

# ADVANCED ADVENTURES MODULE #34

## The Crocodile's Tear

by Geoff Gander

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 3-6



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## THE CROCODILE'S TEAR

A party of bold adventurers has been hired to sail to a distant land in search of a legendary emerald. Will they survive the voyage, and will they find more than they bargained for?

**Notes for the Game Master:** This module is intended for use in any campaign. The encounters are designed to be challenging for a party of 4-6 characters of levels 3 to 6 (for a total party level of 24-36). The party should include a thief, and a cleric of at least 3<sup>rd</sup> level would be very useful. This module can be inserted smoothly as a brief side quest while the party is heading somewhere else, or introduced as the first step in a long campaign. Place names, where given, may be changed to accommodate the GM's world.

An added twist to this adventure, which should give the players an added sense of urgency, is the presence of a toxic fungus (see *Appendix A: The Creeping Peril*) that slowly kills the creatures it encounters, and then animates its victims in order to seek out new hosts. The fungus is encountered later in the adventure, but once it comes into play GMs will need to track its progress.

**STOP! If you plan to participate in this adventure as a player, then stop reading here. Prior knowledge of this module's contents will only spoil your enjoyment of the game.**

**Background:** The PCs begin the adventure in a major port city, where they have heard that a wealthy patron has outfitted an expedition to sail to the mysterious southern continent. Rumors and public notices all point to the Imperial Anchor Inn, a well-known haunt of sailors and their ilk. The GM can start the adventure after the PCs have signed on, or the introductory scene can be roleplayed. If the latter option is chosen, the GM may use the information below to set the tone.

As soon as the PCs arrive at the inn, they are confronted with a huge mob of treasure-seekers. A gangly, well-dressed man holds court at the largest table, bracketed by a handful of grizzled-looking warriors. The man raises his hands for calm, and the mob quiets. Once he is assured of everyone's attention he introduces himself as Octavius Bartholomeus, a representative of a wealthy patron. He explains that he is looking for adventurers interested in joining an expedition to the southern continent—to a particular region that is largely unexplored and whose known inhabitants are dangerous. Volunteers will receive a salary of 10 gp per day from the date of signing, and 500 gp per person upon completion of the mission, plus a share of any loot obtained.

The crowd starts shrinking as Octavius speaks. PCs will be aware of the many tales told about the southern continent – most of which paint it as a disease-ridden jungle filled with hostile natives, reachable only by crossing a pirate- and monster-infested sea. One person in the crowd asks whether Octavius' expedition is the first of its kind. Octavius pauses, and replies that two other expeditions preceded this one, but neither returned. Part of the current expedition's mission is to find out what happened to the other ones. At this, almost everyone leaves. Assuming the PCs remain, Octavius offers to double the salary and completion bonus if they accept.

If the PCs ask for more information, Octavius will show them his map, and relate the history of the emerald known as the Crocodile's Tear (see below). Octavius has also heard that the Tear is reputed to have a number of magical properties – among them, the power to greatly prolong its owner's life, and the ability to summon spirit warriors to defend its owner in times of need. If the PCs ask Octavius how he and his patron (who Octavius refuses to name) came across the legend, he will tell them that the tale has been circulating among sailors for years, but his patron decided to determine whether there was any truth behind it all. If the PCs accept, they're told to board The Mermaid early in the morning two days hence.

**THE LEGEND OF THE CROCODILE'S TEAR:** The Crocodile's Tear (see *Appendix B: New Magic Items*) was discovered centuries ago by

miners in the now-fallen Kingdom of Katapec, on the southern continent. The discovery of such a large emerald soon came to the attention of the king, Tezca, who was also known as the Crocodile King due to his family totem. Tezca ordered that it be brought to him and he became so enamored with the Tear, and so certain that more such stones awaited discovery, that he claimed it for himself and ordered the mines expanded. Nothing equaling the size and beauty of the Tear was ever found, but Tezca, goaded by greed-fueled dreams, sent his armies into neighboring lands to acquire slaves to expand his mining operations. The nightly visions of grandeur were so compelling that Tezca was convinced they were divine prophecies of his future greatness. He ordered the construction of a new capital, Tlachtala, befitting the empire his petty kingdom would one day become. He chose a swampy island in the midst of a lake filled with crocodiles (which were sacred to his family), and had built a luxurious pyramid where he lived like the god he thought he was. It was at this time that priests of the oppressed sun god (the former chief deity of Katapec) received a divine message to secretly enchant the Tear, so that it would one day drive Tezca completely mad and destroy him.

While Tlachtala arose and Tezca's mines became ever more crowded with slaves, the chieftains and warlords of the other tribes began to put aside their differences and work against Katapec. The tribes that had been oppressed by Tezca's armies rose up, and soon Tlachtala was under siege. Katapec's enemies offered to spare the people if they deposed their king. The cityfolk, not wishing to suffer, stormed the king's temple and slaughtered his guards and lesser priests, and Tezca met his end. Katapec collapsed soon afterwards, and the city was abandoned. Over time the story of Tezca became a cautionary tale against excessive ambition. Tlachtala was reclaimed by the swamp and the pyramid crumbled and became overgrown. Today, the ruins resemble a forested island, and the locals consider the place to be an occasional meeting-place of the gods (and therefore taboo). One legend remains from the time of Katapec – that of the Crocodile's Tear, which is now said to have been formed from one of the tears shed by the gods over the downfall of Man.

**WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON:** In the years since the collapse of Katapec, Tlachtala has sunk into the lake. Only the lost city's great pyramid, and a few other buildings, rise above the water, resembling small, hilly islands. The Crocodile's Tear was smuggled out of the temple by a guard who kept the old faith, but he only made it partway into the city proper before he was attacked by roving mobs. He fled to the Temple of the Sun God to hide the precious treasure. Fortunately for the PCs, the Tear is recoverable. Unfortunately, it lies deep in the half-flooded catacombs.

There is a darker side to Tezca's rule, which none of the surviving tales have captured. Once the king was aware of the toxic fungus, and the effects his policies had on keeping it under control, he began to experiment with it to determine if he could use it to quell the rising tide of rebellion. Working in secrecy, Tezca experimented on his political opponents and anyone whom he thought could challenge his reign. He was on the verge of discovering how to use the fungus to turn people into docile, zombie-like servants when the rebellion toppled him.

## ACROSS THE SEA

The GM may, if desired, present the PCs with challenges to make their journey to the southern continent more interesting, or this section may be bypassed entirely. Octavius will accompany the PCs for the first part of the adventure, and he will defend himself if there is combat. His combat statistics are as follows:

**Octavius Bartholomeus** (4<sup>th</sup>-level cleric/thief): AC 6, hp 13, STR 12, INT 15, WIS 15, DEX 16, CON 9, CHA 13, MV 120 ft., D 1d6+1, AL N. Octavius is armed with a **dagger +1**. He also wears a **ring of water breathing**. Octavius will assist in any combat, but if he loses more than half of his hit points he will retreat belowdecks. He has the following spells: **command**, **cure light wounds** (x2), **protection from evil**, **purify food & drink**, **hold person**, **silence 15 ft. radius**.

The Mermaid is also crewed by 20 sailors, who are 1<sup>st</sup>-level fighters, armed with short swords. The sailors will defend the ship if it is attacked, but will only follow the instructions of the captain (**Odoacer**, a 5<sup>th</sup>-level fighter with 35 hit points, wielding a **shortsword +2**). The random encounter table (below) may be used. Roll once per day of sailing; a result of "1" on 1d8 means an encounter. The journey to the southern continent will take 20+2d4 days.

### D8 Encounter

- 1-2 **Pirates** (30): AC 8, HD 1-6 hp each, D 1d6, MV 120 ft. The pirates operate a small ship and are based on an islet roughly a half-day's sail away. They are hoping for easy pickings, and if the PCs put up a good fight they will try to flee. Their loot is in their hideout (400 gp in coins and gems). If interrogated, the pirates can provide information about the local currents that will shorten the remainder of the journey (reduce travel time by 25%). Re-roll this result if it occurs again.
- 3 **Sea Hydra**: AC 5, HD 7 (7 heads), hp 56, D 1d8, MV 90 ft., 120 ft. swimming. If the hydra sustains 8 or more points of damage in one attack, one of its heads is destroyed. It retreats if reduced to 16 or fewer hit points.

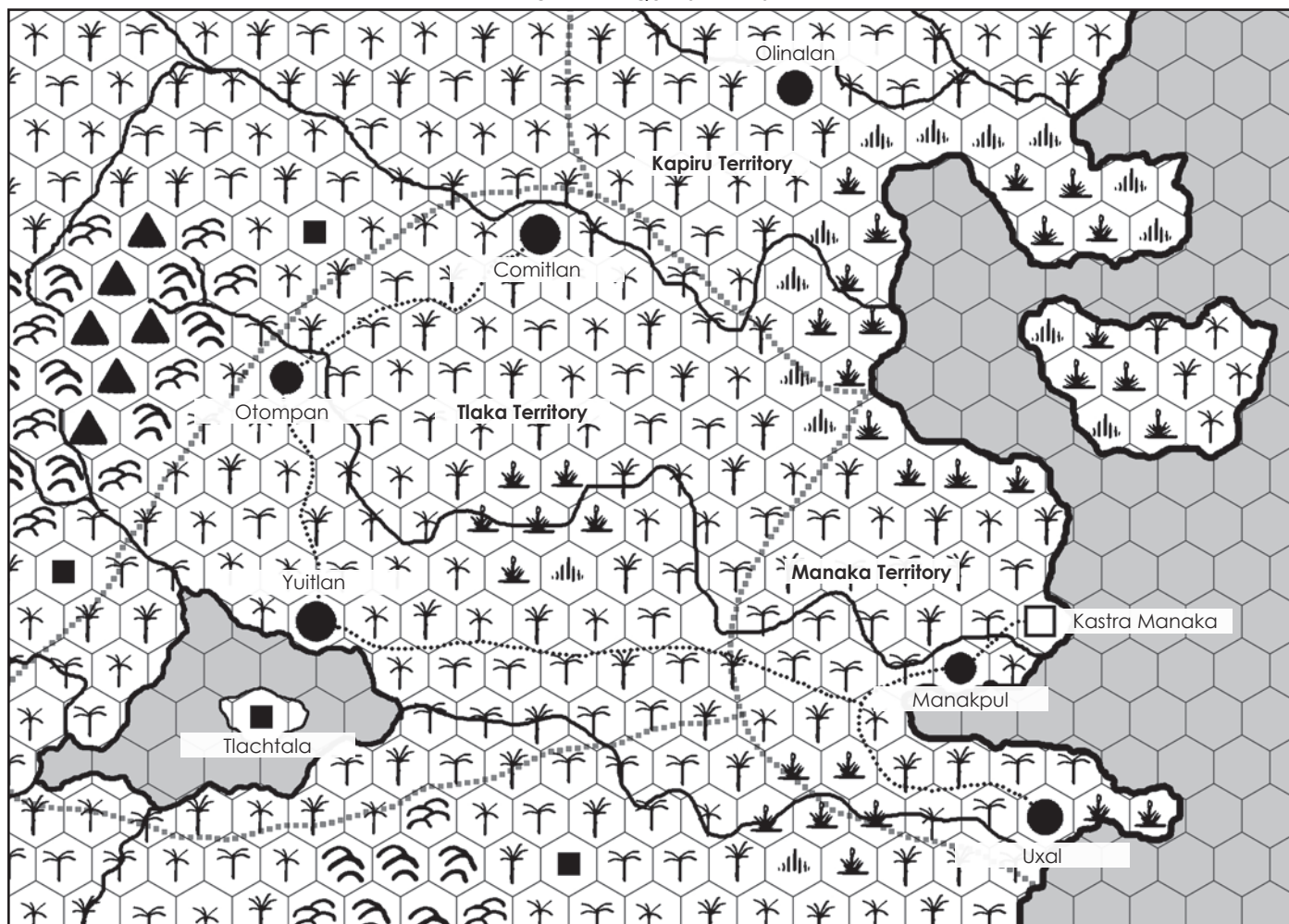
- 4 **Ghost ship**: The PCs see a seemingly abandoned vessel with tattered sails drifting towards them. Should they decide to dock with the vessel to explore it, they will find it barely seaworthy, with evidence of having been attacked a long time ago. The cabins and cargo hold show signs of fighting. A mob of skeletal pirates, armed with rusted axes and short swords, wanders the interior. **Skeletons** (15): AC 7, HD 1, D 1d6, MV 120 ft.

A battered, locked chest, containing 360 gp and 520 sp, sits in the hold. Twenty minutes after the PCs return to their own vessel the ghost ship vanishes without a trace. Re-roll this result if it occurs again.

- 5-7 **Flotsam**: The PCs' ship enters an area filled with fragments of wood and scraps of canvas – the wreck of a ship. The GM should decide whether there is anything of interest.
- 8 **Giant Squid**: AC 7/5, HD 12, hp 63, D 1d6x8, MV 30 ft., 180 ft. swimming. The giant squid is hunting for prey, and will attack the vessel. It retreats if reduced to 20 or fewer hit points.

## THE LAND ACROSS THE SEA

ONE HEX EQUALS 4 MILES



Merchants have established a fortified trading post, Kastra Manaka, on the shores of the southern continent. It is a squat stone tower connected to a walled dockland, set on the tip of a spit of land jutting into the sea. It is home to 30 men (a couple of representatives from the port city, plus a small garrison), who live here year-round. The foreigners interact regularly with the natives who inhabit the surrounding jungles, and exchange steel tools for rare herbs, spices, and exotic hides. The PCs' ship will be

welcomed by the garrison and the commander, **Gaius Septentrius** (F4), will meet with Octavius to exchange news. Octavius will ask the PCs if they wish to participate in the meeting. If they do, the PCs can learn the following:

- 1. The trading post has been operating for over five years. The local tribe, the Manakas, is generally peaceful.

2. Further upriver there is a hostile tribe, the Tlakas, who occasionally attack the Manakas. No formal contact has yet been successfully established with them.
3. According to the Manakas, the Tlakas are a vicious people who eat the flesh of their enemies.
4. Although few expeditions have ventured beyond the lands of the Manakas, it is known that there is a large, fairly shallow lake somewhat upriver in Tlaka territory.
5. There have been two previous expeditions within the past year. The first one, a party of six, marched upriver about six months ago, and never returned.
6. The most recent expedition, a party of seven adventurers plus a small number of porters, went upriver almost a month ago – nothing has been heard from them since. This other group was also in Octavius' employ (although he will not volunteer this information); observant PCs may remember that part of their mission is to look for the previous expeditions.

Gaius can provide some basic information about the tribes known to inhabit this region.

**The Manakas:** The majority of this tribe lives on the tidal flats, in villages on stilts; although some clans live in the jungles. Most make their living by fishing. The Manakas worship the god of the rivers and the ocean, a sun god, and the goddesses of the earth and moon. They also worship a jaguar god, who symbolizes warriors. This tribe fights the Tlakas whenever they cross paths with them – most often over fishing rights in the rivers they share. GM Note: The Manakas have lived in the region for centuries, and are descended from one of the subject peoples of Katapec.

**The Tlakas:** Unbeknownst to everyone, this tribe is directly descended from the people of Katapec (their name is a debased version of their former city, Tlachatala), and they inhabit the jungles that surround the lake at the source of the Manaka River. They occasionally war with the Manakas over territory. This tribe worships the same gods as the Manakas, as well as the god of death (symbolized by a crocodile). The Tlakas have little memory of their former glory (no one knows of their connection to the lost realm of Katapec), and instead believe themselves to be descended from gods. The merchants tried to trade with the Tlakas soon after their arrival in the region, but the latter proved to be too hostile.

**The Kapiru:** This is a reclusive tribe that lives to the north of the Manakas. Their villages are located deep in the jungle, and they are known for their extensive use of poisoned darts for both hunting and warfare. They are also known for their mastery in crafting herbal remedies. The Kapiru occasionally trade with the Manakas, but thus far have refused any contact with any foreigners.

**The Bogasha:** The Bogasha are a fierce tribe of orcs who inhabit the jungles further inland and to the southwest. They are rarely seen by either the Manakas or the Tlakas, but both tribes are watchful for signs of orcish incursions. The orcs were last present in large numbers roughly 50 years previously, but the tales of that time are still widely told. GM Note: The Bogasha do not appear as a major force in this module, but mentioning them – and their reputation – could keep the players on their toes, and possibly even make them a little paranoid.

Gaius can furnish the party with additional supplies if they wish, and arrange for a guide – Octavius will request this if the PCs do not. The next day a short, wiry man with tangled black hair and dressed in a loincloth is presented to them. He introduces himself as Tetahuec, but it is quickly obvious his proficiency in common is limited. Gaius explains that Tetahuec is a hunter of considerable standing among the Manakas, and he has acted as a guide many times. Gaius speaks to Tetahuec in a language interspersed with clicks, after which the native nods and gestures to the party to follow him.

**Tetahuec** (3<sup>rd</sup>-level ranger): AC 6, hp 28, STR 14, INT 13, WIS 14, DEX 18, CON 16, CHA 12, MV 120 ft., D 1d6+1 or special, AL N. Tetahuec wields a spear and a blowgun (he has paralytic darts – if hit, a victim must save vs. poison or be paralyzed for 1d4+2 rounds).

Once Tetahuec is introduced, Octavius informs the PCs that he will remain at Kastrá Manaka. To aid them in their quest, he provides them with two healing potions. If the PCs think to suggest it, Tetahuec can negotiate with the Manakas to acquire natural remedies. The PCs can purchase up to five poultices (at an equivalent cost of 50 gp each) that act as weak potions of healing (restore 1d4 hit points).

## SETTLEMENTS OF NOTE

The following are the largest settlements in the region. GMs will need to provide additional detail should the PCs decide to visit any of them.

**Comitlan** (pop. 410): Comitlan is a heavily fortified Tlaka settlement on the fringes of Kapiru territory. The buildings here are built of stone, and closely resemble those of fallen Katapec (Comitlan was founded during Tezca's reign). The Tlakas living here have tried – and failed – on several occasions to seize some of the lowlands occupied by the Kapiru. The inhabitants farm, raise goats, and mine silver.

**Manakpul** (pop. 280): Manakpul is the closest Manaka settlement of note to Kastrá Manaka, and it has benefitted from its close proximity to the outpost. Many of the locals hire themselves out as guides, and use their connections with the foreigners to act as middlemen for more distant Manaka settlements. The chieftain is pondering ways of using this advantage to gain influence over the other villages.

**Olinalan** (pop. 220): This is the largest settlement of the Kapiru, and it is partly built into the trunks of the massive trees that grow here. There are no paths leading to this village, and the reclusive inhabitants will attack anyone who approaches without one of their own as a guide. The chieftain and village elders are well aware of the conflict between the Tlakas and the Manakas, but have avoided any involvement.

**Otompan** (pop. 210): This village overlooks the only safe place to ford the nearby river. Due to the swiftness of the current, which frequently shifts the rocks of the riverbed, the locals will guide travellers – for a fee. The people of Otompan are known for their pragmatism and will deal with foreign travellers – pay is pay. The other Tlakas view the villagers with suspicion, but as yet have not assembled a force of warriors to bring them into line.

**Uxal** (pop. 110): Most of Uxal's inhabitants are fishermen, but a small number dive for pearls in the oyster beds that dot the shallows. The foreigners' hunger for good pearls is worth the sea voyage to Kastrá Manaka – something that irritates the chieftain of Manakpul, who would prefer that all trade go through his village. The aged chieftain of Uxal is well aware of her rival's ambitions, and plans to forge her own connections with the foreigners.

**Yuitlan** (pop. 90): This Tlaka village lies near the ruins of Tlachatala, which the locals do not approach for fear of offending the gods. Regular conflict with the Manakas has meant that only the most battle-ready Tlakas choose to live here, and they are considered fierce even by their own tribe's standards. The chieftain is particularly bloodthirsty.

## TLACHTALA TEMPLE SURFACE

The ruined temple of Tlachtala resembles a small, forested island in a lake. Other islets – remnants of other pyramids - rise out of the lake. Even from a distance, it is clear that the "island" is not natural. Due north of the temple is the Tlaka village of Yuitlan (see above). Most of the inhabitants fish in the lake and raise crops on small plots. Tetahuac, if present, will urge the party to avoid the village. The lake itself is inhabited by **crocodiles**, which can clearly be seen swimming about. If the party chooses to observe the villagers for a time, they will notice that the fishermen paddle about in small canoes, but give the crocodiles a wide berth.

**Crocodiles** (20): AC 5, HD 3 D 2d4/1-12, MV 60 ft., 120 ft. swimming. The crocodiles will attack anyone who falls into the lake, but will usually leave anyone in a boat alone.

The easiest way to cross the lake to the ruins is to build rafts (Tetahuac will help) and paddle across. If the party does so at night, there is a good (90%) chance none of the villagers will notice them. Any crossing made during the day has a 75% chance of being noticed, unless they approach the island from the opposite side of the lake. However, the villagers are too afraid of the crocodiles, and of angering the gods, to give chase, and will merely hurl curses at the party. They will, however, post a watch to see if the party ever emerges from the ruins, and if so they will pursue them once they return to shore. If the party is caught by the villagers they will be shown no mercy.

There are 35 combat-ready **villagers** (AC 8, HD 1-6 hp each, D 1d6, MV 120 ft.), led by the village chief (4th level fighter, AC 7, 30 hit points, D 1d6+1). They are armed with clubs or spears (roughly 50% of each).

Wandering monsters appear with standard chances (1 on a d6, check every 3 turns) throughout all the levels of the temple.

### D6 Encounter

- 1 **Giant Ants** (2d4): AC 3, HD 2, ATK 1, D 1d6, MV 180 ft. The ants are foraging, and will attack the PCs on sight. Their nest is located near the plaza (AREA 15), but the GM will need to develop it should the PCs try to locate it.
- 2 **Giant Fungal Ants** (1d6): AC 6, HD 2, ATK 1, D 1d4, MV 60 ft. These ants wandered into the lower levels and became infected by the toxic fungus, and are now zombies (see *Appendix C: New Monsters*).
- 3 **Giant Gecko**: AC 5, HD 3+1, hp 15, D 1d8, MV 120 ft., 60 ft. climbing. This gecko is hunting for insects and other small prey, and will not bother the PCs unless attacked or surprised.
- 4 **Giant Rock Python**: AC 5, HD 6+1, hp 34, D 1d4/2d4 + constriction, MV 90 ft.
- 5 **Giant Shrews** (1d8): AC 4, HD 1-6 hp each, D 1d4+2, MV 180 ft. Giant shrews will view any encounter as an attack, and react accordingly. A giant shrew flees if it takes any damage.
- 6 **Giant Vampire Bats** (1d10): AC 6, HD 1, D 1d4 + special, MV 30 ft., 180 ft. flying. If a vampire bat hits an opponent, they must save vs. Paralysis or be paralyzed for 5 rounds, during which the bat sucks blood at 1d4 per round to a max of 10 hit points.

*Modified Version:* **Fungal Skeletons** (1d4): AC 7, HD 2, D 1d6 + special, MV 60 ft. See *Appendix C: New Monsters* for description. They have no treasure.

When Katapec was at its height, its capital city was dominated by Tezca's step-pyramid. The uppermost level was where sacrifices were performed, and where Tezca presided over religious ceremonies. In the centuries since the sacking and abandonment of Tlachtala, the topmost level remained largely untouched by the

encroachment of the jungle, and now it resembles a single stone building sitting atop a hill. The paintings that once graced this open-sided chamber have long since been defaced, and the stone sacrificial altar has been smashed to pieces. There is evidence that other people have been here recently, as the vegetation that once blocked the stairway leading into the temple has been hacked away – this was done by the second expedition hired by Octavius. There is nothing of value here.

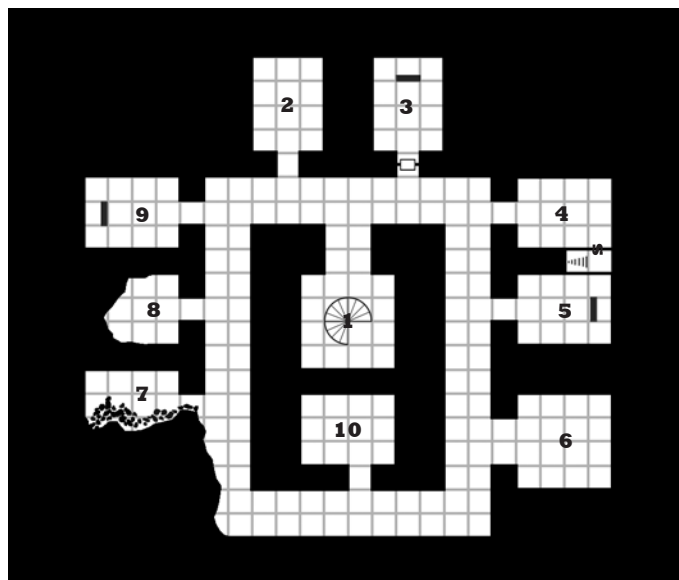
## TLACHTALA TEMPLE LEVEL TWO

This level was where Tezca lived and performed his religious duties in chapels dedicated to the various gods of Katapec. Tezca's attendants also lived here in spartan conditions. The walls, which were once brightly painted with vivid scenes depicting Tezca in his most heroic moments, were defaced by mobs when Katapec finally fell. Empty iron sconces once held torches. Unless otherwise noted, all of the doors have long since rotted away or been smashed to pieces.

1. **STAIRCASE ROOM:** The winding stairway from the top level passes through this square room down to the third level (see below). Debris from the other adventuring party's efforts to break into the pyramid lie scattered on the floor. A skull, all that remains of an unfortunate guard who died centuries ago, lies in one corner. There is nothing of interest here
2. **CHAPEL OF THE CROCODILE:** This room's walls are decorated with heavily defaced paintings of crocodiles in various poses, in natural scenes. A particularly large, barely discernible painting, depicting a man with a crocodile's head, frames the window in the far wall. The window itself is now choked with debris. The mobs vandalized this room with especial vigor, as Tezca had imposed crocodile worship on his people. The rich furnishings have long since been looted, and the altar has been thoroughly smashed.
3. **CHAPEL OF THE SUN:** The moldering wooden door to this room is intact. This chapel is richly painted with images of a golden man striding across the heavens, bearing a flaming shield whose radiance lights the world. A decaying wooden altar graces the far wall, under a window now choked with debris. Crumbling baskets lie on the floor in front of the altar. The local tribes have long worshipped the sun god, and so this chapel was spared when the temple was looted. The baskets once contained

## TLACHTALA TEMPLE LEVEL TWO

EACH SQUARE EQUALS 5 FEET



offerings of food, sweets, and homemade trinkets, but these have long since rotted away. A careful search of the altar reveals a hidden panel that conceals a small compartment containing a gold necklace (once worn by the sun priests, before their authority was curtailed by Tezca), worth 300 gp.

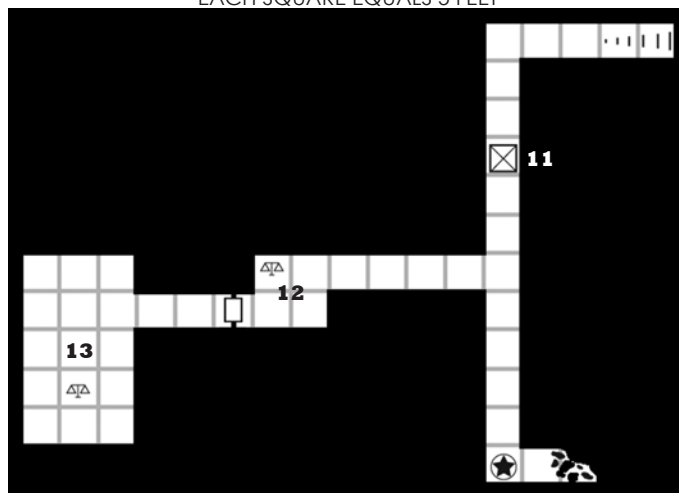
- LIBRARY: This room once housed dozens of scroll racks containing the collected works of the temple – scrolls describing the legends of the gods, treatises on morality and other philosophical concepts, and the proper procedures for carrying out rituals. Most of the scrolls were stolen or burned during the riots that brought Katapec low, but a few survived; these lie scattered about the room. All of the scrolls are in the script used in Katapec, which is still in use by some of the local tribes. Tetahuec can read the scrolls with difficulty, and if given enough time (at least six turns undisturbed) he can tell them what they say in very general terms. The scrolls describe the final days of Katapec. The GM can paraphrase the latter half of the history given at the beginning of this module. The person who wrote the account was a scribe who was secretly a follower of the Sun god, who detailed Tezca's excesses.

A very thorough search will reveal two items of interest – the first is a **spell scroll** containing the following spells: **entangle**, **phantasmal force**, and **fly**; the second is a hand-drawn map that seems to show the floor the PCs are on, except that it shows the existence of a secret room behind the south wall of this room. With the map, the PCs will have no trouble finding the hidden button that causes a section of stone wall to slide aside, revealing a small alcove containing a staircase that winds downwards. Otherwise, the PCs can find the secret stairway by checking for secret doors. The stairway leads to Tezca's private domain – a secret level (see below).

- CHAPEL OF THE MOON: The wall paintings in this room, which depict images of the god of death, have been heavily defaced, but if one or more PCs makes a successful INT check they will realize that there are other paintings underneath. A successful halved INT check will reveal that the defacement was an effort to uncover the original wall paintings, which depicted the goddess of the moon (whose worship Tezca had outlawed). A moldering wooden altar in one corner contains, in a secret compartment, a heavily tarnished silver necklace (once worn by a priestess of the moon), worth 150 gp.
- KING'S BEDCHAMBERS: Tezca spent much of his time here during his reign, waited on by small army of slaves, concubines, and lesser priests. In one corner, by a debris-choked window, sits a rotting throne made of wood and woven reeds – a smaller version of the grand one that once dominated the audience chamber on the main level, below. The black jaguar pelts that once draped it have long since been looted. Scraps of reed baskets that once contained offerings of gold and precious stones lay scattered about the floor. On the other side of chamber from the throne is a pile of rotting detritus that was once the king's bed, a thick reed mat resting on a wooden frame. Again, the jaguar pelts that once served as bed coverings are long gone. There is nothing of value here.
- COLLAPSED ROOM: This room once contained a chapel dedicated to the god of the seas and rivers, but the ceiling and much of the walls collapsed centuries ago. This chamber is now choked with debris. If the PCs try to excavate there is a 25% chance per turn that the noise will attract a wandering monster. After 2d4 turns of searching, the PCs can find a skeletal forearm wearing gold bracelet inlaid with three emeralds (worth 450 gp) carved to look like jaguar heads. The bracelet is **magical**, and when worn gives the wearer **infravision**.
- COLLAPSED ROOM: This room once contained a chapel dedicated to the goddess of the hearth, but like AREA 7 it collapsed centuries ago. There is nothing of value here, but if

## TEZCA'S DOMAIN (SECRET LEVEL)

EACH SQUARE EQUALS 5 FEET



the PCs try to excavate there is a 25% chance per turn that the noise will attract a wandering monster.

- CHAPEL OF THE JAGUAR: This room once contained a chapel to the god of warriors and the hunt. Tezca tolerated his worship because many soldiers were devotees, but nonetheless his followers were required to be very circumspect in their observances. Largely-intact paintings of jaguars running rampant, and hunting scenes, cover the walls of this chamber. A plain stone altar rests in front of a pair of crossed stone spears mounted on the far wall. One of the spears is a **spear +1**.
- PRIVATE CHAPEL: This was Tezca's private chapel, where he conducted his own rites. The contents of this room were burned by the mobs, and now the chamber is empty. The walls, floor, and ceiling are coated with ash.

## TEZCA'S DOMAIN (SECRET LEVEL)

Tezca had this level built so that he could conduct experiments on the use of the local toxic fungus, which he hoped would allow him to make his people more docile and quell the rising rebellions. This existence of this floor remained secret throughout his reign (it was excavated after the pyramid was built), and as a result it is untouched. It is reached via the staircase behind the secret door in AREA 4.

- CORRIDOR: This corridor forms the bulk of this level. There is a pit trap, which conceals a 10-foot-deep pit. The corridor continues south, where it turns east next to a stone statue of a four-armed crocodile man, and it also branches off to the west, towards the Scales Room (AREA 12).

The statue is an **animated guardian** (AC 4, HD 5, hp 25, MV 60 ft. #AT 4, D 1d4x4 + Poison), wielding four blow guns. As soon as someone comes within 20 ft. of it without first uttering the password (now lost), the statue will raise the guns and shoot at the intruder. It will shoot four darts per round until the intruders have retreated or are incapacitated (it has 80 darts in total). The poison contained in the darts used to be lethal, but time has reduced its effectiveness. Anyone hit by a dart who fails their save vs. poison will feel dizzy for 1d4 hours (-1 to attack and skill checks – the effect of being shot multiple times is cumulative). Although the animated statue can move, it will not move more than 10 feet from its initial position. It has no treasure.

Beyond the guardian the tunnel continues for another 10 feet before collapsing. The tunnel used to lead to a room containing fake treasures (to divert intruders), but it, and its contents, have long since been destroyed.

12. **SCALES ROOM:** This small room is devoid of any ornamentation except for a set of large stone scales against the north wall. On a stone table next to the scale is an assortment of metal feathers (two gold and 20 copper). There is a secret door leading to the Laboratory (AREA 13), which is revealed when the feathers are placed on the scales in the right proportions so as to be in balance. The objective is to place an equal weight on each scale, but most adventurers would likely place a gold feather on one scale and try to balance with the right number of copper feathers. Each time a weight is added to each scale, the mechanism determines whether the scales are in balance. If they are not, a dart shoots from one of several tiny holes in the south wall (roll to hit, treat as an attack by a 3 HD monster). If the dart hits, the victim takes one point of damage and must save vs. poison or lose one point of Strength for 1d4 days – this effect is cumulative. What is not made clear is that all of the feathers must be used for the door to open. Each copper feather is roughly 25% of the weight of a gold feather. Besides the obvious even split, one correct proportion is to have two gold feathers and 6 copper feathers on one scale, and 14 copper feathers on the other. Once the scales are balanced a door in the west wall slides open.
13. **LABORATORY:** This large chamber is where Tezca conducted experiments with the toxic fungus to figure out a way of creating obedient zombie slaves. Three cells along the west wall contain “living” specimens – the remnants of early experiments. These cells contain animated arms and legs encrusted with fungus. Lying on a stone table is a withered crocodile head stitched onto the muscular, mummified body of a man – this construct is inert, but intact. A set of shelves along the south wall hold clay pots containing various herbs, powders, and other alchemical supplies (worth 200 gp). Nestled amongst the pots is a leather cylinder sealed with wax, which contains a crumbling scroll written in the language of Katapec. Tetahuac, if he is present, can read the script with some difficulty. He will tell the PCs that the scroll contains notes detailing the results of several experiments. He does not understand much of what is written. The notes, if translated, would be worth up to 1000 gp to an alchemist or wizard.

## TLACHTALA TEMPLE LEVEL THREE

14. **GRAND TEMPLE:** When Katapec was at its height, this level was where the public would seek audiences with Tezca in order to obtain favors and receive judgments. A single chamber with a 20 foot high ceiling occupies this level; the central staircase descends from the middle of the ceiling. The grand throne that once loomed at the base of the staircase is long gone, and of the four grand archways that once opened onto the city, only the western one, from which a long, narrow tunnel extends into blackness, is not blocked with debris. Knee-deep water fills the chamber, and the walls and pillars (intricately carved with likenesses of Tezca) are encrusted with yellow fungal growths.

Harmless fish swim in the water. If the PCs search the room, they will find a simple gold bracelet in one corner of the room (worth 80 gp). The toxic fungus is at a sufficient concentration on this level that the PCs will begin to suffer the effects of the Creeping Peril (see *Appendix A: The Creeping Peril*). For random encounters, the GM should use the modified version of the above random encounter table that replaces vampire bats with 1d4 fungal skeletons (see *Appendix C: New Monsters*).

The western tunnel leading to AREA 15 is comprised of a mix of mud and crumbling masonry (resulting from the slow subsidence of the city). As a result, the walls are very unstable and during combat there is a 10% chance that a missed strike will hit a section of wall instead and destabilize it, causing a minor cave-in (1d6 damage to anyone within 10 feet). Should

there be a partial collapse, there is also a 10% chance that 1d2 crocodiles will be swept into the tunnel. The section beyond the temple is comprised of a handful of sunken, but largely intact, buildings connected by such debris tunnels.

Submerged under the water behind one of the statues is an ancient stone lever (marked as a secret door on the map). The mechanism is clogged with debris (a Strength of 25 is needed to move it), but if it is pulled a secret door will open. This was originally designed as a secret exit which once led to an alley, but since the sinking of Tlachtala this way now leads to the lake bottom. Water pours in once the door is opened, carrying 1d2 crocodiles into the room every three rounds. The door will close if the PCs push the lever, but due to the force of the rushing water this takes two rounds, during which time more crocodiles can enter. If the door is left open long enough, the water level in the tunnels will eventually rise to the level of the lake – this would flood the tunnels completely.

15. **PLAZA:** When Katapec was at its height, the great pyramid was flanked by two grand plazas. This one remains, and the buildings around the perimeter have collapsed and are now overgrown with thick vegetation, giving the appearance of an arena. It is possible to climb the rubble (thieves get a +20% bonus), and if the PCs do so they emerge in dense jungle.

One building, a two-story structure opposite the temple with a wide entrance, appears to be reasonably intact (this was once a barracks (AREA 16), and it leads to the rest of the tunnel system). The water here is knee-deep, but beneath the silt at the bottom there is an intricate mosaic made of jade worth 8,000 gp if intact and 4,000 gp if in pieces. If the PCs search the plaza thoroughly (at least two hours) they can find a pair of gold bracelets (worth 120 gp each); however, for each turn they spend searching the GM should roll for random encounters, using the modified table above.

The entrance to a giant ant nest is located in the surrounding rubble. The ants are currently fighting off attacks by members of the colony that have succumbed to the creeping peril, but if the PCs venture too deeply into the tunnels they will also be attacked. GMs wishing to add this area as an optional mini-dungeon will need to develop the ant nest, and stock it with treasure (if desired).

16. **BARRACKS:** This building once housed a small garrison of soldiers assigned to protect the western approaches to the temple. They tried to keep order during the revolts that led to the collapse of Katapec, but eventually the officers (who were loyal to Tezca) were killed by their subordinates (who tended not to be loyal). The building was looted and burned after the revolt. Due to the more solid construction of the barracks, it weathered the ensuing centuries reasonably well. The water is knee-deep here.

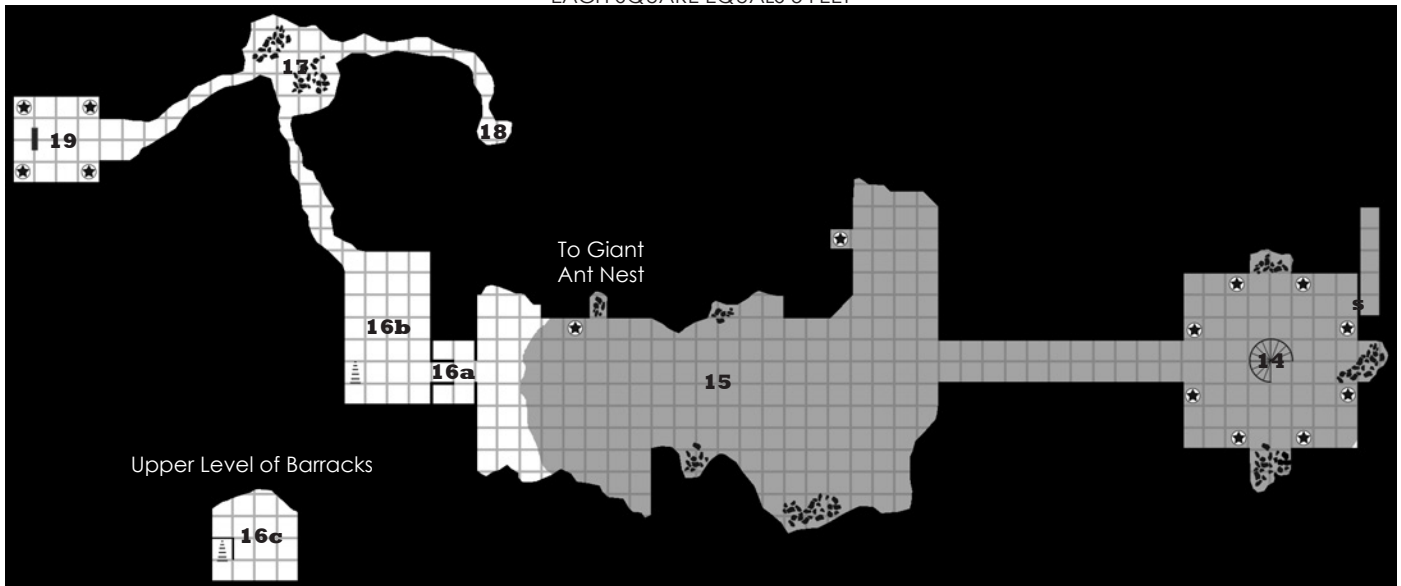
16A. **GUARD ROOM:** Two alcoves lead off from this chamber. Each contains a stone bench and table. There is nothing of value here.

16B. **SLEEPING QUARTERS:** This room once contained 20 beds where off-duty soldiers could rest. All of the wood and reed beds have long since rotted away; although the bones of their former occupants are still visible amid the debris. A gaping hole in the ceiling opens up to the second floor, which can be accessed using a stone staircase. Two turns after the PCs enter this room, six of the bodies (fungal skeletons – see *Appendix C: New Monsters*) will animate and attack. Their combat statistics are below:

**Fungal Skeletons (6):** AC 7, HD 2, D 1d6 + special, MV 60 ft. They have no treasure.

## TLACHTALA TEMPLE LEVEL THREE

EACH SQUARE EQUALS 5 FEET



**16C. OFFICER QUARTERS:** Roughly half of this floor collapsed centuries ago, but the part that remains is reasonably stable. Four rotting, unoccupied beds are here. Also present are the bodies of four adventurers (remnants of the second lost expedition). Should the PCs examine the bodies (three humans and an elf), they will appear to have been dead for a week or two, and yellow fungus is growing on them. These adventurers fell to a pack of undead; although they were already beginning to suffer the effects of the fungus. These bodies will animate in two turns and attack the PCs. Their statistics are as follows:

**Undead Adventurers (4):** AC 5, HD 3, D 1d8 or 1d6 or special, MV 60 ft. Two of the former adventurers are armed with normal swords, another wields a war hammer, and the last – a former magic user – still holds one **magic missile** that it will discharge in combat. The adventurers carry two **healing potions** and a **potion of frost giant strength**.

**17. SINKHOLE:** The tunnel leads to this small pit, which is open to the sky. A smaller pyramid once stood here, but it has long since collapsed and now this water-logged sinkhole is filled with mounds of fallen masonry and broken statues. The murky water is chest-deep in places. The tunnel branches to the east and west here. A large (22-foot-long) **crocodile** has found its way here, and it is rather hungry.

**Large Crocodile:** AC 5, HD 3, hp 22, D 2d4/1-12, MV 60 ft., 120 ft. swimming.

**18. CAVE:** The tunnel descends here to a natural cave, which once lay under the city. The water here is chest-deep, and the ceiling is coated with toxic fungus. If the PCs search, they can find the body of one of the adventurers (a cleric), who wandered here and drowned while under the influence of the fungus. The body will animate two turns after the PCs arrive; use the same combat statistics from AREA 15C. The undead cleric carries a **mace +1**.

**19. TEMPLE OF THE SUN:** This ruined pyramid was once a temple dedicated to the sun god. The person who stole the Crocodile's Tear centuries ago was a believer, and brought it here for safekeeping. This chamber lay under the temple (which has long-since collapsed), and the water here is waist-deep (movement rates are halved). Statues of warriors stand at the four corners, and in the center of the chamber is a plain stone

altar, on which rests a skeleton clutching a large, cracked emerald. A pictographic inscription runs around the base of the altar, which depicts a crowned figure being defeated by a mob of small people. The skeleton shows signs of grievous injuries (he sustained mortal wounds while protecting the Tear, and used it to block a killing blow).

If the PCs touch the Tear, a soft green glow will surround the skeleton and emerald, and the Tear itself will begin to pulse. Different effects will occur, depending on the alignment of the person holding the Tear (see item description at the end of this module).

Once the Tear is disturbed, a green mist fills the chamber and everything goes dark for two rounds. After the light returns the PCs will notice that the chamber they are in is now intact, lit with torches, and dry. A loud commotion can be heard down a tunnel that leads from the chamber. There is no one else here. While the PCs are getting their bearings a young man dressed in battered leather armor staggers into the room. He is bleeding from several wounds and he clutches the Tear – uncracked – in his hands. He sees the PCs and jumps with fright, and immediately babbles in his language at them. If present, Tetahuac can translate. The man, a guard named Mahal, tells the PCs that Tezca's soldiers are pursuing him because he stole the Tear, and he pleads with them for help. The commotion grows louder, and Mahal continues to urge the PCs to help him protect the Tear. If Tetahuac is not present, it should be obvious that Mahal needs help, and that the emerald he is holding is something worth protecting.

Just then, Tezca and his warriors enter the chamber. They pause to take in the strangeness of the PCs' appearance, but assume they are also followers of the sun god, and attack.

**King Tezca of Katapec (10<sup>th</sup>-level cleric):** AC 5, hp 60, D 1d4+4, MV 90 ft. Tezca carries an obsidian hammer +2 and wears enchanted armor made from the hide of a crocodile (treat as **leather armor +1**) as well as a gold ring with a large piece of jade in it (**ring of protection +1**). Tezca also wears a golden torque inset with hundreds of tiny pieces of brilliant green jade (his royal trapping), worth 1,200 gp. Tezca's tactic is to place as many of his warriors between himself and the PCs as possible, and strike at any targets that present themselves. As he has been fighting for some time today, Tezca has cast many of his spells already – he can currently cast two 1<sup>st</sup> (**cure light wounds**,

remove fear), two 2<sup>nd</sup> (hold person, resist fire) and two 3<sup>rd</sup> level (dispel magic, prayer) spells.

**Katapec Warriors** (10): AC 6, HD 2, D 1d6+1 (STR bonus), MV 90 ft. These warriors are the last of Tezca's followers. They will fight savagely because they are with their master, and they fervently believe that the magic of the Tear will protect him from the mobs. Tezca will not hesitate to send his warriors to their deaths in order to save himself, if the battle goes against him. His warriors cannot be swayed to turn against him (their fanatical loyalty is a side-effect of an extract of the toxic fungus that Tezca has had placed into their food).

If the PCs lose the battle, they will return to their senses in their own time period, and the chamber will be exactly as they left it aside from a few bones to signify where Tezca's warriors fell in battle. They can take the cracked Tear and make their way out of the temple, and from there make their way back to Kastra Manaka (see The Return Journey, below).

If the PCs win the battle, but do not manage to protect Mahal, they will awaken in their own time period. If they managed to kill Tezca, his remains will be present and they can take his treasure. The cracked Tear will also be present. The inscription around the base of the altar will now show a crowned figure being defeated by a small group of people who vaguely resemble the PCs.

If the PCs win the battle and manage to protect Mahal, they will awaken in their own time as above, but the Tear will be intact. Award the PCs additional experience points once the adventure is over. The inscription around the altar will be changed, as above.

## THE RETURN JOURNEY

If the PCs managed to enter the temple without being seen by the Tlaka villagers, their return journey will be uneventful (barring random encounters) if they avoid detection while leaving. If the Tlakas saw the PCs enter the ruins, some villagers will maintain a watch to see if they come out. If the PCs are spotted, 20 **warriors** (AC 8, HD 1, D 1d6, MV 120 ft.) will set out in canoes to try to intercept them.

Assuming the PCs make it back to Kastra Manaka, they will receive the reward promised to them, and Octavius will be happy to take them back to their original port if they desire. Otherwise, they are welcome to stay at the outpost as long as they wish.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

There are plenty of things the PCs can do in this part of the world, should they decide to stay. A few adventure hooks are provided below.

1. **Tezca's Mines:** Although the Tear was the only emerald of its kind to be found, other treasures may still lie hidden in the mines. The temple library might contain information on their location. The journey to the mines should be difficult, and the mines themselves would have their own dangers – local monsters might have taken up residence in the centuries since the fall of Katapec, and those who toiled and died in the mines might haunt them.
2. **The Ruins of Katapec:** Tlachtala was the capital, but the lost kingdom had other settlements of note. Although some of these have been abandoned and reclaimed by the jungle, others may have survived the fall of the kingdom. The GM will have to determine how these remnants have changed over

the centuries, but there are opportunities to create many interesting mini-settings. The PCs could even become embroiled in local politics, should any one of these petty kingdoms decide to reclaim Katapec's lost glory.

3. **Tribal Politics:** The incursion into Tlaka territory, and the successful recovery of the Tear (should it become known), might drive the Tlakas to become even more aggressive. This could spur more tribal warfare and possibly destabilize the region. A tribal alliance may form to neutralize the Tlakas as a threat, and the PCs could be drawn in as advisors because of their knowledge.
4. **The Tear:** Although the PCs were hired to recover the Tear for their mysterious patron, they may decide to keep it for themselves if they discover its powers. They could acquire a powerful enemy if they do so – someone who would use their considerable resources to track the PCs down.
5. **Commercial Interests:** The merchants will quiz the PCs intently about their experiences inside Tlaka territory. They may decide, if the Tlakas are deemed enough of a threat and if they suspect there are considerable resources to be had, to move aggressively against the tribe and establish a stronger presence in the region. Doing so would upset the balance of power among the tribes, and could eventually spur colonization – and all that entails.

## APPENDIX A: THE CREEPING PERIL

The lands around the ruins of Tlachtala are home to a magical parasitic fungus. The ancestors of the Tlakas learned to combat its effects by ingesting certain herbs regularly that made the body resistant to the spores – this was incorporated into many of the rituals honoring the gods, and thus its practice was retained (even though the people themselves no longer knew what they were keeping at bay). When Tezca ascended the throne and displaced the old faiths, he also outlawed the old rituals. In so doing, the people became vulnerable to the spores, and began growing ill. There were enough residual herbs in people's systems to delay the onset of the illness, but as the years passed all but those who secretly followed the old ways began to suffer. When Katapec collapsed, the followers of the old ways stepped in to help their compatriots, and in so doing restored the original faiths. The effects of the fungus are once more unknown to the locals; although the Tlakas believe the plagues described in the tales surrounding Tezca's fall were a form of divine punishment.

The fungus itself takes the form of tiny yellow puff-balls that attach themselves to anything in close proximity. These puff-balls expel negative-energy-filled spores when touched. The spores are ingested or inhaled by their hosts, and remain dormant as they circulate throughout the bloodstream. The spores do not "activate" until they reach a certain concentration (50%) in their host, at which time they mature and multiply. Spore concentration increases as long as a victim remains in a contaminated area, at a rate of 10% every half-hour – which means that from time of first exposure a victim will begin to succumb to the effects after 2 ½ hours of continuous exposure. Spores cannot survive outside their habitat for long, and will begin to die off after the host leaves, or is removed from, a contaminated area for at least six hours. Concentrations in the blood fall afterwards, at a rate of 2% per hour. The decline stops as soon as the victim re-exposes themselves to contamination. Casting the clerical spell  **cure disease**  removes all spores from the bloodstream.

If someone is bitten or hit by something infected by the fungus, they must save vs. poison or become infected. As with environmental contamination, the fungal concentrations in the victim's blood will increase only as long as they are in an area where the fungus is present. Once the concentration exceeds 50%, the following symptoms manifest:

Concentration	Effects
51-65%	Victim begins to feel feverish and lethargic (-1 to hit and damage, -10% penalty on other actions).
65-75%	Skin develops yellow patches, lethargy increases (-2 to hit and damage, -20% penalty on other actions, movement rate penalised by 25%).
76-85%	Fungal growths sprout on body, lose 1d4 hit points per hour.
86-95%	State of delirium and hallucinations. GM discretion if victim is unable to distinguish friend from foe.
96-99%	Coma.
100%	Death. Victim reanimates as a fungal zombie in 1d2 days.

## APPENDIX B: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

**The Crocodile's Tear:** The Crocodile's Tear is a fist-sized (60 cn), unpolished emerald shaped vaguely like a teardrop. When first found a deep gouge runs its length. The Tear is warm to the touch. The Tear has a variety of magical properties, which may be used depending on the alignment of the person who holds it.

*Lawful* characters will feel a pleasant, cooling sensation. All fungal toxins in their body will be destroyed immediately, and any penalties will be removed. If injured, they will regain 1d6 hit points for each turn that they hold the Tear.

*Neutral* characters will feel pins and needles. If the person is a thief or magic user they will take 1d4 damage, and if they are a fighter or cleric they will regain 1d4 hit points if injured. Demihumans are unaffected.

*Chaotic* characters will take 1d6 damage and be wracked with pain (-4 to attacks and -20% penalty on other actions, no saving throw) for 24 hours.

If the Tear is restored to its original state, it possesses the following additional powers:

1. Create *light*, as per the spell of the same name, six times daily.
2. Allows the wielder to read the minds of any single person within 20 feet, as per the spell *ESP*, once per day.
3. Grants the wielder immunity to all fire-based attacks.

If sold in its cracked state, the Crocodile's Tear is worth 2,500 gp as a gemstone, and 10,000 gp if its magical powers are known. If it is restored to its original state, the value is doubled.

## APPENDIX C: NEW MONSTERS

### FUNGAL ANT

SIZE: Small (2 ft. long)  
 MOVE: 60 ft.  
 ARMOR CLASS: 6  
 HIT DICE: 2  
 ATTACKS: 1  
 DAMAGE: 1-4 + special  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Fungal poison  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: None  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: None  
 RARITY: Very rare  
 NO. ENCOUNTERED: 2-12  
 LAIR PROBABILITY: 10%

TREASURE: In Lair: 3-12 gems (50%), 2-8 potions (40%)  
 INTELLIGENCE: Animal  
 ALIGNMENT: Neutral  
 LEVEL/X.P.: 2 / 30 + 1/hp

*General information:* Fungal ants are giant ants that have been infected, and taken over, by the creeping peril. They move spasmodically and do not wave their antennae – both of which are sufficient to drive normal giant ants to attack them on sight. Anyone bitten by a fungal ant must save vs. poison or become infected with the creeping peril. Fungal ants can be turned as ghouls. Any human, demihuman, or humanoid killed by a fungal ant will rise as a fungal zombie (see variant in fungal skeleton) in 1d4 days.

*Physical description:* Fungal ants resemble normal giant ants, except yellow spongy stalks have burst through their carapaces in a number of places, and yellowish powder (spores) falls from them like dust.

### FUNGAL SKELETON

SIZE: Medium  
 MOVE: 60 ft.  
 ARMOR CLASS: 7 (or by armor)  
 HIT DICE: 2  
 ATTACKS: 1  
 DAMAGE: 1-6 + special  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Fungal poison  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: None  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: None  
 RARITY: Very rare  
 NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4  
 LAIR PROBABILITY: 0%  
 TREASURE: None  
 INTELLIGENCE: None  
 ALIGNMENT: Neutral  
 LEVEL/X.P.: 2 / 40 + 1/hp

*General information:* Fungal skeletons are the remains of long-dead victims of the creeping peril. Fungal skeletons differ from normal skeletons in that the colony that controls the body can tap into the victim's mind when he or she died. In most cases this means one or two memories might remain (readable using ESP or other mind-reading spells), but in the case of spellcasters one 1st or 2nd level spell (randomly determined) will remain. Such spells are always released at the first opportunity when in combat, and when discharged function as though cast by a living magic user. Fungal skeletons can only infect their opponents if they hit an opponent with their claws; an attack with a weapon will not cause an infection. Fungal skeletons can be turned as ghouls. Anyone killed by a fungal skeleton will rise as a fungal zombie (see below) in 1d4 days.

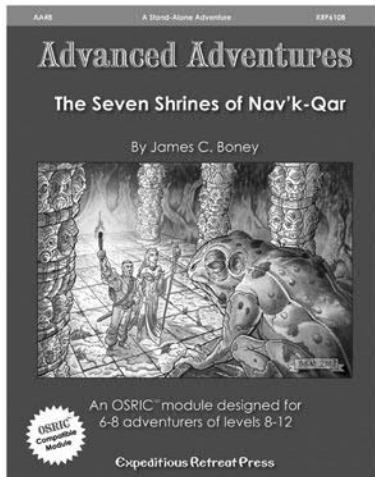
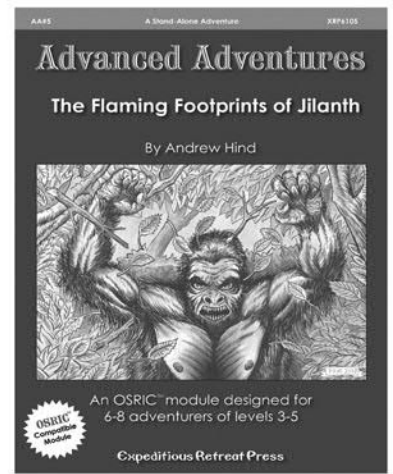
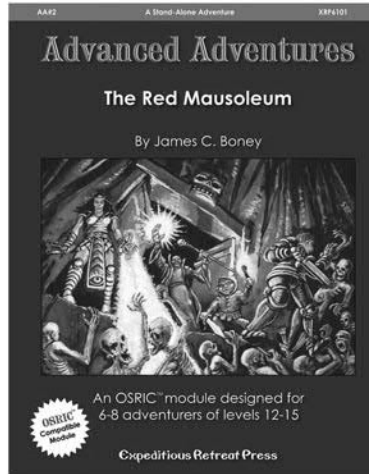
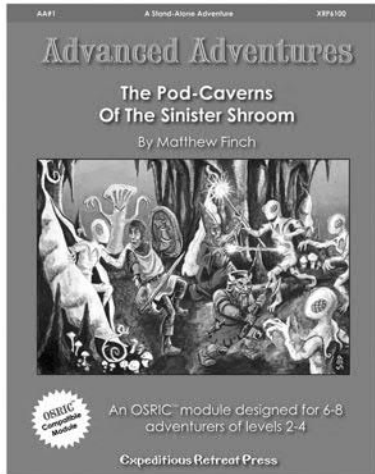
*Physical description:* Fungal skeletons are covered with extensive yellow, spongy growths, and spores drift off of them constantly.

*Variants:* The more powerful initial variant, the **fungal zombie**, is created once a person dies from the creeping peril. These creatures are identical to fungal skeletons, but have 3 Hit Dice and are turned as wights. The fungus slowly consumes the flesh of the zombies, and turns them into fungal skeletons in about two months. They are worth 65+2/hp experience points.



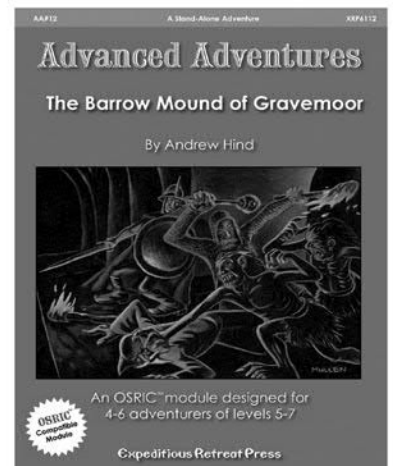
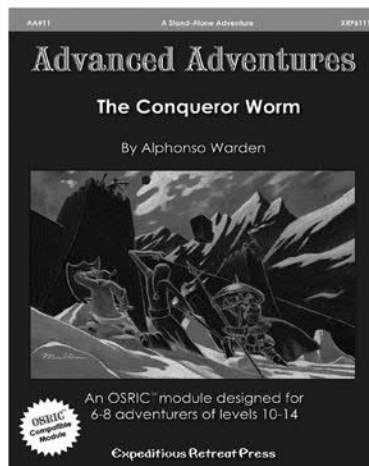
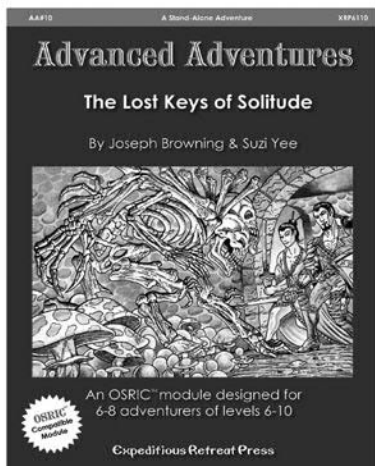
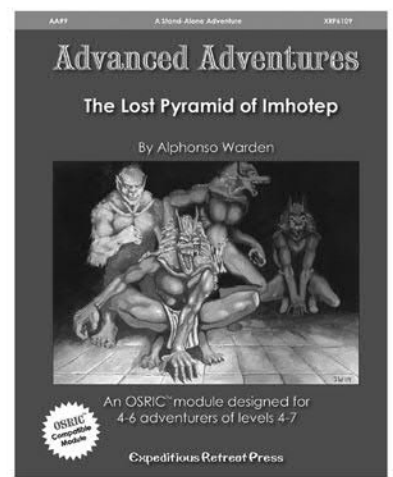
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## The Crocodile's Tear

A wealthy patron is outfitting an expedition to sail to the mysterious southern continent. The goal of the expedition is none other than the legendary Crocodile's Tear: a massive magical emerald! Many tales are told about the southern continent, most of which paint it as a disease-ridden jungle filled with hostile natives, reachable only by crossing a pirate- and monster-infested sea.

As the port winds fade into the winds of the open sea, the sails of The Mermaid billow firmly. Will the player characters survive the voyage, and will they find more than they bargained for? Oh, and was it mentioned that that two other trips set out before this one only to be swallowed up by the dense green jungle...

If you enjoy this adventure, look for future releases in the **Advanced Adventures** line from Expeditional Retreat Press.



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## The Crocodile's Tear

By Geoff Gander



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