abelia Prem’s handwritten logs of her hybrid plant experiments. Characters in possession of this book can correctly identify and surmise the effects of the rare plants in area 40. The Green Ledger is worth 50sp.



The Grounds

General Notes Check for wandering monsters once every turn (ten minutes). Roll a d6. On a 1, roll again on the wandering monster table.

Wandering Monsters (1d6)

1. The Marble Knight
2. 1 Grotesque Spouter
3. 1d4 Archer Cherubs
4. 1d6 Buzzard Dandies
5. Ivy Viper (camouflaged as a vine)
6. The Ghost of Abelia Prem (an unseen woman, softly humming to herself).

24. The Green Woman

Among a small wooded grove there is a large **statue of a sleeping woman** lying on her side. The figure is half buried in the ground as if it were sinking into the earth. A patch of long grasses and ferns has grown around the figure's head, giving the impression of a head of wild green hair. A stone plaque near the figure's breast is engraved with the words "Lay Beside Me."

Statue of a Sleeping Woman

Anyone who falls asleep while touching this statue will dream of an endless, verdant wilderness beneath a dark and twisted sky. The dreamer will be led through this landscape by a wise entity whose head is crowned with antlers. The dreamer gains 1d6 Wisdom after waking. This dream will only occur once per character.



25. The Buzzard Dandies

Six wizened **Buzzard Dandies** are perched in the branches of an old willow tree. Each buzzard wears a frilly gentleman's collar around its neck. One wears a golden monocle worth 50sp. Yet another wears an ill-fitting powdered wig. The buzzards will attack anyone who carries obvious valuables or finery. They are covetous of jewelry, wigs, and fine textiles and will kill for them. However, if even one buzzard is killed, the rest will fly away in cowardice.

BUZZARD DANDY Armor 12, Move 120' flying, HD2, HP6, Bite 1d6 damage, Morale 2

26. The Broken Statue

The remnants of a broken statue lie scattered around a small hill. Two stone arms, two stone feet, a stone head, and a partial stone torso are clearly visible. The statue's face seems locked in an expression of pain and anger. When it was whole, this statue stood 12' tall and depicted a muscular, nude human male.

27. The Green Man

Here sits a massive (12' tall), lifelike statue of a bearded man. The figure is crouched upon a raised bed of stones. Its gaze is fixed solemnly on the ground. The entire figure and its base are covered in patches of brown lichen. A careful search will reveal that the statue's right hand is articulated at the wrist. Twisting it will cause a handful of miscellaneous seeds to pour from the statue's mouth. This will work three times before the statue is empty.

28. Druid's Grove

In this small clearing, a perfect circle of six oaks surrounds a strange hole in the ground. The top of yet another oak is emerging from the hole as if it is growing in an underground chamber below. Anyone examining the hole will discover that it drops thirty feet into area 41. Anyone familiar with druidic lore will recognize this as a druid's grove, planted to honor the presence of an Oak Dryad (a wise tree spirit).

29. The Bathing Woman

A lifelike stone statue of a nude woman sits on a rock aside a **small garden pond**. Observers are likely to mistake this statue for a real woman from a distance, though a few moments' surveillance will prove the figure does not move.

Small Garden Pond

The pond is four feet deep and about ten feet in diameter. Inside are three **Prism Fish**, an exotic species prized for its prismatic bioluminescence and its citrus-like taste. Each fish is worth 25sp alive and 5sp dead.

PRISM FISH Armor 12, Move 60' (in water), HD1, HP2, no attack, Morale 2

30. The Beehives

Here is a circular clearing centered around a large wood and brick housing containing four bee skeps (artificial beehives woven out of grass). On the east side of the clearing there is a small shed containing a single **beekeeper's suit**. Bees flit through the clearing in some number, but will not attack unless

provoked. Anyone messing with the skeps will cause thousands of bees to swarm the area in mere moments. Each round that the bees swarm, all characters in the area who are not wearing a beekeeper's suit must make a save vs. poison or suffer 1d4 damage. On a successful save, the victim suffers 1 damage. Each skep contains 5sp worth of fine honey.

Beekeeper's Suit

Protects as leather armor. Wearer is immune to bee stings. Worth 25sp.

31. The Atrium

This formerly impressive stone atrium is now an overgrown ruin. Dozens of glassless windows permit the elements and sun/moonlight. The ceiling in the southeast corner has collapsed. The north part of the atrium consists of a raised area with a grand double staircase leading to the overgrown garden below. In the center of the raised area is a lifelike **statue of a cloaked man**.

The lower portion of the chamber is covered in overgrown vines, ferns, and beautiful patches of large, **purple flowers**. A successful search of this area will reveal a silver spade worth 40sp under the vines and leaves.

In the center of the floor is a large, circular hole that drops thirty feet into area 34 (the verdant grotto) below. The staircase at the south end of the atrium also leads down to the grotto (area 34).

Three **Archer Cherubs** are perched up in the rafters and will assail any living creature who enters here.

Statue of a Cloaked Man

Anyone with appropriate knowledge of legends and lore will recognize this as a depiction of the Hunstman, a mythical entity said to represent the wrath of nature against those who would abuse it.

The Purple Flowers

Disturbing these flowers causes them to release clouds of psychoactive pollen into the air. Everyone in the area must make a save vs. poison or suffer terrible hallucinations. In this context, the victim will hallucinate the statue of the Huntsman coming to life and firing stone arrows at the party.

ARCHER CHERUB Armor 18, Move 120' flying, HD2, HP12, Stone Arrows 1d8 damage, suffers 1 damage each time it fires an arrow, regenerates at a rate of 1HP per day, Morale 12

32. Vine-Covered Bridge

An arched stone bridge spans the garden's pond. The bridge is covered in a bright green **Stranglecreeper**, which will attempt to grapple anyone crossing the bridge and drag them under the bridge to drown them.

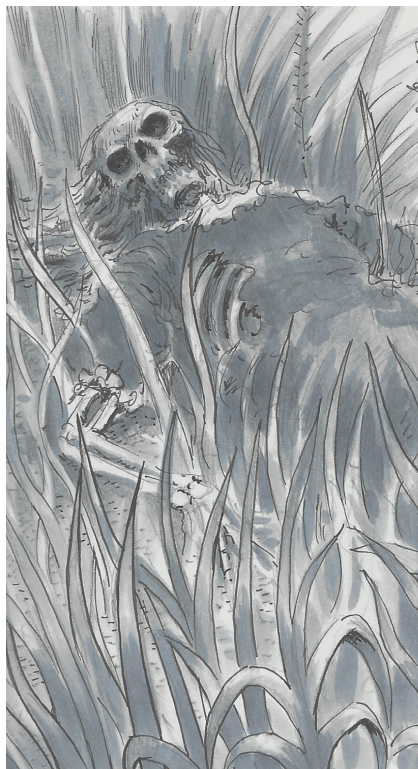
STRANGLECREEPER Armor 12, Move 15', HD3, HP 12, Strangle 1d6 damage, Morale 12

Under the Bridge: The Stranglecreeper has killed before. A young gentleman brought his lady love here to tour the old garden. Neither left the grounds alive. The gentleman's skeleton can be found in the bed of the pond. It still wears a masterwork rapier, a pewter snuffbox worth 10sp, and a pouch of 72sp.

33. Ruined Shrine

This ruined shrine was once at the edge of the garden pond, but the pond's expansion over time has left the ruins partially submerged. A stone foundation can be seen just above the water level.

The north, west, and south walls are in ruins, but the east wall is intact. It contains three symmetrically placed windows, one of which is carved in a stylized semblance of the sun. Behind the standing wall is a large patch of tall, gray-brown weeds. Among the weeds is a set of skeletal remains (the young lady mentioned in area 32). She was killed by an Ivy Viper bite (though there's no evidence of this on the remains). Lying next to her skull is a fine gold amulet worth 200sp.



The Stygian Garden

General Notes: Check for wandering monsters once every turn (ten minutes). Roll a d6. On a 1, roll again on the wandering monster table.

Wandering Monsters (1d4)

1. The Marble Knight
2. 2d6 Cave Bats
3. 1d4 Archer Cherubs
4. The Ghost of Abelia Prem (an unseen woman, softly humming to herself).

34. Verdant Grotto

A staircase of cracked stone leads to a stagnant **pool of bright green water**. The water's color stems from algae within. The side of the pool is dominated by a large oak whose roots have entwined themselves into the structure here. A stone walkway skirts the east side of the pool, leading to a doorway carved into the wall. The wall itself is carved with an intricate pattern of vines and flowers. Above, a circular portal in the ceiling (thirty feet up) permits the light of the sun (or moon).

Pool of Bright Green Water

The green pool is twenty feet deep. The water is not great for drinking (it tastes "scummy"), but not particularly dangerous. At the bottom of the pool is a sleeping **Grandfather Toad**, a massive toad with a beard of kelp-like plant growth under its chin. If the water is sufficiently disturbed (by a character entering it, splashing around, or throwing in a large object), the toad will awaken and defend its lair.



GRANDFATHER TOAD Armor 12, Move 60', HD4, HP18, Tongue Lash 1d6 damage, if maximum damage is rolled, the victim is swallowed whole and suffers another 1d6 damage immediately, Morale 10

35. Statue Corridor

This corridor is lined with symmetrical rows of statuary busts sitting on stone pedestals. Each bust has a cavity in the top of its head with a vibrant green plant growing out of it (creating a semblance of hair atop the busts' heads). In the center of the corridor there is a circular fountain, which trickles with running water.

36. Songbird Conservatory

Thirty opulent, velvet-cushioned chairs face a row of seven large gilded birdcages against the wall. Each cage contains the remains of two long-dead songbirds. The birdcages are large and difficult to carry, but each could be sold for 50sp.

37. Statuary Chamber

This dark chamber is filled with dozens of lifelike statues. Among them is a **Stone Mother**. The creature waits, completely still and indistinguishable from a normal statue. If someone comes close, it springs to life and attacks with its deadly, strangling hands. Anyone unfortunate enough to fight the Stone Mother in this chamber suffers a 25% miss chance on every attack roll (given that she can barely be distinguished from the statuary that fills the room).

STONE MOTHER Armor 18, Move 120', HD5, HP30, Strangle 1d6 damage, regenerates HP at a rate of 1 per day. Can "birth" an Archer Cherub as an action. Each cherub produced inflicts 12 damage on the Stone Mother. She will not destroy herself using this ability, Morale 12

ARCHER CHERUB Armor 18, Move 120' flying, HD2, HP12, Stone Arrows 1d8 damage, suffers 1 damage each time it fires an arrow, regenerates at a rate of 1HP per day, Morale 12

38. Wine Cellar

This dusty cellar is packed with hundreds of bottles of wine arranged in orderly rows on five large wooden wine racks. Most of the wine is spoiled (drinkers save vs. poison or vomit for 1d4 hours). There are six bottles of salvageable Elfin wine worth 50sp a bottle. There is one incredibly rare and expensive bottle worth 9,000sp. This will only be recognized by a character with a good knowledge of fine wines. If bottles are looted at random, roll percentile for each: 1–80 Spoiled/Worthless 81–99

Elfin Wine (50sp) 100 Rare Vintage (9,000sp). If the room is successfully searched, one of the floor tiles is found to be loose. Underneath is a rough tunnel (area 48).

39. Moss Garden

This chamber consists of a stone walkway between two channels of shallow water. Each channel is fed by a cherub-faced spout carved into the wall. Stone shelves piled with moss-covered rocks line the walls. The moss here seems to change hue every few seconds (its color changes to reflect the mood of anyone looking at it) resulting in a somewhat disorienting kaleidoscopic effect. There is a stairway in the wall that descends into an eighty-foot-long corridor that ends in area 40.

40. Hybrid Gallery

This room is illuminated with soft, natural light from above, originating from a **shard of sunstone** firmly embedded into the ceiling. This light illuminates two rows of six glass domes upon stone pedestals. Inside each dome is a result of Abelia Prem's hybridization experiments, a colorful and unusual **hybrid plant**.

Shard of Sunstone

This is an extremely valuable (10,000sp) fragment of a star that perpetually glows with natural daylight. It could be pried loose from its fitting, but doing so has a 25% chance of causing the entire room to collapse.

Hybrid Plants

The plants are contained under easily removable glass domes. If anyone experiments with these without prior

knowledge of what they are, roll randomly (d12) to determine which plant is being experimented with. If the characters reference **The Green Ledger** from area 23, the GM should describe each plant and its specific effects in complete detail (see page 21).

41. Oracle of Oak

A large **oak tree** grows toward an opening in the ceiling. The tree's shape subtly suggests a female form, its branches outstretched arms. Circular stone fountains trickle in each corner of the room. Beside the tree is a well-worn staircase going down to area 46.

The Oak Tree

This tree contains an Oak Dryad, an ancient nature spirit. Those who can sense spirits or magic will feel the dryad's presence very strongly. Others will simply get an "eerie" feeling in this room. The dryad can communicate with anyone bearing the **Enchanted Brass Acorn** from area 45.

42. Corridor

The door to this corridor is well locked. The key was carried by Abelia Prem and is therefore long gone. The corridor itself is empty save for two wrought iron candelabras, one on each end of the hall.

43. Fairy Cages

This chamber has a horrible, swampy odor. The floor is covered in thousands of dead frogs and a handful of living ones. In the corner, there's a small statue of a laughing girl with a bow in her hair. Three iron cages are sitting on two wooden work tables. Two cages each contain the remains of a dead fairy (200sp if a buyer can be found). The

other cage contains a living fairy named **Saffron**. She's been driven insane by her long captivity here.

Saffron

Saffron was imprisoned here by Abelia Prem. Her proximity to the plants in area 40 keeps them healthy without need for water. Once per day, Saffron can summon a frog. While she can communicate with her summoned charge, she has no direct control over it, and frogs are notoriously bull-headed in their dealings with fair folk. For nearly a decade she's been trying to convince her summoned frogs to release her, or at least bump the table so that her cage might fall to the ground and shatter. She's made slight progress, but probably has twenty years to go at this rate, and even then the cage only has a 25% chance of shattering.

If Saffron is released, the PCs will have gained an endlessly loyal and utterly insane new ally.

SAFFRON Armor 22, Move 240' flying, HD1, HP3, Bite 1d2 damage, Morale 12

44. Storage Room

The walls here are decorated with a fresco featuring interlaced patterns of vines. There's a wooden shelf against the wall covered in gardening tools (small shovels, spades, and the like). Against another wall, a life-sized statue of a cloak-clad woman points her finger toward the south wall. If the walls are successfully searched, a hidden door can be found that leads to area 45.

45. The Laboratory

This large chamber is lined with dusty bookshelves and three statues of cherubs. In the center of the room is a large wooden table. Upon the table there is a strange hand-drawn map depicting a complex series of underground caves. This is Abelia Prem's **Stygian Map**. An **Enchanted Brass Acorn** is sitting on top of the map.

The Stygian Map

Abelia Prem channeled this map over the course of several years of consultation with the dryad oracle in area 41. The map is mostly accurate, but not very detailed. It shows the way from this location to the nearest cave intersecting the River Styx. It also implies that the river itself may be accessible from many points across the world as it snakes and winds under the surface. The map can be sold for 200sp.

The Enchanted Brass Acorn

Anyone holding this acorn in their hand can communicate telepathically with nearby oak dryads, such as the one inhabiting the great tree in area 41. Such conversations are long and ambiguous. The deep roots of a dryad's host tree act like antennae, allowing her to gather information about the structure of the underworld. However, these utterly alien creatures have great difficulty communicating their knowledge to mortals. Anyone who engages in communication with a dryad must make a save vs. magic or enter a deep, focused trance. Mortals cannot wake themselves from this trance and must be roused by someone else or be utterly entranced for 2d6 days. To the right buyer, this acorn could fetch 3,000sp.

46. Rough Chamber

This rough-hewn chamber is littered with soil and stones, debris from a hastily conceived dig. There's a wooden barrel filled with large stones, an empty wheelbarrow, and a rusty, discarded pickaxe. The pickaxe has the name "Ragnar" carved into its handle in Dwarven.

47. Dwarven Provisions

This rough alcove contains several empty wooden barrels and cloth sacks. There is evidence that rats have dined here. There's a wooden wheelbarrow filled with gravel and a heavy wooden **strongbox**.

The Strongbox

The box contains 756sp and a contract securing the services of six Dwarven excavators for three months. The contract is signed by Ragnar Bergfalk and Abelia Prem. It is dated ten years and seven months ago.

48. The Wine Tunnel

This passage seems lower and rougher than the others. Just inside the junction there's a message scratched into the wall in Dwarven. It reads: "This woman is mad. Now we drink." The corridor then becomes a low tunnel (even Dwarves and Halflings must crawl) that leads some two hundred feet to the loose floor tile in area 38.

49. Deep Chasm

In the center of this rough chamber is a deep chasm. Cool air blows out of it at a steady rate. The chasm leads to a hundred-foot gently sloping natural chimney that descends to area 50 below.

50. Dead Dwarves

The perfectly preserved **remains of six Dwarves** are lying here on a pile of stone debris. They look freshly dead, as if they've just fallen in place.

The Remains

Searching the bodies reveals the dwarves carried a combined total of 126sp. Three have daggers sheathed in their leather belts. One still clutches the hammer “**Echo Doom**,” a family heirloom.

Echo Doom

Echo Doom is a war hammer created by the Bergfalk clan to combat their renegade cousins during the Underwars of Brackenmount, a great civil war among the Dwarven clans. It is a +2 war hammer (+5 vs. Dwarves). The corpse of anyone slain by this hammer is considered sanctified and cannot be reanimated by necromancy. The hammer could be sold for 2,000sp.

51. The Riverbank

Here the strange cavern ends at the banks of a subterranean river. What happens next depends on the nature of the river in your game. Here are some possibilities, choose one or roll a d6:

1–3 This is the River Styx: It's literally the boundary between the mortal realm and the underworld. Entering or crossing the river spells instant death for a mortal.

4–6 This is a mundane, subterranean river: It probably leads to another cave system. Traversing it would be dangerous, and the risk of drowning is high.

And then there's the matter of the Stygian Rose. Choose one of the following or roll a d6:

1–2 There is no Stygian Rose: It's only a legend. Leopold Malando's accounts were fabricated to secure further funding for his outlandish and fruitless expeditions. Abelia's entire project was a fool's errand.

3–4 There is a Stygian Rose, but it's just a black flower: 1d6 black roses are growing from a bush at the river's edge. They are rare (worth 500sp each to the right buyer), but nonmagical. If any of the flowers are harvested, the bush dies and no longer produces flowers.

5–6 There is a Stygian Rose, and it really can raise the dead: A single black rose is growing from a bush at the river's edge. If this flower is forced into the mouth of a dead creature, the creature will immediately be restored to life (with 1HP). If the flower is harvested, the bush dies and no longer produces flowers. The Stygian Rose is worth 10,000sp.



Appendix 1:

Abelia Prem's Plants

1. Gilded Amaranth

This leafy flower appears to have been carefully painted gold by otherworldly artisans. It doubles natural healing rates if worn around the head as a crown. There's enough here for one crown. The plant is worth 300sp.

2. Black Asafoetida

If burned as incense, no entity, human or otherworldly, can stand its scent and must flee until clear of the smell. If eaten, make a save vs. poison or die within d10 minutes. A successful save leads to 1d6x10 minutes of extreme vomiting. There's enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 50sp per use).

3. Love-Me-Not

If worn over the heart as an amulet, this brownish clover exempts the wearer from all romantic feelings. They will neither inspire nor pursue romance in any form. They are completely immune to all amorous passions and preoccupations. If eaten by a pregnant woman, she suffers an immediate miscarriage. There's enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 10sp per use).

4. Stone Rose

This appears to be a normal rose, except that its flower is gray as stone. Anyone pricked by its thorn must make a save vs. petrification or permanently turn to stone. The plant is worth 200sp.

5. Forget-Me-Lots

A sprig of these magical blue flowers can be worn in the hair to prevent onlookers from forming memories of you. Each sprig lasts about a day before it no longer has any affect. There's enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 100sp per use).

6. Honey Herb

Smoking the leaves of this golden plant is extremely pleasurable. It is essentially super cannabis. There's enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 10sp per use).

7. Greenladder

If the seeds of the greenladder are planted in ground that has been consecrated by thundercloud druids, they produce strong vines that immediately and perpetually grow toward the sky. They never stop growing, stretching all the way to space (or whatever is beyond the sky in your campaign world). There's enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 100sp per use).

8. Fairywort

Patches of this lime-green weed attract the fair folk in large numbers. If eaten or smoked, it produces short-term hallucinatory effects. There's enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 10sp per use).

9. Blue Heliotrope

When blue heliotrope is worn or carried, the wearer's actions attract less attention. After about a day, the flowers lose their potency. There's enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 10sp per use).

10. Singing Violet

Every morning at dawn, these large purple flowers “exhale” with a distinct whistling sound. The plant is worth 10sp.

11. Maidenbane

If ingested by an unmarried woman, she must make a save vs poison or die. On a successful save, the victim still suffers 2d8 damage. There’s enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 10sp per use).

12. Angeldown

If ingested, this feathery white grass restores the eater to full HP. This plant only grows on holy ground (Abelia literally had this pot sanctified by a cleric). There’s enough here for 1d6 uses (worth 1000sp per use).

Home Gardening

If the PCs manage to recover any of Abelia Prem’s plants, they will likely try to cultivate them and grow more. The GM could handle this in a variety of ways. In my own game, I decided to keep things simple rather than turning it into a more realistic and complex mini game. My ruling was this: If any of these plants are transplanted to a suitable home, the character tending the garden can make a bushcraft roll once every 3 nonwinter months. If successful, each plant produces one additional “use,” which can be harvested without harming the plant.



Appendix 2:

Bestiary

ARCHER CHERUB

Deadly cherub of living stone

Armor 18, Move 120' flying, HD2, HP12, Stone Arrows 1d8 damage, suffers 1 damage each time it fires an arrow, regenerates at a rate of 1HP per day, Morale 12

BUZZARD DANDY

Covetous carrion bird clad in finery

Armor 12, Move 120' flying, HD2, HP6, Bite 1d6 damage, Morale 2

CAVE BAT

Large bat who dwells in the deep

Armor 13, Move 240' flying, HD1, HP2, Bite 1d4 damage, Morale 4

GIANT SPIDER

Spider the size of a horse

Armor 14, Move 90', HD3, HP12, Venomous Bite 1d4 damage, save vs. poison or suffer 1d8 additional damage, Morale 12

GRANDFATHER TOAD

Kelp-bearded toad of enormous size

Armor 12, Move 60', HD4, HP18, Tongue Lash 1d6 damage, if maximum damage is rolled, the victim is swallowed whole and suffers another 1d6 damage immediately, Morale 10

GROTESQUE SPOUTER

Squatting gargoyle that spits acid

Armor 18, Move 60', HD5, HP30, Acid Spout 2d10 damage once every d4 rounds (range 10/20/30), save vs breath weapon for half damage, Morale 12

IVY VIPER

Serpent who camouflages itself as a vine

Armor 12, Move 120', HD1, HP2, Bite: save vs. poison or die, Morale 4

MARBLE KNIGHT

Stone guardian of the gardens

Armor 19, Move 120', HD6, HP36, Stone Sword 1d10 damage, Morale 12

PRISM FISH

Tasty ornamental fish

Armor 12, Move 60' (in water), HD1, HP2, no attack, Morale 2

SAFFRON

Imprisoned fairy, utterly mad

Armor 22, Move 240' flying, HD1, HP3, Bite 1d2 damage, Morale 12

STONE MOTHER

Wandering lady of mournful granite

Armor 18, Move 120', HD5, HP30, Strangle 1d6 damage, regenerates HP at a rate of 1 per day. Can "birth" an Archer Cherub as an action. Each cherub produced inflicts 12 damage on the Stone Mother. She will not destroy herself using this ability, Morale 12

STRANGLECREEPER

Murderous, ambulatory vine

Armor 12, Move 15', HD3, HP12, Strangle 1d6 damage, Morale 12

WILD GOAT

Eat the food, bleat, run from danger

Armor 14, Move 120', HD1, HP4, Horns 1d4 damage, Morale 4

WILD MAN

A disheveled squatter

Armor 12, Move 120', HD2, HP6, Fist 1d2 damage, Morale 7

The Crimson Page

Track monster hit points here

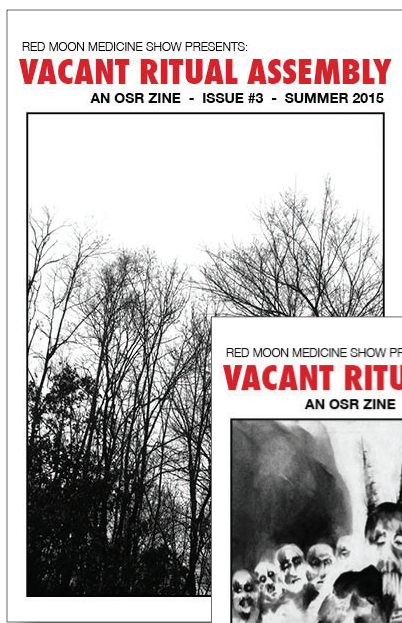


In Memoriam

A record of souls claimed by the Stygian Garden

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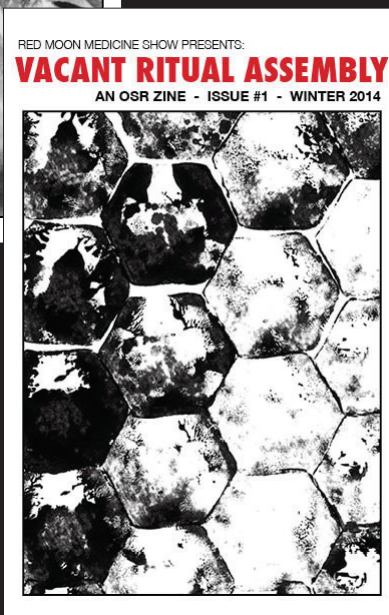
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