

THE TEMPLE OF THE SKULL

A COMPANION LEVEL ADVENTURE

FOR CHARACTERS OF LEVELS 15-18

By Thorkhammer*

BACKGROUND

Somewhere deep in the smoldering jungles to the south exists, according to rumor, a temple dedicated to nothing less than pure Evil! Who built it? No one knows. Do worshippers still attend it? That, too, is unknown. But the stories of its wickedness, and death worshiping, and two-headed beings, have circulated for time knows how long.

Only two routes supposedly lead to the location of the temple, neither having been used by the natives as long as anyone can remember. None of the local residents venture down them, knowing where they ultimately end. And the last group of adventuring fools who tried to follow them never returned.

But somewhere, amidst the sweltering jungle foliage, lies hidden the ancient ruins of a long abandoned temple whose fanatic cult once ruled the land, as rivers of blood ran from human sacrifices made in the name of the Evil worshipped within.

INTRODUCTION

First: location. The size and shape of the swamp (see appropriate map) should be taken into consideration when placing the adventure in a *Known World*. It should be isolated far from the nearest civilization, and require days--if not weeks--to reach. Even on horseback.

Second: spell-magic. The nature of the temple's location is such that most magic--arcane or divinely bestowed--will probably not perform according to the desires of the caster. Either it will simply not work, or will react in such a fashion as to be actually harmful; though a small amount of the time, the spell *might* actually work as intended.

Third: magic-items. Again, because of the nature of the spatial distortion that still lingers within the temple--its ethereal link to another plane--many items will not function as intended by the user.

Fourth: So called "natural-healing" is impossible within the temple.

An appropriate list concerning parts two and three will appear in the appendices.

GETTING STARTED

Certainly an elaborate scenario can be built around the temple, the jungle and the swamp. How much one wants to develop and expand beyond what is presented is all up to the DM. It does not fall within the scope of this document the attempt to detail the countless number of possibilities leading up to this adventure. Therefore, the following will provide only what is to be found within the temple itself.

Upon close inspection of the wilderness map, the great island mound rising out of the steaming swamp will appear as the "mouth" in the overall shape of the bog. This natural feature rises steeply from the murky waters, to varying heights (See cross-section.) On the south side of it is the entrance. A set of naturally formed terraces leads up to the huge double doors in the center of the wall. To the right and left, about twenty

feet above this are ledges (A & B) which may be occupied by two monstrous *swamp toads* each. The creatures will only be present during the cooler times of day: dawn until mid-morning; dusk until midnight. The rest of the time they will be inside their caves.

Gargantuan, Swamp-toads. AC5, HD25 (200 - 175 - 150 - 125 hit points) Move 120' (40') Attacks 1 bite + special Damage 4-24 and poison (paralysis for 2-12 rounds. Saving Throw at -5!) Save as F13, Neutral, and Morale 11 XP Value 6,500 each. About the height of great Danes, but around 375 pounds each, their looks are very deceptive; they can jump up to half their move base in one leap. Their caves are littered with the bones of small vertebrae they have dined on. There is no treasure.

THE TEMPLE

1. The Great Valves. These doors are made of solid pine. At 11' high, 8' wide and 2' thick, they weigh in at around 1,500 pounds each! In their hey-day, when in use and the hinge was kept oiled, they were easy enough to open; requiring only a 9-12 strength. Now, having swollen in the heat and humidity of the bog, and not oiled in decades-- if not centuries-- they require a minimum combined strength of 35 just to pull the door forward two feet! Even this will take a full round of straining.

Once inside, a twenty-foot wide corridor goes due north, with smaller ones going east and west. The air rushing out the just opened doors is rank, and smells of death.

The 3 Traps. (Each Saves against *Dispel Magic* as if placed by a 20th level magic-user)

Three twenty-foot wide by thirty-foot long magic traps fill the corridor going North. Once they are entered, all within must make a Saving Throw VS Death Ray to avoid the initial damage.

T1. Those that make a Save immediately lose 1-3 points of strength or dexterity, not both. Those who fail lose the points now, **and** begin suffering from headache and nausea that lasts for 1-3 hours. During this time they will see *visions* appear, fading in and out around them, of strange, two-headed beings wandering aimlessly through rooms and corridors.

T2. Those who make a save here will immediately lose 1-3 points of charisma. While those who fail **also** begin to suffer from strange growths that appear on their hands and feet, as beginning appendages. A "new" finger and toe will begin to develop and will be completely grown within one day. Those that fail their Save will, also, suffer from headaches, nausea and *visions* for the next 1-3 hours. The "visions" will include the sight of a large, dark chamber, where native girls are, apparently, being sacrificed.

T3. As above, except it affects intelligence or wisdom—not both.

It is possible for a character to suffer from all of the traps, or none, depending on each situation. Once a character leaves the temple, **all lost ability points will** begin to return after six turns outside, gaining 1 each per category per hour.

2. Great Cavern & Web. A gigantic web appears like a horizontal plane, stretching from the eastern side of the chamber to the northwest. With black thick strands up to six inches wide, it seems feasible to walk across, with some help. The web is very sticky, however. Once stepped upon, one must pull their foot away in order to continue onward. This requires an ability check of rolling one's strength or less on a d20 to succeed. A roll of 1 indicates such force was utilized, the character must roll a second check, versus dexterity at a +4 penalty, or go flying off the web and into the abyss below. The bottom of the pit lies 120' below the web.

Obviously, ropes, spells and other safety measures, will help a party along. These will have to be judged to determine their effectiveness. Also, if more than one person is on the web at a time, a vibration will result. This alerts the web's maker--sounding like a high pitched ringing-- in area 3. The mummified body of a dead adventurer lies stuck to the web. On it, is an *invisible* suit of +1 *chain mail*. The invisibility can be commanded (see appendices.) About 1-100 copper, silver and gold coins each are stuck to the web. That is all.

3. Spider's Lair. This cavern is the home of the web builder. A *Gargantuan Spider*. She is AC4, 36HD (216 hit points) Move 60' (20')/240' (80') in web, Attacks 1 bite and 1-6 stomp-crushes, Damage 8-32 bite/ 2-16 per stomp-crush/ + poison, Save as F12, Neutral Morale 11 XP Value 10,000. Scattered about her lair are 1-100CP, 1-100SP, 1-100EP, 1-100GP; a +3 **mace** and a +3 **shield**.
4. Outer Fane. This shrine-room might be mistaken for the actual temple itself. But it is not! Over two dozen black pillars 2' in diameter rise from the floor to support the ceiling. A \$ door stands in the northwest corner of the room. At the eastern section is a small alcove with a huge face carved out of the stone wall itself (C). With an open mouth big enough to jump into, this devilish statuary casts an eerie feeling about the place. If not spotted when the party enters the room, three rounds after they do, a creature floating among the pillars near the ceiling will swoop down and attack. Experienced players will quickly recognize this floating, ball-like thing--with one great eye. However, its undead nature will likely be a surprise! For it is an *Undead Beholder*! AC-4/-2/3 HD20 (body can take 90 hit points of damage before it is killed. The front eye, at -2AC, has 30. While each eye stalk, at AC3, can only withstand 20. Damage to these does not count toward killing the creature.) Move 60' (20') Attacks 1 bite + special damage 2d10 + special Save as M20 Morale12 Chaotic XP Value 14,975.

It requires magical weapons of +2 or better to damage it. It is immune to all charm, hold and sleep effects; all illusions, death rays and poison. It regenerates 3 hit points per round. If reduced to 0 hit points, it is forced into gaseous form and cannot regenerate. It must rest 1 hour in total darkness before regeneration starts again. It can assume gaseous form at will; but has no special abilities when it does. Its bit drains two energy levels (each requiring a day to return.) The front eye always projects a *ray of reflection*, causing any spell cast at it from the front to be reflected back at the caster. In addition, any attempts to Turn Undead in front are also reflected, and the cleric doing so must make a save vs. spells or run in fear for 2d6 rounds. It cannot aim this eye above or behind it; only to the front. Characters attempting to attack it must declare what they are striking at: the body, the large eye, or an eyestalk.

Each stalk can be used once per round, and only 3 can aim in one direction together. A "slain" eye is cut off, but a damaged one continues to function. Damaged and lost eyes grow back in 1d4+1 hours; they don't regenerate as the body does.

Eye 1. Animate dead (range 60')	Eye 2. Charm (as vampire. 120' range; -2 penalty to the saving throw)
Eye 3. Continual darkness--120'	Eye 5. Energy drain 1 level (as Wight)
Eye 4. Death spell (range 120')	Eye 7. Paralysis (as ghoul, range 60'; note that elves are immune to this ray)
Eye 6. Energy-drain 2 levels (as Spectre)	Eye 9. Dispel magic (26th level)
Eye 8. Animate object (60' range)	
Eye 10. Telekinesis (4,000cn)	

Jumping into the open mouth. Roll a d12. 1=Disintegrated; 2-3=Gender change; 4-5=Race change; 6=Teleported to #18; 7-8=Teleported to #15; 9-10=Teleported to #8; 11=Teleported to #1; 12=Granted a Limited Wish! Those who roll 2-5 upon jumping in are "spat" back out, changed for the worse.

There is no treasure in this room. All of it was thrown through the mouth!

5. Secret Chambers. This basically rectangular room appears empty upon first entering it. However, within one round a round, floating shape will become visible as it swoops toward intruders, attempting to spray a shower of spores upon them. It is a *Blast Spore*, AC9, HD1 (1 hit point) Move 30' (10') attacks 1 Damage disease only Save as F1 Morale 9 Neutral XP VALUE 13. It appears identical to a Beholder, and when struck at all it will explode doing 6-36 points of damage to all within 20 feet. If it completes its spore-spray, all those within a 20' x 20'x 20' area before it must make a Save versus Poison, or be infected with a disease. This will grow 1-6 spores inside the host, causing death in 24 hours unless a *cure disease* spell is applied to each victim. The room is otherwise empty.
6. Inner chamber. Nearly rectangular itself, this chamber actually contains what appears to be ancient and decaying furnishings. A velvet covered chair stands in the southwest corner; a wooden frame containing a few shards of reflective glass stands against the angled wall in the northeast corner. But the interesting thing is the tapestry still hanging along the north wall. A good 20' in width, and hanging 10' feet from ceiling to floor, the item--though covered in dust--depicts a scene of macabre horror: a young female child being fed into the waiting maw of some diabolic creature! About seven priest-like figures are present. Dressed in hooded black robes with red stars, some of the figures are holding the girl aloft as they dangle her above the open jaws of the beast, while others are holding on to silver chains that keep the beast under control. Who, or what, this pertains to, no one now living in the realm, knows.

A small door in the southeast corner is, apparently, locked. Though a secret way will allow a party to bypass this, it only leads to a staircase that eventually ends in a small cave of the swamp toads. The door, however, is unique. It either has a nasty bite--should a thief fail to Open Locks and Find and Remove Traps--or it grants a special reward. With a penalty of +10% to rolls made, if a thief manages to Find Traps, then Remove Traps, then Open Locks--thus opening the door--the character receives an increase to his dexterity of 1! Note, however, that, functions 1& 2 must succeed in order for this to occur. Failure of any results in the "nasty bite" of 2d12+6 hit points of damage. That's all for this chamber.

7. Trap device. The only entry to this chamber is via a \$ door. Beyond it, a 10' wide pressure plate acts as a trigger setting off the actual traps. A steady flow of large [3" in diameter] marble like stones will shoot out of the locations marked "D," hit the angled walls and reach the west end of the chamber in 1 round upon being set off. The multitude of objects is such that for each turn, each character remaining in the western end of the corridor will sustain 1-100 attacks--each being for 1-3 hit points of damage, modified by the type of protective armor the character wears. For instance, those wearing full or field plate armor will only suffer 1d10 hits; those in plate-mail, splint-mail or banded will suffer 1d20; those in chain-mail, 2d20; those in ring-mail or studded leather 3d20; those in leather or padded, 4d20; and those in no armor 5d20. Magical bonuses and dexterity are not taken into consideration, nor is a shield.

This barrage will continue for 3 Turns, or until the victims retreat out the way they came. At which point the assault stops. The door is part of the tripping mechanism. If a thief searches the door for Traps, his likelihood of finding one is -50% of his normal rate.

E. Alcove Stepping into this will, immediately, *teleport* one to area "H." Reversible.

F. Trick door. This portal swings either east or west to allow access to the levers beyond. It requires than an elf successfully Find \$ doors! It must be returned to a closed position, then *located again* in order to gain access to the other location. The elf is twice as likely to succeed on the second attempt. The lever in the west alcove raises the portcullis at location "K." While the east one, raises the portcullis at location "L."

G. Alcove. Stepping into this will immediately teleport one to area "I." Reversible.

J. Behind a \$ door are three levers. The one on the west wall raises the portcullis at location "M." The one on the east wall raises the portcullis at location "N." And the one on the north wall raises the portcullis to room #9.

K. Alcove. The lever here *lowers* the portcullis behind the operator, trapping him.

L. Alcove. The lever here *lowers* the portcullis behind the operator, trapping him.

These two devices do not raise anything! Once lowered, one must somehow return to the alcove at "F" to raise these gates again.

M. Portcullis. The lever at "J" raises this device. (West)

N. Portcullis. The lever at "J" raises this device. (East)

8. The Crypt. Four *vampire* rest here. These are native women who were previous sacrifices. Due to the perversity of the *Ethereal*/space-distortion, they came to be in their current undead condition. The three in the west alcoves are all 7HD, while the elder-matron is 9HD *and* a L9 MU! She's the worst of the lot! AC2 (40-38-36 hit points for those with 7HD; or 50 for the matron.) Move 120' (40') / 180' (60') flying Attacks 1 touch or spell; plus spells for the MU Damage 1-10 + double-energy drain* or special Save as F7 x3 or MU9 Morale 11 Chaotic XP Value 1,250 (x3) and 3,000.

In the bottom of their coffins, beneath the soil, is the following in each box:

2000CP, 1000E, 2000GP, and 100PP. Also, inside the boxes, is a vial of *Antidote* Vs. 15HD creatures or less, a scroll of *Illumination*, and a *wand of cold*; only 3 items, one per coffin in the west alcoves. In the matron's box is an *Egg of wonder* (containing a grizzly bear), and a *Ring of Extra Life Protection***

The Matron knows the following spells: Shield - hold portal - ventriloquism; invisibility - ESP - web; fireball - "slow" (haste reversed) - lightning bolt; dimension door - polymorph others; cloud-kill.

* This effect drains two character levels, which return within 1 week after leaving the temple. Or until restored via spell.

** This item functions similarly to a **Ring of Life Protection**, except that it holds 2-8 energy/HD levels and reverts to a +3 **Ring of Protection** when all the stored levels are expended.

9. Odd room. This chamber does not contain much. Some piles of bones lie scattered about, some rotten and decayed matter which could have been clothes and things, and that's about it. If the characters have found and "fiddled" with the levers (see "F, J, K, L, M, N") then all the portcullises will be up and they will see three corridors leading into this room: one from the north, one from the south and one from the east.

One Turn after the gates to 10 and 11 have been raised, the occupants therein will begin shambling into this chamber. Six, two-headed, ogre zombies will enter from the south while six, two-headed, bugbear zombies will enter from the north. (If the party is large-- over six people, add a d6 of each type!) There are no monsters to the east.

Due to the nature of the temple, these creatures cannot be dispelled or destroyed. They are *turned* as Special (needing either an 11 for 15-16th level clerics; or a 9 for 17-18th level clerics!) And like other Undead, are immune to charm, hold and sleep spells; cold-attacks and lightning do 1/2 damage!

Data	Bugbear zombie	Ogre zombie
Armor Class	5	5
Hit dice	4+1 (L)	5+1 (L)
Move	90' (30')	90' (30')
Attacks	1 fist or club	1 fist or club
Damage	1-6 +1	1-6 +2
Save as	F3	F4
Morale	11	11
Alignment	Neutral	Neutral
XP Value	75	150

There is nothing of value within this chamber, or on the monsters. The beasts are simply unfortunate in that they happen to wander in to the temple and fell victim to its deadly traps. Due to the nature of the power-within, they have been reanimated to distract and annoy intruders.

In the eastern corridor are four alcoves. These are non-reversible teleporting devices. Stepping into 'O' delivers one to 'P.' 'Q' to 'R.' 'S' to 'T.' 'U' to 'V.' 'W' to 'X.' And 'Y' to 'Z.'

Each time a character steps through a teleport device there is a 1 in 6 chance he or she will *permanently* lose 1-3 hit points from traveling the Negatively charged path. There is **no** Save against this! These can only be replaced by magic.

10. Chamber. Where the ogre zombies come from. Piles of bones are stacked within. If the party spends 3 Turns searching, they will find a bone “key” amongst one.
11. Chamber. Where the bugbear zombies come from. Like the ogre zombie chamber, this one boasts a great collection of bones. In this case, should the party spend 3 Turns searching, there is a 1 in 6 chance (per 3 Turns) they will find a Skull-like **helm**. This is a new magic item that makes the wearer immune to all the things Undead are. *And* immune to energy-drain attacks! However, the item is easily recognizable by intelligent Undead (vampires, liches, haunts, phantoms and spirits!) And any such creatures coming within 60’ of the item can effectively *command* the wearer as if he or she was a mindless zombie. If the creature’s HD is less than the wearer’s, the character gets a Saving Throw versus Death Ray to avoid being dominated. This can be attempted each Turn.

This item is also cursed, in that the wearer will become possessive of it over time, wishing to wear no other type of headgear except it. There is no save for this.

12. False treasure room. Once the thief unlocks the door to this chamber coins will begin pouring out. The party will see the room is filled to about four feet deep nothing but gold and platinum coins. This is an *illusion*, however. For each one is in reality just an iron slug--and cursed! Those hoarding any of it will not notice their effect until 7-12 Turns later. Each piece is really ten times heavier than a normal gold coin, and will slowly drag a person to a dead stop if too many are being carried; the weight will gradually accelerate until the person is carrying the actual load at the end of 12 Turns! Only a *dispel magic* followed by a *remove curse* spell will reveal their true identity and worth.
13. False treasure room. Again, once through the locked door, the party will see over twenty items each of armor, shields, weapons, and staves! These, too, are an *illusion*. *And* they’re *cursed*. Once touched the item, will either, disappear, or the person touching it will actually believe the thing to be 100% real! A Save Vs. Spell check is made per each item touched. If the Save works the PC is free of the curse and the item disappears. If the Save fail, the PC believes the item to be a +3, +4 or +5 item. Of course, adjustments will have to be strictly followed and the PC monitored while “using” the item/items! But he or she will be absolutely convinced he or she is swinging a weapon, or wearing an item! While, all around him or her, the rest of the party will think him/her crazy!

The PC may “shake” the curse once every week by attempting a new Save Vs Spell. For each week a bonus of +1 applies until, eventually, the character should be able to “shake” the item/items on a roll of 2!

Magic will not remove this curse. And even though others *know* it does not exist, they cannot persuade the cursed PC that it isn’t real.

14. Minor treasure room. Should the party find the secret door to this chamber, they will find what they probably think to be the “true” treasure chamber. Scattered about are 60,000CP, 20,000SP, 4,000EP, 1,000GP, 100PP. After one Turn searching they will find a golden shield buried beneath the coins. This is a **+3 shield of the priest!** Though anyone able to utilize a shield can use it, in the

hands of a cleric--it shines! However, it is *Lawful* Neutral warriors can wield it; all Chaotic types will take 2-40 points of electrical damage per round holding it!

For any non-chaotic cleric, the shield continually emanates a *Sanctuary** around the user, as long as the PC is not in melee. For Lawful clerics of the levels needed to use them, it will allow the PC to pray-store up to 6 Cure Light Wounds spells; *or* 3 Bless, a Cure Blindness, a Cure Disease and a Remove Curse; *or* 2 Cure Serious Wounds; *or* 1 Raise Dead. The PC must decide each morning after prayer which "group" he or she wants to *store* in the shield. They cannot be switched from group to group. Once determined, the cleric receives his or her normal allotment of spells for the day. Those *stored* in the shield can be called forth at any time that the cleric is not in melee. And, require touching the shield to the recipient.

A Chaotic cleric cannot use the item whatsoever!

Note: any **chaotic** person being treated by the shield's power, must make a Save Vs. Spell or its effects are not bestowed.

*A new cleric spell, causing attackers to take -6 to all attack rolls. If the user enters combat the shield becomes *cursed* for the duration "adding" 2 to AC!

15. Sacrificial Hall. This huge chamber was the center of activity for the temple long ago. Where not covered by some other feature, the walls are covered with designs and depictions carved into the stone. These appear reddish due to the blood that was used like paint to fill in the lines. There are many different scenes showing a strange race of huge beings, apparently two-headed, descending from the sky via wings, upon jungle villages; slaughtering and eating and burning everyone and everything. Except for the young girls, who are taken prisoner into the temple. Here, laid out upon the four stone pallets, abdominal organs are removed from them in some bizarre operation, before they are tossed into the great open mouth of the stone face on the east wall.

Other scenes, figures and shapes may be discernible as well. These are left for others' imaginations; and to describe.

Four huge pillars stand near the center of the chamber, but do not appear to support anything; their tops ending a good three feet below the ceiling, which is a good twenty five feet above the floor. Four stone pallets stand in a row along the west side of the chamber; about two feet wide and ten feet long, they are covered with reddish-brown mold and fungi. Two doors in the north wall appear to allow entry and exit to the chamber, while along the south wall is a large face like the one found at #4-C. Beside each of these stands a strange, bone figure. And upon glancing north one will see two more of these shapes standing beside a kind of throne atop a raised platform, reachable via a tier of three steps. Along the east wall protrudes a monstrous opening ten feet wide and ten feet high. This appears to be a gnarly maw of a creature's face. The inside extends for ten feet but doesn't end in stone. Instead, one sees only a waving, purplish curtain of distortion. Entering this freely will result in immediate death and the disintegration of the one so foolish to do so.

The bone figures are, in fact--*bone golems*! AC2 HD6 (44-43-32-41 hit points) Move 120' (40') Attacks 2, or 3 or 4 (see below) Damage 1-6x4, or 1-6x2 & 1-10, or 1-10x2 Save as F4 Morale 12 Neutral XP Value 500 each.

With four arms each, the "creatures" will attack with either four short weapons; or two and one large weapon; or two large weapons. These may be short swords, hand axes, maces, normal swords, two handed swords and pole-arms, as the DM prefers. Note, once a golem kills an adversary, it will stop combat and pick the fallen one up and carry it to the huge mouth on the east wall, and jump in. This process continually produces replacement golems. Once entered, the bones of the victim are used to regenerate the creature, and it will appear, coming back the way it left, with its former maximum hit points, ready for duty, in 3 Turns!

Behind the throne is a \$ door. And the two pit-traps within the corridor beyond are simple drop devices, which plunge those caught 120' to their likely death. At the east end of the narrow halls is another \$ door leading toward the rest of the temple.

There is no treasure to be found in this chamber per se. However, the weapons of the golems are those of former victims. The DM must therefore determine if any of the weapons used are magical in nature, and of what strengths.

16. Stone-trap. A "living" block of stone will begin to flip itself along the corridor in an attempt to crush those who are at the locked door (see map.) It does not roll or slide or walk--it flips! It cannot pass through the doorways.

It can be killed, with blunt weapons doing their normal damage against the creature. Bladed ones risk a 50% chance (-5% per magical plus) per hit upon it of breaking. Even if they make this %, they do only 1 hit point of damage plus the weapon's bonus and any strength bonus.

Living Stone. AC0 HD 30 (150 hit points) Move 10' (10') Attacks 1 crush per ten foot square area. Damage d12x10 Save as F10 (Note: it is immune to all spells except those that inflict physical damage.) Morale 12 XP Value 10,500

There is nothing inside its lair but rock chips and dust and bits of broken metal.

17. True treasure room. The floor of this chamber is 3' thick in coins--real coins, making movement within awkward. (Characters must roll their dexterity or less on a d20 or become stuck for 1-3 rounds; each move) Scattered across the top of this are 2-12 weapons, 1-6 shields, 1-6 suits of armor, 3-36 potion vials, 1-4 rings, and 1-6 miscellaneous items. Some may or may not be magical; though the potions certainly have some type of power. This is left to the DM to determine. It can, of course, be ignored.

The guardian of this horde, sitting atop a huge pile motionless at the north end of the chamber, is a *Gargantuan Gargoyle!* At 15' tall, his size is impressive even as he squats! He will spring into action if attacked, or the party enters the chamber. AC1, HD32 (192 hit points) Move 180' (60')/300' (100') Flying Attacks 4, Damage 4-12/4-12/4-24/4-16, Save as F32, Morale 11 Chaotic XP Value 10,000. Note: only magical weapons hit him.

If the party defeats the “guardian” and wants to count coins, they will need about five days to come up with the totals: 250,000CP, 125,000SP, 125,000EP, 50,000GP, 5,000PP. If they do not wish to do so, it is feasible they could count up to 900 coins in a Turn.

If the party spends the time searching, they will find what appears to be a key-hole in the middle of the south wall at about 4' from the floor. If they put the bone key into this and turn it they will open a dimensional passage that lets them walk safely through and into the chamber at #18 (through the face!)

18. Inner Fane. This is the true temple. Oddly, it is very drab and plain. Eight black pillars 2' in diameter and 15' high form two ranks which run north to south. At the southern end of the chamber is the only apparent way in or out: a huge face carved into the wall like that of #4-C! At the north end is a raised platform, accessed by three arced steps. Atop this is an altar.

The walls of this chamber, unlike those in #15, depict a race of two-headed creatures in scenes of servitude, to some kind of deity. These panels are six feet wide, and twelve feet high, mounted on the walls at roughly three feet off the floor. They circumnavigate the room.

Those who have suffered from “visions” inflicted upon them due to the traps encountered earlier will sense a great familiarity to the place. They will begin to feel very at ease, and under no threat.

Though the party will be ready for some kind of “finale-showdown” here, they will actually be disappointed. There is nothing for them to fight. Instead, after four rounds the chamber will grow dark-purplish, despite whatever light sources they have. For those who have not already “seen” the *visions*, their heads will begin to ache, and their eyes, nose and mouths will begin to burn as the smell of sulfur fills them.

After three more rounds of this, a purplish fog will appear above the altar, and a vortex of sound will swirl about the chamber, until the PCs realize they are hearing words, and can finally make sense of them. Out of the fog a voice will speak to them.

Those who are true, kneel unto me. Those who doubt, be-gone!

Then, the altar will glow a bright orange-yellow for one turn.

Any one who steps up to and kneels before it will receive a sort of tap on the head from a kind of, shifting purple appendage reaching out of the fog. That person will then either have two heads or become a mindless zombie! There is a Save against this (See notes on this to follow) and those who do not make a Save Versus Death Ray will instantly grow a second head, or lose all their Intelligence and Wisdom! To determine which is simple: those who have suffered from the “visions” will grow an additional head, while those who haven’t, will lose their Intelligence & Wisdom, becoming mindless servants of the temple. Those who **make** their Save Throw will simply remain paralyzed for 1-12 Turns.

Those now with two heads can pass safely through any of the mouth-portals, automatically going to the chamber they desire. The ones unaffected are in trouble, for there is no keyhole in this chamber, and re-entering the mouth holds for them the same risk as before.

Clerics with two heads will not wish to leave; preferring to stay and become priests of GOWASHU. Non-clerics with two heads are free to come and go, but will always return to the temple on the fall and spring equinox to participate in a sacrifice of local village girls. All "two-heads" are forever Chaotic after this. Those who avoided either fate will have to deal with those who didn't. Magic-users who attempt to remove the "condition", by means of *Dispel Magic*, will find their power challenged by that of a 20th level resistance. But, it **is** remotely possible to restore their friends to normal.

Clerics of GOWASHU will eventually learn that the organs of the sacrificed girls are what the deity wants. Needing these, placed upon the altar, the deity is trying to take on a mortal form. The one thing *She* lacks is the human ability of reproduction. Once this is complete, she will form Herself from the elements of the earth and become a mortal woman.

The only survivor of a group of space travelers, She is trapped now in a negative space dimension within the swamp. It is only after 2,000 years that she has been able to crudely communicate with the native life forms through the rituals inside the temple. The shrine itself was built when several shaman of local tribes witnessed the crash of Her spacecraft in the swamp millennia ago. Thinking it a sign from their own deity they erected the temple, and soon fell into ritual sacrifice. This "fed" her essence, eventually turning her and all who succumbed to madness, and to evil.

And why two-heads? This is her attempt to gain control over the physical power to procreate. Her followers are guinea pigs. When the first she touches does not become deformed in this manner, she will know it is time. (There is a 1-% chance per PC/LVL who is touched of it NOT deforming them. If that is the case, *Lithia* will then begin creating her physical form in the swamp out of the elements. This will take one week. By then, the PCs should be long gone, if they are not a bunch of "two heads"! In which case, they will remain and worship her.)

Conclusion

Obviously, how much of the back-story the characters are to receive should be determined by the DM. Those who become two-headed clerics will soon know at least what has been outlined above. Anything more than that will have to be added and created by the DM.

This concludes the adventure of The Temple of the Skull

* Written & ©2008 by RC Pinnell

SPELL-MAGIC & MAGIC ITEMS

WEAPONS

1. All magical weapons must make a Saving Throw Versus Disentegrate when being used or they simply become *Ethereal*, losing all physical form during the attack in which they are used. (That round) Thus, they convey no damage at all upon their intended target. The items may add their magic plusses to the roll; with multiple-purpose items using the highest plus minus 1.
2. Artifacts and Relics are not bound by the above.
3. Missile-type devices have all of their ranges reduced to minimum. This includes Wands as well.

ARMOR

4. All magical armor must make a Save throw as described above when the wearer is being attacked. If the roll fails the armor becomes *Ethereal* during that round, thus reducing the wearer's AC rating.
5. The above applies to magical rings of protection.
6. Artifacts and Relics are not bound by the above.

MISC. ITEMS

7. Potions. Antidote, Defense (see armor above), Fire Resistance, Giant Strength, Healing, Strength, Super-healing, all function within the Temple. All others do not!
8. Wands. Enemy Detection, Fear, Illusion, Detection (any), Negation, Paralyzing and Polymorph do not function. All others do.
9. Staffs. Commanding, Dispelling, of the Druid, of an Element, of Power, of Wizardry, do not function in the Temple. All others do, subject to any previous restrictions above. [Note: the Staff of Withering functions as a Staff of Super-healing upon denizens within the Temple. Otherwise, it does not function in behalf of the PCs!]
10. Rods. Rod of Health, Rod of Weaponry (subject to "weapons" above) function within the Temple. All others do not!
11. Rings. Fire Resistance, Protection (see "armor" above), function within the Temple. All others do not! [Note: a Ring of Wishes is subject to Lithia's will. The DM must determine how well or not the item functions.]
12. Miscellaneous Items. Elf cloak, Elf boots, Gauntlets of OP, Girdle of Giant Strength, Lamp of Long Burning, Ointments, will function within the Temple. All others do not!

SPELLS

13. All spells which attempt to provide inter-dimensional transportation (i.e., *Teleport*, *Word of Recall*) are subject to the same roll of the d12 as if the caster jumped into the open mouths at the various locations within the Temple.
14. All spells that attempt to *charm*, *control*, *summon*, or move objects about will not function within the temple.

15. All spells that attempt to “commune” with a higher power, or “create” materials out of thin air, will not function within the Temple.
16. All spells which attempt to *detect*, *find*, or otherwise “perceive” through supernatural means will not function.
17. All spells that attempt to *restore* lost abilities or energy-levels will not function.
18. All spells that draw on *elemental* or other “outside” powers to inflict damage will not function within the Temple.
19. All spells that attempt to *alter* a person or thing’s natural form do not function within the Temple.
20. All spells that attempt to “create magical barriers” of some kind (physical or otherwise) do not function within the Temple.

REGAINING SPELLS

Only 1st and 2nd level cleric spells can be regained within the Temple. All other spells, once cast, are irretrievable until one is outside the Temple. Magic-user spells do not apply.