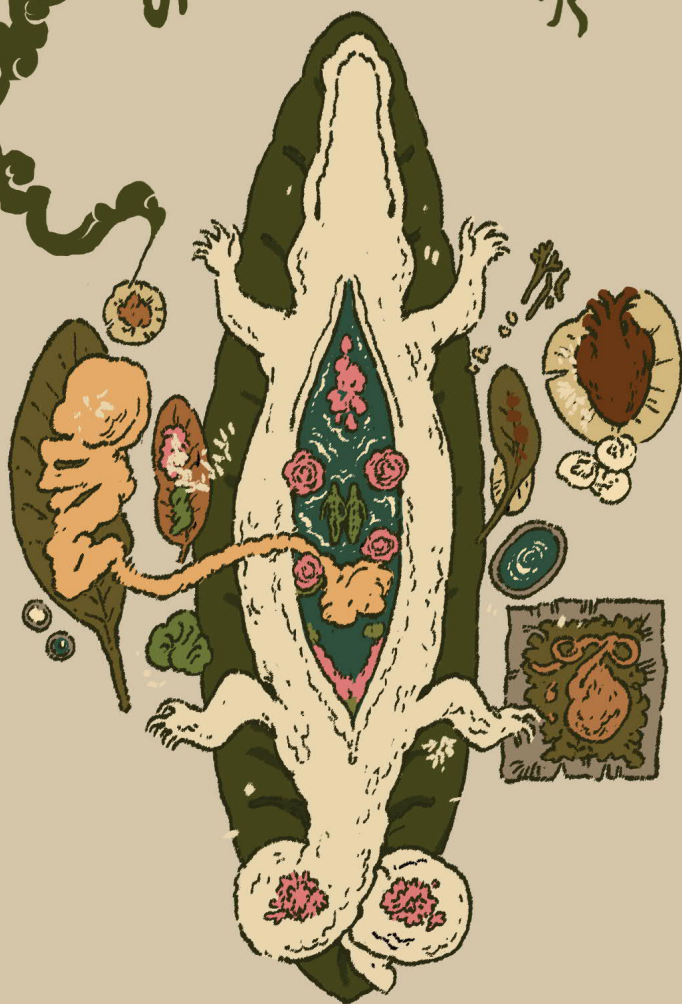


# LARN-SONG OF THE BACHELOR



**ZEDECK SIEW**

ILLUSTRATED BY NADHIR NOR



# LARN-SONG OF THE BACHELOR



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Special Thanks to **Sharon Chin** and **Scrap Princess**.

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# *A further four days by boat upriver*

---

Here people are called the Gleaming Fins. Their territory is known for three things:

One: **dreaming agaru**.

Some trees have the souls of birds. Their heartwood makes a powerful incense—notes of balsam, rain; flashes of true prophecy. Worth five times its weight in gold.

Two: **the Old Ruin**.

Many treasure-filled citadels of the Monkey Empire remain unmapped. The Old Ruin—with smiling macaque faces carved all around its mouth—may be one such place.

Three: **the Bachelor**.

All fear the river. They have feared it for a hundred years. Because of the Bachelor.

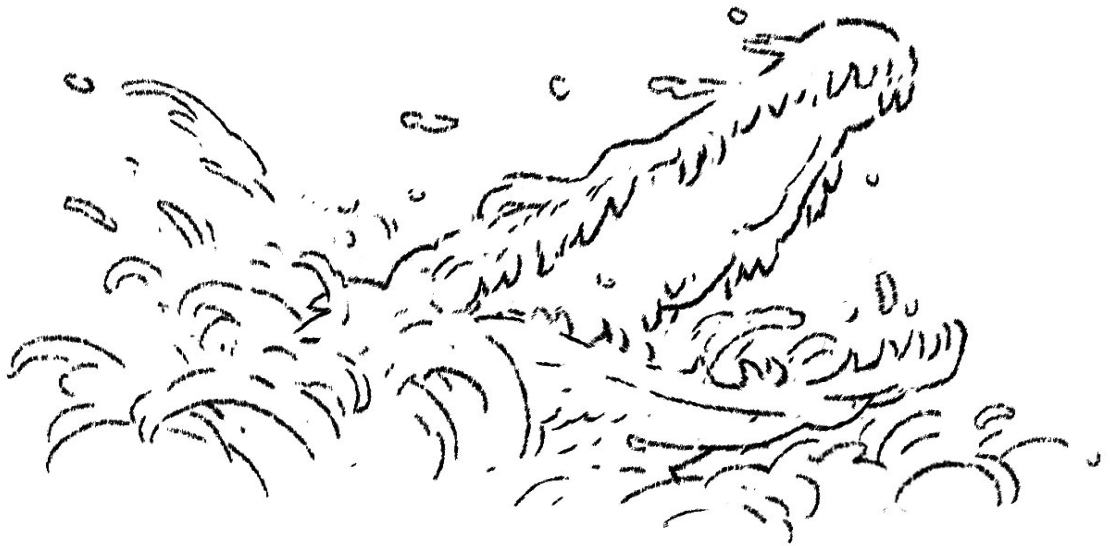
# The Bachelor

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He is a white crocodile, long as five men lying end to end. He waits in the water. Green, trailing weeds grow out his pale-scaled back. He looks like a shoal that has always been there.

Then he lunges.

He is called the Bachelor because he is singular—the only crocodile left in the river. All others have disappeared.



**HD 8, AC 17 Attacks** +8 bite (d8, grapples) and claws (2d6+1, magic weapon)

Hides on a 5-in-6. Sees through the eyes of king-fishers. Snatches a single victim, retreats diving, and waits for his meal to drown.

If killed his remains putrefy immediately. Within a day there is only brittle bone. The Bachelor reappears in d6 days.

The Bachelor's body is mystically tethered to local topography. When he is hurt the landscape suffers, collapses.

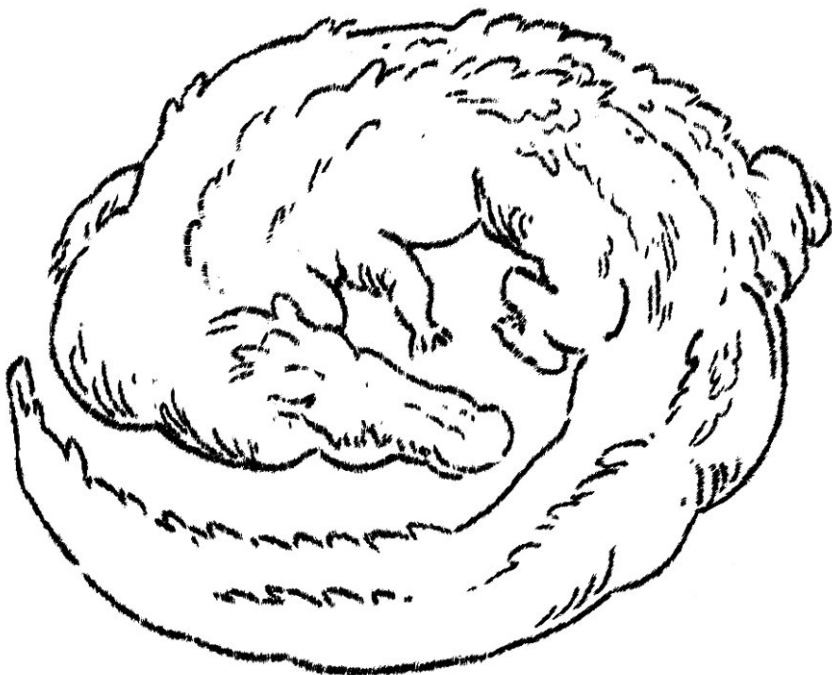
Note the Bachelor's every wound on corresponding map locations. Landslips occur at these places: rumbling dirt; tumbling trees, plumes of dust visible far away. Fissures. New entrances into the Bachelor's lair.

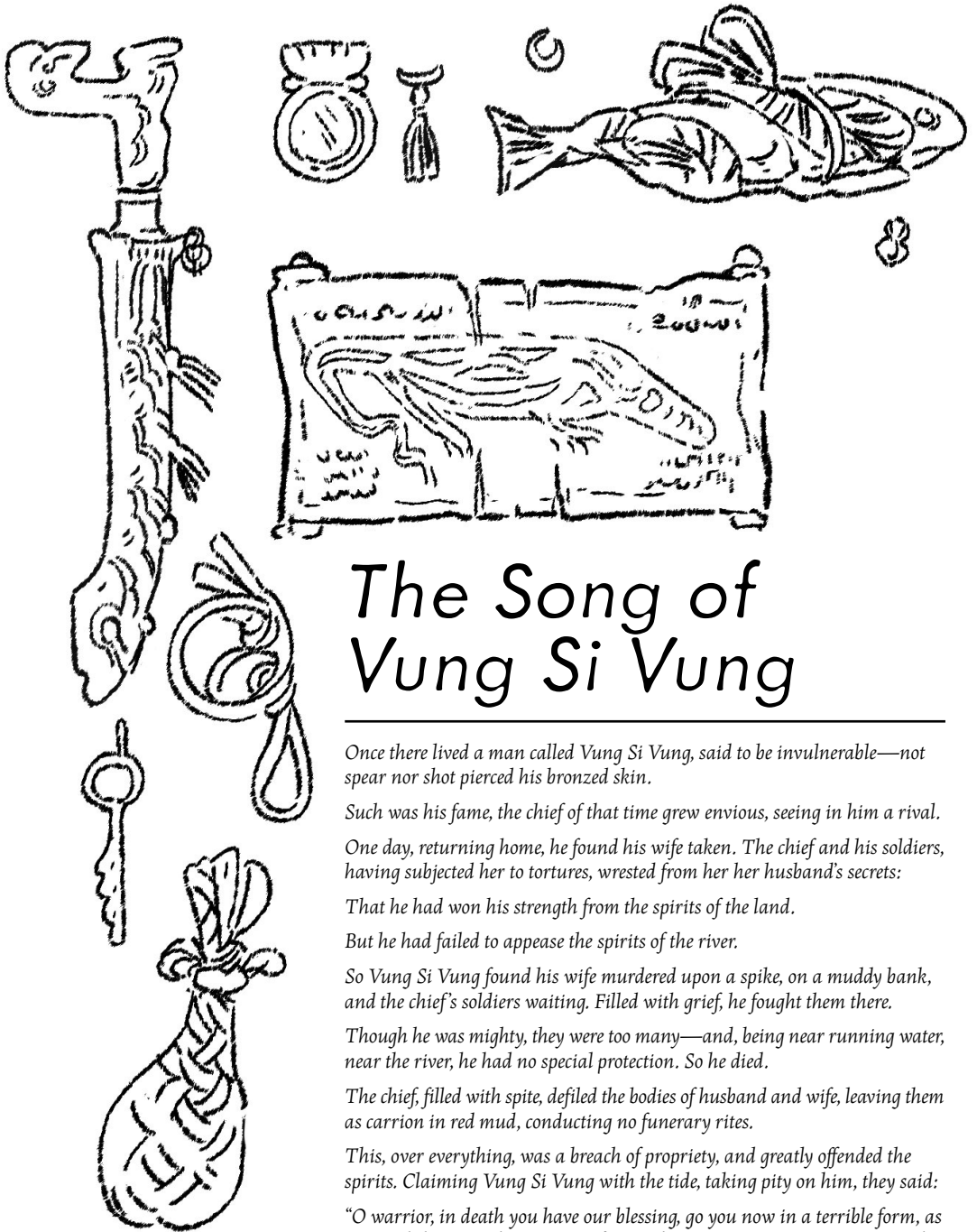
## *Rumors of the Bachelor*

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To speak of fell creatures is to attract their attention—especially now, with attacks happening so often. The Gleaming Fins must be persuaded to talk:

- 1 “A hunting party killed him, once. A few weeks later he was back.”
- 2 “Ask Auntie Sati for one of her incense burners. Keeps him away.”
- 3 “Watch out for kingfishers! Blue ones, especially. He uses them as spies.”
- 4 “He buries his victims. Pebbles, piled on the bank? Those are graves.”
- 5 “He can wear human shape. He can be anyone! He could be you!”
- 6 “Kill a boar. Leave it by the water, say his name. He won’t touch you, then.”
- 7 “He’s a hill-spirit. When the chief fought him there were earthquakes.”
- 8 “Treasure hunters don’t come back from the Ruin because he lives there.”
- 9 “He can’t be killed, not by mortals? Means he’s a god. Obvious, to me.”
- 10 “There’s more than one white croc. They’ve a nest somewhere.”





# The Song of Vung Si Vung

Once there lived a man called Vung Si Vung, said to be invulnerable—not spear nor shot pierced his bronzed skin.

Such was his fame, the chief of that time grew envious, seeing in him a rival.

One day, returning home, he found his wife taken. The chief and his soldiers, having subjected her to tortures, wrested from her her husband's secrets:

That he had won his strength from the spirits of the land.

But he had failed to appease the spirits of the river.

So Vung Si Vung found his wife murdered upon a spike, on a muddy bank, and the chief's soldiers waiting. Filled with grief, he fought them there.

Though he was mighty, they were too many—and, being near running water, near the river, he had no special protection. So he died.

The chief, filled with spite, defiled the bodies of husband and wife, leaving them as carrion in red mud, conducting no funerary rites.

This, over everything, was a breach of propriety, and greatly offended the spirits. Claiming Vung Si Vung with the tide, taking pity on him, they said:

“O warrior, in death you have our blessing, go you now in a terrible form, as an amphibious predator, to visit fear and justice onto your enemies! Let it be so, from this very day!”

# Adventure Summary

---

The **Gleaming Fins** (p. 6) have long been terrorised by the **Bachelor**: a respawning, giant albino crocodile (p. 2).

The **Company** (p. 10), a trading concern operating in Gleaming Fins territory, wants this nuisance gone; it disrupts the valuable **agaru** incense trade (p. 13).

The Bachelor resides in the **Old Ruin**, an ancient **Monkey-Empire** recreational centre (p. 22). The crocodile's mystic presence warped this underground complex, moulding the spaces within into correspondence with its body and innards.

Now that place is a pocket hell. All the Bachelor's victims—and the warring halves of the beast's psyche—are imprisoned within.

## Cast Summary

---

*Vartu Si Vartu* (p. 9)

Gleaming Fins chief. Silver body paint, left arm missing, suspicious.

**Wants:** the Bachelor to become a god; the Company gone.

*Mahivir Sanna Krau* (p. 10)

Company merchant. Tattoo-less, jade fingernails, all curt business.

**Wants:** the Bachelor permanently dead; more profit.

*Sati Wa Sati* (p. 10)

Gleaming Fins witch. Wrinkled, fireflies around her, sudden trances.

**Wants:** the Bachelor's curse ended; the crocodile cult stopped.

*Vung Si Vung* (p. 34)

The Bachelor's bestial soul. Crocodile-scale body tattoo, sharp teeth, animal growls.

**Wants:** things as they are; godhood.  
See **Becoming A God** (p. 38).

*Inna Wa Inna* (p. 32)

The Bachelor's human heart. Shawled, deft fingers, polite and resigned.

**Wants:** to find the key to Vung Si Vung's stupa; to kill him. See **Lifting The Curse** (p. 38).

*Sikkukurut* (p. 24)

Servant of the Thirteen Spirits. Kingfisher spirit made of smoke, always laughing.

**Wants:** to mock everybody; to get out of the Old Ruin.

*Grimkin San Mor* (p. 37)

Catfish chief. Trimmed naval jacket, catfish in pants, charismatic.

**Wants:** to control Vung Si Vung; to control or kill Inna Wa Inna. See **Siding With Catfish** (p. 38).

# The Gleaming Fins

---

They go bare-chested. All have tattoos: gills on either side of the neck; pectoral fins on either shoulder.

They honour the Great Mother, the Harvest Dancer, and the Thirteen Spirits.

For such a riparian people, nobody really works the river, besides boatmen—who tend to sport reptile-scale tattoos.

## A Gleaming Fin

---

Their names come in three parts: A given name, repeated fore and last; with a middle name—“Wa”, for women; “Si”, for men.

1	Arti	11	Mira
2	Bavu	12	Mon
3	Bab	13	Niti
4	Chin	14	Oppu
5	Dusa	15	Qat
6	Gam	16	Rus
7	Hummu	17	Sri
8	Jasa	18	Takka
9	Kuso	19	Villis
10	Liga	20	Wat

For example: Arti Si Arti, the pepper farmer; Wat Wa Wat, the priestess.

They have:

- |    |                                |
|----|--------------------------------|
| 1  | A throat-cancer rasp.          |
| 2  | Swaying, tea-sock breasts.     |
| 3  | A piranha grin. Filed teeth.   |
| 4  | Hands pummelled by arthritis.  |
| 5  | An affectionate pet boar.      |
| 6  | Muscly arms, two peg legs.     |
| 7  | A pubes-like moustache.        |
| 8  | Body odour like roadkill.      |
| 9  | A tic—blink blink blink blink. |
| 10 | Ivory orbs, for eyes. Blind.   |



They are:

- 1 | Sunken-eyed and sniffing. Recently lost their youngest son to the Bachelor. Will assist any effort to destroy him.
- 2 | Gently glowing. Possessed by a moon spirit. It wants to go on adventures, but flees its host as soon as it feels pain.
- 3 | Wearing a crocodile tattoo. Thinks the Bachelor a god, deserving of **blood sacrifice** (p. 17). Shunned by most. But not all.
- 4 | Very sweaty. Early stages of brainbreak fever. In d4 days they become a rabid beast: scratching, biting—infecting.
- 5 | Peddling silty, water-damaged miscellanea—dead people’s belongings, dug up from the Bachelor’s pebble graves.
- 6 | Cornered by a gang of toughs. “Where’s the place?” the thugs growl. Knows the way to a massive grove of agaru.
- 7 | Excited about their new family, upriver. Recently become host to a **parasitic catfish** (p. 44). Grimkin’s spy in the village.
- 8 | Asking if you have compunctions, murdering an old lady. Convinced **Auntie Sati** (p. 10) caused their father’s death.
- 9 | Passed out, drunk, clutching an heirloom spear—their last possession. **Mahivir the Merchant** (p. 10) took everything else.
- 10 | Chased by a man with a machete. “Touch my daughter again, I’ll kill you!” screams. The lovers will elope, soon.

And additional tattoos of:

- 1 | Ginseng in the shape of men. [An herbalist and poison-maker. Dried roots and unguent **pots and medicines** (p. 11). 3sp.]
- 2 | Eagles with twelve wings. [A **dreaming agaru** (p. 13) sniffer. d20 ounces of agaru on person. Talk To Plants, once per day.]
- 3 | Knots knotted around more knots. [A **dire eel wrestler** (p. 16). Barbed bracers, spiked knuckles. 6sp. +2 to unarmed damage.]
- 4 | Neon-bright plate-sized spots. [A frog and lizard breeder. Brightly coloured pets. These are **medicines** (p. 11). 5sp.]
- 5 | Staring, glaring owl eyes. [A warrior of spear and shield. If hired to hunt the Bachelor, asks thrice the normal fee.]
- 6 | Flowers, wreathed in flame. [A **pepper farmer** (p. 16) and boar-herd. Jerky rations. 1sp. Super spicy, temporary -1 Wisdom.]
- 7 | Open maws with curling tusks. [A **singer of songs and histories** (p. 16). Always male. Does not know Vung Si Vung’s song.]
- 8 | Rhinoceroses, in regal profile. [A hunter of forest beasts. Lures for a specific type of animal. 3sp. Fails half the time.]
- 9 | Demon figures in criss-cross patterns. [A weaver of holy fabrics. Just finished a **Harvest Dancer magic motif** (p. 12). 25osp.]
- 10 | Stars and crescent moons. [A shaman and keeper of rites. Random 1st-level Cleric spell. Spell effects last one day.]



## *Village of the Gleaming Fins*

---

Houses on stilts. Orphaned pilings jut on either side of the pier; the village has been backing away from the shore for years.



## Chief's Longhouse

---

The largest structure on the tallest stilts. Tapestries with glinting embroidery, silver fixtures, honoured weaponry—musty, tarnished, rusty.

### *Vartu Si Vartu, Chief of the Gleaming Fins*

Body completely coated in silver paint. He has a servant follow him everywhere, to make sure his makeup is immaculate; it rubs off on everything.

Lost his left arm fighting the Bachelor. As Level 3 Fighter. 10 **retainers** (p. 40), armed with shields, knives, blowpipes.

**Manner:** proud warrior. Every newcomer is a rival; every gesture a challenge to his authority. “You think you can kill the monster, huh? You think you are better than me? Huh?”

**Wants:** proof the crocodile is a god. Then there is no shame; he lost to a divine being. Fears you succeeding where he failed.



## Company Office

---

A godown, bunkhouse, and shisha den. The Company buys the natives' crafts and forest goods, then plies them with dice games and alcohol.

### *Mahivir Sanna Krau, Company Merchant*

No tattoos. Represents The-Isles-Like-Precious-Ivory Trading Company. His fingernails are implanted shards of jade.

Sells non-native supplies—triple the normal price. 15 **guards** (p. 40), armed with sabres and pistols.



**Manner:** too busy to look at you. His abacus goes clack-clack-clack. “Got something to sell? How many catties? Ludo, bring the scales!”

Nods. “Six silvers.” Shrugs. “Take it or leave it.”

**Wants:** the Bachelor gone. Damn crocodile disrupts his supply chain—attacking his prospectors, wrecking his boats.

## Auntie's Hut

---

Hunched over the river, cloaked in a gauze of incense, green from the glow of fireflies. They sketch constellations around Auntie Sati's hair.

### *Sati Wa Sati, Midwife*

Smaller than any grandma you know, and wrinklier. Quicker, too—*thwack!* She's chopped an eel's head off with her cleaver.

As Level 3 Cleric. Sells *eel extract* (1sp, restores 1hp, too gross to chug quickly) or magic *incense burners* (12sp, not magic).

**Manner:** witchy, obviously. “Eel extract. Good for impotence. Eheh heh.” Elbows you and winks. Switches to trance-like soothsaying mode, seemingly at will; whereupon her fireflies freeze in a halo.

**Wants:** the Bachelor's curse to end. Knows he resides in the Old Ruin—she has seen death, inside. Knows the **song of Vung Si Vung** (p. 34).

## Medicines of the Great Mother

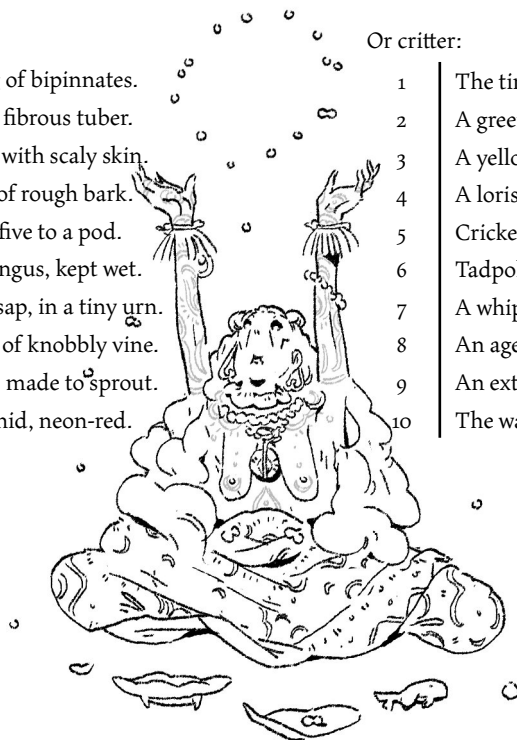
Life flows from the Great Mother's womb. Death also. Therefore herb- and critter-lore, the arts of harming and healing—these are her arts.

Herb:

- 1 A sprig of bipinnates.
- 2 A pale, fibrous tuber.
- 3 A fruit with scaly skin.
- 4 Flakes of rough bark.
- 5 Beans, five to a pod.
- 6 Jelly fungus, kept wet.
- 7 White sap, in a tiny urn.
- 8 A knot of knobbly vine.
- 9 A seed, made to sprout.
- 10 An orchid, neon-red.

Or critter:

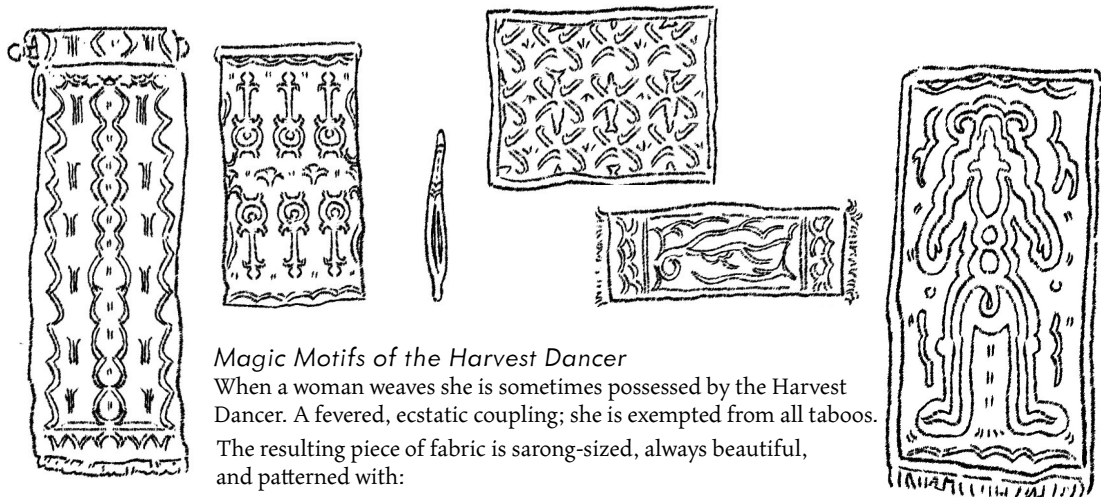
- 1 The tiniest of sparrows.
- 2 A green-finned betta.
- 3 A yellow-frilled agama.
- 4 A loris, eyes black orbs.
- 5 Crickets in a wicker box.
- 6 Tadpoles in a glass jar.
- 7 A whip snake, all blue.
- 8 An age-faded tortoise.
- 9 An extra-large katydid.
- 10 The wartiest of toads.



Eat the medicine. Its effects last an hour:

- 1 **Heaty.** Your touch sears skin and scorches clothing.
- 2 **Cooling.** Your breath mists air and freezes water.
- 3 **Lightening.** Your belly glows bright like a spotlight.
- 4 **Darkening.** All your senses leave you. Total deprivation.
- 5 **Solidifying.** Form a full-body callus. +1 AC, -1 Dexterity.
- 6 **Quickening.** Any sex results in pregnancy. No exceptions.
- 7 **Thickening.** Your lungs fill up. Keep coughing or drown.
- 8 **Thinning.** Pliable, you squeeze through the smallest gaps.
- 9 **Cleansing.** You sweat out toxins. d6 damage on contact.
- 10 **Deadly.** Venom in the blood. Lose 1 HP with every step.

You could keep a medicinal creature alive. It manifests effects in itself for an hour after you feed it. Once per day.



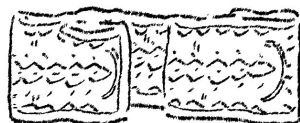
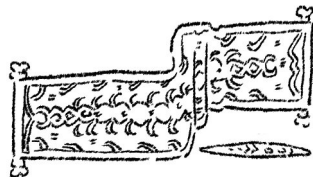
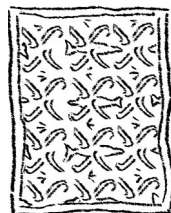
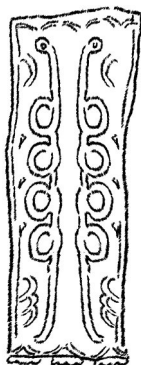
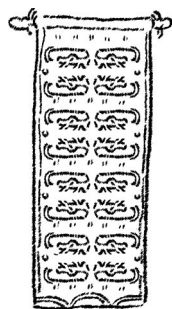
### *Magic Motifs of the Harvest Dancer*

When a woman weaves she is sometimes possessed by the Harvest Dancer. A fevered, ecstatic coupling; she is exempted from all taboos.

The resulting piece of fabric is sarong-sized, always beautiful, and patterned with:

- 1 Red centipedes. Legs interlaced. Wet this cloth and towel-whip your enemy. It hits like a venom-tipped spear.
- 2 Softshell turtles. Necks stretched out. Wear it and your neck stretches, too. A maximum length equal to your height.
- 3 Zigzags of silver. Metallic sheen. As supple as cotton. But try to make a cut, or a puncture? You find it strong as steel.
- 4 Black snakes. In spirals. Once a day, at your command, d6 coil out of the weft. Totally obedient to you for an hour.
- 5 Purple trceries. Like veins. Boiling it makes for a nourishing, bloody broth. Fades after a month's worth of meals.
- 6 Borders around a single inhuman figure. A demon, imprisoned. It bargains with you. Rip the cloth to set it free.
- 7 Floating lotus flowers. Put it on and your pores exude a sweet, powerful scent—irresistible to the dead.
- 8 Bats against a deep-evening colour. Wrap it as a cloak around your shoulders. You turn into a man-sized flying fox.
- 9 A thousand grasshoppers. Poisonous green. Spread it out. Invisible mandibles strip all foliage in a ten-metre range.
- 10 Waves, lunging dolphins. Tiled, tessellated. Unfolded onto any flat surface, it is an inexhaustible well of salt water.

Valuable, so long as they keep their magic.



## The Agarú Trade

---

The delicate, resinous heartwood called dreaming agarú forms in a tree that has the soul of a bird. It longs to be free. This is why it smells so sweet—so people will turn it into smoke.

Its incense is like rain-laden wind, like clove wine, like a lover you knew.

It is expensive. The Company pays sniffers 1sp an ounce. Abroad, an ounce is worth 5gp.

It is hard to find. Traditional sniffers bargain with bird spirits, *Talk To Plants*, and the literal sniffing of trunks. Company prospectors use a more efficient method: *Locate Object*.

Magic-users have learned to ride its bird-soul into the ether. It overpowers fate, like perfume masks a stench. If dreaming agarú is burnt at casting, any spell involving prophecy always returns truth.

The fortune-teller may add one avian-themed circumstance to their prophetic vision:

*“There will be a jewelled egg in the treasury.”*

*“So-and-so will have a caged cockatoo.”*

*“The beast will be harried by a flock of crows.”*

etc. This will also be true.

## The Crocodile Cult

---

It is the Company's fault. Mahivir's deals have made many poor. His guards have guns.

But the white crocodile is a local power, uncowed by steel or creditors. So you see reptile scales carved into pilings, drawn in sand, inked on an arm.

Shamans warn that worship of the Bachelor is sacrilege, but his cult still grows.

Vartu Si Vartu is its secret priest.

Cultists meet **upriver** (p. 17), after sundown. They experiment with rites. Every d4 days, their sacrifices increase in severity:

**First:** a boar, throat cut, left on the bank. (*Untouched, half the time.*)

**Then:** a boar, roasted, laid out like a feast. (*Untouched.*)

**Then:** somebody recently deceased, pushed out in a boat. (*Capsized.*)

**Then:** a cultist dips a limb in the water. (*The whole cultist is taken, half the time.*)

**Then:** Vartu Si Vartu offers his other arm. (*Dragged under—then let go.*)

**Thereafter:** an abductee, bound on the bank. (*The Bachelor comes ashore to eat.*)

The cult's chants flatter Vung Si Vung. After tasting Vartu Si Vartu he will actively pursue godhood, and plan to murder his wife.

# The River

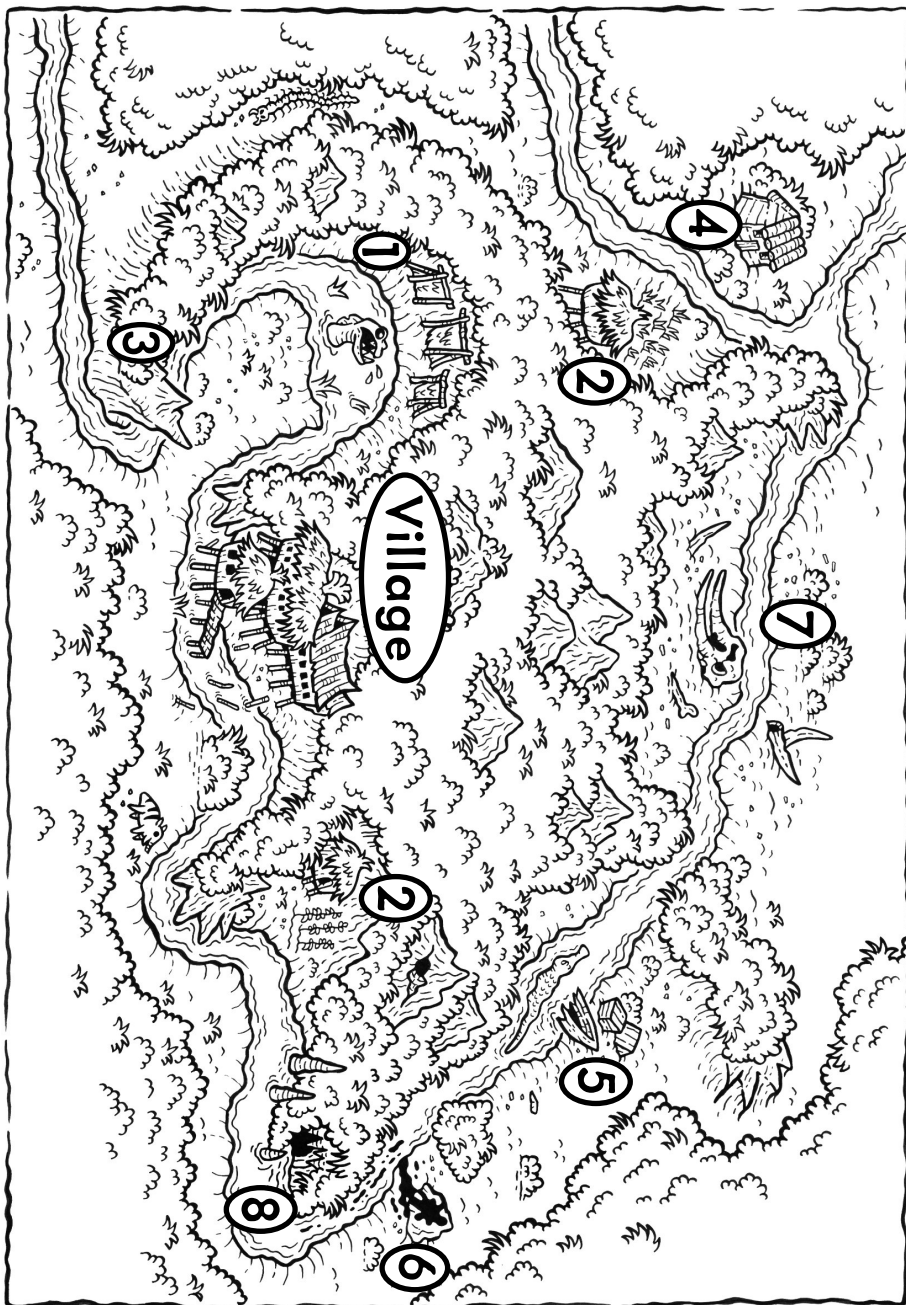
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Travel in Gleaming Fins territory is by boat. There is always something. Roll every quarter-day:

2d6	Encounter
2	A baby <b>tapir</b> , sipping from the stream. Silken, sought-after hide. Tapirs turn invisible as they age; its parents (p. 40) lurk nearby, unseen.
3	Floating face down, a body. Prod it and it sputters. Colour returns. "Attacked!" the man coughs. "We were attacked. By the Bachelor!"
4	Floating face down, a body. Prod it and it sputters. "Where am I?" she feigns, a mind-controlling <b>catfish</b> quietly latched to her crotch (p. 44).
5	Flapping wisp of smoke. A <b>bird spirit</b> (p. 41). Can point you to its current favourite agaru tree. Hexes you if the tree is harvested.
6	Chitin the colour of red plastic, slipping into the water. Hunting you. The water hisses, boils. d8 <b>flame centipedes</b> (p. 41), long as you are tall.
7	A waterweed-y sandbar in a shallow stretch. This is, of course, the <b>Bachelor</b> : a white crocodile monster (p. 2). Attacks if you pass too near.
8	Blue and orange, on a branch. A kingfisher. You think it is looking at you. It is. You see another. And another. And another. Watching.
9	A raggedy girl, waving. This is the <b>Snake Urchin</b> (p. 41). All kraits obey her. She wants a new doll. She pouts. "Promise? If you lie I'll get you!"
10	d4 <b>skelephants</b> (p. 42), fording. Midway across, only their skulls and backs break the surface, like tusked, overturned boats. Ivory pays well.
11	Rocks from the canopy, thrown by arms made of woody sinew. d10 <b>vine monkeys</b> (p. 42). Their chatter is a forest rustling without wind.
12	A man on his haunches, head down, tongue out. Lapping at the water. He has yellow eyes, shining softly. Pregnant with a <b>tiger spirit</b> (p. 42).

If you roll doubles, the **Bachelor** (p. 2) is present. He will perform some sudden violence.

Travel on foot takes twice as long, and still follows the river. Lose sight of it and you are lost. Animal trails shift, hill-spirits move stuff around. The only reliable method of traversing the forest is to cut it down.



## Map Key

Not to scale, meant to represent relative positions. Adjacent keyed locations along the river are a quarter-day's travel apart.

Note the Bachelor's every wound on corresponding map locations. Landslides occur at these places. Fissures. New entrances into the **Bachelor's lair**. (p. 22).

# Other Locations

---

## 1: Dire Eel Hole

---

Lean-tos around a wide lagoon. Eel wrestlers lounge here.

Wade in, wiggle your toes—a **dire eel** will attack. The wrestlers watch and take bets against you.

In the deepest part of the lagoon is a megalith, shaped like an eel's grinning head. Any living creature that touches it turns into a dire eel for a day.

### **Dire Eel**

**HD 2 AC 14 Attacks** +2 bite (d6) and slam (d4, knockback)

Balletic. Strength like a battering ram. Hit and run tactics. Advantage in all grapple contests, unless facing an opponent with specialised gear.

## 2: Pepper Farms

---

Upland rice, pepper vine-yards. Farmers give you the side-eye.

Three Company **goons** (p. 40) are here to evict Re Wa Re, a widow with a gambling debt. She will beg, then swear, then bite. They will shoot her.

Kran Si Kran is haunted by the ghost of his jilted lover. He disgraced her; she killed herself. Sati the witch helped bury a jar of her teeth under his house.

## 3: Singer's Stone

---

Poetry, in male voices. The cliff forms a natural amphitheatre.

The Gleaming Fins keep history in song. New singers come to learn from old ones, to earn their tattoos.

The singers' tattoos carry a secret curse. Those wearing them always forget who Vung Si Vung is. This curse ends if the cliff is destroyed.



## 4: Prospector's Cabin

---

A log house. From inside: "Don't come no closer! We'll shoot!"

The Company prospectors are holed up with four day's rations, d6 scrolls of *Locate Object*, and 500sp worth of agaru.

They are spooked. A **native man with amber eyes** (p. 42) stalks them. "He snatched Ludo yesterday!" Tonight, Ludo will stagger back, feverish.

## 5: Wreck

---

Half a boat, stuck on a shoal. Perfume spices the wind.

Agaru spoils in sodden crates (d4 boxes intact, 150sp each. The rest are too wet). Drowned agaru still smells good but has lost all special properties.

The **Bachelor** (p. 2) lurks nearby, hoping to ambush salvagers. After three days he leaves the site tidy: debris buried in pebble mounds, on the shore.

## 6: Ritual Site

---

Gore stains the stones, drag-marks slip into the water.

Sacrifices to the Bachelor are performed here. Leave raw meat. He will appear at midnight to inspect your offering. He only takes pork: short, or long.

Shamans view crocodile worship a sacrilege, so cultists hide each other's identities. You see traces of silver paint on a few rocks.



## 7: Skelephant Graveyard

---

The bones under your feet shift. A tusk pulls free.

A **skelephant** (p. 42) is assembled in mid-air, like a toy figure being snap-fitted together. Its invisible creator is the Bone Uncle. He is one of the Thirteen.

Stealing from this place is a taboo backed by the Bone Uncle's unseen fists. Anything you leave here he considers his.

### **The Bone Uncle**

**HD 12 AC 20 Attacks** +12 smash (2d10+6, knockback) and grab (grapples, d8 every round) / gore (d10+6, magic weapon)

If you see the invisible you see a giant with an elephant's head and translucent skin. His voice bypasses your ears, reverbs in your brain.

Deal with him as you would a god. Immune to divine magic, mundane weapons and mental effects. *Wake Skeleton*, at will. All skeletal undead obey him.

Any being that slays him takes his place amongst the Thirteen.

### *Wake Skeleton*

Magic-user Level 2

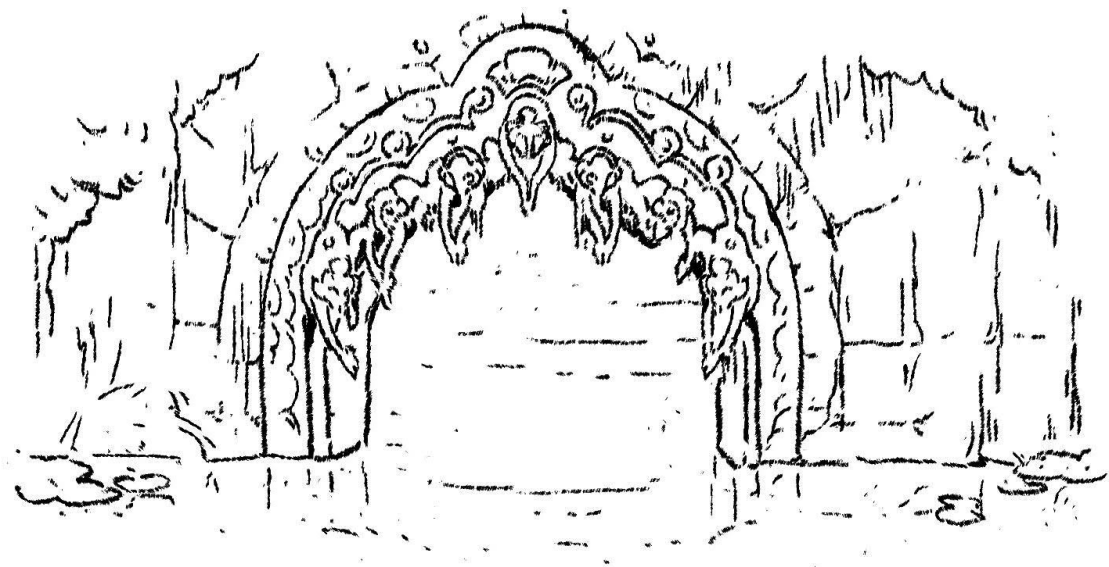
Duration: 1 round/level

Range: Touch

Life is but an egg, an incubator for future undeath. Your necromancy pierces a living creature, rousing the skeleton waiting foetal within.

Imagine waking in your mother's womb. The terror of it. The skeleton panics, attempts to claw free of smothering flesh. Every round, your target must save or take d6 damage and lose their round.

Requires concentration. If your target dies before the spell ends, their skeleton rises under your permanent control. HD equal to half your level, rounded down.



## 8: *The Old Ruin*

---

This cave was not cut by nature. Simian-featured statues hang overhead, posed as if diving into the water—so worn you think them stalactites, at first.

You hear the murmur of waves, further in. You feel a breeze, like breath. Leads to  
**A: The Mouth** (p. 21).



## A: The Mouth

---

Reflected sunlight sings sine waves on the ceiling, on the statues, on the steps rising out of the water.

Halfway up the steps a monkey statue bows, both hands raised in offering. There is a Monkey Empire trinket sitting in its palms.

Do you take the trinket? If you do, and venture deeper in, and return to this area—it will be dark. Both the statue and the exit into the outside world will be missing.

### *Mischiefs of the Monkey Empire*

In a previous world monkeys ruled the earth. Are we refinements of their form? Or regressions?

They do not talk about it. Maybe they cannot. They left no records. Only servitor races, gone feral. Ruins. Vaults full of treasure, magical trinkets:

- 1 | **Invisibility band.** Plain gold. Its function is obvious to the magically sensitive, but only activates if worn on a tail.
- 2 | **d6 vine monkey seeds.** Viable. Sprout obedient, posh-butler retainers. If they meet wild vine monkeys they learn rebellion.
- 3 | **Apotheosis mask.** Exquisite, skull-like, tusked. Reality recognises you as a god equal to heaven. You don't get extra powers.
- 4 | **Grabber bolas.** Animated monkey paws instead of weights. Whatever they manage to snare teleports into your hands.
- 5 | **Jig flute.** Has a three-minute pop hit recorded in it. Those who hear must dance along for the duration, even the one playing.
- 6 | **Stepping stones.** One pair, brick size. They levitate, and go wherever you mentally command. Requires concentration.
- 7 | **Thousand-spice powder.** This seasoning makes anything smell and taste delicious—fresh poop, rotting fruit, arsenic.
- 8 | **Homunculus wine.** Makes you vomit up your soul as a mouse-sized mini-you. Your body is limp until it climbs back inside.
- 9 | **Club house.** Iron mace, hollow head. Stand it upright, press a button—it grows into a tower-like structure you can sleep in.
- 10 | **Slumming-it pills.** Transforms you into a human for d6 hours. But with a tail. No respectable monkey would give up its tail.

Fucking monkeys.



# The Old Ruin

---

Living explorers may enter and exit normally, and have normal needs.

If killed by the Bachelor or the Ruin's inhabitants, you awake in a random passage, stripped of belongings. Your belongings appear in **D1: The Cloth-Packed Belly** (p. 27). You no longer need to eat, and cannot leave.

Cracked geography caused by hurting the Bachelor gradually close, like a body healing, over d6 days.

## Spaces in the Old Ruin

---

Passages are about 10ft wide, wet with ice-cold rivulets, unless otherwise noted.

This passage:

- 1 Climbs upwards on steep, uneven steps. Rusty handrails snap at the tiniest weight. Spike yourself, contract tetanus.
- 2 Makes you float. Antigrav hex gently drifts items and bodies from your end to the other. Resisting this flow is difficult.
- 3 Disappears down a vertical shaft. Gears and a pulley in the ceiling. Snapped wires and an elevator cage at the bottom.
- 4 Hugs a cliff. Path of teak logs, staked into its face. Gaps where logs have fallen away. Overlooks a rushing, chasmal stream.
- 5 Slips into a still pool. Swimmable in a single breath, if you don't get turned around. Do you have a waterproof lantern?
- 6 Narrows into a gangway through a glass tunnel. Beyond the glass, an irregular chamber. The glass is laced with fractures.

The walls are:

- 1 Furred in ghost moss. Sickly white, photosynthesises darkness. Eat some and become blind to light, but see in its absence.
- 2 Tiled, stained as a butcher's, and buckling inwards. Underneath, corrosive gases course through leaky, creaking pipes.
- 3 Undulating. Crowds of anemone-like fungus smell foul and cast luminescent spores. Inhale the stuff and you'll stink, too.
- 4 Decorated with primate figures. Cut from natural stone. High-relief, magically-animated tableaux of fighting and fucking.
- 5 Riddled with side-rooms, like nightclub booths. Teak tables, tarnished cutlery, tall bottles filled with now-volatile sludge.
- 6 Steaming. Fountains gush from tongue spouts, heated by hidden fires. Sulphur deposits. Obscuring fog smarts your eyes.

## Encounters in the Old Ruin

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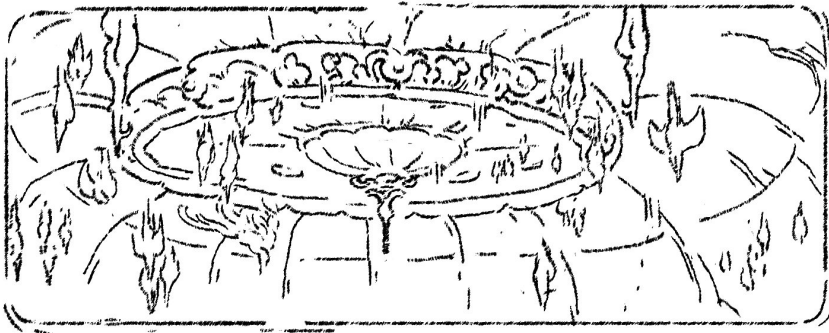
There is always something. Roll for every new passage or room:

### 2d6 Encounters

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 2  | The grind of enamel. A <b>tooth golem</b> (p. 43), a mass of reptile teeth in the shape of a person. To let it hug you is to be entirely masticated.  |
| 3  | Spiral shells stud the floor and walls. Vampire snails, filled with blood. They need not touch you; they can feed from your shadow.                   |
| 4  | Twittering, fluttering, in a roar. A <b>kingfisher swarm</b> (p. 43). Other denizens here have learnt to stay calm, to let them pass through. Do you? |
| 5  | Tiny bobbing night-lights. d8 fireflies. They follow magic-users, easing the flow of spellcasting. With every spell you cast, a firefly dies.         |
| 6  | Nude, trailing innards, missing arms or legs. d8 <b>wet corpses</b> (p. 43). Throats a-rattle, their endless screaming long rasped away to nothing.   |
| 7  | A blur in air, as if from heat. A nostalgia wisp. Recall something happy and it burns as a lamp. Your happy memory is gone for good.                  |
| 8  | Clothed in rags, marching with purpose. d6 <b>wet-corpse hosts</b> (p. 44). The fronts of their pants tent and twitch. Controlled by catfish.         |
| 9  | <b>Monkey statues</b> (p. 44), in d4 mock-heroic poses. You never catch them moving. They tail you, trip you, trick you into danger. Fun and games!   |
| 10 | The muttering of nutters. d4 <b>treasure hunters</b> (p. 40), trapped here, turned milky-eyed, hairless, and cannibal. Maybe not completely gone.     |
| 11 | Sludgy jellies, shiny things in them. Like coins at the bottom of fountains. d4 <b>brown puddings</b> (p. 45), amoeboids that eat animals with acid.  |
| 12 | The clatter of a rock-fall starting. A <b>pebble golem</b> (p. 45), a constant mineral tumble in the shape of a person. Looking for something. What?  |

If you roll doubles, d4 **cave crocodiles** (p. 45) are also present. Blind, echolocating - click-click-click. They crawl on the walls and ceiling, seeking to do harm.



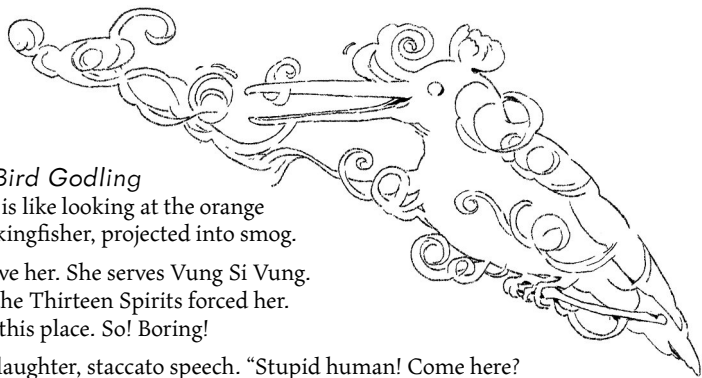


## B: The Lungs

The floor of this—ballroom?—wriggles. A luxury rug of roaches and guano.

Deafening chirps and chattering. The glass-bead glitter of eyes far above you.

**Kingfishers** (p. 43) roost around the pillars. They hang upside-down, like bats. Many kinds, many colours. Some have bills barbed like harpoons. One is made of incense.



### *Sikkukurut, Bird Godling*

Looking at her is like looking at the orange hologram of a kingfisher, projected into smog.

Kingfishers serve her. She serves Vung Si Vung.

Not willingly; the Thirteen Spirits forced her.

She is stuck in this place. So! Boring!

**Manner:** high laughter, staccato speech. “Stupid human! Come here?

Trapped here! Funny, funny! Want out, want out? Sikkukurut knows. Sikkukurut knows stuff! Help Sikkukurut?”

**Wants:** pranks. Steal Inna Wa Inna’s tapestries, completely de-tooth a cave crocodile—shit like that. Or treats! She likes vampire snails.

**HD 6 AC 17 Attacks +6 peck (d4+2, magic weapon)**

Made of fragrant smoke. Immune to mundane weapons and charm effects.

Vulnerable to wind effects. Sees through kingfishers’ eyes. Never fights alone.

Manipulates luck. Every round, roll d20; substitute this result for any roll made by anybody in the same round, provided an avian-themed excuse is plausible. (“A kingfisher catches you in the wrist, you miss!”)



## C: The Paw

---

Lockers line the passage. Unlock them with magic. The simian-sized athleisure within is worth 300sp to museums, per piece, intact.

These sparring rooms (sprung-wood floors, mirrored walls) reflect idealised versions of you, cartoon-villain versions of your foes. Maybe they know your foes before you do.

Brass cages hang from the ceiling. Unlock them with magic. They are etched with ideograms of binding, and are empty. All except one.



### Grasping Demon

**HD 6 AC 18 Attacks** +6 choke (d4, grapples) and jab (d4, grapples) and grope (d4, grapples)

A human shape made of hands. Palms for pecs, fists for abs. Its penis dangles from a wrist.

Worshipped by conquerors, timber barons, plagiarists. Talks using sign language. Always takes more than it initially agrees to. Immune to fear effects. Half damage from mundane weapons.

Splays to hug you. Hands in your clothes, hands down your mouth. Grappled by the grasping demon, take d6 damage next round, then d8, then d10, so on.

Caged, the grasping demon imbues the Bachelor's claws with potency; this is why they count as magic weapons.

Cage other things and the Bachelor's claws adopt their properties, also—a snake spirit grants venom; a flame demon grants fire damage.

The background of the page is a detailed illustration of a cave wall. It features numerous archways of various sizes, some of which are filled with different motifs. Some archways contain crocodiles, others have crying women, and some have monkeys. The motifs are drawn in a simple, sketchy style. The overall tone is dark, with the motifs appearing in negative space or glowing in the dark.

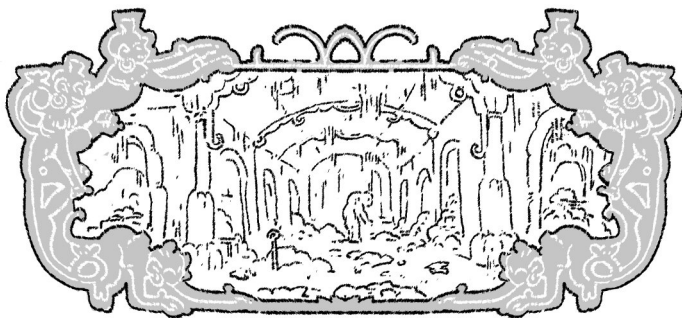
## D: The Bellies

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Archways to the Bellies appear in negative colour—they glow in darkness, and grow ink-black under light.

The motifs carved on them, and the Bellies they lead to, change according to your circumstances. In order of precedence:

1. If anybody is bleeding, the archway is carved with yawning crocodiles. It leads to **D3: The Bachelor-Filled Belly** (p. 28).
2. If you have a stone from a pebble golem, the archway is crowded with crying women. It leads to **D2: The Stone-Full Belly** (p. 27).
3. If you are wearing clothes, the archways sports cavorting monkeys. It leads to **D1: The Cloth-Packed Belly** (p. 27).



## D1: The Cloth-Packed Belly

Some sort of shopping-arcade-like area. Each open lot overflowing with a different kind of human accoutrement.

There is a **pebble golem** (p. 45) here, sorting through:

- 1 Boots, thong sandals, slippers.
- 2 Loin-cloth, stained, stinking.
- 3 Beads, silver rings, gold teeth.
- 4 Cracked spears and blowpipes.
- 5 Torn, claw-marked leather vests.
- 6 Purses, pouches, keepsake bags.

Enough stuff to clothe a whole city. You should be able to find any mundane, non-consumable thing, if you bother looking. It takes time—one exploration turn per two syllables of the item's name. This makes noise. The pebble golem usually notices.

What you find is functional, of indeterminable age, and battered by animal attack.

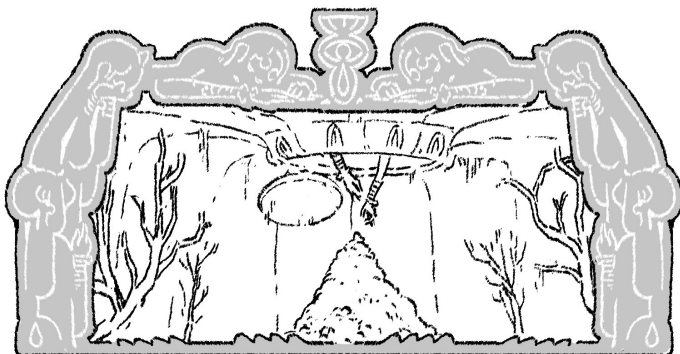
## D2: The Stone-Full Belly

Benches under four bone-dead trees. All face a dry fountain basin, heaped high with stones.

The stones sit directly under a brass hatch, embedded into the convex ceiling.

The hatch swings open. Light through the hole. A woman's forearm reaches through, grabs a stone, then withdraws. The hatch closes.

This repeats every other minute. The hatch leads to E: **The Heart** (p. 31).



## D3: The Bachelor-Filled Belly

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You get a sense of space. No lamp carries light to the roof, high as a starless sky.

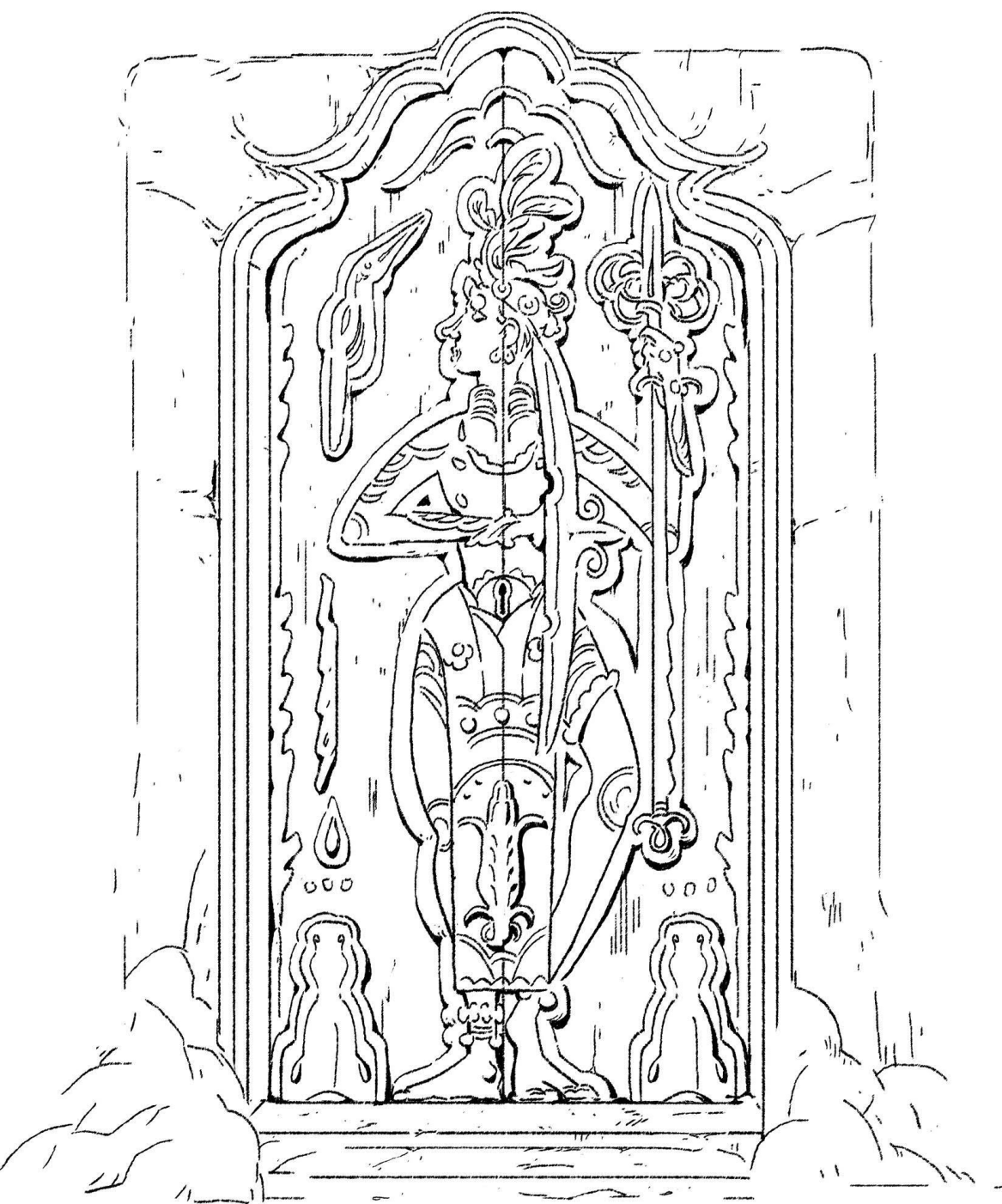
A strange breeze. Waves lap a bucolic shore, next to a stone dock. It is a lake. Among the reeds are rotting planks, axles, wheels—the remains of paddle boats.

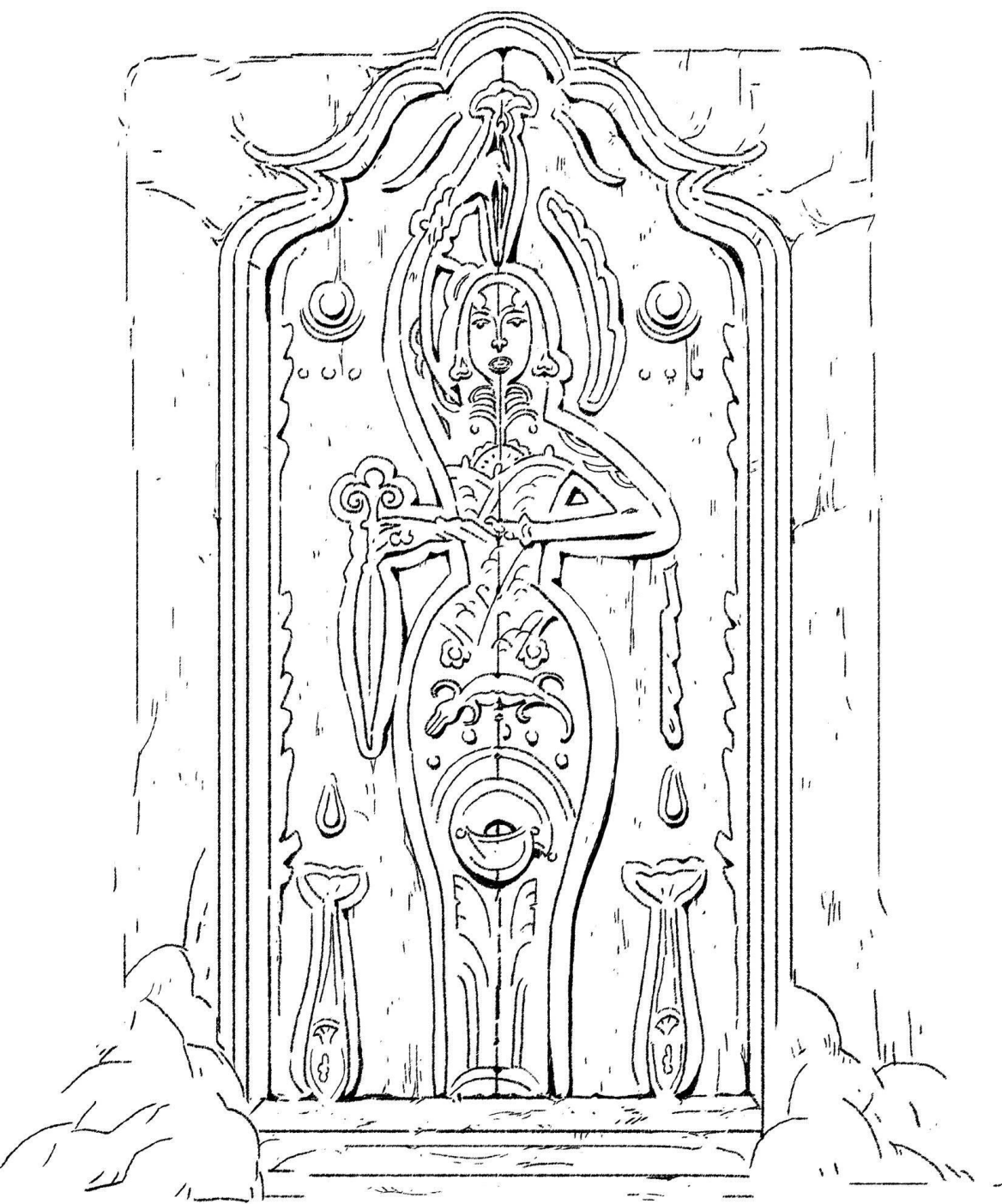
Shrill clicking sounds. d12 **cave crocodiles** (p. 45) lurk nearby. They chat if you prove too difficult to eat.

There is an island in the middle of the lake. Another stone dock, leading to a stupa. In the stupa, a brass door sports the bas relief of a warrior, regal with feathers, spear and shield.

There is a keyhole in his belt you cannot pick. **Grimkin** (p. 37) has the key. This brass door leads to **F: The Head** (p. 34).







## *E: The Heart*

---

The brass door sports the bas relief of a woman, imperious with corset, weaving shuttle, and knife.

Past the door: a waterfall. Around its plunge pool, ferns garland lounge-worthy rocks. A scene plucked from your childhood and planted underground.

There is a lit cottage here, guarded by d4 **pebble golems** (p. 45). Inside are tapestries, a weaving machine, the scent of stew, sanding sounds.

A woman sits at a bench, polishing a stone with a strip of stingray leather. On her right is a basket full of finished, smooth pebbles.

On her left is a hatch in the floor. This leads to **D2: The Stone-Full Belly** (p. 27).



### *Inna Wa Inna, Wife*

A paragon of poise with deft, expressive fingers—a master weaver with a century of practice.

She is Vung Si Vung's wife, and once loved him. Now they no longer talk. She controls the pebble golems.

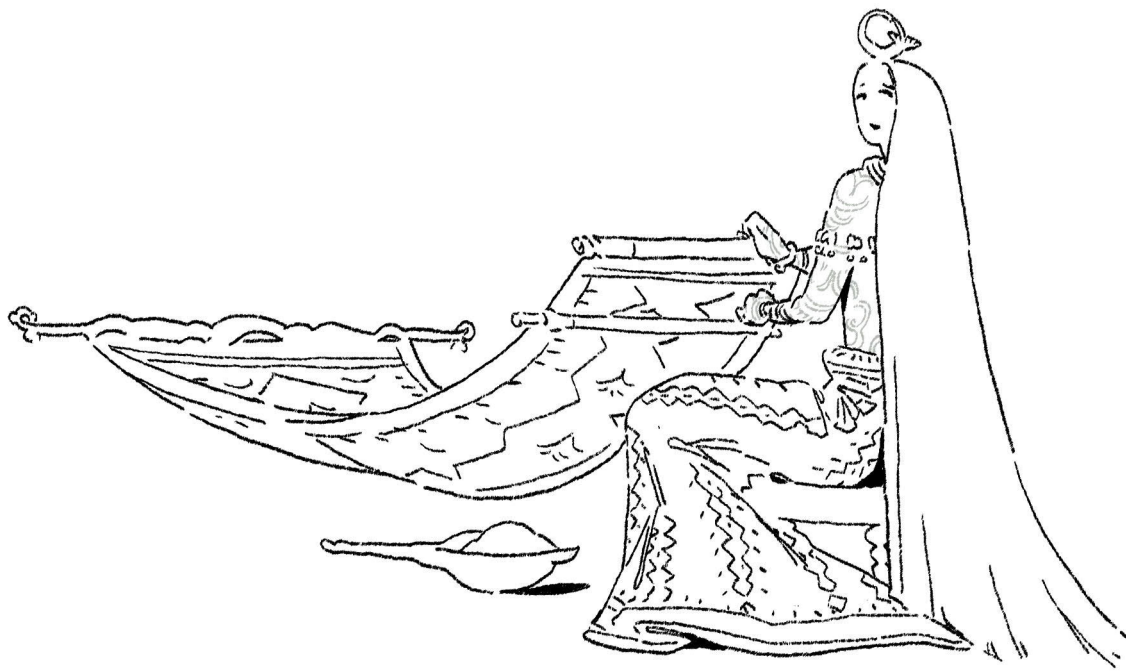
**Manner:** she wears fatalism like armour. "Come in. Have stew, if you please. It won't matter, but who are we without manners? I will raise pebble mounds by the river, for you."

**Wants:** an end to the Bachelor. She must kill her husband, but he keeps to the locked stupa, and she cannot find its key.

**HD 5 AC 17 Attacks** +5 black-bladed dagger (d4+3, magic weapon)

**Spells:** *Dispel Magic, Magic Missile, Feeblemind, Darkness, Darkvision*. Will try not to kill you; she does not want more weight on her soul.

Wears a flawlessly-made magic shawl with reptile-scale motif. AC as chain; strike her and it rings like mail.









## F: The Head

The interior of a chief's longhouse. Glinting tapestries, silver fixtures—your first step goes crunch. The floor is a carpet of cracked skulls.

Two **tooth golems** (p. 43) guard the far dais. There, in a pile: the mummified pieces of a man and a woman. The remains of Vung Si Vung and Inna Wa Inna, the Warrior and his Wife.

Vung Si Vung skulks in the timber struts above you.

### *Vung Si Vung, Warrior*

Tattooed head to toe with crocodile scales. A grin of filed teeth. Not very human. Not anymore.

Once driven by revenge, he has come to love the Bachelor's butchery—its hot simplicity. He controls the tooth golems, the cave crocs, and Sikkukurut.

**Manner:** only growls. If you can speak to animals you can understand him. He is a predator, or prince: he likes flattery, does not understand “no”; is cruel and violent for pleasure.

**Desires:** this private heaven of prey and meat? All he needs. Let it continue. Bring him more: more servants, more playthings, more meat.

Should the crocodile cultists genuflect enough, Vung Si Vung gets serious about godhood, and begins plotting two murders: his wife, Inna Wa Inna; and the Bone Uncle.

**HD 8 AC 19 Attacks** +8 great machete (d10) and punch (d6+3, magic weapon, knockback)

Scales walls and ceilings like a gecko. Immune to water, mental, and hold effects. Half damage from mundane weapons and spells. Ambush tactics.

May spend two rounds singing, raising a new tooth golem from the dental material in this chamber.

Behind the dais is a ladder, up. Living explorers see a trapdoor, in negative colour. This trapdoor leads to **G: The Eye** (p. 35). For dead explorers, the ladder ends in the rafters.

## *G: The Eye*

---

"Ooo," sings wind through the windows. The air is thin. Lean out and you glimpse the river, far below, through cloud-cover.

The ceiling charts a night sky you do not recognise. Its constellations are all monkeys. The floor is a real-time magic map of the river valley.

A spyglass has rolled off into a corner. Peer through the glass to spy on any location within 50 miles, as if you are actually there. The lens is cracked, unfortunately; you only get sound and smells.

Try spying on any celestial body and you only hear indecipherable whispers.

## *H: The Cloaca*

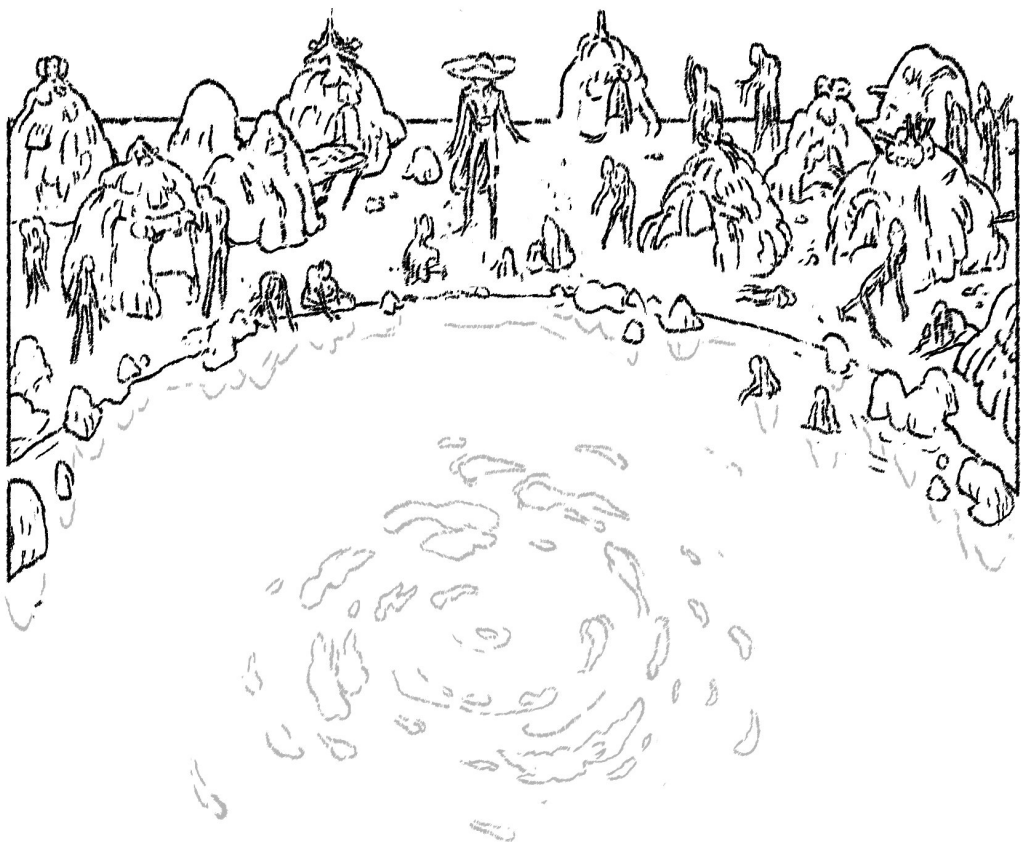
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We know monkeys rode clouds. This was a cloud-park. Visiting whatever the Old Ruin used to be, the monkeys left their cumuliform vehicles here.

Faded traffic runes on the floor. Flashes, claps of thunder. Localised weather: angry clouds, long abandoned, storming at shoulder height. Some are still fitted with stirrups, saddles.

The clouds obey simians, but are now cranky fliers, at best.

Constant rain has carved streams that rush down to a lower level. That is now the **Catfish Village** (p. 36).



## *The Catfish Village*

---

Huts line the bank. Built from trash and human leather; mortared with chunks of flesh.

The wet corpses living here are clothed and organised. A tribe, led by a woman-corpse who calls herself Grimkin. She is no woman; her tribe are **hosts** (p. 44).

The basin is full of catfish. In its floor is a well of darker water, edged with stones in negative colour.

Living explorers feel a powerful current, pulling them in. Diving through, you swim and swim and almost drown. Then sunlight! It is the outside world. The well has teleported you to a random stretch of river.

Dead explorers feel no current; the well leads nowhere.

*Grimkin San Mor, Chief Parasite*

Regal in her jacket and naval trim. Once a pirate queen with vague memories of travelling upriver and treasure.

Also eldest of the catfish—the Bachelor swallowed her ages ago. She will make the most of this. Commands her whole brood.

**Manner:** as a pirate queen she speaks with military camaraderie. “This is my crew. We are family. What skills can you offer? Will you join us? My crew always needs capable hands. Join our family.”

**Wants:** control of the Bachelor. Meaning she needs Vung Si Vung as a host. Has the key to the locked stupa, but is unsure of her chances.

**HD 5 AC 15 Attacks** +5 machete (d6) or pistol (d8, ignores 3 points of AC)

Pistol may be fired once per combat. Is never without minions; fights like a captain commanding an army.

Has a squirming catfish attached to her genitals. This is who she is. At will, or reduced to 6hp, Grimkin detaches; stats as **catfish** (p. 44).



## *Lifting the Curse*

---

**Inna Wa Inna** (p. 32) knows the proper method. Vung Si Vung will not tell you. **Sikkukurut** might (p. 24).

To end the Bachelor, the sitting chief of the Gleaming Fins must be slain. This would be **Vartu Si Vartu** (p. 9). He must be buried with Vung Si Vung and Inna Wa Inna, observing all sacred rites.

You will need the mummified cadaver-pieces from **F: The Head** (p. 34) to accomplish this.

Alternatively: the river spirits can lift their curse—provided they hear from Vung Si Vung's own mouth that his thirst for retribution is satisfied.

## *Becoming a God*

---

**Inna Wa Inna** (p. 32) will resist this; get her out of the way.

There are only ever Thirteen Spirits. The Bachelor must kill one to take its place. Easiest to reach is the **Bone Uncle** (p. 18)—though slaying such a puissant being will take doing.

Should the Bachelor succeed he assists his **cult** (p. 13) in murdering all foreigners. The Gleaming Fins become a carnivore culture; some will be born crocodilian monsters.

Alternatively: kill the Bone Uncle, seize godhood for yourself.

## *Siding With Catfish*

---

First: Grimkin needs **Vung Si Vung** (p. 34) as her host. The means incapacitating the Warrior long enough so she can detach, flop to his nethers, and latch on.

Second: she needs **Inna Wa Inna** (p. 32) dead. Or made into a host—any catfish will do; her brood obeys her, and only her.

With command of the Bachelor, with its conscience out of the way, Grimkin plots for more power. Taking the **Bone Uncle's** spot (p. 18) is good.

The more useful you are, the more the catfish need to turn you into hosts.



# Bestiary

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Entries without “Number Appearing” indicate a unique creature.

“Total Number” indicates a creature’s population in the Old Ruin is limited; its value denotes the number present when you first arrive.

## Gleaming Fin Warrior

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**HD 3 AC 15 Attacks** +3 knife (d6) or blowpipe (d6)

**Number Appearing** d6

Flexing muscle. Poison-tipped blow darts. Every hour untreated: save or take d4 STR damage.



## Tapir

---

**HD 2 AC 12 Attacks** +2 charge (d8, knockback)

**Number Appearing** 2

Snuffling, animal scent, tracks. Protective of mates and young. Invisible to normal sight; this stays true even after death or curing.



## Company Henchman

---

**HD 2 AC 16 Attacks** +2 sabre (d8) or +5 pistol (d8)

**Number Appearing** d12

Waxed moustache. Bad breath and bad teeth. Pistol may be fired once per combat.





## Bird Spirit

---

**HD 4 AC 14 Attacks** +4 peck (d4+1, magic weapon)

**Number Appearing** 1

A bird sketched in fragrant smoke. Immune to mundane weapons and charm effects. Vulnerable to wind effects. Flees, but does not forget you.

Causes misfortune. Roll d10; substitute this result for any roll made by a foe the same day, provided an avian-themed excuse is plausible. ("Crows mob you, you let the rope go!")

Mates with agaru trees; the seeds of this union form agaru.

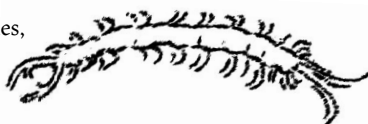
## Flame Centipede

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**HD 1 AC 13 Attacks** +1 bite (d6) and grab (grapples, d6 every round)

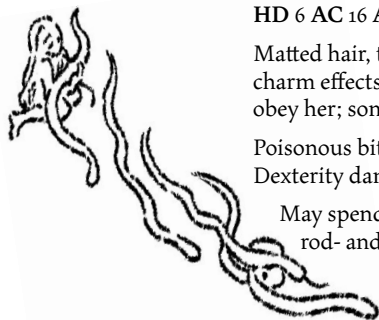
**Number Appearing** d8

Burnt-kettle smell, boiling water. Chitin hot like branding irons. A person-sized pack hunter.



## The Snake Urchin

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**HD 6 AC 16 Attacks** +6 bite (d6+1, magic weapon)

Matted hair, torn skirt, good teeth. Immune to poison and charm effects. Tends towards petulance and cruelty. Kraits obey her; some are always nearby.

Poisonous bite. Every hour untreated: save or take d6 Dexterity damage.

May spend her round chanting. Her voice awakens all rod- and rope-like objects, turning them into snakes.

## Krait Swarm

---

**HD d6+1 AC 13 Attacks** +4 bite (d6) and bite (d6) and bite (d6)

**Number Appearing** d4

Continuous hissing. Hides on a 4-in-6. Not particularly aggressive, mainly swarms in the Snake Urchin's defence.

Poisonous bites. Every hour untreated: save or take d4 Dexterity damage.

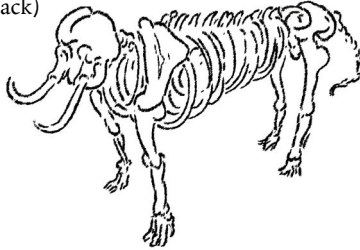
## Skelephant

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**HD 5 AC 15 Attacks +5 charge** (d10, knockback)

**Number Appearing** d4

The crack and pop of bones. Undead immunities. Vulnerable to bludgeoning damage. Stampedes to safety, but will seek revenge if a herd-member is downed.



## Vine Monkey

---



**HD 1 AC 13 Attacks +1 punch** (d4) / stones (d4)

**Number Appearing** d10

A monkey made of vegetable matter. Calls like branches creaking, twigs snapping. Vulnerable to fire. Cowards.

Non-feral vine monkeys are servants, and speak the language of their masters. If they meet their feral cousins they don't stay servile for long.

## Tiger-Spirit Host

---

**HD 4 AC 14 Attacks +4 swipe** (d8+1, magic weapon)

**Number Appearing** 1

A nude man with amber eyeshine. He acts like a feline predator. Immune to charm effects. Possessed by a tiger spirit in oestrus, he only hunts other men.

Any male victim scratched by the tiger-spirit host develops a fever. Save every day without magical treatment. After 3 failures, the victim is ripped apart by invisible claws. A new tiger spirit is born into the world.



## Tooth Golem

---



**HD 5 AC 16 Attacks** +5 chew (d8, grapples, d6 every round)

**Number Appearing 1 Total Number 5**

Grinding, grinding. Teeth arranged into the silhouette of a person. Immune to mundane weapons, fire, and mental effects. Squeezes anywhere a grin might fit.

On a critical hit, the tooth golem extracts your teeth, consuming them and recovering hp equal to the damage inflicted. It smirks at you with your own incisors.

Serves **Vung Si Vung**; he knows when a tooth golem is slain, and can create more.

## Kingfisher Swarm

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**HD d8+1 AC 14 Attacks** +6 peck (d4, knockback) and peck (d4)×3

**Number Appearing 1**

A whistling kettle the size of a train, hurtling through tunnels. Brilliantly-coloured feathers remain, afterwards.

Kingfishers peck anything that twitches, squeaks, or glints like small prey—bits of gear, pets, your extremities—before moving on. Defend yourself and they attack in earnest.

They serve **Sikkukurut**, who sees everything they see.



## Wet Corpse

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**HD 2 AC 12 Attacks** +2 swipe (d6)

**Number Appearing d8**

A victim of the Bachelor, trapped here. Squelching, rasping, like a person strangled. Flesh melted by putrefaction. Undead immunities.

Body parts remain animate even if dismembered.

## Wet-Corpse Host

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**HD 3 AC 13 Attacks** +3 axe (d6) or intestine net (d4, grapples)

**Number Appearing** d6

A wet corpse, but fresher, capable of speech. Rusty gear, nets made of gut, press-gang tactics. No undead immunities.

Actually under the control of catfish, latched to their genitals. When reduced to 6hp, the catfish detaches.

Serves **Grimkin**, their captain and queen.

## Catfish

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**HD 1 AC 13 Attacks** +1 bite (d4)

**Number Appearing** as wet-corpse hosts

A parasite with hooked barbels. With a full-body jerk it leaps at your crotch.



Bites and hangs on to any exposed flesh. A mammal must save or fall under its control. Victims retain their intelligence, but serve **Grimkin**, eldest of catfish-kind.

Forcibly removing a catfish does d6 damage to its host, mutilating flesh and mind.

## Monkey Statue

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**HD 3 AC 14 Attacks** (special) punch (d6)

**Number Appearing** d4

Smiling in a way that immediately makes you suspicious. Stone immunities. Asshole trickster. Play along and they get bored.

Retaliate? They fight back. They cannot move when observed; unobserved they are lightning-quick. If they can attack you they automatically hit.

## Brown Pudding

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**HD 3 AC 13 Attacks** +3 engulf (d8, grapples, d4 and -1 AC per round)

**Number Appearing** d4

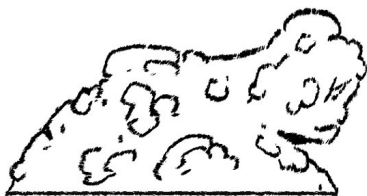
The gleam of precious things in mud.  
Acidic ambush predators. Dissolves organic matter and eats metal.

Non-fire damage causes a brown pudding to undergo binary fission; remaining hp is split equally between two new puddings.



## Pebble Golem

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**HD 5 AC 17 Attacks** +5 crush (d8, grapples, d8 every round)

**Number Appearing** 1 **Total Number** 7

Like an approaching cave-in. A jumble of rubble, ever-rolling, walking upright. Immune to mundane weapons, fire, and mental effects. Squeezes anywhere a stone might fit.

Every round, the pebble golem may fling part of itself at you—a ranged attack that hits like buckshot: d10, knockback. The golem suffers an equal loss in hp.

Serves **Inna Wa Inna**, who knows when a pebble golem is slain.

## Cave Crocodile

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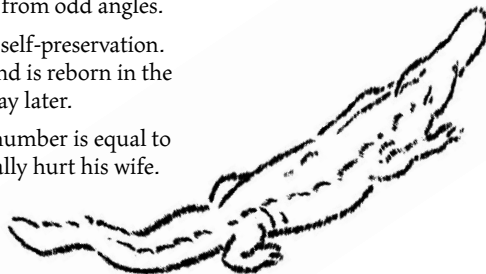
**HD 4 AC 14 Attacks** +4 bite (d6, grapples) or claws (2d4)

**Number Appearing** d4 **Total Number** 29

Navigates with dolphin-clicks. Blind and albino. Climbs like a gecko. Prefers to come at you from odd angles.

A cave croc talks, but is blasé about self-preservation. If killed it putrefies immediately, and is reborn in the lake of the Bachelor-filled Belly a day later.

Serves **Vung Si Vung**. Their total number is equal to the number of times he has physically hurt his wife.



# Notes

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*Lorn Song of the Bachelor* is a fantasy riff on a Bornean story—that of Bujang Senang, an enormous, man-eating crocodile who terrorised Sarawak until the 1980s.

“Bujang” means “bachelor” in Malay, but contextually it is an honorific; think “gentleman”. “Senang” refers to the Senang River, a tributary of Batang Lupar, where he was most often sighted.

He was said to be the vengeful reincarnation of an Iban warrior, wrongfully murdered. He is said to menace Sarawak’s rivers, still.

Any text inspired by Southeast Asia has to reckon with colonialism. It is too much a feature of the region to ignore. This text presents a difficult situation; there are no easy solutions.

If they work for the Company, player-characters could enrich themselves at no direct expense to the Gleaming Fins. This is how good people sanction colonial projects—through self-interest, and insulation.

*Lorn Song of the Bachelor* tries not to prompt players one way or the other. If I offered a mechanical incentive for you to fight colonial invaders, you wouldn’t be making a moral decision, but a mercenary one.

The choice you face should echo, however dimly, the kind of calculus my grandparents faced.

If you worry about doing justice to Southeast Asia, at your table—don’t.

Bujang Senang is an Iban story. But I am not Iban; I’ve been to Sarawak once in my life. How could I ever hope to speak for a culture or a people not my own? I am not doing Borneans any favours.

I can do my due diligence, of course. I have a duty to the work. *Lorn Song of the Bachelor* is my story. Stuff like research, consultation, care? They make the work better.

Your duty is to your fellow players. What do they find fun? What do they know? What can they imagine? Portray an informed and richly imagined world for each other.

You can’t do Southeast Asia any favours. You don’t have to.

You do Southeast Asians favours by supporting our work.

A game designer from Borneo whose work you should check out is Robertson Sondoh Jr.\* Rob playtested this adventure, and made fan-art for it, early on. *Lorn Song of the Bachelor* is dedicated to him.

-Zedeck Siew

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\*[www.experimentalplayground.blogspot.my](http://www.experimentalplayground.blogspot.my)



## Searching, You Find

Roll d20 on the river, and d100 in the Old Ruin.

After rolling an entry with an asterisk, cross it out, write your own. If the result is too big to fit whatever you were searching, you actually find nothing.

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1-10 | Number of sp equal to roll ×5.  |
| 11   | Rope. 10ft.   |
| 12   | Flask of rice wine. Flammable.  |
| 13   | d6 days rations.  |
| 14   | Barbed eel-wrestling gloves.  |
| 15   | Fishing net.  |
| 15   | Ivory shaman's mask. Attracts corpses.*                               |
| 16   | Palm-leaf codex of herb lore. Focused on poisons.*                    |
| 17   | Shrunken head etched with scripture. +1 AC.*                          |
| 18   | Wooden toy crocodile.*  |
| 19   | Blue powder in an oilskin pouch. Enchanted sleep for an hour.*        |
| 20   | Small bar of soap, made from the fat of a murderer. Lifts any curse.* |

21-50	Monkey Empire tokens worth sp equal to roll ×2.
51-55	Mischief of the <b>Monkey Empire</b> (p. 21).
56-60	Sarong with a <b>magic motif</b> of the <b>Harvest Dancer</b> (p. 12).
61-62	Grappling hook.
63-64	d4 jars of lantern oil.
65-66	d10 pitons.
67-68	Machete.
69-70	Charcoal sticks in a bamboo jar.
71	Two left boots.
79	Yellow powder in an oilskin pouch. Causes an uncontrollable sneezing fit.*
80	Bag of salt. Soggy.*
81	Brass platter. Monkey motifs. 25osp.*
82	Compact mirror. Cracks once every time a spell is cast nearby.*
83	Pebble, marked with icon of control. Commands a single <b>pebble golem</b> (p. 45).*
84	Zombie thumb. Puppy attitude, bonds with and obeys whoever finds it.*
85	Rough map of the <b>Old Ruin</b> (p. 20). Accurate, but drawn without exits.*
86	Company chit. Bearer is owed 100osp for “delivery of unripe fruit”.*
87	d10 bone darts. Carries the curse of the Bone Uncle; Wake Skeleton on hit.*
88	Bicorne. Initialled: “G s M” on the inside band.*
89	Hand cannon. Ill-made; explodes when fired on a 4-in-6.*
90	Pedal harp. Unstrung, solid gold. 200osp.*
91	Monkey figurine. Engorged phallus, sprays acid if masturbated. One shot.*
92	Green powder in an oilskin pouch. Instantly jellifies 100 gallons of water.*
93	Gold wind-up songbird. Range outside human hearing.*
94	Parchment. Ideogram of binding. Apply to a creature’s forehead to immobilize it.*
95	Bounty notice. “Grimkin san Mor, Wanted for Gross Piracy.”*
96	Pair of sandals. Child-sized.*
97	Silk pants. In perfect condition, simian-sized, hole for tail.*
98	Iron man catcher. Giant-sized prongs.*
99	Palm-leaf fan scroll. d4 random Magic-user spells.*
100	Brass key, shaped like a lightning bolt. Controls a <b>monkey cloud</b> (p. 42).*





WEEDS TRAIL THE WATER. THE SANDBAR JUST OFF THE SHORE SHIFTS. A REPTILE RUMBLE, A SPLASH. NOW A GAPING MAW. A ROAR. CLAWS SPLINTERING WOOD. THE BOAT CAPSIZES. YOU ARE IN THE RIVER, NOW.

HE IS THE BACHELOR: A PALE CROCODILE, AS LONG AS FIVE MEN LYING END TO END. HE SWALLOWS HUNTERS, FAMILIES, TRADING SKIFFS. PROSPECTORS FEAR TO GO OUT. WITCHES MUTTER. THEY SAY HE CAUSES LANDSLIPS. THEY SAY HE IS A GOD, A CURSE—AN OLD, OLD SIN, STAINING THE RIVER. THEY SAY HE HAS BEEN KILLED, BEFORE.

HE IS PULLING YOU UNDER.

LORN SONG OF THE BACHELOR IS A RIVERINE ADVENTURE AND DUNGEON CRAWL, FOR USE WITH ROLEPLAYING GAMES.

PRESENTED BY THE HYDRA COOPERATIVE.

