

Snakeriders of the ARA DONDO

by Tim Kask

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A remarkably deadly adventure for 5-7 players of moderate level
For use with most fantasy role playing systems

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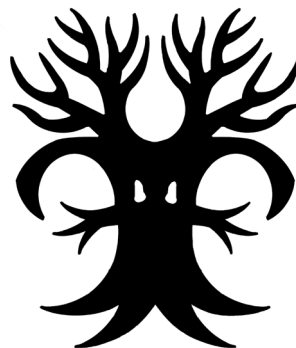
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Author's Preface

Welcome to my world, Makanda. Without quite knowing it, I seem to have created a world. I did not set out to do that, but in putting my stories of adventure down into the form of roleplaying adventures, it just sort of happened.

I never really moved beyond what is now called “*OD&D*,” even though I was heavily involved in the formation of the *Advanced* version. As the original rules were not really rules, but guidelines, I lived by that dictum. They were all “house-ruled” games then because that was what we preached in the very beginning. A major factor in taking *The Strategic Review** from newsletter to full-fledged magazine in *The Dragon** (the original name when I started it) was to make more ideas available to Game Masters, who clearly have the hardest job of all.

I have written my adventures (or modules or scenarios or whatever else you choose to call them; I think of them as adventures), with the aim of giving the Game Master all the ingredients to whip up a dandy adventure stew. Each group that tries it will add their own seasoning to the recipe, and that is as it should be. Take what I have written and make it your own. A good cook knows how to modify a recipe to suit the palate of his diners; I hope that is what you do with this.

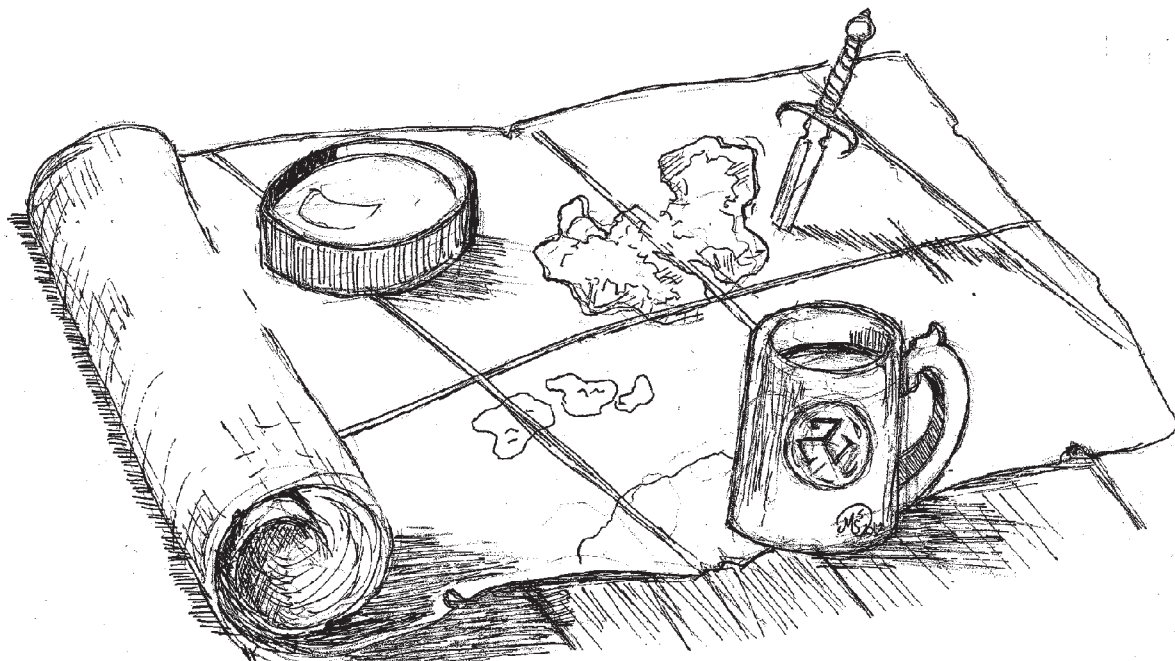
I have always held that the story that we create in each session at the table is what matters. I have provided a detailed plot outline. It will be up to each individual group to write the dialogue on their own, in their own style. They will create the shared memories. Whatever system you use is immaterial; my viewpoint is that the system is there simply to facilitate the fun. If, or I should say when, a rule gets in the way of the group's fun, forget the rule, or change it, or pretend to forget it, but don't get so hung up on minutia that you lose sight of the fun.

We have attempted to present this in two forms. The first is immersion into the world and those pertinent peculiarities or anomalies that affect the adventure unique to Makanda are delineated in the material. On the other hand, if you choose to drop this into an existing world, we think we have that covered as well. In any event, you are encouraged to tinker. Take what I have described in broad terms and adapt that to whatever system you use. At some future date I hope to publish extensively about my world; I certainly have written enough bits and pieces about it that the book is already partially formed.

While my world is certainly fantastical, my influences go back to pulp stories of giant bugs and huge animals. I try to introduce something new in each of my adventures, but the lesson to be learned is even ordinary things can kill the unwary character. Be wary.

Timothy J. Kask
Groundhog Day 2012

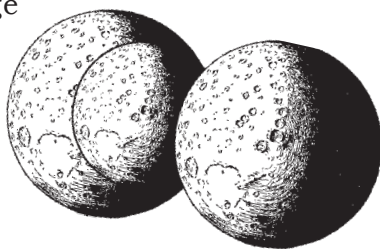
* *D&D*, *The Strategic Review*, and *Dragon* (magazine) are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast Inc., and these historical references are of course not a challenge to their ownership thereof in any way.



The World of Makanda

Many of my adventures are set in the campaign world of Makanda, which has its own unique magical and mundane physics, and this adventure is no exception. In order to make this adventure readily adaptable to an existing campaign, however, some allowances have been made. There are specific physics that come into play in the area enumerated in this adventure, and the moons play a large part.

As Game Master, you will need to decide what particular, rare, and imminent phenomena involving the moons (or single moon) will occur. It could be a planetary alignment with the moon that causes greater gravitational effects (like tides), a strange coloration caused by other stellar juxtaposition, or even a planetary cycle that causes strange lunar effects. In any instance, however, this strange lunar phenomenon is critical to the story, and the Game Master is cautioned to change neither its timing nor its prominence. Simply alter the actual lunar effect to whatsoever might best suit your campaign.



Other changes to the standard physics of the universe occur in this adventure. Some of the monsters are not what they seem *in re* health, strength and the like. Due to the unsettled nature of the entire island, magic may not always work as expected, or even work at all. The Carved Pillars are an example outlined later of a series of artifacts that has a dampening effect. There are some areas of the world in which magic works very poorly, if at all and others where it seems to work almost too well. For the purpose of this adventure, we will simply refer to areas as “magic-lean” and “magic-fat” if they hold any aberrations.

In many areas of Makanda the mana fields have not stabilized since the advent of the cataclysm that reformed the world. Some areas fairly burst with this energy that is manipulated by practitioners of the arcane arts, while others seem bereft of any appreciable amounts. Because of this, the use of magic can have some interesting results. In “fat” areas, healing spells may have greater efficacy, in “lean” areas less-than-normal results should be expected. How this is adapted to your campaign is up to you. On Makanda it is not unusual for spells to have longer or shorter durations, or variable success.



How to Use This Adventure

“Flavor text” is printed boldface. This is intended to be read aloud or otherwise shared with the players in whatever manner you wish. Feel free to edit or embellish at your discretion.

Regular adventure information is printed in a normal type face.

Facts that are important and relevant to the Game Master in particular, and which must be discovered by the characters, are printed in italics.

Snakeriders is designed for use with a variety of fantasy role-playing systems, and, as such, a definition of the statistics outlining the combat capabilities of the monstrous encounters contained within these pages is necessary.

Standard abbreviations used throughout for stats are defined as follows. AH indicates the rating for an Average Human. Those using percentiles are easily convertible to many published game systems; for example, when using a 1d20-based system, 5% = 1 pip.

Power describes the summary skill rating of a creature or encounter and reflects its level in terms of comparative ability. AH Power is 1-5%.

Health indicates the amount of damage a creature can endure before dying. Normally this is 1-2 per point of Power. AH health is 4-6.

Move describes how far the creature moves per second, measured in feet. AH is 8-12.

Defense measures the ability of a creature to protect itself against attack. A defense of 50% indicates that a perfect but unmodified die roll indicates success. AH defense is 1-5%.

Init indicates the bonus a creature receives due to its speed, primarily to determine whether its action will occur prior to that of an opponent. (In some game systems this

is called an initiative bonus.) Init of 100% is reserved for those who are blindingly fast. Init for AH is zero.

Damage is the amount deducted from the opponent's Health score when the creature successfully attacks. Each attack form is listed, often by preference, with and/or used to clarify multiple options. Parenthetical numbers, e.g. (x2), indicate multiple attacks of one type. AH damage (with fists or feet) is 1-2 points.

Special is a listing of any special abilities, attacks, and defenses a creature might possess, to be used at your discretion. A superlative expert in any Special ability would again have a score of 100%. AH has none.

Demeanor describes the general attitude (and often intelligence) of the creature.



Background for the Game Master

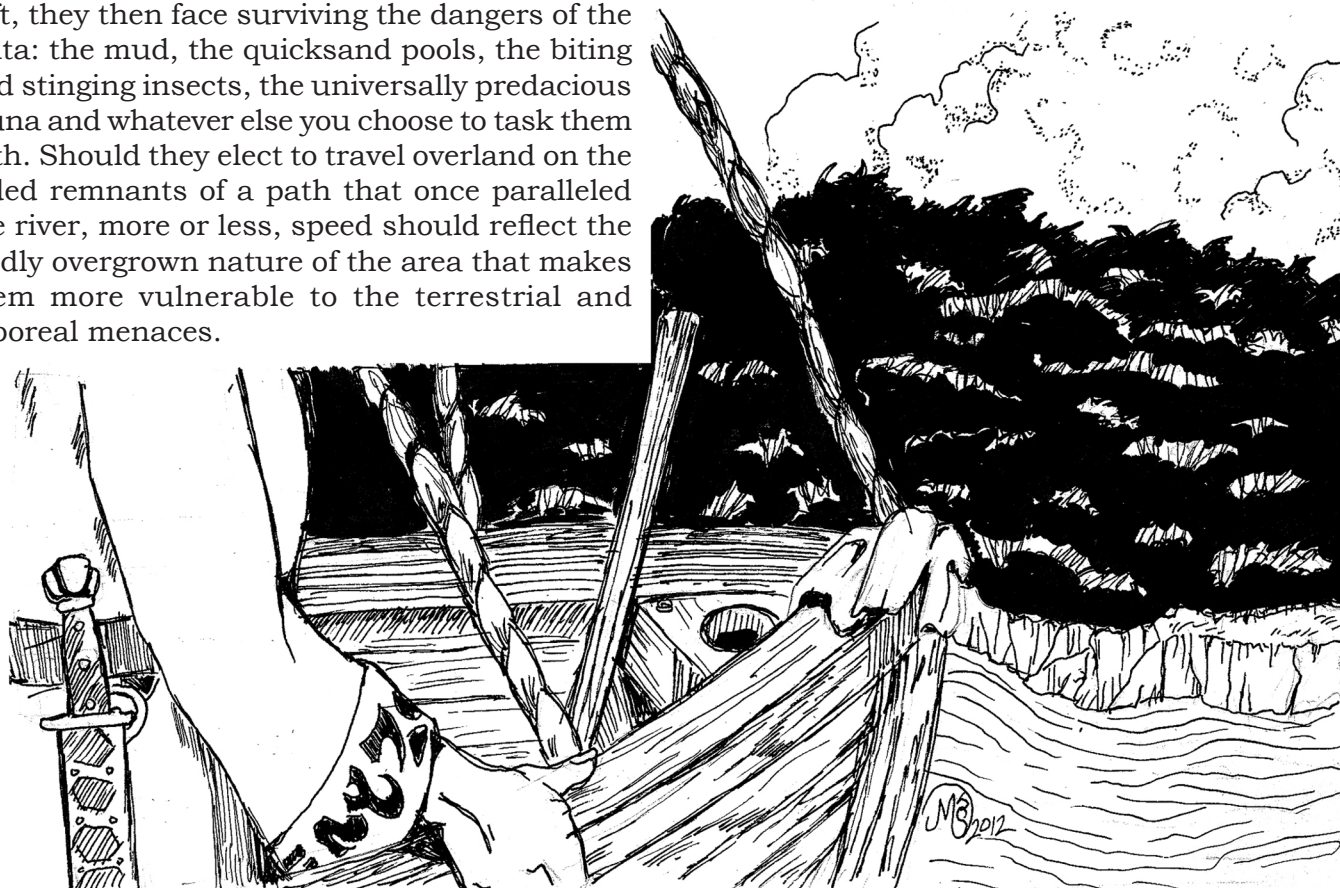
This adventure involves a snake-cult temple thought long abandoned, a mysterious and long-thought- missing race of fey and a ritual that could open a rift into Makanda and loose a demon upon the world.

Snakeriders of the Aradondo has several steps, each involving the attainment of a goal. The first will be getting to the island; the characters are presented with the option to fly there; they need not be forced to fly if this adventure is not transpiring on Makanda. Should they choose to hazard the pirate- and slaver- infested waters between the mainland and Aradondo Island, feel free to strand them somewhere on a sand-spit in their smallclothes, or any other horribly painful result you choose.

Their second goal is to discover or choose a mode of transport inland. If they choose to build a raft, they then face surviving the dangers of the delta: the mud, the quicksand pools, the biting and stinging insects, the universally predacious fauna and whatever else you choose to task them with. Should they elect to travel overland on the faded remnants of a path that once paralleled the river, more or less, speed should reflect the wildly overgrown nature of the area that makes them more vulnerable to the terrestrial and arboreal menaces.

Their third goal, that of traversing the territory they must to reach the ruined temple, can be as arduous and ghastly as you choose. Keep in mind that the island is protein-starved, hence the lack of small game, birds of any size, primates in the trees or any other prey. Virtually everything wants to eat the characters but will just as soon eat their own kind.

Their fourth goal, finding the temple, is marked by the well worn path from the landing to the remnants. Depending upon developments up to that point, the characters could see all the defenders of the temple arrayed against the party and waiting, or nothing at all. Their fifth and final goal is to determine what is transpiring and to take appropriate action.





The Mysterious Messenger

If you are using this adventure on the world of Makanda, the party will be approached by Lady Finnoula, an emissary of the Spectral Conclave. At first approach, she appears as a very pretty, very simple girl with a tale of woe about looking for “good-hearted folk that might help her,” and something about her tale and seeming innocence and guilelessness (perhaps a subtle spell) convince each member of the party to meet at a certain tavern, *The Hairy Frog*, where she spins her tale and reveals her true identity. (If you elect to adapt this to a world of your choosing, the “hook” is up to you.)

Finnoula is a near-mythical sorcerer of the highest level of skills. Unimaginably old, Finnoula has been rumored to have died several times over the centuries. Finnoula is immune to any sort of mental control, whether magical or mundane.

Of all the mages whose area of study was inter-world travels, Finnoula was the only one to discern a method for retrieving living creatures from other dimensional realms. Besides several exotic species of plants and herbs, Finnoula was able to bring back simple animals. The creature Finnoula refers to as her “Flyer” is a very simple organism, despite its great bulk. (In private she calls him “Rusty.”)

On our world, the creature is able to achieve flight by causing a slight temperature rise in the internal nonflammable gasses that give it

lift. It can then use its natural buoyancy to take advantage of the currents of wind that surround Makanda.

The creature is possessed of a very dim, ox-like demeanor. When Finnoula first devised her gondola-like craft to hang under her Flyer, she found that it took constant attention of the most minimal sort. She soon trained a primate she calls “Louie” to follow her simple commands in directing the beast’s locomotion. Louie can read a compass to the extent that he can follow a course. He is also schooled in finding the right air currents to facilitate travel. Within the tiny pilot house in the gondola is a device that helps the Flyer warm its innards and maintain altitude in especially cold air.

The Flyer’s odd shape (it most resembles a giant sausage) and slow speed do make it vulnerable to harassment, or even the occasional attack, by large raptors. In response, Finnoula paid the arms masters of Dwarfheim to build two very special ballistae. She then mounted them on pintles, fore and aft, with clear 180-degree fields of fire. They re-cock themselves and can fire twice per turn with +20% accuracy.

Rusty has several vine-like appendages at his front; each is covered by hundreds of nematocysts that can deliver a large jolt of a neurotoxin capable of instantly paralyzing a creature the size of a large plow-horse. Two or more contacts can be fatal to just about anything.

Finnoula will offer the characters a magical Amulet that provides a 5% bonus to both Defense rating and the chance of avoiding magical effects. However, the wearer of the Amulet is magically (and unknowingly) compelled to bring her a 200-pound pillar from the innermost (third) ring of such things said to surround a certain temple.



Louie is instructed to take the characters to the delta and drop them off. Finnoula fears that the dampening effects of the pillars could cause her



to lose contact with Louie and control of Rusty. They have immutable instructions to deliver the party to the beach at the delta and to return forthwith. Attempts to suborn or influence Louie should have serious consequences, as should any tinkering with the pilot house. Anyone intentionally harming either Louie or Rusty will earn the undying enmity of Lady Finnoula and a horrid retribution.

Special Note: Rusty is organic, and can suffer injury. Serious injury could lead to a loss of altitude with disastrous effects. Magical curing could be used if the characters think of it, or they may have a reduced or magnified effect, all being left to your discretion as Game Master.

Finnoula's Flyer

Power: 50%

Defense: 55%

Health: 110

Move: 12 (flight only)

Init: 0%

Damage: Tentacle 6d10

Special: Flight, neuro-toxin, and ballista (see description on previous page)

Demeanor: The creature is possessed of a very dim, ox-like demeanor.

In any case, Finnoula, or her counterpart in your campaign, will deliver the following message to the party when she arrives. Adjust the text here as necessary to suit your campaign world.

The Mission

There are troubling signs coming from the recently-formed island of Aradondo. There are thaumaturgical and cosmological disturbances that seem to be centered there. It has come to the attention of those who sent me that there was once, very long ago, a temple in that part of what was once the Aradondo Rain Forest, dedicated to a despicable cult of snake-worshippers that practiced human sacrifice and cannibalism. After the snake cult was destroyed it was discovered that they had tried to erect a Rift of some sort in the Inner Sanctum of the snake-cult temple.

The Krin were charged with guarding the temple and seeing that none trespassed.

It was widely held that the cultists had not completed assembly of all the necessary components to activate the rift before the Great Rending.

The ancient tomes tell us that such a rift could only operate if all four elements, earth, air, wind and fire are bound in the form of mana-laden Core Stones, and a precise alignment is achieved.

Your mission is to journey to the island of Aradondo and investigate the following:

What is causing these disturbances?

Who is manipulating them?

Why have the Krin allowed this?

You are to render the rift unusable and acquire any Core Stones that may be present and bring them to our agent. As usual, this mission is "...and found." Anything you acquire in the execution of this mission is yours to keep, within the parameters set forth by the Spectral Conclave concerning safety and wellbeing. You will be outfitted and provisioned by me.

You have 19 days, until the Feast of the Moons (the triple full moon that only occurs once every 209.1 years). On that night, the barrier between our world and the realm of the others is at its most nebulous. Normally, the passage might be made aboard a swift ship in roughly a week. However, as winds are capricious this time of year, and time is of the essence, I have agreed to provide a different type of transport for your urgent journey.



Source of Evil



If you are running this in a world specific to your own campaign, the emissary could be one of the following (choose either or create another):

A. Priests of the local king have sensed the buildup of evil in the area of Aradondo Island and their auguries lead them to present you with “The Mission.”

B. An insane priestess is found babbling in an alley near the docks, raving nonsense about ‘snakeriders’ before dying. She is found to be carrying an odd note (see “*The Mission*,” previous page) and wearing a necklace that resembles a snake and bears a large ruby worth a small fortune.

The Corruption

The Snake Temple is older than living memory, and its origins are shrouded in the vast and murky mists of bygone eras. The temple, dedicated to a ritualistic snake cult, existed when the Aradondo Rain forest was a single jungle spanning thousands of square miles. It existed before the great cataclysm that sundered Aradondo Island from the mainland.

Evil is insidious. Evil never sleeps. Eons ago, Evil, in the guise of the Demon Lord Dumoktruntro, very nearly gained a foothold in Makanda in the “snake temple” in the Great Rain Forest of the Aradondo. The *Spectral Conclave*¹, the nine most powerful wielders of the Arts Arcane, has studied the ancient lore and accounts, what few remain, of that time before the Rending when the snake cult was thought to be eradicated. The enormously powerful spells that were aimed at the temple and its adherents were specifically designed to instantly slay all living creatures within a precise area, timed for a great ceremony where all would be present.

The spell worked as intended and obliterated every trace of the cultists. It was then that the Krin were charged with guarding the former temple and barring admittance to all. Then came the Rending, and with it, the disruption of the mana throughout Makanda. The great Aradondo Rain Forest was rent asunder, surrounded by new seas and oceans, isolated from the rest of civilization. Thus, they escaped the horrors of

that followed in the aftermath of the Rending.

(For non-Makanda campaigns, suffice to say that the snake cult was eradicated thousands of years ago and a watch was placed upon the temple to prevent any return of its demonic patron.)

The Krin, an ancient species of unknown power, were assigned to guard the temple. Over time they were corrupted, as we shall see further on.

They also, unknowingly, were living in a mana-poor area, and that mana was tainted. The demon lord was at the center of the cult, cleverly disguised in the form of a giant serpent. He suborned a number of the first adherents and made them into his tools and dupes. The demon lord manipulated his stooges into performing a Dark Rite that opened a small crack into his realm. The crack was not yet wide enough for him to transit when the Rending occurred, but demon lords are nothing if not patient. It was wide enough for him to send through, one at a time, the beasts called **dumokka** (explained in detail in the next section). They were sent through the crack in the form of idols; they were demonic constructs and therefore not “alive,” and so escaped the deadly spells.

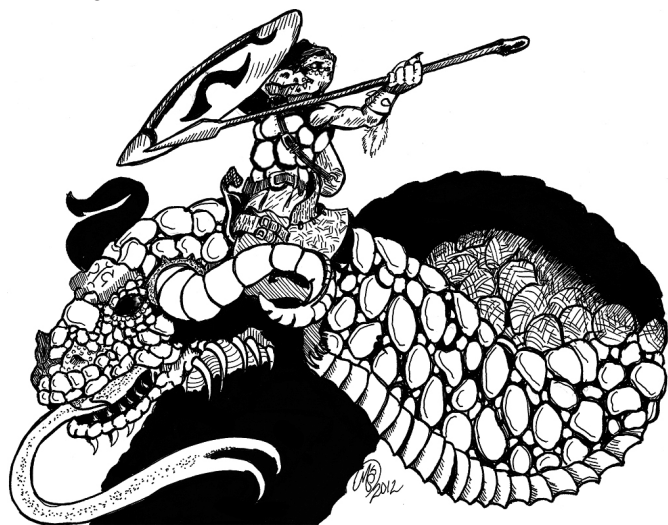
The tainted mana leaking from the crack gradually brought the dumokka to “life.” As the Krin never went into the temple, they had no idea what transpired within. They lived in

¹ The Spectral Conclave came into being at the end of the Great Cleansing for the express purpose of never allowing anyone to tamper with the mana of Makanda again; they wanted no repeat of the Folly of Kwalish which triggered the Great Rending, leading to all the subsequent horrors and deaths.

harmony with the rain forest and enjoyed an affinity with reptiles. The Krin were unknowingly being subjected to mind-control efforts as the dumokka sought to suborn and corrupt them.

When the first Krin grasped the horns of the dumokka, their fate and future were sealed. It took several generations, but eventually the dumokka had completely subverted the Krin, transforming them into unknowing confederates. The corrupted mana, like slow-acting poison in a water supply, began to erode the mission for which the Krin had been delegated. Formerly the guards and guardians, the Krin instead became accomplices and enablers. With a maximum lifespan of two score years, it did not take many generations for the dumokka to completely obliterate the primary purpose for the Krin presence in the Aradondo.

Now the Krin act solely at the behest of their slave masters, unaware that they have been enslaved. The Bonded have for some time been selected by the dumokka solely on the malleability of the Krin's mind, and the ease by which it can be controlled. When protein sources became scarce, it was the dumokka that implanted the "custom" of consuming their dead, wrapping it in pseudo-religious mumbo-jumbo. Just as the Krin have become the unknowing slaves of the dumokka, so too have the dumokka become the abject minions and tools of the demon lord.



With the Feast of the Moons fast approaching, this is the moment for which the demon has long waited.

The Dumokka

A dumok (singular; plural as above) is one of a constructed "species" not native to this plane about which very little is known. What few "facts" exist are suspect, due to their extreme age and several language translations, and may be anecdotal or even wrong. Demonic constructs are purpose-created organisms constructed of the "stuff" of the plane they are built upon. They are somewhat limited in initiative and free-thinking, as they are generally purpose-built to perform one specific action or task (or at very most two or three) on behalf of its controller.

A full-sized adult dumok can exceed sixteen feet in length and five feet in diameter, though somewhat smaller would seem to be the norm. It is very fast on dry ground and an excellent swimmer, and some smaller specimens can even climb larger trees, though clumsily.

It is believed that the dumokka were constructed by the demon lord Dumoktruntro to be a perverse sort of anti-evangelist. They have mental and telepathic powers that are capable of robbing victims of volition and making them terribly susceptible to suggestion, and the ability to broadcast these formidable powers over a distance. It is believed that "Dumo" intended them to be advance missionaries of some sort, converting the masses to his enslaving worship and veneration. Like all demonic constructs, the dumokka have both the strengths and weaknesses of their creator. Further, they are sterile and cannot reproduce normally. While a dumok is nearly² impervious to fire, as so many demonic constructs must be, it is also very vulnerable to electricity³.

All things of substance abrade, tear, bruise or get punctured; inevitably the organism ages and some part or another gives out and it

2 Impervious to normal fire; +45% resistance to fire-based magic and dragon fire

3 -20% resistance to electrical effects and spells



The Dumokka



ceases to function. The dumokka have evolved a novel method of replacing worn-out physical shells (what we would think of as bodies). As a dumok nears the end of its functionality, it can produce one “egg.” It is not an egg as we would think of it, a “new life.” It is rather something of a replication of itself that will take several years to develop, after it leaves the original body, to the point that it will leave the “shell” and then spend several years attaining full size. The replica will spontaneously exit upon the cessation of the body’s normal function, retaining the memories and knowledge that it possessed at the time of its formation. From the time it leaves the shell until it reaches full size it will be constantly in the company of a specific Krin, its “Bondmate,” known to it since the Time of Choosing.

A dumok has a mouthful of very sharp teeth, all angled toward the throat. In addition, it has extremely well-developed jaw muscles and delivers a crushing bite. Its bony head is surmounted by two horn-like projections, they being the source of the psychic waves of thought-control that they project. All Bonded dumokka are in continuous mental contact with each other. When a Bonded Krin grasps the “horns” it is then linked with every other dumok and every other Bonded astride their own dumokka.

Dumok

Power: 40%

Defense: 60% and immune to normal weapons

Health: 50

Move: 8

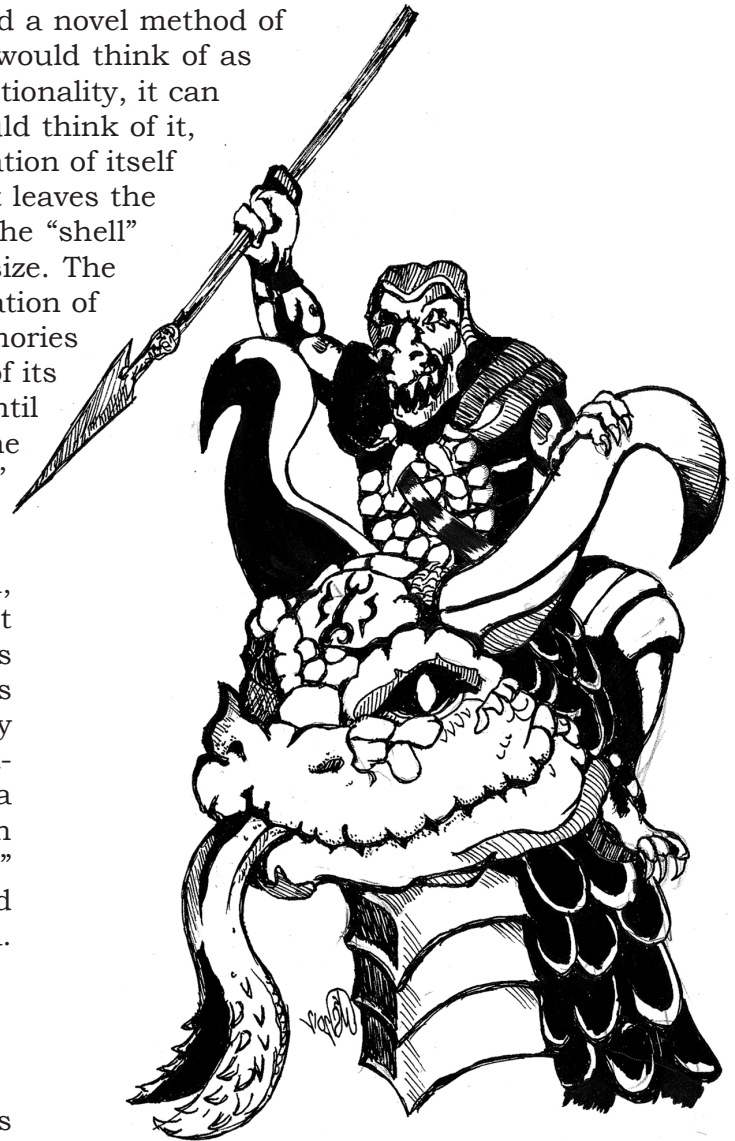
Init: +35%

Damage: Bite 8d6+3 and Tongue flick 2d6

Special: A Dumok has an extremely long (6-7') tongue, and the back of the tip is covered with razor-edged scales. Once each 6 combat rounds it can also spray a very corrosive poison mist⁴ in a cloud about 12' square. A weapon must bear an enchantment to damage a dumok.

Demeanor: Intelligent and aggressive

Appearance: A dumok resembles a very large stocky snake with sweeping horns atop the skull.



There are eleven dumokka on the island. Two are in “egg” stage (Health 8), two are underdeveloped (Health 33), and seven are full-sized, ranging from 11 to 14 feet in length (Health 50).

Dumokka were constructed to have mental powers with a very powerful hypnotic effect. A victim who looks into the whirling eyes of a dumok can become zombie-like automatons unless an avoidance check vs. Poison succeeds. If it is failed, the victim can then be Controlled⁵ by the dumok and its Bonded.

4 If caught in the cloud of mist, check for poison resistance with a -20% penalty. A third of the mist damage (or half if the victim is unarmored) will not heal naturally and cannot be magically Cured. The mist inflicts corrosive damage to armor (details at the Game Master’s discretion).

5 As a Beastmaster’s skill



The Krin: the Stuff of Myth and Legend

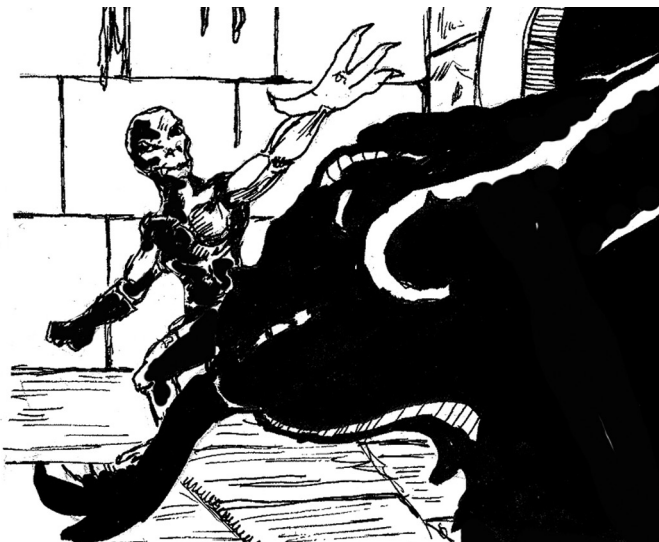
There are three extraordinary types of Krin: **Beastmaster**, **Shaman**, and **Bondmate**.

The **Shaman** class keeps its numbers small and their secrets closely guarded; their training is rigorous and of every five that begin training, only two succeed in becoming a shaman. The training consists of memorizing charms and minor spells as well as learning to wield the control-stones they all wear around their necks. They use these stones as *foci*, enabling them to direct their mental controls over all things reptilian. Their final trials and tests are all too frequently fatal; this involves the training of their personal flock of hoverbirds. The greater the power, the larger and better controlled the flock. Krin shamans wear a pierced, ordinary-looking stone around their necks; this stone allows them to control all reptiles while rendering their person inviolate. Most of them also carry a Paralysis Wand.

“Beastmaster” appears to be a hereditary position; it is not known to be fact, but it may be genetically linked. The closest corollary to a Beastmaster of the Krin would be a woodsman or ranger among humans. Unlike common rangers, Krin Beastmasters learn to charm and otherwise control the rather terrifying denizens of the jungles in which they dwell, keeping them away from Krin enclaves. They had a special bond with the giant carnivorous apes once thought to roam the Aradondo.

Beastmasters wear moonstones on their brows to direct mental commands. Each has a curious device exclusive to their sept, the secret of which is closely guarded. This consists of a wooden handle, much like the haft of a large knife, with a large smoky crystal attached in a lattice of fine wires. From the end opposite the handle is a six inch spike of dull silvery metal; further inspection would reveal a small hammer-like device that can be made to strike the crystal.

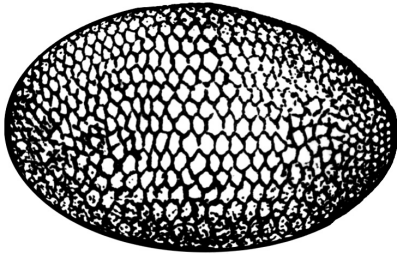
The striker causes the crystal to generate an electrical spark which is then boosted by the platinum spike on the end. This device can deliver a lightning-like jolt that can inflict 2d4 damage, causing humanoids to be severely disoriented for several combat rounds thereafter. It is normally used to train the giant carnivorous apes and discourage the enormous crocodiles from going where they are not wanted. Any character with Intelligence 12 or higher that has seen one used is capable of potentially figuring out how to use the device. The Game Master should, however, decide upon a minimum Dexterity for its safe operation, with a small chance of characters zapping themselves.





The Bonded and the Choosing Ritual

When a dumok begins to sense its end approaching, the “egg” begins to form. By this time, the dumok’s Bondmate is also approaching its average two score years. The dumok must then choose its own new Bondmate for its next version of itself. This choosing ritual takes place every 5.1 years, when two moons are full—the primary moon, traditionally known as *Mother Luna* and the largest of the three moons of Makanda, and the smallest moon, known as *Little Sister*. (In settings other than Makanda, feel free to manipulate this cycle as you choose.)



All of the Krin-candidates of the correct age are instructed in the methods of mounting and controlling a dumok for several weeks. On the appointed night they are ushered into the dumok warrens and tested and inspected by the dumokka nearing the end of their present body. Those candidates deemed unsuitable are allowed to leave unmolested; a few unfortunates never return from the Ritual. It is rumored that those wretches are adjudged flawed and eaten by the dumokka.

The successful candidates are Bonded with the dumok that chose them, and become their riders. Once the “egg” is produced, they keep it constant company, building the psychic skills they will use with their Bonded when it “hatches.” Physical contact creates an instant communication bridge between all Bonded Krin, and becomes part of the collective consciousness possessed by all the dumokka. As the dumok grows and periodically molts its progressively larger scales, the Bonded Krin collects and sorts them until enough have been collected to form the suit of dumok-scale armor they all wear. This armor gives the rider all of the armoring and resistances of its “steed,” and further strengthens the telepathic bridge.

Innate Abilities

The Krin have a collective, hive-type mentality. They can sense the primitive-brain emotions of their kind over great distances; they can sense fear, pain, alarm and the like in a general, emphatic way. Krin can out-climb monkeys in the trees, which may explain why there are no monkeys left in the Aradondo.

Bondmates and Beastmasters are immune to spells that would rob them of their own volition. Ordinary Krin gain a +35% bonus when resisting such mind-control magic.

A Beastmaster has a base 75% chance to *Control the Mind* of any animal within visual range. This ability enables simple nonverbal commands, such as “Attack” (Them or That), “Go Away,” and the like.

The Krin are not a numerous race, with only a few births each year into any of the castes. Regardless of the birth caste, all Krin young ones grow up knowing that they will face a Choosing and that not all of them are likely to survive.

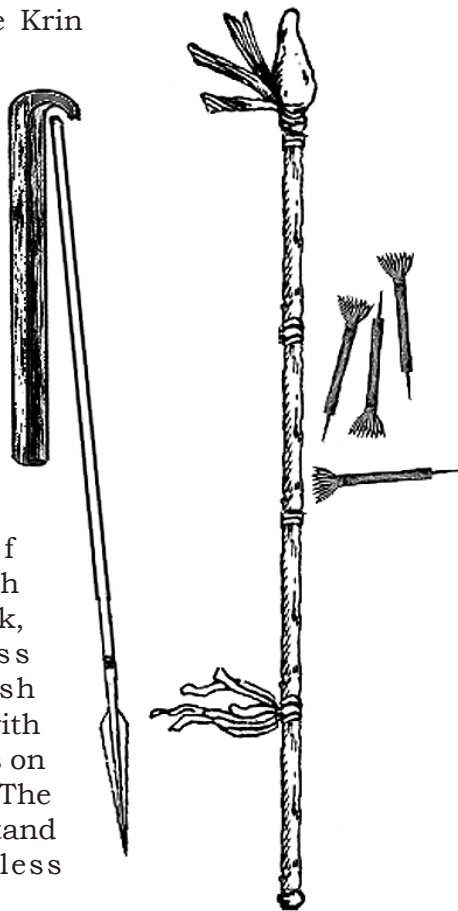


Krin Weaponry

All Krin juveniles receive training to learn to throw the short javelin with which they hunt. The weapon is two feet in length, but the Krin use a spear thrower that greatly multiplies their range and hitting power. Their small projectiles can deliver 1d4+3 damage. Fully half of all Krin, male and female, are proficient with that weapon that only functions well in the wind-free environs of a rain forest—the blowgun. Their blowgun darts are fashioned from the thorns of the ironwood tree, and many are dipped in a toxin or soporific.

All the Krin are capable marksmen and recognize vulnerable spots as targets to aim for. As a result, the target's Defense rating is irrelevant! An ordinary Krin has a base 29% chance to strike an exposed spot. A Bonded Krin has a 49% chance, due to the additional senses afforded by its dumok.

Note: Once the Krin are aware of the intruders in their rain forest, they will set up ambushes from the trees from which to launch clouds of darts in hit-and-run ambuscades. (Instead of resolving each individual attack, use the Mass Attack/Ambush method given with the Dart details on the next page.) The Krin will *not* stand and fight unless cornered.



Krin, Normal

Power: 10%

Defense: 15%

Health: 2d6

Move: 12

Init: 30%

Damage: Javelin 1d4+3 or Blowgun 1-2 (and see "Darts" next page)

Special: Gains a 35% bonus vs. mind control effects

Demeanor: Tribal, territorial, and xenophobic, viewing other species universally as pests and interlopers

Appearance: Typically 3 feet tall, thin, with a reptilian appearance; spotted green flesh allows it to blend into the jungle

Krin Beastmaster

Power: 10%

Defense: 35%

Health: 11

Move: 12

Init: 35%

Damage: Javelin 1d4+3 or Blowgun 1-2 (and see "Darts" next page)

Special: Immune to all spells that take away volition

Demeanor: Tricky, excels at traps and deadfalls to clear pesky foes

Appearance: As normal Krin (above). May wear strips of tough leather hide as armor, but the Beastmaster is also enchanted with a toughness gained from the jungle.



Krin Shaman

Power: 10%

Defense: 15%

Health: 9

Move: 9

Init: 25%

Damage: Javelin 1d4+3 or Blowgun 1-2 (and see "Darts" at right)

Special: Can reflect spells of 1st to 4th Level; immune to any spells that take away volition.

Demeanor: Highly aggressive; attack with hoverbirds and shamanistic spells

Appearance: As normal Krin (left) but taller (typically 3 ½ feet); always accompanied by a personal swarm of Hoverbirds (below)

Hoverbirds

Krin shamans have mastered the art of controlling hoverbirds. They have trained them to attack foes by dividing up into however many groups are necessary. No shaman with any pride would have a hoverbird flock with less than 30 members, and some may have as many as 50.

Optional: Before rolling initiative or beginning the melee, allow a player to roll 1d20. If the roll is equal to or less than half of the character's Dexterity (round down), that character can swat one of the attacking hoverbirds out of the air (and knock it out of the entire fight!) before proceeding to regular melee for that round.

Hoverbird (30-50)

Power: 5%

Defense: 10%

Health: 3

Move: 12 flying, 1 crawling

Init: 5%

Damage: Bite 1d4

Special: 8 can attack one mansized target

Demeanor: Will mindlessly obey their handler (shaman).

Appearance: Resembles an oversized mosquito, 12-18" long

Darts (All Krin)

Each dart that hits inflicts 1-2 points of damage. Also roll 1d10 to determine Special Effects:

1-5	None (ordinary dart)
6-7	Move at half speed for ten combat rounds (avoidance roll applies)
8-9	Fall into a natural sleep (avoidance roll applies)
10	Take 6 points of damage

Mass Attack/Ambush (quick method): When the air is briefly filled with darts, roll 1d6 for each dart fired; 6 indicates a hit. Decide who gets hit in whatever manner you deem equitable.



The Demon Dumoktruntro

A prevalent theory holds that demons abhor all life and will mindlessly seek to destroy and devour it when loose on our Plane of existence. While that may well be true for the lesser types, it is not necessarily true for the higher orders of the hellish archfiends. "Dumoktruntro" means, in what passes for language amongst their kind, "devourer of despair." (We will use the short form "Dumo" hereafter.) Dumo feeds on fear, terror and despair as a gourmand would enjoy truffles, caviar and a very rare vintage wine. Dumo is a master of torment and suffering.



Dumo can only cross the inter-planar boundaries to Makanda on the night of the Triple Moon, and only by using a Gate specifically prepared for him. (When played on a world of your devising, the means of triggering this event is entirely up to you.)

Dumoktruntro ("Dumo")

Power: 75%

Defense: 70%, and hit only by magical weapons of extreme strength

Health: 80

Move: 12

Init: 45%

Damage: Bite 3d8 and Talon 3d10 and Foot-Claw 2d12 (also see *Hooking* below) and Spray (once per 7 rounds, see below)

Special: Magical spells and other effects (see below)

Demeanor: Fearless; attacks any foe, gloating about its power

Appearance: Nine feet tall, serpent head with a magical skull on its tongue; 2 huge talons, raptor-like feet

Hooking: If Dumo inflicts 23 or more damage against one victim in a single combat round, the victim is immobilized, and can be hit automatically by all attacks in the next round before squirming free. (If pressed, Dumo may of course forfeit those attacks and turn to address others.)

Spray: In addition to all of the other terrible weapons at his command, once each 7 turns Dumo can spray an extremely toxic cloud of corrosive gas from the skull-like organ at the end of his tongue, engulfing a 20'x 20' area. All attempts to avoid this poison suffer a -25% penalty.

Magic: Dumo can cast multiple spells as would a very accomplished wizard, and can Detect or Read magic at will. As its sole action during a combat round it can do any of the following: *shapechange* into any human it has ever seen, *levitate* up to 12 feet into the air, create an *area of blackness* around its form (making it harder to hit), create an *illusion*, create an *aura of fear*, or attempt to call forth another demon similar to itself (10% chance of success).



Getting There is Half the Fun!

Suggestions for the Journey

The Island of Aradondo is roughly two-thirds the size of New Guinea (or about 320,000 square miles), covered in dense rainforest and bisected by the Aradondo River. The remaining spires of the Comfort Mountains serve to trap enough wind and moisture to keep the island moist and the river flowing, though not like it once did, now being greatly diminished. The trees are immense and the undergrowth is very thick. There are game trails, very faint, used by animals considerably smaller than humans. There are also strangler vines, a profusion of different flowers (some possibly injurious to humanoids), nettles, insects, serpents and the like. There are no monkeys as they have been hunted to extinction for food. (Consider that the Krin are starved for animal proteins and may be cannibals; big juicy humanoids could be just walking meat.)

The actual distance, in this instance, is not relevant. By making use of *Finnoula's Flyer* (see page 6), the Game Master can truncate the actual air journey into one or two days (or encounters), or as long as you wish. You might choose to have them sail there instead, and therefore face other hazards peculiar to sea travel, such as kraken, octopi, selkies, maelstroms, and the like. Choosing to have the party encounter flying threats brings into play all sorts of considerations and complications from the peculiar restrictions that places upon the party in terms of rendering all non-missile weaponry useless.

The Game Master could choose to have Rusty and Louie deposit the party on the edge of the shore where river meets the sea. The only method of transport available to them is a raft that they must build. Their other option is to follow the river whilst hacking their way through the rainforest. It is reasonable to assume that an experienced party has all the skills needed to build a river-worthy craft. The Game Master

can choose to focus on the raft itself and the peculiarities of ad-hoc construction; alternately, the Game Master can look to the threats a river such as this might pose; the 16 foot caimans, giant bats, carnivorous apes, giant frogs, pythons, and large snakes should pose all the challenge they need.

How you choose to handle the voyage upriver is up to you and your group. You can make it arduous; they have to camp on shore and hunt each day. You can choose to abstract it all into one or two "random encounters" and lessen the focus on the trip itself. How you handle it is up to you; make it your own and test their mettle.

The Carved Pillars

Stone pillars carved with unique symbols are set in three rings, having the temple in the center (see the map of Aradondo Island). They are heavily enchanted and serve two purposes: a species-specific ward and a mild dampening effect on magic, set there by the Krin in ages past.

The first ring confines the caimans to the lower portion of the river. The second protects the frogs (sanctuary) and further dampens magical abilities in unpredictable fashion (it being entirely up to the Game Master as to how this effect is applied). The third ring enhances Krin magic by siphoning any other magics performed inside the third and innermost (mana-poor) ring.

The pillars weigh approximately 200 pounds apiece, and are the only things in the jungle that are not covered in moss or vines of any sort.

Note that once inside the third ring, practitioners of arcane arts might be completely unable to use certain types of spells (again, entirely up to the Game Master).



The Aradondo River

When standing at the beach on the edge of the fetid delta, all you can see is green. There is the green of the jungle that comes right to the edge of high banks; there is the stained green of the river as it spreads across the malodorous miasma. But the stench is what you notice first, as it nearly knocks you off your feet, gag-inducing.

Travel up the river presents a bewildering sameness: steep, sheer banks for the most part, the jungle growing right to the edge. There is a bewildering maze of sandbars and mud shoals all over the river; most of the time there is a channel of sorts in the meandering middle. The sight of several caimans—all well over 12 feet long, greedily gulping gobbets of one of their own in a spreading pool of blood—is a grim reminder about dangling any body parts into the water.

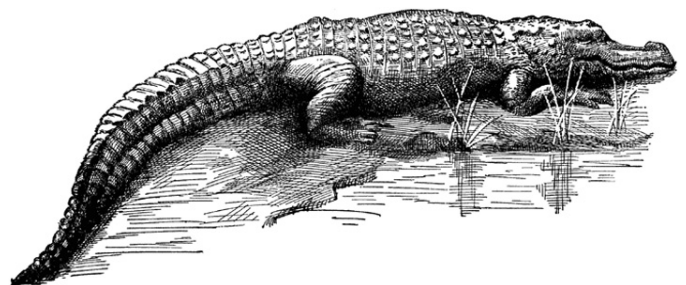
No animal life is visible within the trees looming above the river like the green spires of a living cathedral. There are no birds, no monkeys. There are no obvious game trails leading to the water. The rain forest is strangely bare of life; only the occasional glimpse of the canopy top indicates large flying insects and what appear to be exotic blooms, fruits and seeds.

At irregular intervals on both sides of the river, banks have been undercut during floods, causing trees to topple into the river in some places, in others causing a slide that provides a ramp of sorts up, or down, the bank. As the sun sinks into the horizon, the river is blanketed with clouds of stinging, biting insects, some so small they can wriggle through the links of fine mail to feed on the flesh underneath. Large orange reflective eyes the size of an infant's head twinkle in pairs at the edge of the light, soon followed by booming noises that echo through the darkness. Bull caiman bellow in the night, staking their territorial claims.

In the trees lining the banks, the brazen roars and challenges of enormous apes echo through the night. Welcome to the Aradondo.

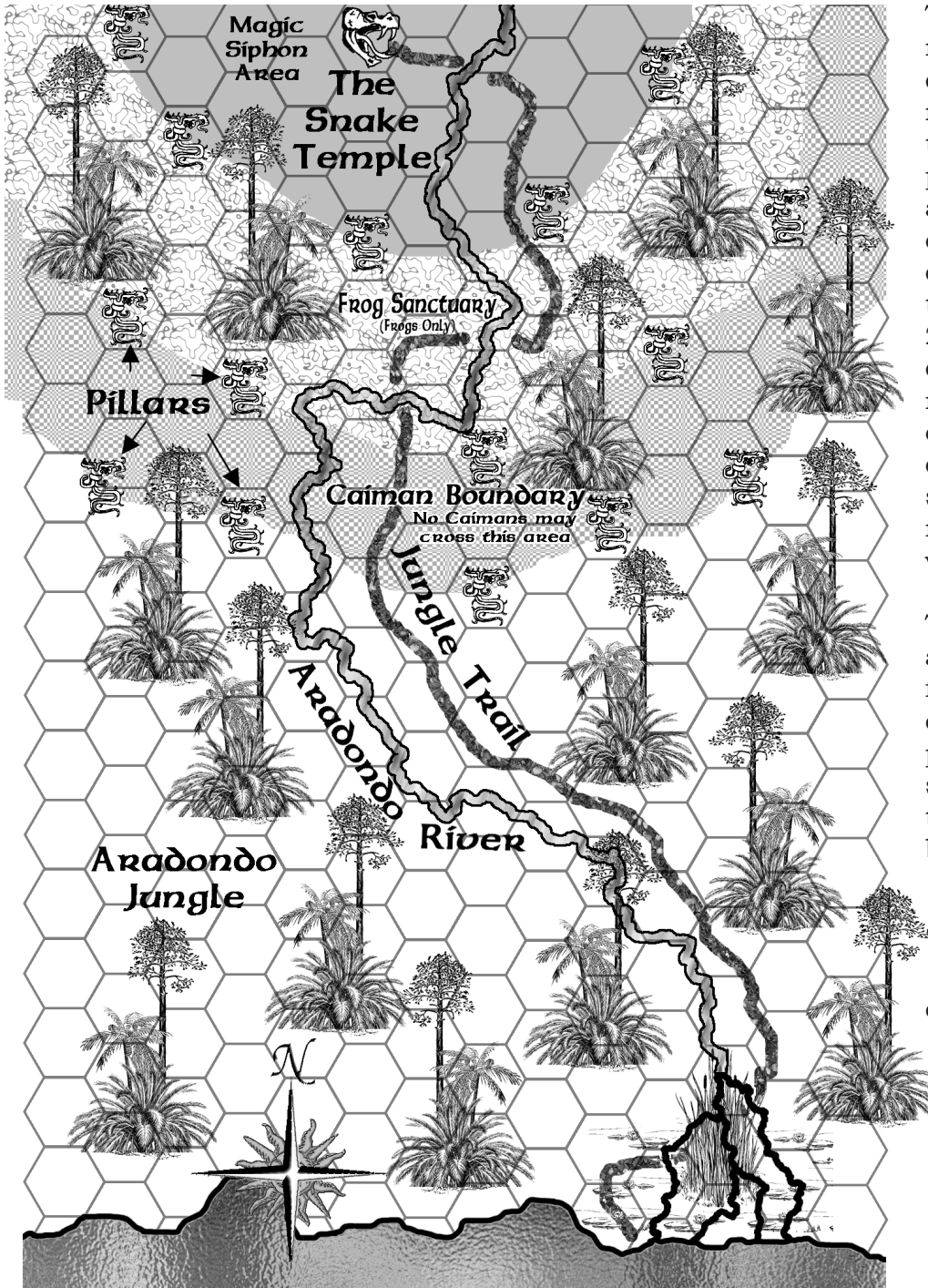
Most rivers are said to flow, or meander, or at least trickle. The Aradondo River sort of oozes. At the delta where it meets the sea, the Aradondo is black water, so high in tannins and tannic acid that it is not healthy to swim in. Those species that do swim in the Aradondo have particularly tough skins, scales and scutes. Visibility is less than two feet, and the water teems with bacteria and tannic acid. Small foraging fish are absent; the only fish that thrive in the river are the plankton seiners and the large armored catfish.

The Aradondo was once a mighty river, swift and deep and wide. It is still wide, but not very deep and not at all swift. Typically the banks are 12 to 20 feet above the level of the currently sluggish flow, and are for the most part rather sheer. Traveling up the river, the intrepid explorer would find the occasional undercut of a bank tumbling into the river and forming a muddy access from the top of the bank. The riverbed varies in width from 20 to over 150 yards, with about 40 or 45 being the norm. Temporary sand bars and sand shoals litter the river. Several times a year huge storms in the mountains of the Aradondo's headwaters cause flash floods to surge down the river channel, scouring it out anew each time, causing the sand bars and sand shoals to shift and undercutting new sections of the bank. In full spate, the Aradondo can rise more than 15 feet, but the torrents always subside in a day or two. During the rest of the time, the river can run 20 feet deep in some of the narrower areas and will sometimes shoal out to three feet or less in the middle of the river in the widest stretches. Some of the sandbars are not what they seem; they can hide sinkholes full of quicksand.





The Aradondo River



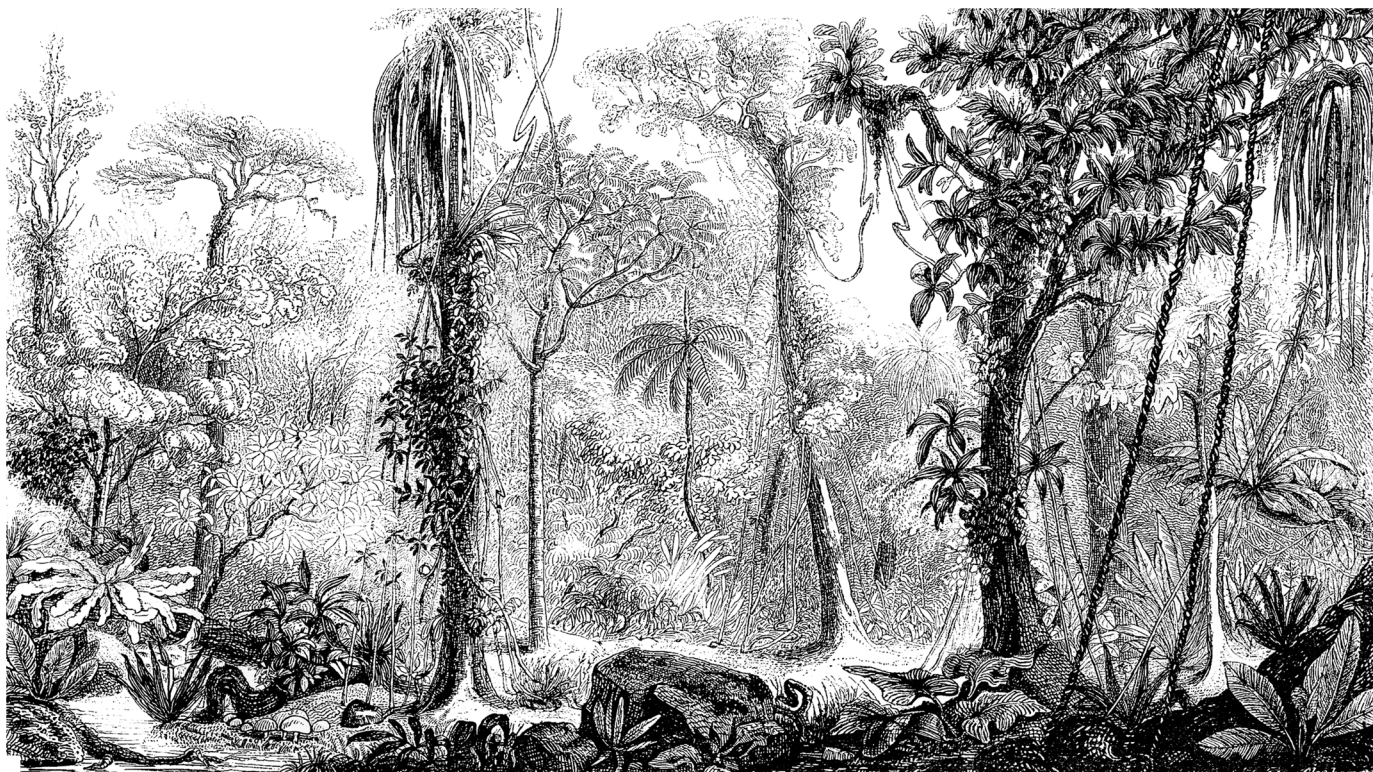
The navigable part of the river twists and turns back on itself, forming a score or more oxbow lakes; these teem with the predominant predator in that area. In an oxbow lake, what little current there is spreads out through the course of the lake. Many oxbows are 20 or more feet deep. The delta area is a nightmarish maze of channels, false channels, floating islands of vegetation and sand shoals intermixed with noxious bugs and predatory wildlife.

The fauna of the Aradondo are fiercely competitive, for like the rest of the entire island, the river is protein-poor. There are some large armored catfish that live in holes in the bank, and there are also large sturgeon-like fish of more than 12 feet length, but not many of either. There are giant frogs and enormous caimans, both of which are enthusiastically cannibalistic.

The Aradondo Jungle

The Aradondo Rainforest was once touted by sages and scholars as having more types of living things, both plant and animal, than any other place on the planet. From the beetles and burrowers under the rotting leaf mold to the insects and extravagant birds that flitted about the tree-tops high above the forest floor,

the Aradondo pulsed with life and noise and color; its very scent was rife with incipient life. Thousands of plant species grew there, some beneficial, some inimical. Some were known by the sentient races, many were not. The forest floor teemed with the death struggles between prey and predator, but the forest



bulged with life. The great highways that the tree branches provided for the arboreal species were filled with life; it was estimated that the Aradondo was home to more than four dozen types of monkey alone. Bird species, as yet unidentified and classified, flaunted plumage colorful beyond belief.

The Krin were the species of fey most at home in a rainforest and their attentions made it a thing of wonder. The Krin had a special affinity with reptiles and felt it their duty to protect them. Much of that has now changed.

Before the Great Rending, the western portion of the continent of Marlann (formerly straddling the equator and now partially missing), much disarranged and all re-named, was one of the least-explored areas of Makanda. Roughly 150,000 square miles were covered by the Aradondo Rain Forest, so named for the enormous river meandering throughout its expanse. The Aradondo River arose in the Comfort Mountains, formed in the alpine rain forest, and made its way slowly through the vast expanse that was the Aradondo, finally emptying into the sea.

Prior to the Rending, the rain forest was notable for the size of its denizens: caiman stretching eighteen feet and more, frogs the size of beef cows, bats with four and five foot wingspans, and carnivorous apes of 450 to 600 pounds possessing a rudimentary intelligence.

There are at least two dozen plants that pose various hazards to humanoids of one sort or another, as well as venomous snakes and insects. Two of the most aggressively inimical “monstrous” plants are herein offered as hazards, but you should have no qualms about adding some of your own.

In the time of The Great Rending, when time stood still, rivers reversed their flow and whole mountain ranges rose and fell, that portion of the continent formerly known as Marlann that contained the Aradondo was rent asunder. Most of the Comfort Mountains sank into the sea, and a vast chasm opened where once the eastern edge of the rainforest ended. What remained was an island of roughly 105 thousand square miles, completely covered by the remnants of the Aradondo. (The Island of Aradondo is roughly two-thirds the size of New Guinea.)



The Aradondo Jungle



There is nothing on this now-island that would not like to eat the characters. Due to its isolation since the Rending, the entire remaining rainforest is protein-poor. You can tip the characters to this fact by repeatedly reinforcing the image that there is nothing of any size alive between the forest floor and the canopy. There are no squirrels, large birds or lizards, no monkeys; that portion of the biome is empty, having been almost entirely eaten. There are insects on the forest floor under the leaf mold, and small birds and butterflies in the canopy.

The weather in the rainforest is humid and hot. There are daily rain showers that will be better ridden out on a raft tied up to shore. Choosing to continue should cause one or more characters to get a good dunking to press home the point. Tying up to shore will, of course, then make them susceptible to other denizens of the jungle.

When you step under the canopy of the Aradondo, the first thing that strikes you is the gloom. Very little light penetrates the canopy, maintaining the gloom of a constant green twilight. The second thing that strikes you is the silence: no birdcalls, no monkeys howling, no insects whirring... dead silence. The next oddity is a total lack of living creatures: no monkeys, no squirrels, no birds, not even any insects of any size. From the floor of the forest to the uppermost branches, nothing moves, not even a breeze.

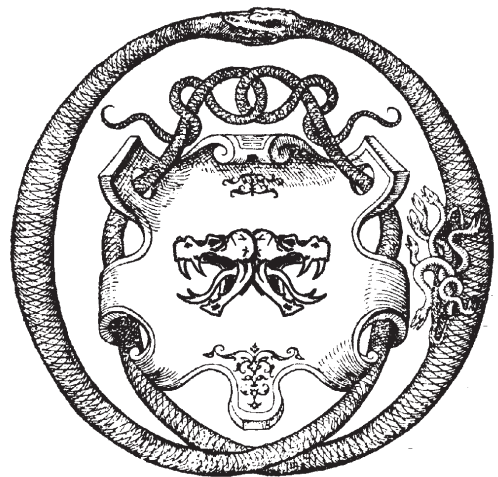
If you stare long enough and hard enough, you might see in the occasional glimpse of the uppermost canopy, butterflies and small birds and what might be fruits or seeds and flowers. Nothing moves in the green and gloomy vastness between the mulch underfoot and that canopy above. After several minutes of scanning and listening, you hear a sound that sends a quiver through your viscera, then another. Welcome to the rain forest.

There was once a trail that roughly paralleled the old bed of the Aradondo. Much of it is overgrown with vines and creepers, and some parts were washed away forever. The party knows that they have to travel "upriver," so keeping on course in those areas where the trail has been obliterated should not be unduly difficult.

The remaining spires of the Comfort Mountains serve to trap enough wind and moisture to keep the island moist and the river flowing, though not like it once did, now being greatly diminished. The trees are immense and the undergrowth is very thick. There are very faint game trails that are used by animals considerably smaller than humans. There are also strangler vines, a profusion of different flowers (some possibly injurious to humanoids), nettles, insects, serpents and the like. No mammals smaller than a carnivorous ape remain, sadly, as they have been hunted to extinction as food.

Special Note: Mana, Fat or Lean

It is entirely up to the Game Masters how they wish to apply this quirk if they play on Makanda. A fireblast spell makes a good example of what might happen; in a mana-poor region, it might just be able to light a rubbish bin on fire, whereas in a mana-fat area it would be considerably amplified, like any fire in an oxygen-rich environment. These factors will inject an element of uncertainty to the adventure. Such areas will be indicated on the maps (pages 34-35).

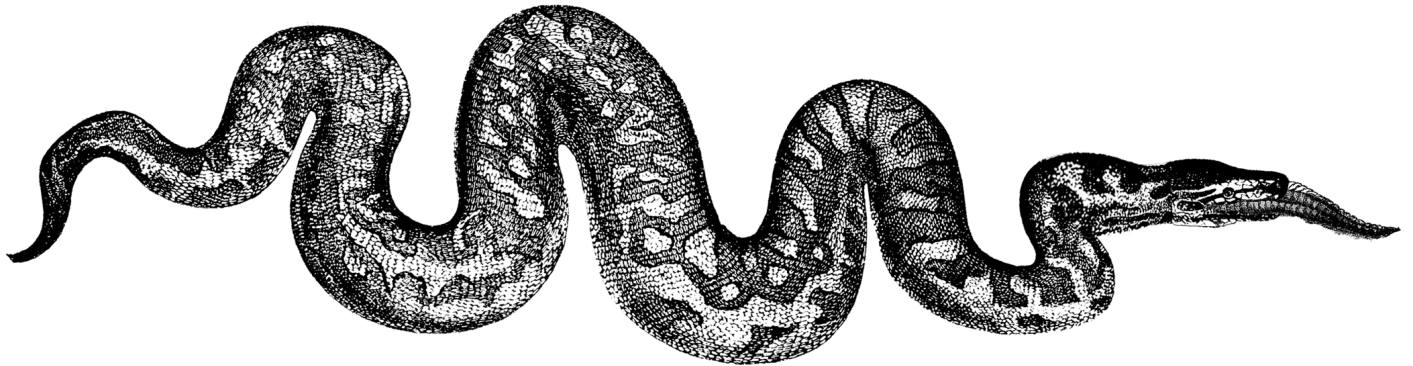




Traversing the Aradondo

How you as the Game Master choose to handle the voyage upriver is up to you and your group. You can choose to abstract it all into one or two “random encounters” and lessen the focus on the trip itself. In the play-test version, I gave the party a limited number of days to reach their goal and attempt to fulfill their mission. I steered them towards building rafts and poling upstream in view of the time constraints, giving them

“either/or” choices of tying up in mid-stream or finding a clearing in which to camp. That method also gave them some exposure to the ecosystem of the Aradondo. How you handle it is up to you. If there are no imminent time considerations, there is no reason you could not allow the characters to stumble upon a long-overgrown path of the type that might have been made by traders with donkeys or pack horses.



Flora & Fauna of the Aradondo

Flora

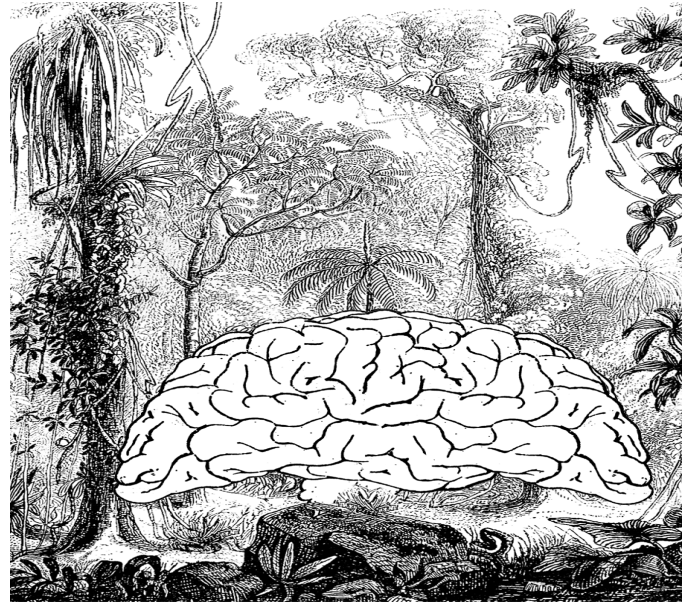
In addition to nettles, thorns, saps that itch and razor-sharp blades of sword-grass, there are two especially dangerous forms of plant life in this rain forest. They have formed a symbiotic relation where occurring together.

The first is a form of semi-sentient vine that feeds on decomposition. Where some plants have leaves that flinch from contact, this vine seeks out anything slow enough for it to entwine with its tendrils. This usually involves carcasses; they will be dragged nearer the center of the root mass, and then pulled into the ground to speed

decomposition. This plant has also been known to take the unwary sleeper or unconscious victim. They are extremely tough and fibrous. They are all connected by the secondary root-mass to the tuberous main root body. The main root body, if dug up or otherwise exposed, is very thin-skinned and easy to dispatch. All pieces of the tuberous main body must be burned to ash; a piece the size of an acorn is sufficient to generate a new vine. (An enterprising party armed with some shovels could probably find all manner of metallic items within the radius of the vine’s tendrils.)



The other symbiotic horror is a type of fungus. A member of the *Orloxus* family, the fungus can grow to nearly 3 feet in diameter, containing billions of spores. The spores are almost always fatal to humans and dwarves; for some reason they have a much diminished effect on halfings and almost no effect on elves. The spores can be released by rupturing the immense body of the fungus, just like its harmless and considerably smaller relative, the "Skunk Cabbage." There are reports, very few in number (not surprising in view of their content), of these loathsome fungi spontaneously rupturing in the presence of warm-blooded creatures (potential food sources). The fatal effects are not immediate; as many as six hours of labored breathing may pass before the victim suffocates and the spores begin to sprout within the corpse.



Creeper Vine

Power: 33%

Defense: 40%

Health (total by tendril size):

small 20, medium 30, large 90; 1d10+2 per tendril (but that damage not counted against total Health)

Move: Extremely slowly

Init: 0

Damage: Tendril 1d4 plus bonus (see below)

Special: For every three tendrils grasping one victim, add an additional 1d4 damage per combat round (and also see notes below)

Demeanor: Always hungry, works toward grabbing any type of protein

Appearance: Large-leafed organism starting in a mulchy section of the jungle and expanding in a straight line toward the sunrise



A large Creeper Vine has up to 7d4 tendrils, each up to 18 feet long. A tendril is fully capable of strangling a humanoid if it entwines the neck. A victim grasped by several tendrils could be torn asunder over time. After 4 turns being continuously grasped by any one tendril, the victim must check to avoid Petrification or be rendered comatose.

Puffball, Giant

Power: 3%

Defense: 15%

Health: 5

Move: 0 (immobile)

Init: 0

Damage: Spore cloud (see below) for 3d4 or Coma/Death

Special: none

Demeanor: Responds to footfalls in its area

Appearance: Resembles a large red brain in size and color

This fungus will occasionally erupt in the presence of possible food. It seems to sense the presence of warm-blooded creatures to a limited distance. That range and area of effect vary by its size; for a really large one, 3-4 feet in diameter, the sensing range is about 12 feet.

Spore cloud: At 12-foot range there is a 4% base chance that the fungus will expel spores in the direction of food; every foot closer raises the chance by 3%. The spores are expelled in a conical pattern 7' wide at end, 1' wide at the fungus. Humans and dwarves check avoidance with a penalty of -20%, and if not avoided the spores produce a deep coma, followed by death in 1d4+1 hours. Elves and halfings check with a +30% bonus, failure merely inflicting 3d4 damage.



Fauna

Ape, Carnivorous (Wild)

Power: 50%

Defense: 25%

Health: 40 (on average)

Move: 7 on land, arboreal 6

Init: +10%

Damage: Up to 3 attacks total per combat round: Bite 1d10 (0-2), Hand 1d6 (0-2), Kick 1d8 (0-1); also see *Grip* below

Special: *Grip* effects (below); may forfeit a Hand attack to use a large stick (as Club, 1d8)

Demeanor: Highly aggressive, may attack at any bold action characters make; poor morale unless enraged

Appearance: Resembling something between a silverback gorilla and a very muscular orangutan, these deadly beasts possess a low sort of cunning and rudimentary intelligence which lends itself to training. They are exceedingly strong and fast, and surprisingly agile in the trees. They can move very quickly for short distances, but cannot maintain high speeds for long on the ground. Wild apes fight with large sticks (as clubs) and their teeth, hands and feet.

Grip: This effect occurs when any hand attack scores 15% greater than the minimum needed to hit the target. The Ape gains a +25% bonus to all subsequent attacks on its Grippped opponent. The victim of a Grip takes 1d8 damage each combat round, suffers a -20% penalty to all attacks, and cannot cast spells or take other actions requiring concentration. The ability to free oneself from a Grip is a matter of relative Strength, and is left to the Game Master. If using a 1-20 scale for such stats, consider the Ape to have a Strength of 17.

Ape, Carnivorous (Trained)

Details as Wild Ape (above) except for the following:

Damage: Cudgel 1d8 or spear 1d10

Init: +15% with weapon

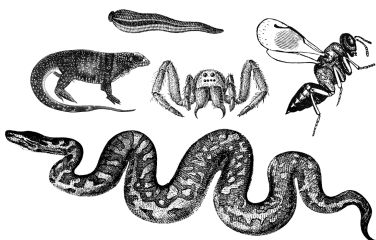
Demeanor: Attacks any intruders on the temple grounds; good morale

Appearance: As Wild Carnivorous Ape, and 40% chance that any band will be accompanied by a Krin Beastmaster.

The training of a Carnivorous Ape emphasizes cudgels and spears, but also hones their natural skills. Trained apes have excellent morale and

Other Assorted Oversized Fauna

The Aradondo teems with oversized lizards, constrictors, spiders, vipers and stinging and biting insects. The Game Master is encouraged to use imagination in throwing these into the mix of hazards and obstacles presented to the characters. The following are suggestions.



	Health	Defense	Power	Damage
Giant Constrictor	10	20%	40%	1d8
Giant Lizard	15	25%	40%	1d10
Giant Viper	9	15%	25%	poison
Giant Spider	9	15%	25%	venom
Giant Leech	7	10%	15%	drain
Giant Wasp	5	10%	10%	venom



Flora & Fauna



are trained to be clever fighters. They can move very quickly for short distances, but cannot maintain high speeds for long on the ground. In the trees they can easily outdistance humans. Trained apes use spears and cudgels instead of hand and foot attacks, gaining a bonus of 15% to hit with these weapons, and, due to the strength of the apes, causing 1d10 with the spear and 1d8 with the cudgel.

Caiman

Power: 50%

Defense: 45%

Health: 55

Move: 9 land, water 12 (and see below for rising & lunging)

Init: 0

Damage in Water: Mouth 6d4 (in water, +25% bonus to hit) or Tail 2d10

Damage on Land: Mouth 6d4 (no bonus to hit) or Tail 2d10 with a chance (Game Master's discretion) to knock the target down

Special: Attacks better in water than on land (as above)

Demeanor: Fiercely competitive and aggressive; forms cooperative congregations of 5-15 individuals depending upon their size.

Appearance: *Purussaurus* Caiman is a crocodile-like creature with a very flat mouth, and can grow up to 39 feet long.

Special Movement: Using a tree, the caiman can rise up on its hind legs to about half its considerable body length. In water it can try to lunge, placing its forelegs and head onto a raft (20% chance of success). In that case, every turn spent upon the raft increases the chance of clambering fully aboard by 40%. (i.e., on Turn 2 there is a 40% chance the caiman will clamber fully aboard with all offensive capability; 80% in Turn 3, and automatic success at the maneuver in Turn 4.)

The domain of this fearsome beast extends anywhere the land is wet; they claim the swamps, marshes and the river itself as their own terrain.

Bat, Giant

Power: 8%

Defense: 15%

Health: 5-16

Move: 12 flying, or 5 aground

Init: +15%

Damage: 1d6 (automatic if attached)

Special: No penalty to attacks in complete darkness; attack may go unnoticed if unseen (due to numbing venom)

Demeanor: Excels at attacking moving humanoid targets

Appearance: Black (almost invisible at night), four foot wingspan, very large fangs with numbing venom (i.e. merely large versions of normal vampire bats)



Frog, Giant

Power: 25%

Defense: 20%

Health: 14

Move: 5, or jump 12 feet

Init: 15%

Damage: Tongue 1-3 and Stick (Special)

Special: If tongue Sticks (Game Master's discretion), begin "Swallowing" procedure (below)

Demeanor: Mildly aggressive, often won't attack unless attacked first.

Appearance: Oversized version of a leopard frog, frequently found in knots of 4-7 individuals



Swallowing: Each of the following actions pursuant to the tongue being stuck to a target occupies one combat round. The frog tries to pull victim into its maw (50% chance); if successful its digestive juices inflict 4d6 damage. The frog then tries to swallow the victim (also 50% chance); if successful the internal fluids inflict the same damage (4d6) in that and each subsequent combat round until the victim is completely dissolved. (Inorganic accessories swallowed may partially survive, at the Game Master's discretion.)

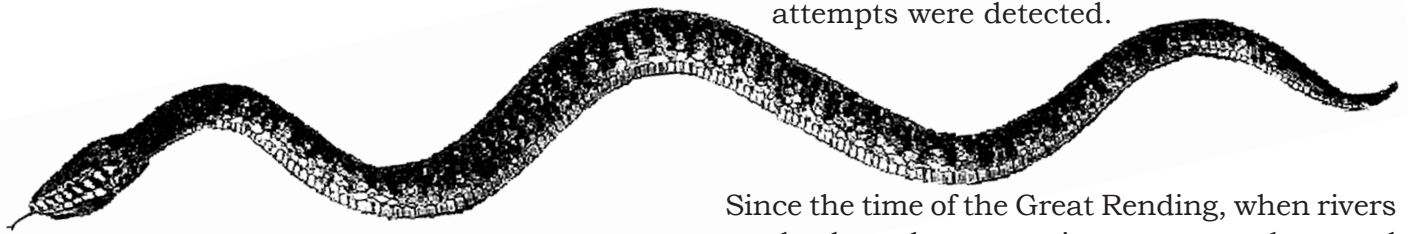
Giant frogs feed well in this jungle and don't have many foes. Its tongue is covered in sticky, corrosive saliva and has extreme accuracy.



The Serpent Temple

The ancient serpent-god to which this temple was originally dedicated has long since been forgotten. There are, however, reminders of the earlier cult--two huge vipers, seemingly ageless, which roam the entire temple. The shamans keep them at bay with their peculiar powers, as do the Beastmasters. The vipers will not come near a dumok (either alone or with its Bonded).

The temple now holds within its innermost sanctum a very curious Gate. It is a link to the Ethereal Plane and is so constructed and ensorcelled that it will only allow a single demon, Dumoktruntro ("Dumo"), to transit it. The Krin who now see the temple as the center of their existence were originally tasked with guarding and protecting the Gate to ensure that it was never used, and to raise an alarm if attempts were detected.



Cult Viper

Power: 35%

Defense: 40%

Health: 51, 47

Move: 5

Init: +15%

Damage: Poison bite 3d6 (or half that; see below)

Special: Poison (see bottom right)

Demeanor: These atavistic reptiles are a mated pair and consider all the environs of the Temple as their den. They ignore the Krin and have as little to do with the dumokka as possible, but will relentlessly track and hunt any other intruders of which they become aware as both trespassers and a vital source of protein

Appearance: Somewhat resembling a diamond-back rattlesnake lacking the courteous rattle, over the ages their coloring has become more like their surroundings so that at rest they can be difficult to discern from any great distance. They taper from their massively-fanged maw to their stubby tail for a distance of almost 14 feet. They can unhinge the lower jaw to swallow prey, accommodating any but the very largest of adventurers.

Since the time of the Great Rending, when rivers ran backwards, mountain ranges were born and died, and oceans and seas dried up or formed anew, that mission has been corrupted by the evil influences of the dumokka. The surviving Krin have been indoctrinated into believing that their task now is to guard the Gate against any that would seek to block the return of Dumo, and to prepare for his return.

The dumokka know how to properly align the stones, but lacking hands they need the Krin (or possibly the characters) to set them in place at the right time. If they are successful, Dumo will re-enter Makanda on the Feast of the Moons, and feast on all the life he can reach, heaping misery, fear, and despair on any he can influence. If that happens, and if he ingests sufficient despair, the consequences could be hideous.

Poison: The poison of a cult viper is an extremely fast-acting neurotoxin. Successful resistance to the poison results in half damage inflicted, and the victim is able to move at half normal (in both movement and attacks) for 1d4 hours. Failure to avoid it results in partial paralysis within ten minutes of being bitten, full paralysis occurring within half an hour. As usual, the application of a strong restorative can negate these aftereffects (though such will not alter the initial damage).



The Serpent Temple



1. Entrance

The stone head dominates the clearing, the only surface not covered with plant life. The serpent's tongue, carved of pink stone and inset with three oval pavers, protrudes several feet from the closed mouth. (There are nine possible sequences, one being correct. The sequence needed to open the serpent's jaw is left to the Game Master.) An aura of unsettling magic permeates the gloomy green; whatever had been here was being reclaimed by the rain forest. Careful exploration of the clearing will reveal a hidden way into the underground Warrens (#21) below the temple. If opened, the jaw opening is about four feet square.

2. The Gut

The "neck" opens to about six feet in height. The walls are carved of pink quartz in subtle, rippling waves that resemble the smooth muscles that a snake uses to swallow, thus heightening the image of crawling into a serpent. The two easternmost secret doors are very cunningly hidden (-35% penalty to detect), and the westernmost is not detectable from this side.

3. The Old Temple

This was the main worship area for the snake cultists. It is now in disarray; the statuary has been defaced and the area is filled with detritus. The "altar" in the center of the dais hides a doorway to the west (see Hallway, area 5) which leads down into the Warrens. There is a heavy stench of snake in this area, as the Cult Vipers den here occasionally.

4. Meditation Room

Once the area where the priests of the cult meditated before and after their rites, this is now filled with a bewildering array of clothing,

most so old that they are reduced to moldering rags. (You may choose to hide all sorts of items "in plain sight" in this room. With a "path" or aisle to the secret door, you can make it obvious or subtle.)

5. Hallway

This area has odds and ends of rubbish strewn about. The staircase at the back leads to the west end of the Warrens, near a deadly spider.



6. Serpentarium

This area holds many remnants of cages and baskets of the type used to house or transport snakes. Several have long-dead snakes in them. Also scattered about the room are various weapons and bits and pieces of armor, all of it very old, rusty and corroded. (You can hide anything you like in here; I placed a simple magical wand.) Thorough rummaging will turn up a wand-like object made of milky pale green translucent glass, shaped vaguely like a stiffened snake. This magical *Wand of Reptile Repulsion* projects a barrier six feet in diameter through which no reptiles can pass. (The number of uses or charges is left to your decision.)

7. Refectory

This was the common room for the cult priests. Here they took their meals and held meetings and other functions. All that remains are the remnants of tables and chairs, some empty pantry-cabinets, broken dishes, and scattered pieces of cutlery. (I chose to scatter a few pieces of silver cutlery to the value of a few hundred silver pieces. Turning characters into dumpster divers can be quite entertaining.)

The door on the eastern wall is a stout, ordinary-looking wooden door. The same can be said of the door on the west, but that one has been Locked with a spell cast by a 14th level mage. The presence of either a Beastmaster's Moonstone or a Shaman's roundstone will allow them to open and close normally.

8. Living Quarters

This room is a jumble of mold-eaten furniture and scraps of cloth, paper, and leather. Careful assessment will determine that this was once a bedroom, and that the rubble was once related furniture. Numerous books and scrolls, and pieces of both, litter the room like a carpet of

scraps. Despite the potential of the paper goods, here is actually nothing of value in this room but a small silver chain worth 5 silver pieces.

9. Scullery

This area, once the gustatory center of the Temple and rumored to have been where whole humans had been spitted on the enormous hearth, is an utter jumble of detritus: a rusted stove (disassembled into pieces), the large hearth (its chimney plugged with an ancient and enormous nest of some sort), scraps of pots, and pans, and broken crockery. Rusted and broken kitchen implements are scattered all around.





10. Living Quarters

Bits and pieces of various furniture are scattered about, some intact and some broken, that indicate that these were living quarters. There are bits of books (gnawed-upon long ago) and one wardrobe cabinet still standing. Within the latter are some remnants of fine textiles that might have been priestly regalia. Secreted in the spine of one of the book remnants is a tiny silver magical Amulet in the shape of a monkey's paw. This item will allow the wielder to Command (or take over if the situation presents itself) 5d8+5 Carnivorous Apes (wild or trained).

11. Dry Pantry

This storage area for dry goods has been mildly rifled; empty barrels, kegs, boxes, and remnants of bags are strewn everywhere. A thorough search of the area will turn up several small containers of very valuable spices, each worth 5-30 gp, including two that are highly volatile peppers. (Should characters find ways to deploy the peppers to their advantage, encourage such innovations on their part.)

12. Library

This area contains the remains of a couple of reading tables and chairs, and a jumble of scattered remnants of books, scrolls, empty inkwells, and quills. A thorough search of the rubbish will turn up two spell-book pages, detailed at right.

13. Stables

Formerly housing the stables, this building now houses a troop of trained Carnivorous Apes. Their duty is to patrol outside the complex, day and night. There are four bands; assume a base 25% chance to encounter each. Their Health varies as follows:

Band 1	22, 29, 37
Band 2	26, 31, 36, 41
Band 3	25, 32, 35, 40
Band 4	39, 44, 47

New Spells which may be found in the Library (area 12)

K'nozz's Compelling Passage (level 6)

This spell allows the caster (and up to four who are touching him) to move through solid rock or water to any known spot up to half a mile distant. The Somatic element is a small silver butter knife. Note that there is a physical cost beyond the normal spell-casting: the greater the mass or distance traveled, the greater the physical toll on the caster, as follows. For every 500' of travel and for every extra person (or encumbrance of similar bulk), the caster suffers 2 damage to Health. (*Example:* The caster moves himself and two others 1500 feet through stone, and takes 6 points of damage.)

Coradd's Servile Fanatic (Level 5)

This spell allows the caster to summon a spectre-like creature named Haskell to assist him. It can Cause Fear (like a spectre) but does not drain life energy. It can also utter a piercing shriek which inflicts 1d4 damage each turn to any with unprotected hearing. Unbeknownst to the characters, this spell is also a Curse upon the caster. Haskell, once summoned forth, will be very hard to end or dispel (5% chance). He will tag along, making noise at all the wrong times and nattering away constantly about his great ideas, none of which are remotely great. How you choose to permit the curse to be removed is up to your tender mercies.

Resembling something between a silverback gorilla and a very muscular orangutan, these deadly beasts possess a low sort of cunning and rudimentary intelligence which lends itself to training. They are exceedingly strong and fast, and surprisingly agile in the trees. They can move very quickly for short distances, but cannot maintain high speeds for long on the ground. Wild apes fight with large sticks (as clubs) and their teeth, hands and feet.

Ape, Carnivorous (Wild)

Power: 50%

Defense: 25%

Health: 40 (on average)

Move: 7 on land, arboreal 6

Init: +15% with weapon

Damage: Cudgel 1d8 or spear 1d10

Special: *Grip* effects (below); may forfeit a

Hand attack to use a large stick (as Club, 1d8)

Demeanor: Attacks any intruders on the temple grounds; good morale
Appearance: 40% chance that any band will be accompanied by a Krin Beast-master.



14. Courtyard

This was once the courtyard. The area contains a dry well, litter, offal, and assorted bits of rubbish. The outer door to the east only opens inward, and cannot be forced from outside.

15. Long Hall

There is a 30% chance of encountering a Cult Viper in this passage at any given time.

16. Common Room

This area is littered with the remnants of tables and chairs, as well as shreds of some tapestries and wall hangings. A rotted tapestry mostly obscures the passage in the north wall.

17. Bath

A large tiled and mosaic-decorated pool fills the center of the room. A large crack running down the middle explains the lack of water.

18. Bat Roost

This large cavern houses a colony of 12-17 Giant Bats. They will be asleep during daylight hours unless awakened.

Bat, Giant (1d6+11)

Power: 8%

Defense: 15%

Health: 10 each

Move: 12 flying, or 5 aground

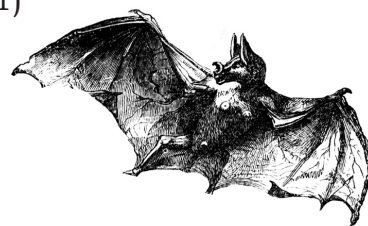
Init: +15%

Damage: 1d6 (automatic if attached)

Special: No penalty to attacks in complete darkness; attack may go unnoticed if unseen (due to numbing venom)

Demeanor: Prefers moving humanoid targets, attacking from behind

Appearance: Black (almost invisible at night), four foot wingspan, very large fangs with numbing venom (i.e. merely large versions of normal vampire bats)



19. Storage

Several large barrels and boxes are scattered about, all empty. This was a seldom-used storage area.

20. Fungus Farm

This area is humid and dank, filled with numerous varieties of fungus. There are a few considered to be poisonous, and at least one is a hallucinogen.

21. Ruins

The remains of an old outbuilding hide the secret stairs to the area below. This reaches the Warrens in area #4.



The Warrens

The majority of this level is formed of natural caves formed by underground water millennia ago. It is very dark, misty and dank. Visibility is roughly half of normal; torches burn dimmer and lanterns give out only a thin and weak light. Much of the upper surface area is splattered with blotches of a phosphorescent fungus that actually dims in the presence of torches, lanterns and other light sources. If all light sources are extinguished, the fungus will provide light about 40% as strong as that enabling sight to a “normal” distance.

1. Unholy of Unholies

In the center of the room is a carved stone altar. The top of the altar bears incised carvings of the four elements, each in a small depression, and a strangely shaped keyhole in the center. Flanking it are four pillars of a dark stone that absorb light.

Reminder: In “**The Mission**” (page 6), Finnoula provided equipment and provisions for the entire mission. She explicitly requested the return of one or more of the Core Stones (thereby disrupting Dumo’s careful and time-intensive plan). Yet I know from long experience that players are likely to do the most unexpected things... in this case, they may possibly decide that their benefactrix is the foe, and that they should in fact place the stones correctly.

Needless to say, try to discourage this line of misplaced logic. If the Core Stones (see next page) are placed in the correct depressions here, the four pillars form a shield around the altar that stops any missiles. If the key (in a chest in The Anteroom, below) is then inserted and turned widdershins, the Gate opens, Dumo comes forth, and the world is destroyed.

2. Anteroom

This room is filled with boxes and barrels, most of which contain mundane items. There are three small chests that are cunningly locked; two contain about a gallon of pearls each, of all sizes and colors.



The third chest is very well made, and holds a curious brass key. This fits into a notch

on the top of the altar. There is a base 40% chance to open this chest, and a failed attempt incurs a 40% chance of releasing a clinging and poisonous vapor, which inflicts 10 points of damage each combat round and lasts up to 30 rounds, effectively rendering the area uninhabitable.

3. Inner Sanctum

The secret door leading into this room is very cunningly crafted, and its opening (base 20% chance) involves touching certain spots on the wall in the correct order. In the center of this area is a dry fountain, the bed of which is filled with stones roughly the size of a small loaf of bread. The fountain can be repaired rather easily by any character with skills or abilities involving dexterity, mechanical or hydraulic knowledge, or general tinkering skills.

On the walls of this area are a wardrobe cabinet and a small carved chest on a table. Inside the wardrobe is the regalia of the snake cult high priest, consisting of a liturgical vestment (chasuble), stole, and a mitre-like headdress in the form of a snake’s mouth “swallowing” the wearer’s head. (The piece reeks of magic. Anyone that places it upon the head must check to avoid Poison or lose 4 points of Intelligence.)





Before proceeding further, it is critical that the Game Master be familiar with the core stones, their function, and the means by which they may be used to open a portal for the demon **Dumoktruntro**:

The Core Stones

Four stones are necessary to open the gate: the AirStone, the WaterStone, the EarthStone and the FireStone. The stones are chert, about the size and shape of a small loaf of bread such as a batard. They show no particular markings to distinguish them, nor do they emanate any sense of power, when dry. When wet, the Core Stones will each exhibit the symbol to which it is aligned, and power can be detected.

The stones are located in the basin of the broken fountain (Warrens area #3), hidden among several hundred others of similar shape, size and composition. They are all of a size to fit into the recesses of the gate. The fountain is broken at present, but could be made to work again rather easily; there are several spells that could wet the rocks as well, should the players figure out that the stones must be wet to find the correct four.

There are several ways that you can let the party work this out; how you choose to guide them, or let them figure it out from hints and clues, is entirely up to you.

Handling just one of the stones when wet is safe. Handling two at the same time can cause 9d4 damage and render the bearer unconscious, possibly causing the loss of one or more points of Intelligence as well.

When each stone has been set into its appointed slot, the Gate will begin to hum with energy. Upon the rising of the third moon, the Gate will open, and Hell will be loosed upon Makanda.

The stones are priceless. The slab into which the stones are set has a clever hydraulic system that keeps the stones wet until the gate actually opens.

Important Note: There will always be at least one dumok with its Bonded, patrolling the Warren. Remember that it is telepathically linked to others, and can easily summon help.

Bonded Krin

Power: 10%

Defense: 15%

Health: 8

Move: 12

Init: 30%

Damage: Javelin 1d4+3 or Blowgun 1-2 and see below

Special Dart effects (1d10):

- 1-5 None (ordinary dart)
- 6-7 Move at half speed for ten combat rounds*
- 8-9 Fall into a natural sleep*
- 10 6 added damage

* avoidance rolls apply

Dumok

Power: 40%

Defense: 60% and immune to normal weapons

Health: 50

Move: 8

Init: +35%

Damage: Bite 8d6+3 and Tongue flick 2d6

Special: Immune to non-magical weapons; Whirling eyes (check to avoid poison or be Controlled); tongue 6-7 feet long (damage above); spray mist once per 6 rounds (see below).

Spray: A 12'x12' cloud of misty but lethal poison (check to avoid with a -20% penalty). A third of the mist damage (or half if the victim is unarmored) will not heal naturally and cannot be magically Cured.



The Warrens



4. Outside Entrance

This is an empty cavern, inhabited by several giant bats. The opening on the southwest wall is framed by two strips of glowing metal. (If pried loose, the metal will immediately go dark. These serve to keep the dumokka from leaving the Warren by this door.) Remember that there will always be at least one dumok patrolling the Warren, with its Bonded.

Bats, Giant (2-4)

Power: 8%

Defense: 15%

Health: 10 each

Move: 12 flying, or 5 aground

Init: +15%

Damage: 1d6 (automatic if attached)

Special: No penalty to attacks in complete darkness; attack may go unnoticed if unseen (due to numbing venom)

Demeanor: Excels at attacking moving humanoid targets

Appearance: Black (almost invisible at night), four foot wingspan, very large fangs with numbing venom (*i.e.* merely large versions of normal vampire bats)

5. Steam Vents

There are several large cracks in the floor from which steam is constantly pulsing. It is very hot and damp with visibility reduced to a few feet. Sounds are muffled and confusing.

6. Echoing Chamber

The entire area around this makes the slightest sound bounce and echo, making it very easy for the party to become disoriented or even lost. The whole area is rife with extraneous sounds of all sorts. (Note that you can turn the party around and thoroughly confuse them in this area.)

7. Gas of Befuddlement

This area has several cracks in the floor issuing forth what appears to be steam. This is actually a noxious gas, requiring a check to avoid Poison.

If successful, character is only slightly dizzy for 1d12 combat rounds, but if not avoided, the character is completely confused.

8 & 9. "Egg" & Bonded

This area contains a dumok "egg" and its Bonded. This Krin will fight fanatically to preserve its embryonic dumok charge.

Bonded Krin

Power: 10%

Defense: 30%

Health: 8 (and takes 1/2 damage from all attacks)

Move: 12

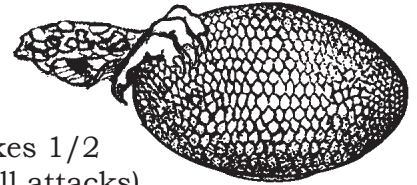
Init: +30%

Damage: Javelin 1d4+3 or Blowgun 1-2 (and see "Darts" below)

Special: "Fanatic" bonuses of +15% to attacks, +2 bonus to damage; +35% bonus vs. mind control effects

Demeanor: As a fanatic mother protecting its young (combat bonuses included above)

Appearance: Three feet tall, thin, with a reptilian appearance; spotted green flesh allows it to blend into the jungle



Darts: Each dart that hits inflicts 1-2 points of damage. Also roll 1d10 to determine Special Effects:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1-5 | None (ordinary dart) |
| 6-7 | Move at half speed for ten combat rounds (avoidance roll applies) |
| 8-9 | Fall into a natural sleep (avoidance roll applies) |
| 10 | Take 6 points of damage |

10. Smells like trouble

This area is also filled with wafting vapors that smell like poison, but aren't really.

11. The Strongroom

This area contains very little oxygen. Torches will not burn and any character that ventures in for more than two turns runs an increasing risk of



passing out and suffocating: 15% chance in the third turn and 10% more in each turn thereafter (25% in turn 4, 35% in turn 5, etc.).

Worse yet, the area is home to a giant spider which has little need of oxygen. This arachnid can throw a web like its normal-sized cousins, but being giant-sized can expand it to more than 6' diameter and may ensnare multiple targets. Any character webbed and secured in this room will invariably suffocate if not rescued.

Spider, Giant

Power: 50%

Defense: 50%

Health: 75

Move: 7

Init: 20%

Damage: Web throw (Special) and Poison Bite 1d10; check to avoid or take 10 additional damage

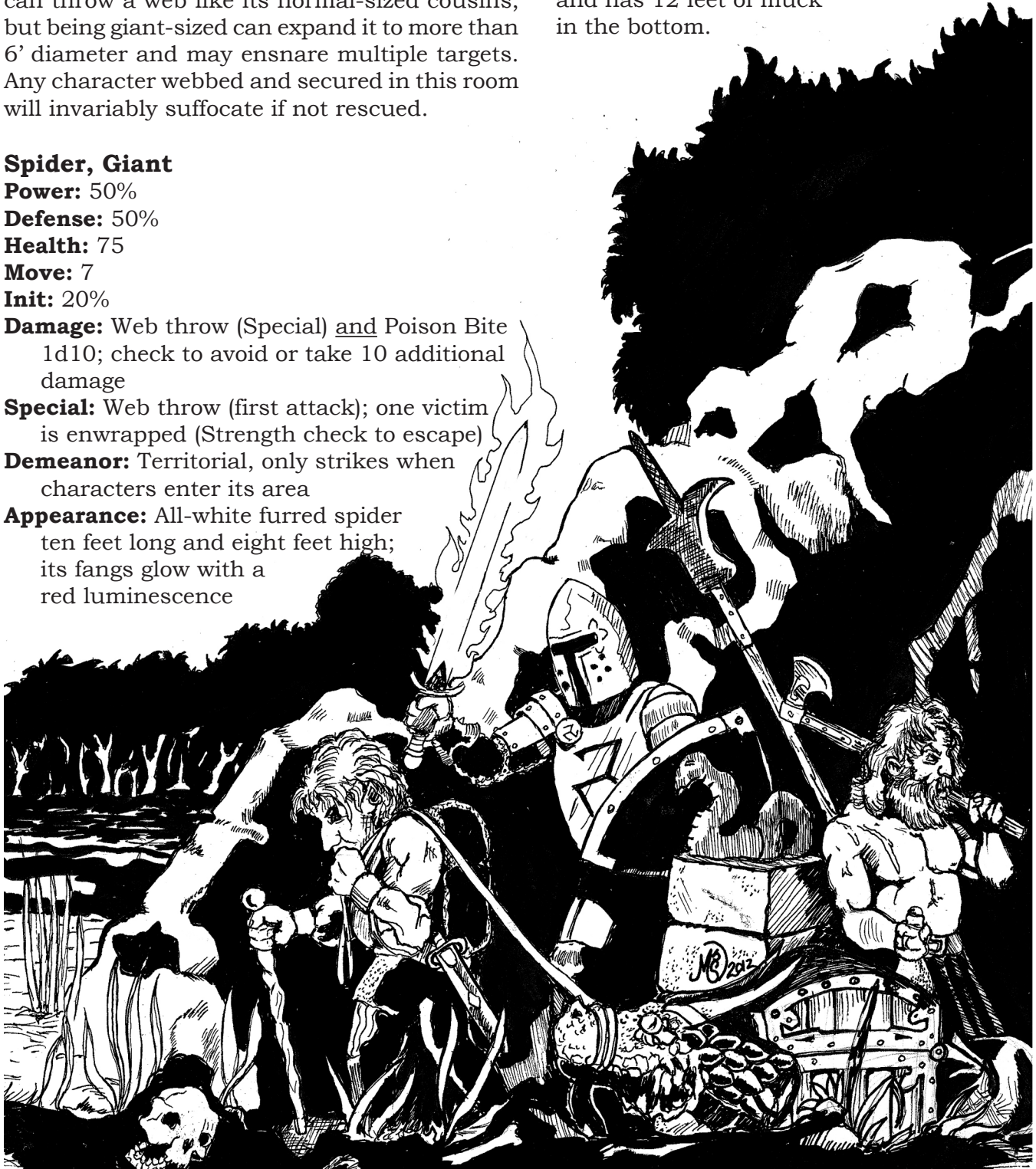
Special: Web throw (first attack); one victim is enwrapped (Strength check to escape)

Demeanor: Territorial, only strikes when characters enter its area

Appearance: All-white furred spider ten feet long and eight feet high; its fangs glow with a red luminescence

12: The Honey Hole

A spell cast on this giant disposal pit makes it seem as though a pile of coins is about 20 feet down. The area has a lingering trace of a scent of rot. In reality, the hole is hundreds of feet deep and has 12 feet of muck in the bottom.





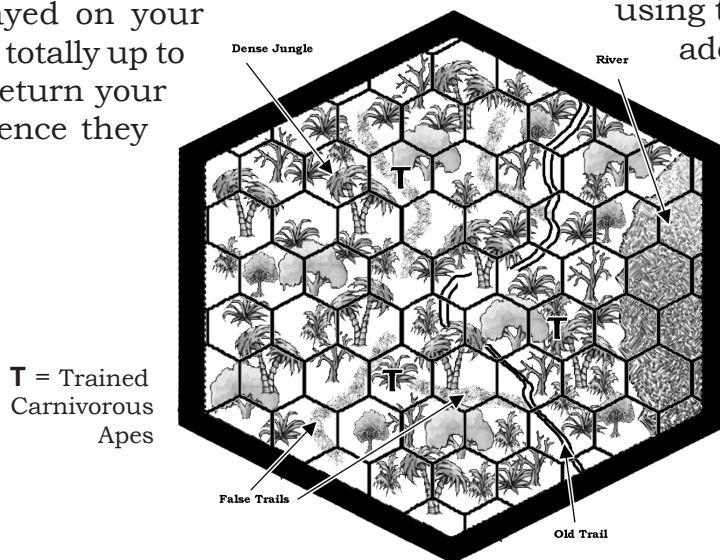
Where do we go from here?

There are myriad ways that this adventure can be ended and blended into the next. If played on Makanda, the most likely is that Lady Finnoula would know of the successful conclusion (provided they are still wearing the amulets and have her pillar) and will send Rusty back for them. Or she might snatch them back in a very disorienting fashion. If played on your world, it will be totally up to you how you return your characters whence they came.

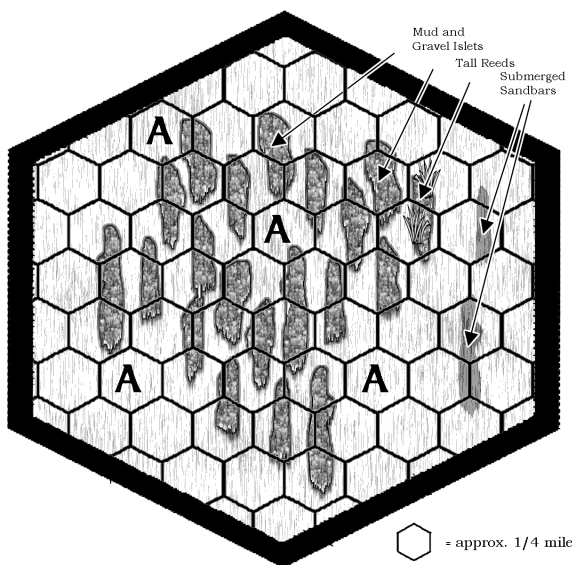
In either event, I leave the last page of the story to you. Perhaps the characters already asked Finnoula about returning, or maybe not....

Map Geomorphs to Use in This Adventure

The hex maps below portray typical adventure settings: the River, a river Delta, and typical Jungle. Use them as-is or design others using these as models. Create and add other details as you go, as the whim takes you; a good Game Master can always be extemporaneous.

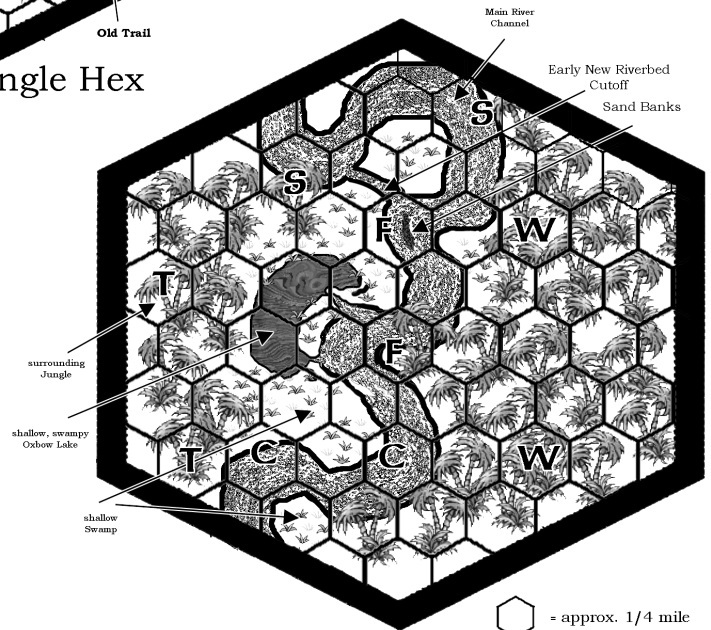


Typical Jungle Hex



Typical River Delta Hex

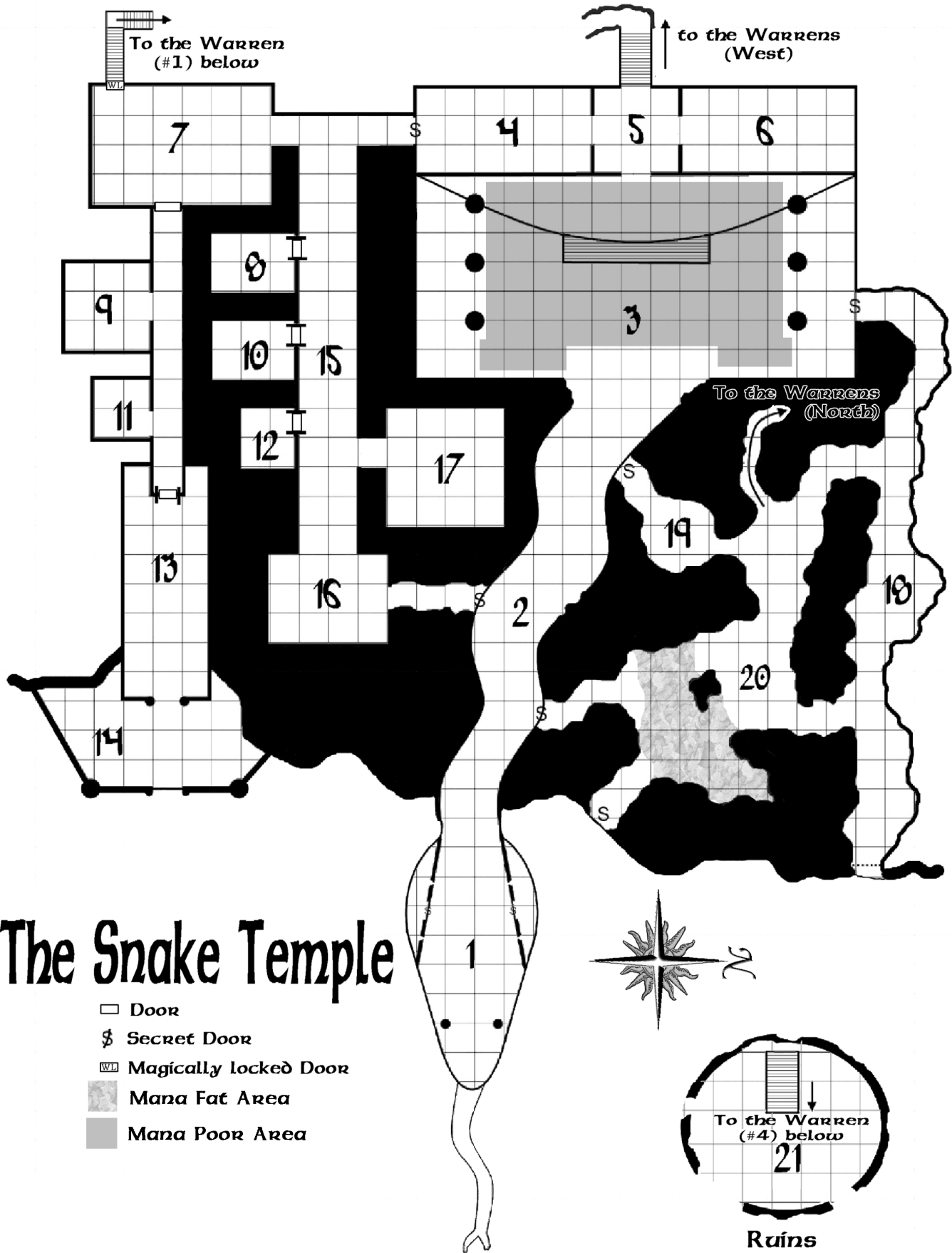
A = roll random encounter all monsters possible



Typical River Hex

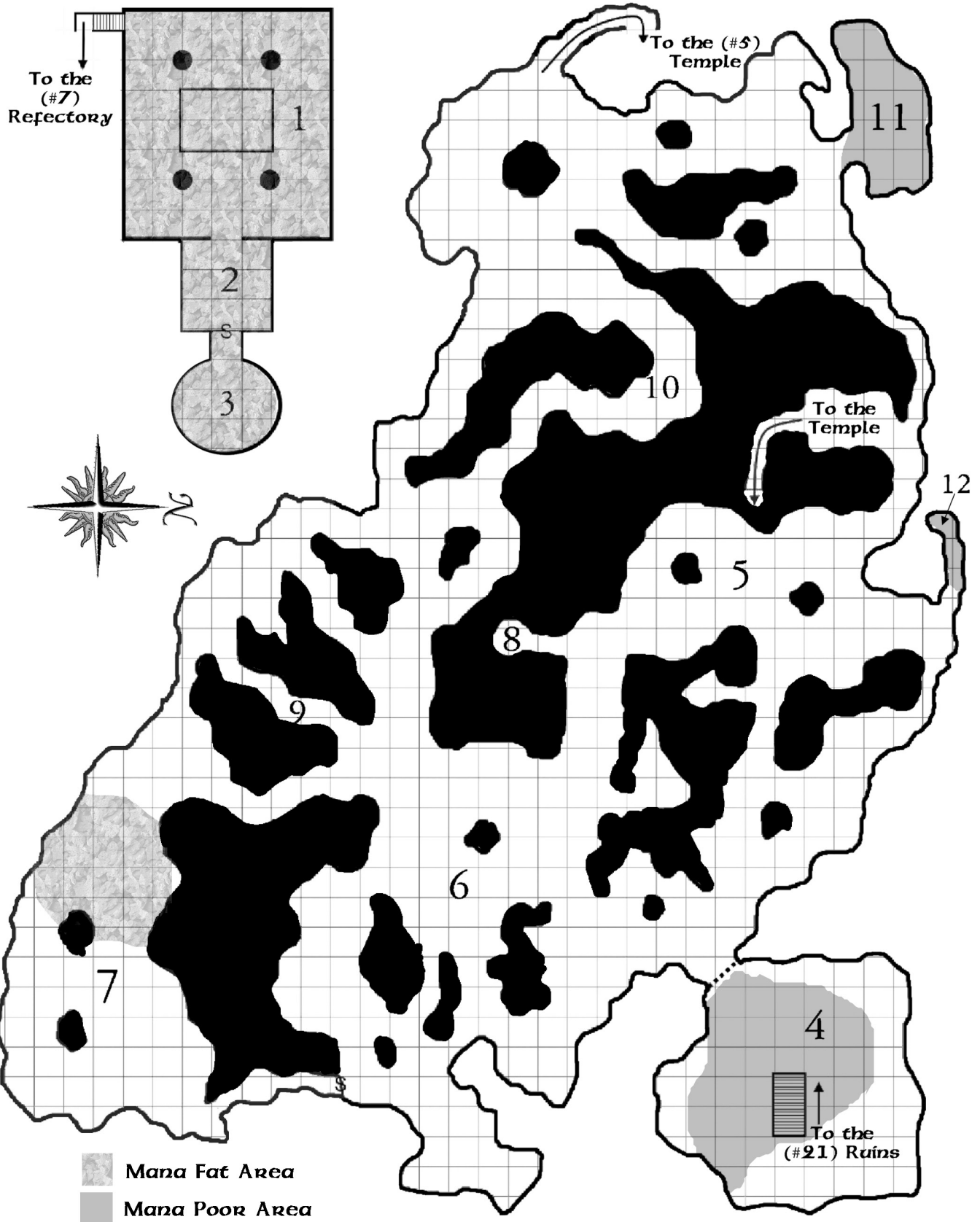
C = Caimans
F = Giant Frogs
S = Giant Water Snakes
W = Wild Carnivorous Apes
T = Trained Carnivorous Apes

⬡ = approx. 1/4 mile





The Warrens



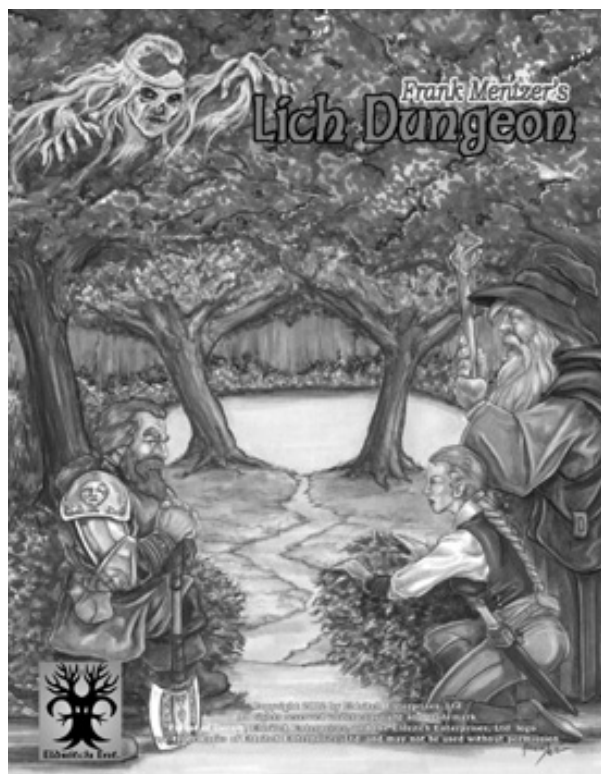
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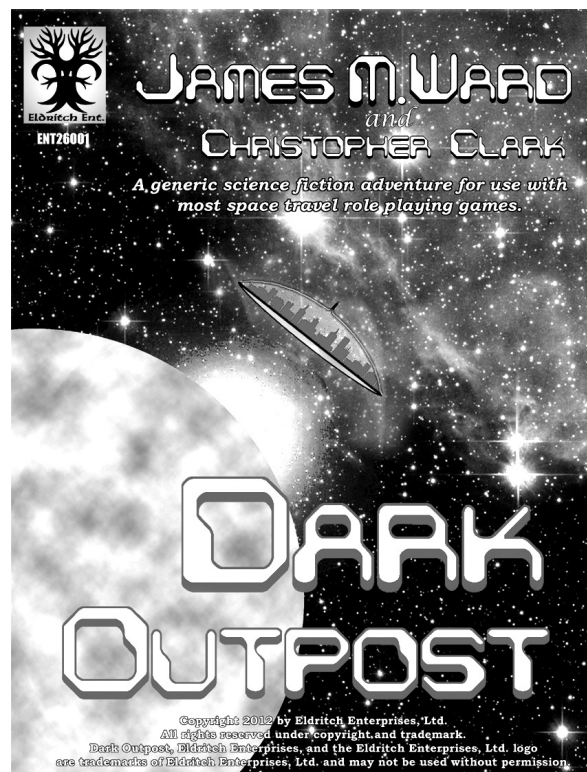
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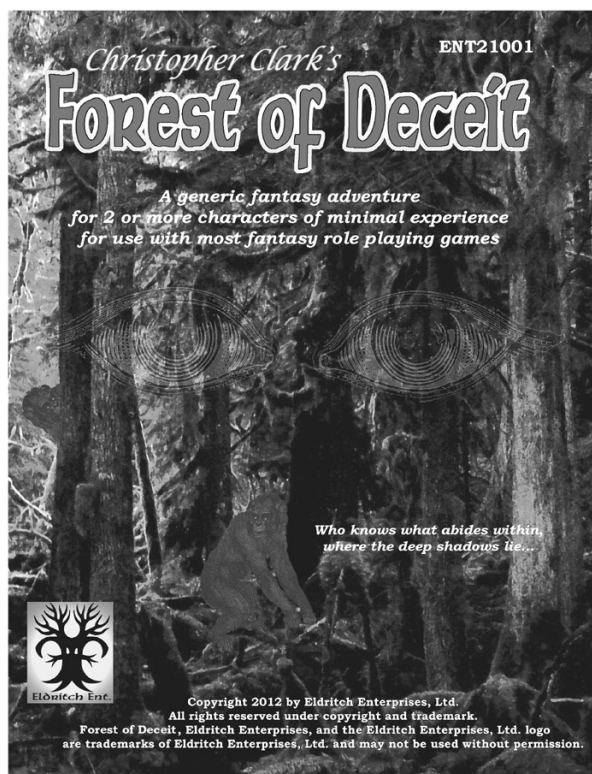
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