

TOURNAMENTS OF MADNESS AND DEATH

**CRYPTS
THINGS &**
AND OTHER OSR GAMES

D101 GAMES

TOURNAMENTS OF MADNESS AND DEATH

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INTRODUCTION

If this adventure module was an old school metal release from the 80s on some creaky little independent label, it would be one of those quirky split singles, where two bands would each have a side of the vinyl record.

On Side A is *The Furnace*. *The Furnace* was the first old school D&D adventure I ran at a convention., I initially ran the game using *Labyrinth Lord*, and the adventure is named after the convention it was run at, namely, Furnace which is held every October in Sheffield, UK. I ran it on Saturday night, which is now my annual slot for running OSR games, and despite the naysayers at the bar beforehand, who seemed threatened by my decision to run a game using a system they had left behind years ago, and my own almost paralysing bout of stage fright, we had a fantastic time. The precise details of the scenario have changed with time, and the current more polished Crypts, and Things write-up is presented here.

Tearing up side B is *The Tomb of the Evil Emperor*. This was an outing of Crypts and Things as a convention game, just after the release of the first edition in 2012. I first run this adventure as a slightly boozy game at Continuum, a summer affair held bi-annually at Leicester University, which saw the bold adventurers race across the ruins of the Grand Debris, through the buried Imperial Complex, to a final confrontation with the shocking surprise of the true form of the Evil Emperor.

Two sides of the Crypts & Things convention experience. *Madness* both in the sense that the locations that make up the adventures aren't your typical dungeon. The Furnace takes place on an artificial iron moon held up in the sky by magic, while Tomb is in a city crushed by a vengeful god using a meteor. *Death* because it was what faced the doomed world of Zarth if the adventurers failed in their mission to stop the Ultimate Evil that threatened the world, and because it was a genuine possibility given the cast of horrors they faced. All "good friendly violent fun in store for all" as the thrash metal band Exodus once sang on their song Toxic Waltz.

Finally, *Dark, Delicious and Deadly* is an insert, cunningly placed between the two adventures, that explains the method behind the madness of how I run convention games of Crypts and Things.

These adventures are for 3-6 characters of level 4 to 5. They are explicitly written for Crypts and Things but are usable with a host of retro-clones based on the early editions of the World's Favourite Fantasy Game, and heck even the modern 3rd to 5th editions if you can be bothered to put the work in to adapting the monster stat blocks.



THE ADVENTURE FORMAT

Each adventure in this book follows a standard format.

- Players' Introduction
- Crypt Keeper's Background
- The Adventure
- Resolution

Location format

Each location in this adventure takes the following format.

#. Name of Location

A brief overview for the Crypt Keeper who is skimming through the adventure.

A description for the players that can either be read out as is or paraphrased to reflect any alterations to the situation due to the players' actions in previous encounters.

Expanded notes for the Crypt Keeper.

The action that happens in the location.

- Any possibilities leading on from the location.
- Any hidden items or secrets.
- Any monster stats which take the form

Monster name: AC Descending [Ascending], HD, HP, Attacks, Special, MV, CL/XP

Here AC is armour class in both Descending and Ascending form, HD is Hit dice, HP is Hit points, Attacks are the forms of attack with damage in brackets next to the attack, Special is a brief note of any special rules (which are usually expanded below the stat block), MV is the creatures movement rate, CL is Challenge Level, and XP is number of experience points awarded for overcoming the creature.

A note about Sanity Checks: Potential checks for sanity loss are noted in the text. Note they are always optional and up to the Crypt Keeper to call if they feel the mood is appropriate for one.

THE FURNACE

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

The Iron Moon hangs five kilometres up in the sky, held in place by giant iron chains as it looms over the ancient necropolis city known as the City of Eternal Shadow.

The Moon was pulled down from the heavens by the Nine, a group of powerful ancient immortals, to act as a prison for an evil megalomaniac known only as The Mad Tzar, who once threatened all with his plots for world domination.

The Moon may be a prison, but it's also rumoured to be a Furnace for the Tzar's desire for vengeance and schemes to rule the world.

Two weeks ago, a piece of the Iron Moon fell to earth in the City of Eternal Shadow- a sure sign that the Mad Tzar is about to break free.

Summoned by the last of the Nine, the White Wizard Arksal, your small group of heroes must travel to the Iron Moon and stop the Mad Tzar. Remember, the future of the world depends on you.

CRYPT KEEPERS INFORMATION

When Zarth was young and beautiful, one of its brightest metropolises was the City of Eternity. Its inhabitants thought the city's glory would never dim. At the height of its power, the city's ruler, the Tzar, was seduced by the power of dark evil black magic. After abusing his citizens, sacrificing hundreds of them to satisfy his dark lusts, he transformed into a terrible monster of Khaos who was named the Mad Tzar.

Darkness and terror came, and the City was renamed The City of Eternal Night. Screams filled the streets as the minions of the Mad Tzar collected more victims to fuel their master's power. Even after death, their agony was not over as the Mad Tzar

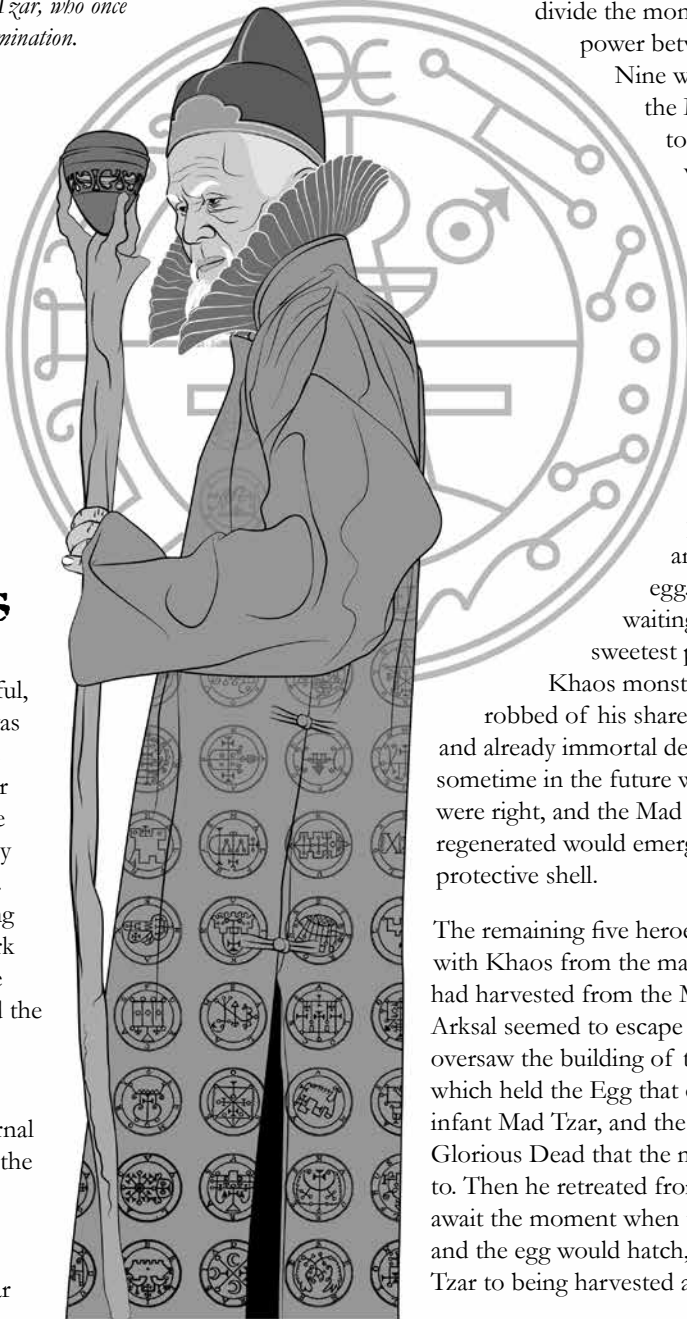
resurrected them as foul undead warriors who roamed abroad as an army of unstoppable power. Thus more cities fell to the Mad Tzar who amassed the magical power of their inhabitants.

A conspiracy of Nine Heroes was assembled by the Wizard Arksal the Stargazer. Popular legend has it that they fought the Mad Tzar to prevent the end of the world. In fact, it was a conspiracy led by Arksal to divide the monster's considerable power between them. The

Nine were able to force the Mad Tzar to regress to a harmless infant, which released almost all of his power, at the high cost three of them being slain in the battle. The last morsels of its magical power were used by the Mad Tzar to protect itself within an impenetrable egg. Arksal, who was waiting to absorb the sweetest portion of the Khaos monster's dying life, was

robbed of his share of the energy, and already immortal decided to wait until sometime in the future when the stars were right, and the Mad Tzar sufficiently regenerated would emerge from his protective shell.

The remaining five heroes became warped with Khaos from the magical energy they had harvested from the Mad Tzar. Only Arksal seemed to escape unscathed. He oversaw the building of the Iron Moon, which held the Egg that contained the infant Mad Tzar, and the Mausoleum to the Glorious Dead that the moon was attached to. Then he retreated from the world to await the moment when the stars were right, and the egg would hatch, exposing the Mad Tzar to being harvested again.



Who are The Nine?

If your players ask who The Nine are, they should test their character's skill. Add bonuses for any ancient history/ mythology skills. This is likely to arise as the player's start exploring the City of Eternal Night and amongst its ruin discover hints of the Nine who are largely forgotten.

The Nine are:

1. Arksal the Astrologer. A wise wizard, leader of the Nine. Alive but a recluse in the Tower of the Stars.
2. Ul the Bull-Headed (Deity). A minotaur hero who ascended to the Other Worlds to become a god of Undead Fighters.
3. Orden the Mortician (Deity). A scholar of anatomy, who died shortly after the battle against the Mad Tzar and was interred in the Mausoleum. In death, he has become the God of Morticians.
4. Ulra the Beautiful (Deceased). A Sorceress of life and love who was cruelly slain in the first attack.
5. Lontha Longshanks (Deceased). A sneaky rogue, who was killed trying to sneak behind the Mad Tzar.
6. Torgil the Insurmountable (Deceased) – A vicious barbarian who spent most of the battle fighting the Mad Tzar into the ground, only to be killed by a stray lightning bolt at the end. A popular song called “Torgil’s Lament” muses over the hero’s final end, wondering whether, if not for the bolt, would Torgil have cut the Mad Tzar down? (see Part 2: The Dark Side of the Moon, location 9 below).
7. Rexo the Magnificent. An elegant and handsome warrior, renowned for his cunning, who mysteriously disappeared after the battle.
8. Oppi The Builder. Oppi built many magical war machines for the battle, and was the architect of the Iron Moon that imprisoned the Mad Tzar.
9. Wendith the Silver Sorceress. A noble and haughty sorceress who was Arksal’s peer.

The Five who Remain

Popular mythology maintains that all the Nine, except Arksal, disappeared from the world in antiquity shortly after the Iron Moon was raised into the sky.

This is not the case, and as well as Arksal the following five of the Nine Immortals remain in the world.

- Ul, god of the Dead- while he physically left the world in antiquity, Ul sometimes communicates through his

Bull-Headed statue in his temple (see location 3, the Temple of Ul, below).

- Orden the Mortician is now an insane undead thing in the Mausoleum (see location 8 below) worshipped as a god of Embalmers and Crypt Keepers.
- Oppi the Builder, who was buried up to his neck in the Secret basement of Arksal’s Tower (see The Tower of the Stars location 1 below)
- Wendith the Silver Sorceress. She is on the Iron Moon leading the winged demons who guard the entrance to the inner moon. The magic that she used to defeat the Mad Tzar left her mad and warped, and she was deliberately assigned as the Moon’s Guardian.
- Rexo the Magnificent. This magician is a vain man who behaves like a strutting peacock. He correctly deduced that he would end up dead at the hands of Arksal, so he used all his magic to turn himself permanently invisible. He hides on the Dark Side of the Iron Moon (see location 10 in part 2.)

Popular mythology paints all of the Nine as glorious heroes, who valiantly risked all to stop the Mad Tzar. The truth is that they were self-serving magicians who banded together out of personal interest to prevent the Mad Tzar destroying Zarth, and to divide his energy between them. Arksal, their leader, was actually the Tzar’s Court Sorcerer who led his master down the path of black magic knowing full well what he would become.

The spoils of the battle allowed Ul to become a grim-faced god, while Orden and Wendith were driven insane when they tried to become gods themselves, and the rest of the magicians died in the battle or shortly afterwards from their wounds. The surviving trio of Arksal, Oppi and Rexo then built the Mausoleum to imprison Orden (who became a God of Morticians), the labyrinth on the Dark Side of the Moon where they set up Wendith as the guardian of the gate to the chambers within the moon where the remains of the Mad Tzar are kept.

Oppi was buried up to his neck in a vat of his own magical concrete, in the basement of Arksal’s tower since the Archmage wanted to keep him around just in case he had any questions about the Iron Moon and Mausoleum of which he was the architect. Rexo quite rightly worked out that Arksal would probably do him in to gain his magic power, disappeared and hid on the last place in the Universe that Arksal with his all-seeing telescope would look for him, the surface of the Iron Moon.

The Format of the Adventure

The adventure is broken into three parts.

Part 1. The City of Eternal Night (roughly 1.5 to two hours with character introductions/rules summary)

The adventurers assemble in Arksal's Tower of the Stars to be briefed on the situation, then head off into the city to find the way up to the Iron Moon.

Part 2. The Dark Side of the Iron Moon (roughly 1 hour)

The adventurers find themselves teleported to the surface of the Iron Moon and have to make their way through the chambers that have been carved into it to find the entrance to the interior.

Part 3. The Court of the Mad Tzar (roughly 30-45 minutes depending on how much they chat to Arksal)

The players expect to finally have their chance to confront the Mad Tzar who is being reborn as a hideous Demon of Khaos. Arksal appears unexpectedly and reveals his murderous plot.

Overall Advice for the Crypt Keeper

Don't get bogged down in combat. If the players find a way to trick, dispose, or avoid a monster without resorting to violence, let them. This especially applies to Orden the Slug God (see The Mausoleum location 8).

The overall tone is dark and wondrous. Think Ray Harryhausen if he had done a Conan film with Clive Barker and you can't go wrong.

Wandering Monsters/Events are included for Part 1 & 2 if you have a space in the flow of the adventure, and you need a quick inspiration to fill that space. They are not a slavish mechanical thing that you invoke if you roll a one on a 1D6.

Since the Furnace is a big epic adventure in scale, there's a lot of detail left out and unexplained. Do not be afraid to fill in the gaps.

There's an assumed plot that paints the characters as heroic types who will meekly go along with Arksal's plan to kill the Mad Tzar. There are also lots of clues that should warn them of Arksal's true intentions. Then players will be players, and go off the plot, even if they learn what is going on. Be prepared to improvise with the copious amount of information provided in the adventure to suit the player's meanderings and deviations from the implied plot, ensuring that they stay happy and entertained.

Don't just volunteer information about the plot and background even if you think it's very cool. Let the players find out for themselves and make their own conclusions and assumptions from that.

PART 1 THE CITY OF ETERNAL NIGHT

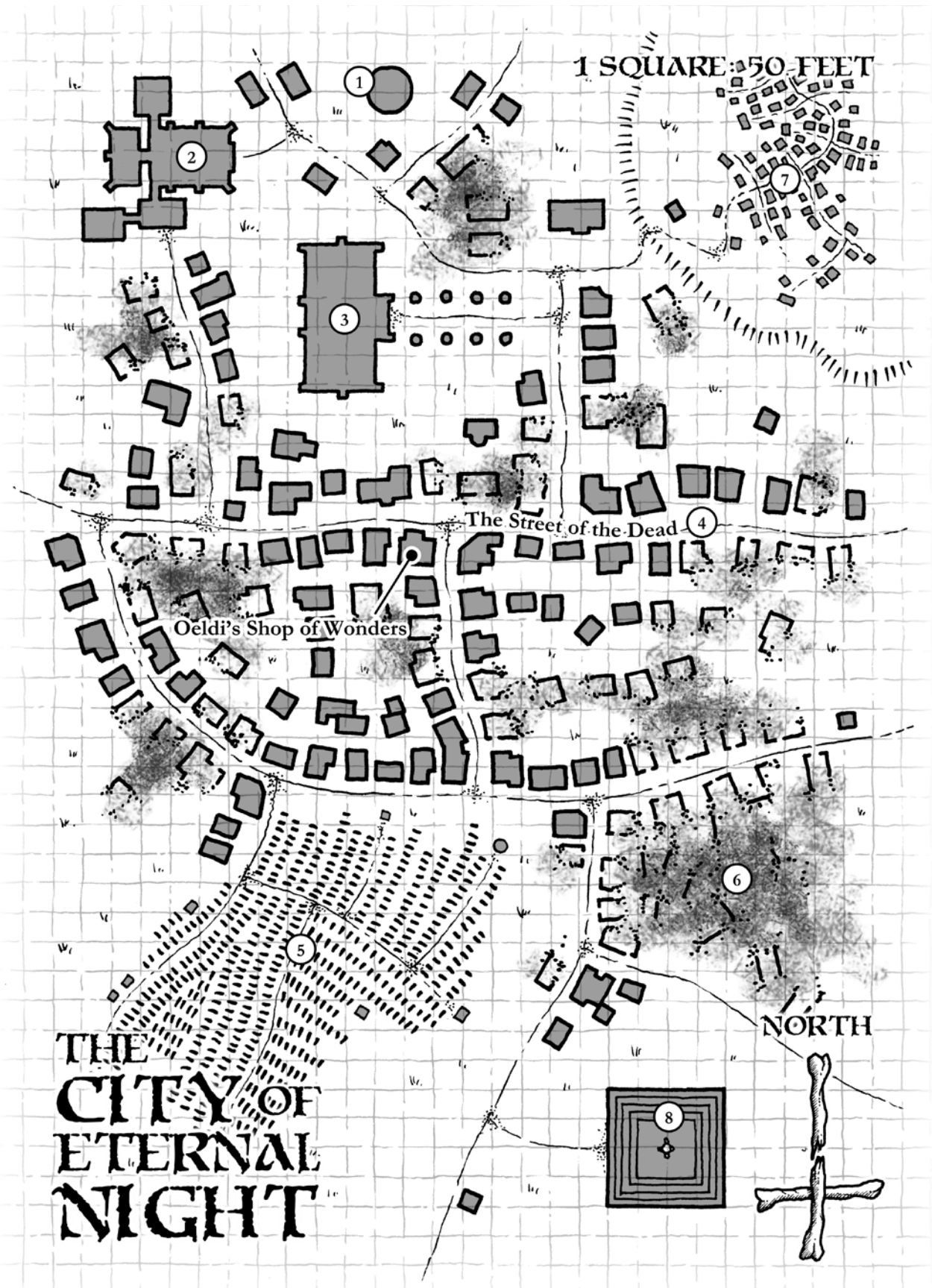
Crypt Keeper's Advice

Let the players wander the city, chew scenery and talk to the various non-player characters present. If the players are smart and hunt for clues, it should become apparent to them that all is not as it seems concerning the Nine, and Arksal is not as noble as he looks. But don't spoon feed it to them. If they aren't suspicious and don't actively go looking, let them live on in ignorance until final big reveal inside the Iron Moon (see part 3).

Eventually, the characters should move on to the Moon. If they linger in the city, have another part of the moon's out shell fall off as a not so subtle reminder that time is pressing.

Wandering Monsters/Encounters

Roll 1D6	Encounter
1	"Doomed! Doomed! The sky is falling, and I want my mommy". The last of the remaining inhabitants are fleeing the city.
2	Zombies! 2D6 of them headed up by 1D4 Ghouls. Originally from the Rich Tombs- see Location 7.
3	A haggard-looking man, obviously undernourished and in some form of shock (players may mistake him for a zombie), with a board that says, "Come shop at Oeldi's Shop of Wonders, just around the corner on the Street of the Dead". He will give directions if asked.
4	Group of Warrior Monks from the Temple of Ul.
5	The Parade of the Dead passes by. A group of twenty skeletons with instruments, escorting a black funeral carriage pulled by zombies. In the black coffin is the fresh corpse of a local nobleman, lying in a bed of 200 Gold Pieces and clutching a silver sword (worth 100 GP, and +2 to hit and damage undead. The downside of the sword is that the wielder must attack any undead they see, though this urge may be resisted on a successful Test of Luck).
6	Bits of the iron moon fall suddenly from the Sky. Test Luck or be struck for 1D6 points of damage.



Location Key

1. The Tower of the Stars

A white tower spirals its way up into the sky. The home of the Wizard Arksal, last of the Nine.

The Tower of the Stars is a white stone gleaming beacon of hope amongst the dark and ruined buildings of the City of Eternal Night. It is at least ten stories high and seems to twist upwards. There are numerous slit windows along its length. On the ground floor is a double gate, with stars carved into the arch. The roof is a big turquoise dome, out of the side of which peeps a giant brass instrument with a purpose you cannot work out from standing on the ground.

Arksal is renowned as a great White Wizard who fought bravely against the Mad Tzar, suffered a significant personal loss of his friends as a result and withdrew to his tower to gaze forlornly at the stars. He appears as a man in his seventies and gives the impression that he is succumbing to old age. His head is bald, and he has a tremendous three-foot-long pure white beard. He wears red robes with black sigils sown into the hems. He leans uneasily on a staff of gnarled and twisted oak.

Arksal explains the situation. The Mad Tzar is awakening. Go to the Iron Moon to stop him, and save the world. For the financially motivated Arksal points out that the treasure in the vaults of the Iron Moon is there for the taking.

Secret

Arksal is the traitor, who seeks the Mad Tzar's resurrection as the Demon Baby. In this form, the Mad Tzar a much easier monster to defeat than the adult Mad Tzar the Nine fought in antiquity, yet still full of magical energy. Arksal did most of the surviving Nine in after the original battle against the Mad Tzar, and the characters are disposable heroes who are going to fight the horrors that the Mad Tzar's reappearance has summoned into the world and act as magical patsies.

Interesting bits and bobs if the players decide to snoop around the tower:

- Arksal disappears almost immediately after his meeting with the characters. Sorcerers who search the tower with their Magic Sensitivity class ability, and who successfully test their skill will find some whiff of magic indicating that a Teleport spell has been used, but no clue where he went.
- There is a body in the basement. Another of The Nine, Oppi the Builder, is buried up to his neck in a vat of the same 'iron' once used to forge the surface of the moon. Of course, he's complexly bonkers but will talk sense if asked questions about the Iron

Moon's construction. If asked why he's here he will say it was his own silly fault; he was helping Arksal make the mix, popped upstairs to get an ingredient, tripped on the stairs on his way back and fell into the vat.

- The Star Gazer's telescope. On the roof of the tower, securely fixed to the floor, this ornate telescope which has a cradle in which the observer can sit and look through the lens. If the characters look through it, they can see the surface of the Iron Moon. Roll 1D10 for the thing that they can see and consult the location index for the Iron Moon on page 13.

2. The Morticians Guild

A large black, dingy building, choking in dust and boxes of bones. In its many empty rooms are bodies in various states of embalming. The Guild is a group of magicians who prepare the corpses brought to the city for burial.

This is a black wooden building made up of several one-story wings and halls, connected by corridors. It would have been a splendid building during its heyday. That has long passed. The rot has set in. Half the wooden tiled roofs are fallen in, cluttering the rooms under them with beams and tiles.

The building at first seems entirely deserted, but when the characters enter they will encounter groups of Undead Guardians (2d4 individuals) who wander the halls and rooms. They are passive unless the characters are actively looting or poking around in areas that they shouldn't be.

Embalmed Corpses: AC 7 [12], HD 1, HP 6, Attacks: fists (1D6), Special: immune to charm, sleep and other mind control magic, MV 9, CL/XP 1/15

Secret

The majority of the guild has gone to the edge of the city to confront the endless hordes of undead arising from the city graveyard (see 1.5 below). Bolstar the Weaslet was left behind to look after the building. Hiding in a cupboard in one of the preparation rooms, Bolstar is an obnoxious fellow, who has remained behind because he knows the Mausoleum is the more significant threat. He will take the characters to the gate in the Mausoleum, but no further.

Bolstar the Weaslet: AC 9 [10], HD 3, HP 15, Attacks: mace (1D6), Special: spell casting, MV 12, CL/XP 4/140.

Bolstar can cast the following spells once per day each:

Magic Missile, Web, Hold Person.

Treasure

Miscellaneous grave goods and silver mortician's tools worth a grand total of 100 gold pieces can be found.

Looting the guild house brings the automatic hatred of any surviving guild members.

3. The Temple of Ul

A few worshippers remain at this grim temple of a stern bull-headed god. They can heal the injured and advise the characters of the undead hordes that afflict the city.

A large temple complex made of blocks of black stone rises up before you. An avenue leads to the main temple, with 20 ft tall statues of the bull-headed god who wields a fearsome bull-headed mace. In the main temple is a hastily put together hospital. Before a seated golden statue of the bull-headed god, who is identified as "Ul" on a plaque on its base, the shaven-headed priests tend their wounded and dying brothers.

Ul is a god of the dead, whose warrior monks are sworn to fight the undead at every given opportunity. They don't know the way into the Iron Moon, having fallen out with the equally grim Orden many hundreds of years ago over some long-forgotten point. The High Priest, Hoden the Grim, knows that the Morticians keep in contact with the Ordenites.

As well as casting Cure Serious Wounds on those deserving of it; the High Priest can provide the following in assistance to any worthy characters in the group.

- Two scrolls of Cure Serious Wounds.
- One potion of Cure Disease.

A small force of twenty Novices protects the complex and tend to the wounded, none of whom are in any fit shape to fight.

High Priest Hoden the Grim: AC 7[12] leather armour, HD 5, HP 40, Attacks: 2H great mace (1D10), Special: spell casting, MV 12, CL/XP 6/400.

Hoden can cast the following spells once per day each:

Magic Missile, Fireball, Dispel Magic, Cure Light Wounds, Cure Serious Wounds, Hold Person.

Novices: AC 7[12], leather armour, HD 1, HP 6, Attacks: mace (1D6), Special: none, MV 12, CL/XP 1/15.



4. The Street of the Dead

In an old merchant's district, an odd mechanical man awaits the characters in his shop of curiosities.

A well-worn dusty road, 20' wide, goes seemingly on and on through the city and into the countryside beyond. Alongside are a bewildering assortment of buildings, most of which are boarded up. Such is the custom here in the middle-class area of town; when the owner of one of these buildings dies, they are boarded up with all their worldly goods inside their old shop. Now the hammerings and bangs from behind the boards show that they are desperate to get out. Amongst the ruin of this once magnificent street, there is one shop that appears to be intact, with golden columns out the front and a lovely colourful sign that gives its name "Oeldi's Shop of Wonders".

Oeldi's Shop of Wonders

This curio shop is run by the overweight Oeldi, who wears a brightly coloured jacket and a blue fez. The shop has a 23% chance go having any item a character needs. Oeldi stays here rather than fleeing the city doomed by the undead because he is a magical construct created by The Nine (or his Nine Dads as he called them). As he takes damage, his fleshy covering falls off revealing a brass body underneath. If questioned about the entrance to the Iron Moon, Oeldi can explain that it is in the mausoleum. Hidden behind his counter is a short sword which he quickly grabs if threatened. But if Oeldi has to defend himself, he breathes a jet of fire doing 3D6 damage, halved on a successful Test vs Luck, which he can do up to three times a day. Each time there is a 30% chance that he will set the shop on fire.

Oeldi: AC 2 [17], HD 8, HP 34, Attacks: short sword (1D6), Special: Mechanical Construct – unaffected by poison, disease, sleep, charm or any magical mind control methods. Able to breathe fire three times a day. MV 12, CL/XP 10/1400.

5. The Poor Graves

At the edge of the city, a vast graveyard stretches beyond the horizon in the form of a field of wooden crosses.

Wooden crosses fill the field, as far as the eye can see. Dark figures are shuffling from the horizon, while in the immediate distance, a group of five brown-robed humans prepare their heavy-set weapons to meet the undead apocalypse.

Here the Warrior Monks of Ul fight wave upon wave of zombies, which come in groups of 6D6 every twenty minutes or so. The clerics are a small group of five novices who are all that is left of the main force from the temple. Behind their makeshift defensive line of wooden stakes thrust into the ground, is a sizeable ten-foot-deep pit, filled with the corpses of their fallen comrades. Crypt Keepers with a grisly sense of humour may want some of the bodies to be zombies, who crawl out of the pit and attack

the party from behind.

Warrior Monks of Ul: AC 2 [17] chainmail, HD 1, HP 6, Attacks: Mace (1D6), Special: none, Move 12, CL/XP 1/15.

Unlimited Horde of Zombies: AC 8[11], HD 2, HP 5, Attacks: Fists (1D6), Special: immune to mind control magic, poison and disease, MV 9, CL/XP 2/30.

6. The Rubble

This smashed and flattened part of town is where a part of the Iron Moon fell from the sky and crushed the buildings below.

Here red rust, with swirls of rainbows which gleam and glint in the dimness, hangs in the air. You look at your feet and its mess of iron fragments, rubble and the occasional body part.

This is the part of the town where a hundred-foot square chunk of the iron moon fell onto the city, squashing buildings and trapping people underneath the rubble. The air is thick with dust, and the visibility is reduced to ten feet. Shocked survivors wander the streets as do packs of zombies and ghouls.

7. The Rich Tombs

In this area the rich of the city are interred in magnificently decorated tombs.

A small hill, dotted with gleaming white marble tombs. Statues of handsome young women and men stand guard outside the memorials to the rich of the city, in various stages of decency, made of the same marble as the tombs. As you get closer to the tombs, you see a gang of about a dozen rough men with clubs and maces, bashing away at the tomb entrances trying to break in.

The group is twenty strong. They are bandits, taking advantage of the break down in order in the city to loot the tombs. They will invite similarly evil characters to join them. Unfortunately for them, the tombs have undead occupants, who fight back as the seals to their tombs are opened and their eternal rest is disturbed.

Bandits: AC 6 [13] (Studded Leather), HD 1, HP 4, Attacks: mace (1D6), Special: none, MV 12, CL/XP 1/15.

The Rich Undead (Ghouls): AC 6 [13], HD 2, HP 10, Attacks: 2 claws (1D3) and one Bite (1D4), Special: Paralyzing touch (Test Vs Luck to avoid), MV 9, CL/XP 3/60.

8. The Mausoleum

This big black stone step pyramid is a grim monument to those who the Mad Tzar killed in his reign. It is the anchor of the Iron Moon which hangs above it in the sky, and is attached by a chain to the summit of the pyramid. Within the pyramid, guarded by Orden the Slug God, is a magical

portal to the surface of the Iron Moon.

Before you is a giant five-tier step pyramid made from black stone, which seems to absorb what little light there is in this grim twilight land. You can see two large entrances on its east and west side. In the south and the north side of the pyramid, staircases fifty foot across ascend to the summit of the building. You figure the base of the pyramid is a good two hundred feet across on each side, each tier is about ten-foot-high, giving the height of the pyramid to be about fifty feet. Running around the pyramids second tier are giant hieroglyphs in some ancient tongue, each glyph being the height of a person. Attached to the summit of the pyramid is a massive giant iron chain. Your eyes follow the chain up into the sky, and several hundred feet above the pyramid, the other end is attached to the Iron Moon, which hangs ominously above.

If any character tries to read the hieroglyphs and make a successful understand language roll (see Crypts and Things Table 4 Intelligence page 11), they will find out that they read “To those who died at the hands of the Mad Tzar”.

The inside of the pyramid mirrors the outside with a vast inverted step pyramid, going down into the earth. At the bottom is a magic portal to the Iron Moon (see location 1 on the Dark Side of the Iron Moon below).

Secret

In the darkness at the bottom is the slug-like Orden, the Khaos corrupted member of the Nine, warped beyond all recognition of the human that he once was. Orden’s present form is of a twenty-foot-long, ten-foot-high slug, with translucent flesh so the characters can clearly see the innards, which contains at least twenty corpses. At the front of the slug is a human’s skull whose eyes glow green.

These corpse lights will be the first thing the characters see as it comes up from the depths of the chamber. As well as providing ghostly green illumination the lights can be used as an attack once every other round, in a cone, thirty feet at the end, with a sixty-foot range, doing 2D12 corrosive damage, which on a successful Test of Luck is halved. As the creature nears the characters, within twenty feet or so, it starts to spit out 1D6 Zombies per combat round. It keeps its distance if possible, allowing the Zombies to keep the characters busy and using its corpse light eye beams to attack.

Orden The Slug God: AC 5 [14], HD 10, HP 60, Attacks: body slam (2D6), Special: spits out 1D6 Zombies per round, corpse light eye beams, MV 9, CL/XP 12/2000.

Zombies: AC 8 [11], HD 2, HP 5, Attacks: Fist (1D6), Special immune to mind control magic, poison and disease, MV 9, CL/XP 2/30.

Crypt Keepers Note: Orden is one of those monsters that are better avoided than engaged to the bitter end. The characters will not notice the magic portal at the base of the chamber initially, because of the general gloom and darkness, but if they shine lights down they will see the swirl of the magic energy at the bottom of the inverted step pyramid. Sorcerers using their magical sensitivity ability may also pick up it if they beam their attention in the right direction.

Ascending to the Iron Moon

The characters may decide to ascend to the moon via the massive chain that attaches it to the top of the step pyramid. This is a bad idea since Oppi created an extremely lethal trap to deter tomb robbers using this route.

If the characters get within ten feet of the chain, it hums ominously. Within five feet it starts to charge up with visible electricity. Any character within one foot a must Test their luck or take 1D10 damage. Even if lucky the shock sends them flying ten feet away. If the characters persist and touch the chain, a lightning strike that does 3D10 damage shoots down the chain.

If by some devious plan or magical resistance the characters manage to climb five kilometres up the chain, when they reach the top a zap of magic teleports them to the Arrival Garden (see Part 2 location 1 below). Any character who has been tenacious enough to do this should have their Luck restored to its original maximum upon reaching the moon.

PART 2. THE DARK SIDE OF THE IRON MOON

Crypt Keeper’s Advice

Fast and furious is the way to play this part, in stark contrast to the previous section. Make reference to dark, ominous noises from the interior of the moon (the Mad Tzar waking up and shaking the moon).

Descriptions should emphasise the dark alien nature of the moon and convey a certain amount of claustrophobia.

The ‘Crypt’ takes the form of a series of rooms and corridors that are carved out of the iron surface of the moon which is open to the sky. The walls of the hallways and rooms are made up of iron bricks and stones, which held together by a magical metal mortar which in many places has crumbled to rust. Overall there is a sense that while this is a magical and magnificent achievement of construction, it has seen much better days and is about to fall apart. Many of the encounter areas are a twisted take on a garden of remembrance.

Wandering Monsters/Events

Roll 1D6	Encounter
1	2D6 Harpies (see location 8 below) come sweeping down from the sky.
2	Falling masonry. Test Luck or lose 2D6 hit points.
3	Violent shakes.
4	The ominous creaking sound from the moon.
5.	Mysterious words appear on the wall written in chalk (courtesy of an invisible Rexo the Magnificent; see location.9 below).
6	A dead body falls from the sky, with no explanation or reason.

Location Key

1. The Arrival Garden

Surrounded by dark alien blooms, the characters teleport into this shady area.

With a flash of light, you are elsewhere. As your eyes adjust you see a field of stars above you, and around you is a garden, where flower beds are filled with black petalled lilies. The only exit is a large black stone archway to the north, with the word "Welcome" inscribed in large writing on it.

The teleport is one way. As well as the large archway to the south, there is a smaller archway to the east, which is not immediately apparent being concealed by creeping vines and lilies.

Secret

The sap from the black lilies provides an antidote for the red poppies in location 6, The Garden of Rage. Allow characters with relevant life events or scholarly backgrounds to make a skill test to realise that these are fabled Moon Lilies which act as a general cure-all for poison.

2. The Freshening Up Chamber

Just off from the Arrival Garden is a small room, whose function is initially obscured by plants.

Black-leafed ivy crawls up the walls around a black marble hand basin. Just above the bowl is a small shelf with a black stone jug full of milky liquid. Next to the basin on the adjacent wall is a mirror, which is misted up.

Secret

The liquid in the black stone jug is a healing potion, which if drunk or applied to wounds heals either 1D6 Con damage or 2D6 Hit Points if the character has no CON damage.

The mirror next to the basin is a magic mirror. There is a small plaque above the mirror, not immediately apparent because it is obscured by ivy that reads "De-mystify me and step on through". "Stepping through" the mirror leads to location 10. This was designed as a shortcut for the great and the good when the moon was first built. The other odd thing about the mirror is that it always shows the reflection of the last person who stepped through the mirror...in this case a grinning and evil looking Arksal, who is ahead of the characters from when he teleported here after briefing them at the beginning of the adventure.

NOTE: This room exists as a sort of an in-joke that in most Dungeons there's never a toilet. Also, it's a shortcut that bright players or Crypt Keepers running close to their time limit can use ;)

3. The Sliding Monolith

What initially looks like a bizarre giant game of chess with one monolithic piece, is actually a shape changed monster of tentacular danger.

In the centre of an eight by eight grid of black and white floor tiles, each five foot across, is a black stone monolith.

For every square the characters move, it moves towards them matching their 'move' square for square. When it is in an adjacent square, five smoky black tendrils lash out from it...and it turns into true form as a fleshy black pillar monster, with a single eye and a mouth full of vicious teeth.

Pillar Monstrosity AC 6 [13], HD 6, HP 40, Attacks: 5 tendrils (2D6) or 1 Bite (2D6), Special: Can Mimic a stone obelisk, Move 12, CL/XP 7/600.

4. The Statue of Ul

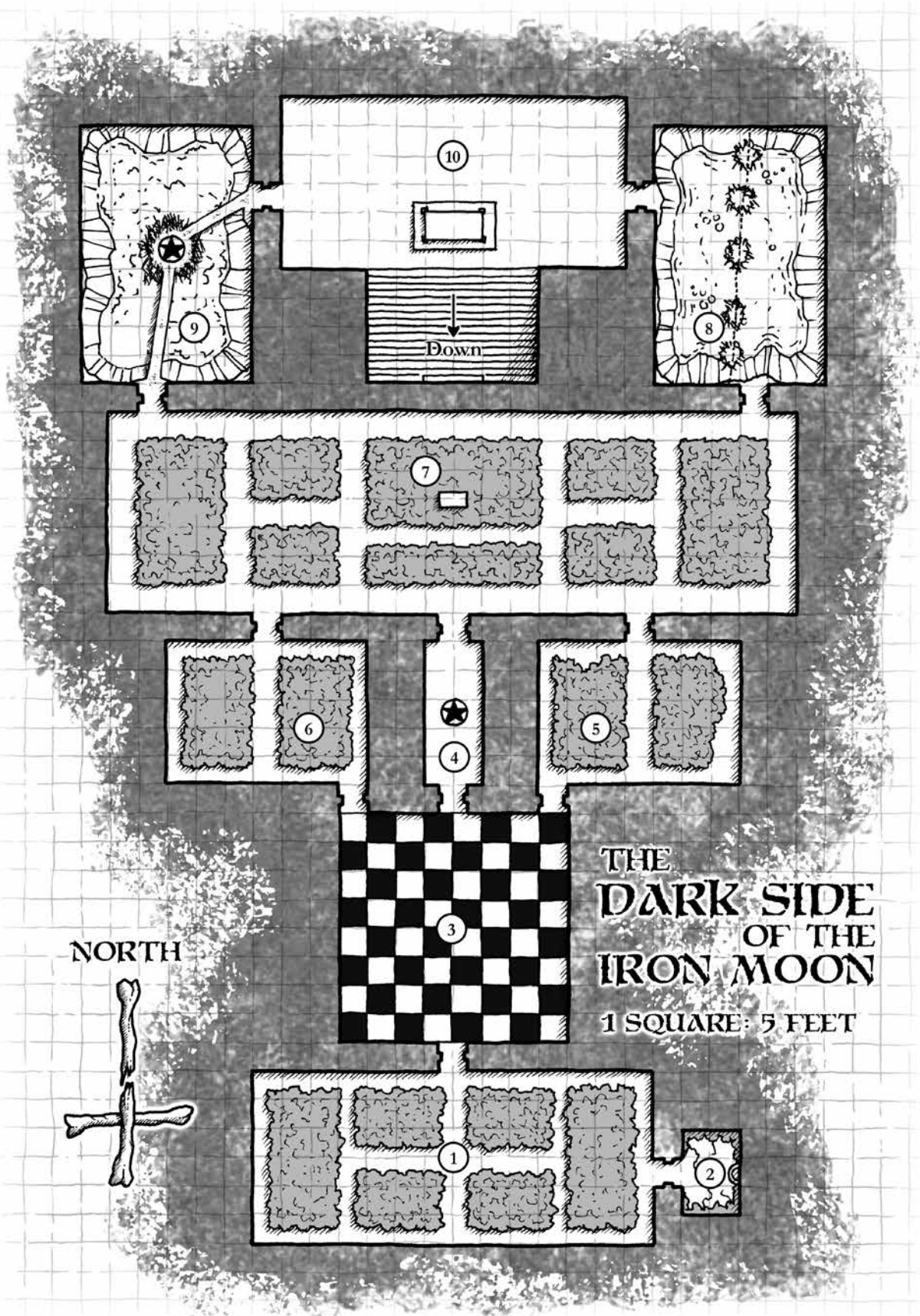
This bull-headed black obsidian statue of Ul defaced by the harpies' claws (see location 2:8) sits in an otherwise tranquil garden.

A man-sized statue made of black stone of a muscular man with a bull's head, standing upright with arms in the air, stands on a black marble plinth. The statue has been defaced; the left arm is broken off at the elbow, and deep claw marks run across its face, torso and the plinth where the name was once written.

5. The Garden of Reflective Sleep

More black flowers. This time they ooze pollen which acts as a sleeping poison.

This chamber is a garden filled with black orchids. A strange white mist surrounds the bases of the flowers, to a depth of about a foot and spreads out to fill the chamber. In both the east and west walls are holes, one foot across, with five foot between neighbours, at the height of one foot up the wall.



This garden is filled with black orchids that ooze sleeping poison. All characters entering this area must make a luck test or fall asleep for 1D100 minutes. Even if the character successfully makes the luck roll they are drowsy and at -2 to all dice rolls for the next 1D20 minutes.

Once the characters have fallen asleep, serpents slide out of the holes, one for each character.

Giant Garden Serpents: AC 7 [12] (snakeskin), HD 4, HP 20, Attacks: Bite (1D6 + poison) or constriction attack (2D6), Special: poison (test luck or take 2D6 extra damage, success halves damage), MV 12, CL/XP 5/240.

6. The Garden of Rage

This chamber is full of red poppies that ooze enraging poison.

This chamber is filled with red poppies, around which hangs a red haze in the air.

Any character who breathes in the red haze, which is toxic pollen, should Test for Luck. Those that fail will be overcome with psychosis that causes them to attack their comrades for 1D6 combat rounds. Those that succeed have a choice go forward, looking for a fight, with a +2 to attack and damage in the next combat encounter or shake off the effects of the poison.

7. The Black Board

An invisible hand writes on a large slab of black granite that sits in the centre of this garden full of blue flowers.

In the centre of a bed of blue flowers stands a large slab of black stone, 5 foot across, 20 foot tall. Written in chalk, in scrawling scratchy handwriting are two sentences.

"Abandon hope, all ye who were stupid enough to come here."

and

"The End of the World is nigh, and I feel fine.."

This is Rexo the Magnificent one of the Nine who disappeared after the defeat of the Mad Tzar after he correctly realised that Arksal would kill off the other immortals. He is also aware of Arksal's plan to rebirth the Mad Tzar.

Players only have to ask respectful questions to get answers from him, which he writes in chalk on the black stone slab. He intends to stay hidden. So, while his vanity craves human contact, hence him answering the questions, he will not say who he is. If attacked he fights back by firing off an invisible magic missile doing 2D10 damage upon striking.

Rexo the Magnificent: AC 5 [14], HD 9, HP 50, Attacks: Invisible Magic Missile 2D10 damage, Special: Permanently Invisible, CL/XP 12/2000.

8. The Harpy Nests

Five nests full of goose-bodied Harpies, guarding their golden eggs, hang over a pit of magma.

A long iron chain runs the length of this chamber, over a magma-filled pit that covers the entire area of where the floor should be. Suspended on the chain, ten feet over the fire pit, are five nests made of iron bars and wire. In each nest are three geese with the heads of screaming women, which squawk loudly at each other.

If the characters want to cross this location, they either need to fly across it or delicately walk via the chains (test of skill with bonuses for acrobatic backgrounds, a test of luck if they fail to avoid falling into magma that does 3D6 damage per round). Either way enrages the Harpies who attack the characters.

The Harpies have the bodies of geese (rather than the traditional vulture body). In each nest is 1D6 Golden Eggs worth 50 GP each.

Harpy: HD 3; AC 7 [12] feathers and natural agility, Attacks: Talons (1D3) or Scimitar (1d6), Special: flight, siren-song, charm person touch, lay golden eggs, MV 6 walk or 18 flight, CL/XP 4/120.

The harpies' siren song is a charm that draws its victims to the harpy, and the harpy's touch casts the equivalent of a charm person spell. Player characters may test their luck to avoid either of these attacks.

9. The Pit of Great Stench

This is a mirror of location 8 (see above), but instead of magma, the pit is filled with excrement and other noxious smelly material.

Walkways lead to an island of iron that rises out of the mess. On this island is a statue of a noble-looking barbarian, great axe held aloft, made of the same metal. There is a plinth which has the following carved into it.

"Torgil the Insurmountable, who came from the cold wastes and fell in battle against the Mad Tzar, struck down by lightning."

A couple of minutes after the characters enter the area, a lightning bolt descends from the heavens. If there is no-one on the island, the lightning goes to ground via the statue. If the characters are on the island, they must test their luck or take 3D6 lightning damage, as the lightning grounds via them, chaining round all present.

10. The Sleeping Sorceress

Here at the top of the sweeping stairs that led down into the interior of the Iron Moon, sleeps one of the surviving, but totally insane, Nine, the Sorceress Wendith.

At the far end of this otherwise featureless area is the gate down into the interior of the iron moon, which is reached by a broad set of stairs thirty foot across which go down twenty feet. At the top of the stairs sleeps a beautiful red-headed woman on a raised white marble plinth. She is dressed in green robes with a golden crown. She sleeps holding a silver rod close to her.

Secret

The beautiful woman asleep is Wendith, the Silver Sorceress one of the Nine. If awoken, the players will find she is completely insane, in a confused sort of way unless the mater of the Gate and/or Mad Tzar comes up. All she knows that she is not to let anyone through the Gate; otherwise they will release the Mad Tzar who is very very bad and will destroy the world.

The key to the Gate round her neck, which is otherwise firmly locked.

Wendith the Silver Sorceress: AC 5 [14] natural dexterity + enchanted robes, HD 8, HP 50, Attacks: Silver Staff which fires a bolt of lightning (3D6), Special: forgotten all her magic but 50% Magic Resistant and can fly as per spell at will, MV 12 or 15 flying, CL/XP 11/ 1700.

Any sounds of violence will summon the Harpies from 8, who will start arriving at the rate of three (or one nest) per round.

PART 3. THE COURT OF THE MAD TZAR

Crypt Keeper's Advice

This is the last encounter inside the Iron Moon, which is a hollow structure.

This is the moment for the characters to shine as Heroes and Heroines or be more dubious if that's the way the players want to go.

But make that moment BIG. Emphasise the fiends, how deadly they are, describe the vast size of the interior of the moon.

Location Key

1. The Bridge

This location connects the stairs coming down from the surface of the Iron Moon (see part 2, location 10 above) with the silver sphere that is the Mad Tzar's ultimate prison.

Leading directly from a large staircase, 30 feet across that leads 50 feet down, from the gate to the surface is this iron metal bridge which stretches across the vast hollow interior into the darkness.

Once the characters get closer to the bridge, they will see human figures running towards them.

Secret

Even closer still they will see thirty human figures made of stone. These are the assistants of Oppi the Builder, who Arksal turned to Stone (using a one-use scroll) when they finished constructing the moon.

At the centre of the hollow moon is a small silver sphere, about 100 feet across, with a single rectangle-shaped entrance. This silver sphere houses locations 2 & 3 below.



2. The Antechamber

In this room, the characters pause for breath and meet their patron Arksal. Here they have a chance to learn about his betrayal and his plan to absorb the Mad Tzar's energy.

In the featureless room, fifty foot cubed, sits Arksal in a comfortable wooden throne, casually having a glass of red wine.

He congratulates them on getting this far and taps his staff on the floor at which point another featureless black rectangle opens in the wall opposite to the one the characters have just entered as that one closes.

He then tells the characters that they should rush into the Mad Tzar's chamber, and kill the Demon infant before it can grow into its full monstrous form.

Secret

Arksal is using a modified version of Dimension Door to create and uncreate doors in and out of the sphere. The staff is the key to this magic but doesn't in itself hold the spell which is part of the sphere. A Sorcerer using sense magic with a successful skill test can work this out.

Arksal's Plan is to use the characters as meat shields in the fight against the Mad Tzar, and as soon as the Tzar is down to its last handful of hit points, step in and slay it, absorbing its magical power.

Don't worry if this doesn't make 100% logical sense, Arksal is an insane megalomaniac who is thousands of years old ...muhaaaahahahaahahaha!

Of course, the characters may buy into Arksal's plan, in which case he will gut them down where they stand before proceeding to the next chamber to slay the Mad Tzar without their help.

Arksal: AC 1 [18], HD 8, HP 60, Attacks: Rod of Cursed Lighting (3D6) or poison dagger (1D6, Test Luck and lose an additional 1D6 per round for 1D6 rounds if Unlucky), Move 12 or 15 magical flight, Special: spell casting, magical flight. CL/XP 10/1400.

Arksal knows the following spells, each usable the number of times per day noted.

Fireball x3, Sleep, Web, Charm Person x2, Ice Storm, Dimension Door (for that last-minute escape).

3. The Prison of the Mad Tzar

The final showdown is with the Mad Tzar, who starts as an infant and rapidly develops into a full grown Khaos monster, insane and intent on bringing down reality.

In the centre of this large egg-shaped perfect white room on a five-foot-high black marble pillar is a light blue egg about four feet in

diameter. A large crack has already formed, and there is rhythmic peaking from within. With each peck, the room visibly shakes.

About a minute after the characters enter the room the egg splits open revealing a newborn male baby with golden skin, red eyes and small horns.

If Arksal is with the characters, he screams at them to attack the monstrosity!

The infant will use its Charm Person special ability to charm its attackers, using the fiery gaze on anyone who doesn't fall under its charms and attacks it. The infant will quite happily set charmed characters against non-charmed characters.

Mad Tzar as Infant: AC 8 [11], HD 5, HP 40, Attacks: Fiery gaze (2D6), Special: Fiery gaze + use Charm Person at will, Magic Resistance 25%, MV 2 crawl, CL/XP 6/400.

After two rounds of combat, the infant grows into a child with small bat wings. The child will immediately fly up into the air and stay away from the characters. Again, it will use a combination of Charm Person and Fiery Gaze.

Mad Tzar as Child: AC 6 [13], HD 8, HP 50, Attacks: Fiery gaze (2D8), Special: Fiery gaze + use Charm Person at will, Magic Resistance 50%, MV 12 Fly, CL/XP 10/1400.

After four rounds the Mad Tzar once again changes into a teenager, complete with stylish black leather armour and sizeable black leather wings. It can still attack people using its Charm Person, but the attack is more sexual than protective in nature, but if angered is quick to lash out with its fiery gaze or even its taloned hands.

Mad Tzar as Teenager: AC 4 [15], HD 9, HP 72, Attacks: Fiery gaze (2D6) or x2 Talons (1D8), Special: Fiery gaze + use Charm Person at will, Magic Resistance 75%, MV 15 Fly or 12, CL/XP 12/2000.

Finally, after five combat rounds, with a loud agonising scream, the Mad Tzar mutates into its final Khaos Monster form, a bloated, angry red thing with only rudimentary human features, which rests in a black iron armour suit and spews corrosive bile and venom. At this point, the Mad Tzar loses the ability to cast Charm Person, but anyone slain by it rises as a zombie with 5 HD the round after they die – and this extends to characters killed by earlier incarnations.

Mad Tzar fully Grown: AC 2 [17], HD10, HP 80, Attacks: Corrosive Cone 30 wide (4D6, Test vs Luck halves), Special: Corrosive Vomit + Raise dead as zombies at Will, Magic Resistance 85%, MV 10 fly, CL/XP 14/2600.

Hit point changes as Mad Tzar grows up.

There are two ways of handling this:

The nice way. Add bonus hit points as Tzar transforms, ie.

Infant>Child +10

Child>Teenager +22

Teenager > Fully Grown +18

This means if the characters have dealt damage, that damage still stays.

Eg. Characters do 5 points of damage to the Infant, reducing it to 35 HP. Then it transforms into a child, so its HP is now 45 HP.

The vicious way. Each time the Tzar transforms, its HP is the new total given in the descriptions above. Eg. Characters do 5 points of damage to the Infant, reducing it to 35 HP. Then it transforms into a child, so its HP is now 50 HP.

Treasure

Once the Tzar is killed, it explodes into a shower of blood-red rubies. Characters caught in the blast must Test their luck or take 1D6 damage from the razor-sharp gems. Survivors will find 3D20 of the gems worth 25gp each.

The death of the Tzar also releases its Divine Energy.

If the characters kill the Mad Tzar

If Arksal is still alive, he screams obscenities and curses them for wasting what was rightfully his, godhood!

Demented and insane not fearing for his safety he attacks them to the death.

The decay of the Iron Moon starts accelerating, and the characters must get off it back to the ground quickly.

If Arksal kills the Mad Tzar

He absorbs the Mad Tzar's magical energy, and gains 5HD, 30 HP, his Magic Resistance of 50%, and the strange Other Worldly glow of one who is Divine.

He turns to the characters and gives them a simple choice. Follow him as a god or DIE!

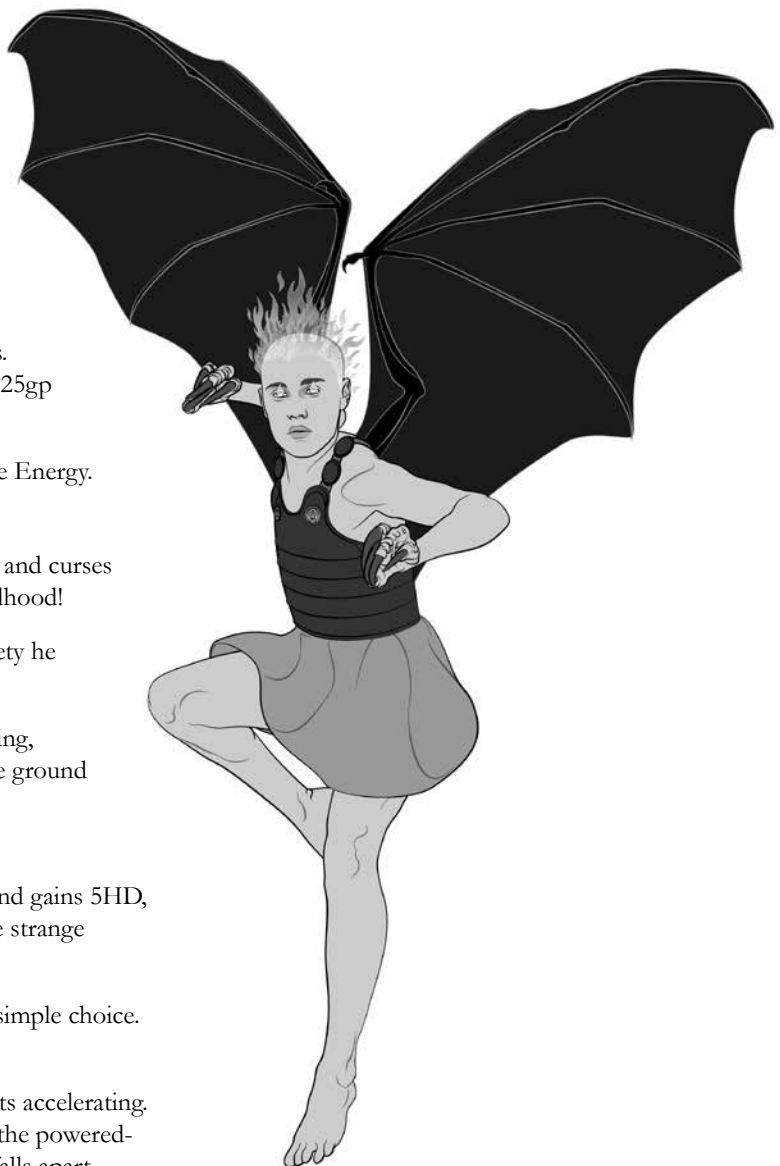
Meanwhile, the decay of the Iron Moon starts accelerating. The character's face a choice, stop and fight the powered-up Arksal or flee the Moon before it finally falls apart.

If they choose to flee the moon, they see it explode from the ground. Moments later they see Arksal in his new godlike form emerge from the explosion and fly skywards. The mad God-Wizard speaks into their minds:

"You may have survived the end of the Mad Tzar but know this I'm now your enemy and I will hunt you down!!"

If you are playing an ongoing campaign, make a note that the players now have a new nemesis in the form of Arksal, who will gather followers/make contacts that will make the characters' lives difficult in future adventures.

If the characters decided to get down and bow to their new God and follow Arksal, he envelops them in a magical protective sphere and flies off towards the heavens with them, as the Iron Moon finally explodes.



DARK, DEADLY AND DELICIOUS

CRYPTS AND THINGS CONVENTION GAMES

A good half of the C&T games I've played have been convention games or have ended up being run at conventions. When you present an adventure for a convention game, it's a completely different dynamic. You'll be running for a group of strangers, who may not know each other or you. So instead of the built up consistent approach and implicit trust that you've gained through playing with your home group, you'll need a different framework that you can use instead that inspires all the good qualities you get in a good session at home, very quickly.

This article addresses that problem. It looks at the critical areas of designing and running Crypts and Things adventures for conventions. It will also work for one-shot games which you run as a taster of the game or a special in between more extended campaign games.

This article looks at six areas that make up my own personal framework that I use when I'm creating convention scenarios.

1. Focus on what makes Crypts and Things what it is.
2. You Can Never Have Enough Pace.
3. Use Pre-Made Characters.
4. Reward Exploration and Interaction.
5. Be the Monster Manager.
6. Have a Structure to Frame the Adventure.

This framework, if you follow it, will go a great way to helping you and your players settle down quickly into having a fun exciting game of a Crypts and Things.

FOCUS ON WHAT MAKES CRYPTS AND THINGS WHAT IT IS

This is a big one. If you don't focus on what C&T does, you might as well be playing one of the other variants of the World's Favourite Fantasy Roleplaying game. Don't be fooled by the fact that it has many features and tropes of that great Dungeon Crawling Game- Classes and Levels, the six characteristics, experience points and hit points are all there merely to make players and Crypt Keepers feel comfortable and at ease. The familiarity of some aspects of the rules is there to ease the players and Crypt Keepers into the game, rather than dropping them in from a considerable height with a huge learning curve. There's also a delightful simplicity of the old school rules that makes them easy to build upon.

A lot of what C&T does is through tone and emphasis. The text of the game imparts this, but the extra layer of rules (Sanity, Black/Grey/White Magic, Corruption, Skill use and the abilities of the classes) highlights it too.

Let's break the title down:

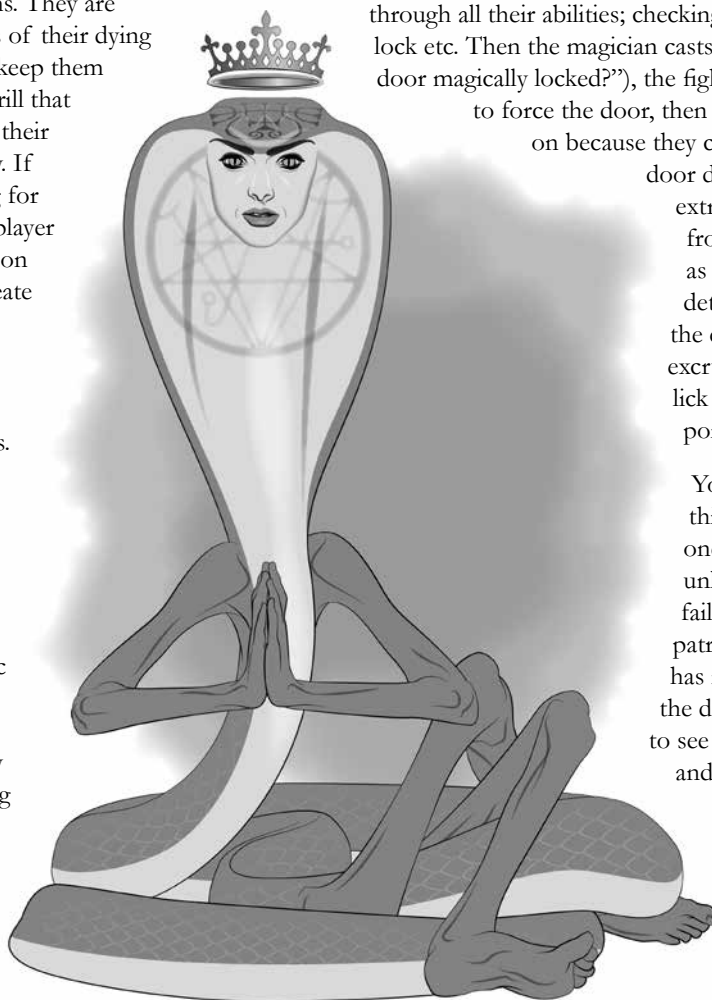
Dark. C&T is unrelentingly dark, to big the player characters up (even if the players are playing anti-heroes who are scrambling around in the dirt). If I want to have villains in my game, I want to show that they are evil to the core. This goes doubly so in convention games unless moral grey areas are the big twist that provides entertainment.

Deadly. This is a feature of Crypts and Things being an old-school game. Old school games are one step away from the world of wargaming in their evolution. This sometimes throws players used to modern RPGs, where friends never kill friends and "I Win, I Win, and I Win again!" gets shouted out loud a lot. In Crypts and Things, there is a clear and present danger of character death, which puts the hairs up on your head with excitement.

Delicious. OK, I was thinking of chocolate here as if the title was an advertisement, but it's all about fun and excitement. The Crypt Keeper's job in a convention is to deliver three to four hours of entertainment and excitement, and have everyone grinning like loons at the end.

The big four points of what makes C&T special are:

1. Player characters are the Heroes and Heroines. Even if they are anti-heroes, the player characters are deliberately the overpowered main characters of Swords and Sorcery fiction. Never make them the side-line in the adventures. Always put them centre stage.
2. Enemies are horrible to horrific. As a counterpoint to the above, and to put the player characters in perspective, their opponents are the stuff of nightmares. They murder, they steal (so their victims will starve to death), they even suck souls. Even the most anti-heroic villainous player character should feel virtuous when confronted by the cruel machinations of a Greater Other.
3. Humans are misguided power seekers struggling to survive (even insane cultists). Also, though the default setting, The Continent of Terror is human-centric, those humans aren't forming lovely well-ordered Kingdoms. They are scrabbling in the ashes of their dying world for anything to keep them alive or give them a thrill that takes them away from their bleak day to day reality. If the players are looking for inspiration from non-player characters, they will soon find that they must create that inspiration from themselves for others.
4. Weird, beautiful and occasionally humorous. Despite the grimdark aspect of the game, there is much wonder and laughter in the setting. Let the players explore that and emphasise the fantastic nature of the world from time to time. It's a critical factor of why people keep on coming back to the swords of and sorcery genre, again and again. The sheer playful escapism it provides.



YOU CAN NEVER HAVE ENOUGH PACE

(as my mate Evil Gaz says)

This is the primary principle to bear in mind when running a convention game. To keep your players entertained you should help to keep the game moving along at quite a speed. Characters should be jumping, running and occasionally fighting their way through the adventure, each location building on the excitement until the big thrilling finale.

If the Action Drags, Something Happens

Things that drag the action, which might be acceptable in a home game where you have all the time in the world, need to be quickly moved on from.

For example, suppose there's a locked door that blocks the characters' way. In a home game, you might let all the table of players try something to open the door. The thief goes through all their abilities; checking for traps, picking the lock etc. Then the magician casts Detect Magic ("is the door magically locked?"), the fighter uses their strength to force the door, then everybody else follows

on because they can all try to bash the door down. Finally, the players extract as much information from the Crypt Keeper as they can, and small details such as moss around the door frame, become excruciatingly important ("I lick the moss, to see if it is poisonous or magical.")

You've not got time for this in a con game. Let one character have a go at unlocking the door. If they fail, a guard (or a passing patrol of guards if the door has nothing behind it) opens the door from the other side to see who is making that noise and play proceeds.

Don't be Afraid to Slow the Pace

With all this talk about speed, if you or your players are finding it too much, put the breaks on. Slow the pace. Gently put the player characters in a safe place, slow things down to talk to an NPC for example. Let everybody get their breath back and then get back into it.

There's a Time and a Place for Investigation

I'll say it up front: C&T is not an investigative game. There may be moments where the players have to find secret entrances, talk to an NPC and ask right questions to find out where they are going next, but these are usually quickly sorted out and moved on from. Characters in Crypts and Things tend to be men and women of action, and the character classes empathise this.

REWARD EXPLORATION AND INTERACTION

Bearing in mind what I've just said above, encourage and reward players who explore and interact with their characters' surroundings and the non-player-characters that they encounter. Reveal interesting secrets. Most published Crypts and Things adventures have a special section called "Secrets" in adventure locations, which detail the special treats that can be found by inquisitive players. Dull and uninspired play should not serve up any additional information beyond the basics that are obvious to anyone entering the location.

REMEMBER TO LET THE PLAYERS HAVE FUN

No overshadowing their characters with non-player characters. Let them use their abilities and have their moments (even if it seems trivial to you). Make this a priority and big them up. Unlike a home game where the players learn through trial and error what their characters can do, there isn't time to do that. It needs to be more immediate.

BE THE MONSTER MANAGER

Don't overwhelm the players with streams of monsters, unless that's the point of the fight scene is that they can never overcome the flood of monsters and should run away!

Don't mistake combat for automatic fun. Make sure that you present combat encounters like scenes from a fun action film, where the director has placed enemies and scenery in an exciting way, so the combat can play out with lots of unexpected turns and twists. And don't force something to be a fight when this is unnatural.

For example, don't just throw 1d6+2 Men at Arms at the player characters who are strolling aimlessly through the palace. If you need a couple of men at arms to show up and challenge the characters about their right to be there, do so. It might lead into a fight (in which case they run away to the next courtyard where the rest of the palace guard is hanging out, with the court sorcerer and the King's assassins who are practicing on various trampolines etc.), but it might also lead to an entertaining moment of role-playing as the players blag their way past the guards.

USE PRE-MADE CHARACTERS

Pre-made characters are a must for convention games. Two reasons why:

1. They save time. No matter how quick you think you are, Crypts and Things character generation at the start of a convention game it will eat up valuable game time, while impatient players twiddle their thumbs and unexpected roadblocks in the process get thrown up.
2. The adventure can be tailor-made to make the most of character abilities. You want happy, engaged players who are having fun. The primary way that you can ensure this is by having characters who have the potential to be fun in play. While Crypts and Things uses Class/Level based characters, so every character is going to have its own niche, make sure that the composition of your adventuring party is made up of characters who all have a role to play in the adventure.

Fighters always have a place, and barbarians are good all-rounders. Magicians need environments rich in magic and mystery, where their magic detecting abilities make them useful for explaining what is going on and detecting magical threats. Thieves are good at sneaking through the shadows, taking out enemies using stealth, but are much more useful in combat than their Swords and Wizardry counterparts. For a four-player game merely make one of each of the core character classes, and you'll have enough variation amongst the characters. If you have six players, add another fighter and sorcerer, with different fighter specialities and spells in their books than the others.

It's often joked that part of old-school play is that the referee has a pile or replacement characters and it is worth having at least two additional characters in case of impending character death.

HAVE A STRUCTURE TO FRAME THE ADVENTURE

By now you should be getting the idea that I walk into a convention game of *Crypts and Things* with a plan, if only in bullet point form, of how I'm going to deliver three to four hours of fun for the players.

This is the Structure I use to hang my adventure off.

- Hour 1: Introduction
- Hours 2-3: The Meat
- Hour 4: Resolution

Introductory Hour

During the first hour of the game, I break it down into three main activities.

1. Let players find their feet. This is my primary goal in hour one. I run heavily focused player games, where their characters are the stars of the show, but nowhere is this more in evidence than in hour one.
2. Introduce characters and rules. After briefly introducing myself and the other players, I hand out pre-made characters. I then take one of the character sheets, either a spare or a duplicate, and run through it explaining rules as I go along. I leave the nuts and bolts of explaining combat and skill tests for when we encounter them, but I answer any questions about the character sheet and the basics of the rules now.
3. Allow the players to settle into the world. After introducing the characters, running through the character sheet, and answering any questions that arise from that, I describe the initial situation the characters find themselves in, and off we go. I let them wander around, strike up conversations with the NPCs they meet, give out information about the setting as they ask about it and generally make them “chew scenery” and ease into the world gently.

The Meat

Once the players are up on their feet, I let them drive the action through the adventure locations. Here they meet characters, trigger events (such as fighting monsters, or conversing with NPCs) and get up to all sorts of fun stuff in keeping with *Swords and Sorcery* genre. Remember you can never have enough pace, and keep things going.

Saying that...

Take Time Out

Eventually, the players will need a break from the action. You'll see eyes glaze over, hands fidget, and attention

wanders from play. They will be full of information and overloaded with description. Be receptive and take time out, in one of the following ways.

Comfort Breaks. At the beginning of the game, after necessary introductions, I always tell the players the schedule for comfort breaks. It avoids a lot of embarrassment as introverted players sit there waiting for permission to go, or more extroverted players just get up and go when they want to, which has the potential to disrupt the play. Stating when there will be comfort breaks may feel obvious, but it's the adult way of dealing with this situation. Take 10 minutes every 45 minutes or so to go to the toilet, grab some food, phone home etc. And then all get back into it.

The Intermission. This is a more extended break of 15 to 20 minutes that I give the players if they are suffering particularly badly from information overload and need a break to gather their wits. It's not something I pre-plan, but it usually happens before the climactic encounter or a significant encounter where the players need me to walk away from the table, so they can collectively come up with a plan, without me standing over them. It gives them and me breathing space. Often this is combined with a comfort break, but I make it clear that they need to use it as an opportunity to get a plan together and refocus on the game. When I come back to the table, I ask them what their plan is, and we play it out together.

Resolution

In the last hour of the game, you need to be wrapping things up to a big climax full of blood, guts and thunder. Get the players on side with this. Tell them before the final hour that they need to save the world, defeat the villain, rescue the prince, and that they only have one hour of game time to do it. Just before the final hour is a good time for an Intermission (see above). Then work with their plan, make it happen. It's up to the players to make it work, but you should give them the opportunity. Be prepared to revise your planned ending, so the players get to have their fun.

THE TOMB OF THE EVIL EMPEROR

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION

"Everyone in the Continent of Terror knows that the Evil Emperor was a false Emperor who seized power during antiquity and brought the evil of Khaos to the world. That his ascension brought about the Long Night of Terror, and he was destroyed when the light of Nemesis returned to the world and the rightful Emperor mounted the Imperial Throne. That his palace became his tomb when it was crushed under a meteor pulled from the sky. So terrible was the Evil Emperor that this is the name that infamy has granted him down the years. Even scholars dare not record his true name that is now lost in the mists of history.

It is well-known that the Evil Emperor rests uneasily, awaiting awakening in the ruined city. The Continent of Terror is threatened by a group of charlatans and tricksters known as the Scarlet Riders. These evil and deceitful people worship the Evil Emperor as a living deity. Through magic and sweet words, they enslaved your proud people. Most of your countrymen are still bewitched by their spell and follow the Scarlet Empress as if she was the real Emperor of all Zarth.

You are one of a handful of those not bewitched, and you must spring into action to save Zarth. A group of Scarlet Riders under the traitor Count Ardru have travelled to the Grand Debris, the Evil Emperor's ruined city, with the implicit objective of awakening him to learn magical secrets that will allow them to dominate all Zarth! Not only that but they have snatched relatives and loved ones to sacrifice to the foul Khaos God. You gather your weapons, mount your horses and ride off to stop them.

Now you find yourself on the dusty streets of the walled town of Zonos which stands next to the giant walls of the Grand Debris. You stand in the Square of the Lost. To the north is the large and tacky Governors' Palace, to the South there appears to be a typical two-story flat-roofed Administration and Records building while to the west is the giant closed Gates of Doom, which lead into the Grand Debris."

CRYPT KEEPER'S BACKGROUND

The adventure starts in the town of Zonos which sits next to the accursed Grand Debris, the old city of the Evil Emperor, now a giant ruin full of foul Khaos monsters. While interacting with the downtrodden exiles and the corrupt nobles of the town, it becomes quickly apparent to the characters that a small army of Scarlet Riders guards the gates into the city and the tomb entrance itself.

So stealth and cunning is the way to go. They may even learn of the Cord, a long tunnel that was the secret

entrance into the Imperial complex from the Court of Stone, the town's administrative building. Halfway long its dark and dingy length is the statue of the Forgotten God, a vile mockery of the imperial deity once worshipped before the Evil Emperor, who comes to life and instils courage and purpose in the characters (as well as restoring all hit points and cast spells).

The Imperial Complex is the main crypt. Put quite simply it is the portion of the city buried under 'Forgotten God's Justice', the meteor the wrathful god brought down on the Evil Emperor at the end of the Gods War. The characters must fight and talk their way through the complex until they find the entrance of the tomb.

Once they have descended to the tomb, it's a fight against time to stop the Scarlet Riders bringing the Emperor back to the land of the living.

The Scarlet Riders' leaders are:

1. *Count Ardru.* The Silver-Tongued Devil, a dashing, charismatic warrior who leads the Scarlet Riders
2. *Yarnala Moonglow.* A mystic warrior who has shed her hair and wields duel scimitars in combat.
3. *Siran Darg.* A barbarian originally from the Death Wind Steppes, who was convinced of the Scarlet Riders holy mission to bring the Evil Emperor back to life.
4. *Jemalida the Crone.* From the hidden parts of the world, this evil witch came up from the Khaos infested depths, to bring her evil master back into being.

If the characters fail to stop the Scarlet Riders' ritual to bring back the Evil Emperor, they will come face to face with the Evil Emperor, an immortal dragon who can take human form. History does not record the fact that the Evil Emperor is a dragon, but recurring dragon motifs in the decoration of the chambers of the Imperial Complex hint at it heavily. Leave the discovery of the dragon as a surprise at the end of the adventure.

Pacing for a One-Shot/Convention Game

This scenario was originally written for a four-hour convention session. One way of showing the urgency of getting on and completing the adventure is to present it as an exercise that is against the clock. The Scarlet Riders' command group, detailed above, is already in the tomb when the adventure begins. Non-player characters encountered in the first part of the adventure can hint at this. As the end of the adventure, the ground starts shaking with the magical energies that the ritual to bring back the Evil Emperor start to swell deep in the earth in the Tomb.

Suggested timings

- *Hour 1* Set up and Zonos.
- *Hour 2* Entering the Grand Debris and the start of the early Imperial Complex.
- *Hour 3* Later Imperial Complex.
- *Hour 4* The showdown in the tomb.

THE ADVENTURE

Part 1 Zonos, the Town of Exiles

There is an old saying: "better to die a clean death than to live dirty and dishonoured in Zonos."

Zonos was built 350 years ago by exiles and is a small walled town that sits next to the cyclopean walls of the Grand Debris.

It's a dusty desperate place, where a man could get killed for his water skin and the clothes on his back. The gods and the stars do not deign to show their faces here, such is their displeasure with the exiles; the only light comes from the Red Sun Nemesis that bathes the town in an eerie red twilight.

The Governor's Palace

Here the corrupt Governor lives with his vicious guardsmen and his seductive Sorceress wife.

To conservative eyes, this lavish and gaudy white marble four-story building with its fifty plus rooms is the epitome of decadence. There are numerous statues of terrifying deities, some of whom are also scantily clad women. The combination of allure and horror is unsettling, and says something rotten about the minds of the sculptors and those who choose to live amongst them.

The town's governor, Slonthos the Slack, lives here with about 30 slaves and a guard of 40 men and his wife, Sazel. He knows about the expedition and its aims but merely sees it as a harmless archaeological dig. His principal job in the town is to maintain Order, so unless the characters threaten this, he will ignore their activities. As soon as they

break the local law, he will come down on them like a ton of bricks. He is decadent to the extreme; a hookah pipe and a glass of wine are always at hand.

Slonthos' wife Sazel is a cunning sorceress, who is bored with the endless parties that Slonthos entertains himself with. She dabbles with black magic and plays endlessly cruel games with the servants. Years of playing such games have corrupted Sazel, and her face is a hideous mess of twisted flesh that she hides under an elaborate silver helmet. Anyone who sees Sazel's true visage they must Test their Luck or lose 1D6 Sanity from the sight and be frozen in place for 1D4 combat rounds.

If the characters entertain Sazel, she will gladly tell them about the scarlet-clad riders that they had for dinner the other night. If the sorceress is exceptionally amused and knows that the characters are trying to get into the Tomb, she will tell them about the secret trapdoor that leads into the Cord (see below).

Governor "Slonthos the Slack": AC 9[10] None, HD 1, HP 6, Attacks; Dagger (1D4), Special: none, MV 12, CL/XP 1/15.

Sazel the Cruel: AC 9[10], None, HD 3, HP 10, Attacks: Dagger (1D4), Special: hideous visage, spell casting, MV 12, CL/XP 5/240.

Spells: Sazel can cast the following once per day each.

1st Level: Cause Light Wounds, Charm Person, Hex, Summon Minor Other, Wailing Lament.

2nd Level: Invisibility, Web.

40 Guardsman: AC 6 [13] leather + shield, HD 1, HP 6, Attacks; Sword (1D8), Special: none, MV 9, CL/XP 1/15.

Treasure

Depressingly. Slonthos and Sazel are quite broke. They live off what they can steal/demand of the town's broken inhabitants. Sazel has a jewellery box in her room with 100 GP worth of costume jewellery. The Treasury, in the basement of the building behind a locked iron door, to which Slonthos has the key on his person, has lots of empty chests but only 50 silvers in real treasure. One of the exciting things about the Scarlet Riders' arrival is that they have promised 50% of the Evil Emperor's treasure to revive the Governor's fortunes.

The Court of Stone

This is grim and imposing administration building has been invaded by hellish Infernal Scribes.

A five-story slab of grey stone, with narrow windows, barred with iron. The building has a single entrance, a set of iron double doors. Above the doors is a sign which reads

"Knowledge is Power, and we hold it!"

The Court of Stone is Zonos' Administration and Records Building. The locals begrudgingly come here to be taxed and registered. Successive Governors have had a thing for endless scrolls of facts and figures, take regular census information and record even the most minor event. Some would say It's a sign of their insanity, a neurotic boredom. The Governors, if they expressed a view, would say such thorough records are the mark of an exceptional civilisation.

When the Scarlet Riders came to town, Jemalida the Crone summoned a trio of Infernal Scribes to haunt the Court of Stone. She felt the building would have information about the Court of the Evil Emperor. More importantly, the neat sterile order of the records offended Jimilada's sense of aesthetics. Thedemonic others Jemalida called are infernal record keepers, who cast spells from their scribes' pads and steal the souls of those they slay.

3 Infernal Scribes (see Crypts and Things page 173): AC 5[14], HD 6, HP 30, Attacks: Sharpened pen (1D12), Special: Spells, Soul Steal, Regeneration, MV 12, CL/XP :8/800.

Treasure

On a successful skill test, a character who is looking for any information about the tomb of the Evil Emperor will find the following fragment on a ten-foot by ten-foot stone tablet lying on the floor in a dusty corner. This ancient stone tablet was made during the Evil Emperor's reign and destroyed after he fell.

A Guide to the Court of Evil Emperor

Go through the Gates of Doom to the Streets of Shame, where the inhabitants sing for your entertainment, and take a shortcut through the Rampaging Field.

From there visit the Hanging Gardens or the Inn of No Rest as takes your fancy. Visit the Counts and enjoy a feast of friends. Watch your step on the slippery bridge over the river of Sludge and avoid stepping on the tiny snails. In the Imperial Square, enjoy the parade of the Imperial Guard, a giant spectacle indeed and go pay your respects to the imperial concubines.

The tablet covers a trapdoor – which leads down into a tunnel directly to the Cord (see page 28).

The Gates of Doom

The entrance to the old city is heavily protected by the Scarlet Riders.

The fifty-foot high double wooden gates to the city stand in hundred foot high walls of black brick. The gates are embossed with two magical bronze heads which scream a warning or abuse at those who stand before the gates.

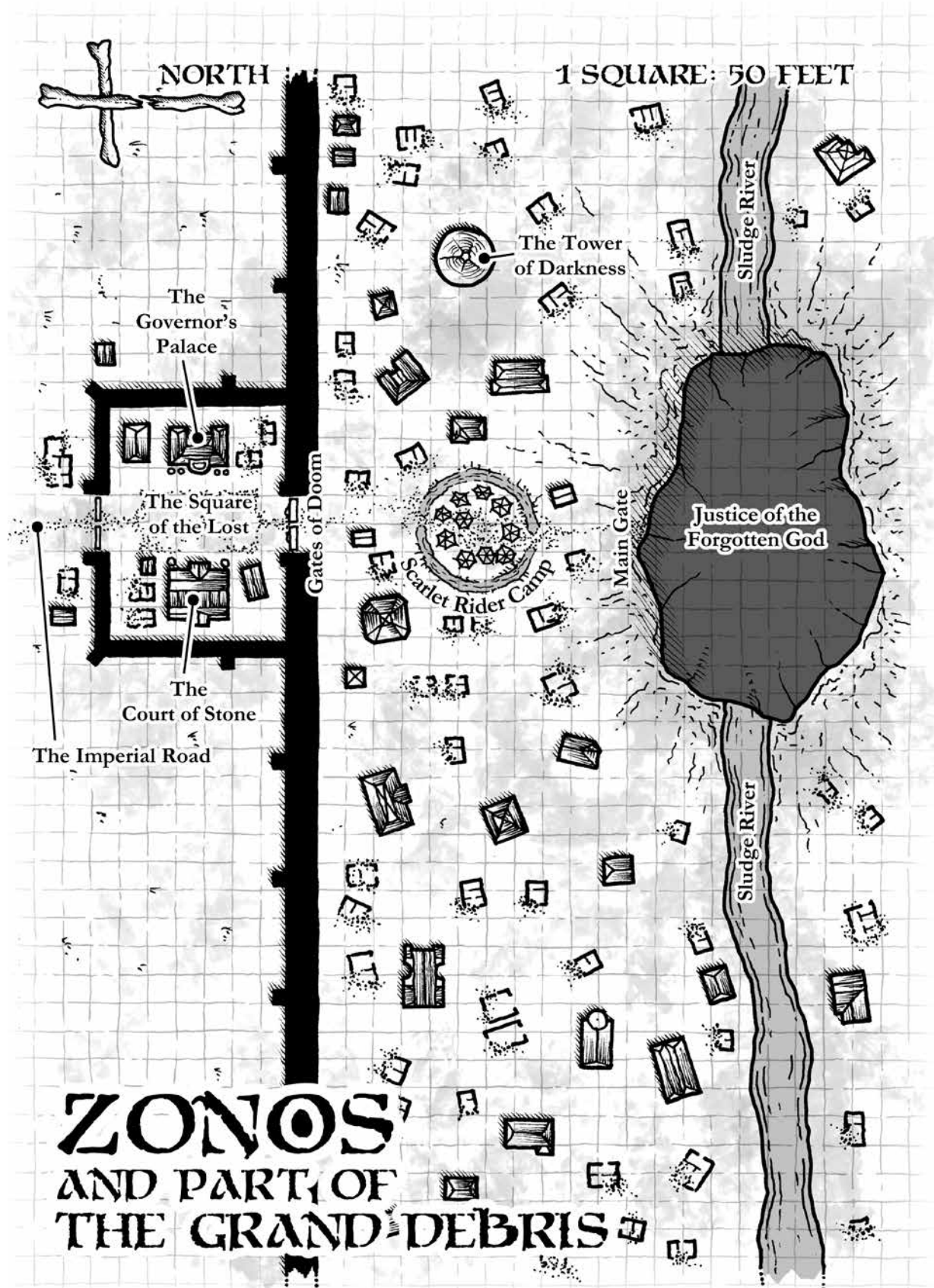
The controls that open the gates are on the ramparts of the walls, which are reached by a hundred-foot-long long iron ladder, situated twenty feet away from the gates. The controls are manned by twenty Scarlet guardsmen who have orders from Count Ardu to let no one through. It's up to the player characters to convince them otherwise.

Scarlet Rider Guards: AC 6 [13] Leather +shield, HD 1, HP 6, Attacks: sword (1D8), Special: none, MV 9, CL/XP 1/15

Questioning the Locals

The exiles are a pitiful unwashed lot, who cower under tattered robes covering their heads. They avoid human contact, and if a character manages to get them to speak, they come out with one of the following rumours.

Roll 1D10	Rumour
1	The Governor had important guests the other night for a banquet who then went into the Grand Debris the next morning accompanied by a small army. (True)
2	Something stirs in the Grand Debris. (So vague it's useless, even if true)
3	The Governor is in love with a witch. (True. The Governor has taken a shine to Yelnara)
4	The Court of Stone has been invaded by strange scribes, who politely asked the Governor's men to leave. Now the building is dark, and no one goes there. (True)
5	One of the leaders of Scarlet Riders expedition is Count Ardu; he's a bigger traitor than me! (True)
6	They say 101 Scarlet warriors guard the entrance to the tomb (True)
7	They have a detachment of Beastlings with them, about fifty of the beasts! (False)
8	They say the Scarlet Riders will raise 'Forgotten God's Justice' into the sky and release the Evil Emperor from his tomb (False).
9	They say spirits from the tomb are going to rise and kill the Scarlet Rider expedition (False).
10	They say Count Ardu wields the famous Sun Sword (True)



Part 2 The Grand Debris

This ancient city presents a twisted mockery of urban life. Houses are dotted higgledy-piggledy on a crazy city grid. Most of the smaller buildings are ruins, but the shells of the larger more magnificent buildings survive. If the characters explore these buildings, many turn out to be grand facades, completely unusable. Those that are useable are home to bandits, beastmen and other foul and depraved monsters.

Note the map only shows the western portion of the city, which extends much further to the east (providing further adventure possibilities for those foolish enough to return here).

Scarlet Rider Camp

Halfway between the Gates of Doom and the Justice of the Forgotten God is the military camp of the Scarlet Riders.

Sitting in the muddy grassless ground, between the ruins of the city and the vast rock of the Forgotten God's Justice, is the well-ordered camp of the Scarlet Riders. It consists of a group of ten large tents around a parade ground, in the centre of which is the soldier's standard- a pole atop which sits a red gold moon. The camp is well defended with a water-filled trench around the camp and sharpened wooden stakes on the camp's side.

100 Scarlet Soldiers are based here, (10 soldiers +1 Centurion). They are uncomfortable in such an evil and inhospitable place, but otherwise, are getting on and doing their job.

Scarlet Solider: AC 6 [13] leather +shield, HD 1, HP 6, Attacks: Long Spear (1D8), Special: none, MV 9, CL/XP 1/15.

Centurion: AC 4 [15] chainmail +shield, HD 2, HP 12, Attacks: longsword (1D8), Special: none, MV 9, CL/XP 2/30.

Treasure

The Red Moon Standard. This is the magical standard of the riders and is currently standing in the centre of the camp's parade ground. The character holding the standard will attract up to ten Scarlet Soldiers within a thirty-foot radius of the standard. They will follow the bearer's orders as if under the magic spell Charm. They will get +2 to hit and damage while fighting to defend the standard and the bearer.

In a treasure chest, within the empty command tent, is the riders' loot of 500 GP.



The Justice of the Forgotten God

The colossal meteor that dropped on the Imperial Complex, the vengeance of the Forgotten God incarnate, dominates the landscape. It appears a dull if enormous piece of star rock, but has the additional magical property of keeping the Khaotic inhabitants trapped under it. Occasionally a beam of starlight shines from the Justice of the Forgotten God out into the dimly lit sky. The underside of the rock emits dim shimmering light.

Sludge River

This black sludgy mess, which intermittently bubbles and spits, disappears under Forgotten God's Justice and carries on through the Imperial Complex.

The Cord

This tunnel was clawed out of the rock in ages past when the city was active, to act as a quick entrance into the Imperial Complex from a secret hidden entrance outside the city walls. The architects of Zonos found this entrance and built the Court of Stone over it, hiding it under a trapdoor. The other end emerges in the basement of the Tower of Darkness.

Halfway down its length is a statue of Forgotten God, looted from one of the cities of The Continent of Terror by the armies of the Evil Emperor.

The Statue of Forgotten God, a proud noble in a complete suit of plate metal wielding the Staff of Law, has been thoroughly defiled by Khaos creatures over the centuries. Its gold leaf covering has been gnawed off, and the Staff of Law has been bent. Nevertheless, the Forgotten God can talk through the statue, and he does to the player characters. If he is convinced that they are sincere in their quest to stop the resurrection of the Evil Emperor he will encourage them on their quest. Healing the injured, restoring magic and lost hit points and constitution, and even resurrecting the dead are possibilities. The Forgotten God is a stern god, and if the players return to seek more divine aid, all they find is silence.

The Tower of Darkness

A five-story round stone tower made of jet black granite rises from the rumble of other buildings around it. The tower is bare, and any treasure and fine trappings were taken when the city fell in a previous age. The tower is still the abode of the sorcerer Nikademis the Broken who now cowers in the tower's basement, afraid (quite justifiably) that the sky will fall on his head. He is the blind and mad court-sorcerer of the Evil Emperor. Dressed in black robes, with a bald aged head, he was transformed into his current state – magically drained, blind and immortal by the Forgotten God. Through his terrible raging madness,

he senses the Evil Emperor is awakening and will take every opportunity to tell the characters this. If attacked by them he will put up no defence and die when hit.

The other end of the Cord has its exit in the basement of the tower.

Part 3 The Imperial Complex

The Imperial Complex was once the Evil Emperor's palace complex. It is now buried under Forgotten God's Justice to form an eerie and rather strange crypt.

The whole complex is a khaos nest, a place full of strange and bizarre monsters whose entire philosophy is that life is pain, and who would like to share it around a bit. Rather than fight their way through the complex, the Scarlet Riders have been buying their way through by giving captives and in some cases soldiers to the monsters in their path. This can heighten the tension amongst the player characters who have loved ones amongst Scarlet Riders' prisoners.

General Features

Corridors

The corridors are the streets of buildings. As the main city, many of these buildings are façades. The 'ceiling' of the halls is the rock of the meteor which shimmers eerily, bathing the halls in perpetual twilight. In most places, this ceiling is fifty feet high, and a typical street is twenty feet across.

Wandering Monsters

If you want to unnerve the players, every now and again throw a D6. If it comes up a one, roll on the following table.

Roll 1D8	Encounter
1	D4+1 of the Emperor's Concubines going for a walk (see location 9).
2	Zig of the Imperial Guard on 'patrol' (see location 10).
3	D10+2 Zombies from the Hanging Gardens (see location 3) escaped and out for brains. One round later D4 of the Ghouls turn up looking to recapture them.
4	D20 Lost Scarlet Soldiers. Just want to get out of this horrible place after seeing their comrades being given to the residents as lunch.
5	3D6 Rampaging Beastlings (see location 7).
6	A mad archaeologist, see location 11, let loose by his comrades. He will babble on about the upcoming sacrifices to the Evil Emperor in the Chamber of Ignorance and Bliss.
7	An escaped 'sacrifice'.
8	Crypt Keepers choice.

1. Entrance

The entrance is guarded by a detachment of 20 Scarlet Warriors and their centurion leader. There is another cluster of tents, and two solid stone doors defend the entry to the complex.

You see the ground give way below the Justice of the Forgotten God, to a giant fifty-foot wide entrance. The entrance is dominated by two massive stone double doors that stand ajar – to the left of which is a pictograph-inscribed stone ten-foot-wide by fifty foot wide. To the right of the entrance is a small camp made up of five small tents. You see five Scarlet Warriors sitting around a campfire directly in front of the double doors.

The writing on the stone is in an ancient tongue:

“Cursed is anyone who enters this prison, you have no business being here!”

The Scarlet Warriors are on a high state of alert. They have lost comrades during the fighting to penetrate the complex and are aware of some of the horrors. Still, their morale is not broken, and they believe in the righteousness of their superiors’ mission to raise the Evil Emperor. They are led by a single Centurion.

As well as charming their way past the guards, it is possible for the characters to sneak in, by clinging to the shadows of the depression that leads up to the open door. The consequences of failure are high, however, since if the characters fail, the guards around the campfire will sound the alarm calling out the rest of the warriors sleeping/ resting in the tents.

20 Scarlet Warriors AC 6 [13] leather + shield, HD 1, HP 6, Attacks: sword 1D8, Special: None, MV 9, CL/XP 1/15.

Centurion: AC 4 [15] chain mail + shield, HD 2, HP 12, Attacks: sword 1D8, Special: None, MV 9, CL/XP 2/30.

2. The Street of Shame

This is the main road in the complex, which runs all the way to the Sludge Bridge (see 8) that leads to the main palaces.

An impressive stone cobbled street, with the faded painted shop fronts of what would have once been a bustling high street. Twenty feet or so ahead of you through the dim light cast by the meteor, ten feet above your head, is a group of five or so shuffling people.

If the characters get closer to the group, they will see that they are zombies. These are the lower citizens of the city who were destroyed by the Forgotten God’s rage when the city fell. Reanimated by the strange magic of Khaos that has now gripped the underground complex, they howl and scream as they walk up and down the street in

mournful groups. While on the Street of Shame, the player characters must avoid the zombies else be attacked by them.

Shameful Zombies AC 8 [11], HD 2, HP 10, Attacks: Fist 1D8, Special: Immune to sleep and charm, MV 6, CL/XP 2/30.

3. The Hanging Gardens

Long ago, this place was a lovely tranquil garden until the madness of the Evil Emperor turned into a place of death where innocents were hung for his entertainment on trumped-up charges.

A ghastly overgrown garden, full of dead weeds and scrub. In the centre is a line of five beautiful dead trees. From their branches hang eight bodies.

Those still hanging from the trees are animated as undead zombies. Their Ghoul guards occasionally nibble at their flesh as a snack. Both groups crave fresh living flesh.

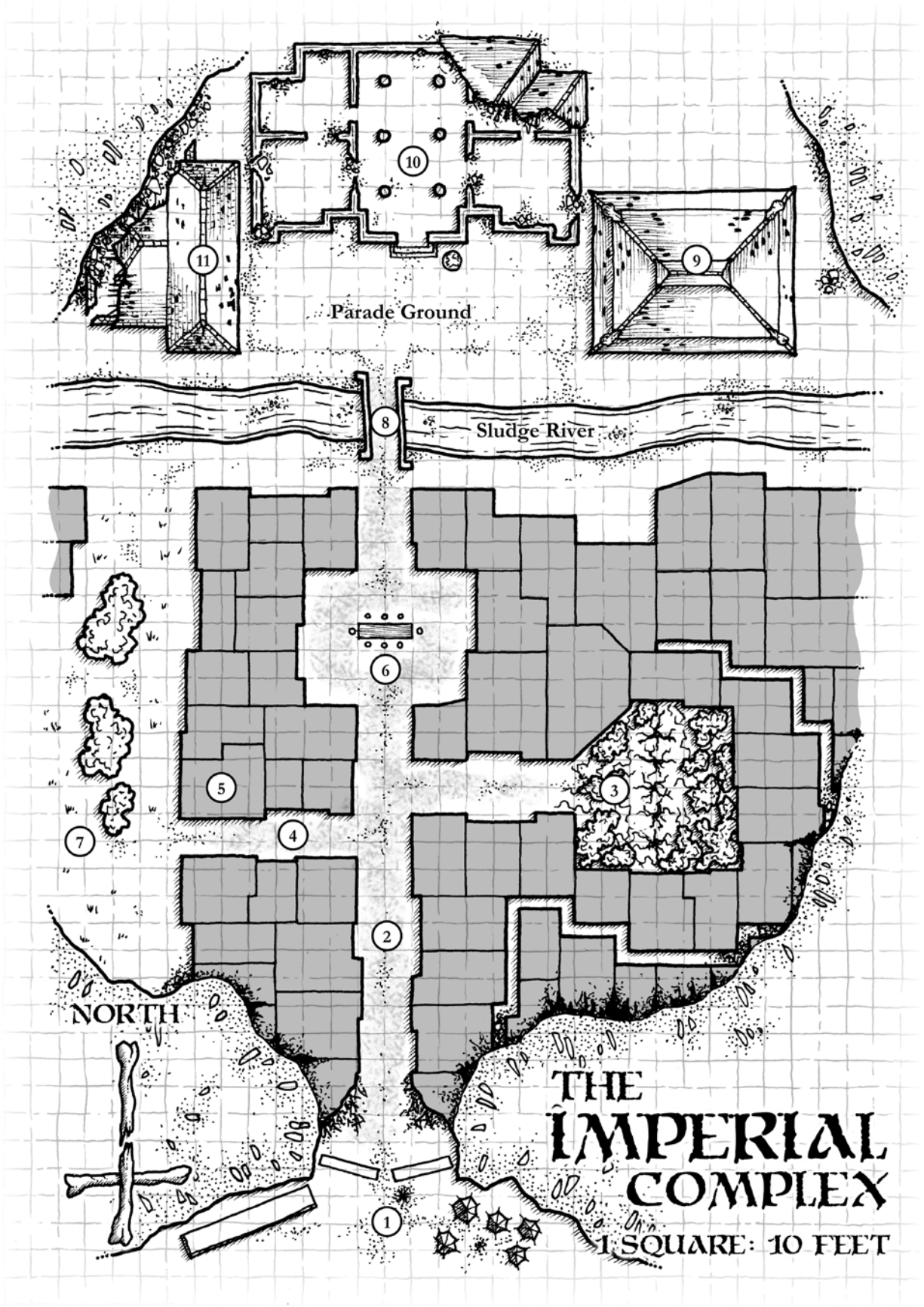
Ghouls AC: 6 [13], HD 2, HP 15, Attacks: 2 claws (1D3), 1 bite (1D4), Special: Immune to sleep and charm, paralysis, MV 9, CL/XP 3/60.

Zombies: AC 8 [11], HD 2, HP 10, Attacks: weapon or fist (1D8), Special: Immune to sleep and charm, MV 6, CL/XP 2/30.

4. The Gauntlet

This street has every conceivable trap you can think and is a veritable minefield to navigate. The characters should encounter at least five traps and should Test for Luck if they are blindly blundering through. Roll on the following table if fiendish inspiration is needed.

Roll 1D6	Trap
1	Pit trap. The ground opens up with a 15-foot drop, that cause 3D6 damage.
2	A boulder, ten feet across, falls from the ceiling and rolls towards the characters, 3D6 damage.
3	Arrows fire from hidden mechanisms in the wall causing 1D8 damage.
4	A pot buried in floor, explodes when stepped on for 2D6 damage.
5	A swarm of angry insects, that quietly hang on the ceiling, sting the characters for 2D6 damage.
6	Swinging blade, sweeps out from the wall at waist height doing 2d6 damage.



5. The Inn of No Rest

The Evil Emperor attracted all sorts of dangerous and nasty types, some of whom achieved high status in his wicked reign. In this rowdy criminal's pit they live on in a weird stasis of their lives, cursed by the Khaos magics that flow through the complex.

Straight off the street, behind a wooden façade is a reconstruction of an ancient inn, complete with wooden tables, stools, a long bar and thirty or so dirty scoundrels who gamble, drink and occasionally break into fight or song.

Secret

Once the people here were leading ministers, generals, and leaders of guilds. Now they are reduced to the level of ordinary rogues, the very people they despised in their old lives. The thieves will offer to act as guides, get the players past traps, find them the secret way in the tomb, but, they will plot and conspire to rob and cheat the player characters at the earliest opportunity.

30 Thieves: AC 7 [12] Leather, HD 1, HP 6 Attacks: shortsword (1D6), Special: thieves abilities as level 1 characters, MV 12, CL/XP 1/15.

Treasure

In a back room beyond the long bar, in a simple lacquer box on a table, is the thieves' loot. The box is of course trapped with a needle trap (test your luck or take 1D4 damage), but also contains five diamonds worth 200 GP each and a Veil of Night's Splendours (see Crypts and Things, page 143).

6. The Feast of Friends

It all looks so civilised to start with. A group of eight noble friends sitting around a beautiful table enjoying a feast. Then you notice the joints of roast meat have hands and feet, and the head with an apple on the silver platter as a centrepiece is human. The dinner guests eat greedily, talking and gulping down red wine- if wine it is. They are served by ten downtrodden and miserable servants, who in contrast to the finery their masters wear, are dressed in rags.

Secret

The nobles were 'Barons' set up to lord it over the people by the Evil Emperor. They were his closest advisors. They were trapped in the

Imperial Complex when the city fell, they now they feed on the people they were meant to rule.

Right now they are feasting on guards sacrificed by the Scarlet Riders, around a long banquet table set up in this courtyard. The cannibals will make civilised conversation with the player characters, especially any noble in the party. A group of ten human slaves serve the cannibals. The slaves are non-combatants and will use the opportunity of any fight to flee.

The Eight Barons: AC 7 [12] natural dexterity, HD 4, HP 20 Attacks: Long Sword (1D8), Special: Cannibal- regenerates 1D8 HP per round of feeding on human flesh, MV 12, CL/XP 5/240.

Treasure

The barons wear various bits of jewellery worth a total of 1000 GP.



7. The Fields of the Rampage

Once a small park inhabited by cute goats, these fields are twisted by the Khaos magic that runs through the complex. The goats' descendants are now twisted Beastlings, humanoid monsters of Khaos with the heads of goats.

This area looks as if it was once a park of some sort. All vegetation has long since died from lack of light, and the light cast by the meteor reflects dully off the slimy wet mud that is left. A cobbled pathway winds through six artificial hills. On each hill is a small group of three or so humanoids, armed with swords and wearing leather armour, with goat heads.

Once a field of lush grass, this is now a dark and despoiled place. Six small groups of Beastling (three to five individuals) camp around the area (at points marked with an X on the map). These feral and rapacious beasts will attack indiscriminately any living thing.

Beastling: AC 7[12] leather armour, HD 2, HP 14, Attacks: Longsword (1D8) or headbutt (1D8), Special: carries disease, MV 12, CL/XP 3/60.

The beastlings' arms and armour are infected by a disease. Any character who stops to loot the bodies or is wounded is exposed to a virulent disease. On a failed Test of Luck they are infected, roll on the following table to see which charming diseases the Beastling carries.

Roll 1D6	Affliction
1	The Shits. Test Luck in stressful situations to avoid a bout of diarrhoea.
2	Droopiness. Test Luck in stressful situations or fall asleep for 1D4 combat rounds.
3	Slow, always last in combat.
4	The Stinks: Smells absolutely terrible; -3 to stealth and hiding skill tests.
5	The Shudders. Test Luck in any stress full situation or drop item carried.
6	Hot-headedness. Test Luck in any stressful situation or go berserk (+2 damage, -2 AC). Also, lose 1D6 hit points at the end of the scene from stress.

8. Sludge Bridge

A stone bridge crosses the toxic sludge river and takes the characters over to the square in front of the palaces. Unknown to the characters, there are nasty guardians lying in wait in the corrosive waters.

Before you is an elaborately decorated stone bridge with stone frescos of monsters preying on human victims on its side. The river, which is

five feet below the bridge, is a dark black mess of slow-moving sludge with bubbles and occasional worrying hisses. Beyond the bridge is a massive stone plaza, hundreds of feet across, on the sides of which sit three huge buildings. To the north are blasted ruins, to the east is a large three-story-high block of a building whose upper floors have been crushed by the Forgotten God's Judgement, and to the west is a palace whose grandeur is long gone.

Two crawling corruptions (see Crypts and Things page 157) swell in the polluted river. They will immediately attack anyone who enters the river for some reason. They will also climb out of the liquid to attack the characters when they sense them crossing the bridge.

A duo of Crawling Corruptions: AC 2 [17], HD 8, HP 40, Attacks: bite (2D6), Special: Immune to mind control magic, poison and disease, MV 12, CL/XP 8/800.

9. The Palace of Pleasure

The Palace of Pleasure is dimly lit and sumptuously furnished, being full of red silks, suggestive statues, ornate furniture and torture instruments. In fact, some of the pieces of beautiful furniture are instruments of pain. The characters had better be careful where they sit.

On the western side of the plaza is an ancient stone palace. Its ornate tiled roof is broken in places, and the paint on the dragon stone heads which protrude from the roof's corners is long since faded. The whole building has an ominous sense of decay about it.

This palace is home to six of the Emperor's concubines, evil undead women who float around the palace in long flowing dresses. They immediately inflict pain and torment on any living thing that enters the palace.

The Emperors' Six Concubines (Mist maids; see Crypts and Things page 180): AC 0 [19], HD 6, HP 30, Attacks: spectral claw (1D6), Special: death scream, only harmed by magical attacks, MV 24, CL/XP 7/600.

The concubines' death scream can potentially scare victims to death. Each time it is used, it causes 2D6 Hit Points of damage. Player characters may Test their Luck to avoid this effect. The concubines are also insubstantial and can only be harmed by magical attacks.

Treasure

In the main audience chamber at the centre of the palace in a stand holding the Ivory-Handled Sword of Truth. The sword is an ornate ivory handled great two-handed sword, and once belonged to a minor Solar God slain during ancient times. It is an anti-Khaos weapon which the Evil Emperor was unable to wield. He gave it to the concubines for safe keeping.

The Sword of Truth blazes with intense sunlight when

used in battle and is +4 to hit and damage to Khaos creatures. It does 2D8 damage per round to any Khaos creature holding it.

10. The Emperor's Palace

This is the former residence of the Evil Emperor himself.

This burnt blasted shell of a building, looks as if it was once something grand, possibly another palace. Amidst the stone wreckage, ornately carved pillars rise up burnt and blackened by some past intense fire. Outside what would have been the main entrance is a single golden dragon statue, which has been half melted by the old fire.

When the Forgotten God smote the Evil Emperor, he blasted his palace into oblivion too.

Secret

In the wreckage live the Imperial Guard, three surly small giants and their ignoramus of a General, a mutated large giant. 75% of the time they mooch around the ruined palace; the rest of the time they are parading in the vast stone flagged square outside this palace, the library and the Palace of Pleasure. The small giants constantly bicker with each other to see who is the best and to impress 'The General' – who is too stupid to care.

Zig, Zag, Zog Small ten-foot-tall giants: AC 5[14] Mess of chain and plate armour, HD 5, HP 30, Attacks: Giant Sword (1D12 damage), Special: None, MV 6, CL/XP 5/240.

The General

A drooling stupid beast of a creature, that lives only to eat and sleep. Unless roused by the small giants the General will be slumbering in the Emperor's palace. As well as being a large giant, the being is a Khaos mutant with an

extra set of arms, which means it wields four swords in combat and is dressed in old rusted plate mail, its General's regalia.

The General, Large Giant (20-foot-tall): AC 2 [17] plate mail, HD 8, HP 50, Attacks: four swords (1D12), , Special: none MV 6, CL/XP 9/1,100.

11. The Library of Wrong

This building once held a world-leading collection of rare magical books. Now parchment lies all over the place in wild disarray. The stairs down to the Tomb below are hidden in the library.

A dark three-story building rises on the western side of the plaza. Its top is crushed by the Justice of the Forgotten God. It is similar in build to the Court of Stone in Zonos but somewhat grander. It has the same slit windows and double door entrance, but it is covered in elaborate carvings of serpentine dragons.

A group of five red-robed Scarlet archaeologists have been left behind to study the bizarre and misleading manuscripts tossed into piles that dot this big stone building. It's been all too much for them and the process has left them insane and babbling, some pleading that this madness should stop, but others saying that Khaos should return to the world to burn it clean.

If the players search through the piles of scrolls, they will find another Forgotten God statue with the same properties as the one in the Cord.

On the ground floor right at the back are the stairs down to the Tomb, under a heavy stone trapdoor, covered with scrolls and other rubbish.



Part 4 The Tomb of the Evil Emperor

This is the final showdown with the command group of the Scarlet Riders, who are camped out around the Tomb of the Evil Emperor, which is on a small island in the middle of a lake made of Khaos essence in a vast underground cave.

The Lake

The lake, a comprised of liquid Khaos, is corrosive and mutating to anyone falling into it. Anyone coming into contact, must make a Test of Luck or take 2D6 damage and gain a Khaos feature (see page 174 Crypts and Things).

The Bone Bridge

It's rickety and creaks a lot, but until Siran Darg starts summoning Skeletons from the bridge (see below), it is entirely safe though somewhat icky.

The Scarlet Riders' Camp

At the centre of the lake is a group of three tents. One of these is the temporary home to seven Scarlet Soldiers. The other two are the living quarters of Count Ardu and Vanya, while Siran reluctantly shares a tent with Jemalida the Crone.

At the centre of the camp is the giant twenty-foot-long long stone coffin of the Evil Emperor, which stands upright. The coffin lid is engraved with a carving of a human skeleton in tomb shroud and a phaorah's headdress. Flying dragons are shown in profile on the sides of the coffin. A magical circle of protection is drawn around the coffin, the incense is burning billowing red smoke, and the required five sacrificial victims are lined up by the circle up guarded by two of the soldiers.

Countdown to Resurrection

As soon as the Scarlet Riders detect the characters, Jemalida starts the summoning.

As well as the usual character blundering around, they can be detected if they move onto the bone bridge since Siran has set up a Magic Mouth which alerts him when it detects any living thing. Crossing the bridge quietly requires a stealth-based Skill Test to avoid the attention of the two soldiers guarding the other end of the bridge if they have not been neutralised beforehand.

Once the summoning starts, the following sequence of events occurs over seven combat rounds.

Round	Event
1	Jemalida starts the summoning spell. Siran takes up the magical defence, and Ardu and Vanya provide cover, first using missiles and then melee weapons.
2	First of the Sacrifices is killed
3	Second of the sacrifices gets the chop.
4	A third of the sacrifices go to fuel the madness
5	The fourth sacrifice is no more.
6	The fifth victim dies.
7	The Evil Emperor arrives!! Erupting from the lake, its new body forming from raw essence of Khaos. It starts attacking everybody it can see; the Scarlet Riders are first because they are nearest.

Count Ardu (Noble)

Count Ardu is the Silver Tongued Devil, a traitor to the nobility, a hero of the mob. He is young, handsome, and dashing, with a cruel streak a mile wide.

Count Ardu: AC 2[17] plate mail + shield, HD 5, HP 40, Attacks: longsword (1D8) or longbow (1D6), , Special: none, MV 6, CL/XP 5/240.

Yarnala Moonglow

Yarnala is a fearsome martial artist who wields two scimitars. She is barely slowed by her red plate mail armour.

Yarnala Moonglow: AC 3[16] plate mail, HD 5, HP 40, Attacks: 2 scimitars (1D6+1) or short bow (1D6), , Special: none, MV 12, CL/XP 5/240.

Siran Darg

Siran Darg is a hairy and unkempt shaman from the nomad lands, whose hands crawl through the entrails of the dead for unspeakable ends.

Siran Darg: AC 7[12] Leather, HD 5, HP 30, Attacks: Bone-Topped Staff (1D6), Special: Spellcasting, MV 12, CL/XP 6/400.

Spells, usable once per day each:

1st Level: Cause Light Wounds, Soul Burn, Summon Minor Other.

2nd Level: Darkness (15ft radius).

3rd Level: Hold Person, Monster Summoning I

Siran is also able to summon skeletons from the bone bridge. He can do this twice; each time takes a round of concentration and calls forth 2D4 Skeletons. Once Siran has summoned skeletons twice, the bridge will be missing most of its bones and be barely functional. It will need successful Skill Tests to cross without falling in the lake.

Skeleton: AC 8 [11], HD 1, HP 4, Attacks :Short Sword (1D6), Special: Immune to sleep and charm, MV 12, CL/XP 1/15.

Jemalida the Crone

The ageless crone Jemilada crawled out from some dark Khaos pit when the Scarlet Riders first formed and made their pact to conquer the world. Count Ardrumy be the public leader of the group, but she manipulates them from the shadows.

Jemalida the Crone: AC 9[10] Unarmoured, HD 8, HP 40, Attacks: Dagger (1D4), Special: Spellcasting, MV 12, CL/XP 7/600.

Spells, usable once per day each:

1st Level: Magic Missiles, Charm Person, Wailing Lament.

2nd Level: Curse, Invisibility, Phantasmal Force, Web.

3rd Level: Fireball, Monster Summoning I.

4th Level: Dimension Door (note: Jemalida will use this spell to escape into the Shroud if the Scarlet Riders are losing).

The Evil Emperor – Khaos Dragon

The real form of the Evil Emperor is a majestic adult Khaos Dragon, whose very existence was a blasphemy designed to bring down law and order in the lands that it ruled. During its reign, the dragon took on human form and only rarely appeared in its draconic form, usually only when it led its armies or was razing rebel settlements to the ground.

The Evil Emperor as a Khaos Dragon: AC 2 [17], HD 8, HP 56, Attacks: 2 claws (2D4) or bite (3D6), Special: Khaos Breath weapon, MV 9/24 (when flying), CL/XP 10/1,400.

The dragon breathes a pure stream of Khaos as a breath weapon in a stream five foot across by fifty-foot long. Not only does this inflict the dragon's current hit points in damage but it also warps and mutates the victim, so they gain a Khaos Feature (see Crypts and Things, page 174).

The Evil Emperor – Human form

When the Dragon is reduced to 10 hit points or less it reverts to its human form, an old and wizened human male with a long white beard, wearing red robes with golden dragons embroidered on it. As a human, the dragon pleads for its life with the players, casting a Charm Person spell as it does so, or if any of the Scarlet Riders are still alive hides under their protection. It can even use its breath weapon, which now takes the form of bolts of Khaos energy that it shoots from its hands. Otherwise, the being loses all its other draconian abilities and is AC 9[10].

Treasure

In the stone coffin is the Emperor's hoard of 2,000 Gold Pieces, 500 Silver Pieces and a gold funeral mask.

The Death Mask of the Evil Emperor

On the surface, this golden funeral mask has a street value of 500 GP.

The Mask has a more sinister purpose. It is the Death Mask of the Evil Emperor, which allows the Emperor to return to the world of the living. Should a person put on the mask the Evil Emperor will take possession of their body over a period of 1D12 nights. At first, the Emperor will invade the character's dreams and confront the character in psychic combat there. Each time the player character needs to Test their Luck (which does not regenerate during the period of the possession attempt). If they succeed, they win against the Emperor and it is driven off. If they fail, the Emperor wins and turns their dream into a nightmare. At the end of five nights, whoever has won the most psychic battles takes control of the character's body. The loser is banished to wander the Shroud as a disembodied spirit, who will only be summoned back to Zarth if someone foolishly puts on the Death Mask.

RESOLUTION

The resolution to this adventure is pretty straightforward: Kill the Evil Emperor or die trying. If the characters kill the Emperor, the cave that contains the tomb will start collapsing in on itself, and they must make it to the surface before it does so. Once the cave has collapsed, the Justice of the Forgotten God will crash through the Imperial complex crushing it too, along with anyone left in there.



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