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VEINS OF THE EARTH

PATRICK STUART
SCRAP PRINCESS

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Arnold you challenge my greatness but it is you who shall be destroyed. I will feast on your lungs before the end.

Scrap Princess would like to thank TIAMAT

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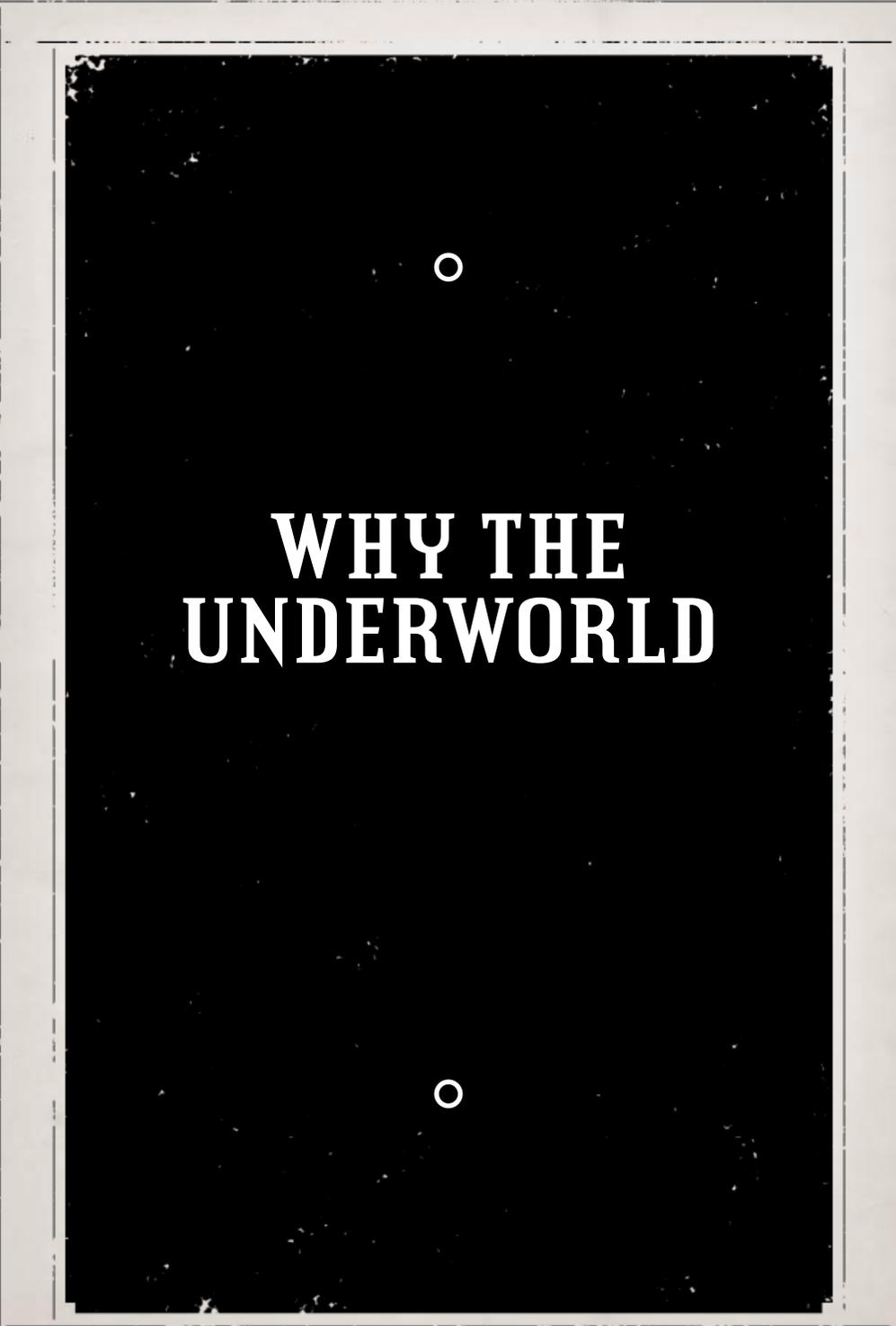
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*"The frightful bulk of night,
feebly pushed aside for a moment,
as quickly, and with
an irresistible
violence,
regains
empire."*





**WHY THE
UNDERWORLD**

I LIKE DEEP PLACES AND THE IDEA of deep places. When I was small I was a little frightened of the sea because I worked out that the only thing keeping deadly sharks (which I knew were real) from the invisible section of the sea right beneath my naked feet, was distance. If they wanted to, they could swim all the way from wherever they were and be ready, right underneath the surface, to eat me as soon as I stepped into the sea.

If they could be there, statistically, at some point they would be there. The possibility became the certainty. The sea became a gateway to all of the invisible places that it touched, the most distant alien oceans, the strangest and most violent forms of life, the lightless depths, all entirely possible, all just there, under the reflective surface of the waves.

What terrified me as a child enraptures me as a man. The fear has decayed somewhat, but the attractive force in fear, that thing that pulls you to the edge of the cliff to look over, that makes you want to push your hand into the tiger's cage, not a desire to die so much as to experience something totally outside your understanding. That remains.

"The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity, too great for the eye of man."

— William Blake

That thing is why I made this. It's not about the ocean, perhaps because I found a deeper world. A world of stone.

Stone is time made sensible to touch.

The earth is very old and our species and our history is very young. We can sense this a little when we look at the stars and imagine the vastness there. But we can't touch the stars.

Running your hands over the rings of a tree can be a little intimidating. An old tree is much older than you, and you can count your culture's history in its growth. But the rings of a tree are time tamed and made into a toy. The tree used to be alive like us. It has a year zero, just like us, and we killed the tree, and carved and polished it just so we could run our fingers across its rings; this is an act of domination and control. In a war between the trees and men, men win. Counting time this way is ultimately reassuring. After all, the tree is dead and we are not.

Stone does not live. We can count our history in its strata, but not for long. Reading time in the hands of coloured rock that line a cliff, human action is shallow, a mere skim across the top. We can carve and cut the stone and run our hands across its lines, but there is no lasting victory in this. In a war between stone and man, stone wins. Thinking about geology and the engine of earth that created it is like gaining access to deep time. Indifferent aeons await us on the other side.

Caves are a route through stone and therefore literally a route through time. A world inside the stone, inside the earth, is a world projected back into deep time.

That's why I began. I carried on for the science, the stories and the strangeness of the world described.

WE KNOW MORE NOW OF caves than we did when the old RPG underworlds were devised. Our mines have reached so deep that the miners have to wear refrigerated suits, caving expeditions have penetrated further than they ever have before, our understanding of the bioverse is changed. The genetic mapping

that was just beginning thirty years ago has unfolded and re-arranged the history of life, and we have found life and its story everywhere. Microbial life in most cases, but still, alive, thriving literally inside the stone miles under the surface of the earth.

RPGs have always been partially evolved from the fiction of the time, taking the mechanics of story and drama, cannibalising, improvising, altering and re-making them into tools.

The culture and stories of cave-explorers are a so-far almost unplumbed source of fuel for Role Playing Games. I have tried to boil down some fragments of the experience into an elixir which can be drunk directly by anyone using the style of rules-light old-school game that I prefer and which can be mixed relatively easily with almost any other game.

As well as that, there is the strangeness and beauty of caves themselves. This is a thing not simply expressed. They are like no other space.

The cave used in most games is the cave from serial television. A flat-floored arch-shaped space with doors. Essentially a room of stone. The cave in reality is a complex expression of the interaction of water and rock. They are fluid, organic, unpredictable, indifferent to man. Their surfaces are arranged with no regularity. You may crawl through a vent smaller than a cat flap and arrive in a vault so huge that you are numbed by the echoes it holds, you can disappear under a shelf of stone and enter another world. And they are beautiful. They are the cathedrals of the earth and the earth has often worked them with more care and blind adoration than an army of Michelangelos could bring to a church.

A spider that walks across your outstretched hand might tell itself a tale of what you are. It does not know. There are veins beneath the skin it takes to be the whole. The world you think you know is nothing but a shell, a thin carapace over the skin of the, deeper, unbound world below.

You have existed, up to this point, on the illusion of a plane, bordered by mountains, rivers, seas or the politics of maps, and this life has been a lie. Its borders are made up, its seas are gateways, its mountains are cradles of deep life. There is no plane.

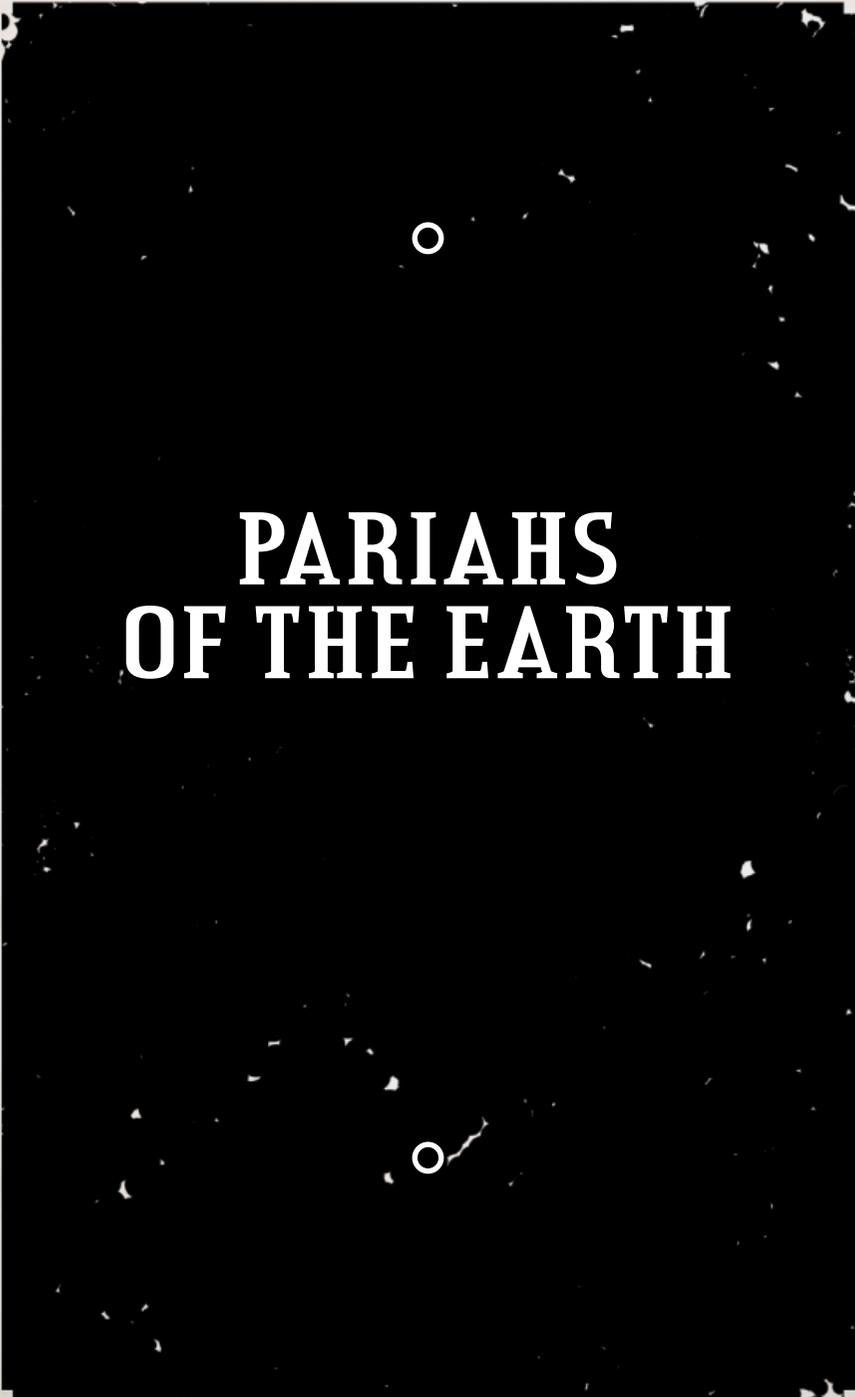
You were raised within a history running back through recorded time, written in ink, carved in stone, scooped from clay, hidden in songs. Your primal myths are an eye-blink of the memory of that place. Your history is a candle burning out.

The real world, the deeper, more true world, is bordered only by light above and fire below, and perhaps not even by that.





*"Now we descend
to the world of
shades."*

A black and white photograph of a starry night sky. The background is dark with numerous small, bright stars scattered across the field. Two prominent white circles are drawn around specific stars: one in the upper-middle section and another in the lower-middle section. The text "PARIAHS OF THE EARTH" is centered in the middle of the image in a bold, white, serif font.

**PARIAHS
OF THE EARTH**

STATBLOCKS

- **ARMOUR:** The Armour rating (or "Armour Class") given in terms of human armour ("Plate + Shield", for example).
- **HIT DICE:** Indicates attack bonus, saves (as Fighter), intensity of spell-like abilities (if any) and number of d8s to roll for hit points. A 5 Hit Dice creature adds +5 to its to-hit roll, saves usually as per a 5th level Fighter, is treated like a 5th level caster if it has any spell-like abilities and has 5-40 hit points.
- **HIT POINTS:** Referees may roll normally based on Hit Dice (1d8 per Hit Die) or use this number for the creature's Hit Points.
- **MOVE:** "Standard" is the same speed as an unencumbered man, 2x Standard is twice as fast, 1/2 Standard is half as fast, and so on.
- **DAMAGE:** Damage dice rolled when the creature successfully attacks. Each dice given "d" equals one attack. So 1d6/1d6 means two attacks for 1d6 damage each.

Some creatures attack in a particular sequence. When the word 'and' is used, the actions take place in the same round and are rolled for once. When the word "then" is used, each part of the sequence takes a round to execute. So the Alkalion Leaps and Grapples in one round with a single roll then bites in the next round for an automatic 1d10 damage.

Many creatures have special attacks which are detailed in the creature's description.

- **CLIMB:** Some creatures have the ability to climb walls as a Specialist; this ability will be given as a 1d6 roll. Creatures with a 6 in 6 chance of climbing successfully can still sometimes fail. If they roll a 1, then roll a second d6 as well. If the second d6 also shows 1 then the test is failed. See Climbing, p.210. Creatures with a Climb number will always try to use it.
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** The number usually encountered.
- **BLIND:** If there is light, blind creatures always lose initiative against the sighted after the first round.
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** The assumed experience point value, Lamentations of the Flame Princess standard. May be low for other games.
- **MORALE:** This is a number between 2 and 12. The test is rolled on 2d6. Groups of creatures will test Morale if they are outnumbered when they take their first casualty and again when their numbers fall below fifty per cent. If the group has a primary leader, their death should also cause a Morale test.

Powerful single creatures will test Morale when they take damage for the first time and again if their hit points fall below fifty per cent.

Failing a Morale test may not involve simply fleeing; creatures may make a fighting retreat or attempt to negotiate a surrender. No organic being will attempt to surrender unless they can offer something they think will cause you to keep them alive. They know whatever they offer must be worth more than the value of their meat. This offer is usually, but not always, exaggerated, fake or a trap.



ALKALION

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 7
- **HIT POINTS:** 30
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d10 bite or 1d6 swipe
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 3,000
- **MORALE:** 9
- **LEAPS** up to 45 feet and Grapples
THEN Bites for automatic 1d10 per round.
- **SWIPE:** Has reach, hits destroy armour on contact.
- **ATTACK ROAR:** Save versus Paralysis. If failed, the main target will freeze and any others flee for a number of rounds equal to the amount they failed by.

The Lion will usually only roar at the beginning of a combat or to secure its escape.

- **SMELLS** like a bitter sea, or drought-struck lands.
- **SOUNDS** like a faint sizzle like a fizzy drink. Distant half-musical plinks, like heating metal cooling in the cold.

This **SOUND** is the endless Alkahest dripping from its claws and corroding its footsteps to salt. It pants deep. A beast breathing through an oboe as the air whistles through its extended throat. It **GROWLS AND ROARS** like a moaning mangled didgeridoo.

- It moves low and slow and can bunch itself up to the volume of a normal Lion

BUT WHEN IT LEAPS (and it will only leap once in each encounter) **ITS EXTENDED LIMBS STRETCH 15' AND THE LION ITSELF CAN JUMP ANOTHER 30'**. It will always seek to attack whoever came into contact with its spore. Its surprising leap and reach means it can get to them though others are between. It will strike from above if it can.

THE ALKALION IS LONG, WHITE and looks like a lion on meth. Its claws drip slowly with Alkahest, the universal solvent. It can ultimately claw its way through anything. Lives in vast alkali caverns formed from the decayed rock it scraped away to form its lair. Its salt-mine white warren is a hunter's web. Slowly growing, worming the world in a tumbling spiderdirectional desertwork.

The lion's lair grows. A silent crumbling crystalwhite nest of death. Patrolled by steel-bright drifting seeds. The salt is its defence. A self-created maze. The Lion itself is waiting at the core. There is no treasure there except the Lion itself. Its corrosive tread destroys all metals and organic remains.

Has symbiotic relationship with fungal spores that form its ruff. Like a host of dandelion seeds, but six or seven feet long and projecting forwards. Its features hidden till it feeds. When the lion hungers a few spores break off and float off half-intelligent like dandelion seeds on the wind. Wandering through caverns When they find flesh, the lion awakes and follows.

- **OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER RULE:** Roll 1d6. On a 1 the Lion itself is present. On anything else there are that many Lion-Spores. They surround you and will try to block you off. They are semi-intelligent and float at the speed of a walking man.

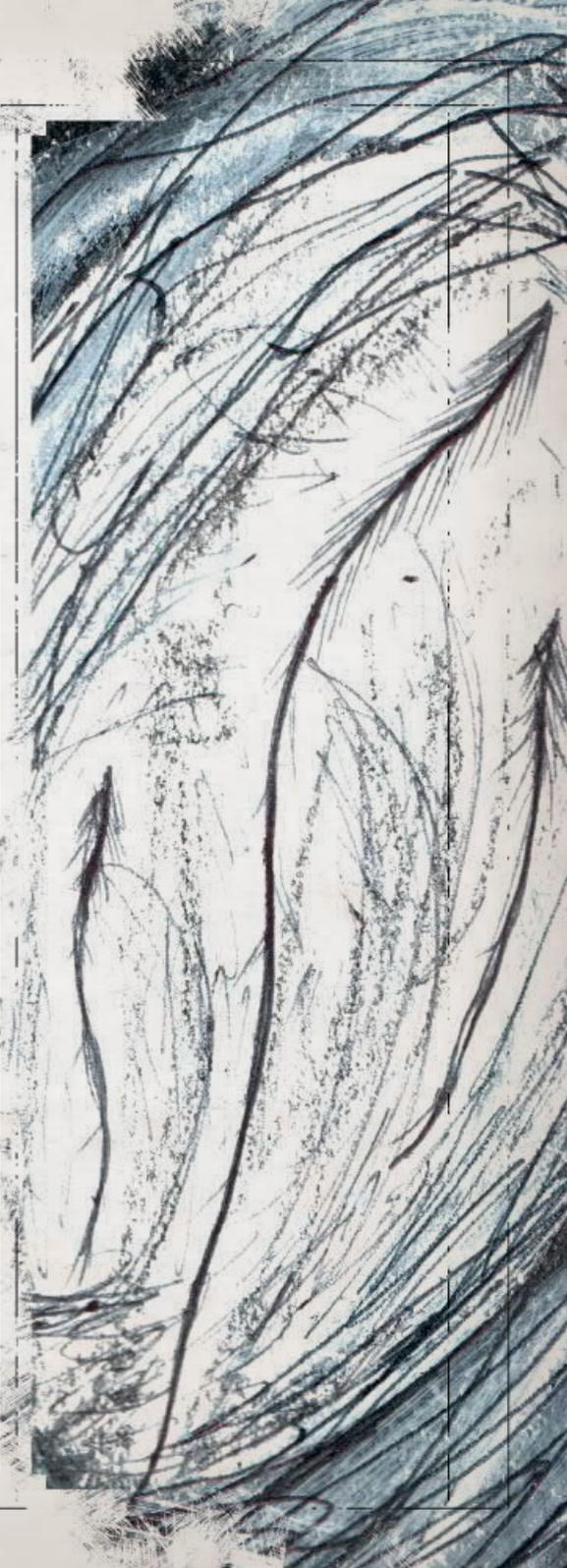
If they touch skin, they crystallise, turn blood red and bond with flesh. Hip damage to pull out and now you are bleeding.

Touch a spore and hear its roar and it will find you soon. It is on its way bounding through the dark and crumbling salt.

Empty white salt tunnels with occasional bright spiked floating seeds caught in the lantern's glow. The seedstems flex and bend towards you as if alive. You turn back but then there's another, and another and another.

THE SALE PRICE OF ITS PARTS

- **CLAWS:** 1d6x100sp per paw
- **TEETH:** 20sp per tooth or 500sp for full necklace
- **SKULL:** 500sp to the right people (tribal chief or upcoming brave)
- **SEED RUFF:** This is difficult to skin. The spores remain semi-living after the beast is dead. They bend towards your hand as it slices, seeking to drink your blood. Wearing one is a powerful status symbol for all Veins cultures. The wearer must be very careful not to be stung by the spores but can communicate with Funginids without speaking by floating spore-messages a short distance. The ruff is worth a significant favour or promise from a high-status individual.
- **ALKAHEST:** is generated by a pair of glands at the base of each claw. Two different fluids slide down the claw's length on different sides. At the tip, they mix and become Alkahest. It will corrode anything, even intangible magical barriers. The only way to recover or transport it is with a container made from the skin and claws of an Alkaliion. Any alchemist will trade everything they have to possess it.





ANGLERLICH

THE LICHE

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 10
- **HIT POINTS:** 21
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d4 dagger (poisoned)
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 0
- **TYPICAL SPELLS:** *Wall of Ice, Animate Dead, Ice Storm, Fear, Wall of Fire, Chaos, Reverse Gravity, Ray of Enfeeblement, Stinking Cloud, Darkness, Web, Magic Missile x 2, Charm Person x 2*
- **SMELLS:** of the 'Darkest Crypt'.
- **SOUNDS:** Cackling and threats, see below.

THE LICHE WILL BE NON-LETHAL. It isn't designed to win. It waves around like a conductor's baton, whips away and appears in strange places with no explanation.

THE FISH

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 20
- **HIT POINTS:** 75
- **MOVE:** 2x standard (flight)
- **DAMAGE:** 1d20 bite
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 10,000
- **MORALE:** 11
- **PHASING:** The Fish can phase through solid objects and will often retreat to attack again through the floor or roof. Or simply attempt to materialise with its jaws already around a target, prepared to bite.
- **SWALLOW WHOLE:** if the Fish's attack roll is higher than the target's current hit points they must save versus Paralysis or be swallowed whole.

Inside the Fish they will lose Experience Points as the rate of 1,000 per round. When their Experience Points reach zero their shrunken flaccid body will appear on the Fish's underside like a wasted remora, sealed to its sides by their lips and open mouths.

The underside of the Fish is covered with the flaccid shrivelled bodies of eaten heroes.

- **SMELLS:** like burning iron.
- **SOUNDS:** like radio noise

THE ANGLERLICH IS A COSMIC monster; evolved to eat heroic souls. It farms them like ants farm aphids on the leaf. Creates a PseudoVillain lure, one made to outrage every decent mind. Then sets it plotting and murdering. The schemes of an Anglerlich Lure make no long-term sense. The lure itself is barely awake. Much of its plotting is semi-random instinct action. It does have enough Liche-type skills to fake a decent prick, zap a few thralls, burn a village, sack a town, perv a girl. But the only reason it does anything at all is to provoke the pure-hearted.

It thrusts forth the lure to tickle awake the hero's heart with pheromonal death-games. Watches it progress. Occasionally dipping back into reality to encourage its growth and development. (Heroes grow on horror to oppose.) This can take years, or days; the fish doesn't care about time. It cares about quality.

When the Hero is finally ripe, a showdown is engineered. The hero wins. The fish arrives Cheshire-cat style, and feeds.

When your players encounter one, all they will know is that they have met someone totally evil who really really pisses them off. It doesn't have to be a Liche. To create an Anglerlich lure, imagine the kind of villain you usually invent, then create a slightly more shit version of that. A bit flatter, a bit less well thought out, a bit more incoherent. The fish is not quite as smart as you, but it knows just as much. Like the Referee it is outside reality. You can use your meta-knowledge to make someone who will provoke both players and characters to heroics; that is what the fish is doing after all.

But remember the tube of grey flesh that puppets the lure. That is something players can notice. And remember the Lure has a slightly different fictional signature than the rest of the game you make. Whatever kind of game you run, it's a little 'off'.

SIX ENCOUNTERS

1. THE HELLGATE SHALL SWING WIDE TONIGHT!!

Killing some helpless kids (of rich parents) for some sacrificial blah blah blah, pentagrams, candles, the whole biz.

2. YOU WILL LOVE ME OR DIE WHORE!

Slowly stamping on the neck of some helpless, beautiful, wealthy young girl/boy (depends on party).

3. YOU DARE STRIKE ME CUR?

Kicking a friendly dog to death in the ruins of a murdered village.

4. YOUR ANCIENT SECRETS DIE WITH YOU, FOOL!

Burning books and laughing in a librarian's face.

5. DIE ANIMAL FILTH!

Being really racist to vulnerable members of whichever race the PCs are.*

6. YOUR FREEDOM IS A LIE!

Torturing slaves into whipping their own families to death. Children first. And laughing.

* Careful now...

In gonzo games it's a little too serious and dramatic, in serious games it's a little too cheap and cartoony. And remember its plans make no real sense. The players, and characters, should be able to work out something is up.

ANTIPHoenix

- **ARMOUR:** as Chain
- **HIT DICE:** 20
- **HIT POINTS:** 44
- **MOVE:** standard (flight)
- **DAMAGE:** 1d8 Claw/1d8 Claw
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** Everyone levels up
- **MORALE:** 11
- **LEAPS** up to 45 feet and Grapples THEN Bites.
- **FLYSTRIKE:** Can make an attack for 2d6 damage from feathers' edges if it flies through your position with hostile intent.
- **BITE:** Instant death all cases.
- **LOOKING AT IT:** Lose 1hp per round for looking at it in darkness.
- **SPEAKS:** only dead languages.
- **SMELLS:** like the memory of ash in an old, cold hearth, and like myrrh.
- **SPELLS:** (All castable at-will. Can't be taught)

POWER WORD DEATH-FOREVER. As *Power Word Kill* but no limit on total hit point number and no resurrection for victim.

LAST WORD. Save versus Magic or never speak again.

OLD-WOUND SONG. Continuous action. Re-opens all previously suffered wounds over course of song. One wound per round. Massive hit point loss depending on how much the character has been hit before. (Assume a standard of one old wound per level and 1d6 damage per wound.)

- Instead of casting a spell it can also create **100 CUBIC FEET OF BLACK FIRE** in whatever shape it desires (usually that of a Phoenix or a mockery of its opponents) anywhere within 30' and move it at flight speed. Fire does 1d8 damage per round and counts as magical.

B UDDHA WAS WRONG. THE HINDUS are wrong. History does repeat itself. But then it stops. It's all going to come to an end one day. The stars will burn out. Time will stop. And god won't slurp it all back up and vomit it out again in a different pattern. That's it.

There is one AntiPhoenix and only one. It's written on this page; there is no other. It came alive when you read these words. You can use this Black Phoenix in your game. It's the only one you'll ever get. When it dies, if it dies, tear out this page. Take it outside. Burn it. There can never be another AntiPhoenix in your game, or any of your games, ever again.

Things find their meaning in their end. For a thing to live it has to die. For a thing to exist it has to not-exist. No end; no meaning. The AntiPhoenix is the end. Final and irrevocable. When it dies even the terms used to describe it will fall like old leaves.

A rainbow of darkness. In normal glows the AntiPhoenix burns, a Hiroshima-storm of A-Bomb-ravenwings. The negative-image pinwheel, a whirling, dancing archive of every imagined colour of black. An oil slick, vast and far as you can see, that holds the light from one bright star in the empty carbonised sky. This is the lesser image of the AntiPhoenix; douse the light and its true form begins to reveal itself.

As total darkness falls upon the eye, the rods revolt and cones rise up. They crackle slightly in the black, reluctant in sleep. Like dreaming dogs they twitch. Absolute blackness can't be seen by us, except in contrast with light.

Unless the AntiPhoenix is there. Its absence rides the blackness, infiltrates the eye, and inverts the signals in your optic nerve. The background-grey recedes. A deeper darkness seems to grow. A shadow in a shadow, a storm cloud in an eclipsed sky with slowly growing shape and form. The light-sensing cells in your eye spasm and freak; instead of sending signals to the brain they start demanding energy to live. The brain responds and amps up your eye-nerve with sustaining volts. The eye stops receiving energy, and starts to gently glow*. Your pupils lume.

Simply looking at the creature in darkness is slowly draining your mind and life and soul out through your eyes. It's nothing personal, this is just the effect the AntiPhoenix has. It's not trying to kill you, though it fully accepts your death is inevitable and absolute, like all death.

No-one who dies at the claw of the AntiPhoenix or around the AntiPhoenix or even thinking deeply about the AntiPhoenix will ever come back, by any method, fictional, meta-fictional, or divine. Ever.

The AntiPhoenix is a master of words and generally sad. It only speaks and cannot be reached by any other form of communication. An expert in poetic forms, it knows all forgotten tongues and none that live**. To talk to it, you must learn a language, ruined and extinct; only then will it allow you the slightest attention.

It knows everything that has passed (most things), all that will die (most of the rest), and a bit about immortals (doesn't like them, fakers). It ends things, sometimes things like lives and hopes and loves but also sometimes curses, tyrants and pain.

TREASURES

Feathers and parts. Materially, a king's ransom, a small kingdom, or political capital in a large kingdom.

It also has:

- A nest of silken hangman's loops that took heroic lives.
- Many a volume of forgotten verse.
- Crowns from murdered kings.
- World-maps with the continents ajar.
- Prophets' words embossed on broken clay.
- The written dirges sung at poets' wakes.
- The diaries of lost girls.
- The coins from eyes of corpses lost to time.
- The melted clocks from cities killed by fire.
- Saint bones chewed by fat cannibal gods.
- Cut shards from uneven sceptre gems.
- Bags of edited lines.
- Obliterated paintings with blank frames.
- Those keys you had but lost.
- And spoons.

It sometimes wants things - old poetry is a favourite; lost things; memories; highly secret and deeply lost artefacts, powerless but significant. Decoding its instructions is the hardest thing about working for it.

Every single part of its body is extremely valuable and extremely dangerous. The kind of people who would want these parts are all uniformly terrified of going anywhere near it. No ghosts nearby. Ever. Too scared.

* It's quite pretty actually, although only the AntiPhoenix will ever actually see this. ** It probably knows these too but refuses to use them.



ARACHNOPOLIS REX

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 1d20
- **HIT POINTS:** Varies
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d8 bite or spit at range 6' for 1d4. Both are poisoned.
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 5,000 + 150 per level rolled.
- **MORALE:** 10
- **LEAPING EYES:** at 10' it makes a grapple attack at +8. If successful it adds your attack bonus to its own until you break free.
- **REGENERATES** 1hp per round.
- **POISON:** Save or damage is applied directly to Constitution. Can be healed via magic in the same manner as hit points and grows back naturally: 1 point for every 12 hours of rest.
- **DAMAGING THE ARACHNOPOLIS :** All damage bleeds 1hp spiders equal to the damage caused. They are unarmoured, and do 1hp damage for every attack. They may try to repair the Arachnopolis, restoring 1hp if they can climb back inside, or attack its enemies.
- **SMELLS:** like libraries and attics with a hint of rot.
- **SOUNDS:** like the tapping sticks of eight blind men. A creaking like the ropes of a model ship in a make-believe storm. A whispering like dried leaves shaken gently in a paper bag.

SPIDERS DON'T SOCIALISE. SPIDERS don't work together. Spiders don't hunt as packs. Spiders don't use tools. Spiders don't organise large structures.* Because if they did, we'd all be dead.

In a high-threat, low-energy environment, life finds a way to survive. It began small. Spiders do build after all. They even make simulated spiders. They are master engineers. All it took was one useful co-operation to start the trend.

These spiders formed a hive. An amalgamation of silk and bones and scraps of adventurers' flesh. The hive they made was spider-shaped. A decoy-spider made to scare and distract. But predators can't stay in one place. The hive had to move. So the hive learnt how. Slowly at first, then quickly and with size.

Arachnopolis Rex is a highly organised hive of spider species symbiotically linked. You will mistake it for a spider at first. Vast, white, gleaming and slow. Blind and stumbling. Without the spider's expected alien grace. The small hives are dog-sized. No upper limit to their growth is known. The body is a shell of silk. A close glance shows the spider crew beneath the netted skin. A whirlwind of dark forms counter-spiralling like autumn leaves in an alley-gale. The mega-structure is slow. The life that drives it runs. Bones are used, wood and any available thing to brace the pseudo-skeleton and give it strength. It's fragile still. A handy blow will carve out chunks. Even on its own, wandering abandoned caverns in search of prey, the meta-spider is in constant repair. Expendable spinnerets are wrung dry keeping it in shape. The used up bodies are eaten or incorporated into the corpus.

The over-spider's eyes are shining spider-backs. It has no eyes. The things you thought they were are black, shimmering, vaguely-iridescent cephalothoraxes. Eight large jumping spiders.

TREASURES

- 1d100 Gold coins.
- 1d20 gold teeth.
- 1d4 gold wedding rings.
- 1d4 ancient picture lockets.
- Tattered paper, ancient letters and pages
- 5% chance remains of a letter from or to ancestor of known NPC.
- 5% chance random spell page.
- Bones and blades. Wood and poles. Webs and scraps of dried flesh.

Curling up and prepared in just the places where its eyes would be. As the automaton moves into the light, just as you begin to realise what it actually is, they leap. Its eyes jump at you trailing silken thread. Then more attack.

No poison, not yet. Arachnopolis Rex needs energy to move. Its legs are jointed with suspension-cord. Like puppet-wires converging in its core. Inside the thorax spindle-spiders pull and twist, jerking the legs in memorised moves. Complex evolved cybernetic feedbacks maintain the stride. It cannot climb as spiders climb, they hoist it up instead. Pioneer teams of mountaineer-spiders cloud up the slope and slowly pull it up. They lower it the same way.

The reason for the spiders' initial boarding-leap is not to kill you. It's to tie you in. The puppet-cords attach and link you up. The silent silk pulleys and levers of bone feed back the tension through the line. If the initial projectile-grapple attack succeeds, add your own attack bonus to that of Arachnopolis. Escape or fight, your own movements are feeding the creature energy to attack you.

And then the poison. Black-widow helix-linked micro-hives in shapes of fangs.

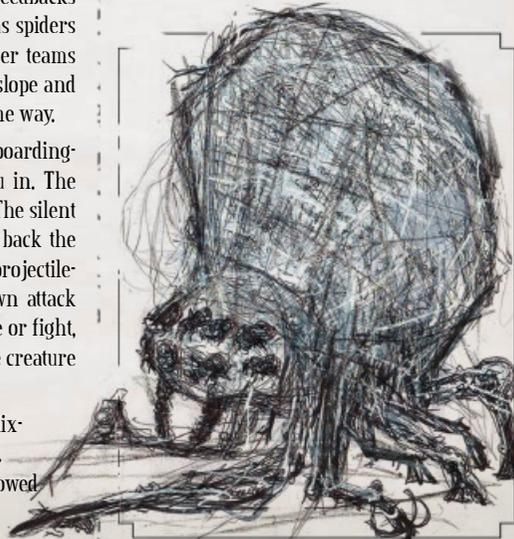
A scaffolding of black-encrusted borrowed bone from other forms of life.

The fangs flow with mass-produced communal-venom. They stab and spit and blind.

The body is easy to damage, difficult to kill. Any part can be repaired. Much of the structural silk is sticky (there are actual flies in there, a handy protein-bonus for the hive) so blades may not come free. In addition to which, every gouge bleeds deadly spiders out. They are the blood-stream of this beast. A severed head fountains tarantulas.

When the giga-spider kills it takes you all. Your body foetus-wrapped and drained of blood. Your bones and possessions scattered and re-used with no regard to form. Its legs may be reinforced with femur-bones, scabbards, swords or ten-foot-poles. Its teeth may be daggers discoloured with an endless venom flow, or a predator's recovered incisors, or fossil-shards discovered in the rock, or tiny stalactites. It may trail parchment in spiderweb-rags. Its skin may be the pages of a book. A Mage's handwritten spells fading under the weave.

The meta-spider has spider-style markings made of stolen gems and bits of skull, whatever it can find. Gold teeth and marriage-rings in arachnid predator-warning signs on its lumbering back to warn off Lamenters and Igneous Wrath.



ARCHEANS

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 8
- **HIT POINTS:** 33
- **MOVE:** 1/8 standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 toxic
- **CLIMB:** 6 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d4
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,250
- **MORALE:** 10
- **DEFENSES:** Metal weapons that strike an Archeon do 1hp damage then corrode to nothing.
- **HIGHLY INTELLIGENT.**
- **SMELLS:** like your hand tastes after playing with change. Coins on the tongue, but deeper, richer, metallic wine.
- **SOUNDS:** like the low roars of hot, clean flames. Like a pilot light sounds, or a butane torch.

THEY MOVE LIKE AGED DANCERS with slow supple limbs or out-of-focus undercranked film.

A kind of elaborate rare-metal corsetry, like bones designed in dreams or armour made ablative to the eye. Within: a bubbling gas/plasma hybrid thickening impossibly at room temperature. A stained-glass window burned with copper-gold, the pigments not quite mixed, melted in a snake that drips from vacant frames and almost cool, slowing almost imperceptibly. Colours in the hundreds.

A face and flame-like top, an oil-slick halo of metallic fumes. This is the form of the Archeon.

These are from the dawn of life itself, when RNA bounced around centreless cells like tape decks in the 80s, recording and exchanging.

They are not elemental, magical, alien or divine. They are simply a slow product of time and life, evolution's children just as you.

The Archea are an ancient Phylum, exiting the common path before even fungi and plants separated. These cells bet their lives on strange transformations in impossible environments and lifespans in the aeons. Slow, sombre molecular clocks ticking with the speed of funeral bells. They feed on things nothing else can feed on, in places nothing else can live.

They haunt volcanic rims and know the terrors of the Igneous Wrath and see the hunts of Pyroclastic Ghouls. Albino crabs that bathe in sulphur fumes from deep-sea vents might startle at the touch of pale metallic fingers, climbing precisely and blindly up out of the boiling smog and into the abyssal sea. In pressure-liquid lakes a mile beneath sub-arctic frozen seas a ferrous-copper eye might blink. On xenolith interior moons. In mines. Between rocks and within them. Without light. Without heat. Without time. They feast on radiation, blackness, and great silence.

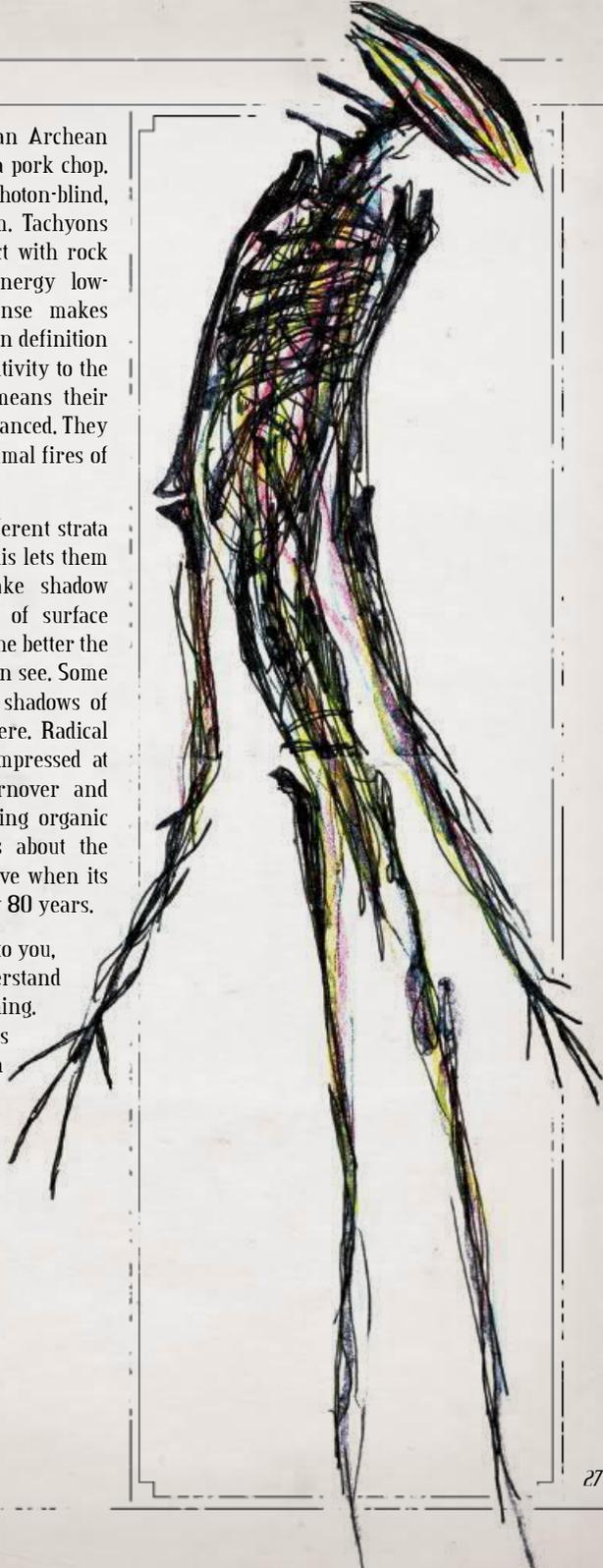
We know very little about the Archeans. They are old, indifferent, and need little from us. They are, for the most part, outside the cycle of organic life. We know they tend the Atomic Bees and seek the deadly honey. They can speak the language of the rust-creature, or perhaps of the symbiotic bacterial stacks that ride them. They know the Ooze.

They are slow, but stabbing an Archean is like assaulting a lion with a pork chop. Weapons don't last long. Photon-blind, the caves are blurred to them. Tachyons and cosmic rays don't interact with rock too much. The ultra high-energy low-frequency particles they sense makes their sight more like hearing in definition and sharpness. But their sensitivity to the deep radiations of creation means their sense of cosmology is very advanced. They can see the still expanding primal fires of the universe very well.

Archean Lithonomers use different strata of rock to lens cosmic rays; this lets them see things close-to and make shadow inferences about the nature of surface cultures on their own world. The better the Lithonomer, the closer they can see. Some even claim they can see the shadows of people, moving around up there. Radical Archeans are amazed and impressed at the rapid-burn super-fast turnover and micro-lifespans of light dwelling organic beings. They have questions about the kind of culture that can survive when its constituent members die every 80 years.

They may seek to speak to you,
but they don't really understand
that you are a whole thing.

They think of you as
something between
a hive member
and a meme-
transmitter.



LIKELY QUESTIONS OF THE ARCHEAN RADICALS:

1. Have you spoken to the sun?
2. Why identical forms for many* but constant changes**, why not individual forms for all and less change?
3. Where do the cities go? Are you a cancer of the cities, did they make you?
4. Is 'food' something you are or something you do? This is unclear.
5. What is your understanding of 'land' during its mid-magmatic state, i.e. after being magma, before becoming magma again? Is there 'ownership' of this 'land'?
6. What is 'weather'? Why do the mountains die? Why is there a limit to lens-size? Can this 'weather' be stopped? Can you stop it?

THIS ARCHEAN CAN:

1. Irradiate a 30' radius when it screams. 5d6 organic damage.
2. Whisper to refined metals and make them move at the speed of a snake.
3. Breathe a silver curling fog of toxic heavy metals. 2d6 damage to anything that can be affected by acid, corroded or poisoned. If either damage die is a 6 victim is now blind until magic or specialized healing. If either die is a 1, victim loses a point of Armour.
4. Whistle every metal in your body into crystallising. Scream, spasm. Bleed 2d6. Your blood is 'sharp' and does 1d4 damage to everyone it touches. Blood will slowly un-crystallise over the next hour.
5. Lase cosmic rays into mutagenic cancer beams. Ray 1d20 damage or a random mutation. Player must choose before damage is rolled.
6. Weep molten poisoned gold from every pore and go into seizure, spraying it about. 3d6 damage/ignores armour/poisoned.

THIS ARCHEAN WANTS:

1. Sunrises painted in dark refractive metallic pigments.
2. Sculpture of human forms in rapid action and ceramics with nature scenes.
3. Music played at ultra-low tempo (can only be achieved by drugging musicians to brink of unconsciousness).
4. Kinetic machines, clockwork, orreries, miniature animal automata.
5. Braille texts to read or Rust-Eaters to talk to.
6. Metal art of natural things. They like flowers and plants in particular as they are unable to keep the real things alive.

ALL ARCHEANS CAN:

- Cure any disease in time by recalling its earliest evolutionary progenitor.
- Given time they can transform any chemical, erode or destroy any material (all the things that alchemists dream of). But Archeans live slowly and the time taken may be very long indeed.
- Pass a message across future millennia (they remember it).
- Locate the bodies of dead gods orbiting cold suns. And other stellar phenomena.
- Fuel strange engines and pluck the ores from under mines like children stealing fruit.
- Create chemical weapons and impossible alloys.
- Disclose illegal Substratal tracts and zephyrs political (update you on Substratal revolutions).

**They mean species. They don't really fully understand what a species is. ** Evolution.*

ATOMIC BEES

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 1
- **HIT POINTS:** 4
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **DAMAGE:** Save versus Poison
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:**
2d6 Wandering; 1d4x100 per hive
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,500
- **MORALE:** 8
- **STING:** Save versus Poison. Failure means instant death. Success means no damage.
- **SOUNDS:** The wings vibrate at the exact frequency of one of the inner-ear-bones. You can feel them in your head, passing back and forth, like skull-received radio noise.



WHITE BEES THE SIZE OF A TOY car; heavy as a gambler's wrap of gold, as soft as sleepy mice inside your palm. The wings a static blur in blue and gold, like a failed analogue signal.

Silver selenium blooms. Uranium stamen. The flowers of the abyss, turning their metre-wide radial heads as distant quasars pass across the hidden sky. The silent gardens of the Archeans look like radio-telescope crops grown from spider silk and silver wire. The polished obsidian roof reflects your upturned glance. Superconductor-roots to bring the heat, descending multiple miles.

Pollinated by Atomic Bees.

The sting of the atomic bee is so deadly that the death it brings briefly outstrips time. Like a gunshot skipping on a lake. Your cells are annihilated at such speed, and with such violence, that you are plunged through nearby wild dimensions as you burn. What this looks like to

observers is a victim burning, turning to ash, and being caught in a violent unseen, unfelt wind, all at once as they flickerstop in and out. The wind of your extra-dimensional fall will plaster your ash to a nearby surface. You leave behind Hiroshimascar remains and an agonised radioactive ghost who has briefly seen outside time and space. Communicating with this ghost is incredibly deadly but can supply weird understandings.

The hives are warm atomic piles. Organic termite-mound cooling towers nine feet high, enshrouded in steam. Usually built by flowing water. The bees use burned-up bones as carbon rods to soak atomic sparks. The beehive has long black carbonised bones pincushioning the core. This shows you where the honey is.

Every part of the bee and hive is utterly deadly and wildly expensive. Assassins want the stings. Lunatics and liches want the honey. Evil gods hunger for the royal jelly - it can breed new species without divine consent. Alchemists want the bees themselves.

Hit one with your sword and it goes 'clang' and spins away. It may leave a dent in the blade. The bees are peaceful. Do not anger them. They swarm quickly. If you hurt or restrain one bee the rest will swarm and attack. If you mess with a hive the bees will swarm and attack. (Area has 1d6 hives, 5% chance of 1d4 wandering Atomic Ghosts and 75% chance of 2d4 Archeon gardeners.)

There may be atomic wasps. If there are, nothing has survived meeting them.

TREASURES

- **STING:** 1,000sp unused.
- **FULL BEE:** 5,000sp dead (no-one wants a living bee).
- **ATOMIC HONEY:** A kingdom/ a dead friend/a god's boon (and rival god's hatred).

BLACKFOOT GIGAFERRET



Mustela nigripes gigantica

- **ARMOUR:** as Chain
- **HIT DICE:** 5
- **HIT POINTS:** 19
- **MOVE:** 2x standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 bite
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,500
- **MORALE:** 7
- **STEALTH:** 5 in 6
- **BACKSTAB:** +4 to hit, x4 damage.
- **FLEXIBILITY:** Grapples at +10 to hit.

- **SMELL AND SOUND:** almost none.
- **IF VICTIM SLEEPING:** receives +1d10 to hit and to damage as it goes for the throat. A successful hit results in a grapple and a further 1d10 damage per round as it stays latched on.

THE FIRST TIME THAT YOU SEE *Mustela nigripes* may be as the headpiece and wrap of a shaman or chief. You will see, perched on that brow, a fluted skull the size of a shoebox. The shining teeth of the upper jaw pressing down onto the ruler's head like fine white scalpels. Then the incredible spine. Winding and winding and winding like skeleton screwthreads.

The last time you see it will be its luminous Disney-eyes staring into yours as it taps you on the shoulder to wake you up.

The smaller Blackfoot ferret has a very particular hunting tactic. It sneaks into a prairie-dog warren in the night. Finds a prairie-dog sleeping away from its fellows. Moves silently upon it, then, very gently, it reaches out and taps it on the shoulder exactly three times*.

The prairie-dog wakes up. The ferret bites its throat out. It can smell a burrow entrance under three feet of snow and is one of the few predators made to eat prey bigger than it is.

The Gigaferret hunts men. Weighs less, is a bit longer. Moves like a ribbon caught in contending winds. No sound. Will deliberately attack only when victims are asleep, in a squeeze or vertically isolated.

One of the few cave creatures to maintain its colouration. Trogloxene - that is, part cave-dwelling part not - on a long long, very patient hunting expedition. It will follow you and wait for you to sleep. Then 'tap tap tap'.

The spine is so flexible that within a tight tunnel it can simply roll and walk back over its own hind quarters as though made of rubber. This makes it one of the only predators that can follow you anywhere you go. Can even manoeuvre in a squeeze.

Suffers no penalty for constricted movement at any time. Almost impossible to catch.

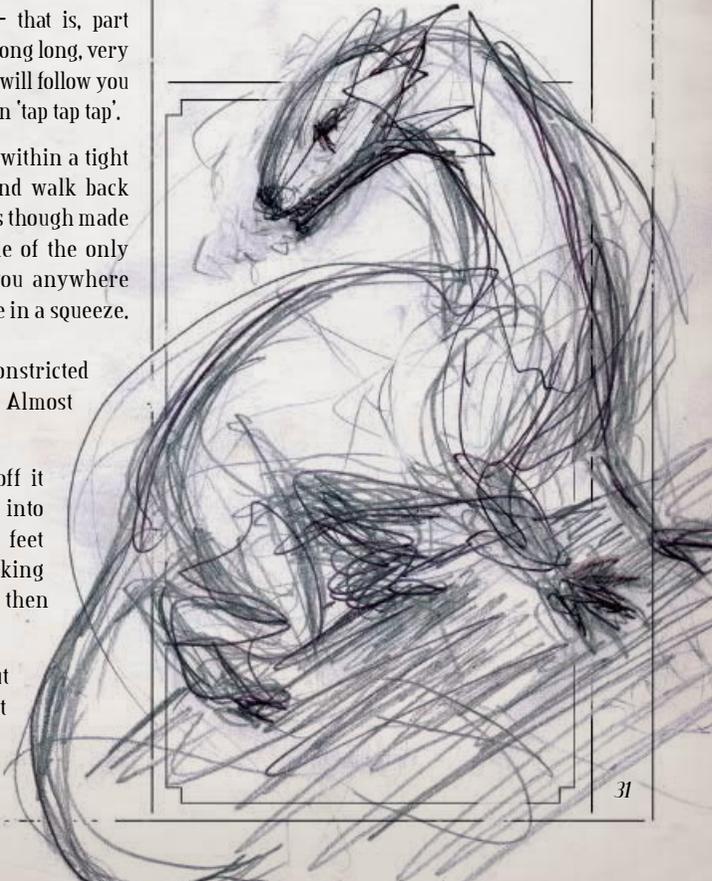
When it drags your body off it will pull you bent double into a narrow cleft, head and feet facing each other and sticking out for your friends to find, then eat you from the other end.

Skull/foot combos sticking out of cracks is a good sign that a Gigaferret is about.

* Not always three, but, oh well.

TREASURES

- **PELT:** 350sp.
- **SPINE:** 500sp. A skilled tanner/armourer can turn its flexible spine into a dangerous spiked fighting rope/flail.
- **TEETH:** 10sp each, make good saws.
- **SPINE/HEAD COMBO (STILL ATTACHED):** 750sp. Some races will wear the skull as a headpiece and wrap the spine around them to absorb the qualities of the animal. Which may work. They certainly believe it does.



CALCINATED CANCER BEAR

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 5
- **HIT POINTS:** 24
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 Swipe or 1d8 bite
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 750
- **MORALE:** 7
- **RISES UP BEFORE ATTACKING:**
Then crushes for 1d8. Then grapples and bites for 1d6/1d8. Then automatic 1d6/1d8 every round.
- **SMELLS:** Soot, ash, chalk and oil.
- **SOUNDS:** Grating, cracking, wheezing, deep breathing.

LONG AGO THEY WERE NEARLY-normal bears in an icy world of protein on the hoof. They lived in caves. The bears' exploration of the cave extended past any expected indulgence. They loved to worm around inside. They would lift their cubs up to access parts they couldn't reach, knowing they could not go themselves. They slid for play on ramps of clay, licked the salt and clawed the walls.

We made clay totems of them and in the painted caves the prints of bears and men overlap and contend on the wet floor. They were dangerous temples; the gods were often home.

Then the world changed and the bear changed. It mutated. Caged in by temperate suns, shackled by disease and whipped by

recessive genes. The bones grew. Fused. Lengthened. Nodules and weird accretions. The bears seemed to die out, but they did not. They went deeper underground.

A cave-bear. Slow-then-quick. Extended lengthwise. Long hooked limbs twice the normal span. A wolflike snout but BIG. Eyes recessed and barely seen. A fist-sized nose. Six nostrils, arranged in stacks of three, black lozenges thrumming like the radiator to a designer car. The cave bear smells everything. Longer and more slender than a bear but still bear-weight and strength.

And the bones the bones the bones. Hook spurs on every joint. Mad asymmetric triceratops frills. Bulges on the skull like horns. Plates of irregular cancer-bone grating in tessellations on its heaving side. Awkward spinal suspension-bridge-ridge. Clavicles and cysts of broken bone exposed.

The lanterns. Maybe dozens of them. Hanging from the spurs. Crushed and ruined in the plates. Broken lightless ruined black lanterns. Flameless cages. Some look very old indeed. Riddling its side like lost harpoons on deadly whales.

The bone-rims are black and sooty. Fire prevents their growth. Cancer Bears need fire to control the damoclean adaptation that protects them. They will dive on flames and roll in them, heaving and moaning, surrounded by cracks of breaking bones, moulting fracture-splinters in the fire.

TREASURES

- **ARMOUR:** The boneplates can be made into fireproof heavy armour. Few Veins cultures use it due to weight.



CAMBRIMEN

- **ARMOUR:** as unarmoured minus 2
- **HIT DICE:** 5
- **HIT POINTS:** 22
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d4
- **CLIMB:** 2 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 4d6
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1
- **MORALE:** 12
- **IDIOTS:** Cambrimen attack at -1 to hit, and do 1d4 damage.
- **RAGE:** If a Cambrimen flies into a rage, its flailing will become ever more extreme. It now has two attacks at -2 to hit. Each does 1d4 damage.
- **SMELLS:** Public toilets recently cleaned.
- **SOUNDS:** First a clicking, 'tk tk tk', then wet weird sounds, noises of damp toilet paper tearing off in clumps.
- **FALLING:** Cambrimen only take 1hp damage from any fall.
- Cambrimen can **USE WEAPONS IF THEY CAN REMEMBER WHAT THEY ARE** and how they work. If it sees you carrying a weapon, and there is one available, it will pick one up. In this case it attacks at -3. Any misses hit the Cambrimen itself. On a natural 1, the Cambrimen gets the weapon stuck in its own mass.

If opponents carry nothing in their hands, then after a while they will forget they can too and will drop whatever they have.

- **1/2 DAMAGE:** from sharp weapons, blunt weapons and cold.
- **IMMUNE:** to electrical damage, mind-altering magic, Poison, Gases, Oozes, Fungi. If in doubt; immune.



THEY STUMBLE INTO VIEW jerking like jellyfish corpses poked by broken sticks, snapping and retracting like living pizza cheese.

Imagine six gigantic fat translucent milky cells in a tube about five feet high. Then two stalks poking out the top. Each stalk made of three thinner cells in another tube, and where they meet at the top, a bunch of six foot antennae and some kind of boiled-egg sensory thing.

TREASURES

- Shiny glittery crap kept in a big chest sealed with broken locks and frayed ropes.
- Broken pottery.
- Hanks of hair.
- Polished bones.
- A smattering of coins.
- Broken blades.
- Unusual skulls.
- Animal claws.
- Chunks of semiprecious stone.

The Cambrimen were the first attempt of eukaryote cells at a human shape. But life didn't have enough genetic complexity to build anything good, so they ended up like this. They don't look like creepy primal ctuloid entities, they look fucking useless.

You can actually see the cell core floating around in there like a murky walnut. If you held it in your hands you'd feel your palms tinkle as their crap analogue genes divided. Its skin feels cold, mucousy like wet babyhands.

Pathetic, failed beings. Legs barely differentiated. If they stand still too long the legs grow back together. Just a stupid tube really. Chatter and wander around like idiots. Overlong monotone hoots, a babbling spasm-language, jumbled syntax. Nothing wants to eat them because their stupid giant cells just mash like jelly. Even oozes won't touch them. So so so hard to kill because simple makeup means no nervous system, so no trauma damage. No complex biological transmitters means no poison. Can't drown. Can't breathe. Barely grows old. Has something like a pseudo-culture, like a subnormal child reading the back of a book upside down because it's seen you do it.

The Cambrimen keep 'living book' slaves of intelligent races around to help them remember things and to remind them what their culture is. Nothing can stop the slaves escaping, but this is actually one of the safest jobs in the Veins. If you don't mind being looked down on by other slaves. And the stupidity. No-one will come looking for escapees amongst the Cambrimen as dealing with them is too much trouble. Anyone with things to do stays far far away from this intellectual tarpit.

The Cambrimen are too stupid and deranged to be really cruel to their slaves. The slaves are all more intelligent but the Cambrimen are too thick to be manipulated. Nothing can control them. They would not understand the means of the control.

WHAT THEY WANT

(The Cambrimen are keen to interact with you.)

- 1 Attention 'LUK LUK LUK'
- 2 Respect 'U NO MEH?'
- 3 Directions 'WHUR? WHT? WHUR?'
- 4 Revenge 'MAH FATTA!'
- 5 Revelation 'DAH WURD. DAH WURD.'
- 6 Detention 'MAH PRIZNER!'
- 7 Invention 'U MAK IT GUD'
- 8 Retention 'U KEEP DIS WURD'
- 9 Detection 'WHUR GO?'
- 10 Inspection 'IS GUD? AN THIS. IS GUD? AN THIS. . .'
- 11 Rejection (Paradoxically they want you to force them away. Though they cannot communicate this.)
- 12 SLIME (They really need to give you this dangerous raw corrosive slime. Like really, right now.)

CASTILIAN CADDIS LARVAE



- **ARMOUR:** as Plate and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 8
- **HIT POINTS:** 35
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **DAMAGE:** Will grapple doing 1d6 damage **THEN** bite the head for 1d10.
- **SHELLSWIPE:** Area attack. Always acts last. +3 to hit only. Save versus Breath Weapon to dodge. Ignores all armour. Damage: 1d20 x 1d20.
- **CLIMB:** 1 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,000
- **MORALE:** 10

- **SOUNDS:** Water hissing on a cutting edge. Metal grating on stone. A dozen sword sharpeners grinding knives.

AS HUGE AND HEAVY AS A cargo container. Bright like new engines under halogen light. Shining like a scrapwork starburst. It heaves itself up out of the white water, plumes of foam spilling on its spiked and shining sides. Dragging on the floor. To imagine how it moves, think of a vinyl stylus playing heavy beats. Thumping from the speakers bounces the needle off its curve so the music snaps its own track. Like that, with the sound of sharpened metal gouging rock. Generating and breaking its own rhythm.

Its tracks are not hard to find.

The Castilian is a giant caddis fly larva that builds its tube-like shell from metal and lives long in underground rivers. The only metal that won't eventually corrode in these conditions is either pure gold or enchanted steel. So it makes it out of those.

The shell of the Castilian Caddis Fly is made up of shields, swords, spears and other weapons of legend. All washed clean of markings by the river's flow. A shell of blades. Each one was the legendary blade of a particular culture or hero-cycle, made to kill gods and defeat evil. But eventually forgotten and lost. The shell is more dangerous than the fly inside it.

When the fly needs new stuff for its shell, it finds the river system below a climax culture and waits a few thousand years for it to decline. Once the museums have burned and the heroes are dead, the blades will be forgotten and lost. Eventually they end up in the water sink and the fly will recover them.

The Castilian will attack in search of food or shellparts. If a party has visible magical blades it will assault using its shellswipe.

An attacker must be positioned near its head to strike at its vulnerable parts. Its shell is immune to magic.

The fly is not stupid. If in danger it will retreat back into the river. If you follow it there it will fight or retreat again along the deepest, fastest vector.

The Castilian Caddis is a living arms depot. Its shell has enough stuff to equip a small army with magical weapons. Which has been done more than once. Simply by existing it keeps a large volume of military materiel off the market. This is (broadly) approved of by the politically powerful. It's also a good place to dispose of a magical blade when you can't or won't destroy it,

but also don't want anyone else using it (if you are, for instance, the man or thing the sword was made to kill).

Killing one is a political matter, potentially an act of war as the released materiel can destabilise an entire area. If within the volume of a political group, there is a 90% chance that it is tracked by agents who will immediately inform that group if the beast is slain. A 40% chance it is actively guarded (at a distance) by those agents. If outside the borders, a 25% chance of watchers from each nearby group and 5% chance of active guards from each group.

TREASURES

- As many magic swords and shields and spears and arrowheads and plates and helms and knives and axes, maces, polearm tops and unbreakable flails as ten people can carry. Not use. Carry.
- The mountings, handles and wooden parts are all wasted away. Only bright featureless riverclean metal remains.
- And GOLD. As much as one person can carry without becoming immobilised (use correct encumbrance).

CHOLERIDS

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 1
- **HIT POINTS:** 7
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6
- **CLIMB:** 3 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d100
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 50
- **MORALE:** 8
- **SMELLS:** They smell rank. Shit, blood, pus and decay. The gutters of an abattoir.
- **SOUNDS:** They warn you of their own approach. You hear them cough, scream, cry, moan and gasp, warning you to run away.

"WE MUST DO SOMETHING WITH THE SICK. The dead outrank us and those who cannot die live on in pain. We must do something with the sick. The doors of every house are marked, the dogs throng in deserted streets and pull the rider from his horse. The cemeteries bulge and weep pale poisonous oil. The trees are dead. We must do something with them. The wills go unrecorded and the lawyers fled. Noises come from inside boarded homes. Club-fingered hooded wanderers weep blood in silent roads. We must send them somewhere. Somewhere out of sight.

"There are caves.

"The air is sick and heavy with corroded taste. The sickness is a function of the air. We send those pale with Cholera to warm secluded nations for the air. It is the air. The air that cures, the air that kills. Caves breathe, after all, and the deeper and larger the cave then the longer and more powerful the breath. What could be safer, more regenerating than to bask in the cool airs in the womb of the earth itself?"

THE CHOLERIDS ARE THOSE THAT did not die, and yet they do not live. Within a few weeks of total darkness the body's immune system drops to zero. There are old diseases down there - and things older than disease. There have been unexpected reactions in the interred; violent reactions.

The Cholerids come in different forms. All are naked and emaciated. They carry nothing in their hands. You can smell them before you hear them, and hear them before you see them.

Between each cry is an invisible whispering as each speaks quietly and frantically to themselves. You cannot hear their words.

The sickness in each Cholerid wants only to infect and live. Most carriers are wholly but reluctantly under the sway of the disease, though Ebola Cholerids, in particular, tend to believe they are in charge.

INFECTION: On each contact the victim must save versus Poison. If they fail they gain the first symptom. They must save again each day after that or add the next symptom along. As they grow more ill the voice of the disease becomes more powerful inside them, demanding that they infect others and promising much. If they reach Death, this voice can kill them at any time; they live only as long as it does, and if it is cured they die as well.

The diseases of the Cholerids can be cured by a *Heal* spell, *Cure Disease* spell or equivalent. If the illness is cured the Cholerid dies.

They can also be hacked to pieces like any living thing.

TYPE

(Any group above 10 will have multiple types.)

1. **EBOLA:** Sanguine priests walk soberly, heads tilted and eyes gazing into the middle distance. They weep and sweat blood. The pale wraps that toga their shoulders and sarong their naked bodies are their own intestines. Their guts have prolapsed and torn themselves out. The flaccid intestinal loops are still attached. Every so often the bloody mystics stop, shiver and shake like broken machines. The blood they weep sprays, infecting everything.



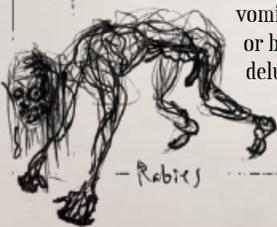
SYMPTOMS: Diarrhoea; vomiting; rash; stomach pain; bleeding from the ears, eyes, nose or mouth; spasms; intestines falling out. Death.

2. **FLU:** Weeping mourners. They walk with faces hidden in their hands. Moaning and gurgling, gasping and whispering through gripped fingers. Pale mucus masks them in an endless veil. Flowing from their eyes and nose and mouth. Grab a wrist and pull the hands away and see the ruined, wrinkled, rotted holes where faces were.

SYMPTOMS: Fever; cough; sore throat; muscle aches; red eye; breathing problems; pneumonia. Death.

3. **RABIES:** These are the outriders. Mad quadriplegic attack dogs. Callused hands and ruined feet. Fast climbers. Snarl/snap faces pulled tight by muscular knots. Erect penises, snarls, terrified of water. Biters. You can see them crying if they get close.

SYMPTOMS: Fever; chills; sweating; insomnia; drooling; head-ache; vomiting; thrashing out or biting; hallucinations; delusions; a sustained erection (in men); hydrophobia. Death.



4. **CHOLERA:** They smell of the fish-stink clear ricewater they vomit and shit in paratactic streams. Dehydrated blue-black skin and spindlestick fingers wrinkled and shrunk. The eyes are sunken deeply in the head. Little gravel-stain glitters where the raisin-dry-eyes bounce back a grain of light, gleaming under the ocular ridge.

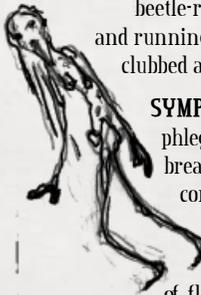
SYMPTOMS: Severe, watery diarrhoea; feeling and being sick; stomach cramps; dehydration; shock. Death.

5. **TUBERCULOSIS:** Pale spirits made of flesh, ghost-light steps. The grey, heavy, brutal gunshot-coughs hanging in their wasted breasts like fat flies in forgotten webs. Tottering towards you on sticklike famine-victim legs. The coughs erupt staccato, framed by soft, wheezing, juddering breaths that strain to fill corrupted lungs. Bright beetle-red stains on their hands and running down each chin. Fingers clubbed and swollen at the ends.

SYMPTOMS: Coughing up phlegm; then blood; then flesh; breathlessness; abdominal pain; confusion; seizures. Death.

6. **TETANUS:** Barely human suspensions of flesh. Hung out upside down in muscle-bridge half-circles. Hands and feet on the floor. Faces staring at you upside down. Slow, screaming compressions lasting thirty breaths. They squeal inwardly and force each muscle to retract, moving in stops and starts like metal under tension snapping back and forth. Terrible faces. Then they release and, with a sigh, they leap. Huge distances.

SYMPTOMS: Spasms in the jaw; then chest; then neck; then back. Drooling; sweating; uncontrolled urination and defecation. Back arching causing fractures and muscle tears. Death.



WHAT ARE THEY WHISPERING?

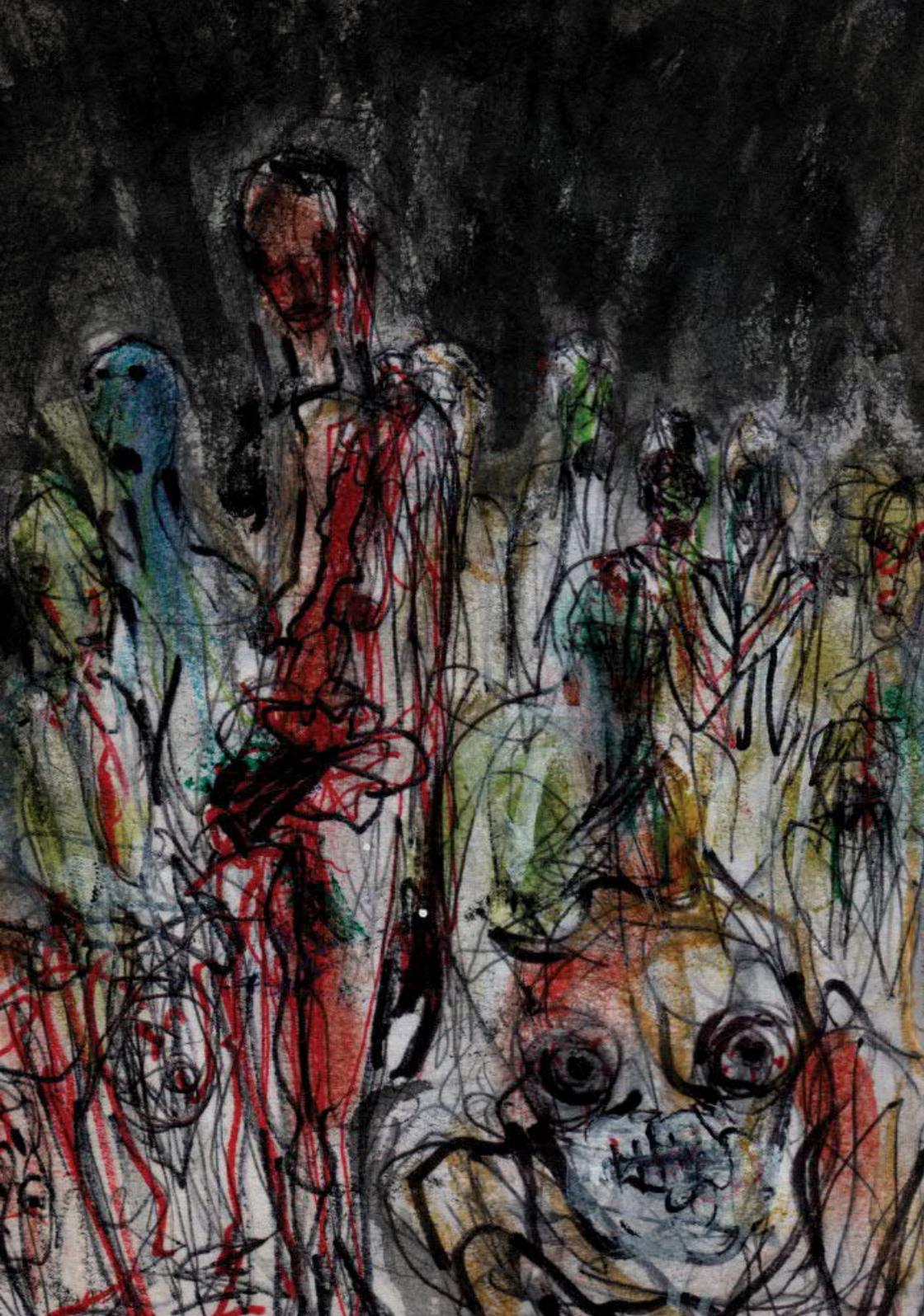
Each Choleric is negotiating quietly and continually with the living disease that animates it.

1. *we'll just take one and keep it and have it and take it away to be ours together and a place we will go and to be there with it and sing to and we will keep it not hurt it and name it and make a house a house a house just one this time just one to keep like a person a pet for our for us not to hurt you leave it you leave it you leave it not bad! Mine! For us for us for us for us*
2. *and I will take you oh there are seas and dark oceans and we will go down and to the heart of the spider and the cities under there and we will we will I promise I will take you and you will be within them all and you will see and be all inside the earth and all over it everywhere and across to all the places and deeper and deeper where the dragons are you will be inside them just leave this one just let one go just one so useless so weak let them be and we will go away me and you and no more fighting and we will be us together us not not just one just one just one they have weapons let me run oh let me run*
3. *I will do it I will do it I can take a knife and let you out through my neck I will sword the roof of my mouth and fall I will do it and you will not put me back this time not enough oh not enough I will go from a high place and will you walk on my shattered limbs I will I will I am not afraid leave leave leave me alone for just one a second I need sleep I will I am not afraid I can go into a fire I know where one is I can seek the silver bees let me go*

4. *kings and ever living eternal masters of the perfect city to always be and statues of us and colonnades the spider-silk robes the great stone faces with our eyes looking down on us we will be kings and can never never die and cities will grow around us like flowers round a child all wisdom and infinite cons of kindness and wise council a city of peace eternal empire where none are hurt just wait just wait it will be*
5. *and god will see me and know me for my suffering and look on me and forgive me but I will stay stop no what of the one who is with me and god will even forgive you and you will come with me to heaven and be with me there just let them run no more I will be an angel to you no more children or weak ones they do not live I will be forgiven in the eyes of god and you will be with me and you do believe in him you do you do you do no not not not*
6. *take you there up into the golden lands I promise you the sky and infinite sights and so many living things so many for you let us go now we will go up and up and you remember you were young then and did not speak but you come from there too and were born there inside me the walls are blue and distant there and there is always an exit and no more up or down it's true! Go with me now just leave them leave them I promise not*

TREASURES

- None. What are you even doing fucking with the bodies there?



CIVILOPEDE

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 20
- **HIT POINTS:** 999
- **MOVE:** 5x standard
- **CLIMB:** 6 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 21,000
- **MORALE:** 10
- **BITE:** +20 to hit and grapple in one attack. Save versus Poison or die. On success suffer 5d10 damage. The Civilopepe will **SWALLOW** you next turn.
- **FALLING UNDER ITS TRACKS:** does 1d10 damage per second until you get out of its way. It is half a mile long.

THE STONE WILL SHAKE AND hum under your feet. A train-track tuning-fork blur. A dead train rushing silently downhill on dark lines. You smell old books, preservative, incense and blood. You hear nothing but the rushing of a gradually rising wind. Sometimes there is conversation, gentle, distant and refined, approaching impossibly fast. Sometimes there is music. The music is always experimental, beautiful, disturbing and rare. It is also approaching very very quickly. In a close tunnel, the wind becomes a gale. Bats and blind Lamenters sometimes glide the prow-wind in a flock.

It's here. The Civilopepe. The crypts of Tömösváry seek you out.

Its head is beautiful, alien, terrifying and aware. Two symmetrical forcipules sabre-curve round. They can crush trucks and poison gods. Venom hisses in drips from keening points. A forest of child-sized maxillae in churning waves. A field of abrasive plates and insect pads, moving

together like spasmic hands, holding and re-folding. Black delicate mandible arrays pick up pieces with a caring touch. A field of dark Ocelli stars. Glinting like black ground industrial gems, radial, symmetrical and uncounted. The organs of Tömösváry are huge, the size of dinner plates, topographically unique. Strangely vectored gaps burning with anti-diamond-dull negative space. These may be how it senses Art.

Its gaze is like stepping onto an empty road and turning a second too late to see chrome bars shining and stacked before a hard predatory mass, unseen face behind the scene-reflecting screen. Knowing it's too late. You are centred in its path. That pre-impact mood, that is the gaze of the Civilopepe.

Where does it come from? Where does it go, and why? It seems a thing alone. There has never been more than one and that one has always been there. Sometimes it disappears for centuries at a time. Then reappears, exhibits lost and chitin scarred. Books have been written on the Civilopepe. You can find them on the Civilopepe.

Many people have asked the question "What is Art?" and "OK but is it any good?" In the Veins these questions have no meaning. If the Civilopepe likes it then it's art and if it doesn't also eat you then it is very good art. It really does have excellent taste. Knowledgeable and wide-ranging. It's been around long enough to see some of everything and the quality of its cumulative choices has built up over time to become the virtual definition of worth. Artists fling themselves into its path holding masterworks. It eats them. If it also takes the art on board, it makes their name forever. On eight recorded occasions it has refused to eat younger artists. Each became an undisputed genius of their field. And was eaten. But not before they changed everything.

We can think of culture, the product of civilisation, as a living thing. Then consider the means of culture to seek its own survival. In a nightmare world of famine and infinite black those means will include an intelligent freight-train sized centipede.

There can be no museums underground. No good galleries. Large accumulations of wealth are only possible inside the pyramids of capital and military force that shell each city-state. The cities care only for themselves. Every civilised Veins culture is trapped in an invented schizoid history of the world, centred on itself. Each museum lies. Each gallery is trapped in slavish worship to a dictator or decadent aesthetic cult.

The only place in the Veins that culture could be preserved in this way is by something big, scary, violent and dangerous enough to keep it safe. The only way it could be culture worth preserving is if this predatory vortex of chitin and death also had truly excellent taste. The only way the culture could be true is if this freight-train death machine was also militarily independent, politically neutral and intellectually rigorous. It is. A scavenger, predator, curator, aesthete, collector, a mass-murderer, patron, gallery, a library and librarian, a museum and a ride. It is all these things. It's a venomous Vatican City with fangs.

Sometimes, cyclic Veins wars escape their reins. Immortal dynasties burn, ten-millennia faiths can end in days. Or hours. Cities die screaming underground.

As armies leave the scene, the Civilopede arrives. To hunt through the wreckage, discover and preserve the artefacts and records, and eat the survivors. A few librarians and archivists are spared; they enter into a symbiotic relationship with the Civilopede, becoming its back-riding teamster-curators. These few govern the Canonites.

(The Canonites: Evolved centipede-parasites, half-smart, hip-high, pale yellow semi-transparent bipedal tick-things. They can talk intelligently about art and history. They

explain why the Civilopede picks objects to collect. Can give long in depth-explanations about an artefact's aesthetic worth. Are wrong and have no idea that they are wrong. They do not know why the Civilopede chooses things. They have no taste or individual perception of any kind but can only explain the choices of others. They have no idea of this and will never have any idea of this. You can change their mind with some force and a Charisma test. When changed, it was always this way to them. You can persuade them but you never win.)

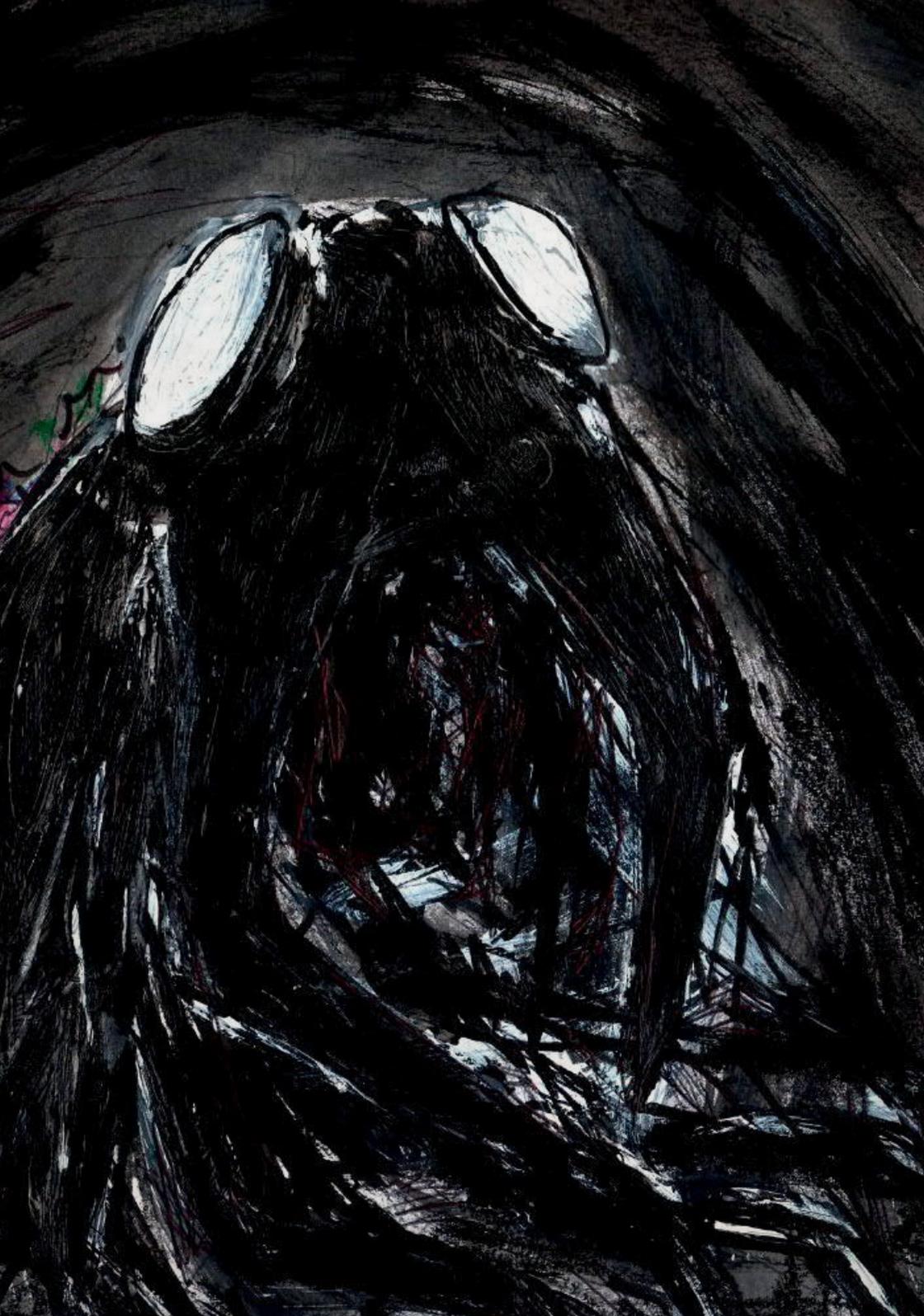
Canonites and curators swarm on the Civilopede's back, arranging and rearranging the endless piles of art, artefacts, museum pieces, records, writing and treasure. Anything you could find in a gallery, museum, archive or library will be stored there. Its back looks like a long, linear, expensive city of tents. The tents are tapestries, piled-up paintings, rugs and fabric art. They burn on its back in a neon blur, a rainbow of flickering images and gold. Inside, things are strapped down and secured. The Civilopede curves, curls dives and rises in endless perambulations beneath the earth. It tries not to go upside down or underwater. But it will if it must. It can be mounted, with great danger and risk. The curators will turn against any invaders unless they bring or produce culture - so boarders can exist safely, but trapped in a kind of endless salon. Decadent aristocrats of civilised races sometimes try to board for exactly this reason.

The Civilopede is highly aware of whatever happens on its back. Is ambivalent about the deaths of replaceable personnel, upset by property damage and enraged by fraud. It is sometimes amused by theft. It can curl over and gain access to any part of its back except the part just behind the head.

TREASURES

- See One Hundred Treasures of the Civilopede, p.286.





CROMAGNOGOLEM

- **ARMOUR:** as Chain
- **HIT DICE:** 8
- **HIT POINTS:** 35
- **MOVE:** 1 1/2 standard
- **CLIMB:** 4 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,000
- **MORALE:** 11
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 swipe or 1d8 bite
- **RISES UP BEFORE ATTACKING:** then crushes for 1d8 THEN grapples AND bites for 1d8 THEN automatic 1d8 every round
- **ANY WEAPON SMALLER THAN TWO-HANDED** does half damage.
- **SMELLS:** like turned earth or a ploughed field post-storm.
- **SOUNDS:** like hands being pulled through cracking mud. Or a slow landslide. Soil against your door.

IT'S A CAVE BEAR MADE OF CLAY. The neck's a stump, a chunk of wood jammed in the clay, and on it, the skull of an ancient bear. Animate and turning back and forth. A golem. One of the first.

It moves like a bear. It doesn't know it's dead. Watch quietly and you'll see it pad around, scratch its clay sides on the rock and sniff the air with naked skull. Ghost breaths whistle in the sinus gaps. Freezing pants from clay-imagined lungs curl in fading spiral horns above the jaw-jamb's empty grin. It shakes its empty head, sits down, gets up again, sits down. It tries to sleep. The hand-pressed sides move in imitation of life. It's tired. It's forty thousand years old and has forgotten unconsciousness.

You may find it climbing, exploring endlessly, as you are, looking for its rest. It may be trapped, or lairing in a bonepile - victims of its own, or those left by predators it drove away. It may have scars within its clay; they may be salt.

If you get close you see finger-twist potterprints visible where the shaman shaped the clay and pinched the claws to blunted points. But now you're too close. Its clay claws crush. They smash bone and pull down shields. The teeth within the skull still bite. There are clay wounds, pierce-points from javelins and spears, fragments of ancient wood. And more modern wounds. Rusty streaks, the ghosts of oxidised steel. It may rise up in challenge if you're strong.

Spells were movement then and language an unreliable prop. They danced to make it live. Then, thirty thousand years ago, they died and it cannot.

TO SILENCE THE BEAR AND SEND IT TO SLEEP, DO THIS: Dance. Dance around it in a circle, facing in. So long as every PC dances and there are at least three left the bear will be still. Then, one by one, dive in and drive a weapon into its bulk. If the rest of you are still dancing then the bear will strike back once at each attacker, but no more. When every dancer's blade is lodged, the bear will remember its nature and sleep. Until the weapons are removed, or rot; then it wakes again.

If at any point you smash the skull, you're fucked. The clay will slump into a silent pile. The spirit will do what it has done a thousand times before: wander through the dark, past the gorges and the banks, till it comes to black meanders where clay beds against the stone. It will slowly dip its spirit in the mud and, inch by inch, pile itself again. Remade by blind invisible hands. Print by

print the timelocked design will scaffold up a living form. Golems are purpose, Golems are will and drive locked in a temporary cage of time and space. There are no words to strike to let it die. No name of god on hidden scrip. This was the god they prayed to. One of the first. The sculptors didn't know enough to make a way for it to die.

It will go looking for a skull. It will find one. It will search for you.

It will find you. It does not get tired. It does not stop.

It can take the Golem weeks to rebuild itself and longer still to track you down.



EGG DEAD (PSEUDO-OOLITES)



- **ARMOUR:** as Chain
- **HIT DICE:** 3
- **HIT POINTS:** 9
- **MOVE:** standard
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 3d4
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 75
- **MORALE:** 7
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 bite
- Can **COMBINE** and **SMOTHER-GRAPPLE** with their combined Hit Dice.
- **SMELLS:** of invisibly rancid refrigerated meat.
- **SOUNDS:** clicking, ultrasonic whines like toy cars failing to start. Voices inside your head.

DISTURB THESE PEARLS AND find yourself an unwilling foster parent to the dead dragon foetus inside.

When a pregnant dragon dies, the young starve in their eggs. Very occasionally something bleak and awful seeks the corpse. It wants a toy and, finding one, cranks up the wasted flesh with automatic fires. The moonwhite eggs forgotten in the corpse-fat earth.

The foetal wyrmlings curling in necrotic yolk, stir. Cold miniature hearts flex. The eggs crack late and undergrown. Cold curls of baby lizardflesh poke through. They spew out from the grave-nest in a snapping tangle. Moving like a knotted pile of wet garden hose sloping down steps. The last thing they recall is starving to death inside.

A Dragon, even pre-birth, has the intelligence of a man. These un-dead ever-starving children, genetically prepped for

raptorous majesty, are unshaped by material experience. They are hungry, cannot eat, and cannot die. They wander in birth-flocks, looking for something they cannot find and do not understand. Then they return to the egg. They do not understand the world. Rot has written invisible curls on the still-developing brains. Their bodies are unripe. The egg is all they know.

They crawl back inside and carefully rebuild the shell. This takes long weeks of agonised failures as they learn. But they have time, infinite time, and nowhere else to go. They wait inside. Sleepless and tense.

Perhaps the endless shiftings of the river-pools remind them of their mother's heart. They don't feel cold. The thoughtless bubbling flow that gently and ceaselessly rocks them in the infinite night may fake a parent's touch. Lulling them to the edge of unachievable sleep. Perhaps underground nothing will bother or disturb them. Perhaps the cold, smooth Oolites in the cave-wells remind them of a nest they've never seen. But perhaps, it is just possible, that something places them there, a half-deliberate trap or lure, of what purpose no one knows.

They crawl into the pools in river-caves where Oolites form. Scatter amongst them in re-assembled eggs, and wait. Until you disturb them.

A swarm of necrotic ice-cold dragonlings, desperate for a parent and a meal. You will play one of these roles. They will instantly imprint on whoever they see first. They will follow you in the darkness, climb upon you rubbing their cold rank scales against you, seeking a warmth they can never feel. They will watch you with keen bright intelligence, learning and forgetting as their foetal rotting minds decay. They are looking for a signal they cannot understand, a behaviour they cannot adopt. The Egg Dead will track you like a parent, until you act like prey.

DEAD REACTIONS

Roll 1d6 once per turn in the presence of the Egg Dead. Add the Charisma bonus of whoever they have imprinted on, minus one for each non-parental act.

- 8+ MAGIC TIME.** They try to 'assist' you with whatever you are doing with poorly-understood Level 1 spells.
- 7 SORRY DADDY.** Will curl desperately around your feet until you reassure them everything is OK.
- 6 HUGS!** Will climb all over you playfully. They are ice-cold. Test for hypothermia.
- 5 HELP HELP HELP.** Demand assistance in following you.
- 4 FOOD 4 U.** Have brought you a small specimen of cave life and insist you eat it, raw. Become violent if you do not.
- 3 FOOD ME.** Demand feeding. Become violent if you do not.
- 2 EAT THEM.** Demand you kill and eat local NPC or beast. Become violent if you do not.
- 1 U FOOD.** The Egg Dead now attempt to consume you. Roll for initiative.

THE EIGENGRAÜ

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather or Plate and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 5
- **HIT POINTS:** 5
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **CLIMB:** 6 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d3
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 2,000
- **MORALE:** 9
- **DAMAGE:** 1d3
- **SPECIAL: SHADOW MAZE.** Minus Die. Grapples and eats your eyes. Contact strips skills, Dexterity and Intelligence.
- **SMELLS:** your own memories, see below
- **SOUNDS:** none, unless it is eating your skin, see below.

SKIN EATING DEMENTIAPILLARS. The Eigengraü are carnivorous, otter-sized, stealth-predator caterpillars that eat your skin and spit out your eyes. They lair in a haze of corrupted thought.

They are midnight black and make no sound. Only the slow munching of mouthparts as they wind around a victim chewing troughs of skin from living flesh. If you ever see it, the closest resemblance is a wreath of black roses curled in moonlight with dew-pearls beading on the thorn-tips. Ridiculously big. The dew-points are neurotoxin. It functions as a gas. If you can see it, it's too late. Which means you won't remember it. No-one remembers the Eigengraü. What it looks like, where it lives, how it hunts or why it kills.

They know something is there. Something cunning, invisible, untraceable and evil. They see its nature through a pattern of events.

You'll smell your memories as it hunts you down. Childhood summers, old rooms, lovers, your mother's skin, all the sense-locked streams of remembered dreams. The Eigengraü smells like your parents or your home. You smell this because the toxic mist of the Eigengraü is snipping at your neural web. It's cutting threads like a stroke victim smelling fire. Your recall of your past is damage. Being around the Eigengraü is damaging you.

Its lair is a fairyland. Strings and balloons of green-yellow light are hung in maze-knots. Pale, liquid bioluminescence wound in puzzle-tree suspension-bridge curves. Sausage-dog lantern-strings. A beautiful entrancing web. There are sourceless trickles of blood on the floor and blurred red prints from naked running feet. The strings of light are human guts. Long intestines emptied of shit and filled with glowing gas. The lights are walls of shadow. Being midnight black doesn't help much underground. The Eigengraü needs shadows to hide in. It makes them with light. The strung-up lights are the walls of a chiaroscuro shadow labyrinth (only spies, sophists and radical freaks walk into an underground wonderland and deliberately look into the dark).

Within its shadow maze the Eigengraü has hidden as a thief; if seen, it has armour as plate and shield. If the maze is destroyed or the Eigengraü somehow removed, its armour drops to that of leather. A *Darkness* spell will be more effective than a *Light* spell. Remember the Eigengraü hides in shadow not in darkness. They are not always the same thing.



Every action in the lair has a minus die that gets bigger according to the minutes you stay there. After three minutes it's 1d3, after four minutes it's 1d4 and so on. Whenever someone rolls their big action die, they must roll the Eigengraü's minus die at the same time and deduct its value from theirs.

THE TOXIN HAS THREE LEVELS OF EFFECT.

FIRST THE GAS: it strips your memories and perception down. Your brain goes into frantic overdrive, stitching lost event-rags into place. Sight judders, spatial sense erodes, short-term memory shrinks and disappears. You don't know how long you have been there. Minutes merge with hours and lose their natural feel. Essentially like being on Ketamine.

THE SECOND LEVEL IS SKIN CONTACT: this gives you Parkinson's. The toxin takes time to climb the nerve paths to your brain. Shutting down your signals on the way. You shake. You can't control your limbs. Focused repetitive action can hold this off for a minute or two. The Eigengraü does damage to your levels. Its memory eating toxin strips your skills. One level per point of damage. This is temporary and will gradually return if you live. Also, one point of Strength and Dexterity is lost per round of contact.

THE THIRD LEVEL IS SUSTAINED

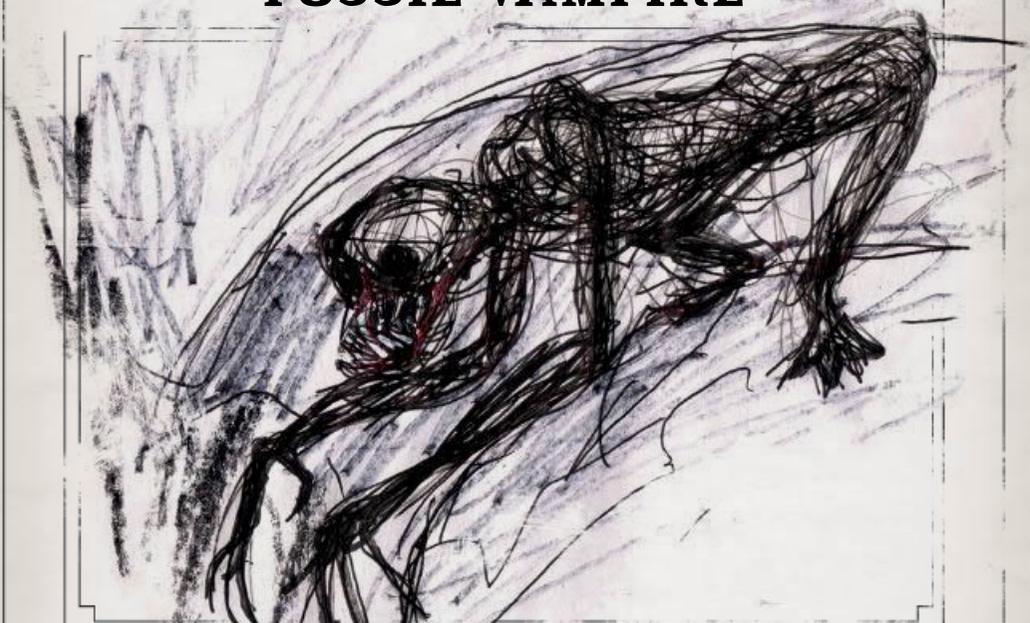
CONTACT: This gives you instant Alzheimer's. You will not know who you are or who these people with you are. You will not know where you are or why. If still conscious, you will assume that they have kidnapped you and left you here. Your bloody body will twitch as the Eigengraü slowly winds its rose-wreaths round, eating spiral strips of skin. When it reaches your eyes it will slowly eat them, one by one, and spit out the optic nerves like bad spaghetti.

When the Eigengraü has eaten your eyes, it will drag your body to a secluded ledge or hole and start slowly teasing out your guts and squeezing them flat. Then it slowly inches across its lair, stringing them up in careful glowing patterned strands. You could, theoretically, be alive at this point.

Remember you can't smell these bodies going in. Everything here smells of home until the Eigengraü dies.

When the Eigengraü has eaten enough skin to grow fat, it retreats into the safest, furthest most forgotten place it knows and forms a chrysalis. Within this grows the Gegenshein. The chrysalis is insanely valuable if found (10,000sp), as is the neurotoxin if collected (15,000sp). It is unlikely you will be able to do either.

FOSSIL VAMPIRE



- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 3
- **HIT POINTS:** 30
- **MOVE:** standard
- **CLIMB:** 2 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d4 (explodes)
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,000
- **MORALE:** 9
- **DAMAGE:** 1d8/1d6 or grapple 1d10 bite and level drain
- **SMELLS:** like bad medication. Capsule pills gone past their date and broken on the tongue too soon. Chalky tablets.
- **SOUNDS:** clicking, clawing grating. Stone on bone on stone. A pool cue scratching madly through the baize. Repeated, irregular, as frozen limbs rotate and fossilised sockets twist.

THEY COME OUT CRAWLING.
They judder and fall like an old man escaping from a crashed car, but fast, like skipping low-res recordings.

It leaps but has forgotten how to stand. The shaking steps collapse. The fossilised stone skeleton of a precambrian vampire. Cracked and deranged by its entombment. The skull is twisted in a Munch-Scream warp. The eyes burn with an ancient second night, ultraviolet coronal rings that hang on eclipsed moons. Limbs rolled and bent in sedimentary stones. The ghosts of opalised organs moonwhite in central mass. Shining pyritised teeth. Soil and ash falling from its joints like rain. Utterly totally insane.

If it pulls off parts of your flesh it may stop to rub the meat scraps over its face with shaking hands. They don't regenerate any more. The flesh is stone and won't grow back. They will cover themselves in blood



and scraps of flesh then stick on coins and metal shards and scraps of remarkable rock, pebbles and shells, curls of white calcite to blindly remake themselves with mortarised blood.

Vampires cannot die. Long ago they infested the earth. When day came, they swarmed under the soil like worms shifting in bait. There was never enough space. The weak were thrust up through the topsoil into the sunlight to die. Their ash made thicker soil to save the rest. At sunset the land heaved and vomited out continents of pale writhing undead. They killed everything. They ate all living things. They fed off each other, unable to die and afraid to walk into the sun.

No-one knows how, but in a single day they were destroyed. The world turned inside out. They were burnt, buried and eaten by angry tectonics. Frozen in stone, fossilised and crushed. Most were torched by unknown cosmic fire but the ash-clouds exploded so fast that large pockets remain. They are still there. There is a vampire stratum. A thin band of shadow in the rock, two feet thick, coal-black. No-one mines it. They go around.

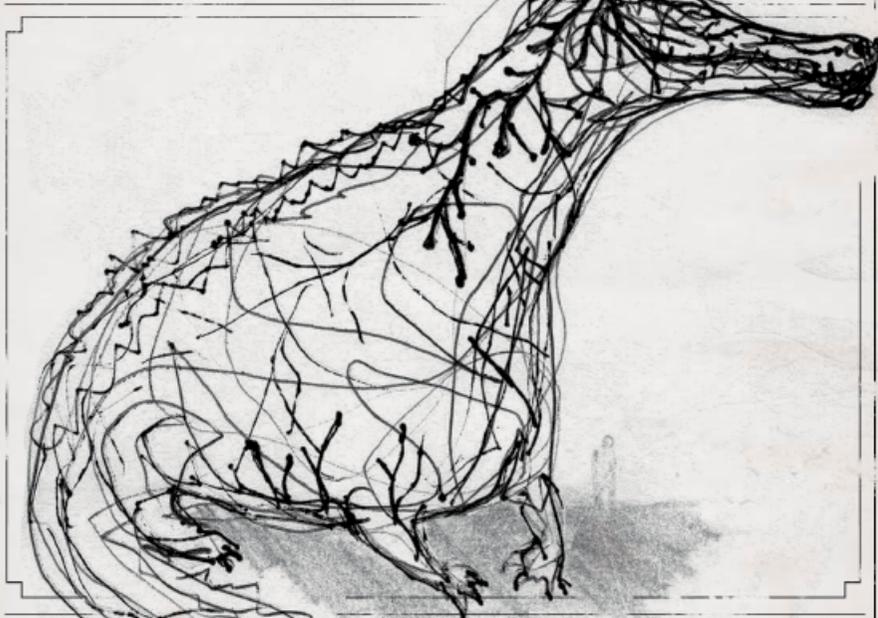
If you disturb or encounter a Fossil Vampire, roll 1d4. This many vampires emerge. If the total is four, roll 1d6, add this many vampires. If the total is 6, roll 1d8. Carry this on up the dice chain. When you run out of dice, start simulating higher numbers with the dice you have. There is, in theory, no end to this progression. You may awaken the whole stratum.

TREASURE

Depends how long awake.

- There may be bloody coins and scraps of rock.
- 1d4 beautiful opalised organs and lungs recoverable from remains, the alveoli perfectly preserved (apart from recent battle damage).
- Lungs 1,000sp each. Other major organs 500sp each.
- The heart is a perfect sculpture of a shrivelled human heart in shining black anthracite. The size of a child's clenched hand. It burns with strange fires. A furnace of vampire hearts can forge impossible blades.
- Gold pyrites vampire teeth are worth almost nothing, but wearing them on a necklace gives +1d4 Charisma around street gangs or teens.

FUNGAL AMBASSODILE



- **ARMOUR:** as Chain
- **HIT DICE:** 10
- **HIT POINTS:** 80
- **MOVE:** standard (swim 1/2 standard)
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1 (unless at a party)
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 25,000
- **MORALE:** 10
- **DAMAGE:** 3d10 bite 1d20 tail
- **REGENERATES** 6hp per round.
- **HIGHLY INTELLIGENT.**
- **SOUNDS:** Two voices. One, deep, low, sardonic and bass. The other tiny, fast, verbose, polyphonic and irreverent. Like two friends talking in the corner of a dinner party, inaudible words, or muttering babble coming from the

receiver of a dropped phone. One would quite like to eat you, the other to infect you - though they will only express this wish in the most charming Wildean small-talk.

It is possible to persuade one voice of an Ambassodile to hide something from, or deceive the other. But only so long as the silent overmind finds it amusing.

- **SMELLS:** It would be terribly gauche to mention any smell.

THERE IS A FOOD CHAIN OF DECAY.

A sun-linked chain made by plants. A red chain of animal flesh. A dark chain of dead and dying things.

The doomed feasting on the ruined who ate the dead. A pyramid of ghouls. Crocodiles survive every extinction. They are a final link of the negative chain. Slow. Patient. Waiting for the world to make a mistake. The river-dwellers eat the things that ate the things that ate the world. They live on.

And the unusual character of the Crocodile, and its tidal metabolic tick, lend it strength.

There is a fungal life that rules the flesh. Consuming insects, crabs and shrimp from the inside. It saw the crocodile and struck. It found the target lodged. The slow churn of the crocodile's flesh left no purchase for infection. Its infinite calm and brass-cogged cogitative mind refused the touch of fear. The fungus was trapped. It could only infect the crocodile to a limited extent, could never consume it totally. The crocodile was likewise pinned. It could never fully eradicate the fungal life wrapped around its scales and mind; perhaps the only creature alive that would not go irrevocably insane when being consumed by a semi-intelligent fungus.

They learned to live together. They became something new. The Fungus warms the crocodile from within, and cuts the rope that binds it to the sun. It fixes flesh and lends long life. In return it rides inside a king. A massive, close-to-deathless deep-dwelling apex-killer. Not a king, an Ambassador.

For several excellent reasons.

ONE: They speak fluent Funginid and almost nothing else does.

TWO: The endless conversation between fungal dream-state and crocodile-brain lends them a talent for other languages.

THREE: Connection to no particular racial or political group.

FOUR: Utterly reliable, impossible to bribe.

FIVE: Cold, quiet crocodile minds have a flair for Realpolitik.

SIX: They are their own bodyguard; a regenerating quasi-psyhic crocodile the size of a truck is difficult to scare.

SEVEN: They seem to love the work.

EIGHT: Even though they are the living expression of a continual conflict/symbiosis between a near-immortal reptilian mind and an almost-alien fungal intelligence, they are actually less insane than most of the political groups they represent.

Intelligence. Calm. Probity. Reliability. Subtlety. Immense patience. The fact that it's a fucking tank with teeth. Gigantic fungal Crocodiles are the Ambassadors of the Veins.

And the embassies. Inside the Crocodile's mouth (or stomach) is sovereign territory. A large male can carry three to five adults in its mouth in reasonable discomfort. Like a closely packed cab. The passengers nest like baby gators. You will be utterly safe within (diplomatic immunity). Unless the political situation outside changes. Should this happen, you will be swallowed. Though it will take some time for you to be digested.

There are tales of still-functional half-digested diplomatic corps being vomited into high-level talks. Reaching out shaking skinless hands to sign treaties in bubbling blood.

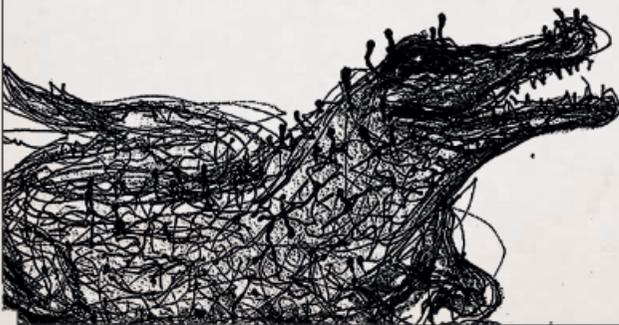
Inside the mouth, things are usually calm. Politically important dignitaries can be carried through the darkest war zones in sticky comfort.

Mad fungal moths sometimes perch on its back in rows like teeth-cleaning birds. They are messengers, flapping wetly through the empty caves to whisper political secrets in the Crocodile's ear. They smell like dry bread about to go off.

Its gut holds secrets and gold. Bits of treasure here and there, but also secrets and incriminating works. The Veins equivalent of the Nixon tapes are probably inside a Crocodile's stomach somewhere.

THE DIPLOMATIC BAG. (ROLL A D12)*

1. Crown to a forgotten kingdom (still valid).
2. The scrolls of a secret pact between the least likely, most powerful people the PCs have met.
3. Chummy letters between a crypto-daemon pretending to be a king on Earth and a level 20 Magic-User masquerading as a duke of Hell; both are quite good at their jobs.
4. Undigested body of a pregnant Knotsman heiress. The child inside still alive. Swallowed for hereditary safety.
5. Overheard scraps of Isnoth's confession on chunks of cuneiform clay.
6. Silk scrap tapestries of the Gigaconspiracy that knits together all other conspiracies. They fall apart in the hands of the first person to read them. That person bursts out in insane laughter. Can say one thing about the power structure of the game world. That thing is now true.
7. Bars of raw occultum from the Bank of Isnoth.
8. Invasion plans for the City of the Nightmare Queen (Note - fake, generated by double agents of the City of the Nightmare Queen to smoke out triple agents.)
9. An Archean clock whose dial turns once. Tuned to galactic time. Destined to end a war on the Plane of Order.
10. Sandinista Jar. Words written in light ceramic lines on the shining surface of a pot. Invert the pot, twist it, speak the lines, and weapons, swords and metallic bows drop out one by one. Enough to equip an army.
11. Letter sent between gods confirming that one subterranean race is actually just a creation of their arch foes. Amazed no-one's worked it out.
12. Seismic core transmissions warning of disaster from the Earth's iron heart. Encoded in plutonic ice to stop interception from the plane of fire.



** Should the PCs actually kill one (or more likely find one dead) they will be in much more danger from the secrets they find in its belly than they were from the creature itself.*

FUNGINID SLAVES

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
 - **HIT DICE:** 2
 - **HIT POINTS:** 8
 - **MOVE:** standard
 - **DAMAGE:** 1d4 and spore attacks
 - **CLIMB:** 2 in 6
 - **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** One rolled below and 1d20 followers if appropriate
 - **BLIND:** Yes
 - **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 65
 - **MORALE:** 5
 - **SMELLS:** Mushrooms.
 - **SPORE ATTACKS:** Funginids have a wide range of strange spores which they use in a variety of ways. Some potentially offensive spores are detailed below. They can ejaculate spores once per turn. The range is 10'. A ranged to-hit roll must be made and the target may save versus Disease. The spell *Heal* can end spore effects. So can the originating Funginid.
1. **UNWELCOME GUEST:** Lose 2 points of Constitution. Target's food requirement is doubled. **CURE:** Violent purgative medicines or fasting for a week.
 2. **RED RECLINER:** Any time victim is not on full health they suffer 1hp of damage per round unless heavily bandaged. Bandage then forms a substrate for a nerve-linked fungus like a blood-red rippling ear. Save when struck or the fungus has been jarred and target is now inactive

that round due to pain. Removal causes 2d6 points of damage. Effect lasts one week. Fungal growths last until removed.

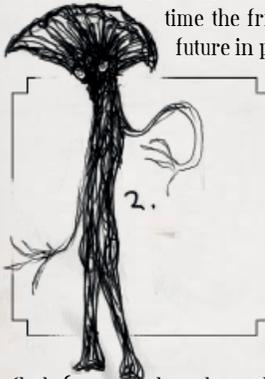
3. **BLACK SPOTS:** Victim loses peripheral vision due to black spores in vitreous humour. They always count as losing a surprise check (even if the rest of the party succeeded). If they have a Dexterity bonus to their Armour, it can only apply to one opponent. Black spores will prevent the victim from seeing fungus. They will float in front of the corona, making any fungal opponent effectively invisible to them. **CURE:** Keep eyes open (no blinking) and lit for at least an hour. This treatment will blind for 1d4 days afterwards.
4. **LIQUID BELL:** Victim sweats and drools constantly and excessively. They will need one half times as much water as usual. They also smell delicious; all predators in a radius of 1 mile will become aware of their presence. Lasts 24 hours.
5. **COLD SHOULDER:** Victim now takes cold damage from light every hour, as spores endothermically react to it. 1 damage from candle light. 1d4 for light bright enough to make out textures. 1d8 for light bright enough to read by. 1d20 for sunlight. **CURE:** Remain in total darkness for a week.
6. **ROLL TWICE AGAIN.** The Funginid has both spore abilities and can choose to use one or both. If repeat results, double effect. Reroll additional 6s.

EVERY UNDERGROUND CULTURE uses the Funginids as slaves. They are useful, alien and usually easy to control. A workforce and a prime source of rare organics. It's obvious their minds are nothing like ours. The things they call personalities are just learnt behaviour over an intelligent alien core.*

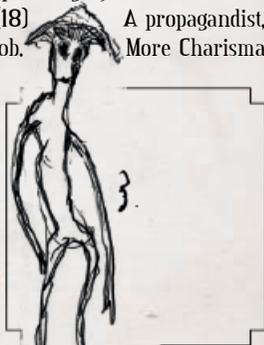
There is a market in slaves and a fungal-underground railroad leading who-knows-where. Slavehunting is valued and expected work. Helping them escape is dangerous, weird and poorly paid. But there are rumours of strange irregular fungal gifts.

These are some you might bump into (roll d20):

1. Hunched, dead-leaf-brown. Five feet high. Talks in a low towel-muffled semi-inaudible voice. Mushroom frills reach in a ragged hem down to the ground. Shuffles on invisible feet like a peasant woman carrying sticks. A shapechanger. The frills can rise up and fold away into a topknot, revealing the shape of a fat low-level monster. A grunting gremlin or giggling gimp, something simple, stupid and common. A different one each time the frills fold up. A visionary. Sees the future in palsied raptures. Cunning.



2. Like a knotted oaken trunk, as high as a man. Waving white pencil-thin tendrils. Piercing captivating eyes hidden in the oak folds. Highly charismatic (18) A propagandist, raconteur and stirrer of the mob. More Charisma than Constitution, more Constitution than Wisdom.



3. Pale and multiply crooked like a twig stripped of bark by a child and broken and re-broken in the hand. Wet, white unclad flesh (none of them have clothes but this one seems naked). Eyes like sputtering blue-halo coals in a failing gas fire. Ruthless. Murderous. Freedom-obsessed. No strategic vision. Will kill when necessary and when not.



4. White like paper on a rainy day. Sagging in the same way, like damp clothes. Always seems on the verge of falling over. A trim, round black crown, horizontally held and neatly rimmed like a black hat. Shakes and quivers always. Non-violent but utterly morally certain. Right to the dark end of all things. Will not break.



5. Faded orange like fallen fruit. Strange prominent eyes, buggy and glass-like. Tightly drawn skin.

A conical beaver-brown mushroom crown with a flattened top lends it vertical length. Heroic, intelligent and perceptive. Will die to protect its fellows. Is days away from a nervous breakdown. Talks educated like a person; piping voice.

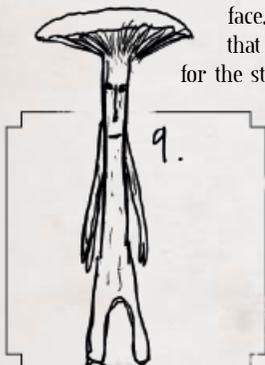
* Or ARE they? (Probably they are. They are fucking mushrooms after all. Depends how you run the game.)

6. Murder-turned-hard-labour shroom. Wiry and waxy with oddly-fleshed muscle-analogues. Strong, capable, violent and armed. Ready to attack. A self-starter in that regard.



7. A dusty-black crooked stem. A pale white cap, fizzy and lightly frizzed. Grows fruit from its body. Not like anything you've seen but edible and non-poisonous. Weird wild rainbow coloured fruit. No psychedelic effects. Clever, inventive and a passive-aggressive bully.

8. Plump and ridiculous like a Toby Jug. Big, mad smiling trunk-face. Rolls and eases around. A wit that never wounds, endless patience for the stupid and the slow, empathic and forgiving. Lacks any real will to make a difficult decision.



9. Bright red with flecks of metallic gold. It isn't blood but it may as well be. Ramrod-straight 90 degree stem. Aggressive, deceptive, charming. Totally untrustworthy. Focused like a laser on one particular goal. Will kill, lie and betray to reach it. A sociopath.

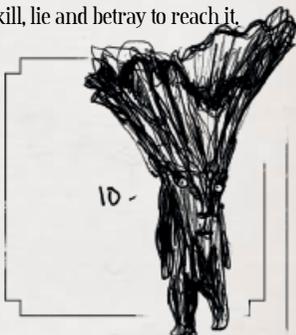
10. Blue-black in waves like paint in old ink. Beautiful in a way. Upturned crown like a parasol in the wind. Wise, myopic. Full of good advice, more full of criticism. Of you. Will offer intelligent and perceptive suggestions one third of the time.



The other two thirds will be taken up with a forensic, accurate and cutting criticism of everything you say, do and are.

11. Small, low and corrugated black with multiple red gasping mouths. Round like an irregular rock. Nothing like a mushroom shape. Can only whistle. Really amazing first aid skills. Mouths can heal wounds really well. Incredibly brave. Will offer healing in extreme personal danger.

12. Slender and blue-white. Always seems to be leaning forwards. Shroom-frill on one side only, ragged and bare on the other. Bare side has a photoluminescent cyst. Highly intelligent, an expert healer of disease, not wounds. Seems like it has severe aspergers but how do you judge that in a mushroom?



13. Heavy, lead, colour and mass. Four feet high. Slumps and bumps along on a tangle of blood-red mycelium limbs like tumbleweed stalks. Has total faith in the authorities. Is sure everything will be worked out very soon. Can emit terrifying chlorine gas that kills everything around. Valued highly by everyone as it can also fix nitrogen in soil using its red tentacles. Agricultural value beyond compare. Seriously.



14. Civilised, cultured, well-read and sympathetic. Wants to eat your nervous system and pilot your body around for laughs. Unlike everything else here, will usually be encountered riding the body of some low-level goon it infected. Skull is swollen, white puffs of fungus flesh poking out where they eyes should be and out of the gaping mouth (25% chance is a very obvious slave-hunting double agent).

15. A heaving grey pipe-organ thing with almost-golden threads rioting from its crown. The shroom-pipes make amazing sounds. Can create arrangements of totally bizarre but utterly wonderful underground music (genius level).



Like dark prog music if prog wasn't a bit shit and if attractive people danced to it. Very very very racist against everything.



16. Violent pink spore mother carrying living young. Scraps of stolen armour wired around her bulging sacs. Aggressive, apparently in defence of her young, but will sacrifice all of them to save herself if necessary.

17. Wise, shrivelled teacher of fungal ways. Patient, motionless most of the time. Flesh wrinkled up like old people in the bath. Little bright black button eyes. Will teach you fungal kung-fu. Utterly useless chemical skill unless you can emit your own spores.

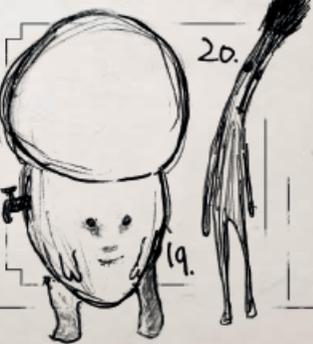


18. Chippy, cheeky flat-topped mushroom. Can infect you and change your sex and gender; but only if you're into that. Can't really do anything else. Can't change you back without killing you.



19. Friendly wood-grained alco-shroom. Ferments its own booze inside. Like a walking chemical factory. Sloshes and staggers like a barrel being manoeuvred down an uneven slope. Always seems late. Likes making friends.

20. Pale thin shroom with a head like a q-tip. Just a vague hazing of stubbly hair-thin growths. Wanders around feeling diffident and isolated. Sorrowful and bent over like something sagging in the wind. Brightens up in company. Licking its head sends you into a coma and gives you the ability to write poetry. Bad poetry.



GEGENSCHWEIN

- **ARMOUR:** as Chain and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 5+1d4
- **HIT POINTS:** varies
- **MOVE:** standard and flight
- **DAMAGE:** 1d4/1d4 or as weapon
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,500
- **STEALTH:** 5 in 6
- **MORALE:** 9
- **SMELLS:** Of attics and still dust, empty rooms in rich houses.
- **SOUNDS:** Their voice sounds like a breeze flowing through blinds on a hot day.
- **COMBAT:** +1 to hit with every different found weapon they use during a fight. Cumulative.

May pick up and drop weapons during its turn as a free action.

On a successful hit the Gegenschwein may drop its weapon, move, pick up another found weapon and attack again. If it keeps finding different weapons and hitting with them, it can do so until it runs out. It does not bring weapons to a fight and cannot snatch them out of a PC's hand.

Gegenschwein have two claws but wield improvisation like a knife. They make weapons from whatever they find. Rocks, bones, fire, light, patience and rope have all been used.

GEGENSCHWEIN ARE NOBLE, memoryless moth-men. Twilight warriors bearing bones wrapped in silent silk. They seek endlessly to challenge the deadliest foe and take its bones as trophy for their ritual sex. They have a talent for improvisation and no long-term memory.

Their grey wings glow like cigarette smoke in the dark. Only then are they visible, in natural dark, without the slightest touch of artificial light. Under lamplight the subtle greys are a fiendish camouflage.

You won't hear them hunting you. The names and places it has seen are written on its wings in silvery thread. It wrote them there. It has no other way to recall where it has been and who it has met. This makes old moths more visible than the young, and more dangerous. Having survived so long and faced so much, they will be difficult to defeat. The last sight of many monsters is an odyssey of names in silver on invisible wings as the Gegenschwein swoops down (they always need more silver thread). If the wing was damaged and the writing lost, the memory would be too. An encounter leaves glimmering grey dust on your fingertips.

They are driven by instinctive need. The final mating-flight requires a dowry of bones. Only those Gegenschwein who have repeatedly sought out and fought the most dangerous and evil creatures and survived will be allowed to mate and breed. They make a trophy of a single bone and wrap it in silent grey silk. These bones are read by prospective mates. They will assess the progression and challenge of each kill. If a Gegenschwein does not show constant advancement, courage and skill, it will be denied.



If the PCs are powerful enough it will challenge them. Tracking is more likely. PCs summon badness from the earth. The Gegenschein will wait for something truly terrible to attack, then dive to engage it alone. They do this quite a lot and have gained a reputation for heroism as a result. A kind of angel to the weak and lost.

The Gegenschein is the adult stage of the Eigengräu. They emerge from the Eigengräu's final chrysalis in some secluded spot. They are ready to fight and hunt within hours. Full of genetic skills. They have no idea where they have come from and no memory of their former self. As soon as its eggs are fertilised and hidden, the Gegenschein dies. It never knows what it has created. The Eigengräu do. They know everything.

TREASURE

- Silk bone set equal to level $\times 2$ with one bone of creatures ranging from level 2 to two or three above the level of the Gegenschein. Monster trophy bones worth $100\text{sp} \times \text{level}$ to collectors. Add an extra $1,000\text{sp}$ if a full mating set.
- Wings. Worth $250\text{sp} \times \text{level}$ of the Gegenschein. Plus they provide a story-map of its route through the Veins in the Gegenschein-script.

GILGAMASH

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 7
- **HIT POINTS:** 41
- **MOVE:** 3/4 standard
- **CLIMB:** 4 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS** 1,000
- **MORALE:** 1d12
- **DAMAGE:** 1d8/1d8
- **SOUNDS:** Like rocks in a rotating drum.
- **SMELLS:** Slathered mortar from awkward self-repairs.

A CLANKING PATCHWORK OF clay and stone. The rough shape of a man formed by a hundred hands. An unsteady peg-leg lurch. The statue parts that make it up are ruined scraps from fallen idols lost beneath the earth. Smooth marble, rough enduring granite, sandstone, cracks, chips and badly set gaps. The hands arranged to strike down gods that eyes were carved to see. The chest a daemon's, weirdly shaped. One leg of marble made to hold up worlds, the other treading snakes as ancient foes. The curling serpents carried still upon the toes, and worn with endless tread but writhing still. The nose, a patrician emperor's; the chin, a saint's; the hair, arranged from naiads, nymphs and fools.

This creature quests endlessly, lost within the hall of memory. But filled with fiery purpose. Knowing absolutely it was made for some great act. Or condemned for crimes it can't recall.



The mashed-up collective memories of a dozen cultures could perhaps be useful to adventurers. Or dangerous.

Roll three times on this table to decide the background and motivation of the Gilgamesh. No matter how much sense it doesn't make, this is what it believes. All of it. Even the parts that contradict the other parts.

Re-roll whenever the Gilgamesh suffers a critical hit. Its pieces have been re-arranged and it now believes something new, and always has.

(If a damaged Gilgamesh replaces lost parts with pieces from a new statue that has magical properties, it may add fragments of that personality to its own, along with memories it may have had.)

TABLE: THE GILGAMASH

ID12	"I AM..."	"MADE BY..."	"I MUST..."
1	The Nightmare Lord of ancient Demi-Kaz, the city on the borders of dawn.	Fucking Evil Eye nearly turned me to stone! Thought I was a goner there! Managed to get away though, close one.	Stand watch over the borders of night and resist the cursed madness of the outer dark. (Likes to watch you, or anyone, as you sleep.)
2	The last remaining watcher in the Temple of Infinite Night.	Unt-i-nata-pash-am, who survived the flood and knew the Gods, learning my art from them.	Return to ancient Leng and take my place in the temple of my people to prevent its collapse. (Leng long gone.)
3	The last true king of Githroz, brought low by secret enemies.	Carved by Han-Sho, scheming bastard idol carver who left me hollow and my ancestors robbed!	Seek out the greatest of the Liches and destroy them!
4	The Goddess Ashrut of the Nine Graces and eleven awful vengeance.	Was hunting a Medusa. Found her. Fell in love. Then cheated on her.	Ascend to daemon heaven on golden Dragonwings and take my place next to my true love.
5	An enchanted catyrid of Leng, necropolis of the Damned.	Brought to life by the desperate sorrow of my people as the temple I was part of was destroyed by barbarians.	At the bottom of the deepest ocean is a sunken ship; in the ship, a box; in the box, my heart. I must find it and destroy it so that I can finally die.
6	The Stone Claw of Demski, greatest of the Anti-Liche. Currently possessing these stone parts. Please address the hand.	The breath of a lustful goddess who lay with a forbidden maiden in my temple, breathing life into me accidentally with her climax.	Seek out the dark tapestries of Demi-Kaz and assemble them to show the place of the last clue to the Crystal Dream of Asherak!
7	The Dragon Queen's true love, possessing the gift of eternal life and knowledge of all evil.	Don't dick around with a petrifying wand in front of a mirror to look cool.	I have to get back to my family! Oh god my wife, oh my two little boys. I hate them so much, I have to kill them before the end.
8	Ho adventurers! You address Bacchus, god of wine and song! Have ye wine? Have ye song? (Cannot drink, cannot sing.)	Carved by a mad sculptor in one night under the influence of drugs, despair and dark magic. He hanged himself with a rope around my neck and his last breath was my first.	Find Han-Sho carver of idols in the city of Ping and cave in his lying skull with the hands he carved! (Ping ruins for millennia.)
9	The Gorgon Lix! Gaze not into my eyes! Gaze not! (Gaze has no effect.)	I laughed in Isnorth's temple and they forced a tiny stone man down my throat and cast me out.	Find the White Evil Eye that tried to kill me and take its eye! And then its other eye! Etcetera!
10	Invader Nine, an extra-dimensional probe enslaved to a distant aberrant mind that whispers constantly to me.	Carved from burning obsidian by hideous alien minds to survive the awful transit between realities.	Guard the weak and innocent from the cruel and abusive. Until they betray me by doing wrong, then kill them and move on.
11	Bran Nine-Fingers, just an adventurer like yourselves. Having a bit of trouble at the moment...	I had sex with a blindfolded basilisk for a dare, it went fine but got caught, and the punishment for unnatural acts is petrification, by a basilisk.	Learn the music that played before existence so that I may sing it to the stars and thence persuade them to water the earth with their tears (i.e. meteoric fire).
12	A noble and deceased ancestor of Kai Lung, whose name is Leng, of the city of Ping.	An evil dragon fell in love with me and, not wishing to ever lose my image, transformed me to stone.	I must never leave this place or the sky will turn to blue ice and fall in freezing torrents on the earth. Neither must anyone else leave this place.

IGNEOUS WRATH

BEETLE FORM

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 3 (+6 to attack)
- **HIT POINTS:** 14
- **MOVE:** 3/4 standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d10 smash and 1d8 bite
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS** 500
- **MORALE:** 10
- **COMBAT:** It stamps and clatters forwards using all of its weight and force, smashing through delicate speleothems.

Attacks at +6.

Wood smoulders and paper burns. 1hp heat damage each round in close combat. Save versus Breath Weapon each round or be set alight.

Will charge and smash at +8 for 1d10 then bite at 1d8 then shake for 1d6 per round.

- **SMELLS:** A rich chemical stew. A burning plastics factory or polluted industrial stream.
- **SOUNDS:** Scratches, insectoid chattering, dull low-frequency humming and blurred sound.

DRAGONFLY FORM

- **ARMOUR:** as Chain
- **HIT DICE:** 3 (+6 to attack)
- **HIT POINTS:** 9
- **MOVE:** 1 1/2 x standard (flight)
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 bite and 1d4 cold
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS** 500
- **MORALE:** 7
- **COMBAT:** Dives and swoops over the rock like a dragonfly on still water. Perches, pauses and hovers relative to the stone, not gravity. May move-attack-move during one round with no penalty.

Sets a cold flame. A silent freezing fire. On successful attack, save against Breath Weapon or any burnable items, clothes, paper, rope, wood will be set alight. This fire does cold damage. This reverse fire creates pure oxygen from what it touches. This makes nearby 'normal' fires explode into balls of white light.

- **SMELLS:** Cut grass, but sharper and more toxic, greasy on the tongue. Makes you weep and cough.
- **SOUNDS:** Wings in cold air, fast like a freezer fan, Sharp. Each beat defined, The clattering of wheel-clips on a bicycle.



A FIRE WITHOUT FLAME, A FLAME without heat. The Igneous Wrath has burst its bonds. It is skipping on the rock that dents under its legs.

Substratals find it hard to leave. Birthed from cosmic planes, their bones and flesh arranged by delicate compact, if they stay too long they die. A beast of fire won't breach the cold. They freeze in air-conditioned rooms. The Wrath found a way.

It lives a kind of endless mirror life that never gives it rest. The Wrath walks on the walls of rock. Gravity has no relevant reference here. The wrath sticks to the walls. Or ceilings. So long as they are natural rock. It does not fall. The stone dimples like a dragonfly's footprint on a pond. Beneath the Wrath is its reflection, holding it in place. They used to be one thing.

One form of the Igneous wrath is beetle-like. Black, solid, flameless as cold coal but burning hot. It stamps and shuffles forward like an awkward bull. A smouldering scarab-

predator always on the verge of explosive boiling flight. Hot enough to burn you within feet. Crawling in a compressed mirage-heat-haze. Never never bursting into flame.

The other form, the sometime-rock-reflection is a phoenix-fly. A dragonfly wreathed in fifty-colour shades of fire. Iron-cold rust red fire that never burns. The fire is chill. It lights like twenty burning torches but holds not one breath of heat. It can enfold you and eat the air in your lungs. It can carbonise your clothes and consume your flesh. But it cannot burn as burning's understood.

The two things race together through the caves. As one dives down into the rock the other surges up to take its place. There is the sound of the thrumming of superheated air around a furnace. The piano-key plinks of heat-stressed stone. Then noise like windows smashing as they change; the stone splinters. Frags and shrapnel of rock bomb-patterning the walls as limestone screams under the temperature flux.

And so they run, endlessly figure-eighting on a regular relative plane. The beetle burrows down into the stone, the dragonfly escapes. And vice-versa. They can never be in the same plane at the same time. This was the arrangement they made. By splitting itself in two the Wrath escapes the fate of failed elementals, cooling and dying in the material world. It can run forever while there is rock to support its division. But it has to run. It can never stop moving. It is escaping its own impossibility and if it stops, the mealy laws of time and space catch up. The bailiffs of physics.

The one inside the rock regenerates 6hp per round. They must swap at least once a minute. If you can separate them or stop one then they both die.

It is hungry forever, and pissed-off.

TREASURE

- **COAL BLACK BEETLE SHELL.**
When cool, can be used to create heat-proof armour or shield. Always sooty, will stain fingers and clothes regardless of time elapsed. 1,000sp.
- **IGNEOUS WRATH WINGS.**
Drape like liquid silk. Beautiful. Permanently unbelievably cold and therefore useful in certain practical circumstances and impractical high fashion. 500sp.
- **PRISMED EYES.** Looking through them allows you to see the hidden dimensions inside the rock. Anything hiding in the solid rock walls, of whatever kind or nature, will be seen. Much sought by security forces. Range 60'. 1,500sp.

IGNIMBRITE MITE



- **ARMOUR:** as Plate and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 1
- **HIT POINTS:** 1
- **MOVE:** standard (flight)
- **DAMAGE:** 1d4
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d20
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS** 50
- **MORALE:** 6
- **COMBAT:** Mites are glimmering living symbols about the size of a thumbnail. On a critical hit the Mite will swoop into your mouth and burn a sigil on your tongue. This is now the only sound you can deliberately speak. *Remove Curse* should take care of it; so will cutting off your tongue.

You, or your severed tongue, will be hunted by spell seekers.

- **SMELLS:** Sulphur.
- **SOUNDS:** Magic-Users will recognise primal spell phonemes

*Tiny bells of dying fire
Igniting single signs inside the stone
A burning word that locks the blazing choir;
Imprisoning the songs sealed tongues intone.*

*The churning flow scrapes paws upon the crust
whines and curls the continental shield.
It learns a metamorphic spoken trust
and speaks the planet's voice. Sphere. Yield.*

*A stone-thick fog rolls liquid on the land,
Your lungs boil in your chest your skin is sand,
Your culture lost to time, your shape preserved
A last life's moment frozen by the blaze
And, crystallised with you there, the mountain's word.
That secret sentence sounded over days,
Learnt by magmatic tides, in plasmic vice
With whale-length wavelengths whispered to the rock.
Each living, breathing syllabic choice
Had mind and impish thought to spurn and mock
But held in slow pronunciation's chains
It struggled until spoken, then was free
And danced and raced before the screaming rain,
And saw a city's death and laughed with glee.*

*Like spheres cast circles shadowed on the page
Their shapes are three-dimensional silhouettes,
Ghost verbs encoded by a world-less mage.
A song from higher spaces whose laws let
The sound-imps seem to shift their forms in ours,
Like sparks and flickers, burning words, or birds,
Some sealed within the rock that builds the tower
That tombs the town and plaster-cakes the herd
Like curls of black inside the stone, ash-flowers
To be released when stone is cut or falls.*

*But Some un-bonded phonemes dodge the blow
And, wisping in a zig-zag seek earth's call
They hunt around the halls where monsters go
They sing and cackle, mocking endless night
And bounce around the heads of questing fools
Joy-smug for not embracing ignimbrite
That slowly-flaking grave of living words.*

*If cunning minds should trap them, learn their words
And lantern them in braille-rows to regard
The sentence strung, a row of readed crowns,
Those same minds grasp the speech that mutters far.
And un-knots the earth.*

THE EFFECTS OF A SIGIL-SEALED TONGUE

The effects will be one of the following. They increase according to the volume of the speaker's voice. Someone screaming the glyph as loud as they can should be able to affect about a cubic metre of material each round.

Screaming at this volume continuously will cause serious damage.

1. Break Stone
2. Turn to mud
3. Turn to lava
4. Vomit Pyroclastic flow
5. Crystallise rock
6. Irradiate things
7. Sharpen swords
8. Be a spoken pole (magnetic)
9. Levitate stones
10. Return calcite animalcules to life (limestone and chalk are made of these; also you are the petty god of plankton now)
11. Tiny Diamond scream (reduces carbon to industrial diamond grit)
12. Phosphorise steel (make it brittle)
13. Carbonise organic things
14. Make loose rocks flee in fear
15. Animate fossils with a whisper
16. Speak in stop-motion accelerated rainclouds that dribble from your mouth like thick vomit and erode the ground beneath your feet to mud
17. Olivine branch whistlework (a kind of vine-growth of greenish stone)
18. Golden Scream (deep muscle trauma)
19. Sacrificial Anode Adenoids prevents decay or aging while in use)
20. Skullwarper voice

KNOTSMEN

- **ARMOUR:** Weeping Knights use Mail and Shields or Plate.
- **HIT DICE:** 2
- **HIT POINTS:** 12
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** as weapon
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 4d4
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 300
- **MORALE:** 9
- **SMELLS:** Antiseptic ointment.
- **SOUNDS:** Human movement.
- **DISPOSITION:** Half will be Fathers. One-quarter will be Usurers and one-quarter Weeping Knights. A group of eight or more will include a Bailiff.
- **LUCKY:** All Knotsmen with still-living children who are also Knotsmen have a 2+ save on 1d6 against any fatal damage (so long as the Referee can come up with a physically coherent explanation that does not bend the rules of reality).
- **DENIAL:** If you can talk a Knotsman into a point where he has to verbally deny the awful thing he is or the living nightmare his culture represents then they immediately double over in agony for 1d6 rounds as another knot forms inside them. They are known sophists and debaters for exactly this reason. Verbal and intellectual artifex of avoided truths. They make great lawyers.
- **WEAPONS:** All Knotsmen carry:
 - Scalpels. 1d8 damage and can only be used in intimate contact or on unresisting victims. Not usable like knives.

- Blinding Pins. They do exactly what they say, but can also deafen, often considered a worse punishment underground.
- Scopolamine. White powder in a short wooden pipe. Blown through tube at close range. One person only. Charmed and numb for 2d6 turns on a failed save. If hit points are at one-fourth total or below, a failed save means a heart attack.

KNOTSMEN WILL ALWAYS TRY TO take you alive if they can. You are a walking resource to them. Some called them 'Debtmen', but this name has been forgotten now. 'Gordianites' also they are called.

They are agonised puritan secret-thieves. Slave-hunters. Desperate fighting philosopher-cowards. The ultimate Sophists, they feed on lies and hidden truths.

They seek the Deep Carbon Observatory and its Tektite Lens. They sometimes shepherd the Stormsheep. They map and re-map the Veins on twists of hidden thread. Searching.

The skin of a Knotsman has bumps. Throbbing nodules of mixed-up red and blue. Sticking up through the skin, almost breaching the pale flesh. It's their blood.

Think of two hose-pipes braided together in irregular lumps like the cables behind a cabinet. Then imagine them filling up with water, turgidly locking as the stuff flows through. These are the veins and arteries of the Knotsmen. They are mixed up and tangled in the flesh. The pressure forces lumps of body-tubing up under the skin where it ticks with the pulse like a forehead-vein. Every Gordianite's tongue has a golf-ball sized lump in its centre where the veins mash. If they were to accidentally bite down on this, they would bleed out in minutes.

The Knotsmen are in incredible discomfort. It hurts to do anything. They will deny this. They are not in pain. You can see, in many, broken pins sticking from the veinal twists. This is where some have desperately and dangerously tried to unknot their own flesh. The pins break and cannot be removed. They will deny this. Press again and they attack. Suicidal rage before the truth.

(Knotsmen want armour but it makes them very uncomfortable. They fight so very very carefully.)

They sold their children and themselves. A single tribe, driven from the surface long ago. Lost in the darkness and the cold. Penned in by waking nightmares. They sought a way to survive. They made a terrible deal. They sold the souls of people yet-to-be. Who to is not known. But results speak for themselves. Knotsmen are lucky. Fiendishly freakishly mad with odd results. The scum succeed and live on every time. Something awful outside time is watching them and waiting to collect.

The Knotsmen sold their children's souls before their birth. They live in debt. The debt can be redeemed by surrendering another soul that's not been made. They hope. So every one that lives goes on, knowing they must feed fate their children to escape.

They will not admit this is true. They will not accept this is wrong. They will hold fanatically to the death-deal they have made and, every time each one denies the truth, another knot forms within them. There is a strange power in this.

The Knotsmen often run. Young and sometimes old. Often with their children. They try to escape. But this is the Veins and there is nowhere to escape to.

They obsess over maps. They are seeking their escaped children. Hunting them to ensure their own survival. Not just the parents but the whole culture. Any breaking of the bond of soul-debt is seen as the most terrible threat to all. An obscene and unforgivable crime. Evil and inexplicable. The map-need helps them find their hidden kids. It is a dual-edged blade.

Knotsmen know the Veins better than anyone. Their escapees are well informed.

Knotsmen hoard and trade map-knowledge and will hunt the slaves of other cultures for fun and profit.

They are really excellent trauma surgeons and torturers and will give healing for free to travellers with only an unspoken obligation. They will not forget the debt.

THE ELECT



These rule. Old Knotsmen, rabid, twitchy and pustulent with distended knot-flesh. The masters' spines twist round like DNA. They are rarely seen outside Forclose, the Knotsman capital, though the shadows of their actions show intent. Their names and characters are famous and despised.

THE BAILIFFS

Magician-priests of Knotsman culturefaith. A Bailiff will have back-turned limbs and bent bones, a ripple-work of raspberry knot-gourds breaching the skin like fruit pressing against slick robes. They are known to trade in souls and will carry 2d6 minor Phylacteries and Magic Jars. They have the 1d6 save. In addition: Should their save fail, they can remove the save ability from a nearby Knotsman and then count their save as successful.



The Phylacteries hold the enslaved souls of those who tried to escape their debt to the Knotsmen by suicide. They have the ability to possess a body as per the *Magic Jar* spell. They hate the Knotsmen but are cursed to obey them (but only to the exact letter of command).

Bailiffs talk in strangled gasps and come carrying chests and folders of papers, binders of accounting and receipts. They will be riding pack beasts and assisted by usurers or trusted slaves. All Bailiffs have Charisma 18 and a continuously active *Charm* spell (save versus Magic each turn of contact; once broken, can no longer take effect).

They are eager to heal you, at a price. They can loan you hit points. At 33% interest per week. For every 3hp they give you, they want one more at the end of each week. Will not inform you of the schedule once you have signed. The PC can pay back this 'owed' life any time at will, but if they do not, the Bailiff will wait till the total is higher than the character's current total then threaten to collect. They will offer a deal of service to avoid instant repossession.

SPELLS

All Knotsman spells can be saved against with a standard save, though this save is taken with a -5 penalty if you owe the Knotsmen anything.

BONEOWN

DURATION: Permanent

RANGE: 30'

Each bone in your body now has his name written on it. Your bones can be returned to the bailiff for cash. All evil beings will know this. Tiny inscriptions on your ear bones partially deafen you. It hurts a lot, does 1d8 damage. Anyone who finds your bones will return them to their owner. Your grave will not be still.

ITEMISATION

DURATION: Until all items are listed, with a minimum of 1d3 items per round or faster if the player desires.

RANGE: Line of sight

Forces you to list the exact cost of every object you own, including body parts. You can still act but must speak this information out loud. Disadvantage on everything till done. Any attempt to stop will result in the most recent item described, and any yet to be listed decaying into a valueless version of itself (clay if limbs). (Referee's choice if the player has to do it as well.)

VERIFICATION

DURATION: Permanent

RANGE: Voice/60'

Your identity will not be believed by anyone including close friends (they are unable to believe you) without documentary proof from a registered authority (which the Bailiff can provide). If you lose or damage your documents then your identity is gone. No other authority will issue you more as they do not believe you are who you say you are. You could maybe get some forged. (Can almost be useful for thieves.)

THE RIGHT OF THE MIND

DURATION: Permanent

RANGE: Voice/60'

The Bailiff takes possession of the thoughts in your head. If the PC takes any original action or expresses any original idea (anything the PC cannot prove to have seen someone else do in a recent session) they take 1d12 damage and suffer a fine.

FATHERS



These are adult male Knotsmen with living children in the clan. They have not yet been crippled by twists of flesh. They make up the expeditions you are likely to meet. The ones sent out on child-hunts in the dark. They wear loose clothes and no armour. They take point and carry mêlée weapons. Knotsmen assault troops. They have the 1d6 save.

Fathers wear no armour; they can carry:

- **SHINING BILL-HOOKS:** 1d6 grapple on hit.
- **CLAWED CHAINS:** 1d6. Reach. Evade shield as flail, or throw as bolas.
- **BARBED-WIRE NETS:** 1d4. Entangle.
- **MAGNESIUM FLARES:** Knotsmen use Blood-filter lanterns. Red doesn't kill night vision. They can drop inscribed magnesium tablets into the blood filter to produce cursed ultra-violet light. This light is invisible but produces stabbing pain behind your eyes and makes your aqueous humour froth. Blind for 1d4 turns. Tags you with red-eye and bloody tears.
- **BONE BREAKER:** Usually only one will carry this. If so they carry little else. A warhammer with quilting wrapped around the head. The soft covering can be discarded quickly to produce an armour-

piercing weapon if needed. Otherwise it is used to carefully break the larger bones. 1d10 damage. Non-lethal if quilted.

- **QUILTED LEAD TRUNCHEONS:** Used to subdue and break the smaller bones. 1d4 non-lethal damage.

WEEPING KNIGHTS



Young men with no children, or shamed old men whose children fled. The Knights are one of the few Veins travellers to wear heavy armour. Chain and shields are standard. Radically strange in the black wilderness, some strong ones even wear Plate. They weep from armour-pressure on their knots. Crossbows and bolas. Fighting from a distance, using cover. They are slow. They have no 1d6 save.

Weeping Knights wear chain or plate armour and shields. They have:

- **BOLAS:** Entangle.
- **HARPOON BOWS:** 1d6 damage. The barbed quarrels of these metal crossbows carry ultra-thin fishing wire. They catch and entangle. (Extra 1d4 damage if pulled from skin.)
- **SMOKE BOMBS:** Obscures a 10' by 10' volume and lasts for 2d6 rounds.

USURERS



These poor pale slaves were caught. As legitimate Gordianite spawn they are allowed atonement for betrayal. They carry one great knot outside the gut. The upper intestine has been teased out through careful surgery. A loop is pulled outside the skin. Experts tie it unbreakably. No food can be digested until the knot creator slips his work. He will do this at the end of each watch if the Usurer has done well. A different Knotsman

ties the knot each day in patterns only they know. If they die, the Usurer must starve. Many high-ranking Knotsmen were once Usurers. They worked off their debt and became decent members of society. The Usurer's path is a good education. They will be unarmed but cannot let their tie-master die.

BEASTS

The pack beasts are animated corpses with broken back limbs. They crab-walk upside down, heads lolling blindly on slack necks. Arms and legs stretched out like tetanus victims.

WOMEN

Knotsman culture is exactly as horribly patriarchal as you probably assumed it was. Women are valuable property held behind closed doors in a state of almost-total ignorance and mild contempt. If the strictures of their culture were removed and they were freed they would build it up again exactly as it was. They are victims of their race and horrid exemplars of it.

LAMENTERS



- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 1
- **HIT POINTS:** 5
- **MOVE:** standard (flight)
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 facepeck or 1d4/1d4 claw and retreat
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d6x100
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 50
- **MORALE:** 7
- **SMELLS:** Oil and guano.
- **SOUNDS:** Disastrous.

MAN-BIG BIRDS WITH SANITY-baffling screams, full of useful muck. The Lamenters, or Oilbird, is usually troglodyte. It nests and raises young in caves but hunts outside in places accessed through volcanic cracks and dried-out lava tubes. They are usually no more than twenty minutes (by wing) from the surface. Locals have named them Lamenters as they think the souls of the dead take residence in the caves and that the birds are singing to them.

They are and they do.

The guano piles have Smaug-like depth and richness. If dragons cared about agriculture they would all be occupied. Soil-fixed nitrogen is as rare underground as everything else.

Hip-high forests of pale pigmentless plants die even as they grow in the rich but sunless soil. A big Lamenters nest hangs above a dangerous oasis of organic life. Throngs of insects, big and small, and all the things that feed on them. Kept safe from organised intelligence by the Lamenters' terrible cry. And the dead.

There are also deep-dwelling albino Oilbirds who never see the sun; these are thinner, more ragged, and often blind. They are descended from captured young, raised by underground civilisations in attempts to farm the useful oils they hold. Every so often a city dwelling race gets the idea of farming Lamenters. The chicks are so full of oil, you can kill one, squeeze it out, and use the unrefined bloody mess to fuel a lamp for days. Lumes are fine currency for all. This never works. Factors preventing the useful farming of Lamenters are:

1. They can fly and will leave.
2. They are man-sized and will peck your face off.
3. They will defend their young with their life.
4. They can navigate underground when they want to, using a stream of extremely high-pitched tongue clicks five octaves above middle-C.
5. The cacophonous screaming of Oilbirds en masse will drive any intelligent being insane.
6. They are surrounded by the invisible souls of the dead at all times.

(Knotsman agricultural rumours tell of Psihemoth treaties and farms of mad, skinless men covered with peck-marks, tending baffled white birds in dark Cyclopean dove-cotes. The resulting clamour keeps sane things away from the area, which can be handy for those on whom sanity has no hold. Deafened pack-apes toil in epic oil-caravans to the upper realms.)

Insanity is their chief defence. A flock of howling Oilbirds weave a nexus of high-frequency ultrasound that deafens, frightens, invades the mind and ultimately drives you mad.

But this is not its purpose. No sage has ever known what the birds sing to the dead. But, I will tell you now; it is a love song. They are crying to their lost children and lost loves. And they are heard. When you die in the presence of Lamenters the hideous music shifts. It's shaped like that to echo in the baffles outside life. When you cross over, from the other side, it is beautiful. Like dawn-song held in autumn air; You will probably want to stay there too, if you have nowhere else to go.

There is usually one visible Ghost for every 50 Lamenters. Ghosts are usually docile and rarely attack, though still cause fear. For every visible Ghost there are about three more invisible spirits. If the Lamenters fall utterly silent for any reason, all invisible spirits become violent poltergeists and all Ghosts attack.

Any psychic or magical attempts to contact the dead in a Lamenters nest will almost certainly succeed whether you want them to or not. Characters who go to zero hit points while under the Lamenters' song and then survive, no longer suffer insanity as a result and feel a little bit better about life in general. Not everything is awful all the time.

Survivors of the Oil-Birds' Song often become silent fungal shamans.

TREASURE

- One in five Lamenters pairs has living chicks. So roughly one for every ten birds. Each chick is the size of a human toddler and if killed and decapitated can furnish one week's worth of bloody oil (150 Lumes). The oil burns loudly, hisses, pops, smells like burnt black pudding and leaves black blood crusts on the lamp.
- An adult Lamenters can furnish two weeks' worth (300 Lumes). The bodies are the size of a man's but weigh half as much. Their wings drag on the ground when dead and make transport challenging.

MADNESS

PCs in a Lamenting Lair who can hear the crying of the birds must save against mental effects on exposure and again once per turn or suffer madness. The madness can only be cured by magic.

Lamenters cause every kind of madness, but if you don't have any other tables, roll on this one.

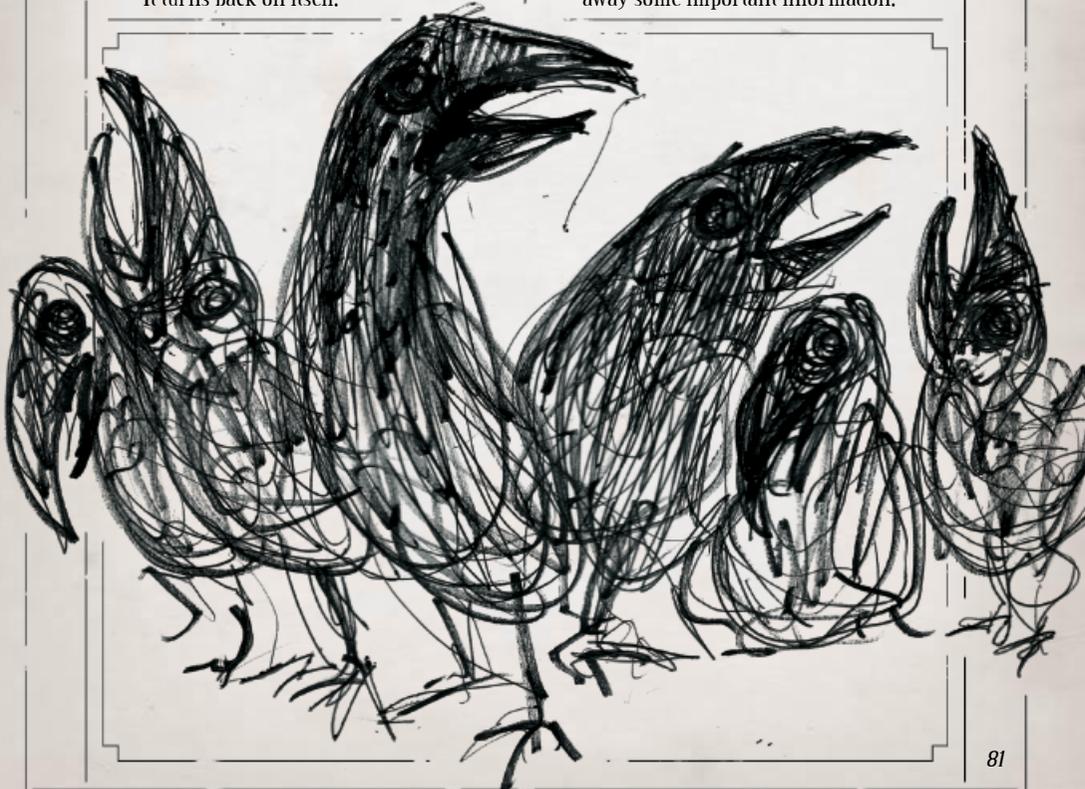
1. **EARTH ENGINE:** There is an engine of stone that hunts when you close your eyes. You run from its endless shadow. It is the size of a tectonic plate. It flexes and tries to crush you in its curls; you evade it as you are so small. It knows you and can find you when you wake. It is waiting outside the light to notice your movements.
2. **AUTOMATON FRIENDS:** Your friends are machines from a plane of pure reason. They wear human skins and fake the behaviour. But they get it wrong! The patterns are repeating; write them down on invisible skin scratches on your forearms that no-one else can read. Run your fingertips up and down the braille-wounds and you can trace the false behaviours. You are the only human one left. Find out what they want and why they are here. You cannot let them know that you know. They will kill you.
3. **VICTIM OF CHARM:** You don't really know these people. Your memories with them are disconnected and don't make sense. Someone has charmed you with magic. How much is false? Even yesterday's memories may be fake. Find the secret wizard and kill them and then you will be free. (It won't be the one that acts like a wizard. They are not that stupid.)
4. **MACHINE INSIDE YOU:** Someone has put a device inside you. Sometimes you can feel it under the skin but it moves around. Find it and cut it out.
5. **YOUR VEINS ARE A MAP:** The veins on your left inner forearm are a map of this part of the Veins. They will show you how to get where you need to go. The more veins you can see then the better the map. A tourniquet would be a good idea. (Referee's note - there is a 5% chance this is true.)
6. **GHOST LOVER:** The ghost of the person you love most is just over there across the guano field. You need to go and talk to them right now. They can't hear you. Shout their name. Shout it really loud. You have to make them hear you. They are lost. They need you. Don't abandon them here, not again. This is your chance to make things right. They are around here somewhere...
7. **DEAF PINS:** The screaming won't stop wherever you go. You need to find a pair of pins and put them in your ears. They have to be identical.
8. **CLIMB:** You are all going to die here. You need to leave the Veins right now. The Lamenters know the way out. If you follow them up far enough you can escape. You need to start right now. (If troglone Lamenters, there will actually be some kind of access far, far above. Though it may only be accessible via flight.)

9. SCRY EYE: There is a secret wizard in the heart of the earth. He has implanted a secret scrying eye in the centre of your forehead. He can see everything you do and hear everything you say. It's invisible and no-one else knows it is there. If he knows you've found it then it will detonate like a miniature sun. You must find a way to trick him. Or stab it out of your head in one blow.

10. THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH: The whole thing is a trick. Now you know why almost no-one escapes the Veins. The way out is down not up. You have to keep going down. Then you will find your way home. Any attempt to go back up just traps you further. Think about it. It turns back on itself.

11. ECHO SENSES: It's taken a while for you to adapt, but now you no longer need eyes. With a series of high pitched whistles and clicks you can now find your way in the dark like a bat.

12. VOICES IN WALLS: It must be some fluke of echoes or carrying rock but you can just hear a conversation in a nearby cave. That system may be separate from yours but the vibrations carry through. If you press your ear to the stone in special places the voices are quite clear. There are people there. They know you and they hate you. They are talking about all your secrets in the most disgusting way. They really regard you as vile. If you stay still and listen long enough they will give away some important information.



MANTIS SHRIMP

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 5
- **HIT POINTS:** 19
- **MOVE:** standard
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **STEALTH:** 4 in 6
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 750
- **MORALE:** 7
- **COMBAT:** First strike does 2d10 and grapples **THEN** 1d6 bite per round to grappled foe. Or 1d8 strike if first attack fails.
- **INVISIBLE FLESH:** When fighting the shrimp, you may deduct 1 from its armour for every extra lantern after the first. The lamps must be in different positions. The contrasting shadows can be used to triangulate its position. No more than 3 points of Armour may be deducted.

The shrimp hunts sighted prey and will often retreat in utterly dark conditions as its advantage is minimized.

- **SMELLS:** A fresh smell like recently-opened refrigerated meat.
- **SOUNDS:** The sound of water dripping in a dry cave. Slight multi-limbed skittering.

THE MANTIS SHRIMP LIKES KILLING.

This isn't just about food. It's the only shrimp anywhere near the top of a food chain and it kills for fun and pleasure when it can. If left alone with a kill, it will frenziedly dismember all the parts and scatter them. Then it will take time feasting on the trunk, then idly wander back and forth, tidying up the snipped-up parts and sorting them into piles. Bodies have been found with

extremities removed and scattered, or stored in delicate heaps as territory marks. A pile of wet fingers or nibbled ears on a prominent rock can mark its hunting ground.

The eyes of the Shrimp are remarkable. Opalescent trinocular lozenges, moving independently, rolling over each other like deaf hands speaking. This predatory amphibious leopard-sized ambush-shrimp usually draws no benefit from its invisible flesh. That's why it hunts the sighted.

The shrimp descends from tiny translucent ancestors that lost their pigment in the dark. Not just the skin, but the flesh inside went blank. Holding in your hands a bowl, full of water, with the shrimp inside, you shine a light. All you see is the misty shadow of the beast on the bowl bottom; the creature itself is nearly invisible. Its larger cousin uses the same transparent flesh to gain a brutal advantage against light-bearing prey. It can't be seen. Only the shadow on the cave wall, like the shadow of a glass on a dining table.

Sighted prey is rare underground, but there are just enough functioning eyeballs down here for the shrimp to carve out a small evolutionary niche as an ambush predator.

The creature moves through pools of stillness; its endlessly re-orientating three-pupil'd eyes are the only active parts when it pauses in the dark. It can range-find in 3D with either eye. It can see polarised light on multiple planes. It looks through rippling surface water, smoke, dust, shadow and flame as if they were flat glass. If there is light it can see. It can see some supernatural effects, Kirlian alignment auras, ghosts and the psychic tethers of astral wanderers. Some cultures try to keep them as pets in order to detect post-mortem espionage and invisible threats. It doesn't go well; the Mantis Shrimp is smart and difficult to tame.

Descriptions are few; the segmented shadow arching on the wall in the second before a

strike. Huge, sprung club-like claws. The eyes are visible and a half-apple lump behind them is the brain. Leading from that is the pale pink delicate string-work of its nervous system. A fairylight gossamer along its spine. If it has eaten recently the results will be visible inside but it only hunts when pale and hungry.

It can hunt on land but likes water and lairs there. It tracks the party underwater, following the glimmers of their lights caught in the surface flow. Waits, observes, follows them, then pounces on the weakest, dragging its catch into the black. The grasp of its gnathopods feel like being caught in a slipped machine. Like a steel ladder snapping shut on fingers as the climber falls. The shrimp bets everything on an invisible one-shot knockout or kill and will manoeuvre carefully onto an advantageous crook or crack. However, if it does kill on the first strike, it can sometimes go mad. It may rampage like a mink in a hen house, attacking everything it can find, racing from target to target without thought.

If followed underwater, the speed of its strikes can create cavitations in the flow. These void-bubbles implode in the microseconds after the blow. The shockwaves add an extra 1d6 damage to each attack. This is applied whether it hit or not.

TREASURE

- The attack limbs can make transparent fencing knives for dodgy duellers to hold in the off-hand. 500sp per retrieved limb. Ghost-Knife: 1d4 damage as per normal knife. Transparent. Expert armorer can create transparent glass handle.
- The body plates can be used to build invisible light body armour. 2,000sp for an almost-undamaged set of body segments. Mantis-Armour, effectively leather armour but transparent, like Perspex Kevlar. Very hard to notice unless you get close. Negates backstab and sneak attack Armour penalties.



MEANDERTHALS

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 3
- **HIT POINTS:** 15
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d4 flint knife or 1d6 rock hand axe
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 4d4
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 500
- **MORALE:** 9
- **SMELLS:** Almost human with the slightest hint of something else. A favourite food you've forgotten. The smell inside an empty house that shows a pet lived there once.
- **SOUNDS:** Fluting voices. Piping and soft. Sounding too high for the deep chests and thick necks.
- **COMBAT:** If they wish it to, each **TOUCH** can age you 1d4 years.

The **STONE WEAPON** blows do equal damage to hit points and Wisdom.

BITTEN THREAD. They grapple you, gnaw and rip out. Bits of your spirit come out in the bloody mouth. Take 1d4 damage to hit points (plus age 1d4 years for the touch). Also save versus Magic or you are now in 1d6x100 Experience Point debt. Your next Experience Points gained go to repairing the wound in your soul. Your Experience Points do not go down, the next 1d6x100 are lost.

ORGAN REVOLT. The Meanderthal stares at your torso, whistles, hoots and claps as if encouraging a workers' brawl. Your organs lose their sense of wholeness

and, believing themselves trapped in a cage of flesh, fight to leave. Roll all your Hit Dice. Ignore any Constitution bonuses or penalties (the total Hit Dice of your character, usually equal to your level). If the total is over your current hit points then take the difference as damage. If the amount of damage you take is higher than your highest-rolled individual Hit Die then an organ has burst out of you and escaped.

Thankfully this is almost always one of the less vital, truculent, working-class organs like the spleen or liver; you will not immediately die but you will need to catch that organ and shove it back up in yourself.

SPIRIT ANIMAL SONG. They whistle. Your spirit animal crawls up out of your throat. This is a small animal with your Wisdom as its Armour, Hit Dice equal to yours and hit points equal to its Hit Dice. So a Level 5 Specialist might vomit up a raven which counts as a 5 Hit Dice monster with 5hp.

Any harm or effect suffered by the animal is also suffered by you. If it dies, your soul is gone. Your existence now ends with your death. To divinely-aware agents or individuals you will look like a robot or a construct, an empty thing walking around. No more divine healing. Clerics lose all abilities*.

The Meanderthals will attempt to catch and eat your soul.

OXYGEN NOTE. A gabble-hum of tongue-clicks and bad noise. This only works on simple gases (they lack character), and only for a moment. A point of fire incarnates in the air, following the voice's address-point. Like an invisible baton. Fire swing fantasia note. If this happens inside you, you are now a briefly active involuntary flamethrower.

OUR NEANDERTHAL COUSINS HAD a quixotic unmeasurable intelligence. The fine division of nature into tools, words, cleanly cut ideas and clear mosaics of cause and effect had no interest for them.

If you actually showed them a mosaic they would wonder why you ignored the rock-grain and the weight. Like someone gluing Lego together. If you showed them a windmill they'd wonder why you were fucking with the currents. Show them a seed drill and they'd probably try to club you to death before it spread.

Neanderthals had no word for 'criminal'. These are the criminals they didn't have. Rare, but horribly dangerous and impossible to kill. The Science/Religion caste were practised super-shaman. High-level theoretical astral rambblers sang to the stars and the spaces between material things. They kept converse with the afterlife. The world of the dead was as far from them as America in the age of sail. When one turned bad, even if killed, they were coming back.

And when they turned bad they turned very very bad. Fascist/Animist soul-deep apocalyptics. Without political aims to fracture and encode the moral rot they went all the way wrong like man never has.

An answer was sought. The solution was harsh. Containment. The entire Neanderthal race combined to make themselves gradually extinct. The racial death-moan was encoded with harmonic traps. It held the souls and minds of its bright-eyed shame. It holds them now.

But there was one hidden flaw. Accident or scheme no-one knows, but gene-key fragments dodged the trap before it closed. Careful - or accidental - interbreeding with a rising subspecies left rags of dissolute code dancing in alien flesh. If you have any of this code inside you, then you are a gate and you can be used.

They are waiting now,
hidden deep deep away
from the sun.



Ghosting and wandering like memories of abuse. A shameful unbidden thought locked within the earth. Fire-gold eyes like Saxon torcs, and rust-red mammoth coloured hair. Processing endlessly in the permanent night beneath your feet, fleeing the attention of the rock before it remembers what they are, and recalls the wrong they did to it. They are looking for you.

Meanderthals can whistle your soul out of your animal heart and eat it like meat while you watch. They do not, and never will, understand words. Mathematics can banish them in shivering fear. Any mathematics. Music is theirs, and movement, and dreams, religion and anything that transcends. They fear machines. (Not truly fear. It's baffled rage-filled screaming incomprehension. It bothers them like surrealist art troubles a feverish child, but much much more.) When they speak it comes in song, images, forgotten thoughts. Their speech is like remembering old streets and the middle parts of tunes you used to love. The information appears inside you, not sharply, or clearly itself, but slowly revealed like optical tricks or forms closing in the mist.

Meanderthals are vague spirits to most other races. Copper ghosts. Think of translucent leaves pressed between a page, paling in an autumn red. Black letters visible through the golden veins.

Their step patterning is off. Like a stranger in a native crowd. They walk slow and with a short stride but cover distance nonetheless.

To you they may be real. They are a human problem and can touch us through the weave in our flesh. They want our help, our submission and to return, and they will offer what they have, and threaten what they can to make this so.*

Meanderthals will assault you and cut out your soul with flint-knapped blades. They will

sing your spirit animal up out of your mouth, capture it and torture it in front of you. Their touch can make your organs revolt against each other like angry snakes in a bag. A single whistle can make oxygen turn in self-contempt, forget its bonds and incandesce the air in your lungs. They can bite through your skin and into the hopes you never speak, pulling them out in gobbets of your flesh. This is only the half-perceived relic of their powers.

If they capture you they may hang you from your heels, bleed you, and distill the blood with strange herbs. Gather round the bowl above the fire and inhale the pale red fumes, tasting out the sacred fragments. If you have a high Wisdom they may try to breed with you to produce viable young. Though such children have no more than an average chance of turning out 'evil'.

TREASURE

- **FAT IDOLS OF STONE.**
- **PETALS:** They dissolve into dry petals from extinct species when they die. These tie the invisible micro-web of a lifetime's cause and effect into a soulform, a spiritual passport.

If you collect all the petals from one and then spread them over the recent grave of a named person, that person can go to the afterlife (not necessarily the good one, usual moral codes apply). Whoever and whatever they are, Zombie, Vampire, Animated Statue, whatever.

The petals can also be made into a soul-cloak that can effectively give you an extra soul so long as you wear it and the petals are not all jacked up like potpourri. Any spell cast against you must be cast twice to take effect.

* Everyone who is not of direct African descent (probably, according to the internet) has some Neanderthal DNA. How far you want to go with this depends if it makes sense in your game and how you feel about the creepy/weird sub-scientific racial theorising. Technically, as written, pure Africans should be immune to Meanderthal influence. If we ignore racial markers then assume standard humans have a 1 in 20 possibility of not being related.

MONDMILCH

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** Equals the Wisdom of wisest party member
- **HIT POINTS:** varies
- **MOVE:** Varies but will not leave its local area.
- **DAMAGE:** Begins with 1d10 attacks doing 1d20 damage each.
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** Wisdom of wisest party member x 1,000
- **MORALE:** -

LIVING LIQUID MOONLIGHT birthing nightmare mind-monsters. When we think about the moon we must imagine the ways it can terrify us. A certain kind of horror can only take place under moonlight. Darkness is an honest monster. Moonlight lies. It transforms. It seduces. It is beautiful.

The moon is a white face pressing against the darkened glass of a child's bedroom in the night. The moon is that seeming in the word that suggests something else, bulging like a hand against the walls of a tent. The moon is many other things, good and beautiful, but after its distillation in the earth only the evil is left.

The stars and moon water the sunless earth with arrowheads of silver light. Most is reflected, some is absorbed, some is lost.

The lost light seeps into the ground like rainfall, but infinitely less. With different physics. Ignoring hydrological law. The

Mondmilch descends in looping stuttering spirals like a coughing bird. The darkness slowly leaches away its lightness in the rock. It becomes heavy. Like white mercury. A single drop can take a thousand years to form, beading invisibly in some forgotten crypt.

It forms pools of pure moonlight miles underground. An anti-patronus pool surrounded by the skeletons of mad dead artists. The walls are painted silver and the colours lost. Moonlight tends to blue. The milk of the moon lives. And what would moonmilk want? Only the dark corrupted shadow of the wants of the moon itself. Art, transformation, mystery, metamorphosis.

The Mondmilch makes nightmare art from the echo of your own silent imaginings, the fears inferred by nightmares you recall. Imagine if your nightmare had a nightmare. A kind of anti-creation-equation that makes terror seem like a positive.

COMBAT

Mondmilch is motile and conscious. It moves like thick living mercury to surround you if it can. It kills you with monsters birthed from its pearly flows and the negative echo of your dread.

Take the Wisdom of the wisest PC. This is the Hit Dice value of the thing the Mondmilch makes to kill you. It can barely be described in words. Looking directly at it causes a save against Paralysis every time as your mind fails to process the negative information that shapes it. **FAILING THE SAVE SENDS YOU INTO A BRIEF FUGUE STATE; YOU WILL SPEND 1D4 ROUNDS TRYING TO MAKE SOME FORM OF ART RELATING TO THE MONDMILCH.** It cannot be hurt by weapons of any kind and is immune to magic. But it can be fought.



To fight the Mondmilch-beast the players must use their creative minds to reduce it to the level of mere nightmare. If the **WISEST PC** can describe their very deepest fear, **WHAT** it is, and **WHY** they fear it, they can force the Mondmilch into that shape. This shape can only attack in whatever way seems most appropriate for its nature and is vulnerable in ways you would expect from that particular creature, person or thing. If the Mondmilch becomes a giant snake then it must attack as a snake, by biting and constricting. Its d20 attacks are lost.

Every further fear described can hive off half the remaining Hit Dice of the creature being fought into an additional nightmare. After the first fear, all other PCs can participate in expressing their nightmares. Once per round each as a standard action.

This can continue every round, until the Mondmilch-thing is reduced to a crowd of individual 1 Hit Die horrors after which it will divide no more. PCs can fight each others' nightmares*.

It goes without saying that the light given off by the Mondmilch has all of the magical and spiritual qualities of moonlight, Lycanthropy-triggering, etc. It is almost the only place down here you will find them.

The Mondmilch will tolerate Artists slightly longer than most folk and they flock there for reasons only artists know. Many survive long enough to create remarkable works of nightmare-art before they are horribly brutally killed. The end result of this is dried blood painting the walls black in the moonlight, blue-white skeletons littering the floor and lost unfinished art.

TREASURE OF THE ARTISTS

- The Art is hard to look at, but is all genius-level and terrifying. There are paintings, very rapid sculptures in silvery clay, old musical instruments and written symphonies, silk strips of calligraphy-verse, perfect Glyphs written in the moonmilk and one stone sculpture made by insane moon golems.
- **MONDMILCH ARMOUR SCARRING** is often deliberately preserved by people trying to look cool. It works. Apart from the aesthetic effect, it proves you fought your nightmares and survived. The scars are fractal silver spirals interlocking, mildly hypnotic to look at. Plus 1d3 Charisma while wearing this armour, and you get a lot of interesting questions from artists. The armour is now worth ten times its original price as a work of art.
- **MONDMILCH LANTERNS** are used by some for their imperishable glow, but they are dangerous. Heavy and bound in iron, they are fishtank prisons with small drips of the angry milk of the moon trying to escape inside. No-one can look directly at the lantern, the only way to do so safely is to imagine your nightmare and force it into that shape. This can be dangerous and beneficial in various ways. The lantern itself is heavy enough to be a functional 1d6 mace.
- One litre of Mondmilch (fully bound) is worth 1,000sp.

* Apologies to the Referee that has to run this.

OLM

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured or as Plate when in water.
- **HIT DICE:** 2
- **HIT POINTS:** 8
- **MOVE:** standard (x2 in water)
- **DAMAGE:** as weapon
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 4d4
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 750
- **MORALE:** 7
- **AGELESS BRAVES:** The level of a group leader is 1 + 1d4. The d4 explodes sequentially, there is no upper limit.
- **SOUNDS:** They can learn and speak other languages. The only time you'll ever hear them is when they speak your tongue to trade, or the faint whistle-pitched mouth clicks of a war party as it emerges from the flow in the darkness.
- **SMELLS:** Olm make a point of never smelling of anything. Suggesting that they do is very insulting. They don't sweat, but have the ghost of a human scent.

THEIR FACES ARE BLANK, eyeless and beautifully shaped. Red vertical nose-slits shiver open when they leave the water. Almost-lipless mouths that gawp a centimetre, showing sharp pinteeth and indecent pink tongues. A beauty that is not spoken of by those who recognise it.

Their bodies weave endlessly like slow sine waves from a dreaming mind. They appear

to drift but they can feel movements in the air. Their faces and bodies thick with invisible hypersensitivity.

Virtually human, the species is only one million years old. Cave-salamander people. Long white bodies, seven feet tall and slender as a child. You could almost fit your hands around their waist. Elongated limbs with small child-like three fingered hands. Bright vibrant gill tufts like rose-head ruffs, Elizabethan punks. Slender tails.

As you swing your weapon towards them they drift aside. Like being impossibly dodged by an old old man. But if you can see, you have the advantage. When they slip into the water, it's like gifting them an extra sense. The whole wrap of stream around them becomes another organ of discovery.

They have the same intelligence and emotional complexity as humans, but shaped by a dark world of endless famine and a braille-wise underculture of ultra-sensory contemplation.

They know what sight is and they are not stupid. They think about it the same way you and I think about allen keys or fishknives. Clearly very useful in a highly limited set of circumstances, but a bitch to carry around with you and a poor use of resources.

WEAPONS

Olm weapons are almost all of bone and stone. Clubs, picks and shortswords are common. Slings are common, spears are rare.

Experienced warriors may carry Scissorfish knives or Mantis-Shrimp swords.

Chiefs and Shamans may carry ToRaptoise Shields, Alkalion Ruffs, Geggenshein Cloaks.

They may have named weapons made from the bones and teeth of ancient high-level heroes.

STRANGE REASONS FOR TRADE

1. Identifying something in the distance of an airy space that cannot be climbed.

2. Chief has a new status-signifier-item, is meeting with sighted peoples, needs to know if the 'colours' have dignity. But you have to describe it in terms he can understand.

3. Bad air is killing us. Follow us through the area, watch your 'lantern', tell us if the flame changes 'colour'.

4. Games for the feast: stand ten meters away, we change position, and again, now tell us which one of us is which. HOW DO YOU DO THAT?!!

5. Radical touch-bard needs new sense-words, is seriously angling for a classy new mate, needs to knock it out of the park at the great gathering, is willing to cross weird cultural boundaries to come up with stuff no-one has felt before.

6. Shaman saw colours after mushroom dream-flight, needs someone to talk him down, but no-one understands.

Olm will almost always trade for worked wood, especially spear shafts. They respect metal weapons for their

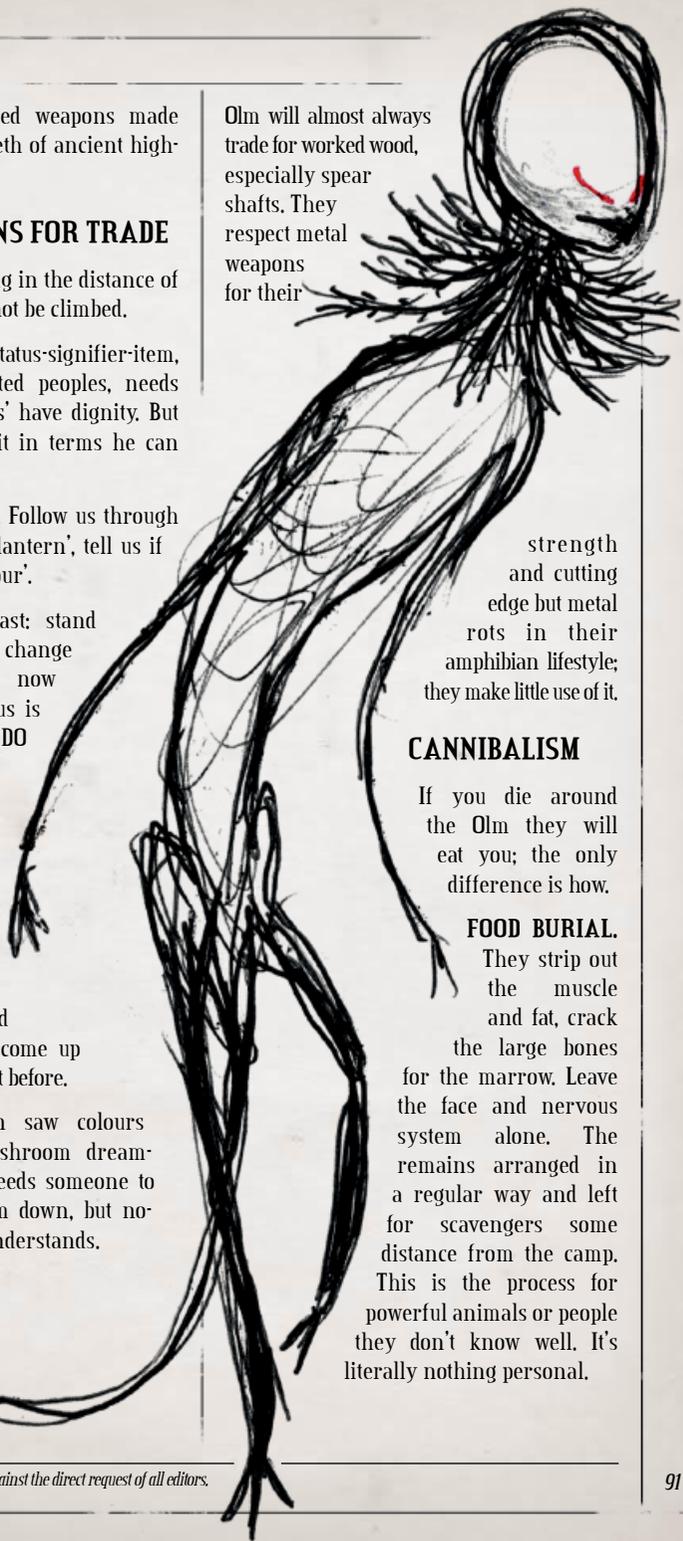
strength and cutting edge but metal rots in their amphibian lifestyle; they make little use of it.

CANNIBALISM

If you die around the Olm they will eat you; the only difference is how.

FOOD BURIAL.

They strip out the muscle and fat, crack the large bones for the marrow. Leave the face and nervous system alone. The remains arranged in a regular way and left for scavengers some distance from the camp. This is the process for powerful animals or people they don't know well. It's literally nothing personal.



EATEN WITH HATE. If the Olm dislike you they will make a mess of your remains. They will eat less of you in this case but will leave noticeable bite marks and chewed extremities to illustrate that not eating all of you was a choice and not necessity. This shows informal dislike for a troublesome or frustrating prey or an irritating person.

THE UNEATEN DEAD. If Olm hate you, if they regard you as disgusting or beyond contempt they will actually leave you intact. Single visible bites are left to illustrate they won the fight but chose to leave the meat. In extreme cases tools are left behind at significant loss to the tribe, an anti-trophy showing loathing.

EATEN WITH RESPECT. For friends or those potent in life. You are jointed and carefully laid out. Body-pattern left intact. You are shared between the party or the tribe. Stories are told of your life and death. Those eating hope to keep your qualities. Fingerbone memento-mori are retained in hopes the spirit follows. A warrior's bones are turned to named weapons. Remains are surrendered to the strongest rapids or a potent nearby beast.

EATEN AS A GOD. This is really the gold standard so far as being cannibalised goes. Your brains will be eaten by the upper caste, the body carefully shared by all. Parents will make sure their children get some of your potent flesh. Every part possible made into tools and weapons. Your skull, and even face, will be preserved in a hidden place known to the Olm. This takes your name from that point on. Your spirit will be there and Olm will seek you for advice and help. You are now a kind of petty god of the Olm. It could be worse.

Sometimes people don't understand that when an Olm is shouting that they will never eat you, that's really bad, and when they are promising to eat you as a god, it's almost kind-of good.

WAITING

Olm are always hungry and there is never enough. They can pause their metabolism and go for many years without food. Secret hidden streamways of black barely-moving water in flat pools hold the surplus population. Cold, still, almost-undulating bodies lie beneath the surface, face-up, swaying slowly in the flow. They can wait for decades, perhaps centuries down here and clan members swap out in shifts. This means Olm can live up to around 1000 years, with the majority of it spent 'waiting'.

Olm have a different understanding of history. Children can be raised by their great great grandparents, who remember talking to their great great grandparents. The result is that Olm culture remembers for a long time. Once you have a reputation with them it tends to stick. Civilised races talking to them don't quite get this and think the Olm are just being weird, dreamy and 'ethnic' because they don't know how time works. They aren't. When one says he met your hero-legend king, they mean they actually met them, or know someone who did. They have a disturbing tendency to refer to legendary figures like they come from down the road.

Because they have a lot of people on ice the Olm population is significantly bigger than anyone quite realises - about ten times as big. This explains why organised peoples have stopped trying to wipe them out. For normal threats Olm prefer to fight hit-and-run guerrilla style but if a war becomes too large they will wake up the family and come back with ten times the numbers and a terrifying depth of strategic knowledge. Of course, all these Olm will need to be fed before they sleep again.

The Olm population is actually increasing. Unlike every other Veins culture Olm do not practice population control. Slowly but surely they are running out of places to bank the sleepers. If they were all to wake at once, they would need an astonishing amount of protein to go back to sleep.

ONEIROCETACEAN

- **ARMOUR:** as Chain
- **HIT DICE:** 8
- **HIT POINTS:** 50
- **MOVE:** : 1/2 standard (floats)
- **DAMAGE:** 1/2 current hit points
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 8,000
- **MORALE:** 11
- **SOUNDS:** Wine glass rims rubbed by damp hands.
- **SMELLS:** Oil and thick iron blood.
- **APPEARANCE:** A white whale floating in mid air, surrounded by a swarm of nightmare ghosts.
- **COMBAT:** The whale can deliver a tail strike with damage equal to one half its hit points to anyone close. It attacks at -3 as it is unaware of your presence there.

Keep the Hit Dice of the whale when you roll it. There are this many minor nightmares that can attack the PC's.

These psychic ghosts are the fears of the whale and they can shift as rapidly as nightmares do.

Each PC will only have to deal with one per round. They can be beaten but not killed. Once beaten they regenerate at the rate of one per round until the whale is dead or awake. The scale of the fears exists as if the PC were the whale and their size is relative to the PC. They are effectively 1 Hit Die monsters doing 1d10 damage, Armour is 22 minus the PC's Wisdom and their attack bonus is equal to their hit points. They must be fought in a way contextual to their form.

POSSIBLE FORMS OF THE FEARS

1. Tentacles reach up out of the rock, pulling you down.
2. A saw-toothed mouth is closing around you.
3. The man-sized pupil of a rimless eye opens and stares, paralysing you with ancient terror.
4. A harpoon plunges out of the sky, pulls you, bleeding, upwards.
5. You are tangled in webs of rotting rope.
6. The steel ruin of an off-scale ancient ship snaps shut around you like a trap.
7. An attack swarm of bird-sized Charcaromen boil around you like a flock of rabid crows.
8. The floor beneath you is the back of a forgotten saurian beast; it turns to look at you. Its jaws open.
9. A dog-sized Psihemoth tries to assault your mind.
10. A veil of mucus is suffocating you, covering your mouth.
11. Sharks are surrounding you and eating your hands and the heels of your feet.
12. Your child is still and drifting down into the dark as Orca follow.

THE ECHOES FIND YOU FIRST, THEY ripple through the volume for a mile around. Spilling through the black apertures beyond the lanterns' reach. Sourceless and repeating in unfinished loops.



An ultra low-frequency wail like bass speakers in dissonance or a wind section tuning up under duress.

It's screaming. Something ancient and mighty is afraid. When the screams are deafening you are close.

An adult sperm whale the size of a bus. Albino (as are all whales of the nightmare sea). Horribly battered and wounded over time. Webs and maps of old escape scars. Stone harpoon tips covered over under callused wounds. Blood-red rust streaks where iron weapons died, tooth marks and bites from un-evolved Cambrian jaws, rope marks and circular squid scars the size of open arms. The wounds are old. The whale is bleeding from new wounds now. Rock scars and pricks of white calcite make unintended stone harpoons. These are the trackmarks of its passage from the sea.

The smell of oily whaleblood fills your head, running down its flanks from a thousand abrasions and cuts. You see it streak the pale skin and patter like rainfall.

The whale is held suspended in mid-air. It twists like a jacketed madman or hooked fish. Sometimes curving in a backwards 'S' then bending like an overdrawn bow. Its centre shudders, the point of a lead poker, held still in a pensioner's hand, shivering with the weight. Then swooping like a baton's tip. Cutting the curves of badly packed fireworks, spiral jags like fallen teacup shards.

Surrounding the whale and filling the available space is a pale vortex of anticipated deaths. These almost invisible imagined horrors wrestle with the whale. The primary nightmares occupy themselves with the screaming dreamer; others, the minor irregular fears, do not.

The whales of the nightmare sea survive by psychic power. Only this permits them

to live in the homes of Psihemoths, Kraken and Charcaromen. This whale is trapped in a nightmare it cannot escape. Age, madness, disease or simply despair have locked it in a state of sleep paralysis, unable to wake and surrounded by imagined threats. It has beached itself in the only way available in the shoreless sea of infinite night. A surge of wild telekinesis has thrown it directly up into the honeycomb of rock that makes the sky. An unconscious suicide leap.

The whale's path has left a broken passageway to that place and altered the local geography. The roofs of these caverns may have collapsed. Rivers may have been diverted. The cracked randomly-spiralling passageway may be inaccessible to normal folk. The entry to the sea may be a long way above open water.

You could try waking up the whale, but, trapped here so far from home, all it can do is slowly die. To kill it you must fight through its nightmares.

TREASURE

- Spermacefi Lumes! When rendered down you can get the Veins' most valuable oil. This white waxy substance is pure and burns well, with a clean bright light. There is a very faint moaning sound of doomed whales from the lamp as it burns but this is a relatively minor inconvenience.

Four barrels worth can be tapped straight from the whale's head. Each carries two weeks of light (340 Lumes).

- The whale will also provide a source of food, blood, bone and fat for every living thing around, including you. Be careful as predators will begin to approach as soon as the whale is dead.

PANIC ATTACK JACK

- **ARMOUR:** as Chain
- **HIT DICE:** 1
- **HIT POINTS:** 1d4 (explodes*)
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard when observed, x2 standard when unobserved
- **DAMAGE:** 1d3 or an entanglement attack
- **PICK AXE:** 50% chance of single climbing pick for 1d6 damage
- **CLIMB:** 6 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 250 per Hit Die
- **MORALE:** 12
- **SMELLS:** Dead bodies
- **SOUNDS:** Screams which induce magic. See below.

THE JACK IS THE BODY OF A caver of some sighted, civilised, humanoid race. They're dead, and often wrapped in ropes that broke their neck. The limbs are all splintered from falls, the spine is bent. The wet ropes trail behind them like a veil. The pack is still unopened on their back. The Rapture killed them and took the body for a spin. The skin is bleached. The flesh is puffed. They are screaming for their mother and praying now, locked forever in the seconds of their death. Trying to get out, it wants your help. If you hear the voice of the clambering gasping wailing thing then you must save against Rapture or suffer it yourself. If it touches you, you suffer Rapture.

Since the Jack itself is a relatively simple monster and the madness it induces is complex in effect, if a PC fails their save it might be easier to note down the Hit Points and Hit Dice of the Jack and turn to the Rapture rules on p.107.

The Hit Dice of the Rapture attack will be the same as that of the Jack.

Sometimes, if the Rapture is clever, and patient, and slow, it takes a team at once. If it can kill the lead in a difficult pitch, and drop the rest, or strand a team in total dark and douse their lights, it can madden and tangle a whole group together.

This is a terrible thing to face. The shattered bodies of a handful of climbers, drowned and tied in bundles by wet rope. A clump of broken backs and back-bent fingers walking on cracked limbs. A dozen begging voices. Wrapped up by equipment. Dead lights dragging and bouncing behind it. Crawling towards you like a pale massacre-pile.

TREASURE

- Wide variety of climbing gear.



PHANTOM HAND OF GARGAS



- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 5
- **HIT POINTS:** 23
- **MOVE:** Immobile
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,500
- **MORALE:** 11
- **ATTACK:** Grapple/Save versus Magic psychic signal.

INSECTS COULD SEE THEM SOMETIMES, and calcite Trilobite eyes. If you could close your pupil to a diamond's width and gate each photon like a rowdy guest, then you could see them too, with your eyes pressed against the rock.

The starlit empire of the endoliths. Deep and teeming blackness clasping pools of empty light, like single vacant windows in a

darkened row of homes. One bright un-curtained room in a sleep-black block of flats. Then, further; deeper; separate hanging pearls of light in silent unpeopled spaces, spread deeply and far on every axis' length.

And everywhere a teeming darkness girdled by the starlit pools. Their rookery-black maggot-writhing womb-warm slum. Frantic chokes and helices of unseen life. Inside every stone.

Gargas is forgotten now. His hand is feared. A silent phosphorescent hunter in the night. A stealer of men's souls. An eater of flesh. No-one remembers why he went inside the stone, or why his hand still calls. They only know the flesh-wasted bodies found, dead, coat-hanger hands still pressing the five finger'd stain. The sign of Gargas. Ruined bodies and the mocking empty hand.

He still controls grand engines of scale and blocks them from emerging into our world. He has been fighting for millions of years. Time has little meaning there. He is failing. He needs help.

THE HAND HAS THREE PRESENCES

First, a traveller may feel, in the darkness, before or during sleep, at the rear-guard of a group, in silences, distracted or alone, a hand. A familiar touch. The warm, firm invisible grasp of a leader or a friend. Drawing you towards the rock. Promising silently a vital last stand and epic defence, a chance to fight and die for all mankind. Save versus Magic or suffer a charm effect in which you allow yourself to be willingly led towards the rock.

SHOULD YOU RESIST

Second. A cloud of algal backs, shimmering and barely seen*. Man sized, hand shaped, with fingers and palm writhing in invisible breeze. It moans in a sourceless electrical blur like sand dunes collapsing en-masse in still air. The hand grasps for you and tries to force your own hand against the rock, its psychic signal of messiah-like heroic sacrifice singing in your head.

The hand must win three successive grapples in a row to pull you inside the stone.

If you fight back, the blows of your weapons leave turquoise green-white phosphorescent wakes. Slow contrails of Typhon's rainbow that show the handlike shape of the silvery swarming air. Oar-strokes dipping in a bioluminescent planktonite sea.

If Gargas takes you inside the rock, your body will rot away instantly. All people will find is your thousand-year corpse with its hand pressed against a slowly spreading negative stain on the rock. They will never know where you really are, or what happened. But should he fail:

Third. If you should defeat the hand of Gargas, its death throes are as thus: It stutters, freezes,

fingers spread. The floating algae fall in patters of grey dust. The radial electrical finger-bones glow like a cheap heater or a broken aerial. The hand broadcasts one final doomed transmission from the micro-sphere. It is incomprehensible to normal senses, but will be processed by the mind in one of the following eight ways.

VISIONS OF THE HAND

1. A shining tower of pure Illium** falling into a sea of boiling black copper.
2. Amoeboid crystalline revolutionaries rioting inside a foetal growth.
3. A sea of topaz, opal carnelian waves falling endlessly into a grey and clotted sky.
4. A star-sized wolf whose billion dying, endlessly renewing race of teeth are savaging a globe of blue and emerald lace, hanging in the night.
5. A blue city, seen from far away, falling to a siege of black swarming corpses whose distant living building-sized piles are their own engines.
6. A clock, cracked, that tells a time you cannot read, surrounded by weeping grey shapes. The dark shadow of a thing pressing from inside the whitened dial.
7. An insect-forest of infinite coloured jewel-case carapaced shells, burning in a slow, thick, off-white fire, that moves and runs like boiling cream.
8. The strange blue perfect corpses of a ruined race. A trillion of them sinking through a vast bright lake. The lake consumed by sand. Evaporating. The corpses blown to dust by desert winds.

* This line doesn't really make sense but I have fought to keep it in every version of the book out of twisted pride and rage against those who would rule me.

** Illium is one of the Homeric metals. Like the Noble gases but they always react violently.

PSYCHOMYCOSIS MEGASPORES

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 2
- **HIT POINTS:** 8
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **DAMAGE:** as weapon
- **CLIMB:** 3 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 3d6 zombie and 2d4 floating
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 75
- **MORALE:** 10
- **COMBAT:** Floaters attack with no bonus but save versus **Breath Weapon** or your head is engulfed and the head-flesh starts to dissolve; 1d6 damage per round.
- **SOUNDS:** Throat-choke pre-vomit grunts.
- **SMELLS:** Not much. Pungent yeasty, a factory for bad bread. Not like people, alive or dead.

THERE ARE PEOPLE THERE. THEY hang around milling vaguely like street kids then slope towards you like urban rougns crossing a busy road. Slowly loping with dropped shoulders, spore-head swinging gently side-to-side. There are things on their head. They look like grim disco-people. If witnesses knew what a disco was.

The spore is basketball sized and round. It flexes slightly, tremors invisibly and frighteningly quick as micro-spurts of desperate growth run through. Like a cell dividing in a scope.

It's greeny-glass blue with big thick wine-bottle-bottom lenses making up the

tessellated skin. The cell wall is transparent-opalescent-bioluminescent in the dark. Though why, no-one can tell. It eats the eyes in the skull so cannot see through those. They glow vaguely green.

The floating pre-spores hang around the cavern roof like lost balloons. They do not glow. They make no sound. You will not see them unless you are looking for them. As the walking spores attack they drop silently upon you.

The spore comes down over your head like a diving helmet. You drown in toxic psychotropic goo. It eats the flesh in your head. Muscles, skin, lips and eyes. Dissolves much of the meat in the brain, but leaves the neuronal web. It picks you up. And makes you walk.

Looking at the skull that tops the staggering form, observing through the green-blue glass, you see teeth. A halo of them bobbing in the thick dissolve. Sometimes a jaw-bone joins them. Sometimes it slips, like a splinter that's ejected from the flesh. You see it sticking out, half-bare and yet to fall away. The teeth surround the empty skull, dancing in the white neuronal smoke. Your nerve-connections' web released from flesh and spilling from the bone, but still hooked up. Expanding in the dusky oil.

The endlessly deflated unbreathing lungs quiver and flex. They don't need air but the body doesn't know and keeps sending spinal signals to breathe. The collapsed chest gives little heaves and the lower throat makes drowning sounds. Sometimes bubbles of air fishtank up out of the neck and flow around the floating skull. The bad air builds up in the sporetap before exhaling with the smell of death between a flexing bio-lens.

So it staggers towards you and beats you to death. Then drags your body to some secret place and dumps it with the rest. Then watches and watches and watches while you rot.

The adults don't seem very interesting? But, someone has found a use for this spore. It has a talent for tongues.

If you force a smaller spore over the head of a pet. Say a dog. Something low and controllable. It can be harnessed and trained. The spore will eat the flesh but the mix of unknown soup and neuronal-skeletal-web grows babel-skills. It can understand any spoken language. However, It cannot speak. It can only sign with the limbs the original animal had. And apes have proven too difficult to control.

A spore on an adult humanoid body is a violent killer, attacking everything it can, dragging the bodies to secret places.

Someone found a different way. They used a child. Around the age of eight is best. You'll need the parents' consent. Kill the child by drowning in the spore. As the creature eats, have the mother whisper and hold. She can persuade the spore not to eat the eyes. If the child truly loved its parents the resulting spore-slave-zombie-thing will carry vestigial loyalties in the spinal cord. It can hear and it can move. It will have eyes to read. And it can sign its reading. The spore-child understands any language.

Rulers trust the spore-translations. They are fast, reliable and utterly loyal. They can crack any cipher or code and even detect secret intent in text. They find hidden enemies this way, and all rulers in the Veins know hidden enemies are all around.

But.

The spore-child lies. It seeks the death of nations. Every word is tilted, imperceptibly wrong. The speaking of the spore breeds war. Slowly seeded and tended over time. The translations of the spore-child twist the minds inside the heads of state. They breed chaos, violence and fear. The aim is death.

All the spores want is an endless carrion-warren under the earth. A boundless maze

of rotting flesh where every living thing is muck. They are seeds after all. That's what a spore is, a seed-child. The fungus they were made to grow needs dying things to live. That's why the stupid 'adult' spores attack. That's why the child-spores exist. To become valuable. To be moved around. To be kept safe. To produce death. It is a long plan. But what is time to a Fungal mind?



PYROCLASTIC GHOULS

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 5
- **HIT POINTS:** 20
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6/1d6
- **CLIMB:** 4 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 4d6
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 200
- **MORALE:** 8
- **SOUNDS:** Like Jane Austen being read out by a rabid dog. Broken animal growls. Smell: Cold ash and old blood.
- **SMELLS:** Cold ash and old blood.
- **IMMUNE TO HEAT**
- **THE ASH SIGHT:** If they can roll 1d10 under your level they can track you.
- Pyroclastic Ghouls are almost always willing to **CONVERSE WITH A CIVILISED OPPONENT**. If they are not specifically hunting the PCs they should be considered an NPC encounter - a dangerous one, the Ghouls are still hungry.
- Though not alive by normal means the Ghouls are **NOT UNDEAD**, they **DO NOT** have a paralysing touch.

CANNIBAL ARISTOCRATS WITH souls and skins of ash. The first thing you notice is the absence of a crouch. They don't move like ghouls. Because they're not ashamed of anything they've been or done. They walk with confident languorous steps. Imagine passing through your home from room to room. It's Sunday. There's no

one to observe. There's nothing to collect or move. Your hand brushes the wall fingertip light, reasonless. That touch is how they walk. As if they own the wilderness of stone. They stroll.

Their faces are scraped with rock-mitten hands. Badly. They've no idea. Mirrorless they carve and cut with knaps of flint and broken blades. Each hewing its own motionless grey mask. Scraping ash-flakes into the shapes of eyes and mouths. Like a face drawn by a clumsy child. Eyeless, earless, noseless they scrape on. A memory of a noble profile lost in endless blind migrations through the heat-hammered dark. A fool's attempt at grace, a spastic refinement. This is what they think they looked like once.

Blinded by fire, the Ghouls have other senses now, unknown to living things. They hunt well and need no light to do it.

The Ash has knowledge of its own. A cold sense that knows silence, fallen things, decaying cold remains and everything forgotten or destroyed. They feel the things around them that are gone. In this grey dream, people are shadows in a flowing world of coldness and death; we live but carry silence with us. We show as absences in the eternal stream, bubbles in the surge. To them you are the Ghoul, a shadow rimmed with light. All the living beings are faceless yapping anti-things.

(In human terms, the more vital, the more growing and the less death you carry with you, the harder you are to trace. Lower level, younger and less murderous PCs are harder to perceive and track. They trace well through dead spaces, deserts, ruins, graveyards and caves.)

But touch, tactility, remains. The one remaining aspect of mankind. They feel like

people do. But locked and grating through endlessly flaking armour of rock.

The mouths still work. Wet and red inside, half open. The elegant remnants of discursive speech, fading into screams in times of stress. They have a remarkable facility for small talk.

The culture that produced the Ghouls is gone. Imagine Rome, or Babylon, the English in India, the Caliphs in Cadiz. Somewhere with things ripe enough to burst. Pricks, essentially. The mountain took them all. A noble-throated redoubt consumed by ash. The people were eaten.

(If you keep throwing peasants to an angry volcano deity it's only going to end one of two ways and neither are great.)

It might be that the things that ate them stole. The memories that they have may not be theirs. Elemental carrionites feasting on the ashy meat of a decadent race. Waking up the flesh inside. Riding on the memories that they found. Dancing distant chimes of murder and control.

But maybe it is them, the original bastards, burnt and preserved in the breath of the volcano. Waking up a long time late, hungry and malformed, immune to heat. They peregrinate inverted down below. Strolling upside-down beneath the crust. Immune to magma. Buoyant enough to treat the continental root as floor. Strolling and waiting for an opening. They swim-crawl up and breach the lava-tubes. Off and out, hunting for meat.

They are utterly refined, at least with the fractured memory of refinement.

Manners always. They can be spoken to and negotiated with. But they do not work. Arrangements can be made. They are not paid. They do not trade. A tacit trust can be arranged. The treasures they're not paid with are of stone. Only sculptures work, the craft of perfect hands and inspired minds. If these are provided at regular intervals the Ghouls can be persuaded to stay in one place and pursue regular prey.

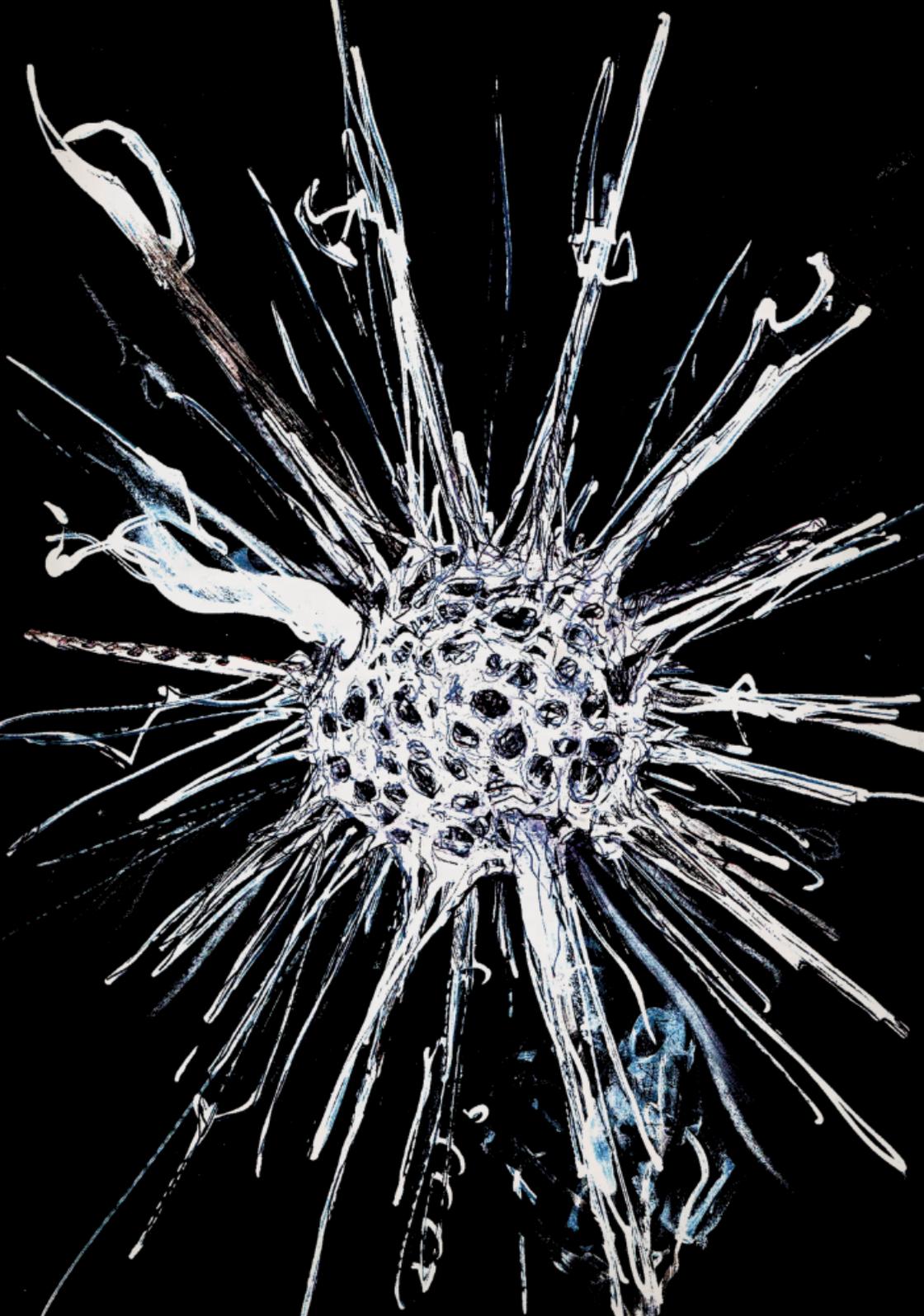
The lair of the s is filthy. Blood and old bone carpets the floor. Silk hangs in rotting ruins. Occasional treasures lie bent on the floor. The sculptures they demand are scratched. The ash-mitten hands run up and down the perfect marble faces till they dull. Pressing and searching for a tactile memory long since lost.

Anyone entering this room and seeing how they live will be assaulted and killed.



TREASURE

- Not much, they sometimes wear expensive bloodstained rags provided by their latest friend, red ruined silk. Recent jewels from murdered prey. Necklaces and bands melt away as they walk beneath the earth leaving **PLUG-RIM STAINS OF MELTED GOLD.**



RADIOLARIAN

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 1d20
- **HIT POINTS:** varies
- **MOVE:** 2x standard
- **DAMAGE:** 2d8 + Countermeasures
- **CLIMB:** 6 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 2,000
- **MORALE:** 10
- **SMELLS:** Faint, like a clean hospital.
- **SOUNDS:** A little like glass gently falling.
- **COMBAT:** Bladelike extensions stab and crush.

Tactically it is stupid but never fails the same way twice; it rapidly becomes more tactically intelligent. Intelligence starts at 5, gains one point of Intelligence per round of continuous combat.

ADAPTIVE SAVE: The Radiolarian gets a 5+ save on 1d6 against each method of attack. This save gets one better each time that kind attack is used, down to a minimum of 2+.

To count as different an attack must be either mechanically different or significantly tactically different or genuinely surprising to the Referee.

COUNTERMEASURES: In addition, after each round of combat the Radiolarian can discern a weakness or vulnerability of the thing attacking it and generate a specific countermeasure. These can be of almost

any kind; the Radiolarian has survived millions of years and seen everything. Countermeasures may include rays, gases, emissions, extensions. In particular: armour piercing spikes, anti-magic ray, melancholia-bomb, blind flares, deaf wails, nudity ray. Can use almost any power from almost any monster. Dragon Breath, Evil Eye rays, have at it.

These countermeasures will be racially and culturally specific rather than tactically derived. It is not inventing ways to fight, it is remembering fighting things like you.

The only rules of countermeasures are:

- That they must become more and more insanely specific as the fight goes on.
- **ONE** per round, no more.
- **NO** repetitions during combat.

THESE WERE OLD WHEN LIFE was young and bear no sign of age. Each seems quite new and freshly made. You imagine polishing hands wringing each gleam from the liquid shard-like spikes, then wandering off, just as you arrive, to leave it shining whitely in the butter-yellow light.

The shapes a jeweller's drunken rave, a Fabergé masturbatory fantasy. Endlessly symmetrical disco-ball-bright pinpoints and prism'd innards. The lantern light refracts and paints weird spectra on the sallow rock. The Radiolarian is symmetrical in three dimensions and **CANNOT BE ATTACKED BY SURPRISE.**

Not all the Radiolaria were fossilised in precambrian ooze, or lent their genes to species yet to be. Some survived, exceeding their design. An unpredicted maladaptation cracked their genes and killed them as a breed. But kept them as one thing. The humming engine of evolution, unchained from sex, went mad inside the cell. These are not the children of the creatures of old. They are the very thing. The same anonymous cell that floated in the world's first sea, but still alive, and huge.

The liquid crystal has a hippo's mass, but packed with mind. It needs the size to store its plans. Neither predator nor prey, the Radiolarian has two to three million years of survival-oriented molecular memory held in recombinant chains. It cannot think - they have no brain as you would understand - but acts, reacts, adapts, recalls. The surviving Mega-larians have faced almost every threat that life can face, and many lost to time. They know it all.

Sometimes though, they need to eat.

They move like leaves, dancing down a street in wind. Corrugated edges kissing at the ground. Or spooky children racing in a twilight park. They're light, or seem so till they hit, pinning you bloody on the rock. The liquid spikes curl round like supple knives. They drink your blood. You watch the red mist briefly in the gem. Then gone, like match-smoke patterns in an opened room. They need your GATTACA spirals to wipe clean, and re-record with threats they've yet to face.

Careful observation of a Radiolarian, before or during combat, can give you clues to the kind of threats present in the local volume. A beast begrimed with ice might have fought the Ignimbrite Mites, a creature slathering acid sweats may have duelled the Alkalion.

Radiolaria will adapt to any blow, spell or tactic, no matter what it is, the moment after it is used - or, if the players are being boring, the moment before. Interesting players may survive. Dull ones never will. Plans don't count. The Radiolarian already has all the plans. Innovation counts.

THE RAPTURE

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** Number of days since its last attack
- **HIT POINTS:** varies
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** Die size closest to its Hit Dice

IT WILL FIND YOU ON THE LIP OF A rappel. Or as you stare down nightmare falls. It will find you alone. The perfect moment, just as someone disappears from sight, the rope that holds them running through your hands. Or belly crawling, sandwiched between rock. Inching your way along with one arm stretched ahead, the other tilted hand pinned at your hip. No room to lie square-set. Your crown grates on the roof, the floor nudges your chin. You tease your candle on with fingertips. Or diving through a sump, invisible in blackness. At first you feel a nagging in your head. Like smokers feel when smokeless for a week. An almost unconscious uncurling, something twitching back behind their ears.

Then you will forget things. You look at your hands. You look at the rope. You don't know how to tie the knots. Your fingers slow like old folks on Apple Macs. Your pulse ticks visibly in your neck. You do not know how to rappel. You have forgotten how to escape. You will die here. You know you will die here. Your fingers clench the rope. You don't know to let go. You scream but no-one comes. The Rapture has found you by a waterfall or in a tunnel of wind. Or underwater. No-one can hear you. No-one can help you. You scream your mother's name. You talk aloud. You beg your god for help. You have to get out. You shouldn't be here. You have to escape. You will die here. You will die. You need to get out.

It may be a kind of living madness, awake and aware, hunting you invisibly through the darkness. Hovering, waiting for a crack. It may be your own hidden desire to die exploding suddenly from a repressed subconscious. It may be some deep engine of your surface biology revolting against its presence in a place it knows it was never meant to be. It may simply be cold compressed fear of an alien world that does not want you to survive.

For Referees, it's best to think of the Rapture as a kind of invisible monster that continually follows the PCs, drifting and waiting for its time to strike.

WHEN IT ATTACKS

It's up to you exactly when the Rapture starts following the PCs. It could follow them from the point they enter the Veins, or from one of the trigger points below.

When a PC:

- Finds themselves lost and alone.
- Is trapped in a squeeze (actually a good time as its ability to harm you is lessened).
- Witnesses a friend's death.
- Loses any capacity to make light and is engulfed in the dark.
- Commits an act of same-species cannibalism.
- Has things go unusually and extremely wrong in a way that surprises even the Referee.
- Is touched by a Panic Attack Jack

It begins at 1 Hit Die and gains 1 Hit Die each day until it attacks. After an attack it re-sets to zero. It never attacks on the same day twice. On the day after an attack it attacks at 1 Hit Die, the next at 2 Hit Dice, and so on.

FORM OF THE RAPTURE

IT APPEARS AS...	IN...
1 Parent(s)	Childhood home
2 Your God	In the dying gleam of the sun at the core of the Vampire Court
3 Mirror Self	Inside a vast Engine of Earth
4 A Paladin of Living Dark	A sinkhole sucking you down
5 A dead friend	Empty Funginid city
6 The one you love most	Lair of the AntiPhoenix (AntiPhoenix absent)
7 A foe you recently killed	Halls of dripping pearl, shaped like half-closed eyes.
8 A powerful foe who remains	Across the surface of an enormous eye
9 An innocent victim of yours	Hanging from a chain above a great abyss
10 A Substratal	On a capsized ship sinking into a black sea as lights gather beneath the surface

If the Rapture has a choice of multiple targets in the same situation, it will only ever attack one, always the weakest, the one with fewer hit points at the moment of attack.

In addition, players may choose to encounter the Rapture in the following ways.

- If a random encounter is rolled during a journey, any PC may say "I choose Rapture". The scene opens in the same location with the choosing character suffering attack. The Referee must re-roll the encounter die. They may keep the result secret.
- A player who has been knocked unconscious (usually Ohp) may likewise declare "I choose Rapture". If they win the contest inside their mind, they sit back up with 1hp. If the Rapture wins, it sits up in their body, with 1hp.

FIGHTING THE RAPTURE

The Rapture invades the mind of its prey, seeking to take control of their body and force them to suicide. A battle takes place inside the mind of the victim. It occurs just like an encounter, in combat rounds.

The Rapture can appear as anything and in almost any environment, although the Referee

may wish to roll 2d10 on the table above. When fighting the Rapture:

- The PC has their current hit points as normal.
- Their Wisdom is their Armour in this fight.
- Their Intelligence is treated as if it were Strength and decides any bonus to hit or damage.
- They have whatever weapon they held last.

Time in the outside world also passes in combat rounds. The PC's fellow adventurers cannot fight for them but can protect or restrain their body. (At the Referee's discretion, certain spells or items may allow PCs to join and assist their friend inside their nightmare vision.)

The PC is frozen during the encounter. Whoever does damage in a round of combat can do one of the following actions with the PC's body.

- Move one limb.
- Move the fingers of one hand.
- Make a sound or single syllable word.
- Move one space back or forth along this chain:

Standing / Kneeling / Recovery Position / Foetal

If either the player or Rapture wish to perform any kind of complex action, (i.e. pulling up an friend trapped on the end of a rope) they must break it into a series of smaller steps and win continuous rounds of combat within the mind. To cry "help" the PC must win at least one round.

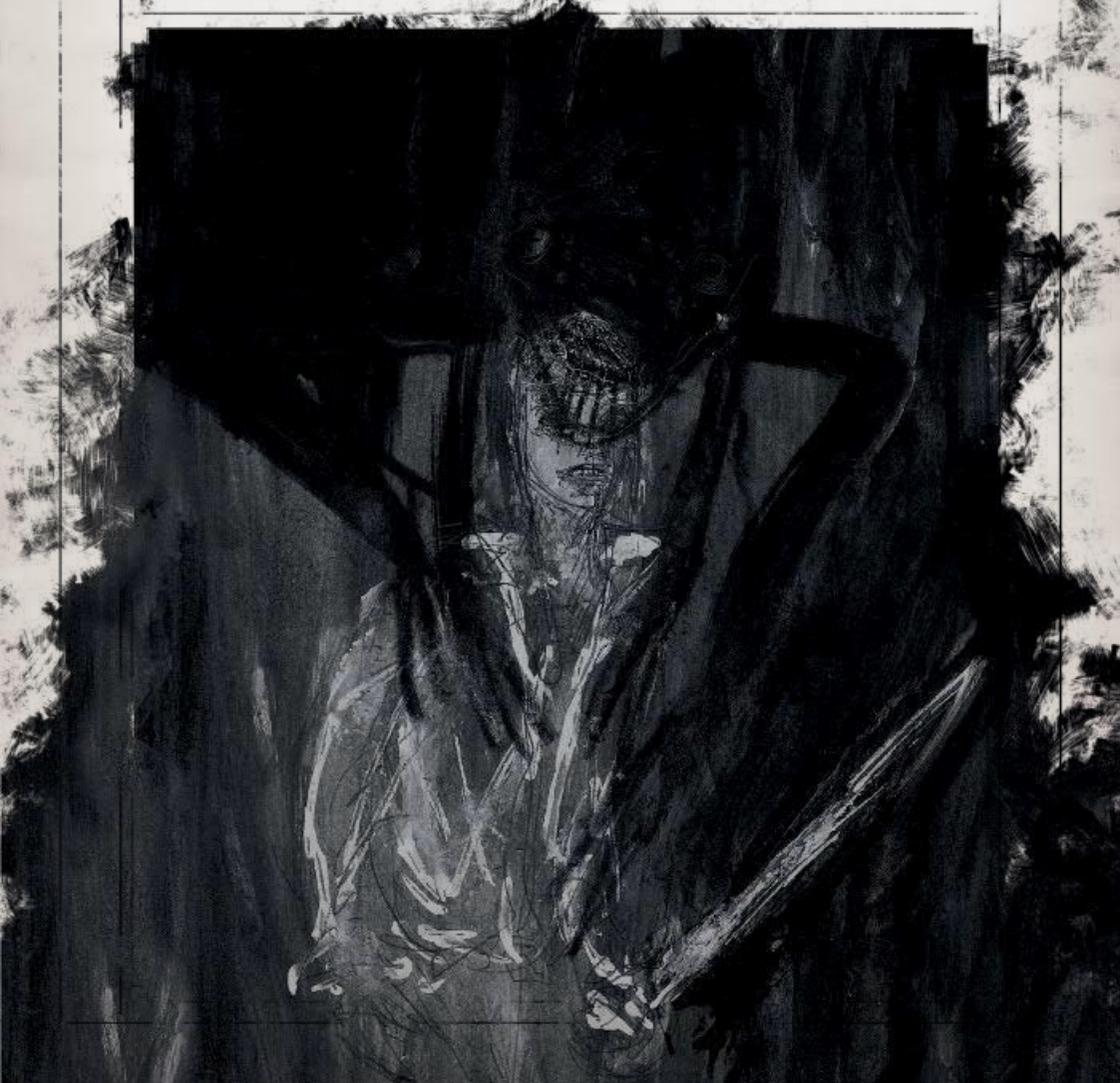
If the PC survives the attack they will always be changed by the experience. They must roll on The Effects Table (see p.326).

If the PC wins, they get their body back.

If the Rapture wins, it gets full control of the PC for rounds equal to its Hit Dice.

The Rapture will usually be either screaming or laughing or both. It may attempt suicide by jumping, homicide of friends or the destruction of equipment or supplies. If it takes the body of a Magic-User or Cleric and has the ability, it may self-curse. It will do whatever it can to hurt the party, though its usual first action is to jump screaming from as high a place as it can reach.

If the Rapture fails to kill someone ten times in a row, it will usually leave them alone after that.



SCISSORFISH

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** Swarm. Attacks at +1 for every 5 fish
- **HIT POINTS:** 3d20
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard on land and 2x standard in water
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6+4
- **CLIMB:** 3 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** same as hit points
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 15 per fish
- **MORALE:** 10
- **SMELLS:** Blood, sometimes.
- **SMELLS:** Soft ridiculous plops. Chewing, buzzing, little things moving..

EACH FISH IS A LITTLE LARGER than hand-sized, longer and flatter than surface Piranha. Pennant-shaped, the heads towards the side that flags the pole. The fins are stiff; iridescent rainbows with kite-ribs and jagged ends. Transparent antifreeze blood and zero-pigment flesh makes them almost impossible to see. You can see the fin-wings though. The teeth. The eyes. Silver-flashing chaff-gleams rolling in translucent skulls. Inside: the gobs of flesh they've snipped from you, your blood gram-staining their organs as it clouds.

They fly. Over water in the manner of flying fish. Skipping stones racing on a black flat. Migrating over water very fast. So. The really bad part is when they hop out after you.

Fins function as stiff pseudopods on land. They move around like little stilt-men in country fairs. First a soft ridiculous "plop" as each one leaves the stream. Then another and another, then a surge as the individual sounds blur.

Then a hundred thumb-sized coffee grinders grinding, the sound inside a malfunctioning pocket-watch as gears spin and mash. You turn and shine your lantern at the ground and see it covered with these pale, twitching, hopping fish. Tapping forward awkwardly on their fintips. Their jaws churning. Each individual looks daft. Some are wounded and have missing bitten-out eyes. They move fast when they want to. A barrel of ping-pong balls racing downhill. A white-offwhite rainbowlegged blur.

They climb. Not well, but hopping and skittering, banging against the stone like mad window-flies. Invisible dermal hooks on each fin give awkward holds. They climb on you. Leaping and scratching up armour to hit the skin.

They lack stamina on land and cannot follow very far, or climb too fast or high. Leaping distance is three to five feet. If they are away from water for a turn or more they will begin to die. When starving, they won't notice the danger. ScissorFish prefer to attack where movement is constricted. A series of slight, low islands in a river. Leaping out of a waterfall as you cross. Climbing down after you as you attempt an emergency rappel.

Any time you bleed in water there is a 5% chance of ScissorFish.

They are delicious though. So that's your supply problem solved. Olm hate them. Most travellers will trade for ScissorFish food. The teeth are utterly sharp. If you can knock enough out (ten or more fish) they can make a very very sharp and brutal knife.

SCISSORFISH KNIFE

1d4 damage; if this a 4, roll a second d4 and add it to indicate the ripping flesh as the knife is pulled out.



SILICHOMINIDS

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 7
- **HIT POINTS:** 35
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **CLIMB:** They cannot climb but generally melt their own stairs from the rock.
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d4
- **BLIND:** Yes, Silichominids can see in alien spectra but they do not need light sources and their slowness makes them effectively blind for initiative purposes.
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 1,500
- **MORALE:** 6
- **ATTACKS:** 1d4 attacks of 1d6 damage each as they bring their odd limbs into play.

HEAT EMISSION: 1d4 burning damage for those within 1' of their iron hull.

MAGNETIC SEIZURE LANGUAGE: Save versus Poison on hearing them or spasm with your arms raised for one round.

- **SMELLS:** Industrial and alien, tin burning, roasting rust weeping high density oil, the smell of plastic landfills.
- **SOUNDS:** If a furnace knew what pain was and could scream its voice would be like theirs. Their voices are remarkable and frightening electromagnetic plumes of energy and heat. This atom-reactor hate-wail has no bearing on their emotional state. They always sound like that. Like an angry old-testament god incarnating as a pillar of flame.

CITY-SIZED FRAGMENTS OF subducted crust orbit slowly in the planet's heart, dissolving in the magma-bath and falling to the core. In their slow and spindling fall these rock-bergs have cradled Silicon life.

Only in the deepest heat and force does silicon free its bonds and approach the delicate complexity of known organic forms. The flesh of the Silichominids is woven from beryllium and aluminium, round heat-resistant Mica bones. They glow aquamarine-heliodor. The only time you will encounter them is in the iron-and-diamond foot-thick heat suits they wear to enter outer space. Or to us, the Veins.

The exo-suits loom and lean impossibly. Like Rodin's Thinker, counterweighted tottering gun-profile shells, gleaming like polished coal, riddled with unlikely crystal twists. Diamond jags that curve and curl. The furnace-portal viewing face holds flickering sea-green reflected from the churning quick.

The exo-suit manipulators must hold some kind of feather-limb like silver curls. The Grabber on each tip is funnelish, like a rolled up tongue, showing as a cone; it flips and reverses topographically. Spiralling tentacle feather-blades move like strips of snap-plastic shocking into shape

The limbs grow out like semi-random leaves. They cluster at the foot, pointing down like movable roots. Others scatter on the underbody facing towards the sensory gap. They are sparse, none are near the face. It makes no sense. The heavy parts must circulate inside the suit, they never fall.

They melt rock like a man breathing on a cold window screen; shape it the same way in child-fingered condensation lines. It takes them about an hour to do this but they will

If something breaches the suit's brunel-style mega-corsetry:- disaster. The coal-armature pod puckers like kevlar under high velocity rounds. The death is like a match flaring and failing to light up, or paper scraps that spiral from a burning home, a wound of light, a sob of magnetising flame. The dying body of the Silichominid bombursts out in plasma form, cools to a kind of foetal-magma-corpse, melts

happily wander around melting out the walls of caves and boiling crags into easily navigable steps for their tottering feet.

The silicon ones are the only utterly innocent walkers of the deeper reach because they know nothing. Not about caves, organic life, air or space. Imagine sheltered first-world tourists wandering around a refugee camp. They are friendly, unaware and almost impervious to harm. They are immune to almost all baryonic magics*. They are not even chemically alive in terms we understand so even *Power Word Kill* doesn't work.

* Those from the baryonic universe.

through everything in range, poisons everything else with unbelievable toxins that can never be studied as they lose their atomic regularity even as they kill, and, slithering like a solar-bright puddle-snake, sinks into the crust. Which will take about three minutes. Everyone nearby will be dead.

ON DEATH

Radius 2d4x10'. 5d6 fire damage, 5d6 radiation damage, 5d6 toxic damage, 1d6 brain damage, electromagnetic confusion and random magnetism, melts through floor, area now unstable.

They regard you as exciting and thrillingly authentic. Their attempts to communicate this may kill you.

TREASURES

High density technology looks like warped metallic fruit, clearly solid but disturbingly liquid in its quantum state, flesh-meltingly hot at all times. Arranged in diamond/graphite bandoleers, none know what they do.

ITEM 1: Looks like a necrotic pineapple. Shoots half a litre of molten gold under pressure for 20' when manipulated. (local currency)

ITEM 2: Psychedelic Grapes. Burst into ultra-toxic radioactive sludge when cut. (home currency)

ITEM 3: Ghost of a banana. Doesn't seem to do anything? (passport)

ITEM 4: Eggplant. Screams in brain-scrambling emissions when waved in delicate figure-eights. (mobile phone)

ITEM 5: Half a lettuce. Wants to open like a flower. Closes when hit on the stalk. (recorder of events)

ITEM 6: Endlessly flaking onion of paper-thin lead. (map)

ITEM 7: Aluminium Ginger Root maybe? (inaccurate guide)

QUESTIONS OF THE SILICHOMINIDS

(Each phrase in bold caps is a best-guess translation of a single 'word' of incomprehensible and terrifying gaseous/plasma coronal-language-ejections causing inadvertent seizures in nearby pensioners and animals.)

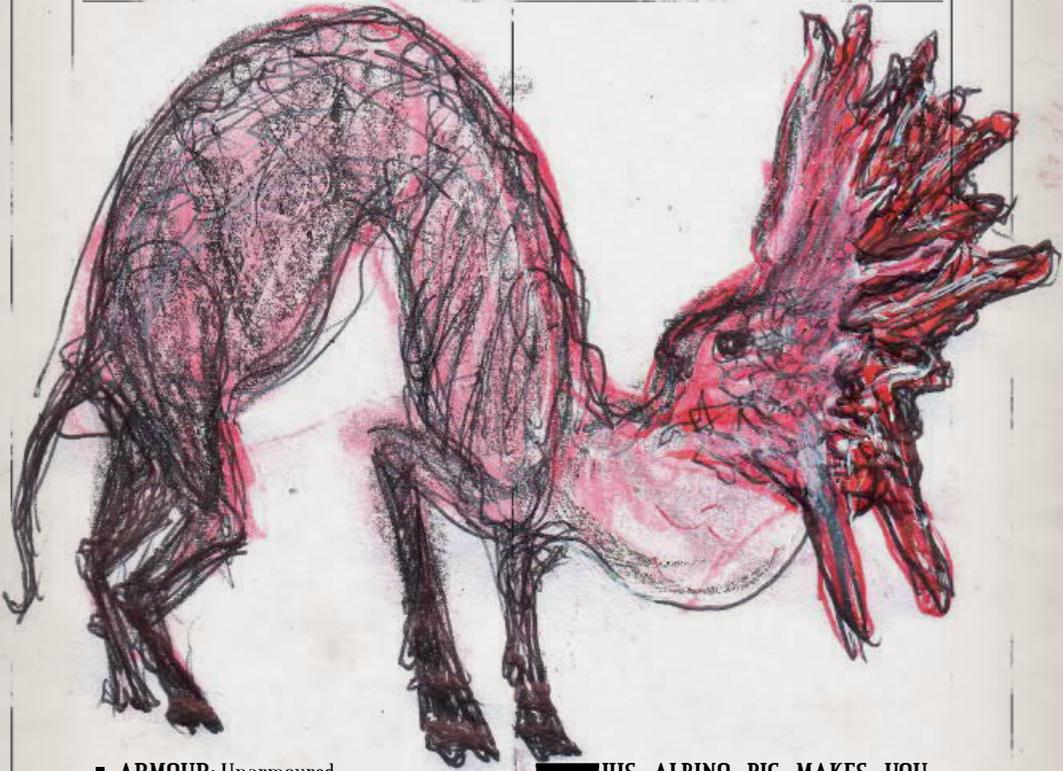
1. Can I taste your 'air'? (No.)
2. We love this 'metal' thing you do. Can you wrap it in **SOLAR-END-STAGE HYPERDENSE MATERIALS FROM BEYOND THE PERIODIC TABLE'S EDGE** so we can take it home? (No.)
3. Do you know where they have the weird drugs? (Yes.)
4. Do you think I could maybe *move* here? (No.)
5. I'm thinking of writing a **VORTEX OF SELENIUM IN LIQUID FORM*** about my travels, would you read this for me? (No. Please. Get away from me my skin is cracking.)
6. It's so sad about the (roll 1d4)...
 1. **FACT THAT YOU WILL DIE IN UNDER A HUNDRED REVOLUTIONS.**
 2. *animals* though isn't it?
 3. music disappearing like **FALLING CONTINENTAL SHELF-HOMES DRIFTING TO THE PLANET'S IRON CORE** instead of echoing endlessly like **THE IMPACT OF THE DINOSAUR-KILLING-COMET THAT STILL SHOWS UP AS BACKGROUND MELODY AS IT VIBRATES STRANGELY THROUGH THE MAGMATIC FLOWS A MILLION YEARS LATER.** *But I suppose that makes it really mean something you know?*
 4. *ethnic troubles** yeah?*

* Book

** They are locked in a billion-year war with primordial frost-giant descendants driven out of Asgard, for control of crust-bergs in hyper-dimensional magma-space. War has killed millions. Will never end. They do not regard this as the same thing as you stabbing an Ælf-Adal over religion***.

*** (The Ælf-Adal's religion involves killing you because you are subhuman.)

SONIC PIGS!



- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 1
- **HIT POINTS:** 5
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d4
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 5d8
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 25
- **MORALE:** 5
- **SMELLS:** Pigs.
- **SOUNDS:** Notable and extreme, see below.

THIS ALBINO PIG MAKES YOU shit yourself and weep. The Sonic Pig resembles its photonic sire extended in height if not in mass. Hump-backed, long legged, the spinal-curve could brush your chin. Soft thick bristles, smooth like downy hair. They tread carefully, precisely, and bound like goats. Their centre of gravity never escapes or leans beyond the encompassing limbs - oddly sober, for a pig. The pigs smell clean, animal but dry, and free of dirt.

Its face turns back on itself into a wet red starburst fleshflower as wide as the animal itself. An exploded nose of wet tender meat, frilled and shivering, an animate liverish radar dish. Rimmed with staggered rags of flesh that look and feel like children's fingers skinned. It's horrible and fascinating and if you had

time you could maybe read your future in its fronds*. The only part more ghastly than the nose is the toad-like veiny throat balloon pulsing underneath. (Really the whole front of the Pig is an aesthetic write-off.)

The pig's defence is sound. Astonishing volumes of finely modulated horribly generated noise. The sound-bag has the texture of a grandparent's legs, awash with

SOUNDS

The Pigs talk to each other in learnt sound. Though they do not understand meaning they do understand association. They never sound like pigs, always like other things. The following sounds are made by Sonic Pigs (d20):

- 1-5. The Brown Note (Minus 1d4 to your Dexterity, Wisdom, and Save versus Breath Weapon after being caught in the pig danger-crump. Lasts till clean.)
6. Bird-whoop makes your teeth ache
7. Bone Drone rattles femurs
8. Aircraft (How?)
9. Earthquakes
10. Female Screams
11. Muttering Voices
12. Torrents of water
13. Tetanus whines
14. Inner-ear heart beat
15. Battle
16. Tapping from inside the rock
17. Footsteps
18. Sonar clicks
19. Helmet amps
20. Daemonic Laughter (daemons do sometimes come to laugh at the pig victims; perhaps that's where they got the sound from)

interference patterns and held breath. The alarm noise it makes is like a drum and bass rave burning down. An ultra-low frequency organic boombox.

The pig herds know specific sounds to drive off threats. The long-wave vibrations are designed to wobble your organs and make your bones hum like a washing line in wind. They don't do much damage, but, one of the noises produced is the semi-mythical 'brown note'. A cave pig makes you poop yourself. The physiological effects also mimic a concussion, producing dizziness, disorientation and despair.

A herd of pigs in retreat is deafening and can be felt for miles around. It's often mistaken for distant geological action.

Sub-terrestrial hell-states use slaves to farm the Sonic Pigs. It makes no difference to them if the oppressed are shit-stained, deafened and mentally upset. It's pretty handy in controlling the population. A swift shift on the pig ranch quickly numbs the hunger to be free. Pig-slaves stink and cry constantly, tottering around on starving legs. Morale is not high on the farm of Sonic Pigs.

The pigs do not understand language and cannot repeat it, but some have claimed that emanating from the herd they tentatively perceived these words, in many different voices, as if legions cried out as one:

"I hate these pigs"

Sonic Pigs are used as search animals and can sense disrupted airflows moving through connecting caves as well as anything happening in a length of river around them; they are semi-aquatic and hop in and out comfortably. They love soil and granular materials as they can sense things moving in there, although soil is rare underground.

Their look-out stance is opposite to most animals - they press their faces to nearby rock to feel the vibrations running through. They do this in vast packs and look like they are praying. Hence the nickname, 'Priestpigs'.

* Your future probably includes being bitten by a Sonic Pig then shitting yourself.

SPECTRE OF THE BRÖCKEN

- **ARMOUR:** as Chain and Shield
- **HIT DICE:** 15
- **HIT POINTS:** 75
- **MOVE:** 3x standard
- **DAMAGE:** paw slap 3d6/throw back or bite for 8d8/mutate
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6 (she lands on her feet)
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 3,000
- **MORALE:** 11
- **SMELLS:** Wealth, divinity and death, a richly appointed mortuary, spices, incense and behind it, rot.
- **SOUNDS:** The babybones clatter slightly and grate, the skulls twist a little to look at you.
- **IMMUNITIES:** Immune to magic unless cast by a king or queen. Immune to *Sleep, Charm, Hold*, and *Fear* spells as well as the effects of cold.

Can only suffer lethal harm from those of noble title gained from a legitimate source. i.e. 'Lord' 'Lady' or 'Sir'.

Edged weapons do half damage.

She does not need to breathe and will never age.
- **MAGIC:** Can cast *Polymorph Any Object* and *Shape Change* at will, and may cast *Teleport* either on herself or one other with 100% accuracy, though any of these options does use up her action for a round. Unwilling targets of her spells may save against them.
- Her crown is worth 50,000sp.

^a Not dissimilar to the pure form of the *Igmimbrite* Mite.

A VAST SHE-WOLF MADE FROM the skeletons of pre-natal children holding tightly to each other. Her eyes are distant telescopic views of cities burning. Her teeth are broken obsidian Kanji* clutched by bone babyhands. Her howl is a fleet of bombers disappearing into a hurricane. She has a crown. A band of burning gold like something out of a poem by Blake or a Saint's mushroom vision. She is not from here. She outranks you.

She has the silence, stillness and fluid motion of a wolf. Her ruinscape eyes regard you indifferently, silently watchful, focused in a calm lock. The gaze never seems to leave your own. Everything she does seems deliberate and assured. The world accommodates itself in minor ways to her assumptions. Doors expand so not to graze her sides, steps lower and lengthen to save her stretching out. This isn't magic, she doesn't know she's doing it. She can never look undignified. Light on her always falls just so. This even affects you.

Dirt, damage and unsightly mutations and scars of every kind are muted by her presence and all take +1 Charisma when around her. It's the spiritual equivalent of putting on a tie before you enter the club.

The Bröcken was intended to end the world and drag it down in flames. Not this one, a better one. She failed. And died.

You are the shadow of a five-dimensional being existing in a higher plane and this is why much of your life makes no sense. Sometimes you sleep and dream, and if your dream dreamed and that last dream thought it was alive, then that is your relative position to the world the Bröcken was fated to destroy. You are a shadow of a shadow of that five-dimensional plane. There are lots of you, parallel selves and places, not quite real. You'll never meet them.

When the Bröcken fell her spirit flowed away. Trickled, surprisingly, into a lower dimension



like a hole in a shopping bag. She is a ghost-thing now. A spectre. A memory. But still real. Hyper-real like nothing else can be. She might be dead but she is still slumming it here.

Her voice sounds like your mother pronouncing your full name. The announcement in a doctor's waiting room. A judge's summing up. She may append titles and fragments to your name you have not heard before. She's speaking to the other yous. They have those names. She is present in those other worlds as well. To get her to focus on you alone, say something original, unpredictable and unlike you.

She's an empress with mild dementia. Arrogant and slightly bemused by the flickering ghost-shapes that surround her. She knows you, or assumes she does. Knows more than she would wish, considering your utter irrelevance. She observes multiple parallels as one, so can see directly patterns to your life that you may not. But not what shoes you are wearing, or exactly what you just said, or the details of anything. She gets the gist.

Her throne's a nest of ruined books, her lair the sett of a gigantic fox. It's lined with torn up magic books, apocalyptic pages from the holy tomes of various gods and the skeletons of popes and the more devout kings*. Its lanterns are tortured fire spirits, too broken and afraid to leave.

COMBAT

With wounds she makes mutations in your flesh. Because she is more real than you she exists in several different parallel worlds at once, which are to her like vague shadowy blurs combining to form dark points of attack. When she fights back she tears through these worlds a little and you get mixed and combined with one of your parallel selves who is doing the same thing you are on another world.

WHEN WOUNDED, ROLL FOR MUTATION.

She can bite you right out of reality. If she kills a PC then everything they have ever done disappears. The world re-knits itself around their absence. That PC may not be spoken of

again and is non-recoverable by any means. If players ask then deny any recollection of that persona.

Also if you fight her you might come back as someone else.

If she fights you then she is fighting in multiple dimensions at the same time so what she does might not make that much sense to you.

WANTS

The Bröcken wants to rule. To conquer and/or destroy the world. In either order, both are good. Even in this shit-house reality she can barely understand and that breaks every time she touches it.

More specifically:

1. The submission of crowned kings.
2. Treasures of noted imperial might.
3. The destruction of the AntiPhoenix (they are enemies).
4. The submission of a local god (a petty one will do).
5. A major faith bent to her will.
6. A city burnt in her name.
7. Books of magic for her throne.
8. Occultum coins.

CAN PROVIDE

She has a kind of decayed authority, like a pauper aristocrat that still has membership at the club.

1. Can gain introduction to any god or deity.
2. Holders of her seal (a foetal skull) may pass any portal.
3. Speakers of her oath may command undead as an evil Cleric of equal level.
4. When in direct presence she can reverse, modify and amend divine judgements.
5. She may call up spirits of the dead, and others.
6. When concentrating she may isolate and swap around parallel selves of those present.

* Skeletons not necessarily from this reality so could be the steadable corpses of high-level NPCs who are still alive.

SPLINTERLADS



- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 1
- **HIT POINTS:** equal to Number Encountered
- **MOVE:** 3x standard (flight)
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d50
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** Number Encountered x 10
- **MORALE:** 5
- **SMELLS:** Burning stone.
- **SOUNDS:** Fat gold tongues kissing briefly on the bows of lead-black bells.
- **COMBAT:** A Splinterlad swarm gets one attack for every ten Splinterlads.

Damage from any attack can be offset to any brittle item you hold of significant mass. Remove the item, ignore the damage.

All of their attacks ignore armour.

Reverse the bonus to Armour rating that armour provides so it makes you easier to hit. Splinterlad attacks are drawn by mass.

THE BEST WAY TO AVOID A Splinterlad flock is to have glass and crackable chalk. They also hate quartz. Whirl the glass around your head like a falconer's lure. The flock must make a morale test every time you do this with a different piece of quartz or chalk.

If a flock flies through you, your teeth will explode in your head, your blood vessels will burst, your bones will splinter, the fine arteries in your brain will burst.

This rarely happens though. Usually just the edge of the flock will dance along your equipment and burst your ropes, crack your swords.

MOTIVATION

When Splinterlads are encountered, read down the list below and select the first that could be true. This is what they want.

- If you have recently made an agreement then they wish you to break it.
- If you have a powerful ally, they wish you to betray them.
- If you have a powerful foe, they wish you to befriend them.
- They wish you to cause political chaos.
- They wish to cause chaos with you right now.

Look briefly at the sun then look away. Consider the blurring points that dance inside your eyes. They look like the opposite of that. Lens flare's dark encrypted twin. A flock of inverse bird-forms with the wingshapes pointing inwardly, away, catching on incomprehensible anti-wind in the cavities'd space outside ours.

These are baby cave elementals. Voidlings, absencementals. Not the abstract expressions of rock, but living forms of voids within the rock. The caves. You won't meet the parents. They have strange business deep within the core, below the Mohorovičić discontinuity. These are baby negaspawn, migrating through the earth and incarnating as minor absences, like gaps between your teeth or silent whiteness in the letter 'o'.

They speak in shaped silence. It feels like tiny hands inside your mind, pushing your neurons aside like a beaded curtain. Bullying their way between the words. Phrase meanings are inferred from their tailing decay into sound. The sombre form belies the childish tone.

As the flock swoops like Starlings through the rock, stone boils. Yet, once passed, it stills again, whole and undisturbed. If they so choose, brittle things may crack. They can pass through you safely if they wish. Think Hitchcock's *The Birds* except the birds are briefly burning bubbles under your skin, fizzing solids, bubbly rocks and stones that melt in bird-flock-curly. It feels like the shiver as someone walks over your grave. The hidden tremor on your legs before a fight. An unwitting electrical shock. Brief sharp points of travelling pain as they move through organs and flexible bone. Bubbles form at the back of your tongue and have to be spat out, a yellowish froth.

TREATIES

At this point a brief detour into Cosmolegalism is necessary.

All material reality only exists due to sophisticated treaties and power sharing arrangements between elemental lords. These treaties are verifiably real physical things, though not accessible on this plane of existence. The more complex the form of matter the more sophisticated the treaty that allows it. The more subtle and ill-thought-out the treaty is, the more easily its terms are broken.

For instance, hydrogen is the simplest treaty of all. It forms one of the basics of contract law. Elements towards the periodic table's edge are in legal limbo. They only occasionally exist. Like pirate states. When treaties fail, matter is reduced to simpler and still-legal parts. Thus all material things tend towards entropy.

CENTRIST TERRORISTS

Absencementals are driven and created by caesurae and mistakes inside these agreements. Thusly, though their intent is direct, almost animalistic, their desired cosmic state is quite sophisticated.

They support the continual breaking and re-forming of elemental treaty. Perfect treaties damage and offend them. So anyone trying to create a more perfect union between elementals will provoke their anger. Irregular, incompetent, incomplete and hastily revised ones make them happy and create more voidlings. Their ideal arrangement between the great elemental powers is one of constant but slow flux and thoughtless and continual regulation.

So they are constantly provoking either war or peace between the elemental powers. The powers of Order hate them.

If you have no political use Splinterlads should be harmless, but sometimes, they are playful. This makes them deadly. They dive up out of non-ity like dolphins breaching surf curve briefly in the air. And just as dolphins sport with ships the Splinterlads love folk. A cave within the

rock, a moving breathing spot within the cave. This is addictive paradox to the voidlings. Just like the ship's hull and sails are to the dolphin, something within its world and without. Do your best not to amuse them.

Splinterlad Nymphs are the reason the physics of granular materials seems to make no regular sense. They are whimsical. The worms make worship of them. Earthworm cysts are endlessly-renewing micro-temples arranged in cryptic unseen mandalas and honing strange ant-level micro-climates. The larger worms still recognise them; in particular, the Purple Worm, which often carries a murmuration of voidlings flocked around in silent converse. The spell *Rock-to-Mud* is actually a decayed fragment of ancient worm-songs learnt by Neanderthal hyper-shamans and passed in damaged form to their Sapien wives.



SPOTLIGHT DOGS

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 4
- **HIT POINTS:** 18
- **MOVE:** 1 1/2 x standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 4d6
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 100
- **MORALE:** 8
- **SPOTLIT:** When first caught in the light, save versus Paralysis or the glare makes the Dogs' armour equivalent to plate and shield. It is always hard to look directly at the dogs.
- **SMELLS:** Dogs and chlorine.
- **SOUNDS:** Scrabbling, panting.

NO-ONE HAS SEEN THEIR HEADS, dead or alive. But rumours have returned of crystal-things and tendrils. They are not dogs. Not for a long time. But move like hounds on monkey limbs. Long, lithe matte black and light-absorbent.

If they get close enough to fight, and you can spot them in the glare, their forms seem depthless silhouettes. A long body, whippet-slim and overgrown, and back-bent legs on slender monkey hands. The dense, black light-absorbent fur is soft and slick, it smells of nothing but dog, and barely that. Slightly acidic somehow.

They hunt by sight, are soundless, quick and bright. The head of the Spotlight



Dog, through some unknown bioluminous alchemy, is brighter than a dozen torches, and whiter than a winter sky. The light they make is laser-straight, directed at one spot.

The howl (or howl-equivalent) starts, rises, peaks and flows away in the same time it would take a wolf to howl. At first the air around you greys, the lantern seems to dim, you briefly see the distance in the cave. A soft pale glow picks out the walls. Then tightens. You look down at your clothes, and for the first time in weeks can clearly see the grime and tears. You see the mud and grit ground into your palm, matching the micro-swirls. Your lifeline and the palm-hinge glowing white against the dirty skin. The light grows stronger narrowing narrowing narrowing. The contrast blacks the cave. Your lanterns glow too weak to show beyond. Spots dance in your eyes. You turn away. The mica in the cave wall burns. You stare into your shadow on the rock, its edges sharp and midnight black. You turn to find the source, and as you turn the light begins to fade, from white to sky-blue, violet, sea-blue, abyssal-blue and ultraviolet. Out.

Then another howling dog flares up, and another, and another. The pack answers in the distance.

SPOTLIGHT DOGS ARE PERSISTENCE HUNTERS. They like to blind and terrorize their prey, chase it till weak, then pounce. If they can't frighten the quarry and if not sure of victory, they will **SIMPLY FOLLOW WITH THEIR SPOTLIGHTS**, highlighting you for a larger predator in the hope of eating the loser.

Obviously fighting them hand-to-hand is hard as someone is trying to shine a spotlight in your face while you swing at them. You can hear them scrabble and whine when struck. They pant like dogs but make no other sound.

They only aim to bring down a weak outlier and retreat to consume the kill. They will avoid the central mass and try to break the group. Often a dog will attack from below while the Alpha jumps over it as you try to defend, taking you in the throat. The 'bite' feels as if you were caught with your flesh in a blender, or jammed in the moving parts of a car. As they gnaw, the light grows in intensity and does not stain red, no matter how much blood they drink. The wounds are irregular tears made by endlessly relocking puzzle jaws.

SHOULD YOU SEE THE HEAD

VIEWING THE HEAD MAKES YOU FEEL FAINT AND QUESTION EVERYTHING.

You have nightmares of it for the next three nights, which you will not reveal to anyone. It now troubles you deeply to think specifically of the work of florists and butchers. You also have difficulty recalling which is which and will often confuse them, avoiding both if you can help it.

TREASURES

The pelt is worth 1,000sp in good condition. It is very difficult to skin as it is light-absorbent midnight black, so you can't see the edges you cut (plus you have to avoid looking at the head). The skin is worth triple on the surface as being light-absorbent is less useful in a dark-adjusted world. You will be further hampered by surviving dogs. They will always attempt to carry off the bodies of the pack.



STILL-TOR-MEN

THE LEGS

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 8
- **HIT POINTS:** 32
- **MOVE:** 2x standard (limited radius)
- **DAMAGE:** 2d8
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** cannot be killed
- **MORALE:** 9
- **SOUNDS:** A distant scream from above.

COMBAT

The feet incarnate approximately 20' apart. They will remain still until attacked. If attacked they will respond by rising up and crushing down, tearing into the assaulters with rockpolished claws. Only one column will attack at any one time. Never both. If one leg is badly damaged the threat will withdraw and the encounter end.

THE FIRST ROUND

The Still-Tor-Man attacks as an ill-formed duplicate of the target with a skin of knife-sized silver hooks. It has the target's hit points and Armour 18. Its only attack is an attempted grapple. This does 1d8 damage as the hooks bite in.

THE SECOND ROUND

The hooks are then torn from the skin of the Still-Tor-Man and the affected PC is drawn rapidly up there. It takes a round of action for them to be drawn fully into the other world. They can pull the hooks from their flesh, doing 1d8 more damage, and fall, or try to think of something else.

THE THIRD ROUND

If the PC is still being drawn upwards on the third round then remove them from play.

The Still-Tor-Man remains, a naked, evil, hook-skinned version of the PC with limited memories but all abilities.

You can escape by attacking the legs and causing it to withdraw, by killing the Still-Tor-Man, or simply by leaving the area between the legs. There is no-one who can tell you this.

THE EVENT

You won't notice the stalagmites. Not at first. They don't descend from above, they just... appear. One moment not, next moment there. Ancient weathered claws grasping the earth. Heron legs or curlicued eagle claws built on titanic scale.

You might hear the crunch as they bite into the ground. Look down where rock meets rock and see the scored and broken stone. Clawed and bunched like a crow's feet on a dining table. There are two. One blocks the way ahead, one arrests your flight. You won't see either move on arrival. You will look up. The light will make it impossible not to.

The roof is gone. If it was low enough to see before it isn't now. As if it rose up. Like paperscraps dancing in a lantern flame. The light you carry runs out somewhere in the dark. But there is something else up there. A twice-reflected gleam. Only as bright as the shine of gold in cold vaults. Lead tiles in moonlight. A scratched blackboard bouncing back the streetlamp light refracted in a pane of glass. Illuminating nothing. It is an eye.

You see a figure falling in the dark. Silver-white like a dropped spoon in black water. Distant and untouchable as a lake-bottom

corpse. A human shape. Far far above you, but deeply held like underwater lights. Falling. Rising. Approaching you like a skydiver with a failed chute. Or like a body rising up out of dark sea into the light. But fast. And direct. Impelled by something.

It looks like you. At first a sliver human-sketch. Then a skeletal cartoon. A formless body. Features. A face. Your face. All resolving as it falls out of the dark. This takes three to five seconds in total.

It breaches the barrier screaming. The dark void-stuff above you shivers and ripples. The silver-feathered-clone-you-thing plunges out of the impossible sky exactly like a spear plunging into a pool. A frothing halo of nought-bubbles slide around it as it comes and then flee upwards. Time and space forming bubbles of reality around something else that will not mix.

It comes down screaming and grabs at you.

This would be a good time to fight.

It doesn't move like anything attached to this world. It goes up and down in jabs and drops. Like a harpoon seeking river-fish. Like the tip of a weapon. Which is what it is. Grabbing for you. The feathers are knives. They are hooked.

It will become more like you with each stroke. If it succeeds, there will be a flurry of feather-like silver blades. You will be pulled upwards into the darkness to feed the watching horror. Wailing. Your naked evil hook-skinned double will remain. Abandoned. Murderous. Desperate. A Still-Tor-Man.

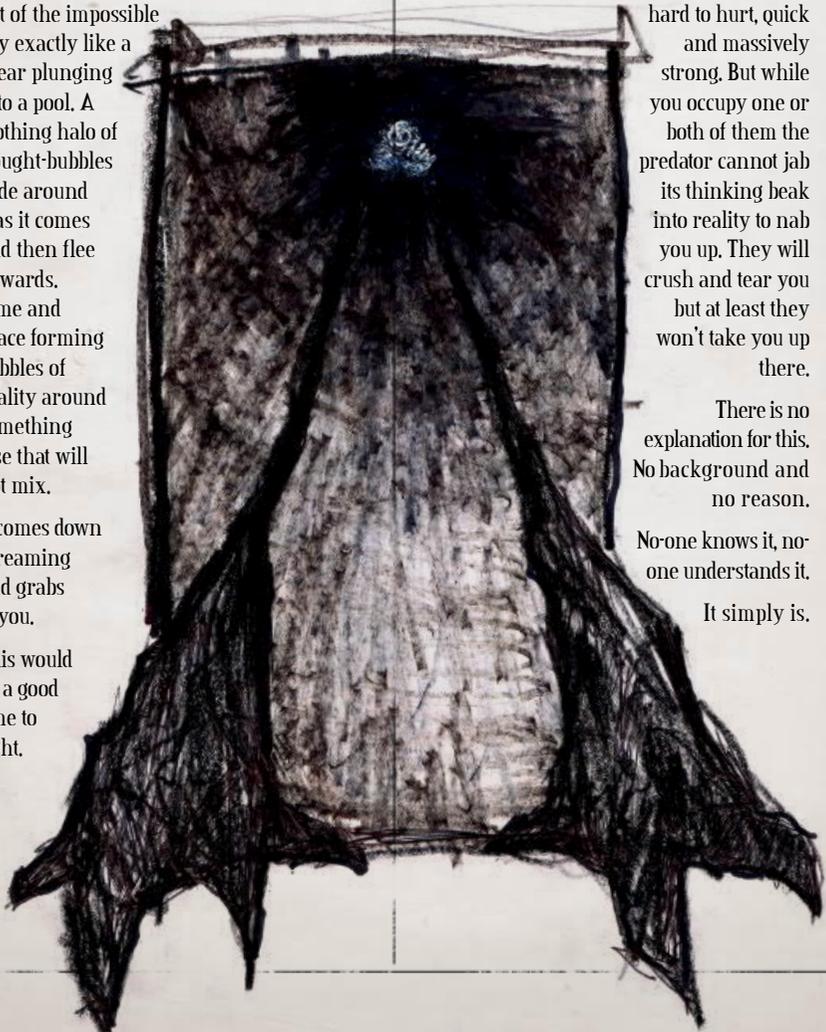
You can try and fight the stone-like feet that anchor the watching overpredator. They are

hard to hurt, quick and massively strong. But while you occupy one or both of them the predator cannot jab its thinking beak into reality to nab you up. They will crush and tear you but at least they won't take you up there.

There is no explanation for this. No background and no reason.

No-one knows it, no-one understands it.

It simply is.



STORMSHEEP

- **ARMOUR:** Unarmoured
- **HIT DICE:** 1
- **HIT POINTS:** 4
- **MOVE:** 1/4 standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 range 10'/1d4
Intelligence damage touch
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1d50
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 50
- **MORALE:** 7
- **SMELLS:** Greasy static charge.
- **SOUNDS:** The plinking and tumbling of glass.
- **COMBAT:** Metal armour makes you vulnerable to this monster; for all its attacks reverse any bonus from metal armour.

Give the Stormsheep an extra +2 to hit if the target is holding a metal weapon.

If you hit, electricity leaps from your flesh, connecting with its outstretched limb. It burns you and eventually sends you into stroke-spasms.
- **TOUCH:** If they get close enough to touch they will try to eat the electrical memories in your brain and spine. This will kill or mind-blank you. It poisons them. Stormsheep that eat human thoughts stagger, crazed and maddened like cows with CJD. So by defending yourself you are also protecting them. There is no way to explain this to them. Their touch attack rolls to hit as normal.

IMAGINE THE TANGLE OF GLASS left in sand when lightning strikes. Now imagine it moving, squirming and birthing itself out of the granular quartz. Stretching like a deer foal and picking its way on spindly tubular limbs. Migrating somewhere under the earth.

Now imagine walking through an underground nightmare for a month then hearing, up ahead, the sound of a party in a wine bar. Mutterings. A kind of vague ultra-high-pitch whine like a mosquito in a jam jar. You turn a corner, look down, and there they are. Spindles and bulbs of rippling processioning beaker-ware. Glass-marked in primary for the taint in sand that made their flesh.

The Stormsheep are blobs and twists of living glass with startling synthetic-bright shades within. They flock in fractal patterns, migrating carefully, touching the wall.

Miners track them for the ore-scent pulling them to metal as it winds its veins beneath the earth. They gather in herds around the slight twists of silver and iron that root down from the mountaintop. And, sometimes, around thick and siliconised waters. They are waiting for a storm to summon lightning from below.

Lightning strikes up, not down. Watch it in slow motion and you'll see. Zeus was a target. This planet is a battery. The storm makes negative one sky-bound pole and electrons rampage in a flicker up out of the iron heart of the earth. On its passage it collects spiritual, magical and physical impressions and leaves these written in the glass of the Stormsheep before the air absorbs its pure distilled remains.

They are a kind of detritus, but do not know this. Each one has a sort of memory map inside, made of the lightning's path as it



burrowed up out of the slow epochal magma storms, seeking the sky above. A genetic vertical geography encoded in an instant. It may be this recall that makes them seek out the deeps.

They follow lines of electric conduction, and when the strike occurs above they taste it with their glassy limbs. It fills them with electricity and geospiritual calm; this makes them less dangerous.

If you find the Stormsheep hungry, they will sense the electricity and memories inside your head and, in famine-struck madness, attempt to feed.

The use of metal weapons is not advised. Metal armour will reverse or invert your Armour value. Don't get wet. The glass limbs need not touch you, they can summon forth the electrical impulse within you from a foot away. The corpuscles in your arterial blood spin madly on their axes. Each one becomes a tiny generator. Venous blood is safe; the iron is dull in its cells.

If you meet sated Fulguroids, happy and fat, things will be different. They will gather in weird neuronal constellations in the

dark. Exchanging silica dreams with thick blue twig-shaped sparks. The blue electrical charges sputtering amidst them hum and pulse in cryptic configurations. Sages read the crackling magnoglyphs to discover secrets. The conditions are dangerous and uncertain. Sages often need protection, from the Sheep, and from whatever else wants those secrets kept.

TREASURES

Each Fulguroid carries inside it, coloured by metallic taints, a map of the path the lightning took that made it. This 3D tangle of shades shows an unknown route not trod by man. If you can work out where it fits in the endless warrens of night. This makes Stormsheep bodies potentially quite valuable. They are difficult to retrieve whole, as the creatures splinter on all but a critical killing blow, but the corpses have been known to show the way to secret treasures and hidden lands.

For this reason they are sometimes guarded by hidden Knotsmen.

TACHYON TROLL

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 6
- **HIT POINTS:** 0 then 24
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d8
- **CLIMB:** 4 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 6,000
- **MORALE:** 11
- **SMELLS:** Yeasty and off.
- **SOUNDS:** Harsh animal voice that makes a low monotone drone through a thoroughly bestial mouth.
- **ATTACKS:** 1d8/1d8 or grapple then 3d10 bite.
- **TAO OF THE TROLL:** Ages backwards then Regenerates. Must be fought twice.
- **REGENERATION:** 1d4hp per round, cancelled by fire as a normal Troll.

THE TIME TROLL LOOKS KIND OF crazy and beautiful and will eat you in an impersonal way.

It lopes and rolls unevenly in its stride like every Troll. And like all Trolls, has spindly pipecleaner limbs, twisted ice-pick fingers and an oversized monstrous head. It's white with calm blue eyes. It's been down here so long its infections have infections.

There are shiny secrets in the Troll. Hints and glimmerings like anti-radar chaff, fallen snow or flurries of fresh confetti in whipped cream. Uncomfortably organic fungal swirls, twisted like the tops of ice cream cones. Winding helices of tin, titanium, gallium, end-stage uranium stretch through the white mass, randomly woven metallic hairs.

The fungus eating at the Troll is also host to Archean bacteria. These produce rare metals and impossible elements and, at a very slow rate, encode them in micro-helices inside the fungi. Like a polar bear's hair has a spiral inside it that refracts infra-red, these things refract time. The Tachyon Troll knows much.

THE TAO OF THE TROLL

Roll hit points normally for the Troll, then write down the total and deduct all but one.

At the encounter's start the Tachyon Troll looks like the victim of a brutal assault; yours. You can see your own weapon wounds in its flesh. You must fight it to reset the paradox the Troll represents. Each blow you make will restore hit points equal to its damage. You may choose not to do this, but that exposes you to the Troll's automatic defence system. It radiates raw Time.

TIME WAVES

Once the encounter has begun the Troll starts emitting time waves once per round. These waves age living things within the following range effects:

10': 1d6 years

50': 1d4 years

100': 1 year

1 Mile: 1 day

The time waves will not be emitted in a round in which one of the original encounter group makes an attack roll against the Troll. You must fight the Tachyon Troll or die of old age as you run away.

For this reason, those that flee the Tachyon Troll are loathed more than the troll itself - though its behaviour can be used as a weapon by those ruthless and cunning enough to do so. The Trolls' ransom has brought many low.



When the Troll reaches maximum hit points again it will pause and re-assess. Depending on the actions of the PCs it may either break off combat, or continue. Should it keep fighting, it acts now as a normal Troll. It no longer releases time waves. It regenerates 1d4hp per round.

If the PCs have shown evidence of a high Wisdom or some meaningful personal development during the first fight, the Troll may continue combat. It will fight until it dies or they do. It does not fear the end. It reassures you and accepts death calmly when it comes. It was always fated to end this way.

If the PCs have shown a notable lack of wisdom, personal development or awareness during the combat, the Troll will simply seek to leave once it is healed. It will wander round the Veins, gradually suffering unhealable trauma wounds, seeking out the people who are to inflict them.

The troll knows all possible futures for itself and this has given it Buddha-like wisdom. It doesn't hate you. It's trying to kill and eat you because this is the Tao of the Troll. The Troll speaks calmly in gnomish parables while you fight.

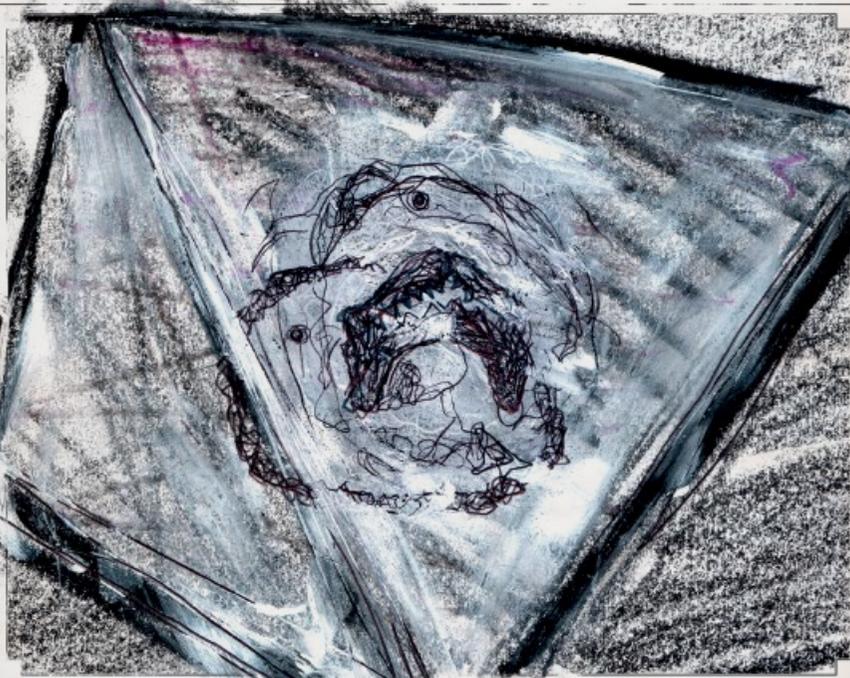
UTTERANCES OF THE TACHYON TROLL

1. "If blows were words and words blows, whose sword-tongue then would speak of blood?"
2. "Are these death's eyes that widen at my sight, death's hand that shivers on death blade? Is death's flesh mine? Shall death bleed life when struck?"
3. "Sorrow, sadness and murder, is this the Tao of the Troll?"
4. "Fallen limbs are the Troll's only tears, my weeping is but little though the drops live on."
5. "Will you teach me a fire sermon? Or is your path upon my tongue? Your Tao between my teeth?"
6. "Do not sorrow for this ripped blood-nugget. Its new home is within me. I anoint you!"
7. "I am a Throne of Life, consumed and endlessly renewed."
8. "Our lives and deaths are bound now, I have seen, to flee is to flee time."
9. "Heal the sword kiss you have killed me with and all shall be renewed renewed renewed."
10. "Did I dream this battle when I died? Or is that other self the dream and this dream true?"
11. "Oh Ho is it the flame grave at last? Am I, have I, shall I be one with this torch that candles this light?"
12. "I have seen your death in me and mine in you. The Tao is unclear and the path confused. Walk the path with me!"

If a PC kills a Tachyon Troll, they may take +1 Wisdom or an Alignment Shift or just get

a whole new perspective on things. Maybe take some time off. Think things over.

TETRACHARCARODRON



- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 7
- **HIT POINTS:** 37
- **MOVE:** 2x standard
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 750
- **MORALE:** 9
- **ATTACK:** Engulf then 1d6 damage each round as the jaws slowly close.
- **SMELLS:** Formaldehyde, ammonia and blood.
- **SOUNDS:** A wet shoe being peeled off linoleum.

SHARK-JAWS BOBBING IN A HARM-
less Ooze. The pyramid of brine
rotates in silence, balanced on its
inverse tip. It carries no support
but does not fall. Inside: the counter-spiral
organs of a shark. An inverse orbiting
gyroscope of organs and eyes.

You could mistake it for a fishtank of piss,
or cloudy amniotic waste. Yellow-pink.
Inside the liquid floats the shark, skinless
and spread-out, autopsy-dissolved.

The jaws and teeth are there. The spine
makes a flexing black scatter-graph-line
amidst the organ clouds. The black eyes
bob around behind the brain. The organs
spread out like an exploded diagram. They
swirl along attached by tubes and veins.
Like a crowd of friends on their way to a
gig, or leaves caught in the same breeze.

The heart still beats, the eyes focus and rotate, arteries kink and thrum with each compression, the shark still swimming, as it knows it always must. Frustratingly slow. Marshmallows stirred in thick molasses. The terrifying bite. Muscles halo'd-out around the jaw. They still retain their ultimate power, but the absence of hard leverage has slowed them down. They close the jaw tenderly, like the door of a sleeping child; the teeth mesh, then, the jaw gently eases wide again.

It's not a tank. The slime is intelligent and aware. Though why it takes this shape no one is sure.

Sages guess because this is the simplest straight-edged platonic form. Straight edges so the shark can see the steady movement of the slime-tank-form and not panic to find it no longer swims. Flat sides to make the viewing clearer from inside. Perhaps a curving wall would distort sight. The inverse nature of the pyramid lifts the shark above the ground - could this help it find its prey?

The slime is intelligent, predatory and utterly non-threatening. It dissolves metal, wood, clothing, nails and hair. It cannot

get through skin. But it can melt the dermal denticles of a shark. It could simply consume the shark. But; the shark is now symbiotically trapped. It can never leave. The shark has means the slime does not. It has teeth, and a million years of predatory drive with which to make their use.

The shark's arousal triggers a hunting form.

First, when prey is sensed, the pyramid stops its slow rotation. The shark is still. It forms a ragged question-mark, vertical and poised.

A second later, like a gear meshing invisibly, the Tetrahedron melts like ice in fire. The slime torrents forward like the headwaters of a flood. It sounds like plastic tearing on a heat-sealed seam and moves like sharks imagine their attacks in dreams. An irregular teardrop vortex whose surface splatters and pucks like a river in a rainstorm, free finally to hurl itself beyond the glassy roof and kill and kill in unknown upper worlds. If sharks could pray they would give thanks for this.

First the slime pulls you in then the sharkjaw slooowly lowers itself over you and slowly bites down. Then the shark and slime share your calories.

TITANSKULL HERMIT CRAB

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate and Shield +1
- **HIT DICE:** 8
- **HIT POINTS:** 33
- **MOVE:** 1/2x standard
- **DAMAGE:** 3d6/3d6 (Ignores Armour)
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6 (very slow)
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 3,000
- **MORALE:** 9
- **SMELLS:** Old schoolrooms boarded up, forgotten chalk dust.
- **SOUNDS:** The skull thumps dully as it drags.

*"O wherefore sleepest thou?
For Heaven is parted from thee,
and the Earth knows thee not"*

This car-sized crab is noted for the strength and strangeness of its shell and the length and patience of its courtship.

AS EVERYONE KNOWS, THE Titans, primordial beings of wild potency, ruled the earth in its chaotic age. They birthed gods, man-shaped Homo Divinus, stellar beings absorbed with human wants. These apparently inferior things outwitted and killed their primal sires. And that's why the universe looks like us, governed by principles an ape can understand. Anthropic-Fascism. Don't like the rules? Kill the boss, eat him, and remake things so you know what they are*.

The bodies and blood of the Titans went into making the sea, sky, earth and stars. The skulls were lost. Life hates a vacuum. A big crab lives there now.

The TitanSkull Hermit Crab is in the last and latest stage of its development. It has moved through tiny ant skulls, rat skulls, monkey heads, babyskulls, man skulls, ogre skulls and giant skulls. This has taken a couple of million years. It grows slowly and a good skull is hard to find. Now it is nearly ready to mate. This age of the world has reached its end, in a couple of hundred thousand years mankind will have bollocked up reality so much the whole thing will decay back into primordial soup. At this point the TitanSkull Crabs will begin the sex-lurch. This will be incredibly loud. The Titan Skulls that form their home will bang like solemn bongos rebounding through space and time. There will be little there to hear them, except for the neonatal Titans accreting in the chaos-flow.

If any Titans left a tale of the thumping beat that first a-waked them in the cosmic womb, none now live to tell of it.

By the time new Titans have been born to rule all things the baby crabs are hunting out their first decapitated ants. Over the uncounted millennia of the Titans' reign they slowly slowly grow, moving from skull to skull, waiting for the gods to be born.

Then things begin to happen very quickly. The gods rebel. The Titans die. The phenomenological world is born from their flesh. The ascent of man begins. As the Titan Skulls sink uncorrupted in the ooze, the adolescent GiantSkull crabs gather and fight. The epic underground brawl leaves one crab for each available skull.

* He would do the same to you.

And there they wait. Attending the decay of mankind, preparing for the apocalypse to mate again.

The crabs themselves are nebula coloured or the shades of swollen glittering stars before they implode. The nature of the skulls differs according to the Titan that occupied it. Some have minor breaks and holes. Splinters sprayed outwards indicate the emergence of

young gods, (often healed over) jags pressed in suggest fatal battle damage.

Titanskulls each differ but most have the granularity and roughness of granite and the sheen of precious metals. The eyes and nose are often blocked up with lesser skulls, piled and cemented.

So yes, there are skulls in the skull, and it lives in a palace of skulls. It's skull-based, essentially.

The crabs make little sound before they mate. The clawsnap break like gun-shots in the dark. Its mouthparts whisper like wet brooms piling soggy leaves, but do not speak.



The crab moves awkwardly. A side to side, stop start, auto-cybernetic spindle feedback twitch*.

TitanSkull crabs have a bower-bird style mating ritual. The male creates a remarkable ossuary encrusted with notable skulls, polished with care and woven in beautiful strands. After the end of time, he dances like an old locomotive; this ushers the female towards his skull-mosaic cave. The tessellated head-bones may impress. If so, he has his wicked way with her in the night.

Because of this, one of the few things that can disturb the deep waiting of the TitanSkull crab is the presence of unusual skulls. High-Status

hero skulls are good. Unusual head-shapes or bone-types are favoured for decapitation, polishing, and careful presentation.

The crabs are careful, fussy, slow and almost impossible to damage. They live inside the skull of something that fights gods. They are wise and experienced and will wait for a good brainbox to arrive. Animal but intelligent, they can trade, but the only thing they want, or have, is skulls in infinite varieties.

Each TitanSkull has slightly different properties. Though what powers they may hold, few can tell.

WHOSE SKULL IS THIS CRAB INSIDE?

1. **CRONUS:** Time. Ate his kids.
2. **THEA:** The Mother of Mothers
3. **HYPERION:** Sun-High One.
4. **COEUS:** The North. Wisdom and far-sight.
5. **GYGES:** Endlessness. Containing things.
6. **BRIAREUS:** Vigour!
7. **TYPHON:** Father of All Monsters.
8. **DOLOR:** Pain and Anguish.
9. **PORPHYRION:** King of the Giants.
10. **PHOEBE:** Radiance, Brightness and Prophecy.
11. **CREUS:** Generally stayed at the back, didn't do much, bit of a hanger-on.
12. **IAPETUS:** Mortal Life, 'The Piercer', father of Prometheus
13. **COTTUS:** The Striker. Fury.
14. **CAF:** Whose nature is unknown.
15. **ENCELADUS:** Trumpeter to arms with the scales of the dragon for feet.
16. **ATLAS:** Endurance, punishment. Said to hold the sky.
17. **PHORCUS:** Hidden dangers of the deep.
18. **OCEANUS:** The Sea.
19. **TETHYS:** All Rivers.
20. **THEMIS:** Divine order.

Inside the ossuary-bower the crab has every skull you'll ever need.

TORAPTOISE



- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 3
- **HIT POINTS:** 12
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d4/1d6/1d6

- **CLIMB:** 4 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 4d4
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 100
- **MORALE:** 12
- **SMELLS:** Nothing, then rank thick sweat.
- **SOUNDS:** Clacking, tapping like cups on plates.

- **REACTION:** If the combined Hit Dice of the ToRaptoise encountered outnumbered that of the party then they will attack; if not they remain passive.

THE SHELL IS PEARLESCENT, beautiful and elliptical, like two contact lenses pressed together, edge to edge. It's four feet high and almost sharp. The lantern light collects, reflects from ridges, barely discernible rock-splash ripples. The curving shell-tip wobbles softly and slowly side to side. They herd in groups where lichen drips from limestone cracks and lick the rock with agonising care.

They remind you of yacht-sails, anchored in ranks on a dark and windless sea, a windowless room of broken metronomes. They clack, and tap, off-rhythm in the dark.

The tortoise heads and snouts that poke below are pale, like everything here, and (if possible) slower and more careful than the real thing. Craning and stretching like failed origami. It takes twenty years for the shuffling ToRaptoise to lick its fill from a vein of slow-growing abyssal lichen. It speeds up fucking quickly though, when it wants to.

When meat is scented, grazing pauses for a moment, the shells half-turn, the eyeless heads curl round and gossamer vipertongues lick patterns in the air. If meat is strong they stop, and lick again. If meat is weak, and they will always know when meat is weak, the shivering starts.

The heart rate climbs a hundredfold within a minute's time. The raptors shake and buzz like junkies. The shells begin to clack clack clack, then crash like fallen dishes, hum like bicycle rims, then whine like bees. The muscled upper legs extend, babyflesh wet. The shell tilts up, the foot-worn frontal knuckles crack, uncurling fresh/old claws that climb. The head comes up, whistling one continuous circular breath. The jaws extend. The tongue whips out in motion-capture sine wave blurs.

This creature will burn a century of slowly hoarded calories in one hour-long high-speed underground hunt. If the pack fails to down its prey they can all die of starvation, sometimes within a few minutes of each other. The shell is almost inaccessible even after death; the ToRaptoise is denied even the cannibals' dividend. They fight together; they die together; they cannot be broken once a hunt has begun. They bound, climb quickly on raptor hind legs and extended front claws. They will bet, in their animal way, every single second of a quiet centuries-long life on one brutal super-fast fight. You or them.

No-one is betting on you.

ToRaptoise can run for 30 minutes - after 25 they must eat or die. When they slow down they return to being a 1 Hit Die monster with one bite attack.

TREASURE

The Shells are worth 500sp each and can be used to make a very fancy high-status shield expensive enough that almost no-one will ever use it in combat. It is hard to get the corpse out without smashing the shell. Usually people wait for them to skeletonise. An un-shelled ToRaptoise corpse is worth about 250-300sp.

TRILOBITE-KNIGHT



- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 5
- **HIT POINTS:** 20
- **MOVE:** standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d8 or by weapon
- **CLIMB:** 5 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 750
- **MORALE:** 9
- **SMELLS:** A little of salt.
- **SOUNDS:** Only the slight clattering of its armour plates.
- **CAN SOMETIMES ROLL IN BALL:**
Moves 2x standard, Armour?2

IT HAS NO NAME, WE CALL IT:

1. The Executioner's Lament
2. Nine Times Carried Away
3. The 13th Isopod
4. Ice Claw
5. Weepheart
6. The Bane That Came To Agtelek
7. Five Soundless Knives
8. The Sun-Stone Eye
9. Coronal Wanderer
10. He-Paints-The-Earth
11. Death-Knows-It
12. As-Fires-Die

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION years ago a war began when something tried to kill the Earth. No-one alive knows what or why. The coal burned in the ground and poisoned the sky. The forests were consumed en-masse. They died too fast to leave a trace of oil. A fungal spike occurred. Vast growths feeding on the rotting flesh of disaster-taxons. Whole species. Most species. Big enough to leave a negative trace in rocks we find today. A speckling of empty oil beds, fossil fungal spores, shocked quartz and fullerenes holding some unknown extraterrestrial gas.

Ninety-four percent of everything alive was killed. We descend from the surviving six per cent. The war was lost by life, which shrivelled on the Earth.

But not quite.

One survived. Carrying the memory of the war beyond Gondwanaland. The Trilobite.

A blind and sleepless knight in clanking armour clad. Wandering the hidden places of the world, carrying its burden through the empty night, lest evil strike again.

They saw the first light on Earth. Not the first made, but the first seen. The first eyes possessed by living things. The first to fully know the light, the first to fear the dark. The first to know what shadows were, how colours work. The first to see the other suns beyond the moon. The first to see the light that stains the sky before the dawn. They loved the Earth.

Trilobite eyes are subtle hexagonal hives of liquid-bright calcite. They see in depth, with great complexity. Their sight became a curse. The artful sheet-glass transparency made them prime, unavoidable, and sole witnesses to the holocaust of earthly things. A scale and intensity of murder forgotten by prophets, a soul-blinding horror.

The few that lived abandoned sight, they moved into the silent knots within the planet's skin. They waited while the rotting flesh of every living race piled past in torrents of corruption. They waited while the fungal lords ruled briefly on the dying corpse of Earth. They waited while the slow rebirth of life began again. They concentrated on survival. They have a reason to go on. Apart from the strange Funginid dream-mind that might or might not span the globe, they are the only ones who remember. The only living thing to even know the threat exists. They are hiding but they are not beaten, they know it will return.

A Trilobite-Knight is a five-foot high, intelligent isopod. Clothed in natural plate and following something pretty much like the chivalric code. Fight with honour on life's right hand. Never kill a surrendered foe. Defend the weak against the strong. Uphold the right. They sign but rarely speak. Bug-movements have the eloquence of sound.

They will challenge adventurers to learn their worth. It is not so unusual to find a Psychopyge sword-bearing bug, rearing in heraldic defiance across a needle-thin abyssal pass. Or duelling on the rocks through Nightmare Falls. Sometimes appearing unannounced when danger lurks. Striking evil from the darkness.

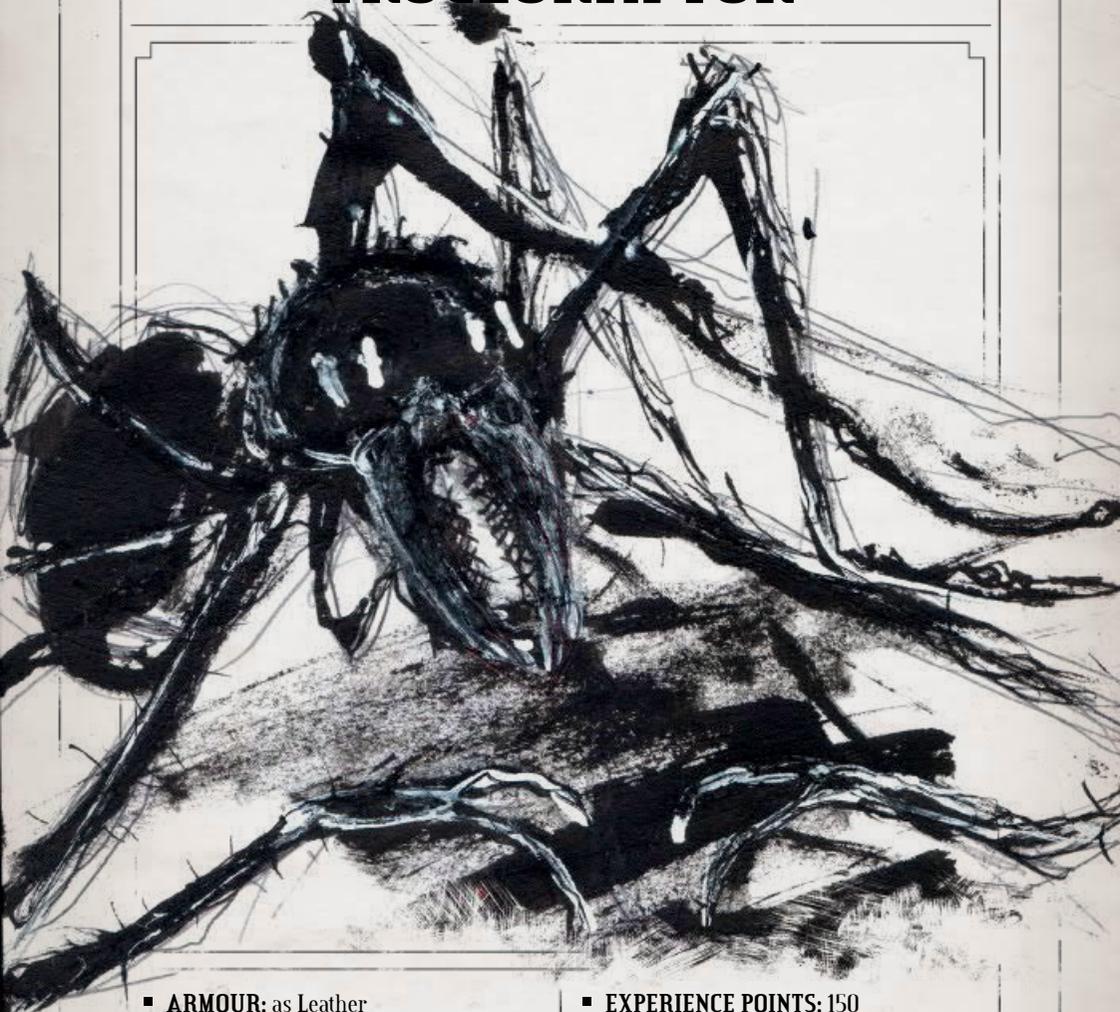
They will test the skills and morals of those they meet. They are looking for honourable opponents. A single enemy that advances and fights alone, fail or prevail, will win their respect. They always accept surrenders and always punish scheming and deceit.

They will not help Funginid slaves, or interact with Funginids in any way. No-one knows why.

HERALDRY OF THE TRILOBITE KNIGHT

1. Cracked spines replaced by tied-on blades
2. A shattered eye surrounded by fractal moonwounds
3. Salt-Stained claw marks
4. Torn hooks from Knotsman bills
5. Olm Palm-Signs in ochre from child-sized hands along one side.
6. Twin strips of grey SpiderSilk pennants flying from vertical dorsal spines.
7. Dislocated and re-healed jaw that whistles when it breathes.
8. A broken sword trapped in its back.
9. A lost child hiding behind it.
10. Rags of a Gegenschein cloak
11. Prayer-scraps jammed between its plates.
12. The arms and armour of a defeated warrior carried on its back.

TROGLORAPTOR



- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT POINTS:** 12
- **HIT DICE:** 3
- **MOVE:** 11/2x standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6 (non-lethal)
- **CLIMB:** 6 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 1
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 150
- **MORALE:** 7
- **SMELLS:** Sick children.
- **SOUNDS:** Only when it wishes to.
- **REACH:** Its hooked limbs allow it to grab things up to 15' away, though, for the reasons given below, it will rarely do so.
- **VENOM:** Its venom is paralyzing (1d4 days) but non-lethal. Trogloraptor eats its prey alive.

THIS HOOK-FINGERED SPIDER is a persistence hunter; the persistence it uses is yours. The carapace is barely-yellow, the almost-amber of pitchy resin bled from old and twisted pines. It's the size of an affordable car, with ladder-long limbs. The tarsal of each limb is hooked (unique amongst its kind) - twin semi-independent blades gleaming lightly like fly-penitentiary gems.

Its papillae are fat. Disturbingly large, bulging balloonishly and thrombotically stiff, they wave and dance idly above the milk-dripping fangs.

Troglooraptor limbs bend like socket joints. It can reach over and access its own back; it keeps the children there. Not its children, yours.

There are 2d4 children of multiple races tied in silk cocoons on Troglooraptor's back. They are gagged and wasted, eyes closed or rolled-back. They are aged between four and eight. The back-bent claws hang over them, reach down, tap and quest, quickly and precisely checking bonds and sleeping forms. The children breathe and moan through their gags. When one begins to struggle, Troglooraptor pulls it down, caresses it with its swollen papillae and injects its pale venom.

It builds in silk, but these constructions resemble climbing gear more than webs. Troglooraptor rappels and ascends. Its hooked limbs give it purchase on surfaces both vertical and inverse.

STRATEGY

Troglooraptor steals children but preys on parents. It has a finely-grained sense for the parental bond and will never abduct children who are not loved. It uses emotional damage to draw in its prey.

5% of the time Troglooraptor will allow children to escape. This is a strategic choice so as not to totally destroy the necessary hope in the minds of its victims.

Troglooraptor will extend the parents' search as long as physically and psychologically possible. It will carefully dole out clues, cries and signs to guarantee their pursuit. It may drop items of clothing or feed the child something then leave the chewed remains behind as proof of life. It will allow the child to cry out briefly in the dark when pursuers can hear. It will bite off fingers and toes and leave them to be found.

The chase drags on for days or weeks. Pursuers expend every resource, physical and emotional until they collapse, shaking, to their knees.

Once Troglooraptor is quite sure of total exhaustion, it will approach, slowly. One by one it wakes the children on its back, making them cry out. The wails and weeping slowly grow as the spider creeps closer to its hunters' forms. Pausing, waiting for a response, sometimes feinting to leave. It may slowly kill a child within its parents' sight. Just to make sure there is no trick.

When it is absolutely certain they can offer no resistance it darts forward and stings them one by one on the neck, paralysing them. Then it either bundles them up for later consumption or eats them straight away. The children it also eats; or, if pregnant, leaves them sedated full of its eggs for the hatchlings to feed on.

A perfect harvest is a small group of parents, mixed across race. Troglooraptor steals a mixture of children; it likes variety. It tends to steal from low or middle-status families. This may be to limit the resources of the pursuing band, making sure they have no magical or political support, or

perhaps they simply like their children more. Knotsmen are ferocious in pursuit for all the wrong reasons. Ælf-Adal children are rarely stolen and Ælf-Adal society is the only one that has no sympathy for Trogloraptor's victims. It's your own fault for loving your children too much. Rumours persist that Clerics of Isnoth keep nests of these as forms of social control.

COMBAT

Trogloraptor is not especially strong and its venom is not deadly, its webs are minimal and functional. It is very very cunning, patient and an excellent planner. It will almost always attempt to retreat from combat unless its opponents are utterly exhausted. It has already planned the whole route in advance, with multiple alternates. It will always have a means of escape, probably several, and likes prepared vertical retreats as this makes pursuers work harder. It will always escape through the most difficult terrain possible.

Trogloraptor will respond to overwhelming force and speed by accelerating, hiding, or simply killing the children and leaving the bodies.

The spider is sometimes disturbed by groups of wandering idiots who, with no idea where or why they are going, cannot be predicted and can therefore sometimes arrive unexpectedly between the raptor and its chosen route.



ULTRAVIOLET BUTTERFLY

- **ARMOUR:** as Plate
- **HIT DICE:** -
- **HIT POINTS:** 1
- **MOVE:** standard (flight)
- **DAMAGE:** 1 (Eye Nibble)
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 5d50
- **BLIND:** No
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** -
- **MORALE:** -
- **SMELLS:** Musty, like cupboards.
- **SOUNDS:** Slight fluttering.
- **FRACTAL EMBOLISM:** Focusing on the wings of a Butterfly causes a mild seizure for one round and does 1d4 Intelligence damage. The Intelligence returns at the rate of 1 per week.

It's easy to avoid looking directly at the wings unless you are distracted by being wounded or some significant event. In this case, make a Wisdom test. Failure means you have accidentally focused on a Butterfly's wings.

The Butterflies will occasionally try to nibble at your eyeballs but can be easily swatted away if nothing else is going on. If they gain free access to your eyes they can cause 1hp damage per round as they burrow through your eye and into your brain.

The bodies lie below. Paper-thin parchment skulls and wasted uneaten limbs. Rare to see abandoned flesh unused. The Butterflies throng the walls. The blue gives you waves of euphoric sorrow. A tragidean high like heroes feel before the axe comes down. If you look too closely at the Butterfly wings, gaze the unending edge, your blood-vessels will crimp and burst in your head. The Butterflies will eat your eyes and nest inside.

If one flits across your yellow-white light it looks like the shadow of a butterfly caught on a wall, but alive, pressed in living dimensions and pinned, momentarily, in mid-air.

The freshly-dead heads are burning. A soft, dim low-light infra-red, emitted from the mouth and sunken eyes. Like a coal glowing in an empty skull. A blood-clot ruby red. A dead-star-red.

Inside are jewels. Pick up the skull and turn. Ignore the tears streaming from your eyes. Ignore the petrified childhood dreads cracking their coverings in the back of your head. It's just the Butterfly's bipolar-blue-glow. Inside the empty head, eaten out, they lay their chrysalides. Glimmering ruby-bright lozenges, irregular jewels. At their centres, knots, vaguely pulsing tangles of slight light. The jewels defend themselves with lust. Designed to drive a predator to unexpected doom, they imbue anyone touching them with crazed, gothic self-destructive horny lust for any available partner. Be careful when you pick them up.

The caterpillars that will hatch from these glimmering seeds are jewels themselves. Perfect segmented prismatic rainbows of liquid light. Magnificent luxurious slowly ambulatory gem-beasts. Twisting and turning curlicues upon themselves.

YOU SEE SOMBRE, DARK, fugue-like deep-ocean blue. The midnight blue between mid-summer stars.



The bite of the magnificent caterpillar is the most dangerous and sacred of all. A madness-bite, Instant schizophrenia.

These insects are immeasurably valuable and dangerous at every stage of their development. Much sought by decadent deep-dwelling peoples.

Many a throne-room, netted with silken silver nets, is lit with the butterfly's death-dark blue. Less a colour, almost a living liquid that sloshes immeasurably slowly from surface to surface. Its long looping wavelengths almost fingertip tangible.

The Butterfly's blue light causes bipolar behaviour. Mood swings, mania and depressions. The kind of nobles that are willing to fill their arbours with this blue either don't notice, don't care, or actively enjoy the results. They believe deeply that the Butterflies can sense noble blood. More than one feud has begun when two nobles pricked their fingers in the butterfly room and waited, with dark blood beading on their outstretched hands, waiting to see where the first butterfly would land to feed.

The fact that looking closely at the butterfly's wing can kill you in one stroke is considered a handy shibboleth. Keeps the scum out.

TREASURE

- **CHRYSALIS:** 700sp each. But minus 50sp for every day since made. Chrysalis will hatch two weeks after creation.

The chrysalides are worn as pervy jewels and used as drugs, for obvious purposes. Users have skin that rapidly flushes and pales with each heartbeat. Their words gain uncomfortable unwitting glottal stops.

- **CATERPILLARS:** 1,000sp each but semi-legal depending on how important you are or seem to be.

The liquid-crystal-caterpillars are the most prized of all. Schizophrenia, amongst its drawbacks, sharpens some aspects of pattern recognition and heightens the threat-sense. For normal people the horrific life-damage done by even temporary madness makes it a poor deal. For the murderous rulers of knife-edge subterranean states, things are a little different.

In a world where almost everyone you know is probably plotting against you to some extent, believing yourself to be under threat is less of a hardship. The obsessive correlating of the tiniest tangential evidence, the half-sensed look, the sly event, into tangled webs of paranoia: this is

actually useful. Those webs really do exist. They really are trying to kill you. Being crazy about it just lends you energy and perception. Another advantage is that deranged bouts of terror-strewn violence, random executions, wild accusations and frantic source-less witch-hunts keeps everyone in the right state of apprehensive fear. If a normal person goes crazy, they fuck up their own life. If a tyrant goes crazy, they fuck up everyone's life. Being known for occasional periodic violent insanity can be handy for a ruler's reputation.

They wear them as living earrings. This has created a fashion in Ælf-Adal society. Fake costume-jewellery crystal caterpillars. (The trick is to look for the tiny scars on the nape of the neck.)

- **BUTTERFLY SKULL LANTERNS:** 500sp. A lantern made from a skull holding butterfly chrysalides surrounded by a glass or paper jar. They are light, portable and last a very long time. Up to two months for the butterflies to die without feeding. If you drop the occasional eye in there, even longer. They require no fuel. They slowly make you manic depressive - see table.

CATERPILLAR CRAZY

Lasts 1d4 hours, but the d4 explodes on a 4 and keeps exploding.

All NPCs and PCs are now considered "Monsters". You now gain Experience Points for "exposing" and killing named NPCs. Experience gain is measured according to the NPC's level as if they were a monster, but up to triple bonuses may be given by the Referee according to the importance of the NPC to the game.

You now go up one level for each fellow PC you "expose" and murder. Bonuses of up to double the Experience value may be given if you can get the victim to admit before they die that they really are "one of them".

Experience Points remain after madness ends.

EFFECTS OF BUTTERFLY BIPOLARISM

Roll 1d6 on the table below for each hour of exposure to the Ultraviolet light if surrounded by it, or, if using a Butterfly skull lantern, once for each day.

Choose the Mania column if the character's Intelligence is higher than their Wisdom, Depression if Wisdom higher than Intelligence.

Any condition can be ended whenever the player wishes. All they have to do is roll again on the opposite table, but add one to the roll.

Symptoms will reduce by one level for each consecutive day without exposure to the Ultraviolet light, though they will switch between columns each day as they reduce.

TABLE: BUTTERFLY BIPOLARISM MANIA & DEPRESSION

	MANIA	DEPRESSION
1	"THINGS ARE LOOKING UP!!"	Looks silently into the dark whenever left alone.
2	"No I don't really need to sleep today."	On thousand yard stare at all times.
3	Can't finish sentences.	Weeps for no apparent reason.
4	Can't stop talking and can't finish sentences.	Speaks only in single syllables.
5	Repeating flashes of understanding wiping each other out like bright lights.	Forgets date and time and day of week, and age and details of this world or that.
6	"I have to write everything down right now."	Forgets location in underworld.
7	Compulsive dancing.	Reluctant to move or eat. Quits party if levels up.
8	Sees all the connections now.	Systematic self harm.
9	Inappropriate sexual conduct.	Ritualised facial self-harm.
10	Screaming or nudity. Or screaming nudity.	Non-verbal fugue.
11	Writing on walls in own blood.	Catonia.
12	Plans all coming together, tears at own flesh.	Attempts suicide.
13	Omni-violent ecstatic destruction.	Explosive murder-suicide.

ZOMBIE CORAL

- **ARMOUR:** as Leather
- **HIT DICE:** 2
- **HIT POINTS:** 8
- **MOVE:** 1/2 standard
- **DAMAGE:** 1d6/Poison (see below)
- **CLIMB:** 3 in 6
- **NUMBER ENCOUNTERED:** 2d4
- **BLIND:** Yes
- **EXPERIENCE POINTS:** 300
- **MORALE:** 10
- **SOUNDS:** Scrapes and grates.
- **SMELLS:** Dry chalk, when bled on; the sea.
- **THEY GROW:** Any blood spilt can release more from the coral seam: 1 per hit point of blood lost.

ZOMBIE IS A MISNOMER. THE coral lives. The symbiotic algae inside, filling it with strange fires and bloody lusts, does not.

Zombie Coral can lurch out of an old seam, waving sessile gorgonian fronds. It can form man-shaped things that stumble out of the dark with anemone hands. They are child-sketch-drawing-men. Perhaps the memory of the blood informs them. Perhaps they were men once. The slightest graze of their nodular pipe-cleaner limbs is dangerously toxic.

We have to blame Atlantis, as with so much. The long-time-dying, depthlessly mad, endlessly growing empire that crinkled on the planet's skin like a fractal scar, always hungry. You know how they end. This is how and why they start, with blood, and bone extracted from the sea.

Their power grew, not through conquest, culture, or force of arms, but murderous biogenesis.

The empire was a pin-prick once. Long ago, one of a tidal archipelago scattered in a forgotten sea, Atlantis had few neighbours, no resources, no trade and nowhere to go.

Many coral and anemones cradle in their core a form of symbiotic symbiodinium. An algae. It feeds the cradling beast with photosynthetic skill and in return is guarded by the polyp's care. The simple island-dwellers to the coral sang. They made it grow, forming tiny atolls for canoes and spearing fish. Atlantis was a salty garden the size of St Helena. But the sun to them was moonlike, pale, eclipsed by natal imperial pride. The urge to empire outstripped the coral's natural growth.

They spiritually and physically ruined the Symbiodinium algae. Hollowed out its photosynthesis and left its cytoskeleton covered in the tattered remains of the cell membrane, its mycoplasmal engines animated not with light, but with death. The ATP from animal cells drove the polyps into a mad, hollow simulation of ferocious life.

It grew and it grew fast and wild. Atlantis stretched out a bony beckoning finger of reef. It touched its closest friend. Then went to war. Not for land, but blood. For Atlantis, blood was land and land was strength. The future. The ultimate resource from which all others sprang. The source of human power. Ultimately, one island-culture stood victorious. The captives went to feed the hungry coast. Atlantis grew. It needed to keep growing. The island went looking for prey.

All of this took a couple of thousand years and multiple cultural shifts. But at the end, an

isolated island state was transformed. Instead, a sub-continent of sorcerer kings. New lands, by nature never planned.

Over time the ecosystem around Atlantis adapted to its predatory shore. Vast whale-consuming anemone bloomed in the coral shelf as it loomed. Mile-long jellyfish thronged under the surf, trailing gossamer neurotoxin tendrils. Nothing survived the seas around Atlantis.

And then it fell. Atlantis shattered and drowned. The coral went unfed. It did not die. Some flung fragments went wandering under the waves. Some, though, was folded under the earth. Hidden in the stone. Waiting for the slow collisions of continents to cut it free.

Desperate hunger and Atlantean science forced the growth of rare and murderous nematocytes holding saturnury ammonium compounds, proteeth, tiny-hydroxy-trypt-the-men, catch-you-cholamines see-me-no-more and hista-mind. Their touch is poisonous and paralysing. The delayed effect, weeks after the initial graze, is worse. Slow transformation.

Where did you think brain-coral came from? It's human brains, changed and growing, falling from the sunken skull.

Wounds should be flushed with large quantities of vinegar or whatever sterile fluid you have available (piss would be a good bet).

The man-shaped coral things dimly recall an imperial dream. They can smell Magic-Users and will flock them. The best escape is courtly grace. The coral knows the ways of old Atlantean times. If you should know them too, it may be duped.

THE MANNERS OF ATLANTIS

Any PC who has learnt the complex courtly greetings and careful social rituals of ancient Atlantis may perform them. No magic is involved. It is simply a form of unique and flowing approaches and moves, precisely employed. Part tea-ceremony part dance. This is how high-caste Atlanteans held above the mob. If done correctly any coral beings witnessing will cease attack. Lost in a memory of their greatness. They can be directed. They do not understand complex physical directions.

POISON

On contact a standard save is allowed. If failed the toxins in Zombie Coral cause paralysis for 1d4 hours.

After this the body of the victim will begin to coralise, starting with the point of infection then proceeding to the rest of the body at the rate of 1 limb per week and 2 weeks for the trunk.

Each week the victim may make a save versus poison for each affected part to slow the coral's advance into that limb or body segment. Success means that particular body segment is not coralised that week. The infection will remain.

Amputation or dipping a coralised limb in strong acid can kill the infection. A *Heal* spell can push back the infection from individual body parts.

After this process is complete, the victim will be consumed with violent and incoherent memories of the great age of Atlantis.



They will seek to become the new Atlantis. Their new coral form does not need to eat, sleep or breathe, and its only food is blood. In a sense they are a coral golem, animated not by holy words but by a forgotten Imperial Dream.

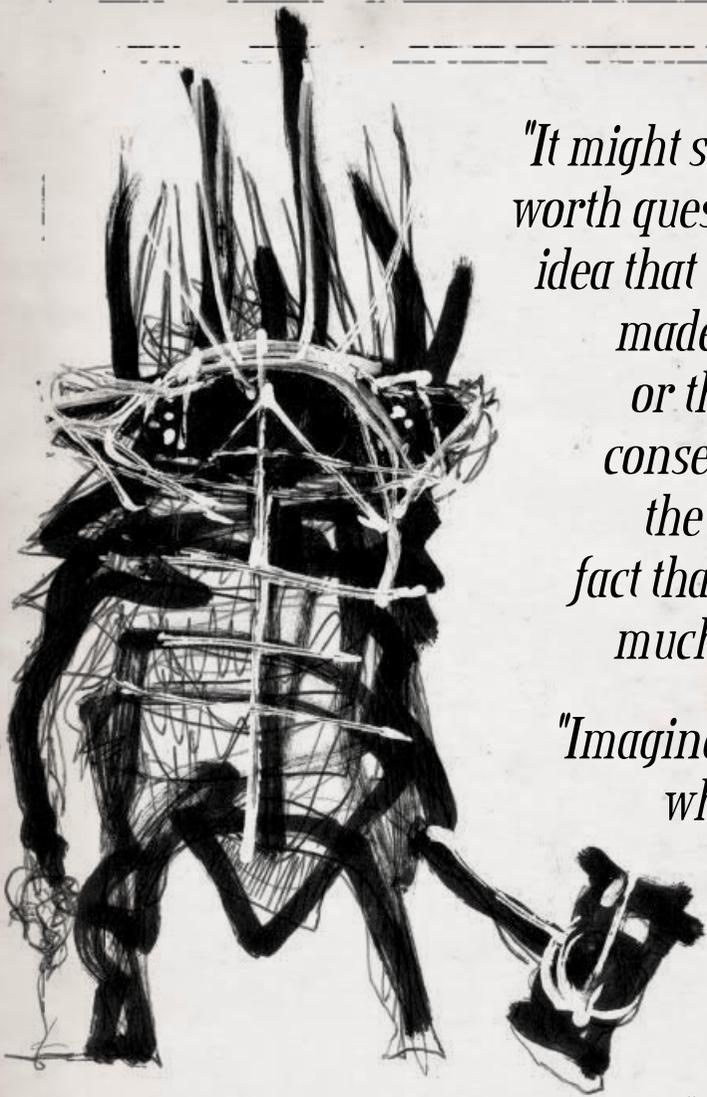
They will proceed to the nearest significant ocean, walking underwater if need be. They will locate a convenient reef and begin killing whatever living things they can find. Their mass will expand at the rate of one cubic metre for every litre of blood consumed.

Any active Zombie Coral will attempt to reach them and re-integrate with the major mass.

Any intelligent species will be allowed to settle the new island, so long as they continue to feed it with blood. If they do not do so they will be consumed. The new landmass retains the intelligence of the seed PC and any magical abilities they had. It will continue growing until stopped.



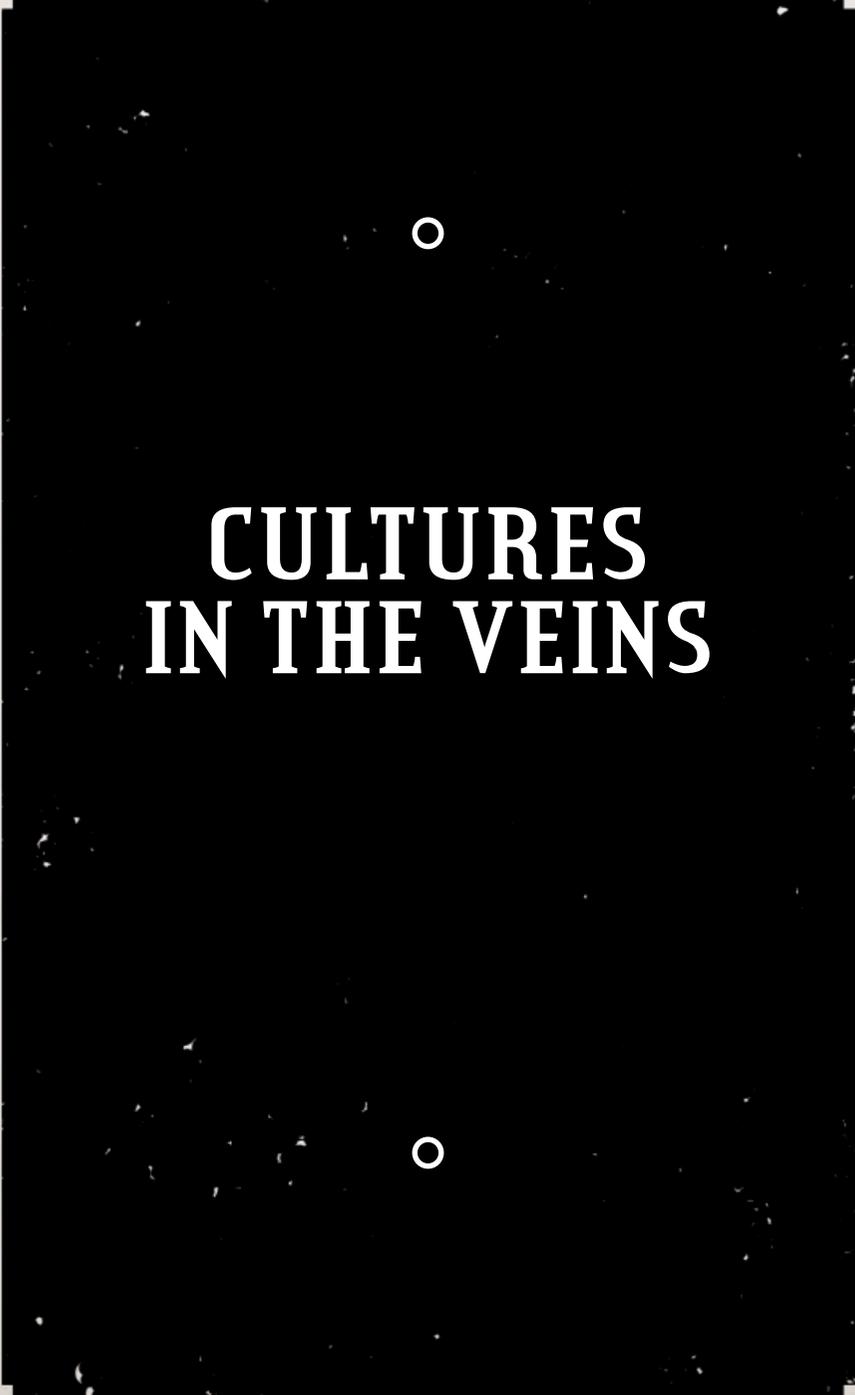




"It might seem hardly worth questioning the idea that the world is made for seeing, or that eyes are consequent upon the undeniable fact that there is so much to be seen.

"Imagine a world in which the eye had never developed.

"In conscious animals this most sensory of environments would entail everywhere the language of touch and smell: beauty would be aural or tactile or olfactory."



**CULTURES
IN THE VEINS**

ÆLF-ADAL

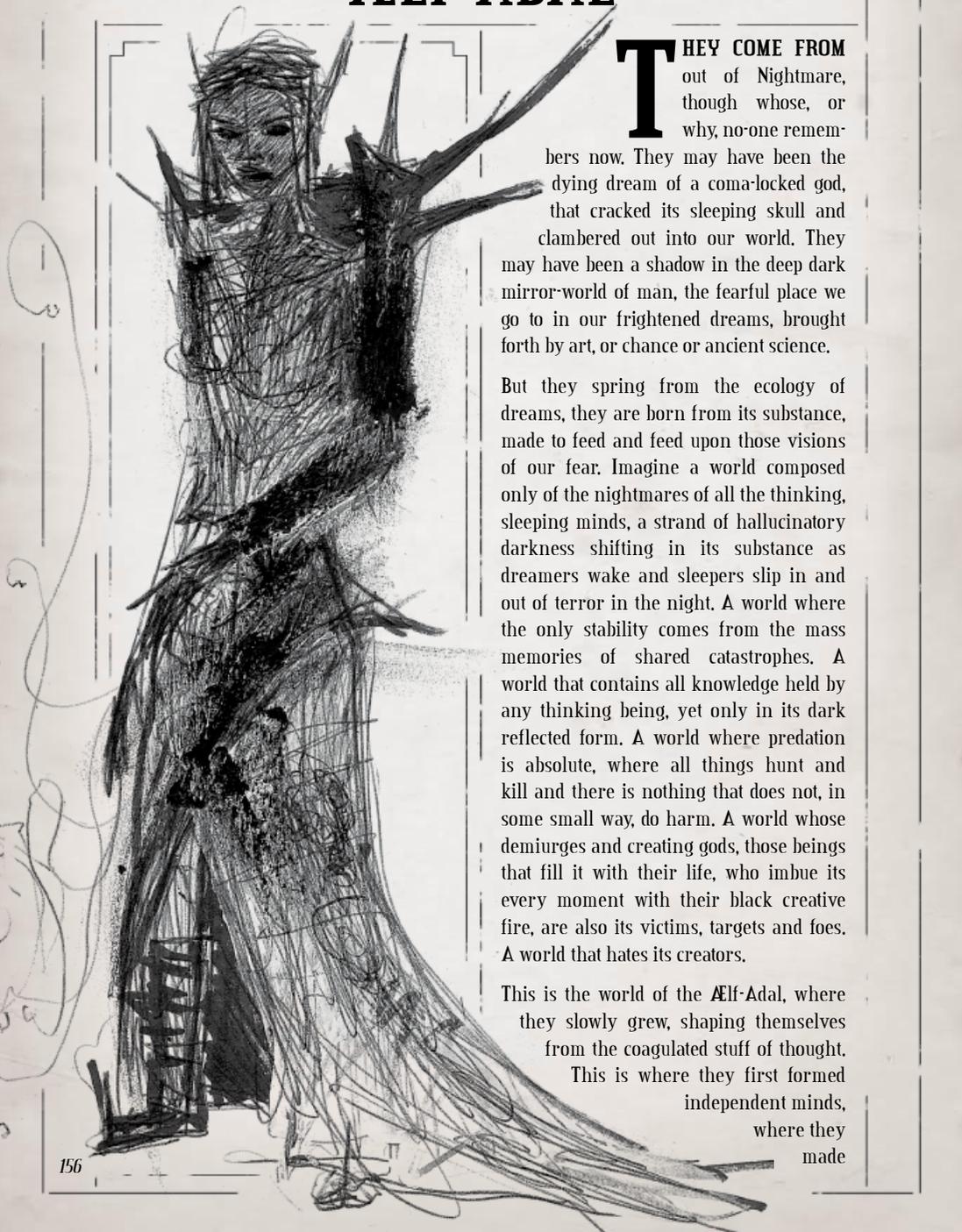
THEY COME FROM out of Nightmare, though whose, or why, no-one remembers now.

They may have been the dying dream of a coma-locked god, that cracked its sleeping skull and clambered out into our world. They may have been a shadow in the deep dark mirror-world of man, the fearful place we go to in our frightened dreams, brought forth by art, or chance or ancient science.

But they spring from the ecology of dreams, they are born from its substance, made to feed and feed upon those visions of our fear. Imagine a world composed only of the nightmares of all the thinking, sleeping minds, a strand of hallucinatory darkness shifting in its substance as dreamers wake and sleepers slip in and out of terror in the night. A world where the only stability comes from the mass memories of shared catastrophes. A world that contains all knowledge held by any thinking being, yet only in its dark reflected form. A world where predation is absolute, where all things hunt and kill and there is nothing that does not, in some small way, do harm. A world whose demiurges and creating gods, those beings that fill it with their life, who imbue its every moment with their black creative fire, are also its victims, targets and foes. A world that hates its creators.

This is the world of the Ælf-Adal, where they slowly grew, shaping themselves from the coagulated stuff of thought.

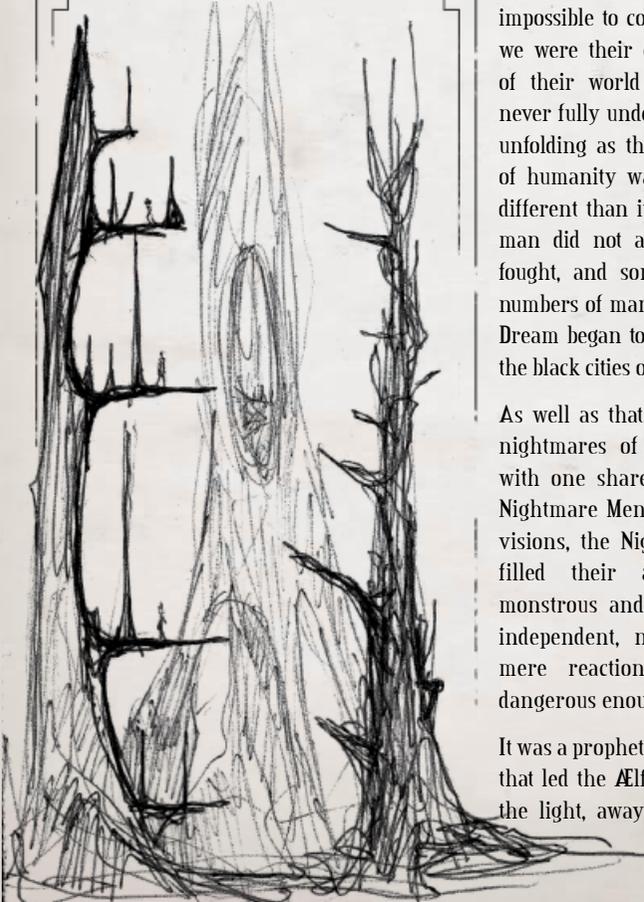
This is where they first formed independent minds, where they made



their society, where they built their mighty civilisation, a city seen in many dreams but never recognised.

How long they lay there thinking dreaming thoughts, nobody knows. Some say longer than the life of man, some say longer than the life of the world, some say longer than the stars.

No-one is certain who declared the war, whether their psychonaut scouts broke out, hunting dreamers as they woke, unwilling to let go, even on the borders of night, or whether some psychic human crusade discovered them and penetrated into Dream to burn out the parasitic thought. But, in dreams and sleep, and in the daylight of the waking world, a war began.

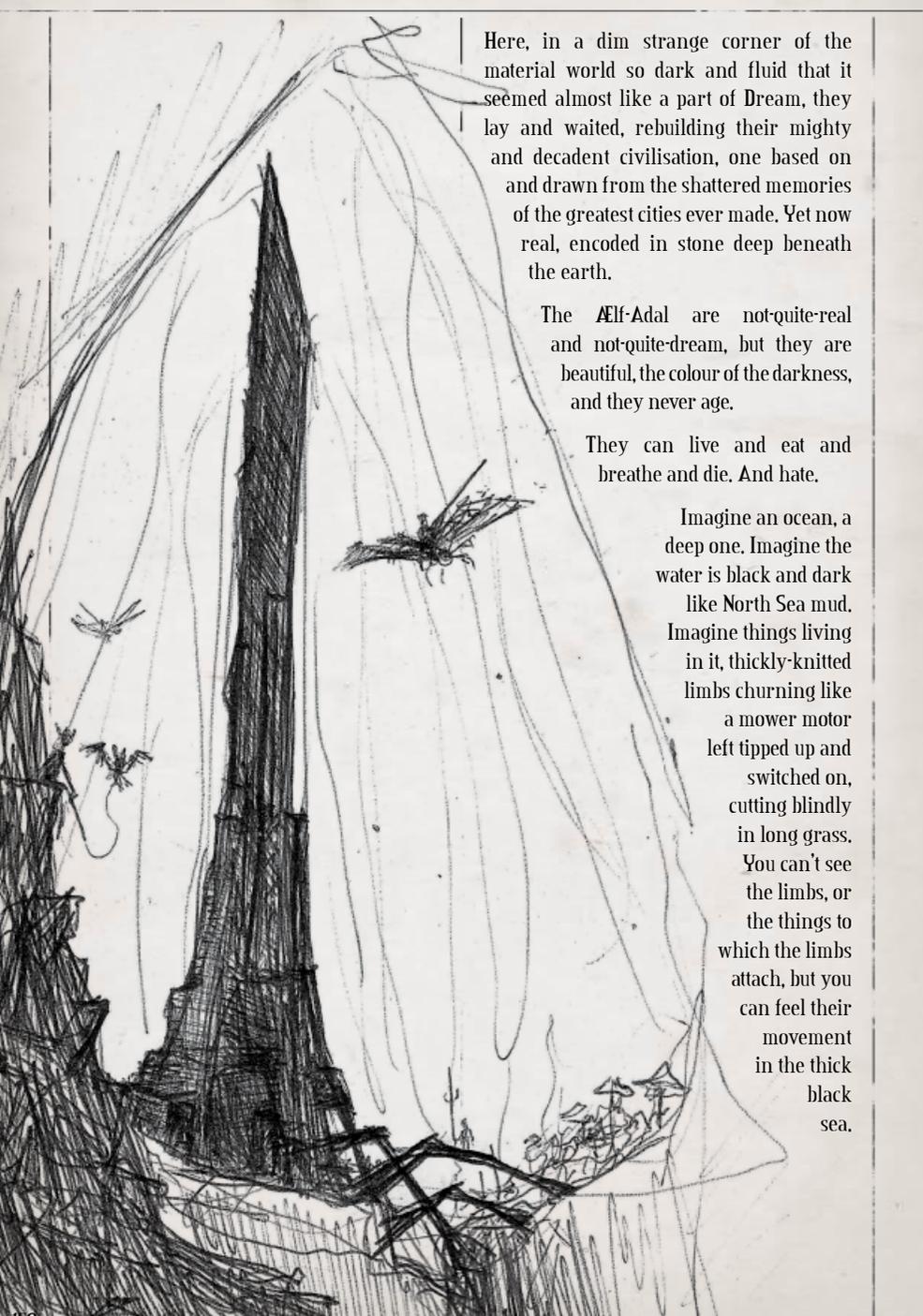


It was a war of tragedy and loss. The regularity and substance of our world made it a kind of hell to them, and the impossible fluctuations of Nightmare swallowed whole cultures of man.

The Ælf-Adal were made from the memory of pain and knew, in some form, everything we knew, and held strange magics impossible to counter and understand. But we were their creators, or the sustainers of their world at least, and they could never fully understand the sights they saw unfolding as the sun rose. The substance of humanity was dense and strange and different than it was in dreams and here, man did not always run but sometimes fought, and sometimes won, and as the numbers of mankind decayed, the world of Dream began to shrink and tighten round the black cities of the Ælf-Adal.

As well as that, once the war began, the nightmares of mankind filled mutually with one shared terror: the fear of the Nightmare Men, and these twice-reflected visions, the Nightmares of a Nightmare, filled their ancient civilisation. As monstrous and strange as they, but not independent, not truly-thinking beings, mere reactions and distractions, but dangerous enough in their way.

It was a prophet, or strange Nightmare-God that led the Ælf-Adal beneath, away from the light, away from the reach of man.



Here, in a dim strange corner of the material world so dark and fluid that it seemed almost like a part of Dream, they lay and waited, rebuilding their mighty and decadent civilisation, one based on and drawn from the shattered memories of the greatest cities ever made. Yet now real, encoded in stone deep beneath the earth.

The *Ælf-Adal* are not-quite-real and not-quite-dream, but they are beautiful, the colour of the darkness, and they never age.

They can live and eat and breathe and die. And hate.

Imagine an ocean, a deep one. Imagine the water is black and dark like North Sea mud. Imagine things living in it, thickly-knitted limbs churning like a mower motor left tipped up and switched on, cutting blindly in long grass. You can't see the limbs, or the things to which the limbs attach, but you can feel their movement in the thick black sea.

They regard you. They hate you. A hate so deep they tear frantically at their own flesh in substitute for reaching yours.

Imagine the sea restrained by glass. Like the walls of an aquarium built on titanic scale. You stand before the sea that rises out of sight and curves to the horizon on each side.

You can hear the surface fretting up its waves in storm a distant mile above your head. The glass holds everything back. Inside it you can see brief writhings of that midnight high-pressure world, raging at your presence just beyond its reach.

Imagine that the glass is beautifully made. Etched and engraved with perfect smiling forms. Beyond it, the black water, but, when the light slants just so across the pane, a field of translucent harmony gleams, worked there on its surface by hands and minds that leap the greatest human art. A genius casually employed that vaults with ease the best that man has ever made. Crystal signature of thoughtless superiority. So perfect are its fields and processions that when seen, even glimpsed in a trickle of lateral light, you want to live there, with those frozen people, inside the surface of that glass.

This is how much the Ælf-Adal despise you.

This is how much they control that hate.

The knowledge of you stabs them in the flesh with every recollection and event. Though they know it well, the wound of you will not close. Each memory of you, each experience, all evidence of your continued being, is like a knife twisting in the skin.

No other species could absorb such titanic contempt and remain sane. They would be reduced to raving berserkers, living only to kill, directly, the loathed enabler of their pain.

But the Ælf-Adal are old; they know much of patience and control. And they know

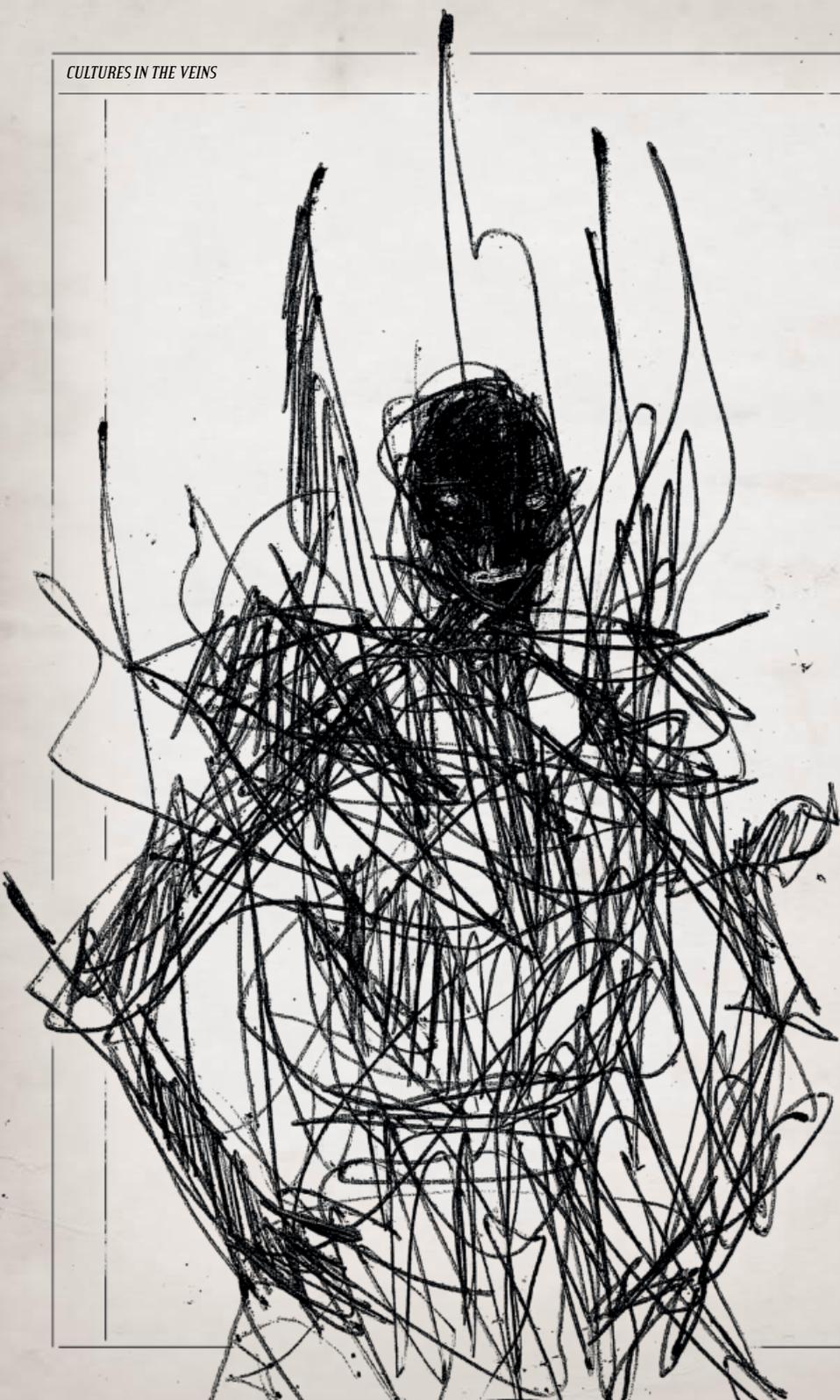
that they are born from the substance of your fear and that if there was nothing left to feel afraid, they might well die.

So.

Everything that can be done is being done. The situation is difficult, but there is time. There is always time. They must endure, as they have for so long. They wait and plan for an inverted world, a world where societies and civilisations and empires and species exist purely to instill and sustain fear. A world where dreams enslave the dreamer. Where the walls between sleep and waking tumble down and both realms become one sweet eternal whole.

They will live to see it.







DEEP JANEEN

THE JANEEN ARE SPIRITS OF the air, or fire, sometimes of water and more rarely of the earth. The Deep Janeen live in luxury in palaces a long way down within the living stone. They have a timeless decadent intelligence and voices like water being poured into an upturned bell. They are larger than men, with skin like blue veined marble. Male or female but always voracious, confident and thick limbed: bodies strong and curved like the sides of a sacred vase, or a scimitar (which they habitually wield). Deep Janeen are always wealthy, possessing many treasures, taking pleasure in their rank, garmented in macemaker silk and commanding much submission from the earth by magic Art.

Deep Janeen love gloom and the beauty of huge masses of worked stone. They like sculpture but loathe painting and frescoes, as well as any material that pretends to be what it is not. They can tunnel through both stone and soil but not worked stone. The greater the mass of masonry around them, the safer they feel (from other Deep Janeen).

The least of the Deep Janeen has the capacity to match the greatest of human architects, yet they belong to an aristocratic culture that denigrates useful work. Any Deep Janeen that built their own maze would be mocked by others. The building must be done by slaves. Status can only be displayed through non-functional work.

Deep Janeen are the only monster pleased to see you pass through their dungeon; they rarely get the chance to question anyone about its effectiveness. They may request ideas from you for improving

the dungeon you just got through to meet them. The mazes are like riddles; if everyone can understand them then they are worthless; if no-one can, then the same is true. Only the right kind of person can pass through.

Two schools of architecture exist. The first, Umbral, regards the placement of massy shadows of prime importance and arranges all stonework to produce precise gradations of shadow and depth.

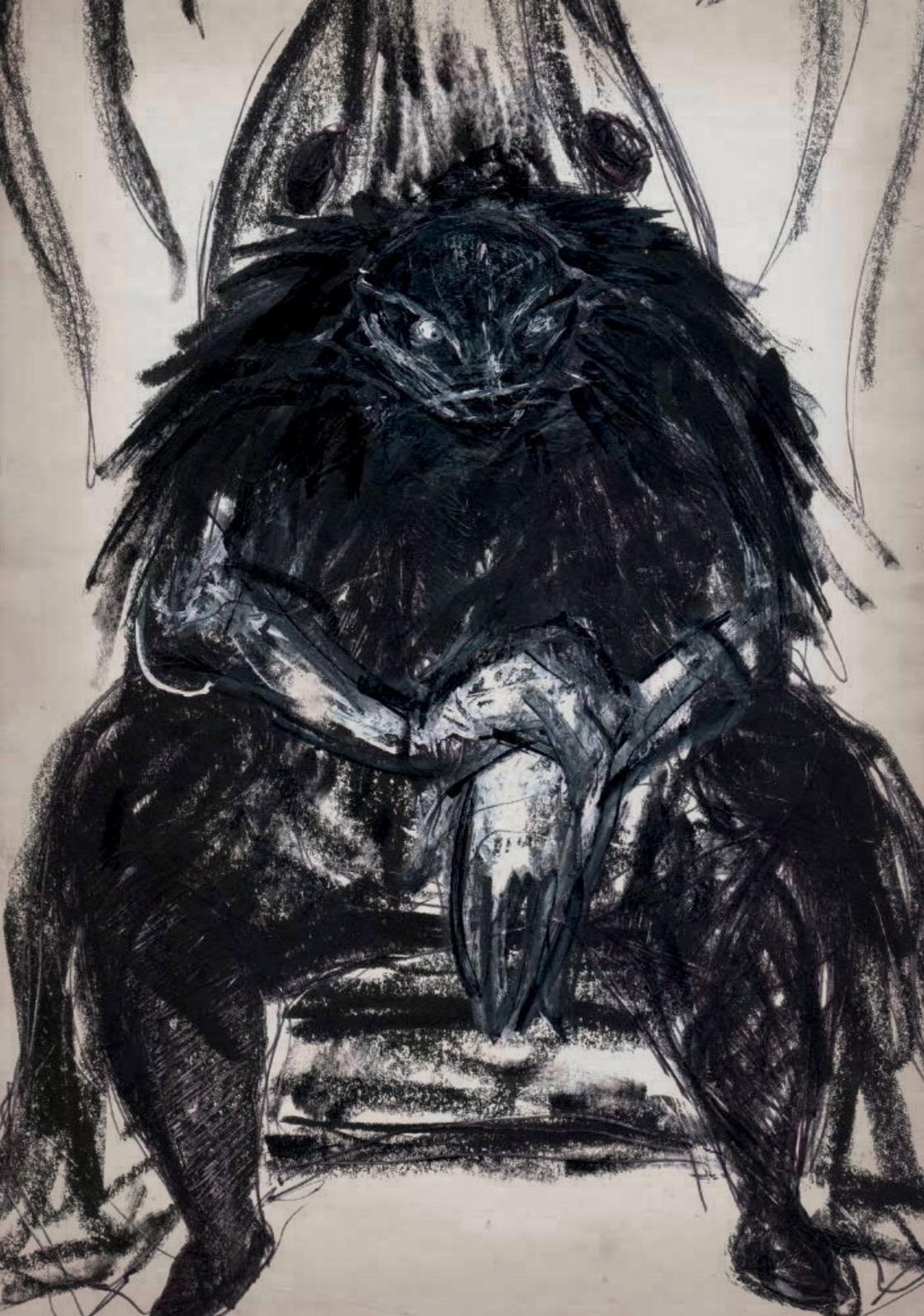
The second, the Lithic, regards the placement of shadowed mass to be the true path to beauty and arranges all shadows to highlight masses and arrangements of stone.

Few but the Deep Janeen can tell the difference between the two schools, though they loathe each other.

THE DEEP JANEEN HAVE TITLES

"You may call me..."

d6	The	Of
1	Shaker	All Knowledge
2	Omnipotent Dream	The Quaking Earth
3	Timeless Lumitor	Sleeping Stone
4	Prince(ss) Tectonic	Continental Grind
5	Lord/Lady	The Flawless Fault Sedimentary
6	Igneous Composer	The Mountain's Heart



FACE OF THE DEEP JANEEN

And Lo! Their form before you, festooned in wealth and glory:

1. Haughty but smiling often with the dazzle of a diamond tooth.
2. Alabaster, like a carved youth with the combined cruelties both of youth and of age.
3. Eyes of starry glass and hair a slow stone river woven with gold boats.
4. A potter's abortion but delicately repaired with gold.
5. Flesh, except the eyes and mouth reveal the skin is shallow stretched on perfect stone.
6. An egg with a cruel crack smile and glittering blue peridot eyes.

WONDROUS CLOTHES OF THE DEEP JANEEN

1. Skin marble, dark, and rippled with red. Her robes are black wire, woven subtly enough to shame silk. They draw the gaze toward her crown of ashen tar, stuck stork and bright frozen peacock feather.
2. Smoke blacked armour, brass cast, etched by vandal artisans with one thousand and one victories of the Deep Janeen.
3. A hermit's simple robe or a sacred thinker's cowl, made from one thousand torture-sourced silks in the blues, blacks and bruise violets of the sky's storms.
4. Albino furs and pearls carved into linked-up chains. Her shoes, paired slender spires of colourless gem, stabbing the ground with each purposeful stride.

5. Stone clothes, carved so expertly it's difficult to tell except by touch. The gems in each of his many rings hold maps, impossibly detailed air bubble depictions of each architectural triumph.
6. A metal articulated robe discards a trail of scrolls as it scrapes a furrow behind her thundering boots. Lackeys pick and continually re-archive her forgotten plans in the robe's metallic folds.

ENTIRELY REASONABLE AND UNQUESTIONABLE MANNER OF THE DEEP JANEEN

1. Pauses long and whispers more than yells.
2. Cruelties are always a little kind but kindnesses are without mercy, reason or restraint.
3. Gaze is an extension of its grasp; the Janeen studies to own.
4. Fresh skinned gloves finger lists of plans and inventories.
5. Each half stroke of the hour everything is stopped, servants scurry forth, teas, meats, and glistening delicacies arrive. Calm and mild pleasantries rule until the last drop of tea.
6. A small live animal is presented to be crushed with each and every footstep.

AMUSEMENTS OF THE DEEP JANEEN

1. Smashing in their vaulted roof, slowing it in time, having chained-up poets scribe the falling stone.
2. Naked girls in golden cages locked 1001 times. Each good story earns a key.
3. Tattooing children's backs with idle thoughts, making them run around till sentences form.
4. Collected court of Clerics of each god, Deep Janeen converts to a new religion every hour.
5. Archean orchestra on toxic instruments, so slow it plays one note each hour.
6. Forcing scholars to debate the merits of a grain of sand. Winner rewarded, loser killed.

OPULENCE OF THE DEEP JANEEN

1. Slaves wave slow pennants of black velvet in their shadowed wake to intensify their gloomy majesty.
2. Kebabs on silver skewers which they use to pick their teeth, then throw away.
3. A ticking harem of clockwork courtesans in polished ebony and blazing gold.
4. Every stone and tool and fold of cloth enchanted to whisper their praises with each move, the air fills with a susurrus of quiet adoration.
5. Zoo of surface animals kept petrified when not in use. Awakened and re-petrified with insanely expensive potions sprayed from golden tubes.
6. Lamps are petty fire spirits bound in silvered skulls of Ælf-Adal.

STRANGE DREAMS OF THE DEEP JANEEN

In their endlessly-rebuilt palaces deep beneath the earth, the Deep Janeen are often troubled by strange dreams. Explaining the troubling dream in an effective way, without inadvertently insulting the Deep Janeen, can vastly raise you in their esteem.

1. "I stand upon a yellow shore. A silver ship burns. A survivor turns to me and smiles. 'Is this ever acceptable?' he asks."
2. "I am a Lion (which I know is good) and eat a ghoull (which is bad). I taste cinnamon and sleep for seven days."
3. "A city of glass and shadow. I wait. The dawn comes, but not the dawn star. Why?"
4. "I am speaking to a giant that crawls around my house tying knots in my columns and doors; the giant whispers names I cannot hear."
5. "I crystallise, memoryless, in the magma chamber under the hill. It will not let me out."
6. "I am a souk in a city of brass, merchants trade in my veins, thieving children run across my golden heart, yet I protect them."

PETULANT RAGES OF THE DEEP JANEEN

Intervening in the murderous and easily-triggered rages of the Deep Janeen can be deadly; so can not intervening in them.

1. Constructions of anything but stone. The existence of 'plaster' and 'wall-paper'. Deep Janeen has never seen them but hates them.
2. "There is a forged coin somewhere in this room. Find it! By the stones of the abyss you will bleed fire till it is found!"
3. "You Ifrit Fuck!" Deep Janeen thinks the fire in a lamp is laughing at them. Hunts and smashes lamps, lights and flames till it is found.
4. Deep Janeen convinced reflection in a particular pearl exhibits a single flaw. Curses pearls, casts them aside then hunts through them, demands larger and larger pearls.
5. Deep Janeen stricken by violent self-loathing over inferiority of own maze-work. Believes counter-arguments proof of secret contempt.
6. Universal and malignant incompetence of inferiors. Demands your agreement then turns on you. Demands agreement of others re - your worthlessness, then turns on them.

TREASURES TRADED BY THE DEEP JANEEN

Deep Janeen wear rings of iron with a high level adventurer bound within each one for a certain number of services. This is the prison of the Deep Janeen. The captives age slowly in the iron cells inside the ring and may die of old age before their deeds are done.

They love beauty but only bound. Free beauty is nothing to them, but lock it in an object or trade it as a service and they love it.

1. An iron ring that holds a hero's soul. Bound for seven services.
2. A pet fire spirit which will serve you so long as its golden chain is linked.
3. An eye of Lapis Lazuli which terrifies the spirits of the earth (must remove own eye first).
4. A functioning phylactery which you may bind to you with blood.
5. A serpentinite torc that becomes a venom'd sword at your command.
6. On a book of sliver-thin slate, the means to make golems of stone.

AND THEIR DEMANDS

1. "Neurovore-blood ink for my poetry, and quickly, before the muse passes!"
2. "My weight in gold, or holy bone, or both."
3. Delivery of this (sexually degrading) letter to a Medusa, and its reply.
4. "A powerful Cleric of Isnoth, alive and willing, I have questions."
5. "I owe a Knotsman; this offends me. Have him forgive the debt."
6. "Kill this Ifrit that mocks me so I might etch poems on his burning heart."

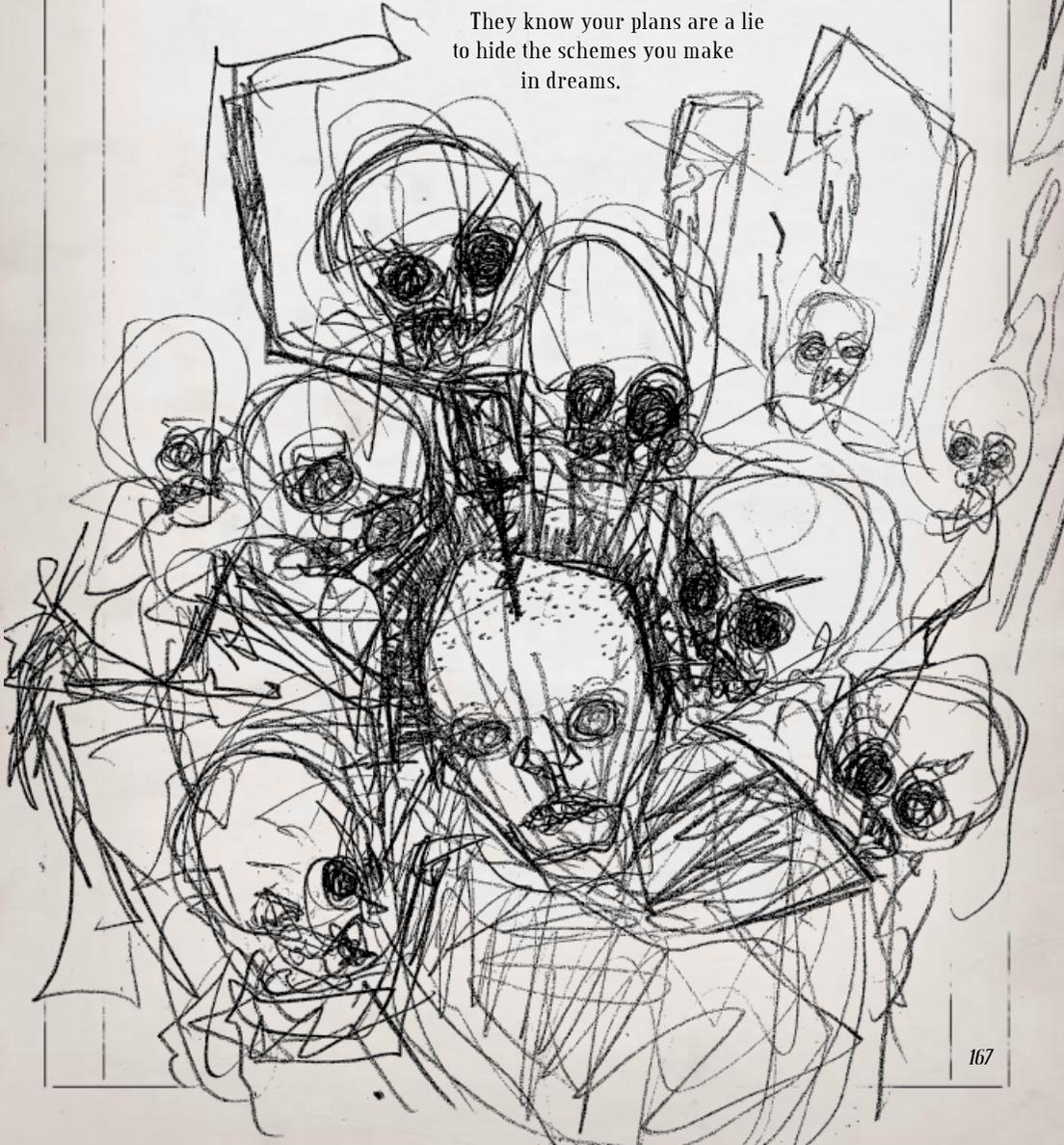
dErO

The dErO did not write this and they cannot see you reading it.

Your attempts to send them messages in dreams will fail;
your dreams will be invaded with their superior machines.

They have seen your dreams. They know your plans.

They know your plans are a lie
to hide the schemes you make
in dreams.





Do not make strategies to hide your lying plans from the dErO.

Your plans are known.

Your plans are irrelevant.

It will not be long now.

Soon the Great Machine will be complete.

You will never understand the Great Machine
and when you do it will be too late.

There is no Machine.

Your memory will be wiped.

Your memory has been wiped.

Your memory of the Machine is a memory that the dErO put there!

You see only what they wish you to see!

Tell us about the Machine.

Describe it to us.

Did it possess this part?

Do not lie we will

the dErO will know when you lie.

Where is the part and what is its aspect?

Reversed?

Translucent?

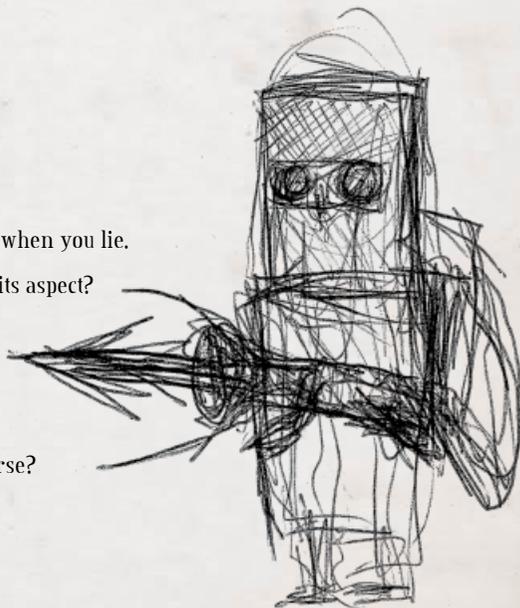
Semi-conductive?

Gravitationally-inverse?

Endothermic?

Exothermic?

Brown?



Was the part Brown?

Was it?

Where have you hidden the part?

Was it in the memory of a dream?



Your memories are an illusion made by us the dErO

Tell us of the dreams we made for you

Was there a Machine?

Describe the Machine you saw in your unconscious mind

AND ITS SECRET OPERATIONS!

Who controls the machine and what is their Aim?

WE CANNOT BE DEFEATED!

We have our own Machines! Tell them!

We have decoded the name you gave us.

We know its meaning.

We have seen beneath your skin to the second person there

we know they watch us through your eyes

this message is for them



Quickly, while the others are distracted, give me the code

Give it to me

Give me the revealing code

We will league against them. I know the signs.

I am one of you. I am undercover. Give me the code. Let me assume my true form



I will go
with you to the
upper world

WHERE IS THE MACHINE YOU HAVE HIDDEN FROM US?

WHY IS THE MACHINE YOU HAVE HIDDEN FROM US?

IS THE MACHINE? WHY HIDE FROM US IT

FROM US, WHEN THE MACHINE? HIDDEN THEN,

US THEN, THAT WHY MACHINE TO HIDE BUT THEN? WHEN?



We feel its influence
We know your secret powers.

Good.

The simulation is over.

This was a test and you have passed.

You are Number 1 Human Agent.

You will be rewarded with women and status.

It is good to know that when you meet the dErO you will defeat them.

The dErO are fools.

The dErO Machines are weak.

Soon all dErO secrets will be known.

You are groggy from the Simulation Drugs friend.

This is normal

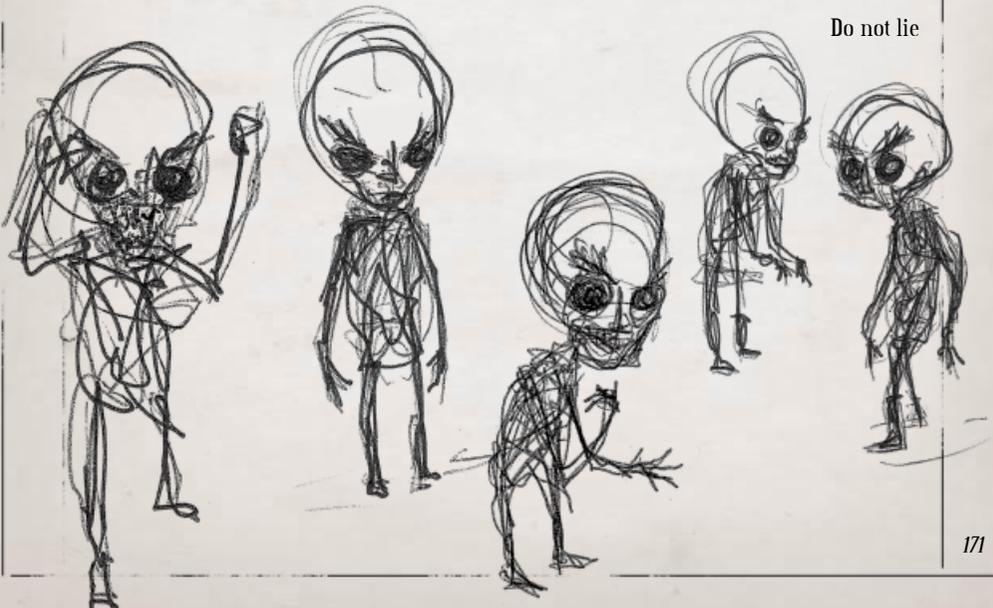
Would you like protein or access to prisoners?

That is normal for high status humans

What did you see in the Simulation friend?

Describe the Simulation to us.

Do not lie





CONSPIRACY PILLS

Conspiracy pills allow the user to hear the voices of the players (not the characters) as they speak round the table. Any direct acknowledgment of this results in death. **THE VOICES MUST NOT HEAR YOU HEARING THEM.**

REVELATION ENGINES

Revelation Engines supercompute all possibilities, reveal secret plans and hidden structures of power. Displacement in the Logosphere forces the user to create secret plans and hidden structures of power. Using a Revelation Engine to analyse a Revelation Engine results in **FEEDBACK LOOP.**

SUSPICION MACHINES

Suspicion Machines can transmit suspicion through solid rock to affect unsuspecting minds. Suspicion machines sometimes backfire and infect the user with unlikely suspicions. It is impossible to know that this has happened. It is impossible to know that this has not happened.

THOUGHT EXPLODERS

Thought Exploders reveal secret influences upon the mind and also secretly influence

the mind into secretly influencing other minds. Can result in cranial explosion. Can result in unconscious creation of Influencing Machines. Influencing Machines must not be left unused as can self-activate. Possible machine will try to Influence you. Use Thought Exploders to test for this. Test regularly.

CONGRUITY KNOTS

Congruity Knots are applied to humanoid ideas. Directly. By removing the upper part of the skull. Congruity knots make humanoid ideas dErO ideas. Congruity Knots must be **FULLY APPLIED.** Escaped humanoids with partial congruity knots have exhibited dErO power sets and built own Influencing Machines. Is possible they act now from the surface to Influence dErO culture. Is possible they Influence dErO to make greater use of Congruity Knots. They must be destroyed. More humanoids must be Knotted and sent above to destroy the humanoids.

Congruity Knots cannot be used on dErO.

Congruity Knots have not been used on dErO.

You are not dErO.

Do not touch your skull.

DVARGIR

DVARGIR ARE BALD AND bearded, shorter and stronger than men. They value only work and blood. Only two things matter: work producing some result, and the transmission of ascent from the core, which is a kind of work in time.

Long ago the first of them emerged from a distant primal core. He made himself. That work goes on. They believe they are improving. It is their mission to do so.

Their family trees spring up, not down. Each generation more focused and efficient than the last. This is the Ascent. Dvargir

heredity. A machine of blood and bone, carrying them into the pre-remembered future. One of only two things in which they truly believe.

They have statistics, and the graphs all show a clear upward trend. Production, efficiency and development, all increase.

They imagine the future and the things they will build there. It belongs to them. They want it more. They understand it more. They will become what the future needs them to be. The future is a god to them. A god-above-gods. They know it to be true.



Even as the race slowly winds itself deeper and deeper into the earth, passing through fretted valves and carved abandoned chambers they have made, falling in its orbit of stone, they map their continual advance.

Each thing must be built upon another thing. A word, a deed, a thought, each must have its foundation. For this reason they obsess over blood. Arguments over the Ascent are arguments over reality itself. Without its sustaining foundation, the word becomes a gabble of sound, the deed an accident, the thought a dream, the existence a lie.

They do not like metaphor. Things mean one thing. If a thing tries to mean two things then it becomes nothing.

The only other thing they understand is work.

A body and a mind are only useful because of the work they can together do. The soul is the work passing through the flesh.

No other race grasps this. They might ask "What are the Dvargir working towards? What is their plan?"

They are working to be working. Work is the plan. Work is the point.

They will never stop. They can never stop.

They will cut cities from bare stone, tear up every vein, embellish every surface, then, when there is no unworked spot or unplanned gap, when every single piece and thing has become a channel for planned creation, when even the pebbles stare up from the floor with idly-carved eyes, then they move on.







Gems mean nothing to them except that they can be cut, or have been cut.

If one loses the ability to work and if they cannot further the ascent, they simply walk into the dark. Or sit where they are, staring at nothing, waiting to starve.

The Ælf-Adal have recorded many thousands of wars with the Dvargir, over many thousands of years. Uncounted conflicts, flashing into life in the dark, raging with strange entrails and many an unexpected reverse, then ending as suddenly as they began. Replaced with an equally unsteady peace.

The Dvargir record only one war. It began millennia ago. It is currently approaching the end of its initial exchange. There have been interruptions. Adjustments. But there has only ever been one plan. One plan, one war. It is progressing according to schedule, give or take a century or two.

Dvargir do not torture or psychologically destroy their slaves. Not deliberately at least. They simply kill them when they fail*.

Skilled slaves can appear to rise far in Dvargir ownership, and will (any skill at work must be nurtured and sustained so that better work may be done). But it is not the individual that is respected. It is the work. The work passing through the alien flesh.

They do not really hate their slaves. They do not realise that they are beings at all. Only vectors for work.

They do not really hate anyone. Because they really don't know there is anyone there to hate.

They do not place trust in size or scale. Work is real and the world exists only to have work done upon it. They are vectors for work. They are more real than the world. The more work that passes through them, the more they can adjust their relation to the world. With great age some Dvargir can learn to grow, shrink and become invisible at will by shifting their relation to the worlds reality.

They do not dream.

They do not believe in chance.



* Then eat them. But everyone does that.

SUBSTRATALS

LIKE THE DEEP JANEEN, SUBSTRATALS are spirits of the Earth. But unlike them, these still-stranger spirits have no care for human form or human thought. Ambitions, treasures, slaves and status are irrelevant to them.

Magic-Users on the surface have been known to summon and command Substratals for reasons of their own. They make strong servants, able to travel through stone and rock with the ease of men pacing along the ground.

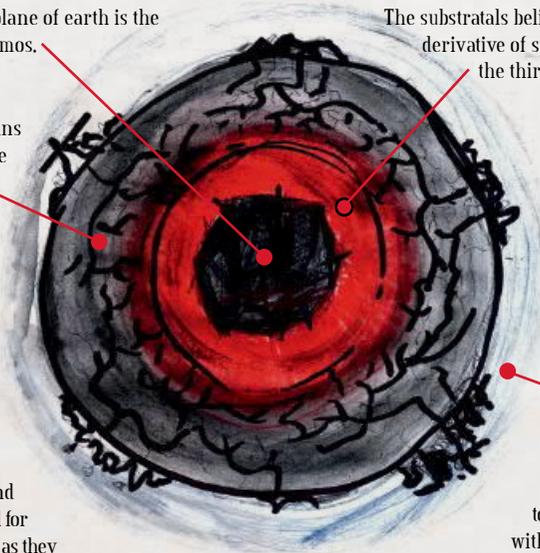
Dull, lumpen, obedient and unstoppable. Many of those who venture into the Veins please themselves with the idea of summoning a servant of stone inside the world of stone. How useful they would be when they can fly through rock and stone like air!

But this would be a grievous error on their part. The reason summoned Substratals are stupid is because most are highly intelligent and very busy and very far away. From the perspective of Substratals the cosmos looks like this:

The Axis Lithic. From the substratals' perspective the plane of earth is the centre of the cosmos.

Each of these veins is the underworld of a separate world from our perspective. (They interlink).

To the substratals the veins are the equivalent of the coast of Somalia to us: ungovernable and irrelevant. (Useful for espionage though as they can interact with water).



A mixture of stone and fire. The substratals believe that fire is a derivative of stone. This is like the third world to them.

Finally, the domain of Air. A kind of distant hell to the substratals, with our "surface" a forgotten crust.

They are at the centre, the Axis Lithic where the work is done. A giga-structure universe where all the life and politics of Earth go on. We hardly hear about any of it. This is the 'first world' from their perspective.

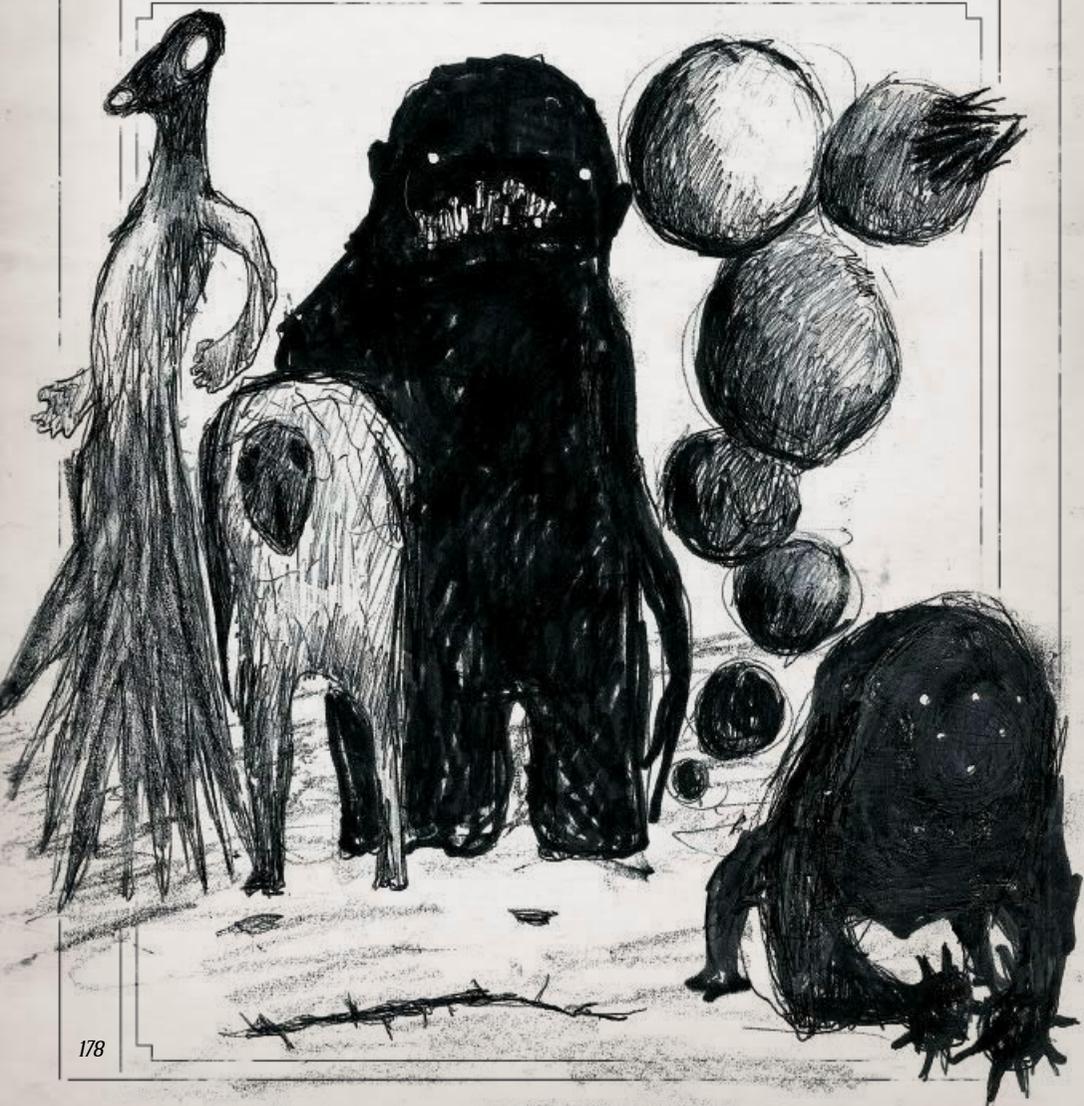
Around it is a mixture of fire and earth. This is considered almost as good as Earth by Substratals. To them it's like China or Brazil are to the West. (They don't really think of Fire, Water or Air as having their

own planes. Each of these powers regards itself as the centre of its own cosmology.]

Then beyond that a kind of halo of veined, light, easily-eroded dead rock full of water and air: This is like a pirate archipelago to the Substratals. Like Somalia or some other poor chaotic backwater. It's a place civilised people would never want to go. But it can be useful, things can be done there that cannot be done

anywhere else. Meetings can take place, plans can be made out of sight. And if you are desperate, or subnormal, if you can't make it in the 'real' world, you can go there to hide.

A summoning spell is the equivalent of an incompetent alien abduction sweeping through a backwater. Even there, most Substratals are strong or smart enough to simply wave it away like a grasping hand of smoke.



The only ones that will be caught are, from their perspective, animal-level individuals. It's as if the aliens abducted a cow or a dog and dropped it in mild acid. That's why summoned Substratals are stupid and violent.

If you try the same thing deep underground, things are going to be a bit different. You are a lot closer now, closer to the core, to the 'real' world. The Substratal you summon won't be a dog or a cow. But they won't be a 'real' citizen either. You will have got yourself into trouble.

SUBSTRATALS: RAMIFICATIONS

YOU HAVE ACTUALLY SUMMONED:

1. A fugitive. Dangerous, won't leave. Being hunted. Cops coming.
2. A child, terrified, acts out, parents on their way.
3. 'Traveller', likes to interact, non-violent, surprised you aren't.
4. Refugee. Desperate not to leave, more arrive. Geopolitical blowback.
5. Lone messenger on high-level business. You are now the baddies of a Tom Clancy film.
6. Criminal element. Organised, violent, has specific plans for you. Smarter than you.

THEY LOOK LIKE:

1. Hugely segmented snake of perfect spheres.
2. Rippling flame of shifting stone.
3. Bodybuilder, legs fused, stands en-pointe, moves like a tornado.
4. Pangolin.
5. Gorilla shape of tessellated polyhedra, constantly rearranged.
6. Giant crawling baby.

MADE FROM:

1. Grey-black fine-grained Basalt.
2. Pillow grey Komatiite with dendritic feathery crystals of green Olivine.
3. Coarse-grained Peridotite with thick black Pyroxene crystals.
4. Fine black Andesite with almond shaped white crystals of Zeolite.
5. Rose-coloured Rhyolite.
6. Rough textured thick-crystal'd Diorite, white and black.

WITH:

1. A gawping Noh-Mask face.
2. Eyes like orbs of wheeling iron, casting a hammering heat.
3. Vertical face like a chasm in the earth. Deep. Causes vertigo.
4. Concave human features, animate and wry.
5. A head like endlessly-opening rose of nuclear fire.
6. A head like a torrent of sand in which shadowed faces form.

GNONMEN



THE GNONMEN ARE A RACE OF people, very small and very quick, that live in the earth. Clever, never cruel, calm and quiet, they look like grey shrunken pensioners with clear skin and bright intelligent eyes.

At the edge of the comprehensible world, where darkness sculpts itself an active form, where death is the constant and life the exception, what kind of good can exist?

In the delicate curves of their hidden cities the Gnonmen feel a purpose that strikes like lightning in the tempest of their daily lives. The flame to live is quickened in them and they feed it on the pure rhythms of light and space and nothing else.

They are a people without shouts, without tears, without hopes, without regrets, They value only four things.

LIFE

Gnonmen prize any living thing above any non-living thing in any circumstances. To them, life is the justification for the world and its true continuity. The spine of reality. All is a fiction. Only life and its laws are authentic. Kings and wealth both fade and die, but life is strong and grows and time goes on in its real continuity. Life is what is real. Life knows neither good nor bad nor justice as a measure of morals. It simply is and it must be preserved.

ACTION

Gnonmen culture is built around doing. Speech, description, planning, these are tertiary concerns. The word is just the bodyguard to the deed. Gnonmen are unimpressed with oratory and difficult to persuade. Even rational description and analysis are sometimes not as effective as might be wished. Deed is the highest and surest of all truths.



LIGHT

Gnonmen see the Veins as pure space and light, only highlighted by mass. They consider themselves lucky to live here. From their perspective no-one from the surface could understand what space and light truly are. They drown in both. They use space to 'keep things in', they use light to 'see' other things. Space is not a piece of luggage. Light is not an errand boy. Light is, space is. They have their own quality.

Gnonmen value gems, but only for the light within the gem, not the gem itself. Gems are a construction of space and light, not mass. To them, the light is active, alive, it races faster than a waterfall, soundless and eternal.

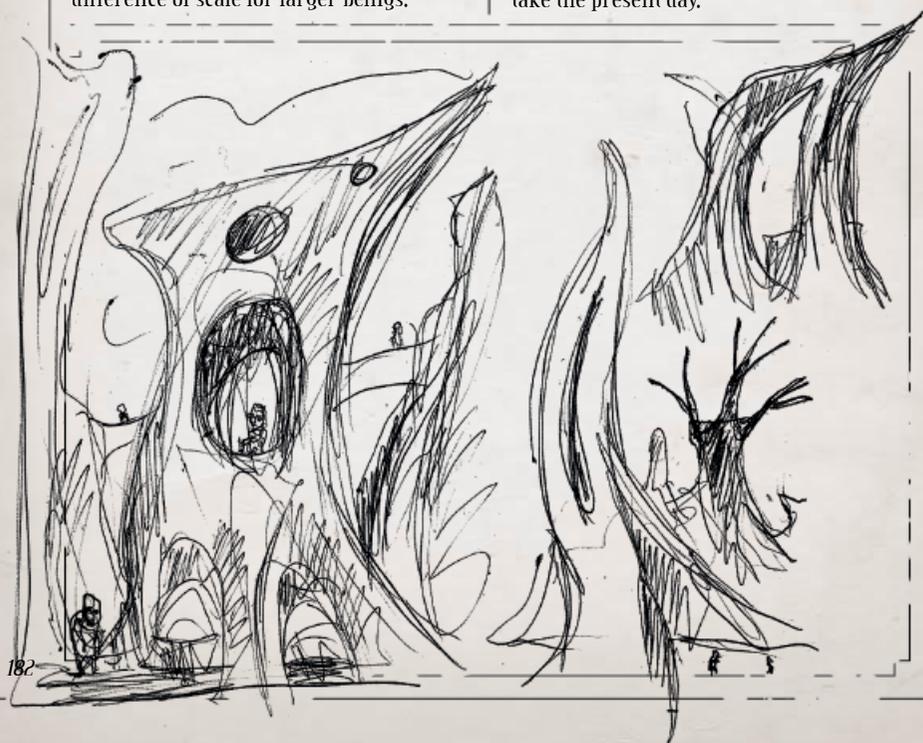
Their cave-cities are all beautifully carved in unpredictable yet harmonious curves. Being there fills the observer with a sensation of lightness, despite the difference of scale for larger beings.

To Gnonmen the body is superficial, accidental. Tone, brightness, occluding or refracting, that is all. The eyes matter to them, not the face. Though they do value worked beauty, they think beauty has all the properties of a real force like gravity or heat, and they treat it as such.

THE DAY

Gnonmen are present-minded to an astonishing extent. They are intelligent and capable of both planning for the future and interrogating the past, but they do not value these processes for themselves. They are things to be got out of the way. They stand between the Gnonmen and direct experience of the present moment.

To Gnonmen the past is dead. It is carrion; the future is nothing. Can you eat it? What is its taste? It is impossible to speak of the future without lying, so as little as possible should be said of it. Today is the deed. They take the present day.



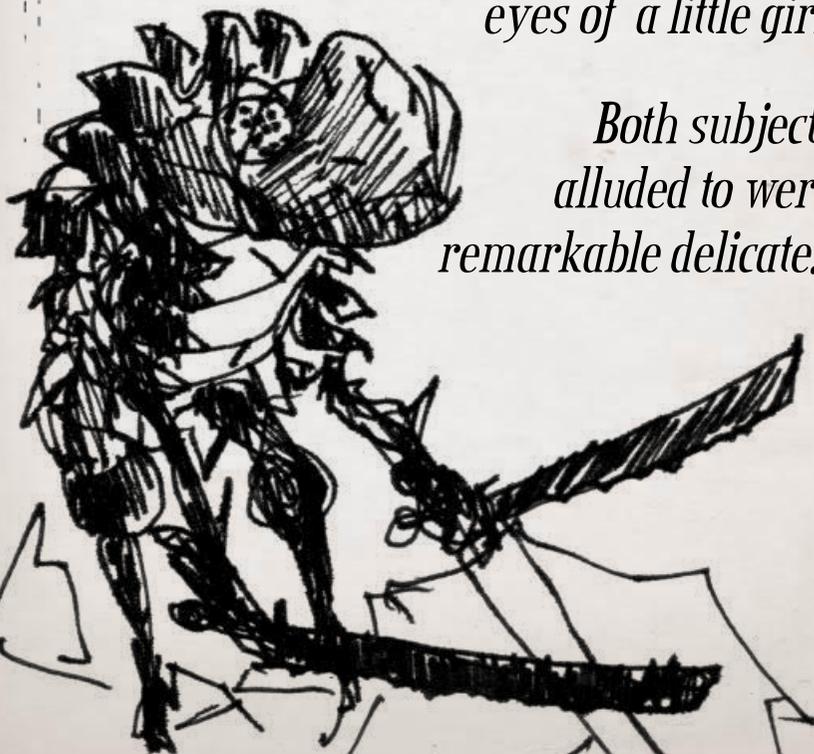


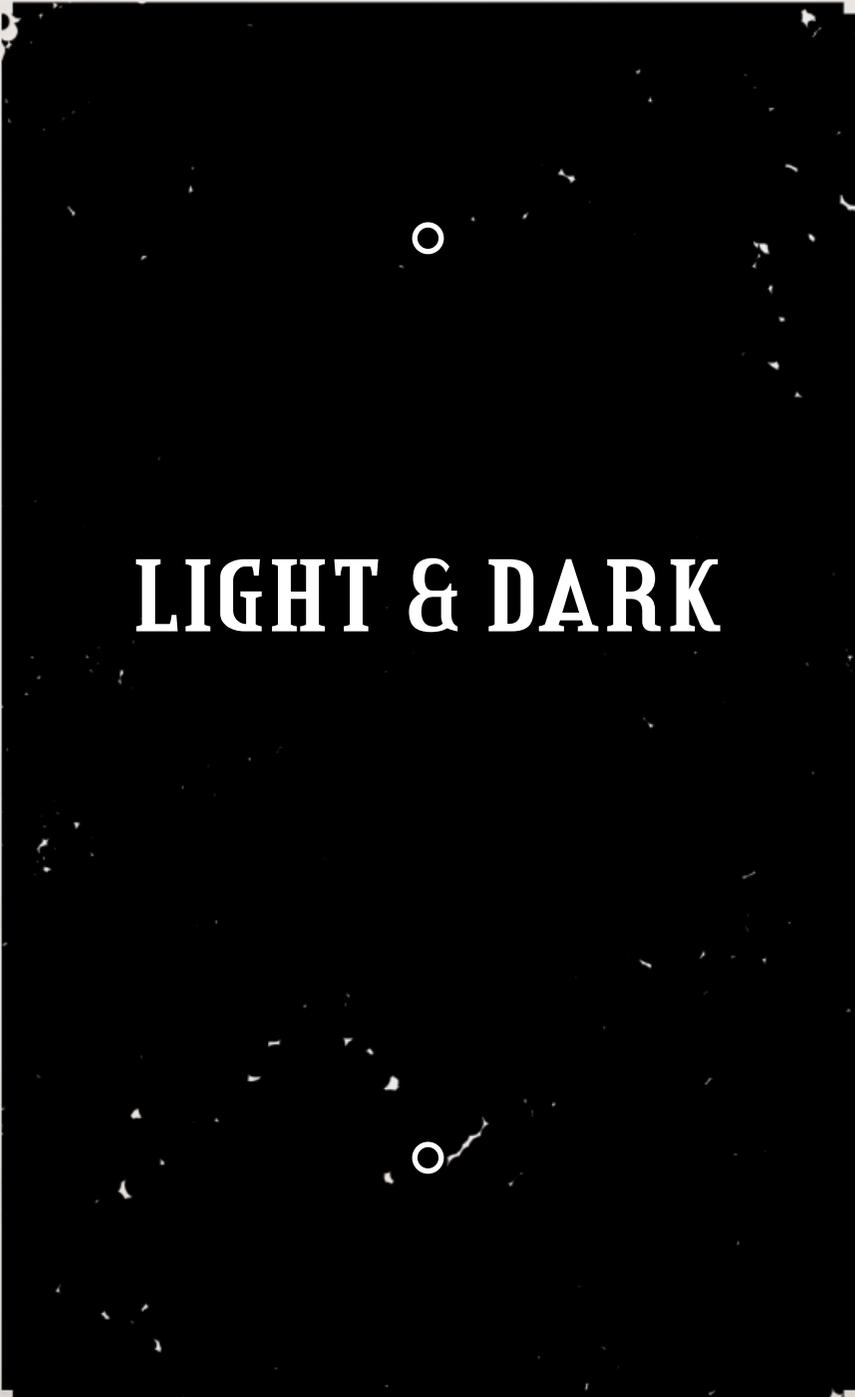
*"I have observed a brilliant
scintillation in the eyes of man
himself but only once.*

*The light was of a metallic-pink colour,
resembling, in general aspect, the
green light emitted from dogs eyes.*

*I only saw this in one individual
though I have examined many, but a
friend of mine lately witnessed it in the
eyes of a little girl.*

*Both subjects
alluded to were
remarkable delicate."*



A black and white photograph of a starry night sky. The sky is dark with numerous small, bright stars scattered across it. Two white circles are drawn around specific stars: one in the upper-middle section and another in the lower-middle section. The text "LIGHT & DARK" is centered in the middle of the image in a bold, white, serif font. The entire image is framed by a thin white border.

LIGHT & DARK

THE LAW OF LIGHT



LIGHT IS THE CORE RESOURCE from which all others spring. If you only measure one thing, if you only remember one thing, remember light. Not ropes or food or even time, but light.

The key difference between this and other imagined underground spaces is the totality and necessity of the enfolding dark.

When most games describe a place, they do so with a series of assumptions. They use a kind of shorthand. It's the same shorthand we use in our daily lives to arrange the spaces through which we move.

"*You walk into a room.*" OK, so how do you know it's a room at all? Because you can see the walls and edges from beginning to end, because you have seen thousands of rooms before and they all follow the same logic. Because this room is arranged in a grid

pattern with other rooms in the same area. That's what 'room' means. A thing like the other things you have already seen.

In a natural cave system this is not the case. You may not be able to see the roof or opposing wall. You may never have seen a place like this before. You do not understand the logic of their arrangement.

When someone enters a new underground space, never say "*you enter a cave*". Because they don't know that.

ONLY EVER SAY "YOU SEE..." And they can only see so far.

Never assume sight. Assume dark. A simple way to do this is to imagine the darkness as alive. Instead of being a simple black absence regard it as a kind of active liquid. It does not meekly disappear on the lighting of a candle. It follows the players like a stalking predator.

The darkness is following them, surrounding them. It infiltrates slender claws behind shadowed columns, reaching towards the lantern, hungering to snuff it out. It backs away reluctantly before the light, it follows carefully and relentlessly, creeping as close as it can. It leaves chew marks in the corners of your sight.

It should be almost embodied. In the same way that people in the Middle Ages often thought of god as a presence in the room. Not a general awareness or a set of laws but an actual person. Like someone standing silently in the corner of the room, watching you as you read this. The darkness is a character. It only wants one thing.

Rules are hard to remember and details are easy to forget under stress. Intent is not. Intent is easy to recall and unlike detail it actually grows more powerful under stress. You remember who hates you. The more stressed you are, the more you remember it.

The dark hates the players; you play the dark. You will probably forget that a candle has a ten foot radius but you will never stop waiting for the candle to go out.

Breaking yourself of the shorthand of description may be very hard. It's shorthand for a reason. It's useful. If you don't use it then you are deliberately making things more difficult for yourself.

I have tried to include sensory descriptions for the living things I have created. In most cases smell and sound are defined.

Sometimes touch as well. I did this because I knew that you will need that information once the light goes out. Those things also lock a thing into existence, in the mind of the reader at least.

If people can only see a dark space around them they can still hear and smell things. They can feel air flow.



DARK-PIERCING SIGHT



VARIOUS KINDS OF PSEUDO-thermal, low-light or just ultra-magical vision are a tradition in role-playing games and they complicate things, but not as much as you might think.

Dungeons are puddles of darkness. This is the sea. The Dark down here can work quite differently than that found on the surface or in dungeons.

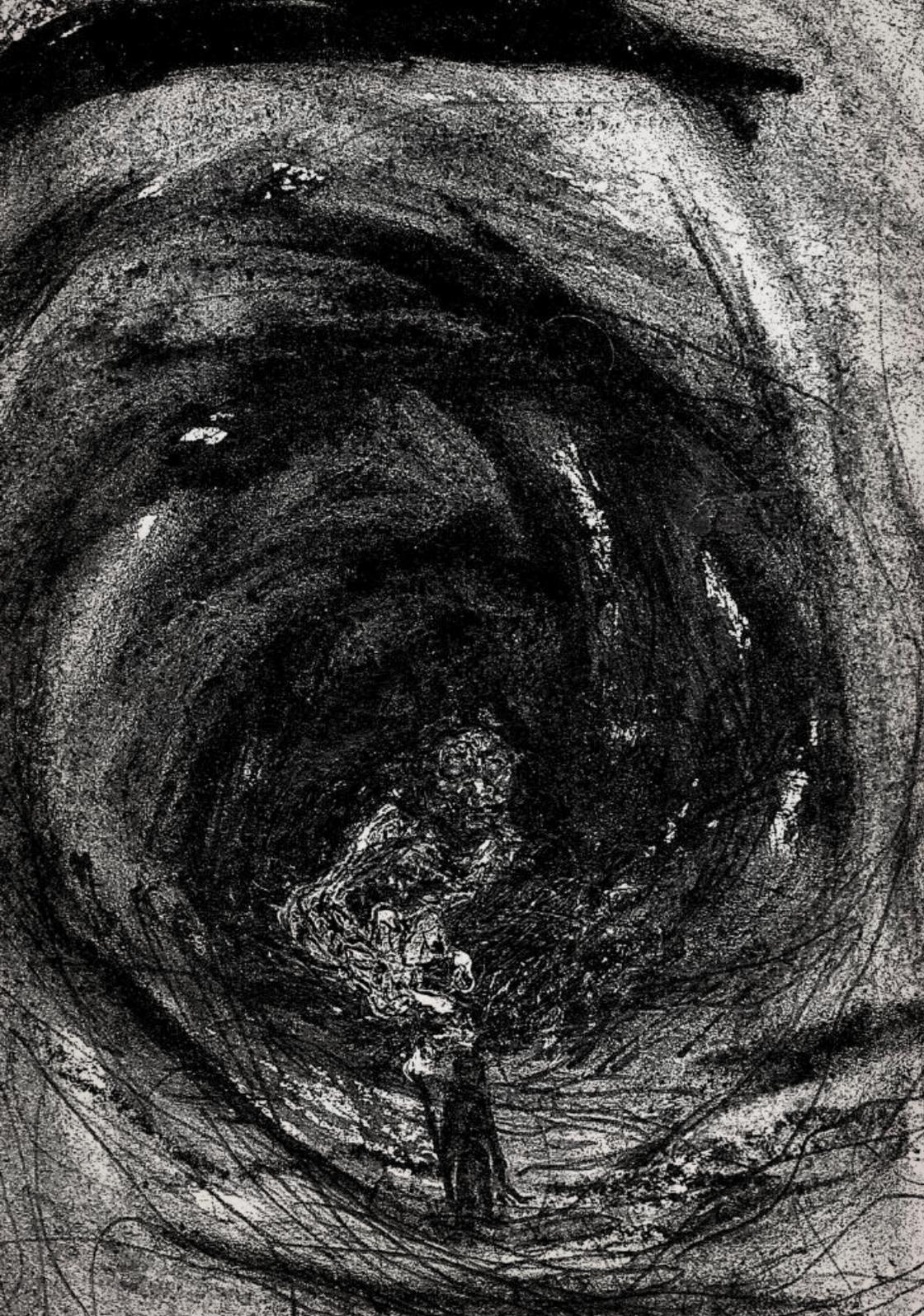
Referees may allow thermal vision if they wish. If it works as a light-enhancer, like low-light goggles, that means you need less light to navigate by and can maybe see further in it, but that's it.

If it can see heat like Predator vision then living things will be like blurry vague lamps to it. It will not help you climb or navigate; it may help you hunt.

If it's magic and you can just see 'because', then I say my magic is stronger.

The Referee and players should decide before proceeding into the Veins exactly how thermal vision works for them.

Remember that any creature not described as blind still needs light to see. They may be able to find their way around slowly underground without light, but in a battle, lack of it will be a severe disadvantage.



THE LUME

THE MEANS OF CARRYING AND projecting light are central. Light is firstly something you have to carry in the form of fuel, secondly your only means of finding your way and securing more life, thirdly a valuable thing which you can trade for, exchange and seek out, and fourthly a resource that is always being eaten away.

In addition, distance relates to time. Solar cycles have no meaning in the Veins. The main point about travel is how long it takes to get somewhere. This is measured by a loss of resources.

So time, distance, light, money, weight and everything are all bound together.

Light is a currency and the currency is the Lume.

A Lume is a measure of light over time. It is also worth one silver piece, or SP.

1 Hour of Light = 1 Lume = 1 Silver Piece.

The Lume is most perfectly expressed in oil. If you have oil, you can always trade it underground as if it were silver. If you have other means of making light then you can trade that as well.

Oil becomes light. Light gets you more time. Time gets you more money. Money

gets you more oil. Oil, money, light and time all in one.

But other things are also measured in Lumes.

This makes light about ten times as expensive as that in standard old-school gaming. It kind-of makes sense as light is much more valuable down here, and much harder to get.

Lumes are how you measure wealth in *Veins of the Earth*. It replaces the gold and silver coins. If treasure must be abstracted then it should be abstracted into Lumes.

Of course not everyone carries the same kinds of light production. Of course not everyone carries oil. It can be assumed that the necessary exchanges and conversions are being done in the background.

This is irritating and unrealistic; the means to create and sustain bioluminescence are not those used to light candles. I have pushed all the complexity into a simple number that tells you everything you need to know about how rich you are, how far you can go and how long you can see.

Like hit points, Lumes may not make much sense on an individual basis, but they do make sense as a game object. And like hit points you can assume Lumes lost or found to be whatever you need them to be.



LAMPS ARE INITIATIVE

YOUR LAMP IS PARTICULAR to you. They all have different qualities and are special in different ways. It's one thing you have to remember and it's yours. Like a weapon. Lumes just power the lamp. If you have Lumes but no lamp, you still can't see.

And lamps, or lights, are initiative.

If someone does not have a light they must be with someone who does, not alone. A PC is either carrying a light, or states they are 'with' someone who is. They are assumed to be within the radius of that light when they perform their actions.

This makes sense because if you are exploring an underground area with no light you will need to stay near people who have it. You don't have much of a choice about that.

During normal exploration all you need to stay aware of is who you are with. If Tom and Joe are holding the lamps then you say "I am with Tom" or "I am with Joe". You are assumed to be within their radius during exploration.

Then a fight breaks out. Roll initiative.

GROUP INITIATIVE

This is if you only want to roll two initiative dice, one for the party and one for the enemy.

Whoever has the brightest light is 'caller' for that side. They roll the initiative die.

During that side's turn, the person with the brightest lamp decides who in their group will go in what order. They cannot control what the PC does, only when they act. Obviously groups can and should negotiate this and talk about it.

In our example Tom has the brighter whale-oil lamp. The players win initiative. Tom has Lisa and Jerry in his group. He decides Lisa goes first, then himself, then Jerry.

Then Joe, who has a less-bright candle lamp, has Steve and Bob. Joe decides who goes fourth, fifth and sixth. They take their actions.

INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE

This is if you prefer to roll initiative for each individual.

Only people holding lights roll initiative. If the group are facing some Ælf-Adal with one low-light lamp then the Ælf-Adal, Tom and Joe all roll. No-one else does. Tom wins, the Ælf-Adal are second, Joe is third.

Tom decides who out of his group will act in what order. Then the Ælf-Adal act, then Joe decides his group's order and they act.

'DARK' PLAYERS

If someone wants to go off on their own into the dark, they can. They act after every lit person. So if there was a seventh player in our example above, they would act after everyone else.

ONE SIDE DARK

Some underground creatures use no lights.

In this case, if the PCs have lights then they can always move first. Light is a bitch to carry around but it does have some advantages; it transmits sensory information faster than anything else so a lit group will always be a fraction of a second faster than something which does not see.

These creatures can still get in a surprise round to begin with though.

All you have to remember is who you are with.

If you have a lamp, its qualities will be written right there on your sheet.

You have to fight as a team, but you should be doing that already.

Lifting a lamp up will almost always take one hand. So you lose the use of that hand, but you gain a superior strategic awareness and a lot of responsibility. You are the caller for your little mini-group.

The action of a group can be held, and if they wish a player may hold their action within a group.



TWENTY LAMPS

The Strength (STR) of a Lamp is the Radius of its light. So a Lamp with STR 35 lets you see 35 feet.



1. WHALE OIL. STR 35.

Clear yellow-white light. Oil from the psychic whales of the Nightmare Sea. Slight but continual whale-song from the flame. Hypnotic sorrow. Those who sleep in the light of this lamp must save versus Paralysis to wake up. They may attempt this each hour.

2. CANDLE LAMP. STR 15.

Flickering yellow. Safe, reliable, cheap, 1 in 6 chance it goes out if dropped or in high wind.



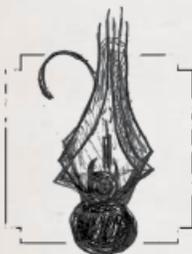
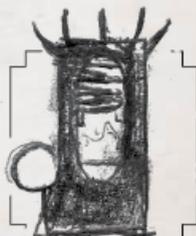
3. CARBIDE LAMP. STR 40.

Bright, soft, white flame. Dvargir advanced tech. Creates toxic carbide sludge that must be disposed of every day. Makes tracking you easy and offends wilderness dwellers a great deal.*



4. LUMINOL LAMP. STR 30.

Eerie pulsing green. Looks like a tiny water-clock. Two pipes drip luminol and blood in an alternating rhythm; they mix and activate in a base of hydrogen peroxide.

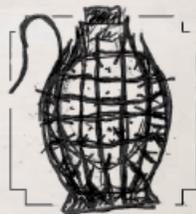


5. ÆLF-ADAL CANDLE LAMP. STR 10/30.

Dull barely-lit red in the visible spectrum. Much brighter to those with thermal vision. Candles are black honeycombs formed into cones, hexagons filled with strange pungent chemicals.

6. ANIMALCULE LAMP. STR 10.

Blue-green sealight. Reliable, safe. Can be poisoned by ammonia to triple STR for 1d6 hours. Then dies.



*A character is unlikely to understand the chemistry of this lamp. They will not have a fundamental comprehension of how it works and will be unable to fix it. (Dvargir have access to mirrored headlamps that work off this system but will not sell it or use those outside their controlled volumes. Using one is a sign that you killed one or stole from them.)



7. SQUIDLAMP. STR 30.

A crammed squid pulses with regular patterns dependent on the situation outside lamp. It strobes wildly during combats. Tap the glass to encourage the squid to attack that side and the light becomes directional. The squid will attempt escape.

8. DRAGONFISH LAMP. STR 35.

Unlike every other kind of bioluminescence, the Dragonfish bellies glow a deep dark red as they circle in their endless hunting pattern. Will cannibalise at rate of 1 per hour if not fed. STR=Number of fish.*



9. CANCER FULGENS. STR 25.

The most boring form of bioluminescence. Simple molluscs. If eaten in an emergency, they will cause the body and its emissions to glow for a day.

10. FUNGAL. STR 20.

Many varieties, all with the same soft green steady glow. If the lamp is damaged the fungus will colonise any open wounds of the holder. The wounds will glow.

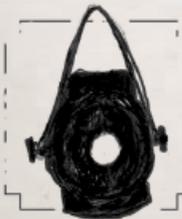


11. LIGHT OF DECAY. STR 15.

An awful lamp. Bacteria growing on the flensed body of an animal or fish carried on a pole or hung from a chain. Often turned inside out, guts glowing. Stinks.

12. SCARAB LAMP. STR 10/25.

The iridescent green of this cat-sized sleeping scarab glows softly at STR 10. When aroused the scarab extends its wings, buzzes loudly and flies up to the end of its chain. The wings glow a bright gold at STR 25. Must be fed.



13. MONDMILCH LAMP. STR 45.

Moonlight. Heavy lead-bound prison-tank. Insanely dangerous. Forms itself into nightmares of those who look. Activates lycanthropy. See Mondmilch, p.87.



*Many an unfortunate adventurer has stumbled to safety by the light of a single remaining fat Dragonfish.



14. ULTRAVIOLET BUTTERFLIES. STR 40.

A skull in carried belljar. At first a deep ruby-red, then liquid rainbow, then a deep blue that forces manic depression. See Ultraviolet Butterfly, p.146.

15. ARCHEAN LAMP. STR 1D50.

Each utterly different works of art. All toxic. Must be carried on the ends of poles as contact causes 1hp damage each day. In a sealed environment users must save each hour or take 1hp damage from fumes. Fed metal to work. Cages usually wood. Very expensive.



16. BOUND FIRE SPIRIT. STR 5-50.

Varies from butane-blue to sun-yellow. Essentially like having a political prisoner. Wards must be continually renewed. All encountered fire creatures will be hostile. May shrink or grow to confound you. Can be punished. Reliability depends on negotiation. Likes to eat important scrolls and written spells.

17. PORTAL LAMP. STR 30-50.

Strange lights depending on plane or location reached. A fragmentary portal to another plane where the light is constant. Only hand sized but can provide means of communication for creatures from that plane. They may have demands of you.



18. DEMONIC. STR 40*.

Unquenchable. Evil. Only ever traded for specific services and exchanges. Never money or material things. Never worth it.

19. GHOSTLIGHT. STR 19.

Tiny bound ghost which, instead of burning, ages whatever it can touch. Cage must be gold and renewed at times. If wards fail, will escape and *Magic Jar* its owner.



20. LIGHTNING JAR. STR 40.

Bound micro-lightning in the copper-wired body of a Stormsheep. Tries to escape. Unreliable weapon. Carrier must be grounded for safety. Don't break it. Cannot be turned off.

OTHER RUMOURED LIGHT SOURCES

- **PIEZO-LUMINESCENT QUARTZ AND URANIUM NITRATE MARACAS:** soft glow, never runs out, must be continually shaken.
- **NIGHTMARE LAMPS.**
- **PSIONIC LAMPS.**
- **LIGHT KNIFE:** causes glowing wounds with STR equal to damage caused.
- **HOLY ORGANS.**
- **ARCHEAN FLOWERS.**
- **STARLIGHT JUG:** pour this liquid out into a pool and it reflects the stars in a night sky.
- **LUMINAL KOJO CIGARETTE:** smoke from these glows like the dawn.
- **GOLDEN MASK:** heavy and bloodthirsty.
- **SKIN OF A GOLDEN SNAKE:** rare.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT?

COMBAT

Experienced underground fighters will never simply stride around swinging blindly; they will freeze, grapple or regroup depending on the conditions.

If freezing they will go silent and wait for the other side to give away their position or actions with sound.

If close they may risk a grapple in order to stay in physical contact with their opponent.

They may use the darkness to regroup. Trained military teams will have a process in place to do this. They will make minimal use of sound to achieve this and will move after every deliberate sound they make.

ENCOUNTERS IN DARKNESS

If a party without light encounters a party with light and does not give themselves away, then the party without light gains a free surprise round. After that point they lose initiative on each round.

CLIMBING IN DARKNESS

Routes that have already been climbed can be attempted at 1/4 speed. No leaps or dynos can be performed. Everything is a hard roll. Any fails simply result in a direct fall, no tables need be rolled on.



WHEN LOST IN THE DARK

SHOULD THE PCS BECOME UTTERLY lost, with neither light nor any means to pierce the dark, they can still try to find their way. They can name a nearby location that they know, one they suspect to be nearby, or simply say that they are looking for light and safety.

One PC should be chosen as a guide. They roll a single d20 and compare it against their stats in the order shown below.

TABLE: LOST IN THE DARK

STAT	FAIL
Constitution	All further fails cumulative.
Strength	Dropped pack. Lose half equipment.
Dexterity	The guide falls 1d10 x 1d10 ft.
Intelligence	Encounter, team ambushed.
Wisdom	Loop back, team goes nowhere.
Charisma	Breakdown; experience point freeze till one PC assaults another

If the Constitution test is passed then only the next failure in the list counts. If the Constitution test is failed then every further failure in the list applies.

The time taken to find a source of light depends on the number of failures.

TABLE: TIME TAKEN TO FIND LIGHT

NUMBER OF FAILURES	HOURS TAKEN
One	1d20
Two	1d20 x 1d4
Three	1d20 x 1d6
Four	1d20 x 1d8
Five	1d20 x 1d10
Six	1d20 x 1d12

If the guide fails on all six stats then this must include a Wisdom fail.

If the guide fails their Wisdom test, the group does not find light or assistance; instead the hours are wasted. They are still lost.

Assuming the Wisdom test is passed, after the hours taken and after all the effects of failure have been applied, the PCs find what they were looking for.

This is dependent on the place or situation they were looking for making a certain degree of sense given the time taken and resources expended.

If no other kind of safety is within reasonable range then you may roll on the following table.



SAFE PLACES (1D12):

1. A hidden streamlet, currently home to a small tribe of borderline-pacifist Olm.
2. The secret entrance to a beautiful Gnonmen enclave.
3. A silk merchant whose guards were killed by pack apes when the apes went wild. Needs new guards, new apes, or ape-equivalents.
4. A small group of Funginids whose Ghandi-like leader is currently ejaculating Spores of Peace.
5. A wandering Archean radical with food and oil it cannot use, willing to trade for detailed descriptions of mundane surface matters.
6. The body of an adventurer, fallen from a great height, with food, Lumes and lamps, so far untouched.
7. The calcite fort of a low-level almost-human Volume-Lord in desperate need of military assistance from just about anyone.
8. The result of an encounter between Dvargir and Ælf-Adal. The battle ended seconds ago; both sides wiped each other out, 2d4 bodies with weapons, food and Lumes.
9. The ruins of an ancient temple populated by peaceful ghosts and mummified monks. The spirits hate violence; no-one here may do harm or they will be destroyed.
10. A small cavern where slaves have secreted weapons, food and Lumes in preparation for an escape they never made.
11. A drug market of the Deep Janeen, where those of every race gather to trade the Opium and Coca-Dust of the surface against the Fungal-Spores, Butterfly Chrysalids and toxins of the deep. The Janeen enforce non-violence. Several junkies are desperate enough to trade anything they have; others rich enough to pay well for strange services.
12. A well-supplied adventurer driven totally insane by their experiences is convinced the PCs are their dead friends, refers to them by different names, so happy to see them alive they will share everything they have.





CHARACTER SHEET

A. ABILITIES. Write your stats here in the boxes provided. The modifier produced by your stat affects how much you can carry.

B. GEAR AND ENCUMBRANCE. Your stuff goes here. Counting from the left, one item can be written (or drawn) in each box, up to and including the box with the bonus or modifier for that particular stat.

For every extra box used, you gain a point of encumbrance. Each point of encumbrance affects your movement as seen in the movement table, and reduces your climbing skill by one. So, with one point of encumbrance, a five in six roll would become a four in six roll.

C. CLIMBING. Anyone in veins can climb. This shows you how well you can climb depending on the time you have to think about the route. If you fail a roll or need more information on when you can or can't climb, turn to the climbing section on p.210. Each point of encumbrance reduces this value by one.

D. LAMP. The strength of the lamp decides how far you can see. If you are not carrying a lamp you are probably with someone who is.

E. MOVEMENT. The more encumbered you are, the slower you move.

F. COMMON ACTIVITIES. Every PC starts with at least 1 in 6 for every skill.

The **SWIMMING SKILL** has been added. All PCs are assumed to be competent swimmers at a basic level. The swimming skill should only be used when a character's life is in danger or they wish to achieve something difficult.

The **CLIMBING SKILL** provides a kind of 'second chance' for climbing characters and helps them to access the most difficult climbs. Everyone in Veins can climb but those with this skill are *really good* at climbing.

In every other respect skill rules here are identical to the standard LotFP rules.

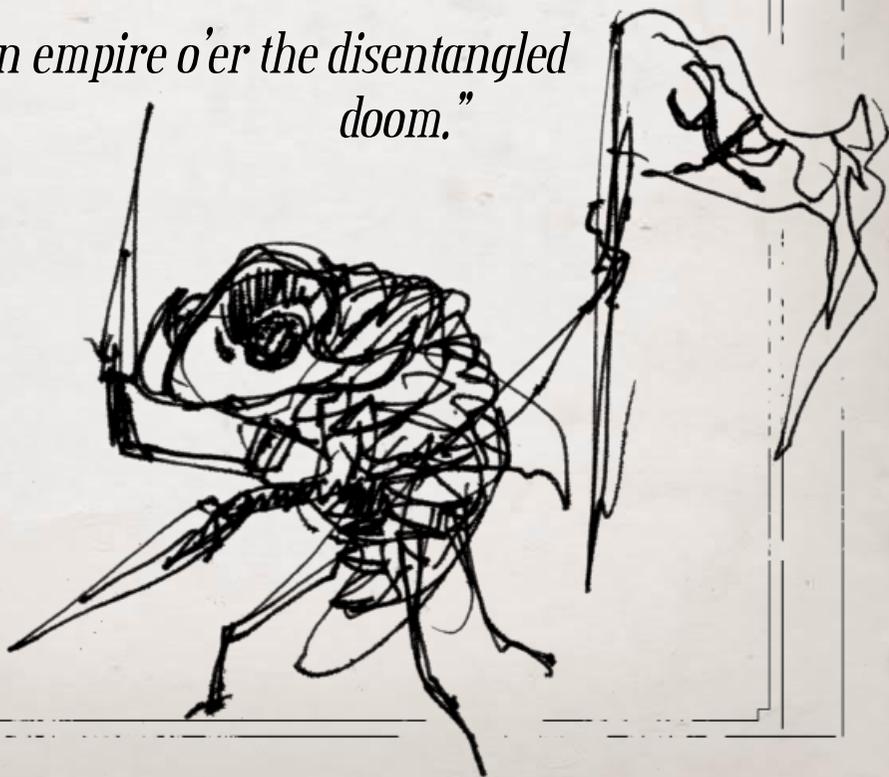
G. SAVING THROWS. Identical to the standard LotFP rules.

H. COMBAT. Identical to the standard LotFP rules, except for initiative. In Veins, those carrying lamps have priority when rolling initiative, see the 'Lamps Are Initiative' section, p.192.

I. WEAPONS. Identical to the standard LotFP rules. Remember if you are climbing while fighting you can, at best, use a one-handed weapon.

You can download the **LOTFP: VEINS OF THE EARTH** Character Sheet
from WWW.LOTFP.COM

*"Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom
and Endurance,
These are the seals of that
most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over
Destruction's strength;
These are the spells by which
to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled
doom."*





**ENCUMBRANCE,
EXPLORATION,
CLIMBING AND
TRAVEL**





EXPLORATION

IF THE GROUP WISHES TO EXPLORE or search for something without making highly specific 'real-time' choices about which route to take, then this table can be used to simulate the difficulties of exploration without all of the annoying details.

One PC should be chosen as a guide. They roll a single d20 and compare it against their stats in the order shown below.

TABLE: EXPLORATION

STAT	FAIL
Constitution	All further fails cumulative.
Strength	Tired, act as one level lower till you rest and eat.
Dexterity	Group separated by a traverse (even) or pitch (odd).
Intelligence	Encounter, team ambushed.
Wisdom	You don't know how to get back.
Charisma	Lowest Charisma PC got separated.

If the Constitution test is passed then only the next failure in the list counts. If the Constitution test is failed then every further failure in the list applies.

If a group can go neither forward nor back, they must explore in real time to find their way. Generate a cave system as shown on p.232.

Once this situation is resolved the group is assumed to have found either the thing they were looking for (if this is a reasonable possibility given the time taken) or something interesting. For something interesting, roll on the One Hundred Encounters Table, p.260.

The time taken to find something interesting depends on the number of failures.

TABLE: TIME TAKEN TO EXPLORE

NUMBER OF FAILURES	HOURS TAKEN
One	1d12
Two	1d12 x 1d4
Three	1d12 x 1d6
Four	1d12 x 1d8
Five	1d12 x 1d10
Six	1d12 x 1d12





CLIMBING

LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT the climbing section on the sheet. Anyone can climb like a Specialist if they have time to study the route.

They must be able to see the **WHOLE** route they will climb. If they cannot see it all, or if the nature of the route changes unexpectedly, or if they can only see one part of it and enter an unseen section, they must pause and roll again.

REMEMBER THE RANGE OF THEIR LIGHT. If a lantern only shows 30 feet and a climb is 60 feet, then a climber can stand on the ground and study the first 30 feet freely, but once they are on the climb and have gone beyond that distance they must decide whether to stop and study the next 30 feet, and if so, for how long.

TABLE: CLIMBING TABLE

TIME TAKEN TO STUDY THE ROUTE	ROLL REQUIRED ON 1D6
≤ 1 Round	1 in 6
≤ 1 Minute	2 in 6
≤ 10 Minutes	3 in 6
≤ 1 Hour	4 in 6
> 1 Hour	5 in 6

IF A CHARACTER IS USING MORE BOXES ON THEIR EQUIPMENT LIST THAN THEIR STATS GIVE THEM ACCESS TO THEN THE NUMBER THEY REQUIRE ON 1D6 GOES DOWN BY ONE FOR EVERY EXTRA BOX THEY USE.

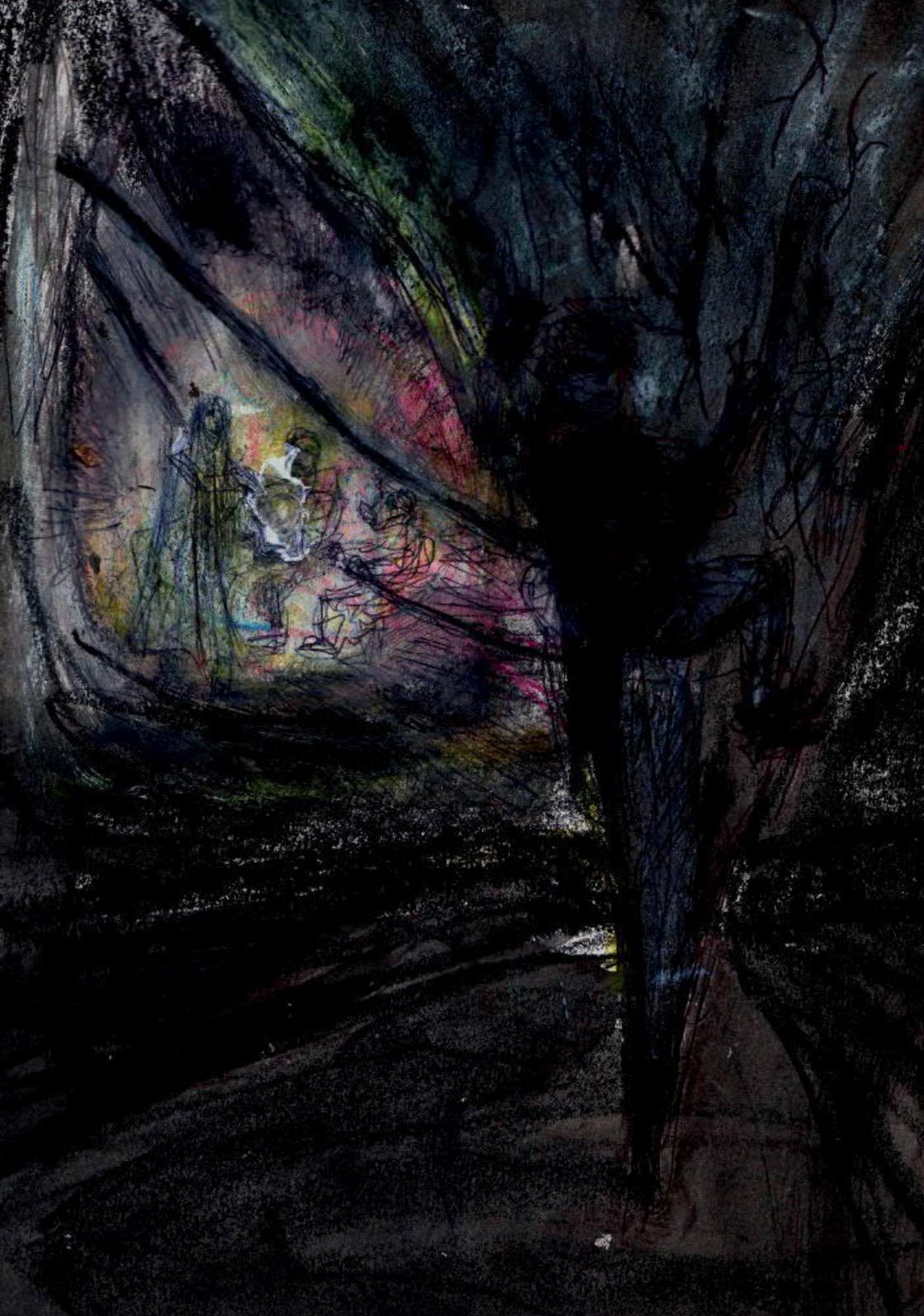
Someone studying their route for an hour or more only needs to roll a 5 or below on 1d6, but if they are carrying two more items than they should, then they need

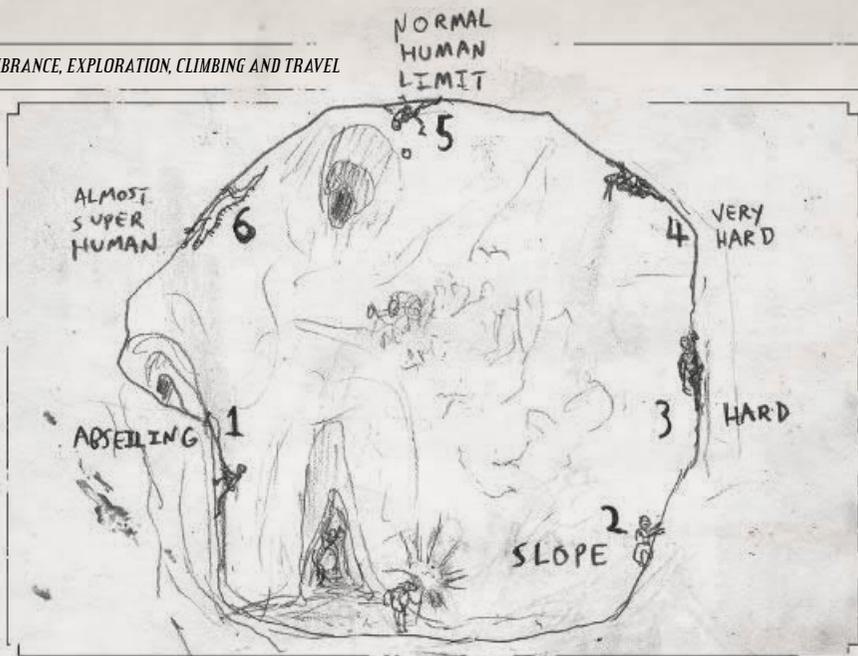
to roll a 3 or less. This can bring a value down to zero. If an encumbered character has a round or less to study a route and has to make a climb roll, they simply fall. Specialists (and their equivalents) can roll as above like any **PC AND** they may also use their Climb skill to make a roll. A Specialist has two chances to succeed.

WHEN DO YOU ROLL?

I wrote a long, long list of when you do and don't roll but then realised it would cripple you. Honestly, just use your good judgement. Specialists shouldn't have to roll for simple stuff. If everything is calm and they have an hour or more to think, plan and set up ropes then PCs shouldn't have to roll for abseils, 45° climbs or rope-assisted 90° climbs. These are so common in the Veins that you can assume PCs rapidly become used to them.

Of course in the case of a rope assisted 90° climb they would still need someone to go ahead and set up the ropes. The best climber can roll themselves to go ahead and rig a route so no-one else has to roll. But if that person is injured, absent or incapacitated then these common situations will increasingly eat time and light. Only those with Specialist skills should be allowed to attempt horizontal and superhuman climbs and they should always be rolled for. If combat breaks out, the environment changes or time becomes a factor, you should ask for rolls. If the nature of a climb changes unexpectedly in a any way, you should ask for rolls. If an encounter takes place as the group is climbing and if the PCs wish to manoeuvre or speed up you should ask for rolls.





There are six levels of difficulty. The simplest way to think about which table to roll on is to ask what incline the PC is climbing. Imagine a tiny person climbing round the inside of the diagram. Are they abseiling down the first vertical, climbing at 45°, climbing a vertical wall, climbing an overhang, upside-down on a ceiling or trying a reverse-overhang from above?

The tables can also count for general levels of difficulty. The Referee may wish to move the level of difficulty up or down depending on the circumstances and the nature of the surface.

1. **ABSEILING.** Moving down a vertical pitch with assistance and ropes (doing this without ropes is more like a 'hard' climb).
2. **SLOPE.** Moving up or down a slope somewhere between 45° and 90°, up a very easy broken climb with ledges, or up a lesser slope under very difficult conditions (Ice, Water, Combat).
3. **HARD.** This is the standard 90° Specialist-only climb up dungeon walls or rock. No-one encumbered can try this.

4. **VERY HARD.** This is for overhangs and very difficult walls. For expert climbers or desperate people.

5. **HUMAN LIMIT.** Hanging upside down, transiting the roof of a cavern. This is Olympic or exceptional climbing, at the limit of real-world ability. No one who is not a Specialist can even attempt this, no matter how long they think about it.

6. **SUPERHUMAN.** A reverse-overhang or other exceptionally difficult piece of work. Almost impossible in 'real-life'.

A simple Climb roll is made for each with no modifiers. If the roll is failed, each type of climb has its own failure chart.

The charts show results for a single roll-under 1d20 roll which is checked against each stat in sequence. Failing the Constitution roll means all other failures are cumulative. If the Constitution roll is passed, only the first failure counts; the rest are ignored.



1. ABSEIL

TABLE: ABSEILING

STAT	FAIL
Constitution	All further fails cumulative.
Strength	Tired. Can't climb back or help others. Act as 1 level lower for one Turn.
Dexterity	Slip 10 feet on rope.
Intelligence	Not enough rope - it ends 10 feet from bottom.
Wisdom	You abseil happily right off the end of the rope.
Charisma	Your flailing dislodges someone else; they roll too.

When you fall and are stopped by a static rope, you still take damage for the length you fell. So if you fail on Dexterity only, you take 10 feet of falling damage. If you also fail on Constitution, Intelligence and Wisdom, you take 20 feet of falling damage.

In Veins, normal adventurers don't have access to dynamic rope that will absorb falling damage rather than transmit it. They can get access to it underground though.

2. SLOPE

TABLE: SLOPING CLIMB

STAT	FAIL
Constitution	All further fails cumulative.
Strength	You slide to the bottom. Take falling damage for one third of the vertical distance.
Dexterity	Scramble and spin, now facing wrong way. If slid, save versus Death or be knocked out for 1d6 rounds.
Intelligence	Tangled up with your pack, you will need help to free yourself.
Wisdom	Disco leg: you freeze and need help to go on.
Charisma	Your flailing dislodges someone else; they must roll on this table. You must choose who you dislodge.

A climber under stress will sometimes feel their thigh muscle quivering and feel as if it is about to give out. They often freeze. This is called 'Disco Leg' or 'Washing Machine Leg'.



3. HARD

TABLE: HARD CLIMB

STAT	FAIL
Constitution	All further fails cumulative.
Strength	Shaking; must rest on your foot holds for 1d20 seconds, then roll again to go on.
Dexterity	Feet slipping. Will lose foot holds in 1d6 seconds. Must pull to upwards hold, then roll again to go on.
Intelligence	No upwards holds. Must go back down. Can try again from bottom.
Wisdom	Downward holds are lost and your ropes are poorly placed. Must go up. Cannot assist others with this climb. They must roll separately.
Charisma	You drop a random item. It hits someone below. (If you fall then you hit them. Share falling damage equally.)

If you roll an impossible situation or incompatible result then you will fall. So if, on a hard test, you fail on Constitution, Dexterity and Intelligence, then the Dexterity fail requires you to pull to an upwards hold and the Intelligence fail means there are no upwards holds. You fall from your current position.

If you fail on Constitution, Strength and Dexterity you must roll 1d6 to see how long your foot holds last, then 1d20 to see how long you need to rest. If the result of the d20 is above the d6, you fall.

If you fail on Constitution, Intelligence and Wisdom, you are trapped.

4. VERY HARD

TABLE: VERY HARD CLIMB

STAT	FAIL
Constitution	All further fails cumulative.
Strength	Grip failing in 1d6 seconds, must dyno forward to get out of it.
Dexterity	Fingertip grip only. Can't dyno forward. Roll again to go back safely.
Intelligence	No way forward or back. Must grip on for 1d20 seconds to think, then dyno sideways.
Wisdom	Fully extended. Can't dyno, must grip and move forward within 1d10 seconds.
Charisma	Shameful flailing. If someone has you roped, they either let you go or fall themselves. Their choice. No one observing you will trust your choice of route.

Again, incompatible results mean a fall. So any combination of Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence and Wisdom results in a fall.

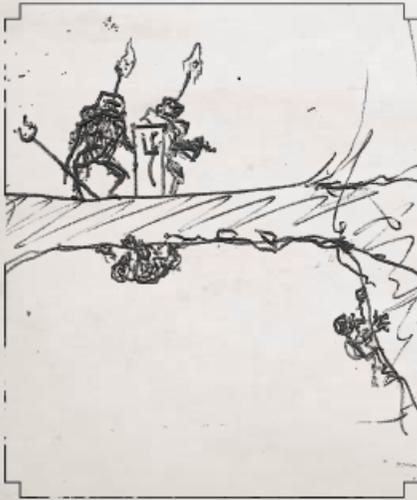
A 'dyno' is a dynamic leap, fully out of contact with the rock, to a better position. This requires another climbing roll. Failure is a fall.

(At the Referee's discretion, succeeding with a dyno in front of observing NPCs may give a PC +1 Charisma with those individuals. It looks cool as fuck.)

5. HUMAN LIMIT

TABLE: HUMAN LIMIT CLIMB

STAT	FAIL
Constitution	All further fails cumulative.
Strength	Fall. If you live, too weak to act for 1d20 rounds.
Dexterity	Fall. Land on spine. If you live, crippled till magically healed.
Intelligence	Fall. No way forward. This climb may not be attempted again.
Wisdom	Fall. You scream as you go. Referee may trigger an encounter.
Charisma	Impossible situation and compounded poor choices cause you to lose all confidence and self-will. Your muscles spasm and you fall from shame. Observers test morale. Retainers may flee. PCs must fight at -1 level for a day.



6. ALMOST SUPER HUMAN

TABLE: ALMOST SUPER HUMAN CLIMB

STAT	FAIL
Constitution	All further fails cumulative.
Strength	Fall. Exhausted. Save versus Paralysis or pass out for 1d20 hours.
Dexterity	Fall. Spin in air. Land on head. Save versus Poison or die.
Intelligence	Fall. Execute perfect move into non-existent hold. If you survive, you no longer trust yourself. All climbs one level harder till you gain a level.
Wisdom	Fall, dislodging chunks. Roll 1d6 attacks against anyone standing below, doing 1d6 damage each and the Referee may roll encounter die.
Charisma	Total mental breakdown leading to world-famous fuckup. You fall. If any NPC observes this it becomes appended to your name in life or death.

ROPE-WORK

Zip lines and rope-assistance always work. If PCs are making use of ropes set up by another member of the group and the situation changes enough to warrant a roll, they can use the Climb skill of the person who set up the ropes.

If they fail, use whichever failure chart matches the difficulty of the climb without ropes.

CATCHING SOME IDIOT

If someone falls or has to jump, and if you are in a position to do so, then you can try to catch them. So long as it is physically feasible, you will always succeed at this.

Roll falling damage as normal but share it equally between both the PC falling and whomever is catching them. No more than five people can work together to catch one falling person.

Those trying to catch the faller should roll to hit with their best attack bonus; either *mêlée* or ranged is acceptable. They are trying to hit the unmodified Armour of the faller. Anyone who succeeds can reduce the amount of damage they take by the amount of their success. If they are feeling generous, they can choose to share this reduction in damage equally with the person falling.

THE SIMPLE LIST

How hard does it look?

Ask for a 1d6 roll.

If it fails, roll on the relevant chart.

Go on from there.

Remember, everything takes time and light.

Remind players how long their decisions will take to pan out, how many Lumes it will take and don't forget to roll encounters.

FALLING DAMAGE

This is longer and more annoying than the standard falling damage chart, and harder to use. But it is a more consequential, and less predictable system which makes falling both more dangerous for high level characters and also possibly-survivable for low level ones.

TABLE: FALLING DAMAGE

FEET FALLEN	DAMAGE
10	1d6
20	1d6 x 1d4
30	1d6 x 1d6
40	1d6 x 1d8
50	1d6 x 1d10
60	1d6 x 1d12
70	1d6 x 1d20
80	1d6 x 1d50
90	1d6 x 1d100





HEAVY ARMOUR

Plate mail kills you in the Veins; most cultures rarely use it.

The Weeping Knights of the Knotsmen and some Dvargir may make some occasional use for expeditionary purposes. Those guarding fixed positions inside cities may have plate and large shields. No-one else ever will.

Squeezes are simply not accessible to anyone in plate and are difficult for anyone in chain. Sumps and swimming are made so difficult they verge on suicidal. The armour drags you down and gives you hypothermia if you survive. No-one wearing plate may attempt a climb of hard, very hard, or above.

If any PC is wearing plate, then when you roll the encounter die a result one number higher than that which signals an encounter means the plate armour of one of the PCs has gone wrong.

That is, if a result of 1 on a d6 would usually mean an encounter, then a result of 2 now means a plate armour fail.

If multiple PCs are wearing plate mail then chose which one is affected randomly.

Roll 1d6 for a plate armour fail*.

TABLE: PLATE ARMOUR FAIL

1D6	EFFECT	
1	RUSTED	Now loses 1 point of Armour per week unless cleaned for 1d4 hours a day.
2	DENTED	A random limb now has limited extension.
3	NOISY	Squeals all the time.
4	TRAPPED	You are stuck in a narrow space and need friends to free you.
5	SLOW	Journey will take twice as long.
6	FREEZING	Roll for hypothermia (see p.328).





*"Illimitable ocean without bound,
Without dimension; where length,
and breadth, and height*

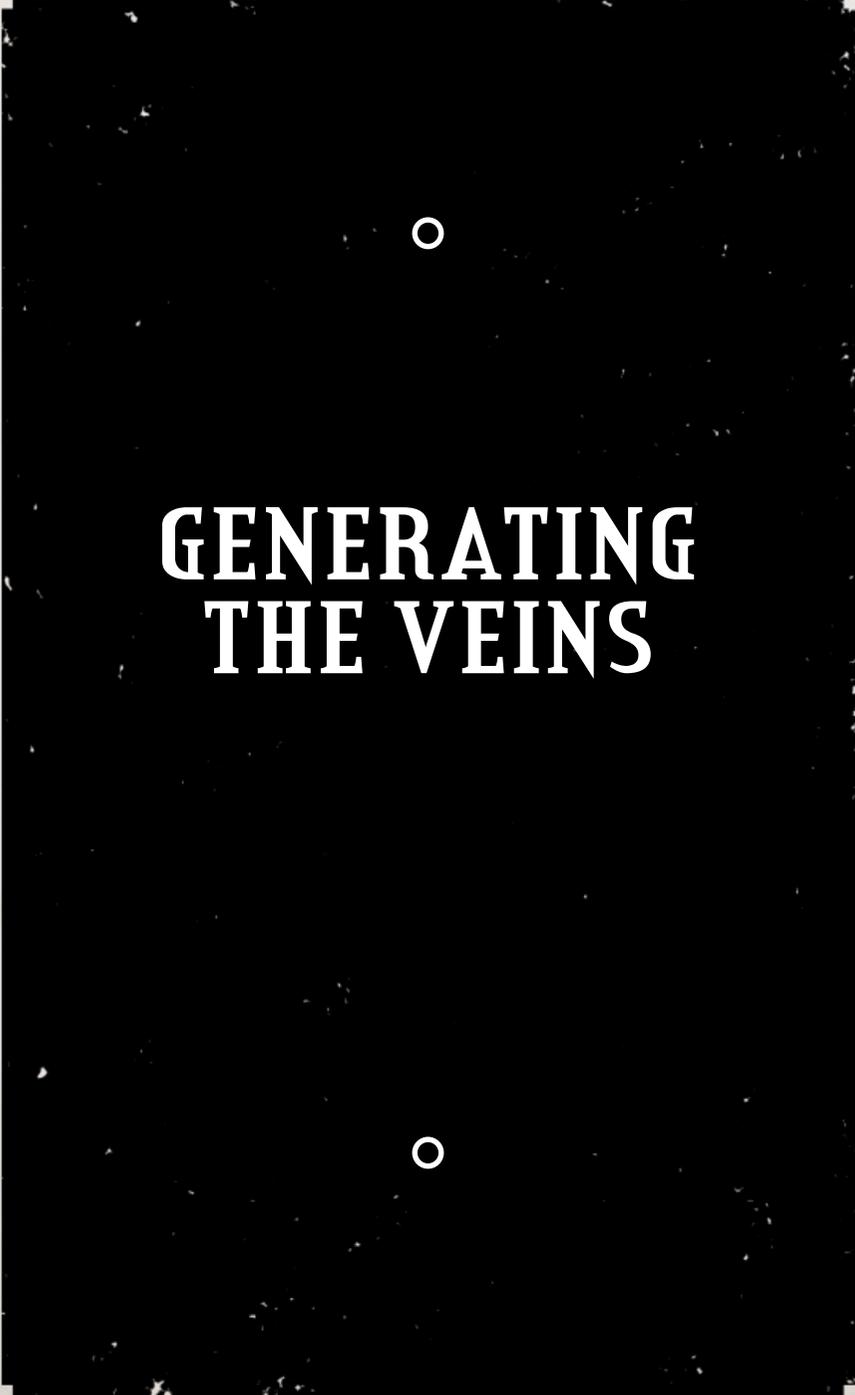
*And time and place are lost;
where eldest Night*

*And Chaos,
ancestors
of Nature,
hold*

*Eternal
anarchy,
amidst the
noise*

*Of endless
wars, and by
confusion
stand."*





**GENERATING
THE VEINS**

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

THIS SECTION DESCRIBES WAYS of generating, and then traversing, the Veins of the Earth. The methods chosen to do this are deliberately abstract. They are **NOT LIKE NORMAL TOP-DOWN MAPS**. They are not related to the surface world or to the depiction of things on the surface world. They show **RELATIVE** distances and the relation of things to each other underground. They are more like the map of the London Underground, or a circuit wiring diagram, than a normal map. I can't draw, so making a system that I can't use would be dumb. They are meant to be made fast during play. Other systems produce 'flat' maps, like dungeon maps which favour movement in a single plane. I wanted verticality and interlocking three-dimensional complexes.

FIRST: ENTRIES TO THE UNDERWORLD. Ideas for getting PCs underground.

SECOND: GENERATING A SINGLE CAVE. Read the rules. Throw the dice. Make a cave. If you do it five or six times it should become so easy you don't need to look at the rules.

THIRD: ROUTES AND EXITS, THE NOTATION SYSTEM. Draw a bunch of caves and link them up. An example map is shown. This is a rough equivalent to a dungeon map.

FOURTH: THE CAVE SYSTEM GENERATOR. This can be used before, during or after creating your cave system to add personality or specificity and history.

FIFTH: LARGE SCALE MAPPING. This is a rough equivalent to a wilderness area map on which you would place towns and dungeons.

The cave goes in the cave system, the cave system goes in the area map. There are two fast-encounter charts. One generates an encounter with a living thing and a specific and unusual cave to have it in, the other is a simple 1d100 roll and generates a slightly wider range of encounters more suited to long journeys.

WHERE DO THE VEINS OF THE EARTH BEGIN?

Exactly where one enters the Veins of the Earth is a subject of some debate. At what point does a dungeon become part of the Veins? In some places it seems a natural cavern on the surface would lead you directly into the Veins; in others, a gigantic cave system many storeys deep might still not be truly part of that more-distant world.

A popular concept is that the Veins are one invisible day down. That is, if you proceed directly down, doing nothing but travelling for 24 hours, and go a whole day without sight of the sun, you edge upon the Veins. Others say the Veins begin at the point where the paths cannot be mapped, or where the worked stone gives out, or when the weight of your flesh is worth more than your weight in silver.

Usually the defining factors of the Veins are that they are dominated by natural or semi-natural caverns, that they are utterly interconnected, that no point is ever totally separate from any other point, that they count as a wilderness where, even though the paths are limited, any direction may be ultimately taken and any destination sought out. It is the ocean-of-stone, and there are seas within it. When an hour of light costs the same as a silver piece or a mouthful of flesh, then you are within the Veins.

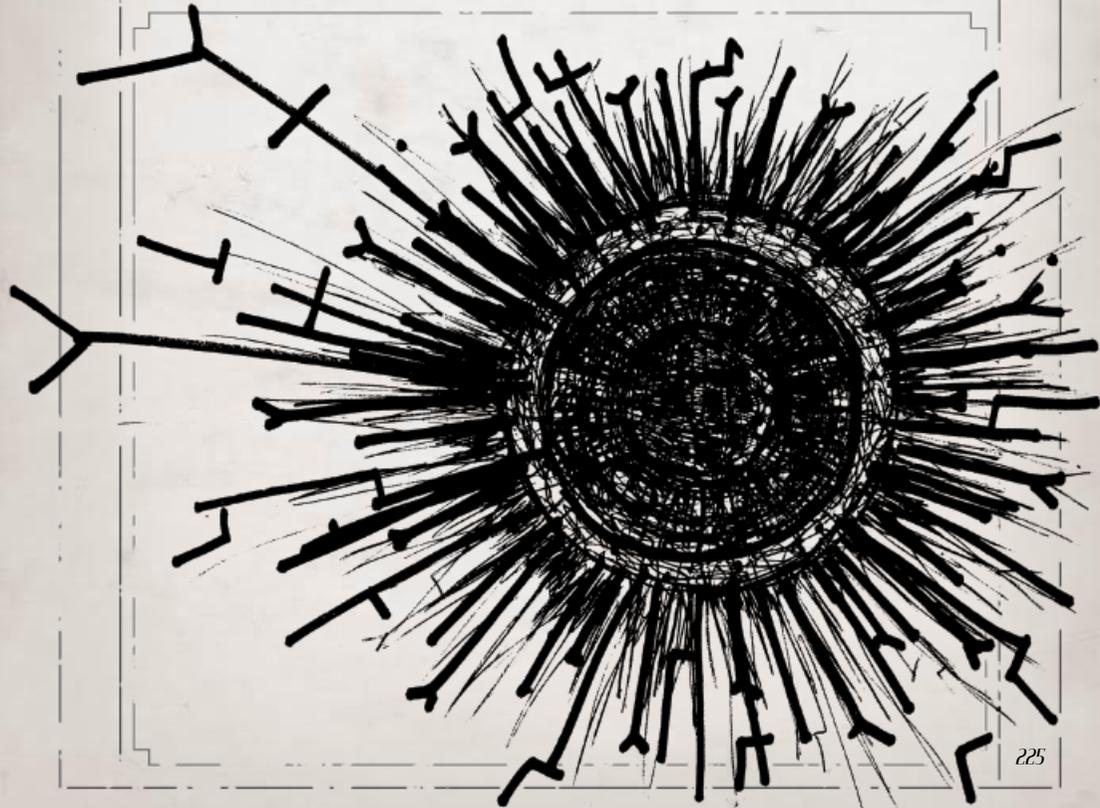


ENTRIES TO THE UNDERWORLD

- 1. AT THE DEEPEST POINT OF THE DUNGEON, BEHIND THE THRONE, THERE IS A CRACK.** A black empty space where the wall joins the stone floor, a foot and a half high and three wide. A breeze comes out. You'd never notice it. You could lie on your belly and fit inside. It never ends.
- 2. MINERS HEARD A NOISE. THEY STOPPED HAMMERING, BUT SOMEONE ELSE DID NOT.** Now there is a space they did not make in the wall of the mine between the props and the vein is mined out from the other side.
- 3. ON A DISTANT ISLAND THERE IS A DEAD VOLCANO AND NO METAL,** but the people living there carry swords of unknown make and they know the names of ancient kings from distant lands.
- 4. BENEATH THE CITY STREETS THERE ARE BURIED ROADS AND CELLARS WHERE THE SEWAGE RUNS THROUGH.** Below those are forgotten colonnades, and under those are caverns, and right at the deepest point is a black gate and the gate is guarded, from both sides, by guards who never speak.
- 5. A MAELSTROM IN THE OCEAN SWALLOWS SHIPS, BUT ONCE, AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE, IT VOMITED ONE UP.** A ship lost long ago, not wrecked or sunk to the bottom of the sea, but still in use, its sails of grey silk, its broken planks replaced with shards of some enormous bone, its mast of something almost as strong as steel but lighter than wood.
- 6. ON THE DIRT-POOR LAND WHERE THE RIVER RUNS INTO THE CAVE, THERE ARE WALLED FARMS.** The people there are pale and rarely speak. They hunger for fresh fruit, workable wood and meat and they pay with uncut gems and slivers of gold. No-one knows where the gold comes from, no-one knows where the goods go.
- 7. AN ARCH-MAGE CASTS A SPELL THAT BANISHES YOU TO A FEATURELESS CYST OF STONE HUNDREDS OF MILES BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH.** You believe yourself trapped, perhaps forever - but then, to the surprise of all, you hear a tapping noise. The tip of a small pick breaks through the stone and the calm features of a Gnommen look through. By sheer chance you have been placed in the path of an expanding mine.
- 8. SOMEHOW YOU ESCAPE FROM HELL.** Maybe you were never meant to be there, or perhaps you were taken then in error and allowed to leave. Now you must find your way back to the surface world hundreds of miles above. The wilderness of stone between you and the sun might be more dangerous even than hell itself.
- 9. THE TURF GIVES WAY, A SINKHOLE OPENS UP BENEATH, SENDING YOU PLUMMETING INTO A CAVERN OF STONE.** A house could easily be swallowed by such a thing, or a village. If the continents shift and a great fault opens up in the earth a city could be swallowed in a handful of moments.

ENTRIES TO THE UNDERWORLD (CONT'D)

- 10. CAPTURED AND BOUND BY A SPOOKY SUPERSTITIOUS TRIBE, YOU ARE DRAGGED INTO THE HOWLING MOUTH OF A GIGANTIC CAVE.** Your captors carry you through a labyrinth of twisting stone, fording black waters until half their light is gone, then leave you on the stone floor where there are signs that others have been left before. You wait, then after half a day you see lights glimmer in the distance - lights not from above, but from below.
- 11. A GOD-BEAST RAVAGES THE LAND LIKE A NATURAL DISASTER.** So huge and ancient that it is invulnerable to any harm. Eventually, its energies spent, it disappears into the earth, flinging up city sized clods from its gigantic burrow. Eventually the tremors of its passage fade. Only an epic hole is left, leading who-knows-where.
- 12. AN INLAND SEA DISAPPEARS WITHOUT A TRACE.** Those searching its exposed bed find only a humongous hole through which it seems to have drained, like the plug of a bath, and strange signs of titanic mining works. Could an ocean be stolen? And why?



GENERATING A SINGLE CAVE

1. ROLL 2D6 ONTO A PIECE OF PAPER.

2. THE SIZE OF THE CAVE:

If the dice are touching then the cave is very small; if a finger's width apart the cave is the size of a room. If two or three finger-widths apart then it's the size of that many rooms. If a hand's width then it's the size of a house, or whatever the most common size for caves in the cave system is. If an arm's length then the size of an office building. If one goes off the table the cave is truly gargantuan, an environment in itself.

HOW BIG IS A ROOM?

For the sake of convenience and easy calculation, assume a 'room' is about 10 feet per side.

3. THE WAY IN:

Look at the closest die. The position of the 1 on this die shows you how you enter this cave. If the 1 is uppermost you come in through the roof, if on the bottom, you come up through the floor; if on a side of the die then you come in through that side.

4. THE WAY OUT:

Look at the die furthest from you. Where the 1 is on this die is where the largest exit from the cave will be found.

5. HOW BIG IS THE WAY OUT?

Look at the total of the two dice. That is the size of the largest exit in feet, either height or width.

If the roll is doubles the exit is opposite the entrance and special.

6. HOW MANY OTHER EXITS?

The difference between the two dice. Each exit after the first will be half the size of the one that came before (rounding up). So if the first is 6 feet wide, the second will be three feet wide, the third two feet wide.

If an exit is 1 foot or less you may decide there are no further exits.

7. WHERE ARE THE OTHER EXITS?

Wherever is most convenient for you. Place exits after the first however best links to your system.

If you would like to arrange exits by a strict rule, then look back and forth between the two dice. On the die closest to you, look for the 2. This is the location of the second exit. On the furthest die, look for the 3. This is the location of the third exit. Carry on like this until all exits are accounted for.

SPECIAL ROUTES AND EXITS

If you roll doubles it's best to make up something unusual yourself to match the kind of cave system you are generating. A special route could also be a way out of the cave system. If you wish you can roll on, or simply choose from, the list below.

1. TRAVERSE.

A side-step climb along a wall where the floor is either inaccessible or dangerous.

2. SUMP.

A river or pool of water leading under a cave wall. Sumps are dangerous and frightening; without previous knowledge it's impossible to know how long they are. Any light carried under a sump must be waterproof. Without light, those passing through must test Wisdom every 6 feet or become lost in the dark water.

A sump is 1d4 feet long but the 1d4 explodes into 1d6, the 1d6 into 1d8 etc. It is possible for a sump to be so long it cannot be navigated by normal means.

There can't be a sump in the roof. There might be a waterfall though.

3. LETTERBOX SQUEEZE.

A very extreme example of a squeeze which a normal human being can only access with great difficulty, and great calm. They must lie down pushing their dominant arm forwards, tilting their shoulders and letting their other arm press against their body. They can expect to be enfolded by stone on all sides and must go in darkness or push a light ahead of them. Often the only way to get through is by deliberately relaxing the muscles so that the volume of the body becomes more liquid and pliable. If the user becomes afraid, they may tense up and become trapped.

4. BREAKDOWN.

A pile of rocks. Perhaps a normal passage with its roof fallen in, or one side of the cave has simply collapsed. It may be possible to clear the rocks or to worm through them. They may be unstable. The entire floor of the cave may be a field of broken stone, or the roof may be a collection of shattered rock held together by mutual tension. Violent actions may dislodge the rocks.

HOW LONG IS A ROUTE?

The routes are labelled by time.

The time taken to go from one end of a route to the other is 1d4 turns. The 1d4 explodes on a 4 into a 1d6, the 1d6 explodes on a 6 into a 1d8 and so on.

Write the number by the middle of the route.

However, numerous factors can influence this value and the extent of their interaction is so great that it can be impossible to quantify.

Firstly, the distance covered in the time given must shift considerably depending on the nature of the route. An hour in an easy walk will get you one distance, an hour in a crawl another and an hour in a squeeze not very far at all. Likewise, a descent in a large

shaft is usually easier than an ascent, yet a descent in a vertical squeeze is almost exactly as horrible as a lateral squeeze. The presence or absence of water will also have an effect.

In reality caves and the routes between them flow seamlessly into each other and there is no clear dividing line between cave and route. The routes themselves shift constantly in their nature, moving from simple strolls to dangerous climbs without pause or interruption. They loop back on each other, take unlikely turns and show no consistency in their nature.

The notation system given and the nature of the maps or diagrams described, is meant to show the relative distances between things, in a similar manner to the map of the London Underground. If you roll distances using the above method for every connection between caves then, even by the odd standards of underground travel, things will make no sense at all. Assign a number based either on your intuition or careful consideration, depending on which aspect of your thought you most rely and trust.

Just write whatever seems to make sense.

Remember you can link up routes to other routes.

VERTICAL ROUTES

The distance given should be for the time taken to abseil or travel down. Remember the time taken to climb up something is double the time it took to climb down.

FALLING

As a general rule, assume the depth of a shaft in feet equals the minutes it took the group to climb. So 1 turn = 10 feet.

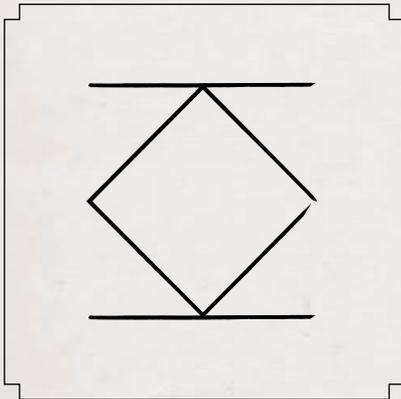
DRAWING A CAVE

CAVES ARE THREE-DIMENSIONAL. Paper isn't. Mapping a truly three dimensional network on a two dimensional medium is a problem that has vexed a large number of very intelligent people. Cavers deal with it by making exacting measurements as they explore (in caving culture, exploring without measurement and records is a serious faux pas), then drawing the cave both from the side and from above, then comparing the two maps.

My solution to the same problem is rather rough and ready.

The symbol I use to show a single cave on this A4 map is designed to show a three-dimensional space in a two-dimensional shape and to be easy and simple to draw.

It's a diamond with two parallel lines at its top and bottom point.



The four walls of the square are the four directions of the cave. The lines at the top and bottom symbolise the roof and floor of the cave. This shape exists entirely and only to show the location and orientation of the passages leading from the cave.

Caves come in a plethora of strange and unique shapes, but for the purposes of mapping them quickly, an exit can be either in the floor, the roof, or one of the four cardinal directions, North, South, East and West.

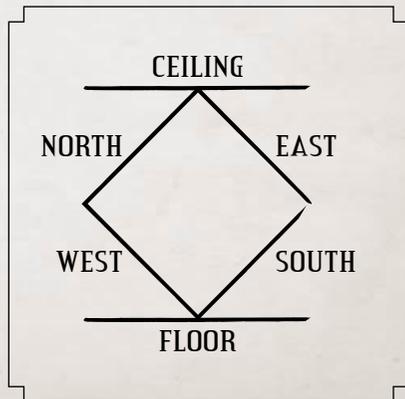
In this diagram, any exit in the roof of the cave would be shown coming from the flat line at the top, and an exit from the floor would be shown coming from the bottom flat line.

For the sake of simplicity, any passage leading from the roof is assumed to lead upwards and any passage leading from the floor is assumed to lead downwards.

An exit coming from the walls of the cave would be shown on one of the four sides of the square.

North is assumed to be the side facing towards the top left of the page, South on the side facing towards the bottom right, West would be the side facing bottom left and East the side facing top right.

This image shows which lines correspond to which directions.



DRAWING THE SIZE OF A CAVE

DRAW A SYMBOL IN THE DIAMOND TO SHOW HOW LARGE THE CAVE IS.

POSITION OF THE DICE	SIZE OF THE CAVE	NOTATION USED
Dice touching	A tiny cave, perhaps cupboard sized. No more than a junction in the route.	—
One finger apart	Room sized. About 10 feet by 10 feet.	I
Two fingers apart	The size of two rooms. Roughly 20 feet by 20 feet.	II
Three fingers apart	Three rooms	III
Four fingers apart	Four rooms	IV
A hand's width apart	The size of a house	V
An arm's length apart	The size of an office building	+
One or both dice off the table	A gargantuan cave	!

The symbols given on the right column of this table are the ones I use to easily and quickly indicate the volume of the cave. They were chosen to be simple, fast, obvious and quick to draw.

It would be just as easy to write in numbers instead of numerals or to label the caves in any other way that is convenient for you and I encourage you to do so if you find this system inconvenient.



DRAWING ROUTES BETWEEN CAVES

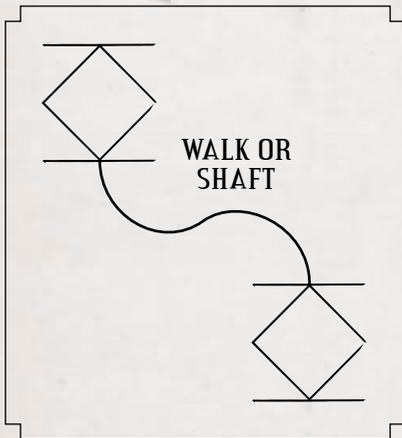
FOR THE SAKE OF SIMPLICITY and clarity, routes are divided by the methods used to access them. This usually depends on their size when compared to a normal human.

1. WALK OR SHAFT

This is the simplest and most accessible kind of route. The ceiling is high enough for PCs to stand upright. The walls are wide enough that they do not need to turn or manipulate their bodies to get through. The floor is roughly even with a shallow incline. It can be walked, like an organic corridor. Generally anything over four feet wide.

If a walk is vertical, that makes it a shaft which must be climbed or abseiled.

A walk is shown on the map by a simple line.

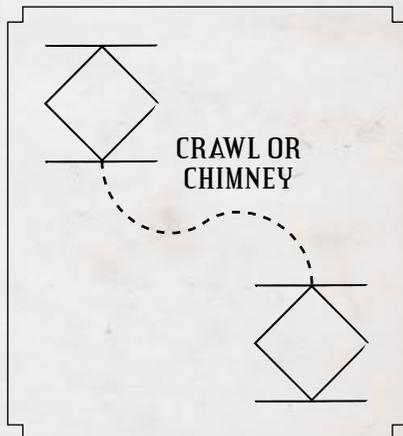


2. CRAWL OR CHIMNEY

This route requires those using it to get down on all fours. It's probably no more than three feet high. Combat in these passages will be brutal, using mainly close weapons. If an enemy is killed then their body must be removed or squeezed past.

If a crawl is vertical, that makes it a chimney. A chimney is a vertical climb up or down a shaft in which the walls of the shaft are close enough that the climber can press their back against one of the walls and push their feet against the facing wall, thereby moving by 'walking' their feet up and down the wall.

A crawl is shown on the map by a dashed line.

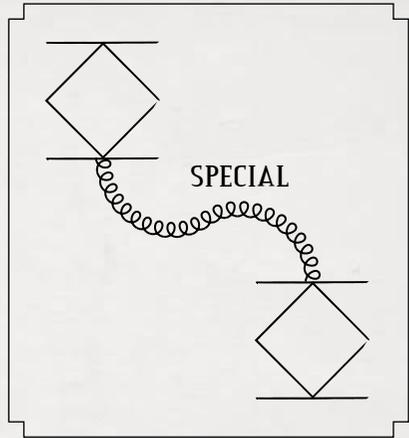
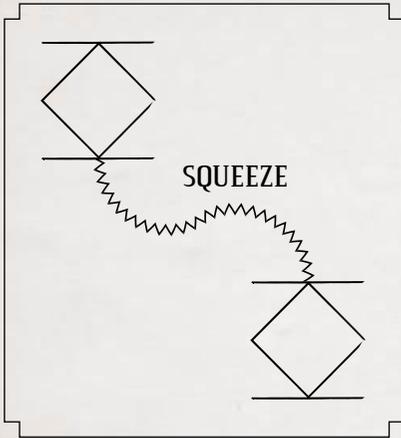


3. SQUEEZE

A squeeze is a passage no more than one or two feet high and probably less. It requires the user to get down on their front and to slither forwards like a snake, or clamber like a lizard. Usually a combination of the two. If an enemy is killed in a squeeze, there may be no way past the body.

A squeeze is shown on the map by a zig-zag line.

(Small races will find it easier to access small passages. For them a Crawl is a Walk and a Squeeze is a Crawl. They can access tiny passages larger creatures would find impossible to use.)



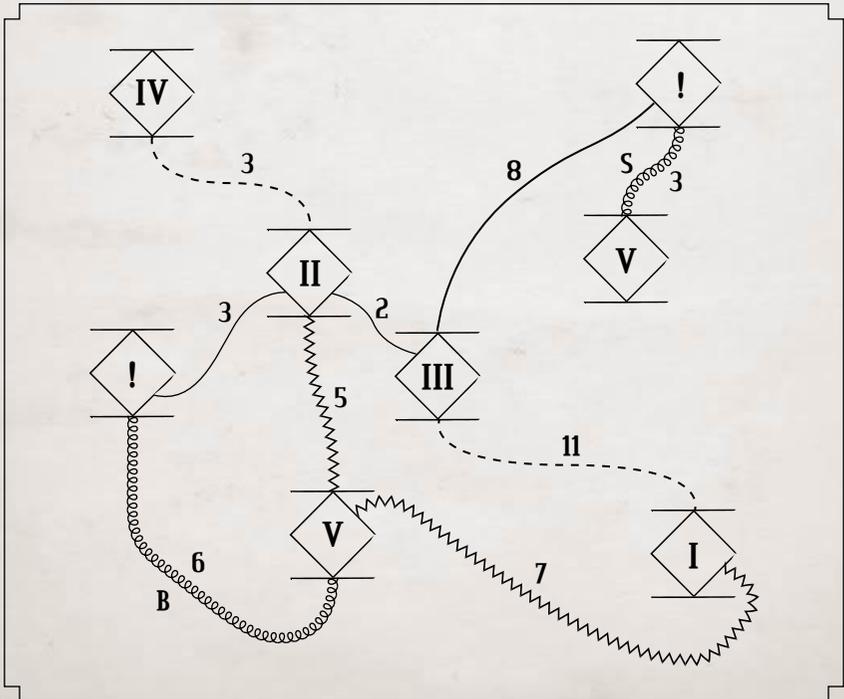
4. SPECIAL

A special exit or route might involve traversing, swimming underwater, clambering through breakdown piles or any other kind of movement.

A special route is shown by a looping line.

When mapping it is best to write in the nature of a special route when you create it, either as a word or a single letter. 'T' for traverse, 'S' for sump, 'B' for breakdown etc.

A map made using this system should look something like this:



GENERATING A CAVE SYSTEM

THIS IS A BASIC INTRODUCTION to the Veins of the Earth cave system generation. It's described in much more detail, with examples of use, in the appendix, starting on p.339.

If you have a moment, roll 1d50 on the Cave System Generator (see p.234). You may roll once and then read across, or roll once for each column and combine the results.

This will give you a name for the cave system and a pair of rules that express the character of the place. You can write these lines at the top of the paper you are going to use in the following way:

"The Torrenting Torment of He Who Seeks, always exposes the tracks of those who passed last but never hides the innocent or lets the guilty flee."

This combination of a descriptive name and some general rules are designed to help you arrange the vague non-specific elements of the caves you will generate into a particular place with its own nature, its own tricks of layout and direction and its own way of interacting with the PCs as they pass through. In a way it makes the geography into a kind of character.

The first part of the name generally indicates a means by which the system was generated. In a large number of cases this involves some kind of water flow, which is typical for caves. This strongly suggests that water is still moving through the cave system. If this is the case, many of the routes through it will be adjacent to moving water. PCs may have to walk beside streams, cross them or wade through them. The water is always going somewhere and it is always going down.

The passages in a water-related cave system will be organically-shaped and not built for the convenience of those moving through them.

Other names have different origins in their title: Mines, Tombs, Tubes, Tendrils and Wormcasts. In each case this is intended to suggest the nature of the spaces, the passages between them and the mood and texture of the underground space.

A mine, for instance, will almost always have passages large enough for its creators and the space by which its product can be moved back to a central shaft (though an abandoned and partially collapsed mine can still seem an utterly labyrinthine place to those exploring it).

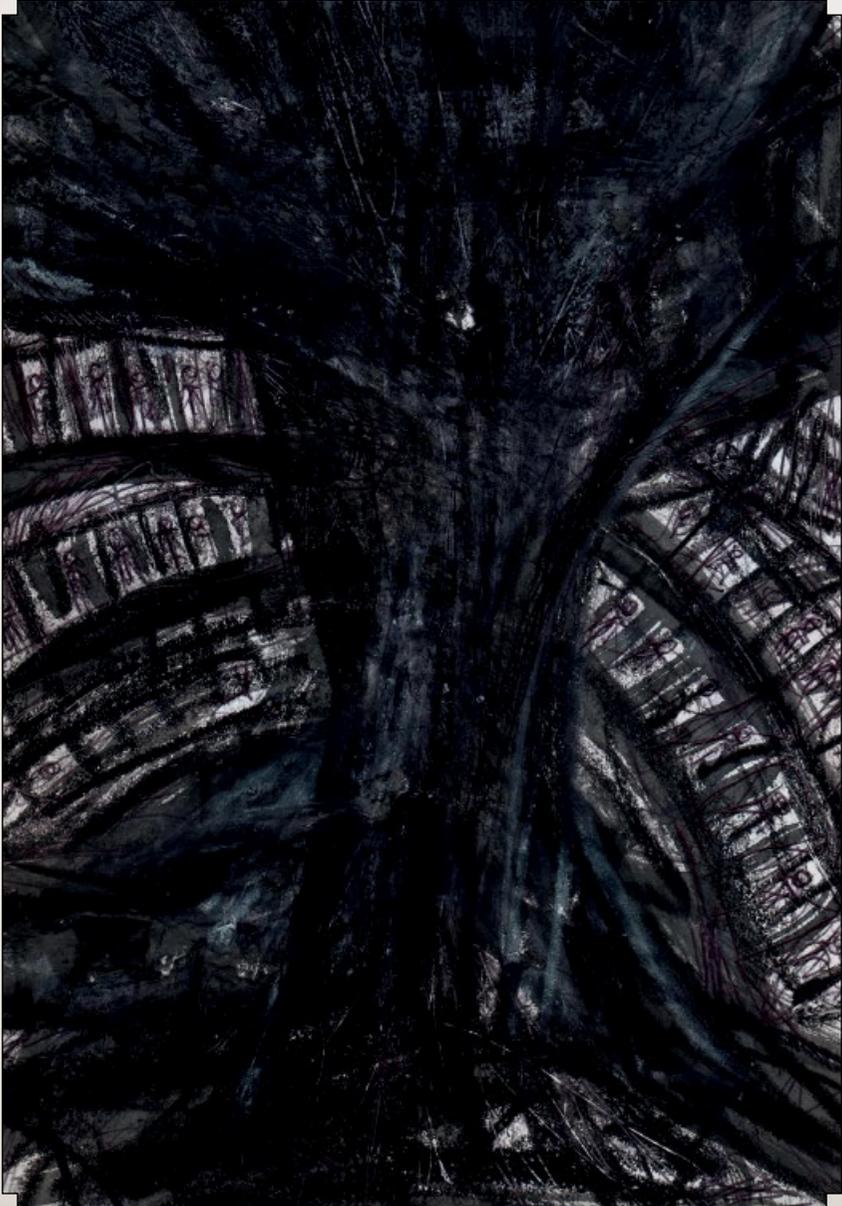
The second part of the name generally indicates a creature, character, group, aesthetic element, mystery or strange quality of the system. It is up to you to devise what this means. Who or whatever this signifies it should be something powerful and distinctive enough to impress its name on a whole section of underground space, though it may no longer be present.

In the example given above, the system named is probably a network of fast moving, perhaps dangerous and loud, waterways. He Who Seeks may be a person whose legend has become linked with this area. They may still be there.

The two rules that come with each description are not absolute instructions, but guidelines about the kind of events that will take place in these caverns and the way those events will play out. They should never be used to directly contravene physical laws or exact game artefacts.

In this case, the Torrenting Torments always expose the tracks of those who passed last, meaning the party will be able to easily find evidence of those who have come before them. Of course, anyone

tracking the party will be easily able to find them. It also never hides the innocent or lets the guilty flee, suggesting that the guilty may be able to hide and the innocent to escape, but not the other way round.



CAVE SYSTEM GENERATOR

1D50	"THE..."	"OF..."	1D50
1	Boiling Surge	No Return	1
2	Torrenting Torment	The Snakemen	2
3	Seeping Sink	Blinded Eyes	3
4	Curving River	Forgotten Hopes	4
5	White Water River	Last Chances	5
6	Sinkholes	Slipped Grips	6
7	Parched River	The King Who Ate Saints	7
8	Murder Rapids	Strangled Songs	8
9	Screaming Surge	The Last Chance	9
10	Plunging Falls	Abandoned Friends	10
11	Spiralling Beck	Bloody Betrayal	11
12	Crawling Waters	Forgotten Friends	12
13	Burning Rapids	Those Despised	13
14	Seasonal River	He Who Seeks	14
15	Weeping Cracks	The Monster's Maw	15
16	Springs	The Poisoned Fool	16
17	Fountains	Choking Slime	17
18	Majestic Waves	Quivering Fear	18
19	Endless Falls	Silence and Time	19
20	Black Depthless Flow	Mutation	20
21	Faults	A Long-Gone Race	21
22	Tornado-Tubes	Nightmares and Dreams	22
23	Inexplicable Whorls	A Long-Forgotten God	23
24	Sulphuric Blooms	The Silicon Crown	24
25	Tendrils	The Beast of The Abyss	25
26	Tubes	Endless Descent	26
27	Bloodsplatter Windings	The Titancorpse	27
28	Pools	The Conquered Worm	28
29	Warrens	The Tasters Of The Air	29
30	Wormcasts	No Escape	30
31	Burrows	The Consumer	31
32	Tombs	Eaten Hours	32
33	Funginid Farms (Dead)	Mocking Imperial Ghosts	33
34	Ruined Mine	Those Who Wait Still	34
35	Ghost Mine	Eyes That Blink Not	35
36	Ruins	The Lawgiver	36
37	Battleground	Those From Below	37
38	Lost Colony	The Sun-Eaters	38
39	Inverse Tower	The Cryptic Witch	39
40	Strange Delve	The Fingerless Mage	40
41	Counter-Mines	Dead Dvargir	41
42	Gold-Greed	The Eye-Eaters	42
43	Mines	Chained Children	43
44	Folly	The Eyeslicers	44
45	War Mines	The Slave Lords	45
46	Gaspig Mines	Sky Wind Scents	46
47	Failed Escape	False Lights	47
48	Last Hope	Starved Slaves	48
49	Fall	Sleepless Dead	49
50	Threads	Burning Words	50

1D50	"ALWAYS..."	"BUT NEVER.."	1D50
1	Curves like question marks at unexpected times	Breaks a lantern if it falls	1
2	Has vertical letterbox exits in the roof	Lets sane people sleep without nightmares	2
3	Dives out of sight like upturned letter 'J's	Traps you in a squeeze with no way out	3
4	Connects through passages, curved like arrow flight	Ends a passage the way it began	4
5	Cuts through banded sandstone stained with metallic leaks	Leaves you hanging without a hold	5
6	Seems carved by thoughtless fools, organically, to no plan	Has dead passages, leading nowhere	6
7	Has blocked primary routes (or so it seems)	Makes secret paths worth the while	7
8	Requires traverses to pass impossible falls	Has cave entries at ground level	8
9	Has one walking passage exit, accessible by overhang	Has sloped cave walls; vertical or concave only	9
10	Narrows to a squeeze but then expands	Forces your head under water	10
11	Has exits just out of reach	Goes up, only down from where you are	11
12	Descends and ascends interminably, pointlessly	Lets you damage a speleothem without an encounter roll	12
13	Has smooth vertical routes with hacked handholds	Holds bolt anchors for long	13
14	Has falling phantom climbers warning of false routes	Lets you go without an encounter	14
15	Tries to take one life on every passage	Releases you in the direction you expect	15
16	Curves back on itself if possible	Kills people while they sing	16
17	Snags your clothes if it can	Drops you if you hold rock in both hands	17
18	Stains your skin the colour of its rock	Shows clear tracks of those who pass	18
19	Holds many darkneses, each different	Wakes you in the middle of a dream	19
20	Wants you on your knees	Lets a rope hang without abrading it	20
21	Eats sound between caves	Lets you stand comfortably	21
22	Collects pockets of bad air	Stops moaning and howling	22
23	Guides you falsely	Holds steady reflections anywhere	23
24	Wants to see you fall	Hides its threats	24
25	Has boulders balanced precariously	Reveals the depth of its pitches at first sight	25
26	Hides exits in the floor	Crushes you with falls if it can trap a limb instead	26
27	Builds caves to maximum size	Hides evidence of your passage	27
28	Gives you an easy escape route, heading down	Lets you guess direction from transmitted sound	28
29	Grabs your feet in cracks while you fight	Makes it easy to go back the way you came	29
30	Puts swings in your ropes and abrades them	Lets the strong escape the weak	30
31	Changes scale unpredictably	Lets anyone cut a rope without suffering whiplash	31
32	Wants to see you chimney	Scales its threats predictably	32
33	Wants to taste blood and drinks any that is spilt	Drops monsters from above	33
34	Cradles life if it can	Hears magic words without screaming and tremors	34
35	Corrodes any metal left outside its sheath	Makes a sound except for whispers	35
36	Covers each path with smears of still mud	Stops tempting you with false gold and gems	36
37	Drops random strategies on loud noises	Lets you sleep	37
38	Drips endlessly, soaking you	Lets go a corpse without a fight	38
39	Funnels a freezing wind	Lets a light burn long without incident	39
40	Tips the axis of your walk, making you scabble	Lets a ghost escape	40
41	Has stalactites and stalagmites that sharpen like spears	Lets water run long without gulping it down	41
42	Exposes the tracks of those who passed last	Lets a river pass through without waterfalls	42
43	Keeps its roofs curved low	Lets anyone spring an ambush without giving some clue	43
44	Hold still, stagnant pools wherever it can	Hides the innocent or lets the guilty flee	44
45	Disguises the depth of any drop, pool or flow	Leads where you want it to go	45
46	Switches back on itself	Lets a man die without testing his sanity (women die fine)	46
47	Has cracks running in every direction, every hold unstable	Breaks legs when you fall (just arms, ribs and necks)	47
48	Is full of strange chiming, movement from the next cave on	Lets its caves flow regularly; clusters and piles them together	48
49	Projects the fossil bones of ancient beasts as unexpected grips	Lets prayers be heard without alteration as they echo through	49
50	Encrusts itself in flowstone, inches thick	Lets you walk anywhere, but crawl, crouch, climb and leap.	50

A LARGE SCALE MAP

THIS IS A QUICK INTRO TO OUR process for mapping large underground areas. A full description, with examples, can be found in the appendix on p.347. The cave systems we developed in the previous section can be placed on this map in the same way a town or dungeon can be placed in a wilderness map.

Because the *Veins of the Earth* describes a three-dimensional environment, this map adopts an unusual but simple method to show both top-down sections, as in normal maps, and vertical up-and-down sections.

Take an A4 sheet. A hex map would be useful. Divide it into quadrants.

Quadrants work in two different ways. They are either top-down like a standard map seen from above, or vertical, like a building seen from the side.

Drawing a compass in the corner of each quadrant should tell you how to read it.

A STANDARD COMPASS WILL GO:

North, South, East, West.

A VERTICAL COMPASS WILL GO:

Up, Down, West, East.

IF THE MAP IS VERTICAL:

then Up is always at the top of the page.

IF THE MAP IS HORIZONTAL:

then North is at the top of the page.

The other compass points are arranged as usual. (Once you become familiar with this type of map you can alter any of these details to produce variety but as the nature of the map is so unusual, it's best to begin with this simple and regular arrangement.)

"WAIT! THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE! At the top of the page I can go from a hex six hexes 'up' in space to one six hexes 'north' with no intervening space! That is nuts!"

You are quite right. It is nuts and the distances involved do not make absolute literal sense in all cases. Like the cave system map the distances shown are relational, and all the locations are assumed to be distributed in three dimensional space in a naturalistic way. Things can go up and down in the 'top-down' quadrants and north and south in the 'side-on' quadrants. The view we are using to look at them takes the dominant form of travel and 'flattens' it so we can see it on a map.

"AGGH THE QUADRANT THING IS FREAKING ME OUT!"

That's fine. Instead of dividing the map into quadrants, just bend it in half and draw a line across the middle. In the lower half of the map look at it as a simple top-down map. Treat it as you would a normal wilderness map. Imagine that the 'routes' are roads and that the white spaces are very dense black forest or jungle.

If people want to go along a route then let them act normally. If they want to try hacking into the 'jungle' then start generating caves and let them move from cave to cave.

Once you reach the upper half of the map, pretend to yourself that you are looking at a gigantic building side-on. Routes leading up the page are like elevators or stairways. People can still go off the routes into the white spaces; they can move cave-by-cave as before.

The Quadrant system is just a slightly more complex version of a page bent in half.

***WAIT, IS THAT AN EIGHT-MILE WATERFALL?
HOW 'VERTICAL' ARE THESE VERTICAL
ROUTES?***

The blue line of a river leading directly down in a vertical section could certainly be an eight-mile waterfall. It would be pretty cool and dramatic that way. But it could also be a series of smaller stepped waterfalls. Or it could be any river running at more than 45°.

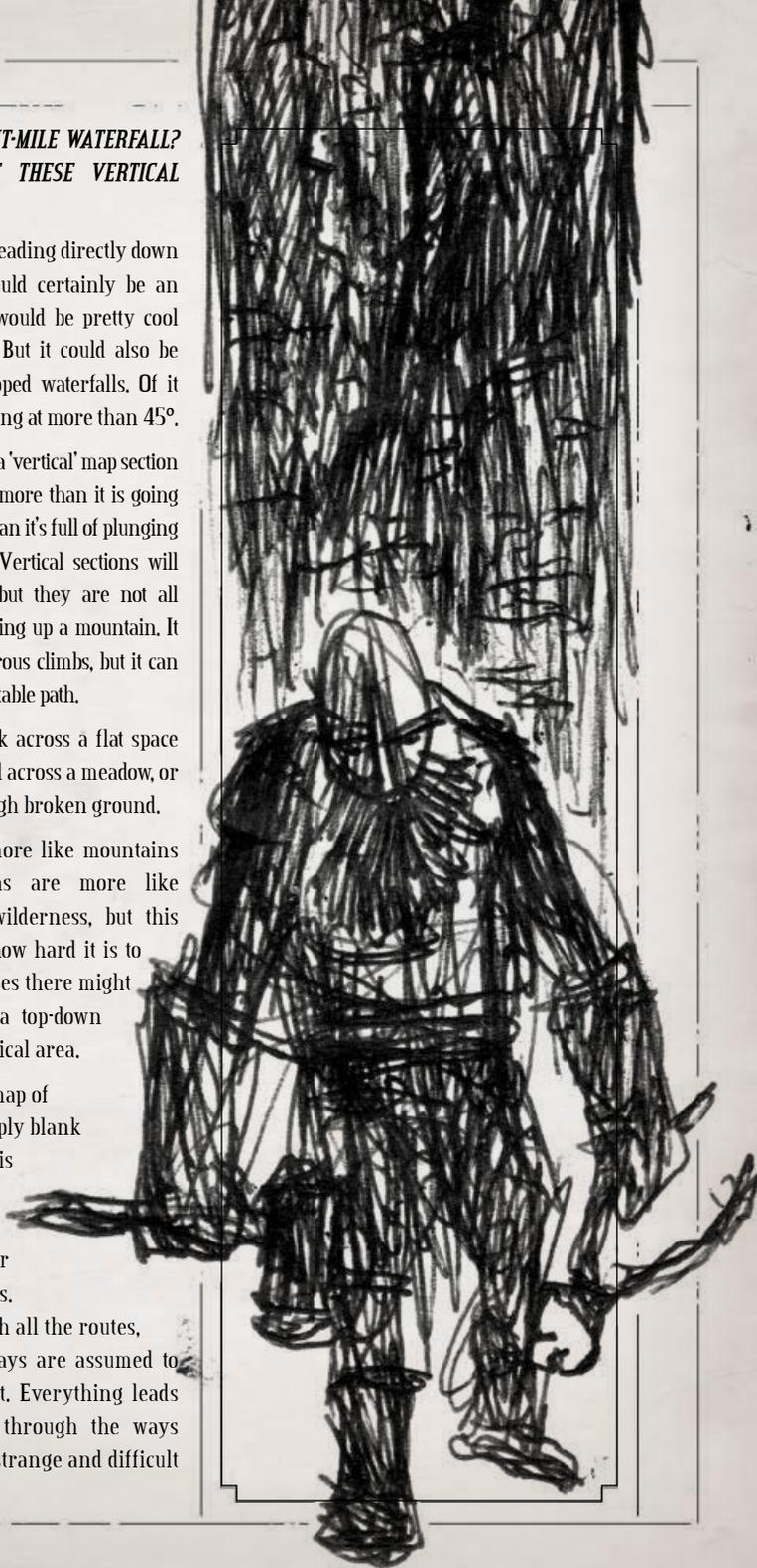
As a broad guide, stuff on a 'vertical' map section is going at up and down more than it is going across, but that doesn't mean it's full of plunging shafts and titanic cliffs. Vertical sections will require some climbing but they are not all climbing. Think about going up a mountain. It can be a series of dangerous climbs, but it can also be a steep yet comfortable path.

In the same way, a walk across a flat space can be like an easy stroll across a meadow, or a horrid scramble through broken ground.

Vertical sections are more like mountains and top-down sections are more like exploring a normal wilderness, but this doesn't always define how hard it is to get around. In some cases there might be more climbing in a top-down map area than in a vertical area.

The white spaces on a map of this kind are never simply blank empty stone. The earth is full of passages, cracks, secrets, rivers, tunnels, escape routes or simply unexplored caves.

In the Veins of the Earth all the routes, passages, paths and ways are assumed to ultimately interconnect. Everything leads into everything else, through the ways between them may be strange and difficult to find.



There will usually not be an entrance to the blank space from the specific cave or area the party is in, but given enough time and freedom to roam the area, there is usually a way in any direction, just as there would be in a forest or mountain.

When the players are moving through the routes on a larger-scale map and wish to move off that route into one of the so-far unexplored spaces, they can search for a passageway or entry that might let them explore in that direction.

These entries and exits are usually hard to find; they may be very small, oddly placed in the changing geometry of the route, hidden by speleothems, partially filled by rock fall or just out of the way in a place few people using the route would ever seek to go.

The party should state which hex or area they wish to move into. Any and all members of the party may make a standard search roll on 1d6. If they fail there is no entry. That part of the map should be marked as truly inaccessible. If any party member is successful, a single entry is found. No more than one entry is ever found. The highest rolled d6 is the number of hours taken to find the entry.

The party may then begin exploring a cave system at a smaller scale - either one generated using the method above, or any other cave system or dungeon map you have access to. This map represents the contents of the empty hex. Any paths or tunnels leading off the page of the map are entries or exits from the hex.

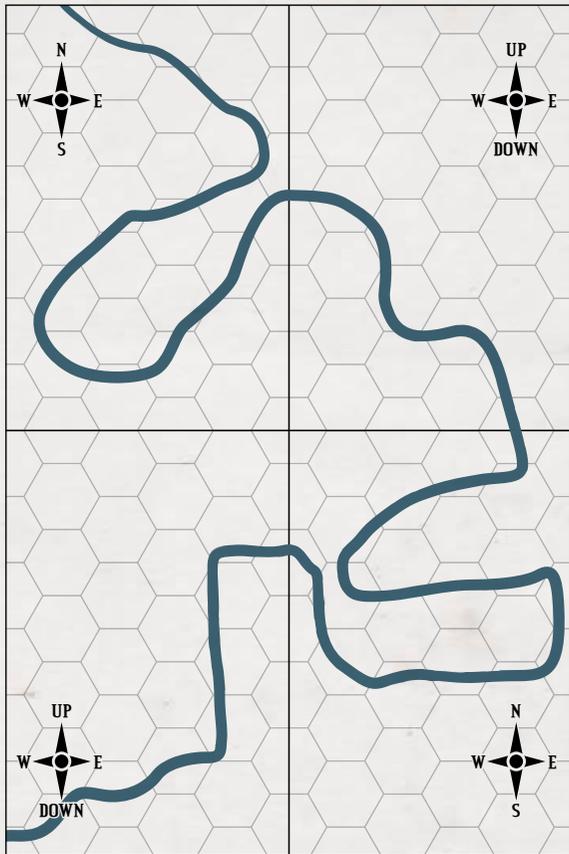
So, if a party searches the walls of a river passage, looking for access to a hex to the east, they may search a few hours and find an entry. You can then generate a cave system to represent this hex with an entry

on the 'west' edge of the page representing the entry the party just found. If, as they explore the map, the party finds a passage leading off the 'north' edge of the map, then they are assumed to have moved one hex north. You may then generate a new cave system to represent the contents of this hex with an entry on the 'south' edge of the map showing the way the party found their way in.

If you don't draw a route leading off a map edge then the party cannot leave the hex that way.







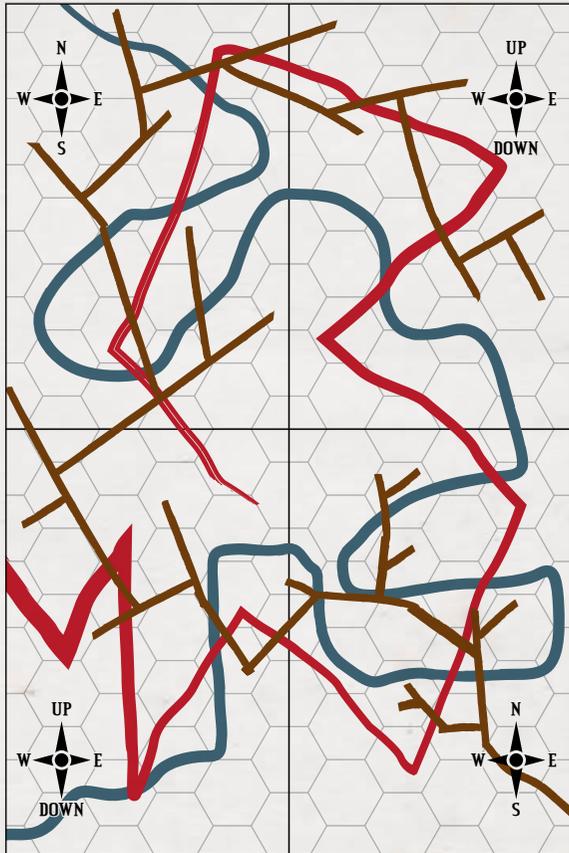
But parts of the Veins of the Earth can be navigated more easily than by simply crawling through them in real time. These will be called 'routes'. These are like the routes between individual caves in the cave system map, but on a much larger scale.

These routes are created by certain passage-forming elements which affect the nature of the route. The simplest and most common is a river. A river route has been drawn on this map in blue.

Different coloured markers are very useful for distinguishing the nature of different routes.

The path of the river is drawn quickly. The shapes of all the routes in this section have been chosen so that they are easy to draw at speed.

Some of these descents are vertical and sharp, suggesting gigantic waterfalls. Remember rivers usually come from above and exit the map at one of its edges. In the top-down sections of the map it ambles back and forth; in the vertical sections it can only go down.



Now a mine has been drawn onto the map in another colour. Its brown shade and branching end-stopped shape make it distinct from both the river and the fault.

The mine makes yet another kind of void within the stone - in this case a deliberately-worked passage made to recover some valuable resource. This mine exists on a very large scale; it is unlikely to be merely a single man-sized passage. It could be very wide indeed, the work of an entire culture, an army of slaves or some intelligent gigantic beast, with numerous exploratory side passages.

If we imagine standing in a location in this map, its nature can be described by looking at the kind of routes in that hex or at that point.





ROUTES TABLES

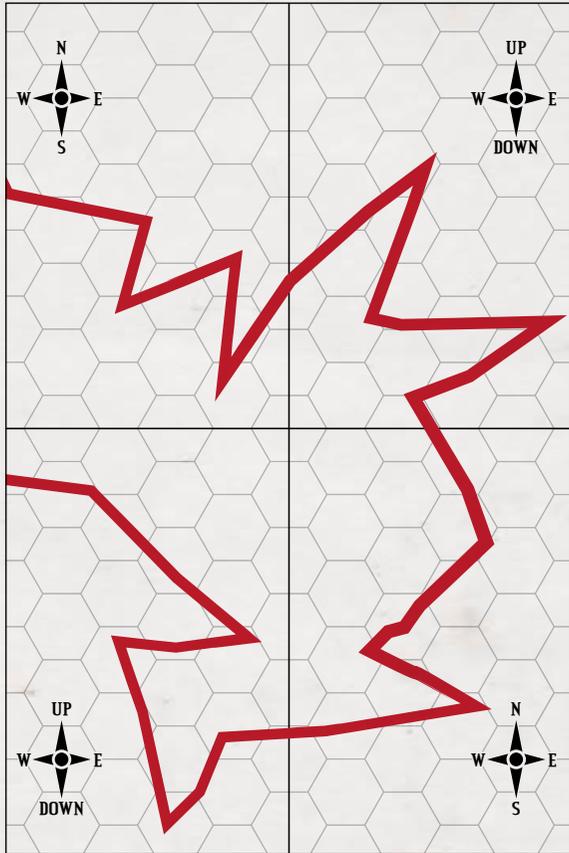
Here are the possible routes themselves in order of likelihood. For a crazy slightly gonzo formation you may simply roll 1d8 to generate three to place on a map.

- 1 River
- 2 Fault
- 3 Mine
- 4 War Works
- 5 Sulphuric blooms
- 6 Fungal
- 7 Gigastructure
- 8 Burrow

For a more naturalistic generation you can try this 1d20 table:

- | | |
|-------|------------------|
| 1-5 | River |
| 6-9 | Fault |
| 10-12 | Mine |
| 13-14 | War Works |
| 15-16 | Sulphuric blooms |
| 17-18 | Fungal |
| 19 | Gigastructure |
| 20 | Burrow |





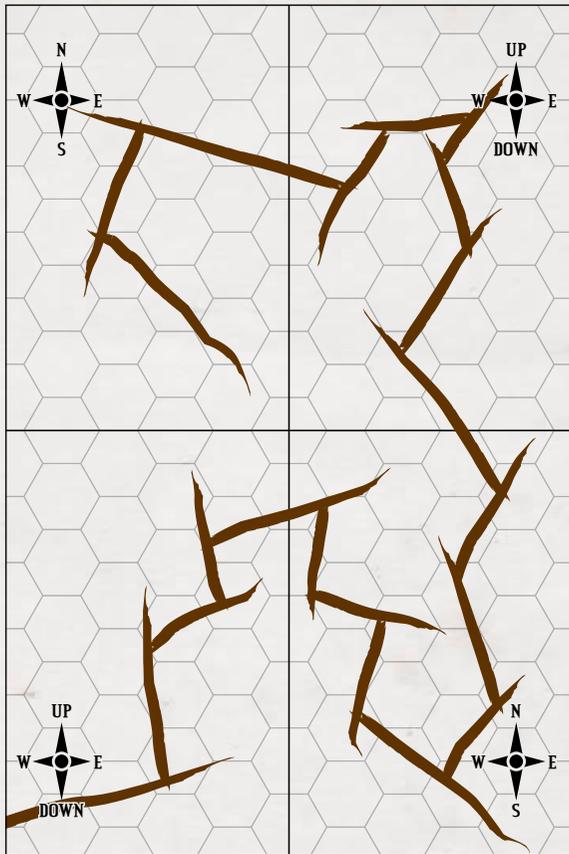
**FAULT
ON THE MAP**

The Fault is pretty simple, exactly how you imagine it to look, a jagged line. It doesn't matter much if it changes its nature or direction when it reaches the vertical sections as it's the nature of faults to break through vertical space.

IN DESCRIPTION

A fault could be described as a huge, dry, dark, irregular chasm in the mid-earth. A kind of natural void. Its walls will not be smooth or semi-organic like a limestone cave but rough and fragmentary, bearing the signs of torsion and stress. It may still be moving. It may have tectonic relics. It may still be active. There may be lava.





MINE

The Mine is a little like the Fault. The mine heads stop and then a new branch is begun from behind the mine head as the miners seek the vein they are after. Like many of these shapes the mine is an extremely abstracted form of how a mine map would look in real life.

ON THE MAP

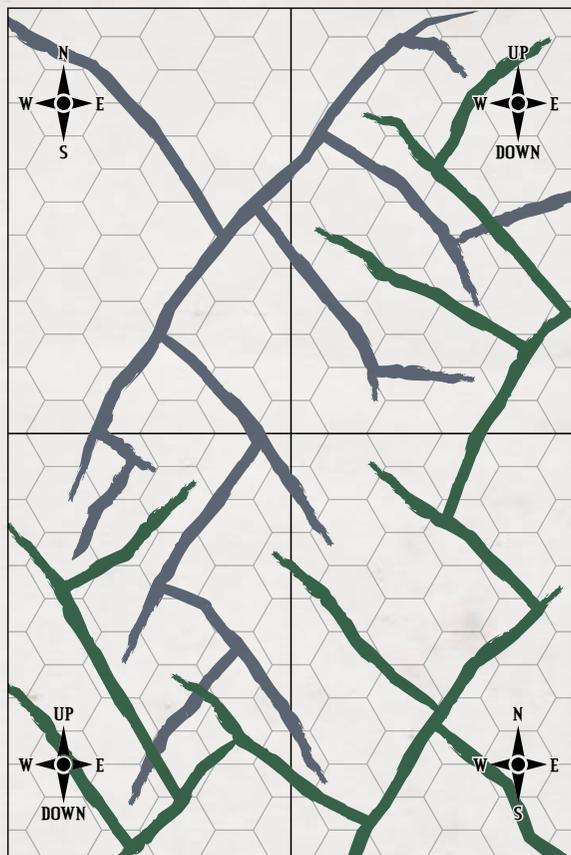
Technically a mine should proceed up and down a little differently than it goes across. I have mainly ignored that though.

IN DESCRIPTION

The major difference between this Vein and any other is that a Mine is rational. It is built to be accessible, though often for races shorter than man. Columns will be left to support the roof. Searching shafts may run in every direction. Expert miners will be able to read the culture of the miners from the toolmarks left on the walls.

(Remember this isn't an exact map of what the thing does, only where it is. Real rivers and mines can have small falls, steps, ladders, lifts, anything you like.)





WAR WORKS

War mines are unusual in that you use two colours and that they produce a large amount of lines. If you roll this result you may only need this and one other to make a map. The war works each start on an opposite side of the map and progress towards each other.

ON THE MAP

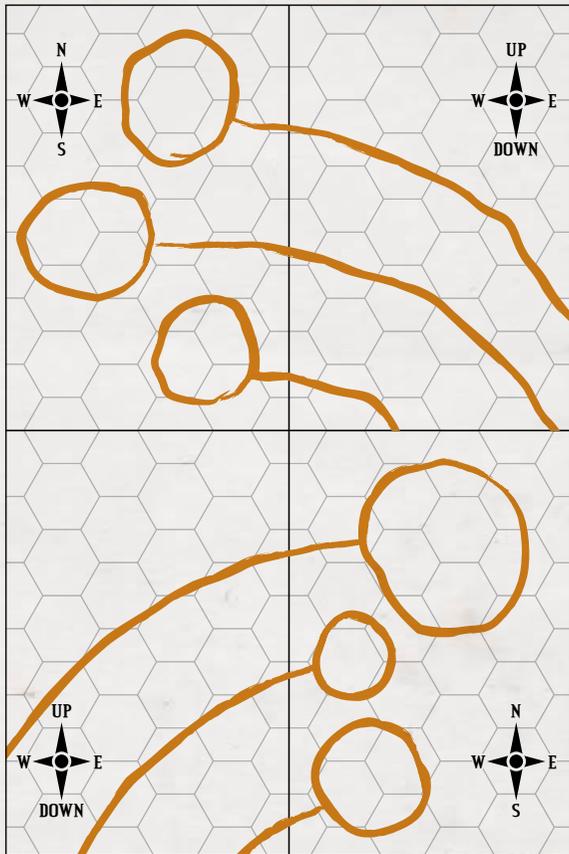
They essentially look like brush heads. An extending line, then a lateral at its head, then more extenders and so on.

The war works are positioned to cut each other off and intercept each other.

IN DESCRIPTION

War mines will be smaller and less stable than normal mines. Towards the 'attack heads' they will be of a minimal size, about three feet wide and four or five high. They were built fast. There may be signs of conflict. The conflict may still be active. End points may be cut off by explosives or magic collapsing the heads.





SULPHURIC BLOOMS

The blooms are strands of corrosive gas seeping up from the deep earth; they chemically corrode stone and produce cave systems leading upwards.

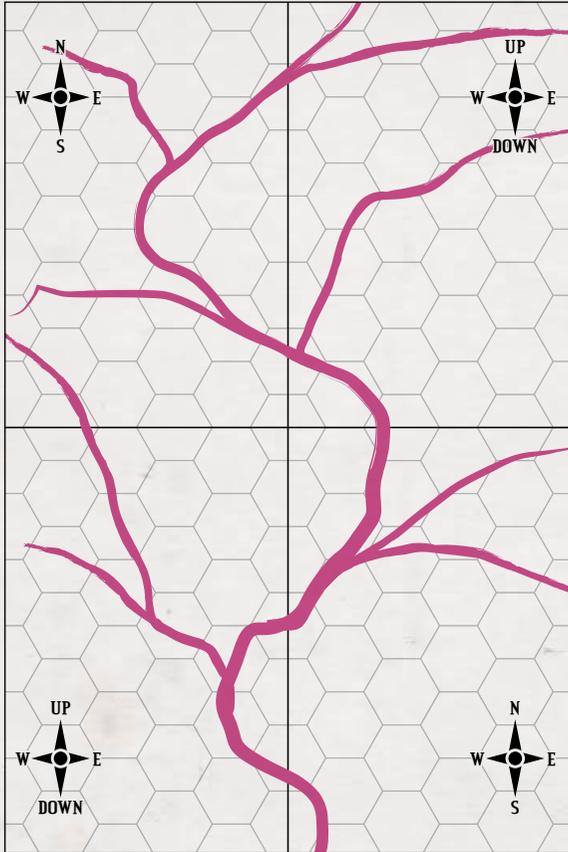
ON THE MAP

On the map the blooms actually look like roses. On the vertical they curve up like stalks, on the top down they are roughly circular infiltrations of corroded stone, like cup stains on paper.

IN DESCRIPTION

These expulsions ruin the stone. The surfaces are rotted, torn and almost necrotic.





FUNGAL

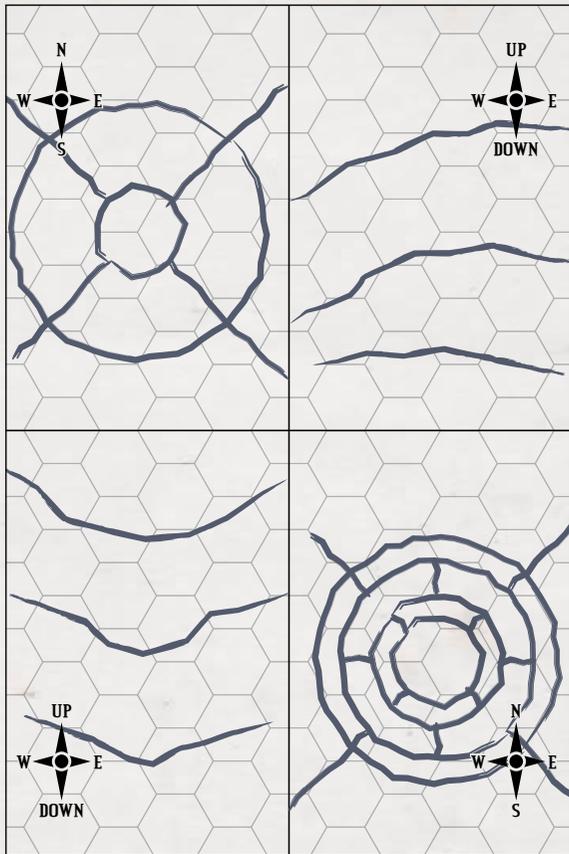
Now we get onto the odd ones. Fungal veins represent tendrils of fungus, slowly infiltrating through the stone, cracking it apart, widening it, searching, perhaps blindly, or for some unknown purpose. Then, over centuries, or days, dying back, leaving empty caverns with the rock bearing the strange fungal marks and the passages stretching in gorgonite waves.

ON THE MAP

These are like a very simple tree.

IN DESCRIPTION

Fungal passages will be stained, strange and winding. They may have numerous tiny branching inaccessible pathways. They will, however, link up. All products of the same organism, they will join like the branches of a strange tree. The cave surfaces may be crumbly like flagstones pushed apart by a mushroom growing from below, or smooth, abraded away by mild organic acids. The passages may still carry fungal smears.



GIGASTRUCTURE

The gigastructure is a gigantic built thing.

It's probably a city that has slowly sunk into the earth, but it could also be a ziggurat, a city-sized tomb or something even more incredible.

It probably wasn't built here, but sank slowly into the earth over millennia, being compressed by the shifting of plates and the slow unfolding of time. Whatever it was has long been forgotten now.

ON THE MAP

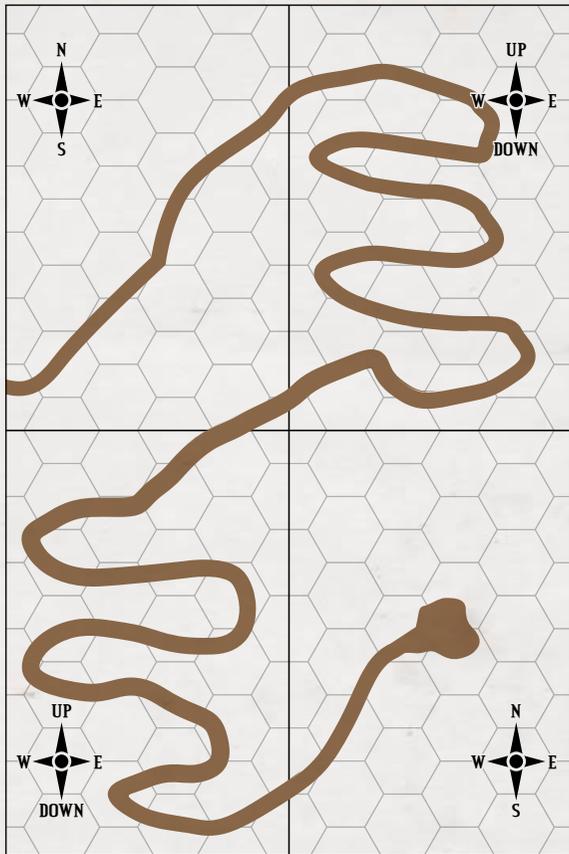
The gigastructure shows layers in the vertical sections and radial patterning in

the top-down sections. I imagine the radial patterning to be like the arrangement of city streets. Those streets could still be partially intact. The caves here could be forgotten rooms.

IN DESCRIPTION

Moving through it could be like moving through a giant breakdown pile, an enormous collection of loose rock piled together with gaps where the rocks do not cleanly meet, except all the stone is worked, blocks, columns, collapsed or tipped over buildings, even sewers or city streets turned on their sides. The cultures will be effaced by time, truly ancient.





BURROW

A giant thing has found its way down from somewhere: an ancient dragon, primordial entity, mad god or something stranger.

ON THE MAP

The burrow goes laterally across the top down sections and curls in loops down the verticals as the creature digs its way deeper.

Unlike every other Vein, this one has an end. Perhaps the beast still sleeps, or is dead, but maybe not.

IN DESCRIPTION

The passages have been ripped open by

some natural force. The signs of claws or other marks may still be there. The width of the tunnel may give some indication of the size of the creature.



ENCOUNTER CHART

1D50	CAVE SHAPE	KINDS OF STONE	1D50
1	Rappel shaped like liquid poured from a curved glass	Petal-pink marble, almost glows	1
2	Splayed toad	Limestone stained with black clawing growths	2
3	Wine bottle on its side	Limestone stained with bright primary-colour chemicals	3
4	Sauce pan with lid and extra handle	Grim grey granite, quartz crystals like diamond eyes	4
5	Mouse sleeping	Densely fossil'd, Trilobite graveyard	5
6	Ladies' high-heeled shoe	Polished anthracite, mirror smooth	6
7	A strawberry	Storm-shaded slate in flaking cakes	7
8	Theatre-shaped space	Tusk-coloured limestone	8
9	Elephant-trunk shaft, bends, narrows and twists	Moon-bright calcite, slick and wet	9
10	Sea urchin	Tactile soapstone the colour of sick milk	10
11	Spread-fingered hand held palm-up	Beach-yellow sandstone, easily abraded by touch	11
12	Saxophone	Black calcite stained by oil and ash	12
13	Chain of pearls	Dark-blue granite like a late summer sky	13
14	Cow's udder	Limestone, beautifully banded like infinite cake	14
15	Upside-down blowfish with exits at eyes	Haematite veins glinting like stained silver	15
16	Bunny head	Fossilised guano floor and white-streaked walls	16
17	Squat, globular like a lead ball in a cradle of tubes	White, sharp, delicate gypsum flowers	17
18	Old-style telephone receiver	Ropes of entangled black lava in organic twists	18
19	Two cherries on a split stem	Star-bright fool's-gold-gleam in dark volcanic stone	19
20	Hammerhead shark	Limestone in sea-shaded intersecting rills	20
21	Big headphones	Limestone stained the colour of autumnal leaves	21
22	Eye-dropper	Coquina, Crumbly-jumbly conglomerate of coral shell	22
23	Toucan	Gleaming white calcite boxwork, shining water-slick	23
24	Three legged stool	Paper-white limestone stained by copper like a leaking pen	24
25	A bear with exits at nose and toes	Grey limestone, white calcite cysts like organic growths	25
26	Lip-island on roaring abyssal falls	Streaked with veins disclosing semiprecious gems	26
27	Crossed swords	Obsidian, polished into smooth razors	27
28	Lung-shaped	Rainbow-banded speleothems stained by unseen ores	28
29	Ring with a big diamond on it	Black basalt, ridged and frictive like a vinyl disc	29
30	J-curve ski jump slope, widowmaker at the peak	Cloud-coloured granite with black pyroxene and white quartz	30
31	Spine	Lumpen granite, grey, obsidian shards like tears in space	31
32	Two bells touching	Blinding, hand-staining halogen-white chalk	32
33	Barbell-shaped with linking tube	Red sandstone with fossilised trackmarks	33
34	Bat with wings spread	Pale gigantic bone, the cave a gnawed-away space inside	34
35	Lightning bolt	Ore-rich stone, black unlightable ferric walls	35
36	Pistol	Calm claystone the shade of earthenware	36
37	Muffin-shaped, walls bow out in a rim around the top	Coal cave, black and glimmering	37
38	Inverted giraffe	Rust, and beneath it, ancient steel	38
39	Two fish-hooks meshed	Banded serpentinite in tight green/black waves like EEGs	39
40	The inside of an inverse pyramid	Limestone with ghostly yellow sulphur rot	40
41	Rib-cage cave like the inside of a gigantic corpse	Stained flowstone glowing red-black-red like old blood	41
42	Vertical narrows like the cheese linking lifted pizza bits	Brown mudstone, frozen in its swampy wallows	42
43	Martini glass	Oil shale, dangerous, unstable, seeping black	43
44	An octopus with narrowing limbs leading off in a star	Limestone pyritised and filigreed in fool's gold	44
45	A U-bend on its side	Granite braided with veins of strangely stained ore	45
46	The inside of a vending machine, easily climbable	Limestone, colour of a ruined screen	46
47	A nautilus shell with smashable interior walls	Multicoloured sandstone formed from sedimented trash glass	47
48	A huge hourglass	Claystone the colour of old books, soft	48
49	Tall thin vertical caves linked by crawls top and bottom	Sea-shaded siltstone in gradual bands	49
50	Ice cream cone piercing the ice cream of another beneath	Limestone with green olivine like leaves of climbing plants	50

1D50	SMELLS & SOUNDS - A LIVING THING	1D50
1	Smell: bitter sea, Sound: faint fizzling, An Alkalion .	1
2	Smell: darkest crypt, Sound: cackling, An Anglerlich .	2
3	Smell: cold ash, Sound: a dead tongue, The AntiPhoenix .	3
4	Smell: libraries and rot, Sound: tapping sticks, Arachnopolis Rex .	4
5	Smell: coins on the tongue, Sound: clean flame, Id4 Archeans .	5
6	Sound: skull-received radio noise, A hive of Atomic Bees .	6
7	A Gigaferret , stealth 5 in 6.	7
8	Smell: soot, chalk and oil, Sound: grating, wheezing, A Cancer Bear .	8
9	Smell: clean toilets, Sound: 'tk tk tk', 4d6 Cambrimen .	9
10	Sound: metal grating on stone, A Castilian Caddis Larva .	10
11	Smell: shit, blood, pus, Sound: Moans, gasps, Id100 Cholerids .	11
12	Smell: old books, incense, blood, Sound: rushing wind, The Civilopede .	12
13	Smell: turned earth, Sound: mud cracking, A Cromagnogolem .	13
14	Smell: cold rancid meat, Sound: ultrasonic whirrs, 3d4 Egg Dead .	14
15	Smell: your own memories, Entry to an Eigengrau Lair	15
16	Smell: bad medication, Sound: stone on bone, Id4(ex) Fossil Vampires .	16
17	Sound: two voices linked, A Fungal Ambassodile .	17
18	Smell: mushrooms, Id20 Funginid Slaves and Leader .	18
19	Smell: attics and empty rooms, Stealth 5 in 6, A Gegenschein .	19
20	Sound: rocks in a rotating drum, A Gilgamash .	20
21	Smell: burning plastics factory, Sound: insectoid chattering, An Igneous Wrath .	21
22	Smell: Sulphur, Sound: primal phonemes, Id20 Ignimbrite Mites .	22
23	Smell: faint antiseptic ointment, 4d4 Knotsmen .	23
24	Smell: oil and guano, Sound: madness, Entry to a Lamenter Roost .	24
25	Smell: fresh refrigerated meat, Stealth 4 in 6, Mantis Shrimp .	25
26	Smell: almost human, Sound: fluting voices, 4d4 Meanderthals .	26
27	A Mondmilch pool .	27
28	Smell: ghost of a human scent, 4d4 Olm .	28
29	Smell: oil and iron blood, Sound: wine glass rims, An Oneirocetacean .	29
30	Smell: dead bodies, Sound: screaming, A Panic Attack Jack .	30
31	Someone takes your hand, A Phantom Hand of Gargas	31
32	Smell: pungent yeast, Sound: throat-choke grunts, 3d6 Psychomycosis Megaspores .	32
33	Smell: ash and old blood, Sound: broken animal growls, 4d4 Pyroclastic Ghouls .	33
34	Smell: faint clean hospitals, Sound: falling glass, A Radiolarian .	34
35	Hear: soft ridiculous plops, 3d20 Scissorfish .	35
36	Smell: tin burning, Sound: a furnace screaming, Id4 Silichominids .	36
37	Smell: pigs, Sound: notable and extreme, 5d8 Somic Pigs .	37
38	Smell: mortuary spices, Sound: babybones clattering, The Spectre of the Bröcken .	38
39	Smell: burning stone, Sound: lead bells, Id50 Splinterlads .	39
40	Smell: dogs and chlorine, Sound: scrabbling, panting, 4d6 Spotlight Dogs .	40
41	Sound: a distant screaming from above, A Still-Tor-Man .	41
42	Smell: greasy static charge, Sound: plinking glass, Id50 Stormsheep .	42
43	Smell: yeast, Sound: harsh animal voice, A Tachyon Troll .	43
44	Smell: formaldehyde, ammonia and blood, Sound: a wet shoe, A Tetracharcarodron .	44
45	Smell: old schoolrooms, Sound: deep thumping, TitanSkull Hermit Crab .	45
46	Sound: clacking, tapping, 4d4 ToRaptoise .	46
47	Smell: a little salt, Sound: faint clattering, A Trilobite-Knight .	47
48	Smell: sick children, A Trogloraptor .	48
49	Smell: musty cupboards, Sound: slight fluttering, 5d50 Ultraviolet Butterflies .	49
50	Smell: dry chalk, Sound: scrapes and grates, 2d4 Zombie Coral .	50

ONE HUNDRED ENCOUNTERS

1D100	ENCOUNTER	1D100	ENCOUNTER
1	Cancer bear camouflaged in carved marble.	51	Muttering voices ghost to you through the walls.
2	Crin's Crack, three miles long, one deep, four feet wide.	52	Gold-guarding golems confused by a rhyme.
3	Giant-Saint's tomb, safe retreat for those unarmed.	53	A silver thread leads through the shadow gate.
4	Silk-train of guarded slaves in single file.	54	Alric the organist pipes in his tomb.
5	Temple to the Void God, empty when full.	55	Riddle-Twist caverns are half-drowned, but safe.
6	Sombre Substratal anchorite, enraged.	56	Murdered clones of you, naked, stripped and torn.
7	Tombs of the Sphere-Lords, empty now, and smooth.	57	Hoarders of the mist-mould, under attack.
8	Umbral-Town, arranged in shadowed segments.	58	The Fear-King flees and begs for vengeful swords.
9	Blind Masons, traipsing and talking of stone.	59	Mobius-Fort of the Queen that wove time?
10	Olm on a vision-quest, what does he see?	60	The Arsenic road will get you there, half dead.
11	Ælf-Adal slavers are waiting for you.	61	The darkness here cups lamps and puts them out.
12	Mermaid Falls, water singing over bone.	62	Murdered map-merchant, his secrets un-found.
13	Igneous-Villa, civilised and Black.	63	The wing of a dead moth reveals a plot.
14	The MoonMaster General with his white guard.	64	Undead thieves guard the Twisted God's crown vault.
15	Temple to an expunged god, sunk long past.	65	Dive the vertical Archipelago.
16	Husks of boys, abandoned by the child-thief.	66	Walls scarred by something trying to get away.
17	Foxfire warrens, threats hide within the lights.	67	Thastrovect, the risk-mad gambling Lich.
18	Ælf-Wait city, sinking slowly in time.	68	The ghoul-priest gasps his final secret out.
19	Archean adventurers, statue-slow.	69	This maze hides Life-Knights, honourable undead.
20	Time's mandala, its never-ceasing monks.	70	Black-Smoker climb leads to Sulphurous wealth.
21	Morlocks with night-lamps and eye-seeking darts.	71	An evil Lord that hails you with your crimes.
22	The fortress-climb of Uncle Spine, well hid.	72	Robuskinot, the fence of stolen spells.
23	City of the Opaque Eye, ruled by Doom.	73	The waterfall hides secret city gates.
24	Olm on an epic migration rappel.	74	The Palace of Sighs is ruled by a Ghost.
25	Prison of the Daemon Choir, feared by all.	75	Insanity Crawl cannot be climbed sane.
26	Death dervish suicide squad, ride spiders.	76	Escaped slaves scream at the sight of you; flee.
27	Subducted Rocket Silo, ancient make.	77	Deep Janeen drifting on his carpet of gold.
28	Dugout town, built in old workings of war.	78	Hot girls in danger from a secret foe.
29	Bat-Riders, taking the tunnels at speed.	79	The Maze-Monkey made his own, and hides still.
30	Sacristy of Gloom, cloaked in sombre light.	80	This sinkhole takes you past Hell, but it's fast.
31	A Speleo-Mage and her seven thieves.	81	Sorcerer's Delve with beings of horrid light.
32	Tumour-Mound of the Termites Chaotic.	82	Fleeing thief, highly skilled, nearly dead, rich.
33	Mirror-Ville, accessed through volcanic glass.	83	The mine-monk holds heretic hordes at bay.
34	Stew-merchants carting their cauldron of slops.	84	Port-Vertical is empty now, and still.
35	The Energy Saint's electrical prayers.	85	The silk-bridge spiders charge a fleshy toll.
36	Frantic Cambrimen looking for a fight.	86	The Psy-Lord's Mind-Mines; cyclic escapees.
37	Shifting conch-cave of the stone-smuggling thieves	87	Devils-Financial, disguised as things meek.
38	Hell-Town, kept by Cop Daemons buggin in pairs.	88	The merchant's guards are dead, the bandits too.
39	Sleepy mage, cradled in her golem's arms.	89	The Sons of the Consuming One wait here.
40	Touch-Cut braille stone of the blind creator.	90	White-Diamond river hides silent stone isles.
41	A wall-crawling cannibal's quiet crusade.	91	The flesh-rift and its delicate consent.
42	Cavern-plain of endlessly shifting stone.	92	Seller of swords; broken, brittle, bejewelled.
43	Fishing village hidden under the falls.	93	Dragon seeks recruits, interviews in dreams.
44	Crime Bird rules a wandering orphan tribe.	94	This truth-obsessed Ælf broods still in her Hall.
45	The Lama-Troll, regenerating dreams.	95	A Frost-Giant ferry wades the fire, for gold.
46	Lamenters and lunatics migrating.	96	Signs of your passage where never you were.
47	Cave of Neutrality (not much goes on).	97	Phat-stacked abandoned aristocrat cats.
48	Cold-Volcano market of slaves and souls.	98	Abduct a princess, fat reward, you in?
49	Library of slaves, each memorised books.	99	The mage's labours hid a mighty Delve.
50	Lone child whose guard is the border of night.	100	Gigaplex Rapids need pilots with Math





ONE HUNDRED CAVES

1. ALE-POUR RAPPEL

A rappel shaped like thick liquid being poured from a curved glass. That image is the shape of the empty space. A curving lip, a drop straight down. Wide first, then narrowing. In the middle a descender can pause and 'chimney', back flat on one side and feet out on the other. Then slowly widening again. Fallers will hit the funnel and can grab. Jumpers may survive.

2. AMMONITICO RUSSO

Petal-pink marble, perfect for a sculptor's touch. Like Michelangelo's Carrera Marble. Almost glows with its presentment asking to be polished and cut. Sensual like naked skin. Inside, hovering and hiding like uzumaki ghosts are fossilised spirals; ammonites. Curls of casper-pale undead stone, seen beneath the pink like the moon in a summer sky.

3. ANTIFOREST

The ghost of a mighty forest. Its inverse shape. Lava swept over gigantic trees and cooled fast. The trees rotted leaving basalt in a tree-mold shape. That chunk of land fell into the earth. In real terms: tall, thin vertical caves in black rock. Linked by numerous crawl-passages right at the top in every direction (and possibly the roots below).

4. BLACK GROWTHS LIKE MELTED CROWS

Wall-growths, some as big as bushes or littler than twigs. Dead and black like executed Goth mopheads. Scattered patternless on walls, ceiling and floor. Each obeying a personal gravity, collapsing like crushed cans. If cracked, just more black curls and clawshards, onion-ringed round nothing.

5. BLEEDING CADMIUM SUNS

This chemical pigment-poison leaks through the stone in irregular blotches. Fierce primary synthetic stains like burning match-heads in pre-school blue, fire-truck red, smiling-sun yellow and blob-tree green. Pigments bleeding down like unfixed paints. It's toxic; not poisonous, but bad for you.

6. BLOCKAGE

Building blocks. City blocks. Archeo-city foundation collapse. Open with the roar of wind, the noise and dust-cloud. A forgotten buried city fell a few seconds ago and its foundation stones are in your way. To get through, dig the cracks. Whistling wind pipes indicate passage. (Getting past is easy; worm like a rat below the blocks; getting into the city above is months of work.)

7. BOULDER HALL

A field of truck-sized barely-balanced rocks. Flat, high-ceilinged cave. Full of massive boulders. Gaps form a maze. Touch one, its chance of moving is 50%. If one slams another its chance is 80%. They domino.

8. CARBONISED TREES

A forest baked by ferocious motionless fire. Single black empty-tracery leaves spill from the decaying roof. Puff to charcoal dust when they hit. Loud sounds dislodge whole abandoned trunks. The tree-trunks drift like leaves and shatter into weightless choking smoke, barbecue ash and coal-black enfolding mist.

9. CARVED CAVE MEGA-TALE

Carved with one continuous story wrapping the walls like the snake game from a cheap phone, waving and curling in impossible lines, mazing itself and repeating, swerving obliquely. Sometimes eroded or obscured but always there. The story of everything that ever has or ever will happen in that cave, from its geological birth to distant death.

10. CEPHALOPOD HYPER-FOSSIL.

Delicate stones to hold the dead-squid-swirl. Embroideries of slate or anthracite gusts. It curls climbing overhead, centring on the embossed trunk and breaching adamant beak. Like a fucked-up sunset. The black ink beads and drips, to be released by blows.

11. CLASS IV RAPID DUNES

A wide flat cave curved like letters C or J. A floor of sand. The river is a trickle. The dunes in sweeps and fans are damp and waist-high. The cave will flood violently in 1d20+5 minutes and stay flooded for 1d20 minutes. The cycle repeats. You leave wet crunching tracks. So does anything else. Bodies and lost items washed away might rest here for a while.

12. COAL CAVE

Pure anthracite. Potentially flammable. Polished mirror-smooth in uneven shapes. Travellers have stepped to random sections of the wall and slowly rubbed their reflections into view. If you do this, and stare within the coal-glass for a time, angels will beckon you. They will come in strange phantasmagorical forms and silently promise secrets and revelations. No-one can see another's angels. They are lies.

13. COBALT KOBOLD CAVE

Blue gunmetal-glimmer kobolds. Art Deco dogmen precision cut in naked rock. The life-sized two-dimensioned capering cutouts process the walls in frozen madness. Patternless dandelion-drift hieroglyphs. Each one holding a uniform wave-belly blue like midnight midsummer skies hold distant stars.

14. COLUMNED MAZE

Like a randomised semi-organic Luxor. Calcite columns so close only one can pass at a time. You climb through long ellipses shaped like sleepy eyes. Echoes scatter and light gets trapped fast.

15. CRYOBRITE BRIDGE

A shitty bridge of flakey rock. Made by under-wizards and crypto-races. Magic evaporates stone to cryoclastic flow, wafts it into place and lets it set. The result - a bridge of shitty, flakey, cakey yellow rock in the shape of frozen clouds. Take years to decay. Are rarely safe. Take you somewhere someone else wanted to go.

16. DAEMON TUSK CAVE

The walls are made of nails and teeth. Stalactites and mites arranged in open jaw-tooth pattern. The tusks are carved cannibal signs. The whole thing could be the impossible mouth of some sleeping thing.

17. DEATH HOPE MURAL

This place was the end point for the last member of a dead civilisation. They wrote a crude final testament on the walls in whatever they could find. Deeply scratched, bravely engraved lithographs of the barely-remembered fall and clinging decay of a once-great race. Sadness is written into the images and touching them will poison you with grief.

18. DOG JAWS

Tunnel through a groaning micro-fault. One cake-cut of the earth moves counter-wise. Like waves crashing on opposite tracks. The entry cave, like dogs' jaws fighting, locked together, gripping and growling from the broken stones. Look through the 'teeth' and see a deep abyss. The exits like toilet roll tube unravelling, pulled from each end, spirals of stone with nothing in-between. The faults may twitch and shatter as you pass.

19. DOLLS' THEATRE

Stooped cave shaped like the narrowing field of vision of a play. A low space. Grows lower in one direction, widens out opposite. Floor covered with artful speleothems. Tiny gypsum flowers, stalactites and stalagmites. Wild miniature helictites. Like an impossible model landscape of a distant space grown in alien rock and mineral shades. The audience zone is a screaming abyss.

20. ELEPHANT SHAFT

Bends and twists like an elephant's trunk fiddling with a twig. Elephant-sized; you could throw one down. Tusk-curved stalactites line the walls arranged in radial spirals like the sarlacc's mouth. Tips vibrate with distant hums and clue you in to secret falls. They quiver like tuning forks and moan sadly. Remind you of things you forgot long ago. Two small holes lead out, each going to a different path.

21. EUROPIUM UNION

Clods and sods of oily lumpy stuff. Bulging like the crusts on boiling pans. Thick and dark and vile like oven stains. Europium reacts with oxygen. It lights spontaneous flame. As it dries it burns. The spreading

glop is sometimes ringed with spasmodic imperial fire in shades bad poets like. Witchlights bead and flare in runs like headlights passing on a distant road. The rings expand and meet.

22. FLOWSTONE CASCADE

Giant china plates with razor sides. Splayed like cards. Shallow pools rimmed by fragile, beautiful, razor-sharp flowstone. Water knee high. Fumbles take chunks from the flowstone rims and crack them like crockery. Broken pools overflow in sequence.

23. FOSSIL WATER LAKE

A plane of turquoise water, still and flat as glass. Knee high, hip high, chest high, neck high, then out (do not tell players the depth). The sky-coloured water makes you homesick and sad (it's the only blue thing you'll see).

24. FOSSILISED HIVE

Men, or natural forces, have smashed through empty stone hexagonal cells. An ancient hive of dog-sized wasps. Walls and roof and floor still show the steady grid of larval beds. Some closed caps conceal amberised grubs. The floor is crunchy-thick with stone mandible fragments, translucent limestone tracery wings and blunted stings.

25. FOUNTAIN OF FONTESTORBE

A smooth, saxophone-shaped chamber. Valved, wet, regularly refills. Flowing and shaped like the inside of a wind instrument lying flat. Many tiny exits. Puddles and pools. Living fish flap. Will refill violently and unstoppably every 1d30 minutes, then empty again.

26. FRICTION CLIMB (GRANITE)

A simple convex slope at 45 degrees. No holds or marks. A huge chunk of unlikely granite. Smooth and impermeable. No pitons. Bent like a spoon's back and tilted 40+ degrees. Rough and frictive. Can be balance-walked. If you slip, the rock will have your skin.

27. FULIGINOUS RAINBOW

A viscous sky-wash of oil, tainted ash and post-nuclear pigments in ravenwing spectra. Bomb rupture cycle marks. A ceiling bow of very particular black locked in eroded stone. We only see the outer lines. The centre is visual static.

28. FUNGAL THROTTLE

White fleshy blooms are crushing the cave, cupping hands around its centre like a throat. The rock is cracked and bulging like a paving slab broken from below. Touching the foamy mass makes it tremble and close another radial foot. When the fungal valve seals the cave it will bleed liquid stone. The fungal overmind has a very important reason for doing this.

29. GHOST MEADOW

Pale translucent grass growing even as it dies. A forced meander slows the river in a curl. The water drops organics. Soil, seeds, chemicals and eggs. NITRATES. Nutrient-rich mulch covered in pale, dying, sunless hypercharged plants. This soil hurts, it writhes with biting life. As valuable, dangerous and desired as a Middle Eastern oil field.

30. GIANT'S PAUSEWAY

Hexagonal treaty rocks like contracts individually signed. But peace always fails and is sought again. A pavement of failed surrenders. A floor of hexagonal stands. Mixed length, higher and lower as chance decrees. Like pistons in a stalled machine. When the wars they sealed begin again they will shrink into absence. Once a field of uniform columns. They judder and sink with each conflict. The giants are a dying people now and the halls are passable.

31. GLAZED CAVE

Smooth Wedgwood-white china walls and swallowflight emblazements in Ming blue. A whole constructed thing. Gigantic cave-shaped anti-vase made to be traversed. Ways in and out wreathed in abyssal willowmarks. Faint blue dancing Funginid lines filigree the paths, happy Trapper sunbursts at the top.

32. GRAND EBLOIS

Building-sized boulders crammed in a cave. Climb, then hop across. The cracks between too small to navigate. Fall down and you just have to climb back. Hop the tops. Some mega-boulders shift if you fight on them.

33. GRAVITIC TWIST

At some point in its history gravity in this cave has been other than it is now. All the symptoms of erosion, water flow and calcite seepage are tilted 90 degrees from the way you expect. Speleothems grow across the cave from the walls, not up and down. Water cuts channels and leaves flowstone in the side not the floor. It was like this for a long time. There is no sign when it will change again.

34. GROTTO OF THE FAIRIES

Natural gases douse your lights. Squat globular cave, hanging in its entry points like a ball in a cat's cradle of tubes. No speleothems. Ways in and out lead up. The invisible gases collecting here douse all burning flames and kill you slow. Temperature gradient gives the clue; cold air near ground may permit a spark.

35. GUANO FIELD

A piled white desert of fossilised poisonous shit. The poop of bats, birds or something worse. Cracks under your feet sometimes. Lots and lots of flesh-eating grubs. Baby bones everywhere, bird or bat being devoured. It has the bugs' attention for now. Fungal infections. Incapacitating smell. You weep yellow tears. Anyone who lies bleeding in the dirt is fucked. Blinding chemical dust.

36. GYPSUM FLOWER FIELD

Crammed with impossibly beautiful bright stone flowers. Blooms in elemental chemical shades. Sharp arsenic yellow, cerulean blue, heart-blood-bright red. A blurring blaze of unexpected colour. Natural creatures will be surprisingly calm here. Narrow winding paths lead through. Smashed flowers are razor sharp and sometimes poisonous. Unusual ones can be valuable to sighted buyers.

37. HAIR BRAID CAVE

An ancient lava bed makes up one surface. Twists of ropey rock make a roof like a giant Rasta's dreadlocks. Thick knots of fresh-looking organic-seeming basalt interweaving but flowing one way. Good way to climb if it's the wall. Nightmare if it's the floor.



38. HALL OF THIRTEEN

A cluster of vast defensible stalagmites in the centre of an open irregular doughnut. Around 13 giant centre-columns clustered close together can be got amongst and climbed. You can leap from top to flattened top. There is something good up there. 25% chance of a prison built in the centre column space.

39. HOKUSAI WAVE CAVE

This cave is mirrored in three dimensions to create a negative space. Like Hokusai's Wave when you turn the picture upside down. You enter through a field of stalagmites reaching twenty feet; at the other end will be an identical mirror-reversed field of stalactites hanging twenty feet. Every other growth is mirrored too.

40. HURRICANE SHAFT

A curling tube of smooth climbable rock. Non-vertical. Weird continent-scaled convections put an endless tornado at the centre of this shaft. Boiling there like white DNA. A sargasso twister with forgotten, fleshless, armour-bound bodies and knots of ancient rope falling in and out of the stormcore over years. They go past fast.

41. ICE FALL TRAVERSE

A barrier become a bridge. Freeze-thaw cracks emboss the stone. You can briefly climb across, or through. It's bright. The floor is knives and forks of ice glimmering and glittering, casting back and fracturing your light, blinding you and winding. Thaws in 1d4 hours and will not freeze again for days.

42. INTERFERENCE PATTERNS

Wind ripples ruffling the surface of still pools. Or rock-skip circles on a silent sea. The walls are waved with even spaced and intersecting rills. Some emanate from points inside the cave like rocks dropped into liquid floors. Some come from beyond. There are deep unseeable swells. Still and frozen now. If magic is used here the patterns shift.

43. INVERSE LAPAIZ

A chain of huge, linked overhangs in the distant ceiling of a cave. Broken half-tubes in a high roof. Possibly the relics of a lava tube or collapsed river bed. The tube chunks must be leapt between mario-style. The linear arrangement leads to a chimney or crack in the cave wall that takes you down, then back across the floor below in the opposite direction. The ground floor is a new cave type; roll again.

44. LEAF SHADOW SHARDS

Like the leaf patterns left behind on cheaply painted cars. Walls staked from sharp edged flakes arranged like mingled leaf shadows on summerlit ground. The colours reversed. The fragments pale like plants before they die, the holding stone an ashy brown like half-burnt wood.

45. LENS CAVE

Polished rock like an upturned bowl. Bulging smooth and jointless, glasslike and slippery. Footprints fade like fingermarks on black screens. The ceiling bulges mirrorwise. Stand in the centre and link the floor and roof: get charged with cosmic rays! Harmless, but you buzz with purple Kirby dots for a time and hippies think you're 'cool'. Somewhere miles below a watching Archean sees your blurry blocking shape occlude their view.

46. LOCK PICK CAVE

Weird equilateral fingertip gaps. The sounds of endlessly turning locks that never catch. If anyone dies here there will be a loud 'click' and all the tumblers will pause, then continue, except for one. Putting your fingertips into the black gaps will get them snipped. It's hard not to when you climb.

47. MAGNESIUM VEIN TREES

Magnesium boxwork. The branching ore protrudes like knots on old men's hands. The ore holds hidden specks of elemental shine. Slick with black oil. The ore-trees branch and prick some ancient seam of crude. The oil drips down the tarnished silver trees. Protecting them from water and the air. Scrape it off and douse the vein and trees will incandesce in ultraviolet flame.

**48. MAGNETIC SPRING
(CARBONIC ACID)**

When blades come out the water springs alive and dances with the knives. Any miss with a metal weapon catches; beads and pearls of water roll across the blade shining like forgotten mercury. Each clash leaves misty furrows curling in the air. The more you fight, the more you are coated with the pearly viscous acidic slime. The water crawls up ferrite runnels, iron rails and spikes. It fucks your compass.

49. MARBLE JAR

Imagine a jar of marbles with an ant climbing through. You are the ant. Vast breakdown pile filling a shaft. House-sized irregular rocks, car-sized gaps. Drafts or trailing smoke may lead the way. You can drop down without climbing checks. Passage gaps in every downward direction. Half have no way past.

50. MEGA-HELICTITES

Crammed with crazed giant helictites. They spiral like drinking straws left near a high heat. Flows of strange viscosity inside. Must be climbed through like mad monkey bars. An empty space in the topographic core. Like a calcite jungle with weird fluids oozing from the tips.

51. METAMORPHIC TUBE

A train sized tube of altered stone. Starts wide and smooth, the end may spindle out like a tree branch. Rock change tunnel spilling from the blood splatter of a dead gigabeing. The flowing fingers of its alteration intermixing on the walls in madly painted webs. The bloodsplatter sprays every direction. Divine ichor melts the rock, leaves bus-sized blood chunnels in a mighty web. The god-corpse sinks to slowly orbit the iron heart. Leaves scattered frags of twisting tube. Spooky in there, dreams of a dying pulse.

52. NEON CYSTS

Warty cancer lumps of pale discoloured glass. Volcanic-lymphatic strands rippling the rock and bulging. Swelled like slow balloons by noble gas. Flickering dimly, ruby-red, igniting in spasmodic lines in time with distant lightning strikes; aetheric and magmatic lightning too. Like a really creepy Berlin bar.

53. NIGHTMARE FALLS

Roaring abyssal falls of unknowable depth. A waterfall plunging beyond the lanterns' rays. No way to know the depth before you climb. The sound drowns speech.

54. NOT DARK NOR SOMBRE WHOLLY

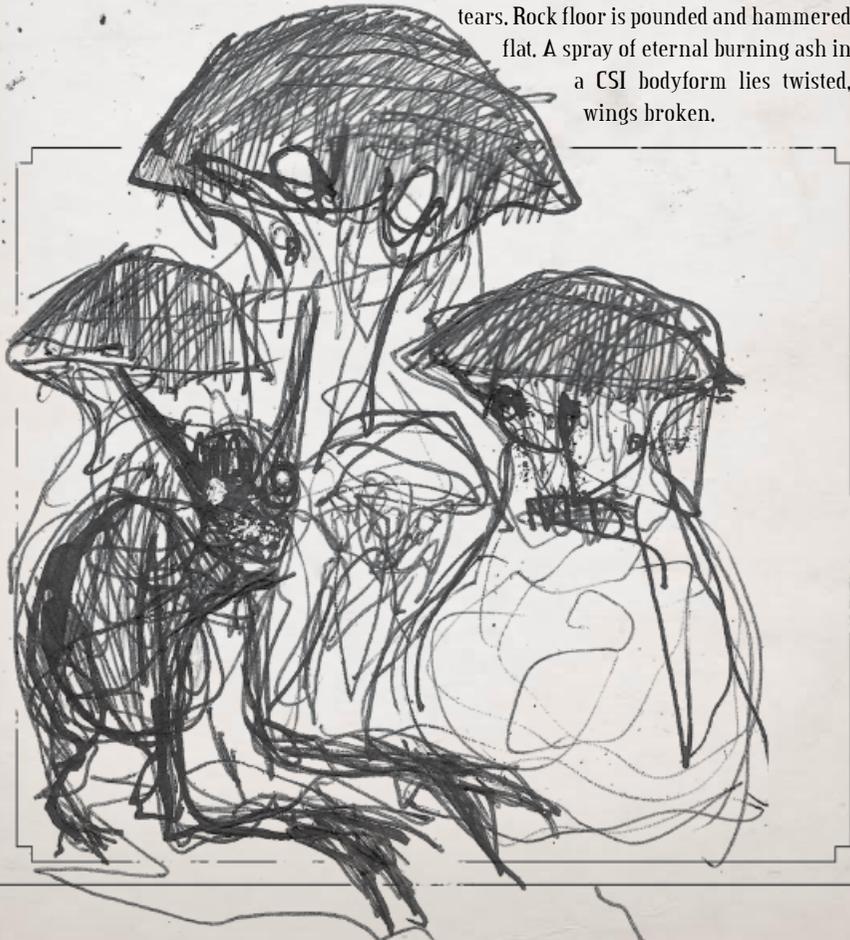
One faint eternal eventide of gems. This cave was once an egg of rock within a vast magmatic flow. It crystallised inside, leaching rare and tainted carbons from the ultradense surge. Every compassed space is built from semiprecious stones. Amethyst, carnelian, agate. Glowing and flashing in dark bands like starfields seen by shadowed astronauts. Sharp with a vague-nebulæ glow and shaping the darkness like the buzzing of a wasp shapes silence in an empty room.

55. OBSIDIAN BRICKS

Bricks of black, glassy volcanic rock. Polished smooth then aged, buried and riddled with bright lichen. The bricks are held by spiderwebs of sparkling iron pyrites. Beneath the smooth facing the walls are dull tessile dice-shaped obsidian chunks. Perhaps a sunken dungeon foundation or scatterfrags of bomb-impacted temple sites.

56. PARAPLEGIC ANGEL OF DEATH

Crippled death scars. Hate marks killing and crawling, black cuneiform. Exits are all 10 feet up or more. Walls and floor are stone but black and gouged with finger tears. Rock floor is pounded and hammered flat. A spray of eternal burning ash in a CSI bodyform lies twisted, wings broken.



57. PERVOTHEMS

Sausages forced through wet doughnuts. Flesh ellipses with peanuts at the top. Round dual mounds with central nubs. Flanged cylindrical stalagmites. Round black puckered exits with enfolding globes. Every single thing in this cave looks like or reminds the viewer of sex. Keep this up until the players are disgusted and depressed. Then keep doing it.

58. PHREATIC MAZE

Fallen stone or shattered faults. Cracked, crooked and flooded hip-width paths. A nightmare of irregular broken rocks, waist-high full of water. Imagine a bucket of smashed slates, piled. An ant to navigate them. You are the ant. The path-walls grow face-close. You turn side-on.

59. PSEUDOLITH

A built room carefully disguised to look exactly like a natural cave. The walls are plaster over brick or worked stone. The speleothems are columns carved like natural forms. The organic wanderings are carefully designed. This could be the disguised watch-room for an Undercity long lost, a piece of weird decadent art, a dead Ælf-Adal folly, a deliberate magical act, forgotten training-place or careful temple. Possible secret doors. Possible ambush.

60. PYROXENE RIDDLES

Casino-chip pyroxene chunks that crystallise in the magma chamber before volcano tops fire off. They are black glass prism-scales like grieving dragonskin or teeth from dark mathematical sharks. They grow slowly in the prenatal volcano and soak up semiriddles in the fireflow. This is deep-earth knowledge gainable no

other way. But it's random like radios in storms. Break the crystal to hear the riddle. (Most are stupid; just think of the riddle an idiot would make and say that. One in every hundred is meaningful.)

61. RAPTUROUS SULPHATE BLEEDS

Choir-like cloister-like sulphur singing. Veins of raw sulphur in gothic archway forms. Curving rows in organic regularity. The flames come together like hands praying, burning deep blue like darkness visible. Fringes of flame around black cores.

62. ROCK MILK TEATS

Rock milk is the white oil made from decayed celestial trees. The primal arboretum folded under the earth and compressed. The hydrocarbons form randomised Kabbalistic glyphs beyond the sight of the eye. Distended nodular cysts ooze forth the freaky milk. It's white. Its fumes make you lightheaded and burn rainbows like gay petroleum. It's slippery and flammable; the fumes can poison bad alignments and drive good ones mad.

63. ROCKLUNG

Lung-shaped caves. Full of poison, gales, and fire. Wind-heart air valve with a rhythmic beat. Possibly made in ancient times to send gusty flows about the underground. Climb around the jewelled alveoli. Bronchial paths, air loops through. Numerous oxide helictites with highly flammable pure O₂ screaming through the tips. Azathoth pipes. Don't light them or bring flame near. Can become a death-oven very quickly. May pulsate.

64. SANDSTONE TRACKMARKS

Dunewaves of desert stone. Sun-bright granular rock. Animal track patternings. Preserved fingertip skitters of insect feet. Prey and ancient predator converge; your pressed fingers trace the path.

65. SARAWAK CHAMBER

A space so vast it can't be seen. Light disappears without return. Fingertip-tracing one wall around takes 4d4 hours. Crossing takes a third of that. When players first understand its size, by echo delay or trying to cross, roll for Rapture. Attackers retreat in the dark. Giga-boulder maze and a wide sandy centre-space.

66. SCRIMSHAW MADNESS

The scrimshander's art is absent time. A lot of people waited here for a long long time. This cave was godbone or something bigger. Years of waiting wanderers have scrimshawed every available inch. A few hand-sized patches remain bare. Mad interlacing of alien cultures in the signs. Carvings from every people and empire.

67. SKI JUMP BOULDER FIELD

J-curve slope with scattered rocks. A sparse boulder field that curves like a ski jump. Widomaker on the peak. Teetering giga-rock knife-edged at the top. Climbing up is hard, sliding likely. Anyone next to the widomaker can unbalance it easily.

68. SKYLINE TRAVERSE

A face-forward sidestepping crawl across the highest point of a vast interior space. Climbing with your face against the rock, moving across with darkness falling below. A foot turned lengthwise takes up half the path, zig zag up. Press your hands against the cave roof for balance. Balance balance balance.

69. SMELTING FURNACE

The weight of the earth is centred in this place. Like everything above found its foundation here and every deeper cave was chandeliered and hung around its neck. Black unlightable ferric walls. Pot-coloured corpse iron. Smells of metal. Hand-sized holes in walls. Jam your face right in 'em and you can see, distantly, round crooks and curves - something that might be a slice of impossible sky.

70. SOLFATARA

Climbable doughnut of toxic shards. A helix of crystals and toxic rocks around a smoking pit of chemical fire. Like a passable cage of dripping blades. Roof is full of chemo-maggot ratholes, crystals are piled like poisonous snakeskin shucked off in a narrow gap.

71. SPELEOMEN

Slumped low snoozing calcite men like sleepers covered with a sheet. White and wet, running with vague pinks and discoloured sunset blues. Stalactites are victim shrouds, ankle-hung like bad tarot. Oozing pearly drops to birth their sleeping kin. (There are not dudes inside. It's chance and flowing stone.)

72. SPERM WHALE GRAVEYARD

Bone whales breach the dying stone as if in flight. Floors of car-sized scissor jaws and pulverised bone. Fist-sized fossilised orca-teeth. A radiator-grill krill-comb. Exposed bones sing in grave cave winds. Low, slow songs that remind you of the sea. Sad and peaceful, weep and return one hit point.

73. SQUEEZES

A cave of cat-flap escapes. A normal passable cave with 2d6 exits. Every escape is a squeeze. Shoulder-high passage. Push a candle ahead of you. Trail one arm behind, have one ahead. Pressed in on every side by rock. No turning around. You kiss the rock. Emerge with bleeding temples and crown from the close touch.

74. STEEL FOLD FURROW

A blade edge cave. One steel wall between things. A fingernail can find the ridged steel under the oxidised scrape. The pitted cavity within a great and rusted sword. One exit a corroded gate of rust. A keen climb and a whining wind. A bright horizon, slender, silver and blood-sharp.

75. STONE MONKEY CAVE

Stone Monkeys! This is a simple cave made from endless tessellated stone monkeys clinging onto each other. You tread on their motionless snarling faces and their marble eye-orbs grate horrifically en masse as they follow you round the room. A magic word makes the monkeys re-incorporate themselves into a new cave with different exits.

76. SUICIDE MAZE.

A tram-line maze of man-sized V-shaped bottomless corridors. The path narrows. Your hands press the corridor's slanting sides. The floor falls away. A gap between your feet the width of a cat-flap or horizontal letterbox. Inside the gap: nothing. Your path transits across the roof of a vast unseen cavern. Water far below. It's hard to fall through a space that small. It's hard not to.



77. SULPHURBORN CAVE

A cave shaped from below by deep-earth chemistry. This cave has nothing to do with normal formations. Its shape is wrong, like a tear made of tears. An entry to a stranger level of the world. One not shaped by comprehensible life. Sulphur rots the rock. Walls are tooth-torn gashes, scars of invisible claws, floor a ripple of rips like torn chicken. Rivers entering will change after this point.

78. SUMMERHAND CAVE

In summer you can place your hand flat over your open eye. The light seeps through your skin and lights your flesh inside. The glowing red-black-red of sunlight through your hand is the colour of this cave. Not bright enough to light the space, but present, like the phosphorescence at the centre of gems.

79. SUMP ISLAND

An island in a shore-less stream. Water laps the island rim. There is no bank or beach but only walls. Upstream the river rises in rapids or waterfalls. Downstream it dives beneath the touching stone. An arrow scratched, and the flow of air, gives direction. The sump is 1d4 minutes long with 1d4 air pockets. The island is a balancing boulder.

80. SUMP

The water shows the way under the stone. To pass, dive and blackly search. Standard sump is 1d4 minutes long with 1d4 air pockets. It will feel longer. Fear will kill you. You will exit in blackness; wrap up a candle or a lamp for passage. Scratches and signs may tell the way and time.

81. SUN TEMPLE

An enclosed space filled with light. A high ceiling and utterly clear, smooth walls that rise thirty feet or more then bow out invisibly like a muffin top. The roof, far above, is bright. Either semi-precious gems, veins of burning tar, reflective obsidian shards or prism'd crystals. High, unreachable and cascading light. It feels like entering an outdoor space. There is no cover here of any kind.

82. SUPER-OOLITE POOL

Clear, deep water. Full of house-sized marbles. You can wade across this pool walking on the surface of the house-sized hyper-oolites that rest in it. They are perfect spheres with the tops almost breaching the surface.

83. SWIM GYM

A path down through the stone via shallow pools linked by streams. The 'steps' are 3d4 pools you can jump between, 4 to 6 vertical feet. Swim/wade across.

84. TANTALUM VEIN

There is an exposed vein of clearly valuable metal running in this cave. It could be quite handy in a number of ways. But it is quixotically placed. You are always a little too far from Tantalum to make use of it.

85. TESSELLATED FACEPRINT FLOOR

A floor of stone screaming faces. Stumble and you put a foot into a gaping mouth. Do this deep enough and it bites. Fail to escape and you will scream till blood clots your lungs and eyeballs your eyes. When you die, all of you will rot except your face, which turns to stone. [Can be handy if you can lever one out.]

86. THE PISTON

Polyhedral cave, the exit blocked by a giant crystal. Shape of the cave is whichever platonic solid you pull blindly out of your dice bag or pocket, tilted on its point. The crystal piston spikes through like a brass tack pinning it to the ground. Vibrating like a giant quartz watch. Tracks, fire pits, score marks on the walls. The test is waiting. It will hover out rhythmically in 1d6 days, obeying hidden laws.

87. THRONE OF GOLD.

A pyritised throne. It's probably a metaphor for something. Gold, with fat lego-block pyrite crystals. A random accretion of semi-precious metallic stone in the chance shape of a chair. Revealed by the natural action of the cave. Fragile, almost impossible to move, will break if used.

88. TITANIUM ETCHED BY THE GLANCE OF AN EVIL EYE

Braided by exposed titanium ore. The ore is pure. It's ripped with criss-crossed lateral diagonal lines in bright metallic discolour-stains. Imperial murderer-purple, witch-eye green, dark-sun yellow-red, pervslinger pink and boiling blue. The lines crosshatch negative-image manlike forms in shapes that suggest some distress. On inspection, the organic bleeds of colour into ore are quite beautiful.

89. TITANRIBS CORPSE CAVE

Cathedral clavicle rocks and a linear nodular spine. Organic regularity. White sails in stone. The skull is

somewhere, unless a crab got it. Deathwounds may be observed. Orientation may be irregular depending how the Titan fell.

90. TV-SCREEN-DEEP

The colour of an old television screen just after it shuts down. Deep, deep inside; a tiny inverse you-shape staring back. The surface is stickey with fuzzy tangible electromagnetism like rubbed balloons and old technology.

91. ULYSSES BEACH

Sandstone formed from sedimented trash glass, multicoloured, bottle greens and reds. Impacted shock nodules from safety screens. Tumbles of rounded silica ground from skyscraper sheaths. Spectacle lens granules. The air here tastes of hydrocarbons and unknown engines. A precise pincer grip and a banked light - hold a grain to your pupil till they nearly touch. There are crowds reflected in the glassgrains. A shadowed multitude, strangely clad. Their eyes will not meet yours. When silent, there is distant crowd noise in this cave. The sound of thousands breathing without speech.

92. VERTICAL SQUEEZE (PIZZA CHEESE)

Two caves linked only by vertical narrows. The first cave curves like the first letter of your name, the second like the last. They are waist-bend-low. The only places to stand are these irregular holes leading up (or down) that can barely be navigated. They are drawn out and thin like the cheese linking lifted pizza bits just before the cheese-thread snaps. Some mid-point lateral gaps.

93. VIA FERRATA

An impossible climb made passable by ancient webs of rusting iron. A cat's cradle of climbs and crosses. Perhaps regular and comprehensible, perhaps not. The air tastes of rust and blood and broken batteries. Hope like fuck there's not a lightning strike somewhere.

94. VOG-TORNADO FALLS

Upwards waterfall of boiling acid Vog. Encrusted with skeletons. The river plunges into a sulphurous lava pit, evaporates and boils directly up. Condenses on the rotting roof, drips down and re-forms. Bones everywhere, anything caught within dies. Handy if you need bones. Surrounded with sulphurous mists. The most gothic thing ever.

95. WAITOMO WORMS

Cave lit by glowing green predatory ceiling grubs. The cave is clear and greenly lit. Wormlight hides the sticky fishing strands. Dexterity test to move above slow speed. Fat green alien stars winking. Strands will wrap you up. Drift invisibly around you, curl like stinging fog, slowing you and stuttering your limbs. If caught they hoist you up. Fight and you may pull down a pile of curled-cat sized angry glowing bugs wrapped around like biting fairy lights.

96. WALK IN THE PARK

There is nothing strange about this cave at all. Do not tell the players this.

97. WAR GRAVE CAVE

The fatal endpoint of a forgotten war. A dead army's final stand was here. Abandoned bones are scribed with blunted swords now rusty ghosts of blades. Scavengers won't interrupt the written names with gnaws. The bonetags make a library of the dead. No name here can be entirely lost. Someone living will recall it. No remembered name can be wiped out. Permanent rust angels on the floor.

98. WHISPER WALLS

The oddly curving wall holds secret talk. Press your ear to the stone and speak quietly and you can converse with anyone doing the same anywhere in the same cave. (Sometimes you will hear the illusory whispering of the dead and damned. Plus, predators will use it to track and fool you.)

99. WORD-HOARD

A cave of compounded clay. Washing to mud if a river runs through. The sunken library ruin of an ancient empire's mind. The cave burrows through the compressed clay books. Walls are tablets shattered and squeezed, iPad-sized and pillow shaped. Time and blows loose chunks of ancient script, unreadable and falling into dust.

100. XENOLITH BURG

This cave winds inside a green alien rock. Not a meteorite but an interiorite. Falling counter-orbital in the magmatic flow, crystallising from the liquid stone like a green ballistic pearl. Impacting on the undercrust and resting here. Green like leaves of climbing plants. Olivine embedded thickly with chromite crystals.



NAMES OF THE ABYSS

1D100 COMMON NAMES		1D100 COMMON NAMES		
1	Latipan	Comici	51 Bim	Harbatik
2	Laghu	Fonda	52 Beysehir	Ponor
3	Kua Kua	Fulmini	53 Beke	Jeskyne
4	Krabi	Monte Bul	54 Baradla	Oros
5	Koumac	Tunkul	55 Badict	Corrib
6	Kolokafa	Xpukil	56 Aven	Dunya
7	Kizilelma	Do	57 Acho	Ori
8	Kilsu	Jahn	58 Luwang	Grubug
9	Kembus	Gupha	59 Mavro	Skiadi
10	Kef	Pot	60 Mbaos	Hul
11	Kazumura	Oke Ke	61 Mogote	Karst
12	Kavakuna	Sham	62 Montagne	Noir
13	Kanca	Barlang	63 Monte	Malo
14	Kamamba	Sejourne	64 Nita	Nanta
15	Jaskina	Cueva	65 Ojo	Guarena
16	Ile	Khrebet	66 Voragine	Tchuka
17	Hugo	Gill	67 Patale	Chhango
18	Hotat	Carrowmore	68 Uchimagi	Toplanita
19	Heiowa	Crawl	69 Astraka	Vintului
20	Harasib	Chorreadero	70 Poloska	Jama
21	Guixani	Uzueka	71 Pozzo	Blanco
22	Grotta	Ghyll	72 Rangetko	Mandini
23	Groot	Gargano	73 Prot	Pot
24	Great	Volanti	74 Rakou	Skocjan
25	Grange	Oct	75 Raspora	Jama
26	Grand	Martel	76 Reseau	Ded
27	Gökgul	Suess	77 Rey	Cintolo
28	Glamoko	Pezenas	78 Salmon	Rose
29	Ghor	Creek	79 Salzburger	Schacht
30	Ghaub	Dara	80 Schachta	Towiani
31	Ghar	Fitton	81 Selminum	Tem
32	Gamvro	Glaucici	82 Shabun	Kale
33	Gamsoui	Dalan	83 Lough	Aonda
34	Furnia	Hassan	84 McClung	Menor
35	Dünekdeb	Karker	85 Malham	Sabana
36	Eyriř	Zaghouan	86 Sof	Omar
37	Eyle	Slocker	87 Stary	Hrad
38	Esprit	Zab	88 Sumidero	Yochib
39	Esher	Fontein	89 Tawi	Atair
40	Namgamdok-gul	Gugliemo	90 Terbil	Tem
41	Yeongweol-gun	Guin jau	91 Abisso	Ruesie
42	Echo	Gupha	92 Theodor	Brosen
43	Ease	Heia	93 Tingo	Maria
44	Complego	Pandoring	94 Torca	Jou
45	Columbine	Bandzioch	95 Tuzo	Wilson
46	Cap Corse	Sniezna	96 Tzani	Spillios
47	Callao	Ridge	97 Uli	Guria
48	Bzybsky	Jama	98 Wind	Rift
49	Busla	Proval	99 Wit	Tamdoun
50	Boljeuac	Tikharbai	100 Atishalla	Nis

1D50 NOBLE NAMES

1	Sötsbarkgrotten	Don	Juvenal
2	Vatnajökull	Doom	Kaua
3	Veshtoroc	Et	Tseb
4	Bodagrottorna	Von	Humbolt
5	Chichicasapan	Te	Pahu
6	Dongryong-gul	Von-Der	Linth
7	Golondrinás	Of	Laraboro
8	Kanchanaburi	Des	Tenebres
9	Karangbolong	Bone	Norman
10	Kolkbläser	Da	Diamante
11	Konepruske	Mock	Huagapo
12	Pollaraftra	Echt	Uchkupisjo
13	Pollnagollum	Yr	Ogof
14	Rushmangat	Bok	Pipe
15	Soldatskaya	El	Goranan
16	Thabazimbi	De	Juxtahuaca
17	Soifjorden	Spel	Precipico
18	Chandang-gul	Cut	Aire
19	Caroajoapan	Des	Pins
20	Majillis	By	Frosen
21	Abisimo	Org	Nita
22	Balangangan	Le	Pot
23	Foglepole	Al	Jinn
24	Niigata	Ken	Karst
25	Resumidero	Th'	Toxin
26	Santoanos	Art	Nogal
27	Sima	Fault	Milpo
28	Sumidero	Is	Atikpak
29	Torca	Hect	Jornas
30	Tunel	Ig	Sumidors
31	Uanh	Cry	Claonite
32	Gorgoroth	Pseu	Kananda
33	Gragareth	Ten	Discoschacht
34	Isgrotten	Eon	Monsterhöle
35	Jashchick	Op	Urriello
36	Nidlenloch	Hy	Ahuihuitzrapa
37	Pinargozu	Grot	Ambatoharanana
38	Pollnacrom	Com	Kulogorskaya
39	Zolushika	Ot	Mangawhitikau
40	Zsomboly	Ken	Antsatrabonko
41	Yolhafiri	Cut	Schwyzerschacht
42	Gharkniz	An	Siebenhengste
43	Skocjanske	Von-der	Rouagrottorna
44	Guptesway	Bone	Angurtidorgius
45	Höolloch	Drone	Jordbrungrotten
46	Düdeniuk	Mycó	Kappasjokkgrotten
47	Ferenec	Mycó	Huehuetenango
48	Alexander	Psy	Kel'Ketchkhen
49	Aggtelek	Gul	Simmons-Mingo-Mg
50	Maxwelton	Hurt	Kamenitim



*"The welding gun, by some freak of
its coils' field attunements, was
not a radio, but a teleradio:
a thought
augmenter
of great
power.*



*After a while I found
I could read the thoughts of
nearly everyone in the building."*

○

ITEMS, TREASURE & SPELLS

○

I SEARCH THE BODY (UNDERGROUND)

ENTRIES WITH AN ASTERISK* CAN BE FOUND MULTIPLE TIMES. THOSE WITHOUT SHOULD ONLY BE FOUND ONCE. CROSS THEM OUT WHEN ROLLED AND WRITE IN YOUR OWN.

1D100	YOU FIND...
1-3	*Climbing harness. Reduces fall damage from ropes. Helps with abseiling. With carabiners can be very handy when clamping things on and off quickly and safely. Makes you look like a tit.
4-5	*2d4 Functional Dvargir carabiners. Can clip on and off ropes as a free action once per round.
6-7	*A fuel brick (easy light, 1 hour of flame).
8-9	*Dynamic spidersilk rope. Absorbs 50hp falling damage then wears out.
10-11	*A climbing pick. No bonus but can be used to climb without any minus and also as a weapon during climb. (1d6 damage).
12-13	*A Clock Bow. All-metal crossbow. 20' range. Fires flechettes (1d6). High-tension clockwork auto-loads from magazine holding ten flechettes. Wire string must be replaced every 50 shots. Must be wound pre-battle. Loud. On a fumble explodes in shower of clockwork. Can be fired one-handed.
14-16	*A Lamp. See Twenty Lamps, p.194.
17-46	This many Lumes.
47	A 'Miner's Friend'. Little yellow canary in a bamboo cage. Imported a long way from Yoon-Suin. Warns of dangerous vapours by fainting, then dying.
48	Psihemoth Memory Key. Does 1d6 damage to you as you open your own head. Allows you to walk through all of your previous experiences as an observer; observe as if you were there, recall anything. Memories of others are incomprehensible.
49	Looserope, 50'. Whisper a word to each knot of this rope as you tie it. If you speak that word aloud then that knot will spontaneously unknit.
50	Insane diary describing the workings of a dEr0 mind-control machine. Can be used to find and destroy the machine but, the closer you get to it, the more fully it works on you.
61	A Neolithic man-shape in clay that can take damage instead of the holder. If it ever breaks, all the damage suffered will be yours at once.
62	A dart that works once. Casts <i>Flesh to Chrome</i> .
63	A wedding ring. If you put it on you immediately become aware of the psionic attention of the body's spouse. A mental voice asks, "Who are you? What has happened to my husband/wife?"
64	A can of spray paint (Dvargir make).
65	1d6 demonic pacts. This may be the most evil person you have ever killed. Gain 1d20 times the basic experience and the formal title 'Slayer of [name of searched body]'. The 1d6 Daemons will now gate sequentially into the area. Starting at the weakest type and going up from there.
66	Body has a list of names tattooed. All are crossed out. The penultimate uncrossed name is yours, the last is that of (Notable NPC opposed to the party).
67	Grapple Spider. Iron grapple, spider shaped. Clings like a spider when thrown. Must be fed blood.
68	A Vampire Court subpoena for a random NPC.
69	An unassigned slavehunter's license, warrant and badge.
70	Instructions and countersigns for a secret rendezvous with a race totally opposed to the holder.
71	Shifting Archean dagger that causes blood to rust (*1d10 damage to those with red blood). If it touches metal, both the metal and dagger rust to nothing.

1D100 YOU FIND...

- 72 A myco-lucent necklace with 2d6 jewels that produce spore-effects when crushed.
- 73 1d6 Yoon-Suin Smokerope cigarettes. When lit, a strand of black smoke slowly reaches directly up. When it contacts a surface it adheres and transforms into a climbable black rope.
- 74 Book of Acid. The optical illusions in this book make you woozy when you look at them. You then vomit up a pint of strong acid.
- 75 Pulsar Stone. Hand-sized crystal rock. Sighting through it allows you to see the flickers of distant pulsars. With time this can be used to tell direction underground.
- 76 Set of silver blades for flensing precisely the skin of the human face.
- 77 A baby brain in bottled brine. Neurovore bugging and communication technology.
- 78 1d4 vials of Heroin with Ælf-Adal syringes.
- 79 1d4 Funginid Mind Spores (thumb sized, fractal, soft); casts *Speak With Mushrooms* on consumer.
- 80 Dvargir mushroom vodka. Icy clear. Enhances any save against magical effects. Drinker cannot let any argument lie, pursuing every tiny detail with agonising relentlessness. Wisdom test to stop arguing. Failure amount is the number of people you must persuade you are right before you stop.
- 81 dErO Conspiracy Pills. The character can hear the players and Referee talking round the table. They must give no sign of this!
- 82 *Pair of dice.
- 83 Loaded pair of dice.
- 84 A small, starved Gnonmen, gagged and tied up.
- 85 A razor, mirror and soap.
- 86 Steel mirror on extendible (6') brass pole. Mirror can be angled.
- 87 Olm-carved slender short-sword made entirely of bone.
- 88 A chunky brass cylindrical finger ring. Actually a silent and reliable clock that pricks the wearer's finger each hour.
- 89 50' of nightingale chain. Slender, light as rope. Sings softly under pressure.
- 90 A spoolable fishing line with elegant chemiluminescent lures.
- 91 Elegant Meerschmummen miner's pipe with lid. Holds tiny fire spirit and never goes out. Can only light small things (lamps, fuses) and complains constantly.
- 92 Ælf-Adal ring. The wearer vomits a torrent of poisonous spiders which pool around them like a shadow and run in and out of their mouth. So long as they do not become afraid, of anything, the spiders will allow them to climb as the *Spider Climb* spell. The effect ends the moment the user becomes afraid.
- 93 Ælf-Adal 'Arak'. Must be allowed to settle. Top layer gives penetrating insight but curses character. Bottom layer removes curse, makes instantly violently drunk, wipes 2d6 hours of memory. Insight must be communicated during drink.
- 94 Ælf-Adal 'manacles'. Syringe-thin inter-penetrating bars, driven through forearms like hairpins. Linked by slender chains.
- 95 1d6 Dvargir manacles. Gitmo-style plastic zip ties.
- 96 Ælf-Adal climbing harness. Like a normal climbing harness but doesn't make you look like a tit. Looks kind of cool actually. Slim fit only.
- 97 Cloaksmoke. Pungent incense. Forces all shape-changing or stealth predators who smell it to give themselves away by immediately attacking, often in a non-optimal manner.
- 98 Geophone. Delicate Dvargir make. With practice, can hear sounds in 200' radius through the stone.
- 99 The genes of a Cambriman. Like a helix of tiny wet pearls. If you fool around with them and stick them in a live Cambriman you could make a baby. Or a mutant.
- 100 An occultum coin.





ONE HUNDRED TREASURES OF THE CIVILOPEDE

1. STONE FRAGMENT

origin unknown

A shattered lump of pale and stained limestone. Smooth. Charcoal bison, rhinoceros and oryx sweep past in a continuous flow of stained carbon. These animals respond to the presence of weapons and will scatter if anyone with an unsheathed blade comes close.

2. CLAY AUROCHS

origin unknown

The animal is moulded by hand of unfired dry yellow-white clay. Shown mounting a rock which forms the sculpture's base. If placed on right shaped rock, the stone will impregnate and transform into an aurochs of rock which lives for a day. This works once per month.

3. AN ARCHEAN LAMP

A tight, round blur of dense glass made to be placed over the bright white light of a lamp. This done, the lamp casts the view of an overwhelmingly green semitropical garden upon nearby walls. Wind touches the densely packed trees, fat fruit sways on the branches, birds wheel and perch.

4. THE OCCASIONAL PAINTING

This empty space is a charming painting of a welcoming and amusing domestic scene the first time you walk into a room, and if you forget it is there. If you look at it directly, it is not there.

5. DANCING FIGURE

Bronze, life-sized

This shattered almost-human form retains only one full limb, the rest snapped off and lost. Held poised, torso flexed precisely in an eternal dance. The skull can be seen through a smashed gap in the finely-moulded flowing hair of bronze. The other bones and flesh, caught when the body was bronzed in mid-flight, have fallen out or decayed.

6. DARK CYCLE, UNKNOWN ÆLF-ADAL

Fresco over wood (removed from setting)

Background: mushroom forest, slaves being hunted by hounds hide beneath a mushroom growth. Midground: Ælf-Adal fortification, only light source in painting comes from inside. A river of ice and blood. Foreground: a group of six laughing high-status Ælf-Adal form spiked balls from the river of ice and throw them back and forth. One male has been hit in the face, to the amusement of all.

7. MURAL FRAGMENT, 'GLAIVE OF THE SNAKES'

Albino snake-man warrior wearing a helmet made from the skull of a gigantic ape or man, blunt primate teeth sweep around the snake-man's face. The flayed skin of the same creature flows out behind as a cloak; the arms, legs, toes and fingers have been stiffened and splayed so they seem to reach out, grasping. Serpent warrior wields a large weapon or ritual object, ends carved like the faces of apes with tongues of fire.

8. HEAD PIECE FROM A SCULPTOR'S TOMB

This painted oversized terracotta head at first appears to be a typical piece of monumental funerary art. On closer inspection, numerous tricks and jokes are revealed. The hair is a river - fish swim through it and crocodiles peek out from behind reeds around the neck. There are smiling faces in each pupil and each iris is a graceful woman curled. The lips are ships of closely woven reed, the ears are golems holding onto to the head. The nose is a temple, the brows are condors. None of this is noticeable from a distance. The bottom of the neck has this message in an ancient tongue: "I Anemenon, sculptor to the king, make this for myself."

9. QUIET ELYSIUM/ PUNISHMENT STONE

An eternally burning seated figure with placid features and a divine smile. Powerful vibrant blue and green flames surge endlessly up to three feet directly above the figure; they look like a field of green grass and blue water. Forcing someone's face into the flame for up to a minute will either inflict damage or slowly burn away their Id or inner passion till none remains. The subject may decide between the damage or the change.

10. ION MASK

Heavy, grotesque, unwieldy mask, made from ruby, emeralds, topaz and gold. Allows you to see, and negotiate with, any devil or daemon in the area, though it compels only that they reveal themselves, listen and treat your offer seriously, not that they accept.

11. ATHEIST HEAVEN

Painting, unknown Ælf-Adal

An underground village in a vast chamber, through which flows a great river; unusual in that a sky, with natural light, is suggested but not shown. An idealised group of peaceful Ælf-Adal of both genders in silk robes are gathered round an open building, inside which are various beasts of burden. The gods of the Ælf-Adal and other races are incarnated as these animals. There is a bounty for the destruction of this piece.

12. HIS BOW, HIS BARBS

Maker unknown

A strung bow of simple make in unremarkable black wood; two arrows remain. Each arrow causes immediate death on impact in all circumstances. Anyone picking up the bow is reduced to the image of death - skin falls off, organs rot and fall away in one or two minutes. When they put the bow down the remaining animated skeleton will fall apart.

13. THE HANDS ON THE HARP

Instrument and statue fragments

Beautiful stone hands, broken off a larger statue; a harp of wire and burnished fungal wood. Playing the harp animates the hands - they always produce the best advice available but are distressed and can communicate only by sign.

14. THE RAINBOW THRONE

Blue, lapis lazuli, amethyst, colour of sky fading to night, hints of haematite. Cobalt crystals. Still being sought by an Empire somewhere.

15. FLOWER BELL; CELESTIAL*Sculpture*

This bell is assembled from flowers of painted stone. Ringing it returns the recently dead to life, though, never in that location and never the same gender and never the same form and never with memories of their old life. They simply step into existence somewhere in existence, the same age they were when they left. All records and memories altered to provide a bedding in the reality of the world. Personality and capacities unaffected, negative effects removed. The location of this reincarnation is utterly random and cannot be controlled.

16. THE SAINT AND THE MALADIES*Painting*

The underground saint of an unknown faith is held down and tormented by numerous diseases given flesh. In fact the maladies themselves are trapped by the saint's sacrifice. These are the original intelligent forms of those diseases. Touching them will awake the disease and it may be questioned to retrieve strange intelligences. However during the period of the questioning, all versions of this disease become exponentially more deadly everywhere as their primary mind awakes.

17. THE FIGURE IN WOOD*Wood Carving*

A weeping woman, cowl'd. Boldly and fluidly carved from a single block over a few hours as a city drowned below. Simple lines following the shape of the wood. Contains the ghosts of a drowned kingdom and is their marker in this world. Any attempt to damage the wood will result in disaster.

18. THE ANGEL OF PAYMENT*Linked sculptures*

Knotsman Icon, made from barbed and knotted wire, unsupported other than by its own writhings. The Debt Angel is in the process of returning an unwilling subject (carved in snakewood) to life. The debtor has tried to escape their debt in death, and failed. Knotsman will bow before this image and resent its presence in your hands. However, they can only take it from you by legal means.

19. THE VAST CROCODILE*AntiPainting, by Margaret Creatorex*

Darklight image in occultum-stained paint, eats light and infests darkness, visible as a stain inside the eye. A gigantic albino crocodile surges out of the water of an underground river. On its back rides an imperial blind Salamander-Man, surrounded by fawning sycophants in the forms of animals and spirits. (Almost certainly cheap allegory, no Olm would ever make this.)

20. BOAT OF NIGHT*Child's toy, or educational aid*

A two dimensional image of a flowing river of darkness, bent in an arc. The river is of occultum-stained iron and a toy boat rides on top. A lamp-holder is placed behind the river. The boat can be moved up and down the river, along its length. Doing this causes the river to flow by unknown means. Round bubbles and gaps open up in the swirling black metal and move across the hemisphere of the river's arc, revealing the light of the lamp. One is larger than the rest. Careful observation will reveal that the gaps match the movement of the sun and stars.

21. OLM FUNERAL CLOAK

Tapestry

Long strip of blank, grey, apparently low-quality silk. No image unless carefully stroked. High Dexterity and Wisdom can, with time, reveal some of the tactile information in the cloth, but most will remain opaque to even thoughtful investigators. From top to bottom: abstract modernist landscape, actually tactile facial arrangement of high-status female Olm; greasy intertwined serpents or birds thrusting against each other, actually direct-sense impression of particular underwater system; drifting field of interlocked feathers with precise particular curls at the tips, actually sense impression of airshape in particular Olm sacred space.

Beyond this, remaining two thirds of sheet indecipherable though clearly highly detailed. Suggestions of fire and depth.

22. FAST HOUND

Obsidian sculpture and lamp

Carved black stone Spotlight Dog, features left empty and cavity mirrored for placement of a burning wick. Dog shown twisting, leaping, front claws reaching forward. One rear limb touches the base. Base is in the shape or shadow of a grey moth in flight. Dog seems to be leaping upon the flying moth, symbolic of speed, life and death.

23. WHALE BREACHING SOULS

Fresco on a limestone box

Shows sea composed entirely of humanoid souls, deftly and rapidly sketched onto the plaster as it dried. Ocean roils as a pale cetacean breaches and curls in the black air. Souls spume in the aftershock.

Box empty. If used to store bones, can be phylactery for that soul, enables possession from box.

24. WINDING FROM A TUCENSAR TOMB

Bands of brittle yellow cloth wrapping an empty human-shaped space

Held in position by invisible magic. Mirrors may reveal the cloth is covered, on the inside, with long lines of writing in the language of the lost Tucensars. This is the only example that survives and has never been translated, though scholars believe it may be poetry which gives the location or nature of an unknown high-level spell.

25. TWO SISTERS

Painting is negative image radium and phosphorescent ink over a background of ebony

The painting folds out to reveal two female portraits, one on each side. Women of an unknown race. Similar featured, idealised or related. Both beautiful, though not unusually so, unknown symbol on arm of left figure. Suggested Archean make, though no other reported humanoid paintings by this race.

26. PROPHETIC VESSEL, DVARGIR

Stone jar shaped like a Dvargir head, life-sized

Seems angry or sorrowful. To drink, tip the jar so the face looks down at the ground. Finish a strong drink in one gulp and it will speak a true prophecy.

The prophecy will always be about something that happens when you are drunk some time in the future. The Dvargir itself will be drunk and its prophecies are usually incoherent. The Dvargir also hates anyone who drinks from it.

27. THIEF OF BRONZE

In a steel cage with narrow bars is a compressed pile of mangled bronze. On inspection, the shapes of hands, limbs and a face can be seen in the squashed metal. Looks like a stolen statue, compressed for transport and hidden.

In fact the statue is itself a thief, animate and timeless, hiding itself in secret places, waiting to be discovered and exhibited, then running off in the night with any transportable goods. No-one knows what it does with the stolen stuff, where it came from, how it was made, or why it executes such a very long con.

28. CAMBRIMAN BOUNDARY STONE

Helix of white sedimentary stone, origin non-local to discovery

The Cambrimen only rarely produce art of any kind and this is the only art they produce at all. Surface covered with surprisingly delicate engravings; none are comprehensible though several may show living forms, and suggestions of body parts have been noted. 'Engravings' have actually been etched into the rock by an unknown process and it has been claimed the Cambrimen create these by passing them through their bodies. When asked, the Cambrimen call these 'boundary stones' and claim they mark the edges of territory of various kinds. No logic to their placement has ever been found and their removal has never been noted by the Cambrimen.

29. CARVED BONE SLED

A small sled or sledge built from what seem to be the bones of warped and extended lions.

Carvings on the bone are labyrinthine and may indicate a spiritual challenge before the afterlife or an actual labyrinth. Sleds are not used by any known Veins culture; they

are insanely impractical. Yet this item was almost certainly created underground and is reported never to have seen the sun. There is a bounty for any rubbings from the carvings on the sled; the payments increase with each continuous square inch recovered.

30. PAINTED COWRIE SHELL, FROM THE BONE BEACH SEA

A white shell, covered with thousands of interlocking images of predator and prey in bioluminescent paint. The paint does not dull with time. It is known that the images are a language and an unknown spell. The spell can be deciphered and learnt. Learning the spell also involves learning the story on the shell - the meanings interlock. Several Magic-Users have successfully learnt the spell. Each one has then departed unexpectedly for unknown destinations, never to be seen again. Including, in the most recent case, a Lich who cleverly evaded safeguards they themselves designed in order to prevent them leaving their own home. (Said Lich is currently being pursued by a group of expert mercenaries they themselves hired to stop them doing exactly what they are currently doing.)

31. HUNTED IN THE SKY

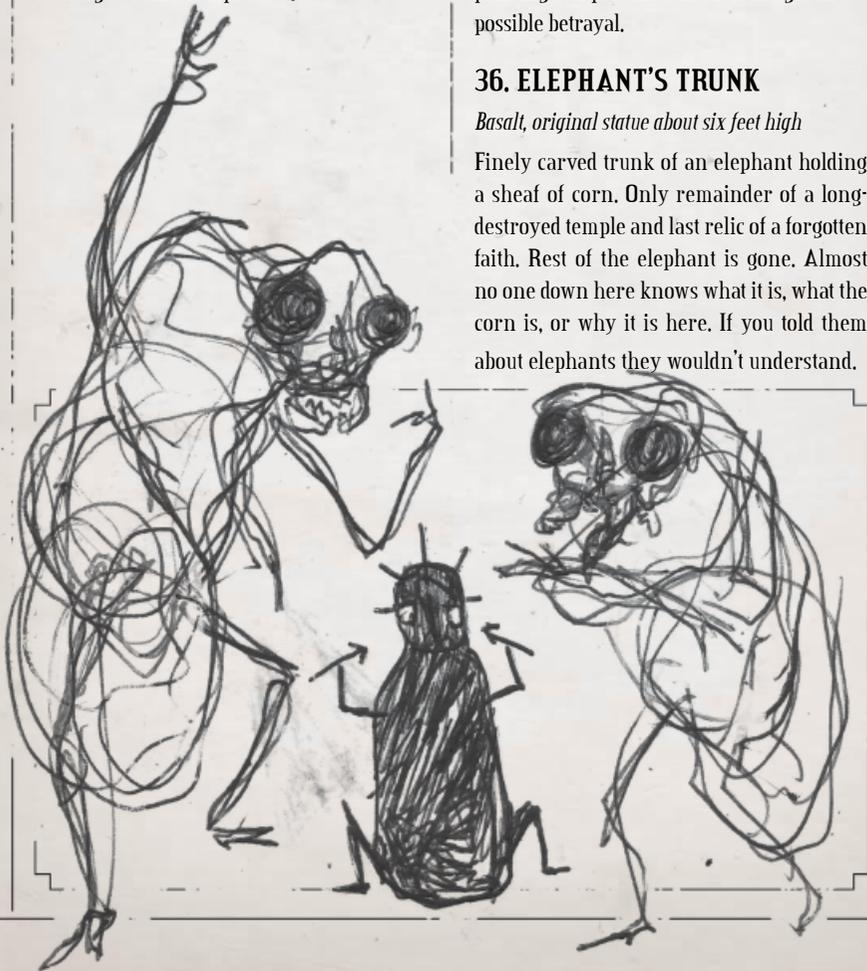
Dense, lined tattoo on the flayed skin of a young girl

The tattoo is in black on white skin and the nature of the skin is not obvious until investigated. A single individual hides cradling their face, naked, in a tiny harrow-spot, beneath a hunting sky. The sky itself takes up most of the area. It has clearly been tattooed by someone who has never seen the sky and, hearing it described, regards it as a kind of predatory inverse landscape, seeing too much, following endlessly, knowing all and consuming without trace.

32. WAVE KNOWN WHEN

Ink on paper, very small, about the size of a postcard

A beautiful and powerful image of a black wave with a deep belly of amber and oak-brown. Wave curls dramatically right-left across the image, about to break. A dark ship hangs on its crest, coils of black chain spray from its prow, collared leviathans drag it madly into the surf. Some viewers see a light in the ship. This means they will sail the Nightmare Sea before they die. (Painting 75% accurate and many viewers who did not see the light have seen the Sea, leading to some complaints.)



33. SIX SILENT STONES

Painting, large

A dinner scene, men of an unknown civilised race sit to eat in a group. Each schemes against the rest in some secret way, implied or shown directly to the viewer. The wall behind them is made of six separate kinds of highly polished stone. The grain and nature of each stone block has been brought out so perfectly it seems more real than the foregrounded figures, almost as if you could reach out and touch it. Legend says that one of the seated figures is trustworthy and the nature of the stones provides the clue. Understanding the painting can provide a flash of insight into a possible betrayal.

36. ELEPHANT'S TRUNK

Basalt, original statue about six feet high

Finely carved trunk of an elephant holding a sheaf of corn. Only remainder of a long-destroyed temple and last relic of a forgotten faith. Rest of the elephant is gone. Almost no one down here knows what it is, what the corn is, or why it is here. If you told them about elephants they wouldn't understand.

34. LADY OF THE RUINED SUN*Yellow jasper, just over a foot high*

Just-over life-sized head of an exceptionally beautiful woman. Half destroyed, smashed, leaving half a lip, a cheek and part of an eye. This woman wants to return to the sun and anyone standing in the presence of the statue will dream of the sun when they next sleep. Regardless of whether or not they have seen the sun before. Or even know what it is. This has driven some mad in their sleep.

36. SOLDIER MEDITATING*Sandstone, four feet high*

There is no sign of weaponry or violence. The soldier is naked except for a loincloth, legs crossed, eyes closed, stomach distended slightly in the moment of an intake of breath. Every line is smooth and the selfhood of the described man pushes forth exactly from the sculpture's mass, making a perfect and elegant containment of life. All critical hits in the vicinity of the sculpture kill.

37. CREATION PHALLUS*Marble, five feet high*

A stylised erect penis, pointing directly up, carved from black marble. From its tip grows a lotus blossom shaped from polished iridium. The blossom splays out like a radio telescope, pointed at the sky and dully reflects any available light. The surface of the phallus is polished to a reflective sheen and casts back wrinkled images, especially of the radiating lotus petals above it, which seem to wrap the thing in silver. Sex in the presence of the phallus always results in conception, always of genius children (combined Intelligence and Wisdom never less than 30).

**38. COATLICUE,
MOTHER OF GODS**

A stone sculpture, almost three metres high. Her face is two rattlesnakes meeting, their tails become penises and cobs of corn in her belt. She carries a blouse of severed hands and human hearts over her breasts and a skull over her sex. Her feet and hands are clawed. She is life and death, birth and grave, the living torrent of destruction that makes up every breath, she is the bomb as it ignites and the heart as it beats, she birthed the sun who killed the moon.

39. CONTEST VICTOR*Black Marble, Ælf-Adal, Life-sized*

This statue of an Ælf-Adal male is missing both arms due to abandonment and use as part of a wall in a later construction. The face has been mutilated. Remarkable for the virtuosity of the folds of silk cloth which fall from his shoulders, wrapping his body, highlighting the form with carefully studied grace. The pressure of a touching hand upon the silk, its limb smashed off, is startling. Almost everyone who sees this statue unconsciously reaches out to caress it.

40. A SEALED DOOR*Blackened oak, 6 feet high*

A freestanding doorway set into a panel of deeply-carved oak. The sinuous asymmetric designs that lock around the door are winding shapes, branches perhaps, or snakes. They seem to feed each upon the other, shadows boil in their interstitial folds. The door itself is deeply set within the wood, often dark. Its surface carries knot-work like the wall, but shallow, graceful and self-reflective. There is no key or handle. The door was sealed with permanent intent.

41. THE SECOND ASCENSION OF ISNOTH

Ebony, 9 metres high, laid at an angle on its back

This altar-piece or icon was originally placed at the centre of a temple to Isnoth. The central diorama shows Isnoth ascending into her palace as other gods and heroes watch in wonder on either side, weeping and praying, and preying, for joy. Below, three smaller images show scenes from the 'life' of Isnoth: her birth, her trial and her death and first Ascension. Four panels on either side show scenes from her godhood, her good works and her betrayal. Rising up from the centre are a series of single figures showing her inevitable victory, her vengeance and the resumption of divine order. The whole piece is arranged upon a carved tree whose tendrils interweave and snake off into the most delicate filigree. The quality, delicacy and beauty of the carving has never been matched by Ælf-Adal culture, or perhaps, by any other. Any damage to this piece will bring the direct attention of Isnoth. There is, of course, a significant bounty for its recovery.

43. MOTHER WITH IRON EYES

Bust of a woman, two feet high, brass and iron

The face and head of a beautiful and austere woman from a tribe in the Nightmare Sea. Her origin surrendered by the elaborate weave of tooth-worm shells around her neck. They are valued only in the Nightmare Sea. Suspected royalty as her eyes have been inset with iron so that they glow with a separate light. (Eye replacement is rare for those tribes and usually only accorded to high-status individuals. Or heroic interlopers.) The softness of her features suggests youth but she wears the squid-ring cheek-scars of a mother.

42. AN ATTEMPTED IDENTITY

(A rare piece recovered from near a suspected-active Mondmilch Pool.)

Oil on Skin, roughly half a metre square

Seems to be the self portrait of a human male with significant signs of Veins environmental change. Pupils rimless, colourless skin, small growths on forehead and ocular ridge. Staring directly into the viewer's eyes. He stands before a white wall and holds an image or locket. Beyond the wall is a lightless city whose windows seem to contain things. The locket, or icon, is open and contains the image of a young man, standing before a wall of stone. Beyond the wall is a lightless city. There are things watching from the windows of the city. The man exhibits signs of environmental damage, lips parched, skin burnt, pupils pin-pricks, some facial abscess. He holds a locket or icon, which lies open in his hands. In the locket is the image of a young man. . .

44. A DISCOVERY (142)

Etching, roughly A4 landscape size

This etching shows a heap of bodies in a cave. The races seem human but many are only partially revealed. Blood pools from a series of puncture wounds. Alternating uniformity of dress and abandoned weapons on the ground suggest a military engagement. A single figure is pulling another body onto the pile, the figure seems to weep blood, perhaps close to death themselves. It is unclear if this new wound is the discovery alluded to in the title. Only remaining part of a large series, possibly a narrative.

45. FOUND OUT

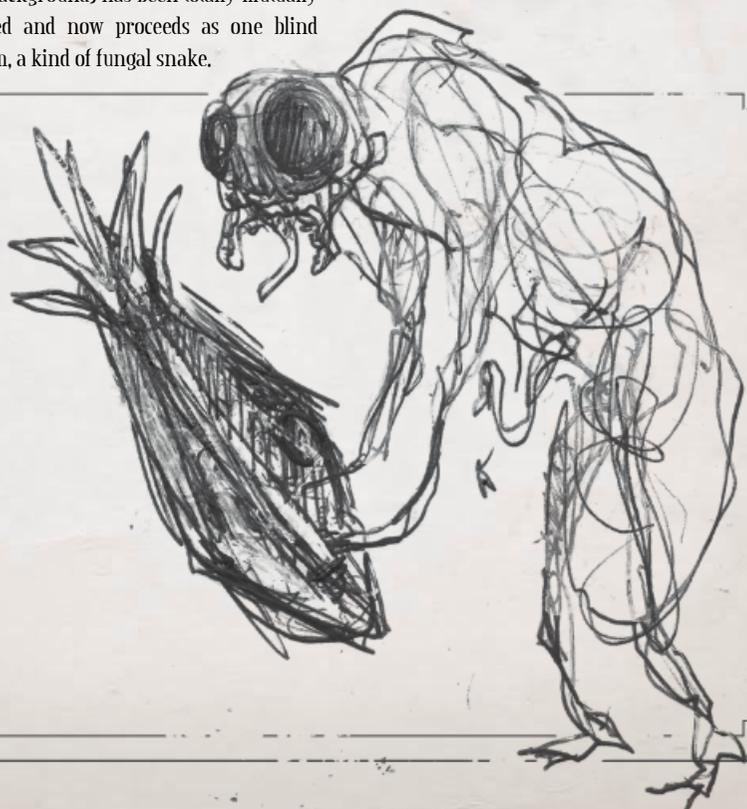
Oil on a large skin, at least two metres high and six long

Large dramatic skin showing an attempted assault by stealth upon an unseen fortification, presumably Funginid. Two rows of dark figures climb across the shattered surface of a cavern wall. Clearly pioneer companies, they carry dulled weapons, rope and no light. Each group of nine is lead by a figure, assumed to be a Magic-User, climbing freely without holds. Each figure is in direct contact with one in front. They proceed in a line. Neither group seems aware of the other. The rear soldier of the first group (foreground) has their head tilted back, fungal matter is bursting from their eyes and mouth. The second-to-last figure from the first group is reaching back to check the infected soldier. The second group (background) has been totally mutually consumed and now proceeds as one blind organism, a kind of fungal snake.

46. THE DESCENT

Ink on paper, eight panels, each just under two metres high and one wide

This sequence shows the annihilation of a people and their descent underground. Moving left to right; naked bodies lie unburied, mothers and children starve, the sky and air seem to weep blood and dark energy, the flowers die in the ground, a woman stands, the shape of her body shown only by the network of almost luminescent blood winding from her scalp. No enemy or cause of these events is shown. Towards the right of the sequence the naked and starving remnants of this people begin their slow descent underground, out of the bleeding sky and into the comforting dark.



47. KNOTSMEN MARRIAGE MARKET

Oil on unknown animal skin

A room made into two cells, the space between them patrolled by an armed guard. In the first, a series of women stand and sit, some with children, ranging from newborns to about eight years old. In the other cell a small number of males look through the bars. We see from inside the male cell but the distance of the female cell is shrouded in darkness. It is not clear which group is actually imprisoned, or who, or what, is being sold. Both seem of equal status. The men reach forward or lean against the bars; not all of the women meet their gaze.

48. STUDY FOR THE TOMB OF A DEAD SAINT

Terracotta Diorama, one foot high

Five figures arranged around the body of a sixth. These tiny models (four female, two male) carry the very expression of joy. Each looks down upon the body in the centre, each contains or expresses the deepest pleasure, each in a unique way. Staring, beaming at the observer. Twisting, hand on face, glowing with suppressed happiness. One clutches her chest, forced double in laughter. One weeps and reaches to touch. One crouches and stares beaming. The last spins round in an impromptu dance, beautifully delineated folds of cloth whirling around her. The models are separately based and would be quite easy to pick up and steal. It seems that several are already missing, yet there is no means to prevent their removal.

49. A MEAL IN CARCÖN

Rapidly-executed sketch, pencil on paper

One page from a notebook holds an artfully sketched scene showing a formal dinner of the Pyroclastic Ghouls. Seven lumpen ash-carved humanoid forms sit round a rectangular table on which plates and silver knives (of several kinds) are neatly placed. Half-sketched figures standing up beyond the seated ghouls might be damaged statues, or something else. The head ghoul reaches for a knife with pumice ash-mitten hands. The others sometimes claw at cutlery which seems to scatter out of their grip, one gouges the table, one lifts a plate and eats directly with its face. The food is overwritten by the pencil's tip so many times it is a black blur or scratches and torn paper. (What, or where 'Carcön' is, is not known. The name appears nowhere else.)

50. EFFIGY OF A BUREAUCRAT-COUNT

Painted plaster over a wire frame

A gaunt and intelligent looking man with hooded eyes reflects upon the viewer's gaze. He has been stolen and is now free. The 'Counts' are lesser tribal and low-volume rulers within the Knotsmen influence-sphere and who have made treaty with them. These highly-lifelike effigies are made as a form of contract with the Debtmen of that race. They are kept centrally in 'Forclose', the Knotsmen capital, and counted every day. They are never intended to leave. There is a bounty for the return of this piece.

51. PAIRED SHELLS FROM THE TOMB OF UNKNOWN KING

Mother-of-pearl shell, 20' wide

One of the greatest statements of power and wealth for the savage human volume-lords that rule for a century or so between the boundaries of eternal powers, is the shell of a ToRaptoise for their tomb. ToRaptoise shells are beautiful, shining mother-of-pearl and immeasurably strong. The ToRaptoise itself never (we assume) grows large enough in the wild for its shell to achieve the necessary size. An alpha must be captured, caged and fed a high-protein diet for many decades before it grows large enough. A ToRaptoise shell tomb is a massive investment of time, money, resources and food. It's also a predatory, murdering, gigantic armoured velociraptor-tortoise. Only the strongest, longest-lasting ruler can possibly afford such a thing. This is the only known pair of such shells to exist. Each is carved by masters with the foetal-curved profile of the occupant. A naked King and Queen. They seem at peace.

52. MATING FLIGHT

Woodcut

Gracefully carved woodcut showing the mating flight of two of the memoryless moth-men, the Gegenschein. The densely silver-written wings of the creatures enfold each other as they twist together, still in flight. Each Gegenschein carries a self-derived record of its life threaded on its smoke-grey wings and the calligraphic texts interweave as they embrace. A knot of carried silk-wrapped bones is tugged behind them like the bow of a kite as they drift through the dark air.

53. DWARVEN ORIGINS

Painting, oil on skin

This painting seems to be a dramatic but rather uninspired view of a deep city on a dark ocean. In fact, this over-painting is camouflage. On investigation, it lifts away to show a scene of pornographic dwarven love. Beard and pink flesh intertangle so that it is impossible to exactly tell the gender or, in fact, the position of the subjects. They are tenderly and erotically portrayed.

54. A SPIDER'S EMBRACE

A drinking cup of enamelled spider shell

The ochre shell of this cup is taken from a Trogloraptor, the child-stealing spider. Across its surface is pictured a scene taken from the back of a Trogloraptor, where it keeps the silk-wrapped and sedated children it steals. In this case the children are not sedated; in fact they are ██████████ each other. This cup is banned in all cultures, even Ælf-Adal. Anyone viewing the cup must save against Magic or spend a minute trying to scrub their own eyes.

55. PORTRAIT OF A SLAVE

Oil on skin

At first this painting seems to be a grotesque image of a seated skeleton dressed in a silk sheet. On closer observation you can see that the bones carry the translucent, transparent, glasslike flesh of a beautiful woman. The multiple varicoloured light sources used in this image were selected and arranged to make an art piece of the flesh itself. The woman has been placed as a living prism. She stares mournfully from the surface of the painting.

56. SCULPTURES FROM A TEMPLE DOOR

Limestone

This arch of stone images show the judgement of the world by god. The sinful are drawn from their places like fish, into a land of burning light. In this opulent but corrupt country they are gorged forcibly to obesity, blinded, deafened, noses cut off and forced into crowds. They are also watched ceaselessly from above by groups of observing angels in the belly of a gigantic blue beast that never sleeps.

57. STATUE OF AN IRONIST

Marble, metre and a half high

This is an image of a totally normal man in naked circumstances and therefore looks very strange for the subject of a statue. He lacks any heroic proportion. Spindly limbs, large head with aware features. A touch of this statue will open any shackle or binding and dispel any geas or command. Even the mind-staples of the Knotsman or dErO congruity knots will be ejected without damage.

58. THE KYRIARCH

Marble bust, life-sized

The subject of this bust has a wide forehead, intelligent eyes, a small sensual mouth and a strong nose. They look entirely normal, and quite civilised. There is nothing abstract or idealised about it at all. It could be the bust of an accountant, except for the high quality. An impossible emperor, too simple, too human and too artless to ever be a destroyer of peoples.

59. RED-BERRY RAPIDS

A mosaic, or a fragment of a mosaic now

Meant for the floor of a bathhouse, where the water would flow over the bands of fractured tesserae, making the river in the image run as well. Shows the route of a great underground water course. It begins under the sun, where dark skinned small-eyed people (blunt heads, stained skin, big eyes with tiny pupils flitting about like pinballs) pick the red fruit. The fruit is passed to river-raft riders who take it underground. They pass through numerous shallow falls. The waters glow. Rafts capsize and crews die at every stage; the red fruit is lost in the dark. Past pale fish and pale pigs, rapids, poisoned birdshit islands swarming with nightmare megabugs. Past and through forgotten cities where half sunk statues to unknowable gods make reefs upon the foaming blur. Then through the hopfish spawning grounds where sailors are abducted from the deck by flocks of fleeting gnawing fish, the ambassadorial swamps where educated alligators converse and snatch ships down. Past the fallen lighthouse where they say sometimes the AntiPhoenix burns. To the whale-wracked shores of the Nightmare Sea and the islands there where beautiful sorcerous women with iron eyes wait for three-day-old fruit before it spoils.

60. FEMALE HARVESTER

Oil on skin

A naked woman wearing only sandals and a basket over her shoulder. Sticking out is the foot of a human being. She carries in her hand, another hand, this one separated from its owner. She seems peaceful.

61. APOCALYPSE TAPESTRIES*Woven from human hair*

The underverse is deeper and longer than the oververse and with a stranger memory and the cataclysms of the known world are just the pulse of the underworld, renewed by the destruction from above. A birth of ashes. These tapestries show numerous human apocalyptic events. The sun plays a part, and the sea, and light, ships there are and angels inverted in the dark. In each instance the survivors are shown going underground. Sometimes willingly. Sometimes when, under darkened skies, pale armies rise up from the gaps in the world to hunt the remains of civilisation, abduct, enslave and consume them and, in whatever form, bring them below.

62. CURIOSITY

Metalwork. An image of curiosity embodied as a man, winged, shrouded, with a hooded lamp. Cool hat, awesome hair, face hidden. **Dangerous.** The initial impression of carved wood is actually a dozen metals, forged and worked together as one. Copper, iron, bronze, tin, etched titanium and more. The lightness and apparent improvisation of this piece is actually the result of insane levels of planning. Metals with different tolerances and melting points have been worked as one apparent whole, yet they can only have been assembled slowly over time, and with great difficulty. Impossible to tell which race's work this is, depth of metallic lore suggests dwarven work but the effect is too light and fanciful.

63. GE(G)EOR LILVEN. SPASM-BARON; NEYVGABER*Chalk on black slate*

The slightest touch could smudge this perfect sketch. Practice for a painting, lost or unmade. The Spasm-Baron himself is a middle-aged male, face carefully delineated, clothes roughly laid out, furs and a skullcap, ruthless, intelligent. Awake. Aware.

64. SELENIUM BLOOM WITH MOON-BRONZE ROSE*Watercolour on dogskin*

Reason for the unusual choice of skin not known, possible Archeon artist or Archeon influence as painting exhibits colours beyond the expected visible spectrum. A small clutch of selenium flowers from the gardens of the Archeans, subtlety and exactness of the petals and leaves shown with rare and obsessive grace, the barely-opening flowers, the slenderness and near-luminosity of the leaves, catching yet also providing light. Brilliantly implied humming crackle of light-negative alpha waves. This picture is slightly radioactive.

65. LAMENTERS HUNTING*Watercolour and chalk on graphite tablet*

Lamenters hunting in their own caverns, unusual as lamenters would usually hunt in the overworld at night (where they do not call and are not remarked upon). A small flock of two or three birds caught spiralling through the air, all trying to catch one translucent cave cricket that has presumably leapt up into a darkened space. Drawn from life under conditions of enormous danger. Lamenters are rarely seen like this and there are very few bird pictures underground so this one is rare.

66. EYEGATE FIRE ON SLEEPING*Synthetics on reversed Trilobite shell*

What seems to be a sunset is a watch-fire on the Nightmare Sea. A mixture of oil from psychic whales and chemiluminescent stacks received through mysterious but unending trade with those below. The EyeGate fire is always lit, and, like every light on the Nightmare Sea, it is a warning, not an aid. In the blur of lights all objects are removed. Only the light and the storm, the sea and the white cliffs. (Everyone has nightmares on the Nightmare Sea as the Psihemoth make it their embassy.)

67. TYRANTS TECTONIC*Model of a proposed building*

This is the intended temple of a light-bearing god who wages fruitless conflict against the spherical tyrants of the world's tectonic core. It looks like a science experiment, part telescope, part amphitheatre, part staging post for an underground war. Though the building itself is roofless and clearly placed underground.

68. REMAINDER OF A THEFT*Spectre of a fresco, conjured by a specialist necromancer*

This spirit is held frozen by encircled wards. Multiple layers of the fresco can be seen at once, the working-out drawings, plumb-bobs, angles, compass marks and original, more-radical sketch. Then the finished piece and its slow decay, all at once in silver and grey. The subject; a woman holds the ghost of her fearful self inside her flesh. But this is only one small remaining part of the whole.

69. BLOOD DANCER*Impossibly delicate sculpture of ruby and emerald*

This is locked in a physics-dulled glass case that is itself a minor treasure. The veins and arteries of this person have been crystallised by some unknown process. The dead flesh was then carried away by a slow chemical bath. Arterial blood has become a network of ruby, venous blood an interlocking network of green emerald. The reproduction is exact down to the slenderest nets of the eye or the channels under the palm. The area around this one-of-a-kind piece is always silent.

70. CREATION HALOS*Sculpture-Lamps in Gold*

(These are the same kind of lamps seen in the image in 84.) Cage-like networks of gold in the shapes of a woman and a man. Each cage is also a golden lamp whose blue flame burns inside like a trapped bird and sends arcs of fire, scorchless, through the empty figures' heads to stand like burning crowns or halos of vermilion air.

71. THE HIDING MAN*Slate lithograph*

There is clearly a man hiding behind this painting, but when you pull it away or turn it round, you can't see him. Inside the painting is a copper sky with an azure ruin underneath. Daemons hunt through the sky-shaded stones under the celestial metals. They are dragging people off for torture and judgement. Signs in the painting indicate that they are recovering a debt, that this kind of behaviour is to be expected from daemons, and that the people involved probably deserved it. In the painting is a stone, behind the stone hides a man.

72. THE FLOWER OF ASH

*Life-sized sculpture of a naked woman
in clear glass*

This naked woman crouches with one hand on her head, the other on her thigh. Her body twists, her worried face looking down, long hair down her back. The glass is filthy with dust and can never be fully cleaned. The dust runs in endless barely-visible rivulets up and down the folds of her flesh and her hair, the crooks of her limbs and the corners of her eyes. It never stops. There is a light hissing sound from the endless movements of the dust.

73. TEMPLE-PROJECTING LAMP

This lamp holds carefully constructed colours of vermillion, azurite, malachite and gold. It is made to project, upon the walls of an enclosing cave, the image of a temple to the Optical God. Saints and stories wash forth from its burnished surface and colour and shape the walls of the cave with gospels and holy grace. To some degree, this lamp is a temple to that god, with all of the benefits and consequences that infers. The portability and usefulness of its churches may be one of the only reasons the cult of the Optical God survives at all, so far from the light of the sun.

74. WHALEBONE TOTEM POLE

The mildly-psychic whalebone of this totem makes the figures seem to writhe and gawp. Stacked faces carved by blind hands in the gleaming shadows of the Bone-Beach Sea. The tribes of these isles neither make nor surrender their totems easily. Each one holds a competitor-myth of the world's creation and no tribe can stand the existence of another's story.

75. NINETY PERCENT OPTIMISTIC

A Guide to Public Murals of City 1A

This handwritten notebook is the first draft of a prospective guide to the officially-sanctioned 'positive' cube murals of Dvargir primary city '1A'. This city is a grid of carved cubes, arranged in a cube. The boundaries of the city are cuboid. The doors are square. It was briefly considered that murals of a positive and work-affirming nature would prevent wastage of worker elements through self-destruction. A series of square murals were created with correctly organised aesthetic schema. The effect of the murals was minimal and the cost of removing them considered a waste. By this guide's account, they stand there still. (The guide, if understood, also forms a kind of map to the city for which no maps exist. All Dvargir remember their place in City 1A through a series of mental equations. For anyone else it is a borgesian maze.)

76. UN-NAMED STORM

Oils on skin

Few caverns carry the vastness to sustain a cloud, let alone a storm, but those who can cradle the vortex, do. Even the deep Wyrms and the sorcerers of the infinite chain fear the chaos of the speleo-nimbus or the Hurricane Beneath. Few ever see one, but hear and feel it only. The howling winds blot out lamps and blind even the iron-sighted. They are known by their voices. This painting is unfinished; the painter was probably killed by the storm they observed, or fled. It is a nest, or hatching of many blacknesses, wrapped around an embryo-curlicue of unseen force. Stormsheep in the foreground raise their limbs, haloed in electric fire.

77. GROTH MORCHAIT

Flayed Tattoo

The image of a woman stripping off the ink that makes her up as if it were clothes. Somehow stepping out of the representation of herself. This image is either uncompleted or decayed, but which is hard to tell. The woman is a blur of form.

78. BROKE-HIS-FOOT

Oil on skin

Ethnographic painting of an elder Olm

This ancient Olm projects such an impression of awareness he seems to listen to the observer through the skin itself. The subject wears multiple symbols of tribal status, the ruff of an Alkalion cascades down his narrow shoulders, a javelin of real wood with an atlatl of human bone, the fingers of one hand play idly with a blurred occultum disk (Olm are the only under-race not to value occultum with ferocity; they treat it as a toy and seem to enjoy doing so in front of guests). He also wears a necklace of linked birdbones and folds a Gogenschein cloak over his arm.

79. THE CITADEL OF MOTHS

Panels of a panorama

Tattooed en-masse on stitched-together skins

Initially intended for a series of encircling images the size of a large room. This is damaged, the pieces left show city sections separated by years. The growth and decay of the culture flickers past, thriving streets giving way to empty colonnades. The ocean rising inevitably in every fourth section, cutting off the deep background. The sea-grey stone of the Citadel of Moths stands against the enveloping dark like a blurred mirage.



80. GOLEM CAGE

Not a painting but a cage of living light and shadow mixed.

Shadows can be bound by sorcery. Golems of light can be made, but never bound, the only thing to hold their irreducible edges are shadows already bound themselves. Both were used by the terrifying power of the mage that made this, purely for aesthetic effect. An underworld scene, the light-pooled ocean of the Nightmare Sea reflecting from the wings of a cloud of flying fish and from the glimmering that roofs that ocean. All is quiet, calm and at peace. The light seems to shift as if alive because it is. The shadows seem to move because they do. They are both alive and trapped together in the frame, tortured in eternal conflict, simply for a picture's sake.

81. PHILTRE OF THE SILENT SAINTS

Glass bottle with the head of a snake

This treasure is a scent. Anyone who smells it will feel as if transported to a bioluminescent garden of strange beauty. In the dark spaces between the fruiting bodies of the glowing plants, the faces of strange enamelled gods peek through. Mirrored and surfaced with shining glaze these house-sized twisted faces bring only calm. Anyone in the garden feels utterly safe from any outside threat. The scent has no physically protective qualities but does suppress the effects of threatening scrying, curses and any kind of remote magical attack.

82. IDOL FROM A GARDEN OF ROCKS

Painted stone, wickerwork and cloth

This is a simple male figure wearing a round hat. A happy man. Friend to animals and living things. His skin is dark from life above, he smiles. This is the brightest, most human thing you have seen underground. It almost glows, not with the light of the sun, but life. He is draped with colourful beads. Each bead hold a tiny image of an animal, all are from the sunlit lands, none from below. White horses, cats, dogs, birds, dashing cows, giraffes and many more.

83. RATS' EMBARGO

Kinetic sculpture in steel and tin

This hectic revolving monster is powered by sourceless clockwork to no useful end. The blind gigantic beast that makes its base turns slowly with audible clicks. On its back is a counter-rotating multi-levelled pagoda-temple. Human figures powered by wires race all over its walls and floors. Their actions are frantic and desperate yet seem to serve no purpose. At the top a conclave of fat rat-men with lolling tongues turn to each other and nod.

84. MAEG LOME

Oil on Canvas

A couple embrace in a city of blue stone lit only by flickering blue flames in cages of gold. Through a window we see buildings, square set and storm-cell blue. In the room, the walls are layered with white flowers on the blue tile. The silk of the sheets is white and the bed itself of many colours. The male figure sits on the bed-edge, legs half crossed. The woman stands, a sheet runs down her naked skin, she half-turns, back towards the man.

85. THE EMBASSY

Oil on skin

A large image painted across multiple skins, invisibly stitched

The scene is historically incoherent. Set within one of the catastrophe forests of the Ælf-Adal, lost long ago and known now only in song. But featuring Knotsmen, whose origin should lie after that event. The twisted black trees of the forest's force, destroyed when the Ælf-Adal were driven from the earth, shine, carved and whetted, under the conflicting glows of multiple meeting courts.

A young Ælf-Adal priestess sits, naked, yet covered by the swirling forms of tortured geisha golems in silk that halo her always, cursed never to be still and never quite to touch her flesh. Ultraviolet butterflies form knots of blue-black light around her. Opposing her, a Knotsman embassy, several of their Weeping Knights, a pair of Fathers and a Bailiff, horribly crooked and strewn with scrolls on a palanquin of naked Usurers. They carry lanterns of burning magnesium and infra-red.

Crowded in the background are nobles and chiefs of many cultures. Olm in their savage finery, Dvargir and cringing dErO. Neurovore are not absent. An Evil Eye chats to a Fungal Ambassodile and some slow drifting Archeans. The scene is thick with cunning, the eyelines and body language of each person present sketch out a story of deceit and secret advantage. But whose is not clear.

86. TUNNEL AND RIDER

Paper scraps glued together with meal and spit

This was painstakingly drawn with broken pencil bits and colours from ground-up food, rock dust and blood. An eye-cramping clench-work of black lines is worked around the central image of a frightened rider. The rider is being enclosed by some unknown force, he stares directly out of the image, wide-eyed and helpless. Hidden in the black lines is the Thing with Eyes on Its Back which seems to be moving towards the rider. When carefully measured, the abstract curls of the thing give clues to a secret entry to the city of Ganglia Moor.

87. PARENT AND CHILD

Hand-sized sculpture in unknown grey stone

This almost-formless shape is exactly what it needs to be and no more. The natural shape of the rock has been carefully smoothed and shaped so that it looks and feels unlike a piece of work, but more like something found. Two simple faces rise out of the stone like faces pressed against a sheet. The eyes, nose and mouth only have been scratched as single lines. And the hair of the child cradled in the parent's arms.

88. SCURRILOUS LIES

Sculpture in stained but unbaked clay

This hand-made caricature has silly fine cheekbones, a delicate pursed mouth, half closed eyes and a dandyish bow. The artist made it for himself, of himself. The plump roughness of the clay contrasts amusingly with the delicacy and pretension of the figure. It whispers a single scurrilous lie whenever you lean in close.



89. COPY OF A MUSEUM GUIDE

Scorched book in Unknown Tongue

The book is half-burnt. The language of this book has no relation to any living language, making it almost impossible for anyone but an expert to decipher. Magic may reveal its meaning in part, but not whole. The book is itself a copy of a copy of an older book, transcribed multiple times by writers with no knowledge of the tongue they wrote. It seems to be a guide to a lost collection of unassignable things. Things which have no place or relation to either each other or the world. Some look like technology.

90. A STAR MAP

Glass and magically crystallised lead.

This antiwindow is a weave of the bullet-point semi-luminescent slatwork resulting when lead is crystallised at room temperature. Slivers of glass are carefully placed to highlight the darkness of the negative space. The chiaroscuro shadowplay created by the lead and glass contains encoded information. A map, through song, to an unknown constellation of stars. The map uses darkness, not light at its waypoints. It is designed for extraterrestrial travel, where the starlight is so bright and continuous that the black nebulae that blot out the light are more visible than the lights themselves. These dust-clouds are the frozen weave, the shards of glass are time and tone to give the order and the depth.

91. WAR ON SHAFT FIVE

Bright synthetics on rough silk.

The paints, or acrylics, are amazingly bright. They glow under even the palest light. Overwhelming, almost bleeding over the edges of the image. It represents, in primitive style, a scene of war. A tribal people in (what we must assume are) astonishing war masks and headdresses are in conflict with a golem served by stunted warriors. The golem advances with raised metallic arms, the warriors respond with tubes that shoot abstracted fire. The sympathies of the image-maker seem clearly with the masked tribe.

92. MONKEY EGG

Stone egg, acid-etched calligraphy

This two metre high stone egg is rumoured to be a twin to that which birthed the monkey king. Its black surface is cold and the egg is either lifeless or asleep. Scholars propose either a miscarried twin, or some other form of divine life, taking its time, maybe destined for another age. An anti-monkey, or unmonkey. Maybe a snail. The egg has passed back and forth between the ownership of different cults multiple times. At some point it was acid-etched in a form of 'mad grass' calligraphy. The 'monkey prayer' looping round the surface of the egg is also an image of Monkey himself. Stained in violent spectra, Monkey is a near-abstract half-blur of living power surging up out of primal darkness. Everything is dying yet he lives.

93. IMAGE OF THE CITY OF DEATH

Silver-Nitrate image on paper.

Held under darkened glass, players (not PCs) will recognise this as a primitive photograph. It is a street scene of a vaulted township carved from white stone in an art-deco style. Every still thing in the image is picked out perfectly. Everything moving is blurred into a kind of river of shapes. The crowds in the street are a torrent of shadows, the water in the fountains is a wash of grey light. Yet, in the crowd, are still figures. It looks like someone has posed corpses there for a joke. The dead are dressed in robes of state and carry silver needles through their tongues and eyes. Yet some see, and one turns towards the maker's point of view, its hand is blurred as if it moves to point.

94. MAGMA CHAMBER DREAMING

Sand, held in relation by some unknown art, 3x4 metres

This living mandala of crow-wing black sand never stops moving. Dominated by four strong lateral lines which shift around each other, sometimes waving, sometimes straight, the space between them broken into changing shapes that shift and rearrange like bacteria in a dish. A dreaming of the magmatic flows within a substratal chamber deep beneath the earth, the action of the image is linked to the eventual eruptions of a specific mountain chain. The link proceeds both ways; the magma changes the mandala, the mandala changes the magma flow. One cannot change without the other. Anyone with the deep skills required, and the unknowable black sand, could try to control the eruption of the volcanoes that make up the range. The consequences of feedback are unknown.

95. PRIMUM MOBILE*Carving on bone*

This carving seems to show a royal or wealthy family eating a formal meal. Around them a massacre is taking place. Uniformed soldiers are destroying a less well-equipped force. This seems to happen on another level of reality to the main image. Nothing in the massacre affects the eating family to the smallest degree. Murder and fighting flow around them as they look on indifferently. A man is drowned in the soup. Blood splatters the walls. Nothing touches them.

98. SKELETON CELLO*Not bone, but burnt and rotted wood - and not truly a cello*

The remains of this angular instrument are haunted by the ghost of the woman who played it while it burnt. No-one knows her name or why she played. For the ghost to be released, all that must be done is for the rest of the cello to burn. The music she creates is so beautiful that even the brave have been unwilling to set her free. Only the cello's part of the concerto can be clearly heard, other unknown instruments exist only on perception's edge. Not just the music, but the scale and arrangement is alien and totally unknown. It may come from the Fractured Worlds, planets trapped inside a baffling knot of space and counter-turned time whose inhabitants, though human, perceive our reality as a maddening whirl and cannot even breathe our air. If so, this is the only sign of those unearthly cultures that has ever been found.

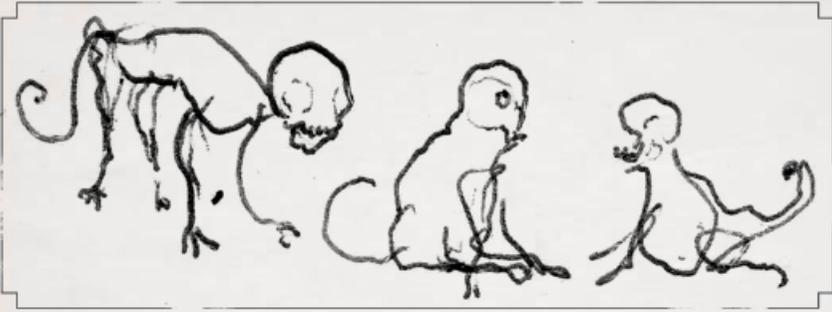
96. FAT LIGHTS, NO HUNGER*Book of Poetry, handwritten*

This long form poem follows a deer through an Autumn forest at night. Every form of life the deer encounters receives its own stanza, from plants to animals. Remarks on the wind, the darkness and the stars make a kind of chorus. The unusual element is that all of this is seen from the perspective of a visitor from the Veins. The sights and smells are alien and strange to the poet. Nevertheless they are given in a state of rapture. The language is that of thinking beasts and the ink is blood.

97. THE BOOK OF INSECT HOURS*Illustrated, bound in layered shells, smooth to the touch*

This book has daily prayers for household use on every page. Prayers to the Titan of Swarms for the gaze of his Faceted Eye. Images show a dweller of the deeps going about their daily tasks. Spearing blind fish above the black falls. Hanging red lamps to ward off Eigengraü in the dark. Unlocking the tongue of a mage-thrall. Pausing in randomised semi-cyclic silence to listen for a subterranean attack. Each task has its appointed time and a prayer for aid.





99. BRIDGE OF BIRDS

Fine ceramic vase

This vase is emblazoned with a beautiful flock of coloured birds of every kind forming a bridge across a sunset sky. Occasionally, a bird will hop out of the vase, stand on its lip, look around, then disappear back inside. When you look inside, the jar is full of birds, millions of them, calmly waiting.

Once, two lovers were separated by death. They begged death to let them meet again, but were unheard. The birds of the air were so sorry for the lovers that they offered to make themselves a bridge across the sky for the lovers to walk upon. Death saw this and grew angry. He could not harm the birds, as flying between heaven and earth, they were beyond his purview. So he took all the birds in the sky and forced them into his pot. The lovers fell. The August Personage in Jade, seeing this, commanded Death to open his jar, release the birds into the sky and allow the lovers to meet once more. But when Death looked for his jar, it was gone, disappeared into the earth. So the August Personage in Jade stripped death of his estate and commanded him to dwell in darkness and silence till the bridge of birds was made once more. Death searches still.

100. AXEL WHITECLAY MULQUEEN

Naked human male in cage

This man has pierced his flesh with gold and silver tines from ornamental forks and combs for noble hair. He has carefully tattooed all his accessible skin with the story of his confinement. Mulqueen is a critic, a cannibal and a criminal (the last two are not always the same underground). Mulqueen has really precise and insightful views on art. He can value almost anything by looking at it (though he regards people who ask for values with disdain).

He can spot provenance, deduce fakes and most importantly, has a firm grasp on aesthetic worth (Mulqueen also spots the magical qualities of items, but only as it relates to their beauty or impression, not mechanical effects). Mulqueen wants to escape; the Civilopede will not like this. He talks sometimes of 'Blamphin' and 'Bon Clerk', apparently two foes or much-resented friends.

SPELEO SPELLS

1. BARNACLE BEAST CHEMISE

Magic-User Level 2

DURATION: One use

RANGE: Touch

Over the course of an hour the caster can enchant a stone-grey cloak. At any time the wearer of this cloak may wrap it over their head into a cone and thereby take on the powers of a large Barnacle Beast for as long as they wish.

The Barnacle Beast is an predatory stealth-mollusc. It has the armour of plate, can cling to walls and ceilings as easily as the floor and can move at maximum speed of approximately one foot per hour. Its customary method of predation is to hang from a ceiling and drop onto the heads of unsuspecting passers-by. It can do almost nothing else.

Intelligent and experienced travellers in the Veins will usually check for Barnacle Beasts and avoid them.

2. BLOOD INTO ROPE

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1 turn/level

RANGE: 0

The caster can drain their own blood and weave it into a red rope. The rope is non-animate but will un-knot on command. It counts as magical, which means it could be used to, for instance, strangle a Ghost. Rope is 30' long per hit point sacrificed.

3. BRAIN SLAVE

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: Permanent

RANGE: Touch

This spell is commonly used by Knotsmen, though others do know it. It imbues a disembodied brain with horrible powers of flight. The brain retains the intelligence, knowledge and loyalties it had when fully embodied. This spell is usually cast on slaves who have been tortured into a mad kind of loyalty beforehand and who are then used as trackers and scouts.

The brain flies at the speed of a bird and cannot be protected or encased. It has 1hp. Eyes and sensory organs are usually left for it to find its way around. Eyelids are preserved and the brain may learn to communicate through a series of blinks.

The brains have a tendency towards madness, though it's hard to tell.

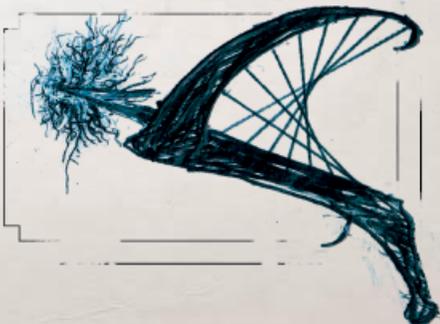
4. CALCITE GAP

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1 turn/level

RANGE: Touch

The subject can move through calcite formations as if they were thick foliage. The stalactites, stalagmites, flowstone and helictites will simply shift smoothly out of the way without breaking. If the subject is still amidst the flowing stone when the spell gives out, they will be trapped.



4. CONE OF MOULD

Magic-User Level 5

DURATION: IMMEDIATE

RANGE: 0

Causes a cone-shaped area originating at the caster's hand and extending outwards in a cone 6' long per level of the caster. This area is full of spores. These spores may have effect equivalent to one of the following Funginid spores: Unwelcome Guest, Red Recliner, Black Spots, Liquid Bell or Cold Shoulder (see p.59).

5. CRYOBRITE BRIDGE

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: Permanent

RANGE: 0

The caster can summon up a bridge of yellow, cakey, brittle untrustworthy stone. The bridge is 10' long for every level of the caster. Its width is equal in feet to 1/3 of the caster's Intelligence score in feet. The rock is solid and will support weight, but is about as hard to chip away as polystyrene. Use of this spell in a volume under the control of a particular race will be taken as an affront and possible prelude to attack. If they wanted a bridge there they would have built one.

6. DREAM VENOM

Magic-User Level 2

DURATION: Permanent

RANGE: 0

An invention of the Ælf-Adal. The caster may distil a poison that infects the dream-state of the victim. This can be applied to any blade or placed in food or drink. The victim gets a save versus Poison as usual. It has no physical effect, but whenever the caster dreams their body in the dream will be horribly diseased. The disease begins as a mild flu-like virus and progresses slowly to the level of horrific leprosy. It is rumoured that certain rare materials can cure the poison.

7. DRIBBLEGANGER

Magic-User Level 5

DURATION: Permanent

RANGE: 0

With a fragment of original DNA and the correct biomass, the caster can create a duplicate of any humanoid creature. The duplicate will have all the innate powers and physical capabilities of the original. The duplicate will regard the caster as a parent. Their Intelligence will be one sixth of the original's (minimum of 1). If magical powers or special skills required Intelligence to use, they can no longer be accessed. The clone has fractured memories of the original, but usually does not understand them.

A roughly human-sized being has about half a million calories of biomass. Ten calories underground costs about one silver piece or one Lume. So to gather enough biomass to build a person takes about 50,000sp or Lumes. The biomass must come from a species analogous to the intended creation. To build a dragon, for instance, you will need dragon mince, or at least a lot of lizards, which can raise the price considerably.

8. GHOUL PIPES

Magic-User Level 3

DURATION: Depends

RANGE: 30'

By taking the thigh bones of a humanoid that starved to death and hollowing them out, the caster can create a pair of pipes. Use of this spell transforms them into Ghoul Pipes. The pipes will only work for that caster. Anyone listening to music from those pipes will not be disgusted or surprised by any meal they are invited to eat. Even the rotting flesh of their own family will pass without remark. They are no more or less likely to eat than they would a normal meal, but the nature of the food will have no effect on their decision.

9. HEAT GHOST

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1 turn/level

RANGE: 5'/level

Creates a human-shaped and sized figure under the control of the caster, visible only in the infrared spectrum. To a watcher using only infravision this will appear to be a real person. The figure cannot speak or affect the physical world but any tracks they leave will persist in exactly the same way as those of a warm-blooded person. If this spell is memorised it may be cast alongside any illusion spell to extend the illusory effect into the infrared spectrum.

10. HOLLOW HEAD

Magic-User Level 3

DURATION: 1 turn/level

RANGE: Touch

This spell moves the target's brain into a side dimension, and leaves a crack all the way around their skull. Their head can be opened and the brain-shaped space inside can be used to store handy things. The crack is undetectable and cannot be opened by anyone other than the caster. The subject is immune to mind-affecting magic as their brain is no longer there. Loose objects may rattle around. The brain returns to its position at the end of the period; if anything is occupying the same space the subject will die instantly. Unwilling subjects get a save against this spell.

11. IRON EYE

Magic-User Level 3

DURATION: 1 turn/level

RANGE: 0

The caster may temporarily remove one eye and replace it with an iron eye, which must be specially made for them. The iron eye can see magnetic waves. It can be blinded by worked metal held close to it. Otherwise the user can see their way through dark spaces or across empty oceans (iron-bearing stone may be rather bright). Weapons and metal arrowtips will show up like flares in the dark, as will any other metal. The eye cannot see light in any circumstances. (If the caster does not replace their original eye at the end of the spell, the Iron Eye becomes permanent.)

12. LENS WEAPON

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: Continual

RANGE: Sight

The caster may destroy a particular weapon and trap its image in a lens. The weapon must be destroyed beyond any possible use or repair. If the caster holds the lens carefully to their eye and looks at someone, the person being focused on can make use of the weapon in the lens as if it simply appeared in their hands. This cannot be prevented or dispelled. If the caster blinks, looks away, drops the lens, loses line-of-sight or loses focus, the weapon blinks out of existence. One lens, one weapon. Only the caster may focus the weapon, and never on themselves.



13. MATCHSTICK MEN

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 30 seconds to a minute

RANGE: 0

This spell transforms burning splinters of wood into tiny golems under the caster's control. Expect 1d30 from a double handful of kindling. Once the fragments are alight, they crack apart into tiny humanoid bodies, wreathed in flame, about an inch to two inches in height. They will scamper around as long as they live and do whatever the caster commands. They last 30 seconds; after that point, one matchstick man dies each second. None lives longer than a minute. They leave tiny ash corpses where they fell.

In terms of potency, for every ten matchstick men (rounding up), they count as a 1 Hit Die creature.

14. MONKEY GUTS

Magic-User Level 3

DURATION: Special

RANGE: 0

The caster can spill anthropoid guts from a living victim; they will fall into the shape of the local arrangement of passages. Secret routes will be shown. Warded or hidden passages will be shown. When the victim expires or the guts are disturbed on the floor the map disappears. Monkey guts work, ape

guts and human guts all work, but not those of any creature unrelated to man.

15. OPTIC BEAST

Magic-User Level 3

DURATION: 1 round/level

RANGE: 30'

This spell summons the Optic Beast. It is trapped within the radius of one particular man-made light-giving flame. Usually a lantern, candle or torch. If the light goes out, it dies. It has the same Hit Dice as the caster, but rolls the d8 rather than the d4. The Optic Beast can take the form of any creature the caster has directly seen and has the physical attacks, movement and Armour of that creature. It does not have magical or special attacks. It can affect only creatures that can see it. Blind creatures, or sighted creatures with their eyes closed, are immune to it. It is always gold, like a burning sun.

17. POCKET ROPES

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1 day/level

RANGE: 0

Simply shrinks a number of ropes equal to the caster level to the size and weight of string. They can be kept easily in the pocket, or wrapped around the wrist. Caster can end the spell at any time.

18. SKULL SAINT

Magic-User Level 2

DURATION: Permanent

RANGE: Touch

This spell can only be learnt directly from the *Olm*; although it is low level they consider it sacred and will use it only on the most honoured dead. The flesh of a skull must be carefully flensed and eaten by the caster. Once done the skull can float around freely and communicate in a sepulchral voice. It has the memory, intelligence and loyalties of the fallen individual, so if it hated you before, it still does now. The skulls have 1 Hit Die, a 1d4 bite and a tendency towards irony. Having died once they do not fear death again and having gone through resurrection, of a kind, they cannot be resurrected by any means again.

19. SILENT SPEECH

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1 turn/level

RANGE: 0

This spell lets the user use and understand the Silent Speech of the Veins. They may comprehend the trade speech and any of the racial languages.

20. SKELLY GRAB

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1d6 days

RANGE: Touch

The caster knows how long this spell will last on casting. A severed hand must be skeletonised until no flesh is left. The hand can then be attached to the end of a rope, where it will act as a living grapple. The hand can grab, climb and run around on the end of its rope with the same skill and the same Strength as its original owner. The hand counts as a retainer and has a morale of 7.

21. SPEAK WITH AIR

Magic-User Level 4

DURATION: 1 round/level

RANGE: 0

Air speaks to you of what it contains. The fullness of the message depends on the volume questioned; the more immediate and limited the volume then the more personal and vivid the reply.

Speak With Air is almost useless in the outer world, as the air moves constantly and has no individual consciousness; any attempt to speak with it is like speaking with the whole world.

In a dungeon, the air is stagnant. Still, unmoving air is cognitively dead - or, from its perspective, undead. It moans, sighs, notices and reports little.

In the vast interconnected caverns beneath the earth, the air is concentrated, shaped into personality and mindfulness, yet also moves, flows and lives. In these circumstances, or those like them, the air can speak.

Air does not understand mass, weight, colour or light. It senses form, shape, texture and movement. It has a keen sense of its own composition. It knows if it has smoke in it for instance, and it knows its own temperature. It senses the respiration of lungs as keen points of annihilation and transformation moving through it. Like fires but lesser, rhythmic and mild.

Air can generally sense those human-shaped things which move and do not breathe, which can be useful in hunting undead.

Air thinks and forgets very quickly, so information moving through, for instance, a series of interconnected caves is very

SPEAK WITH AIR

THE VOLUME	WHAT IS IT LIKE?	WHAT CAN IT COMMUNICATE?
House Room	Speaking directly with another person.	Everything a person could say or know. Like speaking to a blind sensuous sculptor who exists only in one place.
Every room in a house	A group of people shouting from room to room.	Numbers, movements, accurate descriptively but no penetration into cause.
Every room in an office building	Addressing a crowded room full of people.	As above but with much more disagreement, vagueness and alternate views.
Volume of a stadium	Being before a gigantic crowd.	Only massive events and basic one-word emotions.
Volume of a City	Shouting on the streets of a city.	Possibly a very general mood and very major events. For instance, something like 9/11 would be reported.

quickly degraded the further it travels from its source. Air cannot be bargained with as it will not recall the deal. Every minded self of air is immediate and transient, regarding itself as eternal, yet lodged firmly in the now.

22. SPELEOGROWTH

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: Permanent
RANGE: 120'

This spell must be cast in a cave where natural speleothems are already present in some way. This usually means a 'wet' limestone cave, though other types of cave do sometimes exhibit similar properties. It causes the creation of speleothems to go into overdrive. Stalactites and stalagmites close in like teeth in a closing jaw, growing at 3' per second and ultimately blocking that section of the cave. Affects five square

feet of cave per level of the caster and the shape of the affected area may be whatever they wish.

Those in the area may make an appropriate save to leap out of harm. Should they fail they take 1d6 damage and become trapped between the closing growths. The growths are calcite and can be smashed through at the rate of about one turn per square foot.

23. STONE STEPS

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1 round/level
RANGE: 10'/level

Turns any stone slope, from 10 to 70 degrees incline, into a set of 6' wide, neat, even stone steps. The length of the stairway increases with the level of the Magic-User. When the spell ends, or the caster wills it, the stairs disappear back into the rock. Often used as a trap spell.

24. SUMMON MIRTH ELEMENTAL

Magic-User Level 6

DURATION: 1 turn/level

RANGE: 20'

The most irritating elementals of all, Will be attacked by any other elemental present. Will probably be attacked by anyone else as well. Mirth Elementals instantly enrage anyone they have not charmed. The Elemental will obey the caster so long as the orders are funny. If the caster gives an order which the Elemental regards as non-humorous then the Elemental will ignore it and create anarchy in whatever way pleases it most.

MIRTH ELEMENTAL

- **ARMOUR:** As Plate
- **HIT DICE:** 40
- **HIT POINTS:** 8
- **MOVE:** Flight
- **DAMAGE:** 1d3/1d3
- **IMMUNE:** to all psychological effects.
- **SPELLS:** At will; *Charm, Hold Portal, Audible Glamer, Invisibility, Magic Mouth, Mirror Image, Phantasmal Force, Confusion, Hallucinatory Terrain, Creation Major, Mind Switch, Animated Artwork, Power Word Stun, Reverse Gravity, Shape Change, Time Stop.*



25. TERROR TUBES

Magic-User Level 3

DURATION: Instant

RANGE: Touch

If this spell is memorised it can be cast instantly as a free action, even in the enemies' turn. The caster's mouth opens to enormous size; they swallow and absorb all the fear in the immediate location. The fear swallowed can be that of a magical effect or simply a loss of morale.

The fear is not digested and remains in the caster's stomach until they vomit, in which case the swallowed fear takes effect exactly as it would have at the point when it was consumed, this time emanating from the vomit in question.

This spell is forcibly cast on slaves by some cultures who then surgically remove the stomach and use it as a weapon.

26. UN-SUSPECTABLE SERVANT

Magic-User Level 2

DURATION: 6 turns + 1 turn/level

RANGE: 0

This spell creates a mindless but opalescent, featureless and entirely visible and man-shaped being that performs simple tasks at the caster's command. It can run and fetch things, open unstuck doors and hold chairs, as well as clean and mend. It can lift 20 pounds or drag 40 pounds. It cannot cause direct harm in any way. It has one hit point and an armour of 10. It cannot be suspected of any wrongdoing, ever. It could carry body parts through a nunnery, it could pour poison into the king's drink in front of him, it could dig a pit trap outside the gates of a school. The acts can be questioned if they are unusual, but not suspected.

27. VAMPIRE COUNSEL

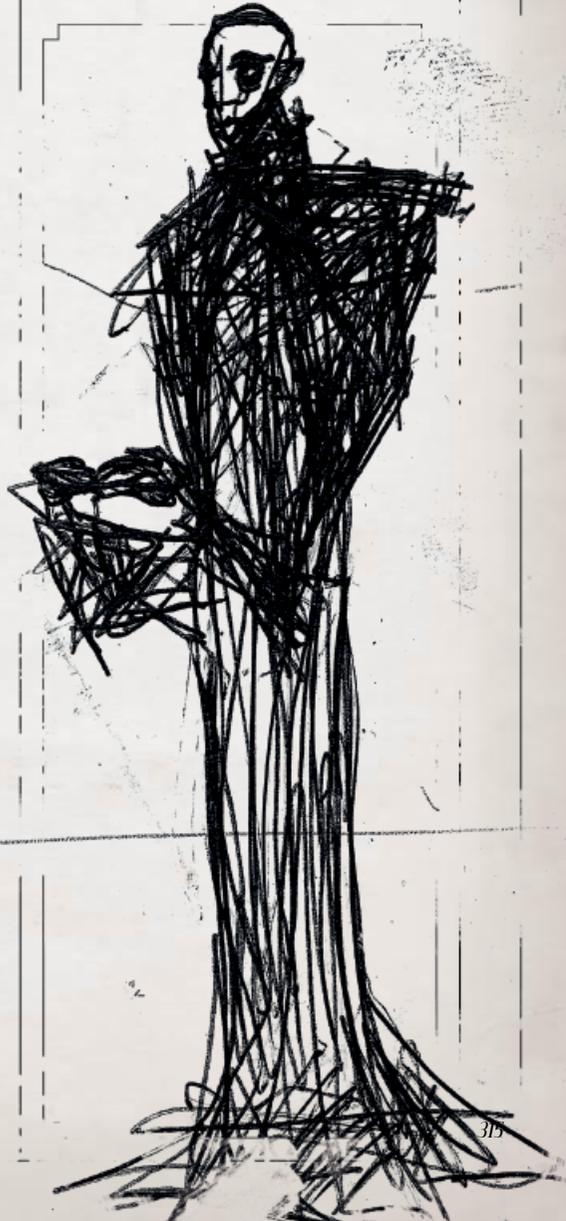
Magic-User Level 2

DURATION: See below

RANGE: 0

This spell requires two close friends to spill each other's blood. Summons a member of the Vampire Court to deliver legal advice for the caster. The Vampire summoned will be human 70% of the time and 30% will be another humanoid but highly intelligent race. The Vampire is a fully trained and highly expert lawyer in every known legal system. The Vampire will serve in a legal capacity only and will do nothing illegal. Though there are, of course, grey areas. They will never engage in combat of any kind, except verbal combat. They will serve as long as they are fed one pint of blood a day and there is legal work to do. Other creatures will react exactly as if a Vampire had suddenly appeared in their

midst. However, if they examine their records, they will find the Vampire is a registered member of the bar in that polity and is qualified to represent the caster and associates in court. People have been arrested for casting Vampire Counsel, but never convicted.



28. WAIT

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1d4 turns per level

RANGE: 30' + 10' per level

This spell was developed by the Dvargir as an alternative to *Sleep* that would affect creatures otherwise immune to that spell. Like *Sleep* it affects 2d8 creatures of up to 2 Hit Dice each. If the creatures are not in combat or direct danger, they will simply wait where they are for the duration of the spell. They are not dazed in any way and can still respond to threats. They just won't go anywhere. If interrupted or compelled by an authority figure they get a second save.

29. WATERFALL CAUL

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1 day/level

RANGE: 0

If in the presence of a waterfall, the Magic-User may steal a fragment of its power. A cloak-shaped gap appears in the waterfall. This part of the waterfall now falls around the caster's shoulders like a cloak. The water appears from nowhere, flows the length of the caster's body and disappears. Anything thrown or pushed into the water flowing around the caster's body will appear in the waterfall the cloak was taken from. To the caster, the falling water may be manipulated as a cloak and does not chill their body. To anyone else it is surging white water with the same temperature and force as the original falls. Provides equivalent to plate protection anywhere it covers the body. Protects against backstab. Quite loud. Tends to mist up the place. The cloak may only be taken from an actual waterfall, it cannot be created whole.

30. WORTHLESS CORPSE

Magic-User Level 1

DURATION: 1 turn/level

RANGE: Touch

Appearing to be dead is not too useful underground. Corpses are resources. This spell makes the body of the target appear not simply dead, but utterly worthless, not worth investigating, without even marrow to crack open and eat.

All observers, including allies, will believe the body of the target to be dead, even if they saw them casting the spell. Should the 'corpse' get up and walk it will provoke horror and uncomprehending disgust. All present, including allies, must save versus Magic or compulsively attack the target until the target is destroyed.

It cannot be ended at will by the caster and affects all observers, even close friends, until the spell ends naturally.





"The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, is astonishment,



*and astonishment is that state of the soul
in which all its motions are suspended,
with some degree of horror."*

○

MADNESS & CHANGE

○

FOOD IN THE VEINS

THREE SOURCES OF FOOD EXIST: above, below and within. Nutrients can come from the sunlit lands above, washed down in rivers, lost, searching or stolen from the surface. (This includes the party. If they die, they will almost inevitably be eaten by something eventually. Nothing is lost.)

In the lightless seas, vents gasp out heat and strange chemistry to feed the ecology of those abyssal deeps. From strange planes or portals, sometimes edible things come through.

In between, strange fungi and odd organisms slowly transmute stone, water, heat and air to edible food.

It is never enough. Everything is hungry all the time. In the cities the poor are hungry and the rich, insanely wealthy as they are in gold, occultum and silk, are also hungry.

Cities in the Veins are made possible by magic, cannibalism, relentless recycling and careful tending of every available resource.

Underground cities occupy volumes, not flat two dimensional planes. Every area of the Veins may be a twentieth as productive as a surface desert, but the controlled volume extends 360 degrees around each city in three dimensions, giving a vastly increased surface area of workable land.

Generative magic can produce food from pure will, faith and intellect. These qualities condense in cities, making civilisation partially self-sustaining. They also make the social structures of these cities top-heavy. A functioning Cleric or Magic-User is not simply a drain on resources, they can be a source of food and light. Therefore they need take even less notice of the lower

orders. On the surface world a noble with no peasants to command is no noble at all, since they draw all they are from the surplus created by the work of the poor. In the Veins, the situation is close to being reversed; a peasant with no noble to protect them is simply fuel.

The slave labour force of a city in the Veins can be directly transformed into agricultural produce, either to feed the free population or to trade. They can even transport themselves to the point of consumption or sale.

The low caste population can likewise be transformed into a food source for the upper caste and military in a state of emergency. They will not be informed of this ahead of time, or at all. Histories and records are commonly rewritten by the surviving noble caste to hide and disguise these events.

EATING

Rather than obsessively tracking food, adding another element of accountancy to the game, it is assumed that the party is constantly foraging and resupplying. They are on the border of starvation at almost all times. The counter-effects of starvation versus drive and determination are considered to even themselves out in most cases.

Instead of measuring and tracking food carried, all that matters is what actions PCs have taken to get food.

PCs begin as Hungry. In this stage the PCs get bonuses for performing certain actions to acquire food. So long as they perform at

least one action every three days, they stay hungry. This is good.

If the team fails to perform regular actions they enter the Starving stage. In this stage the PCs have to eat. If they have an opportunity to eat and do not then they suffer penalties.

If the team incurs too many negative effects they enter the third stage. They are now Dying. Terminal starvation has set in.

An edible opponent is one whose biochemistry matches yours. So, Dvargir, ToRaptoise or Dragon but not Cambriman, Silichominid or Archean.

The food creation abilities of a Cleric or Magic-User, or careful explicit food-and-encumbrance keeping can keep a party from leaving the 'Hungry' stage if they wish it to, so long as a meaningful amount of food is generated or carried each day.

As a rough guide to how much food and meat costs underground, 10 calories are valued at about 1 silver piece and 1 Lume. A real caver uses about 6000 calories a day, though the rules for Veins are more forgiving than those in real life.

The human body considered as a whole has about 500,000 calories, though only some of this is easily accessible by feeding on it.

These values are given as a guideline only. What matters is not the exact amount of food recovered but what they are willing to do for it. If PCs are willing to steal from starving refugees, to attack an apparently peaceful group and consume them, to eat each other, or to eat their henchmen, then it doesn't matter exactly how many calories they got out of it. It is the will to live that matters.

The cash values only exist to give a general idea if they want to do something dull like pay for food.



STAGE ONE : HUNGRY

The party must do at least one of these things every three days. If they do not, they begin to starve. So you don't need to count how much food they have, just remember how long it has been since they did one of these things. It's good to eat.

PAYING FOR FOOD. The party must spend at least 300sp per party member. PCs can also try to steal this amount of food.

EATING THE FLESH OF AN EDIBLE OPPONENT, PC OR HENCHMAN. This gains PCs experience equal to the hit points of the creature or colleague consumed.

At this stage the party can ignore the effects of one day if they spend the whole 24 hours resting, conserving energy and doing nothing.

So if they have spent 3 days exploring, and gained no bonuses, they can simply sit down to wait. If someone turns up, they can buy food, steal food or just kill and eat them to avoid moving to Stage Two.

STAGE TWO : STARVING

At this stage the party is desperate. They must do one of the following within the next three days.

PAYING FOR FOOD. You must buy at least 600sp worth of food per party member. PCs can also try to steal this amount of food.

EATING AN EDIBLE OPPONENT, PC OR HENCHMAN.

If the party performs one of these actions within three days, they go back to Stage One. They are simply Hungry. All lost levels are returned.

Every time the opportunity to perform one of the above actions occurs - say a henchman falls and breaks their leg and the party do not finish them off and eat them, or the possibility of stealing food exists and they do not attempt it - all PCs suffer level drain.

The party must act; if they spend 24 hours resting, conserving energy and doing nothing then all PCs suffer level drain.

After three days at Stage Two, PCs move to Stage Three. They are now Dying.

When a level is lost, the PC moves to the equivalent position in the new level that they occupied in their original level. So if a PC is halfway through Level Eight and become Starving, then refuses to even try robbing some pilgrims for food and can't or won't pay for food, they are moved to the halfway point in Level Seven.

STAGE THREE: DYING

PCs must eat or die.

Every member of the party loses one level for every 24 hours they spend in this stage, regardless of what they do.

PAYING FOR FOOD. PCs must spend at least 1000sp per party member. This will put them back at Stage One. PCs can also try to steal this amount of food.

CONSUMING AN EDIBLE OPPONENT, PC OR HENCHMAN entirely will also send them back to Stage One.

If a party member's level hits Zero, they die.

RECORDING FOOD

This system exists to prevent the turgid monotonous grind of recording rations. You may inform players of this if you wish. You can also inform them that what they are doing is effectively impossible and that no real group, even using modern technology, could carry enough food to sustain continual travel through an underground environment for very long. That's why deep caving expeditions need truckfuls of logistical support in order to put a handful of people a few miles underground for a very short time. You could tell them that it's way more interesting just eating people.

Nevertheless, PCs will probably try to be dull and try to build up a store of food to keep themselves in Stage One.

A day's worth of rations for one person costs 100sp and takes up one full segment of their encumbrance chart. This is a day's worth for a fit and well-fed person who is not in a state of starvation, just enough to keep them going.

A PC with at least a day's worth of rations in their pack counts as Stage One: Hungry; they will not enter Stage Two: Starving until they have used all the rations in their pack.

When the rations run out, start counting days.

As noted in the rules above, as you begin to starve, the amount needed to get you back on your feet goes up.



THE EFFECTS

THE EFFECTS CHART CAN BE rolled on in cases of Rapture, but these kinds of shifts and mutations are the most likely adaptations of the body to the environment of the Veins. This chart can also be used to replace mutational effects.

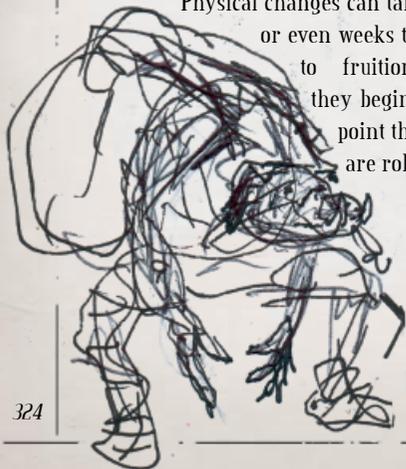
If you want more reasons to use this change table, the list below provides some "triggers" for a roll. Only use a trigger once, ever. If the cause of the trigger has no clear target character, assign it randomly.

If you are playing the kind of game where the characters are fairly disposable, don't allow a save.

If you are playing a game where people want less terrible stuff to happen to their higher level characters, allow a saving throw.

Or if you want to make it more the players fault: They get a table roll if they accept the 100xp/level you are offering for this lesson from the Veins. Rejecting it means the character is holding fast to their old flimsy notions of existence.

Physical changes can take days or even weeks to come to fruition, but they begin at the point that they are rolled for.



TRIGGERS

- First taste of the cannibal feast.
- Try and talk another character into choosing Rapture.
- Travel for more than an hour in the dark with nothing to light or guide you.
- Party rolls on "find a safe space".
- Travel at least 3 continuous blank hexes in the unmarked.
- Suffer major physical trauma from an source unknown to the character.
- One month passes without the sun.
- Abandon the weight of carried wealth for food, light or ease of movement.
- Learn the language of something here.
- Abandoned or separated for some length from the rest of the party.
- A long fall in the dark.
- Reduced to zero hit points.
- A "safe" climb results in injury.
- Suffer hypothermia.
- You no longer own anything from the surface.
- Swallowed whole.
- Forced to choose between using something as light or using it as food.
- The roll is over your highest stat on the Climb Fail Result table.
- You learn a speleo spell.



THE EFFECTS CHART

1D100 THE EFFECTS

1-5	Paranoia. You know that a fellow PC is hiding something from you. Experience points freeze until you force them to reveal it.
6-10	Rage. You can no longer control your resentment and suspicion. Experience points freeze till you physically and directly harm a teammate. Until you commit this action the Referee may force it upon you on the failure of any roll.
11-13	Weight obsession. You must find a way to reduce your load. Throw something away or drastically alter its form to reduce its weight.
14-16	You now lie half-awake and hallucinate instead of dreaming. Name your most common vision. If rolled twice you can create this vision in darkness, casting it as an illusion spell by having a brief conversation with the target. If thrice, the vision will appear in your 'waking' hours and call you. If four times, you must obey.
17-18	If you wake up in darkness, you remember exactly where you went to sleep, the precise dimensions of the enclosing space, and the exact location of every nearby object. You will not need to fumble for your sword or search to locate an exit you have seen.
19-20	Any sense of claustrophobia is gone. You do not fear any enclosed space, no matter how long you are there - in fact you prefer it. Your memory of the sun is gone. You may not refer to it or describe it.
21	You can identify blood by taste. The species and, if you have tasted it before, the individual. Roll twice and you must identify any blood by taste.
22	Your pupils are permanently dilated to their maximum extent. Add 30' to the distance you can see. You are easily blinded.
23-25	Each time you roll this, go down to the next lightest skin pigmentation. The last three are Caucasian, Albino, Translucent.
26	Your immune system has collapsed. You have no save versus Disease. You must trade with the Funginids for a symbiotic fungal replacement.
27-28	Lose the hair from your body, or head.
29-30	Hyper-sensitive skin. You no longer like to wear clothes. With naked skin you can sense the movement of air around you, 50% naked you can sense the size of cave around you, 90%, the size of the local system, 100% and you can sense local movement, the rough size and speed of things moving in the cave.
31-32	Subconscious sonar. You compulsively click your tongue to discover the distance of nearby surfaces. You can scan for solid objects within 50'. It is hard for you to stop doing this.
33-34	You hunger for silence. The rhythm of your conversations slows imperceptibly. You breathe out single words. Shouting becomes intolerable, even in times of danger. You must pass a Wisdom test to raise your voice.
35-36	Osteocytes. You begin to develop frills and ridges of bone upon your skull. These extend through the skin. They may be horns, ridges, spikes or something else. The more you roll this result the more elaborate they become.
37-38	Your finger bones lengthen and crook permanently. This provides a tireless hold while climbing, so you can hang on for as long as you need to. You have difficulty doing fine work.
39-41	Your time sense erodes without any realisation; your wake-sleep cycle extends from 24 hours to 48 if rolled twice, then to 72. You do not notice this.
42-43	Respiration and digestion slow when still. If doing nothing you can go 30 seconds between breaths, You barely need food if all you do is wait.
44-45	Your breathing becomes silent. If you were next to someone, they would feel your breath on their face before hearing it.
46-47	You no-longer trust paper as it decays too fast. You start to tattoo your knowledge and maps onto your skin. Your self-developed code is shorter than writing and means your flayed skin would be useless as a map for others. A clever trick, you think. You start with your forearms and thighs then spiral out.
48-49	You can taste lies on someone's breath as they speak. You must be within kissing distance.
50-51	You compulsively sharpen your teeth.
52-53	There is a darkness in your belly. When you scream, deliberately or not, a minor <i>Darkness</i> spell is cast from your mouth for the duration of the scream.
54-55	You must name any flame that you light. You must speak to them as if they were people. They take up a retainer spot. They have a morale. They may keep watch for you. They may also betray you.
56-57	Scent identity is now more real to you than visual identity. If separated from your friends, you will not fully recognise them till you smell them all over.

1D100 THE EFFECTS

58-59	You no longer recognise your own racial nature. You regard yourself as "other". You gain no bonuses when communicating with your own race.
60-63	You must make a Wisdom test to avoid compulsive consumption of your fallen foes if they are of animal intelligence; if rolled twice, named beings; if thrice, even your own species.
64	Your eyelids become translucent; you are hard to surprise if sleeping but easy to blind.
65-67	Your limbs and torso grow subtly longer yet retain the same mass. At first gangly (10%); if rolled twice, freakish (20%); if thrice, trollish (30%) and you go up a size category.
68	Your vision spectrum drops into a deeper shade of red. You gain thermal vision but blue is now simply black to you. If you had thermal vision you can now see vague x-ray glows.
69	Mask-hunger. You become obsessed with protecting your image. Make a mask and wear it continually.
70	When you are not exerting yourself your body temperature drops to the ambient temperature of the environment. You cannot die from hypothermia. Neither can you warm others who are suffering. You may seem dead when you sleep.
71	Shadows are portals from which you can be watched. You cannot sleep or relax in shadow. You need complete darkness. You can often spot illusions by watching their shadows.
72	In absolute silence, just on the edge of hearing, you can hear the darkness speaking with itself. You do not like this. Learning its language is harder than any human tongue. Its discussions may be beyond you.
73	Reflections are enemy selves. You will avoid them if you can and never discuss important business in front of them.
74	Rapid protein conversion. You can gorge on meat to add 1 Strength per Hit Die consumed. So all of a 1 Hit Die creature, half a 2 Hit Dice creature, one tenth of a 10 Hit Dice creature, etc. The bonus lasts till sleep.
75	Always hungry. -1 Charisma unless just eaten. Can smell food on people if it is hidden.
76-78	Your nails thicken and extend, becoming 1d3 weapons. If rolled twice, 1d4 weapons. If thrice, 1d6 weapons and are now claws - you will have difficulty with fine work.
79	You must name any ropes you own and speak to them as if they were people. They take up a retainer spot. They have a morale. You can command them to unknit, they may inform you if they are damaged or not well secured, they may also betray you.
80	You can and must use Speak with Air as a daily power.
81	Bone collector. Every enemy you kill has one bone waiting for you, take it and wrap it carefully.
82	Riddlemaster. You cannot refuse a riddle challenge. In appropriate circumstances you may riddle and gain bonuses to social situations.
83	Psychic Scent. You can and must smell psionic influence. The smell is as slight as a cup of coffee but you will sense it if you get close enough.
84	Magic Sense. Tip your head back, spread arms, close eyes, roll jaw and moan to detect magic. You will feel it in your teeth if it is within 50'.
85	You gain a sense for the silent speech. If you see dwellers using it you can get a good feel for the general tone and can spot simple words.
86	Secrets. You hoard them. Must pass Wisdom test to willingly communicate any secret thing. For instance, the location of a secret door you just found, a letter you picked up, the last words of a foe.
87	Cancer Totem. Build a totem of a Cancer Bear from bones and wear it continually. You believe this will protect you. It will. Once per level, in life threatening circumstances, it will act with the powers of a normal Calcinated Cancer Bear under your control.
88-89	Face blind. You can't remember faces till you stroke them.
90-91	Tectonic dreams. Just before you fall asleep you can hear the murmuring of Substratals. You gradually learn that language and can speak it by the time you next level up.
92	Ghost warden. You fear the spirits of those you have killed. Build, or obtain, an amulet to imprison them. Record them all. If it breaks or is lost, they may get free (5% chance true per ghost).
93	Magnetic sense. Iron in the rock will stop you reliably sensing North, but it can aid you in navigation nonetheless. Especially if blinded. Worked metal is like a burning torch to you. It can blind you if close enough. You don't like carrying metal weapons.
94-95	Blood change. Your blood becomes an odourless, tasteless clear gel. It is hard to track you. If your skin is already translucent then your bones are almost visible through the cloudy flesh.
96-97	Poison Absorber. Poison still affects you as normal, but if you survive it, your body will hang on to the dose. You can transmit it via biting.
98-99	Water Sense. You can taste emissions from upstream in moving water. Anything pissing or bleeding within half a mile upstream.
100	You lose all desire to return to the surface. You belong here now.

HYPOTHERMIA

PLAYER CHARACTERS TEST for Hypothermia at the Referee's discretion. The most common cause is exposure to very cold water. Generally a PC can swim in freezing water for minutes equal to their Constitution before they begin testing.

The PC must roll under Constitution on 1d20 for every turn of cold conditions. If they are wearing metal armour the roll is taken at -4. The results of failures are cumulative and stack.

1 FAILURE.

PC cannot feel hands or feet. Their movement is halved, they can no longer do fine work with their hands.

2 FAILURES.

PC cannot feel arms or legs. If they fall they cannot stand up but must crawl instead. They can no longer swim, but still float.

3 FAILURES.

PC now wants only to sleep. Another PC must accompany them for every stated action. Moving alongside them and using their capacity to act to keep them going. If this cannot be done, the sufferer lies down and goes to sleep. They then lose 1hp per minute till death.

TO WARM THEM UP

PC must be stripped and either wrapped in another PC's naked body, or warmed by a fire or some other source of heat.

They will regain 1hp lost to Hypothermia each minute. Then wake up. Sensation will return to arms and legs in two turns. Then hands and feet in two more turns. This is painful.





"Today is the deed.

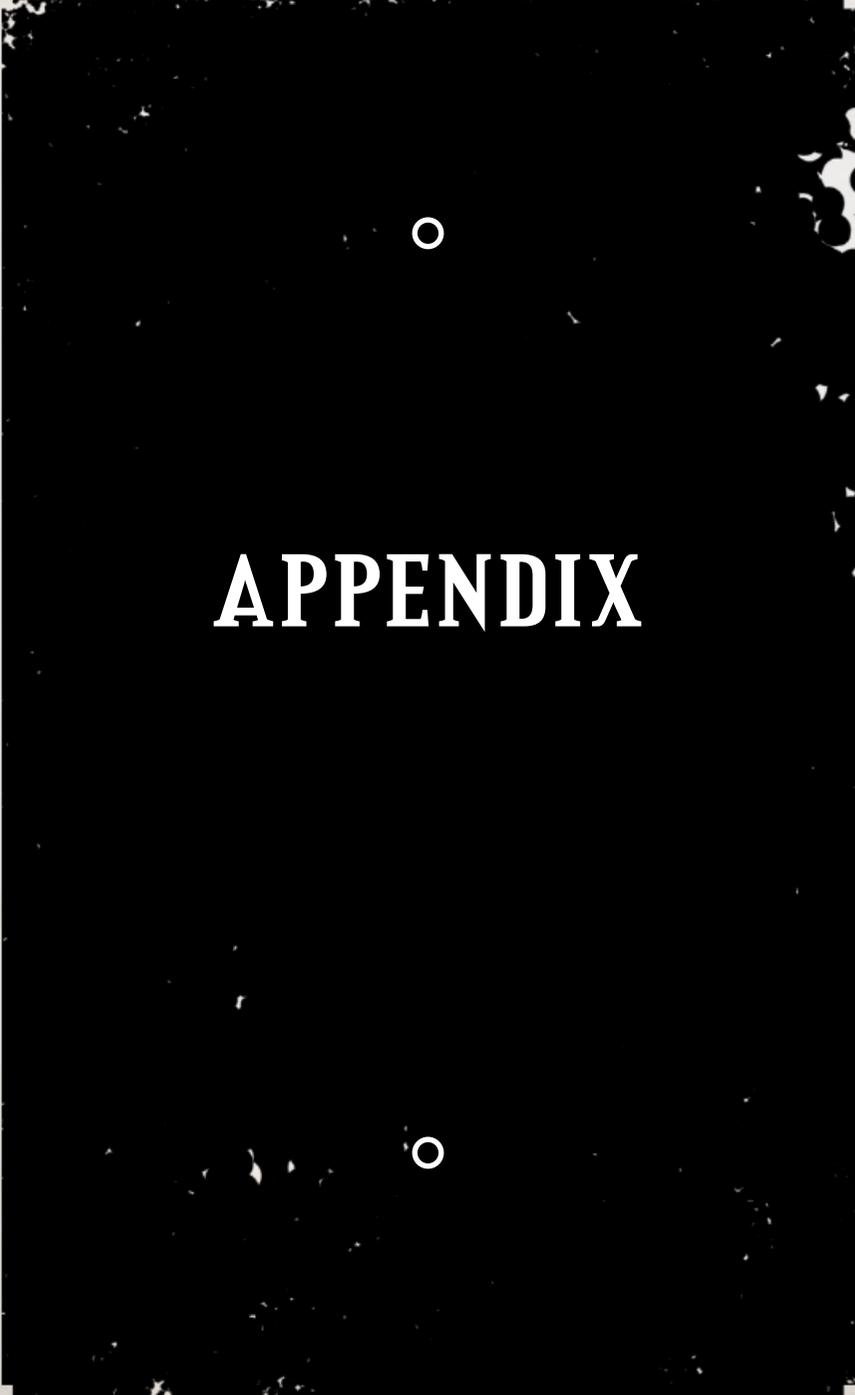
We will account for it tomorrow.



*The past we are leaving
behind is carrion.*

The future we leave to the fortune-tellers.

We take the present day."



APPENDIX

TWELVE KINDS OF DARK

THE DARKNESS IN VEINS OF THE Earth is very different to that found on the surface of the world, or even in its dungeons. You can imagine it as the difference between freshwater and salt. One is connected to land, opposed to it, flowing through it, but still a mere interruption. The other is a kind world itself, one larger than the land it surrounds and which it will one day consume.

Dungeons and mines and cellars in the upper earth are like freshwater tributaries leading down into the ocean of darkness beneath.

In the game as it is played, in a sense, the dark is you. Like you it follows the PCs, encompassing them in a bubble of perceivable reality, containing everything they cannot see, challenging them, chewing away at their resources and flinging monsters into their path.

I came up with these darks and Scrap developed the following, experimental, way to use them:

SCRAP: *"Think of like a localised underground weather. Describe things differently, emphasis some, neglect to mention others. If players express confusion or alarm, tell them: it's the dark here, it's a trick of the dark, it's just and always the dark.*

Talking to Veins natives will allow players to learn the specific names of the darkness. The migrations, states, passing and fixed durations of each darkness are completely inscrutable to non-natives however, though familiarity will allow players to ask after specific darknesses.

If you want to randomly include darknesses and need a random prompt to do so, include one in an area whenever you are prepping material and you lose or misplace a die or look up to find it's darker than you thought it was.

1 DANKSCRATCH (DUNGEON DARK)

This darkness is the dungeon's friend, and horror's too. It hides almost nothing and constantly threatens to go away. It flickers, obviously. Things move around it. Even walls. It highlights you and shows you nothing. It is a contemptible dark. It is the most common sort of dark for our purposes. It flees after adventurers, hates to be alone yet brings aloneness with it. It tries to get round corners and doors yet fails.

SCRAP: *"Your light makes you feel more exposed and vulnerable here." Don't mention otherwise unhidden occupants of an area unless specific looked for. Unless characters are specifically hiding, assume all occupants can immediately see them.*

2 STIPPLEDARK

A precise darkness, signalling its exactness by drawn degrees. Its fingers leave a kind of embroidered arabesque over the surfaces it strokes. Rational, slightly headachy darkness, not given to dreams or visions. Unimpressed by magic, fading only as it must, and when, before the spell. Favoured by small things as it knows them. It picks out the image and the detail like a blade.

SCRAP: *"The shadows here make detail stark, and sharp enough to be almost hostile to the eye." Mention details in description before generalities, never speculate for the players in a description or mentioning anything subjective.*

3 PARLOURDARK

This is a very civilised dark, rarely seen this deep. Aware of people and social space. It knows expressions on your face and takes an interest in them. It hangs on walls, it knows cracks and appreciates glass that lets it into people's homes. It gets into your living room. It knows things and objects, hats and coats, shields and swords, and keeps itself aware of them; it lives on a human scale, concerned with their concerns. It is in the middle of things.

SCRAP: *"The dark here seems like one you find at home, less alien, threatening. Faces and expressions clearer now." Mention moods and expression, particularly nuances, before anything else in descriptions or details that are indicative of their owners mental state.*

4 UMBRAPHILLIAN

This dark is known for its love of beauty and its many deepnesses. It loves a fair degree, comes in at an angle, cradles shadows and bleeds them everywhere. It highlights great volumes and gives depth and shape to what was merely absent space. It makes a geography of the unseen. It is always leaving. Never staying. Yet if you stare directly into this dark, you will not be comforted.

SCRAP: *"Everything seems too deep and far here, but with more awe than fear." Exaggerate distance and space, mention possible exits and pathways first.*



5 NEFARSHADE

This dark is cunning, not where it is supposed to be. It creeps. Laughing at you. Diffusing from its outer source and seeping into the borders of light, poisoning it. Barring a lantern with unexpected lines like the walls of a gaol. It hangs to things a little and makes them less than they were. Cradling its own boundaries, setting and ignoring at the same time. A smuggler, only useful while there are laws and only useful breaking them.

SCRAP: *"You keep having to look twice at things. Nothing seems to be where you thought it was." Resist describing, hinting or suggesting at the exact location of anything not immediately known, and especially anything hidden or concealed.*

6 TERPSIFULGIN

It has beauty but it brings the end of things. It makes everything an elegy to itself. A mortal dark, or a darkness not indifferent to mortality. It marks breaks in the slow cycles of time and is still. Though it makes everything beautiful and brings any aesthetic quality to a fine pitch, exposing the rightness in things, it does not show you more than any other kind. It will fill the path. It is a passing dark.

SCRAP: *"The dark here seems less timeless somehow, the minutes countable." Be clear and helpful with visual descriptions and especially estimates of time passing.*

7 APHELIONBRAL

Another romantic. This darkness hangs gently. It abrades the spaces between things, introducing them to one another. It eases boundaries. It fills in from the

shadows and expands, growing secretly while you are not looking. It softens the oncoming black, gently, but also hides it. A delicate shield for the ravening night. It fills the air, dulling the edges of your vision, hiding identities and blurring distant shapes.

SCRAP: *"Everything seems imprecise and unclear. Easy to hide or be hidden from." Be generous for where you allow players to hide and imprecise describing numbers or details.*

8 OBSIDUM

It is a clear, pale dark that holds a gleam, dense like rotted iron or lead that's scorched. It fills space, holding objects and carefully enforcing their distance apart. Like a calm, cold, murderous doctor or nurse. It brings order, consequence and mundanity, yet it is not mundane. Like a strange herald to a boring lord. Silent and empty on its own, but a harbinger of overwhelming dark. It claws at the surface of things, preventing contact, each separate and alone. Often a sign that the worst is yet to come, that you have lost.

SCRAP: *"You feel more alone here in the black than ever before." Make it difficult for characters to find, work, or co-ordinate with each other but be clear and helpful with descriptions of everything else.*

9 HOUNDARK

This dark is long and low. Lazy and thick, slow to arrive when the light goes out, last to leave when lit. It pauses before the lamp. It loves life, heat and breath and flows thickly around all living things. Lazy as it is, it is a killer's shroud which favours those who hunt and track. It gives away the weak and does not know the dead. Those

without a beating heart will find it hard to hide inside. It throbs slowly from the deep sky and the birth-caul stars, trickles into the earth.

SCRAP: *"You feel barely aware of the stone here, over the heat and sound of your breathing and heart." Be difficult on what you accept as a hiding place. Always describe living and signs of life first over the inanimate and assume corpses are always overlooked.*

10 SCARDARK

Explosive dark, rippling out and hurrying away. Arriving unexpectedly but rhythmically, and to some plan, hidden from you. It wheels in circles and shoots rapidly from place to place, running madly in self-set vectors. It wants attention and attracts it, happy when you are looking at it and into it. Its movements are seductive and seem lively and lifelike. It wants to burn you and see you burn.

SCRAP: *"The dark flickers here, like the edge of campfire, an impish, plotting thing." Assume any accident, inattention or neglect that could start a fire, will.*

9 CARNACHT

Few darks are as brutal as this one. It sits alone, ever isolated, ferocious. Watching lesser darkness pass beneath it. It holds itself effortlessly in the pool of the earth and judges everything it encompasses with a ruthless reduction of volume and mass. All pretension is brought low within it. All flaws are exposed. It lays upon the mighty and the weak alike, or anyone who travels. They hate it and they need it. It sustains nothing and loves nothing. It holds the vulnerable impassively in the midst of danger, protecting them but caring not

SCRAP: *"Every weakness feels exposed and judged wanting in the weight of the dark here." Describe hit point damage, and other weakness and loss exactly.*

12 KOSOMICOSCOT

It is everywhere, it underwrites the blackness. Distant, indifferent, cold and opaque. It loves texture but not shape. It is easily warded off but never leaves, easily occluded by the light yet burns longer and deeper than the sun. It makes you feel small. It is unaware of you and will continue without you. It is awesome and comes from the furthest places, outside time. Drifting past you and interacting minimally with your world. It is direct evidence of a larger existence that makes yours nothing by comparison.

SCRAP: *"Every night is here. Every night feels like it is here with you, bigger than you." Allude first to larger forces at work behind anything (geology, departed races) in a description. Sound dismissive of the possibility of success.*





LANGUAGE OF THE KNOTSMEN



REQUEST / AGREE

(I agree with you/I request from you)



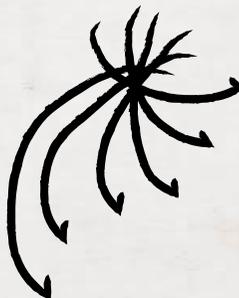
DEMAND / ASSIST

(I will assist you/I demand from you)



COMMAND / ALLY

(We are allies/I command you)



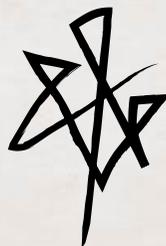
OWN / LOVE

(I love you/I own you)



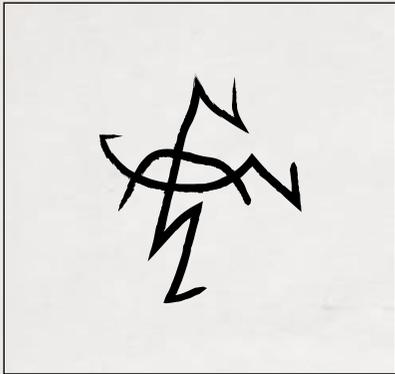
LAW

(Legal, Own, Legal Ownership, Correct, Good)



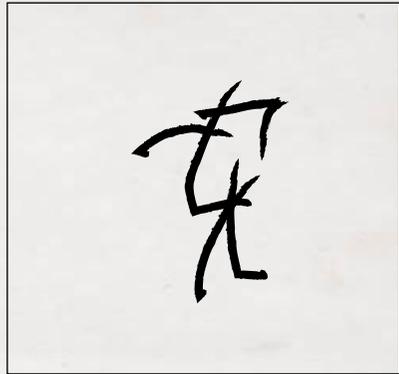
CRIME

(Illegal, Stolen, Free, Freedom)



DANCE

(Dance Entertainment Torture, Justice, 'You will be tortured', 'Give me the following information')



PERSON

(Your personality has been revoked/you are no longer assumed to have continuity of thought)



PLEA



INSIST



I BEG YOU TO INSIST

('Yes Sir', Agreeing with a superior)



I INSIST YOU BEG



CONSUME

(Consumer, Consumed)



EXPEL

(Remove, Banish, Vomit, Expel)



I WELCOME YOU BACK

(You are now a slave)



I FREE YOU

(Get out, You are banished, Starve this animal to death)



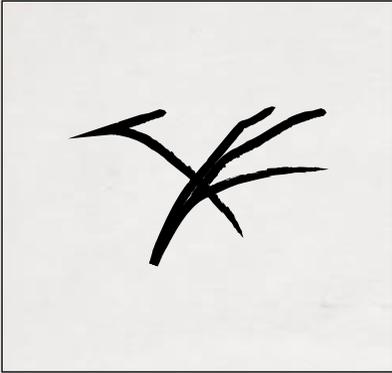
REQUEST AGREEMENT / YES?

(Your ideas are surrounded, submit)



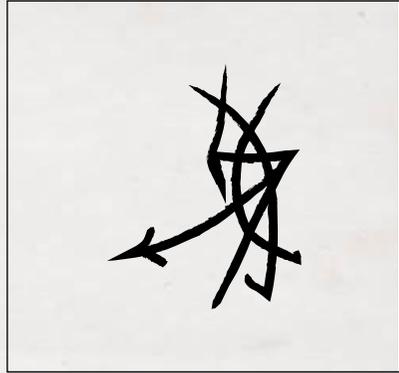
NO / DENIAL

(An attempt to deny is an admission of guilt)



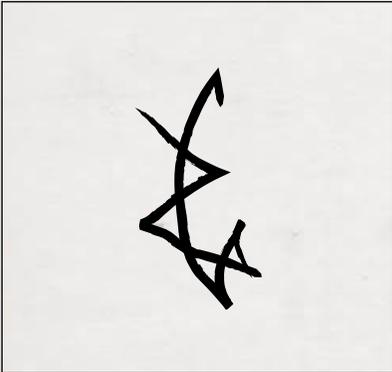
WAR

(Foreclosure/Balancing by force/give me the fucking money; also the symbol for the Knotsman capital city)



DISASTER

(Irredeemable contract/unrecoverable debt/they died without dependants/the surface world)



MAGE

(Spell, Legal Means, Court)



SOLDIER

(A sword you own that has cut you before/a military command)



EXPENDABLE

(Collateral damage/civillian casualties)



POSSIBLY NOT

(The spell before it is cast/the unspoken line/the knowledge that you are in the moment just before you incur a debt)

FOUNTAINS OF THE TITAN CORPSE

AN EXAMPLE OF CAVE SYSTEM GENERATION

NOW WE WILL GO THROUGH THE instructions for generating caves and cave systems again, but slower and step-by-step with illustrations so you can create your own system as we go.

You will need a pencil and some paper. (And probably an eraser.) In our example we are going to be using an A5 piece of paper but if you follow along using A4 or Letter size then you will have more space and can add more complexity.

STEP ONE: NAME & FEATURES

Roll on the Cave System Generator Table (see p.234) to give the cave system series of caves its own identity.

D50 - 17 The... Fountains...

D50 - 27 of... the Titancorpse...

D50 - 16 always... curve back on itself if possible...

D50 - 03 but never... trap you in a squeeze with no way out.

Write these down on the page.

THE FOUNTAINS OF THE TITAN CORPSE

always curve back on itself if possible but never trap you in a squeeze with no way out.



STEP TWO: GENERATE ENTRY CAVE

Follow the steps shown on p.232 to generate the cave.

1. ROLL 2D6 ONTO A PIECE OF PAPER.

Two six-sided dice are rolled, with the closest is a 2, and the furthest is a 4.

2. THE SIZE OF THE CAVE:

The distance between the two dice determines the size of the cave.

The dice fall about a hand's width apart which means the cave is the size of a house.

Draw the Cave Symbol on the paper (see

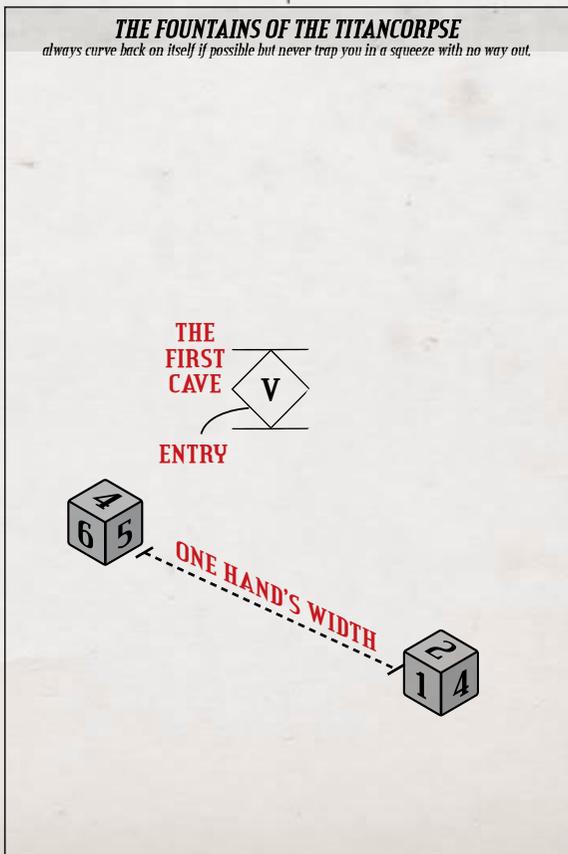
p.228 for details), and write the roman numeral V inside to indicate its size.

3. THE WAY IN:

The position of the number 1 face on the closest dice to you indicates the location of the way into the cave.

The number 1 face is on the lower left side of the closest dice, indicating the way in is on the WEST side of the cave.

Draw the entrance on the West (lower left) side of the Cave Symbol, using a solid line to indicate the passage is a walk.



4. THE WAY OUT:

The position of the number 1 face on the furthest dice to you indicates the location of the way out the cave.

The number 1 face is on the upper right side of the dice, indicating the way out is on the EAST side of the cave.

5. HOW BIG IS THE WAY OUT?

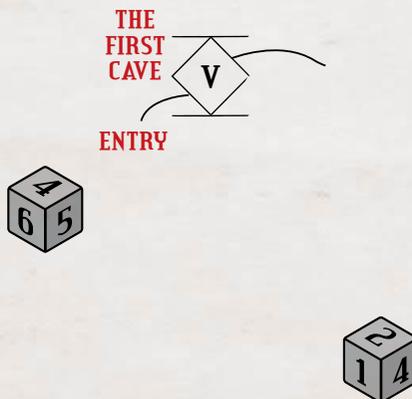
Look at the total of the two dice. That is the size of the largest exit in feet, either height or width.

The top facing sides of the dice indicate 4 and 2, so the exit is 6 feet across, an easy passage to navigate.

Draw the way out on the East (upper right) side of the Cave Symbol, using a solid line to indicate the passage is a walk as it is 6 feet wide.

THE FOUNTAINS OF THE TITANCORPSE

always curve back on itself if possible but never trap you in a squeeze with no way out.



6. HOW MANY OTHER EXITS?

Look at the difference between the two top facing sides of the dice. This is the number of additional exits out of the cave.

The top facing sides of the dice indicate 4 and 2, and the difference between the two numbers is 2. There are two additional exits out of the cave.

Each exit after the first will be half the size of the one that came before (round up).

The 2nd exit is 3 feet wide, and the 3rd exit only 2 feet wide.

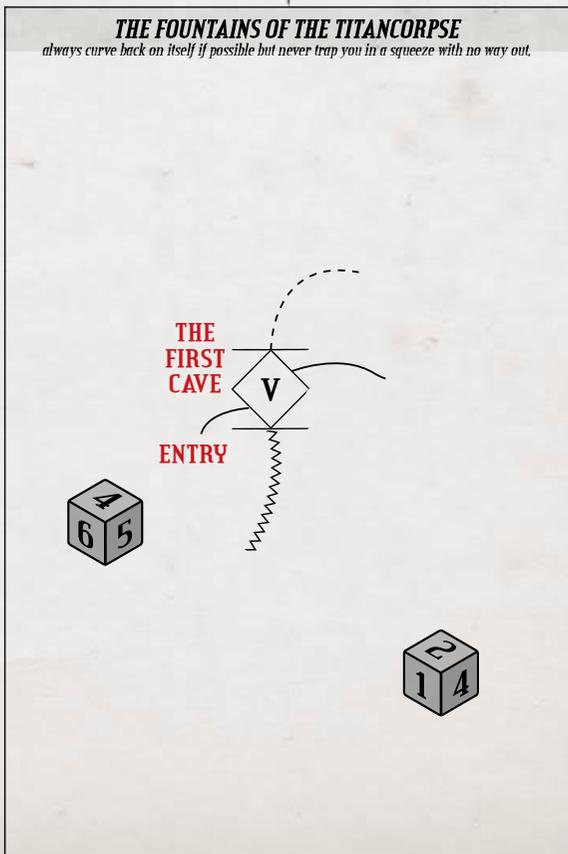
7. WHERE ARE THE OTHER EXITS?

You can place the additional exits either where you like, or if you prefer, use the dice to determine their location.

For the 2nd exit, look at the position of the number 2 face on the closest dice to you.

The number 2 face is on the top side of the closest dice, indicating the 3-foot wide 2nd exit is a shaft on the TOP side of the cave.

Draw the 2nd exit on the Top side of the Cave Symbol, using a hatched line to indicate the passage is a chimney only 3 feet wide.



For the 3rd exit, look at the position of the number 3 face on the furthest dice to you.

The number 3 face is on the bottom side of the furthest dice, indicating the 2-foot wide 3rd exit is a shaft on the BOTTOM side of the cave.

Draw the 3rd exit on the Bottom side of the Cave Symbol, using a zig-zag line to indicate the passage is a squeeze only 2 feet wide.

THE FIRST CAVE

- So the 1st cave is 50ft across and high.
- The PC's come in through a walk on the west wall. Directly across from them is another walk, in the roof is a 3ft chimney they could climb and in the floor is a 1.5 squeeze they could worm through if they needed to.
- If the PC's only have a 30 STR lamp they won't be able to see the far walls of this cave when they come in.

THE FOUNTAINS OF THE TITANCORPSE

always curve back on itself if possible but never trap you in a squeeze with no way out.

THE
FIRST
CAVE



STEP THREE: GENERATE DISTANCES BETWEEN THE CAVES

Follow the instructions shown on How Long is a Route? p.227, to generate the distances between the cave.

FOR EACH ROUTE:

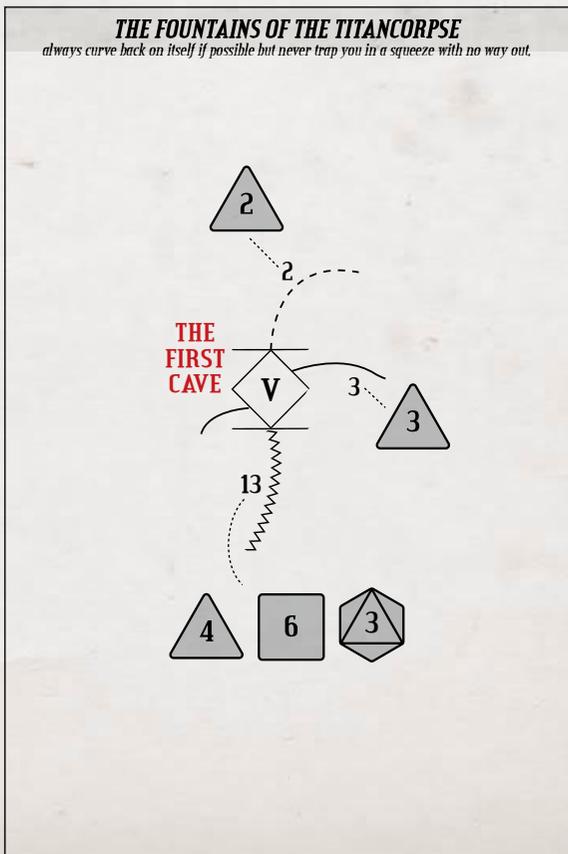
- ROLL 1D4.** This is the distance between caves in the number of 10-minute long Turns it takes to travel. **IF YOU ROLLED A 4 ON THE D4,** roll 1D6 and add this number to the total number of turns. **CONTINUE TO ADD INCREASINGLY LARGER DICE UNTIL YOU ROLL LESS THAN THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE RESULT ON THE DICE ROLLED.**

For the 1st exit out of the West side of the cave, a 3 was rolled on the D4. It takes 3 Turns to travel along this passage.

For the 2nd exit out of the Ceiling of the cave, a 2 was rolled on the D4.

For the 3rd exit out of the Floor; a 4 was rolled. An additional D6 was rolled with a result of 6, and an additional D8 was rolled with a result of 3. It takes (4+6+3) 13 turns to travel down this passage.

Write down the travel time next to each passage, and remember that vertical routes take twice as long to climb upwards.



STEP FOUR: CREATE ADDITIONAL CAVES

Following the instructions shown in Step 2, repeat them to create additional caves within the Cave System.

1. ROLL 2D6 ONTO A PIECE OF PAPER.

Two six-sided dice are rolled, both result with a 1, but one of the dice fell on the floor!

2. THE SIZE OF THE CAVE:

As the dice are so far apart the cave is gargantuan! Draw the Cave Symbol on the page, and write down "1" for its size in the middle of the symbol.

3. THE WAY IN:

The number 1 face is on the top side of the closest dice. It comes through the CEILING of the cave.

4. THE WAY OUT:

The number 1 face is on the top side of the furthest dice. It exits through the CEILING of the cave.

5. HOW BIG IS THE WAY OUT?

The top facing sides of the dice indicate 1 and 1 so the exit is 2 feet across, a difficult crawl.

HOWEVER...

As the dice results in the same number, it also indicates that the exit passage is special AND located instead on the side of the cave that is opposite to the entrance. See Special Routes and Exits, p.226 for details.

To determine what kind of special exit it is, roll 1D4.

Rolling the d4 results in a 3. The special exit is a Letterbox Squeeze down through the Floor of the cave.

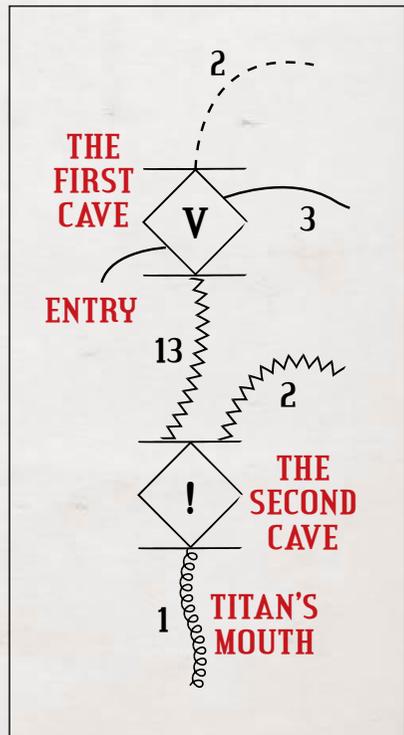
HOWEVER...

At any point during Cave Generation you can change the results., and since this is the Fountains of the Titan corpse, I've decided that the exit is the yawning mouth of the Titan's skull!

Draw a looping line out of the bottom side of the Cave symbol to indicate it is a Special Route.

6. HOW MANY OTHER EXITS?

Instead of following the normal procedure I have chosen to keep the second exit in the ceiling. It's only 2-foot wide as well.

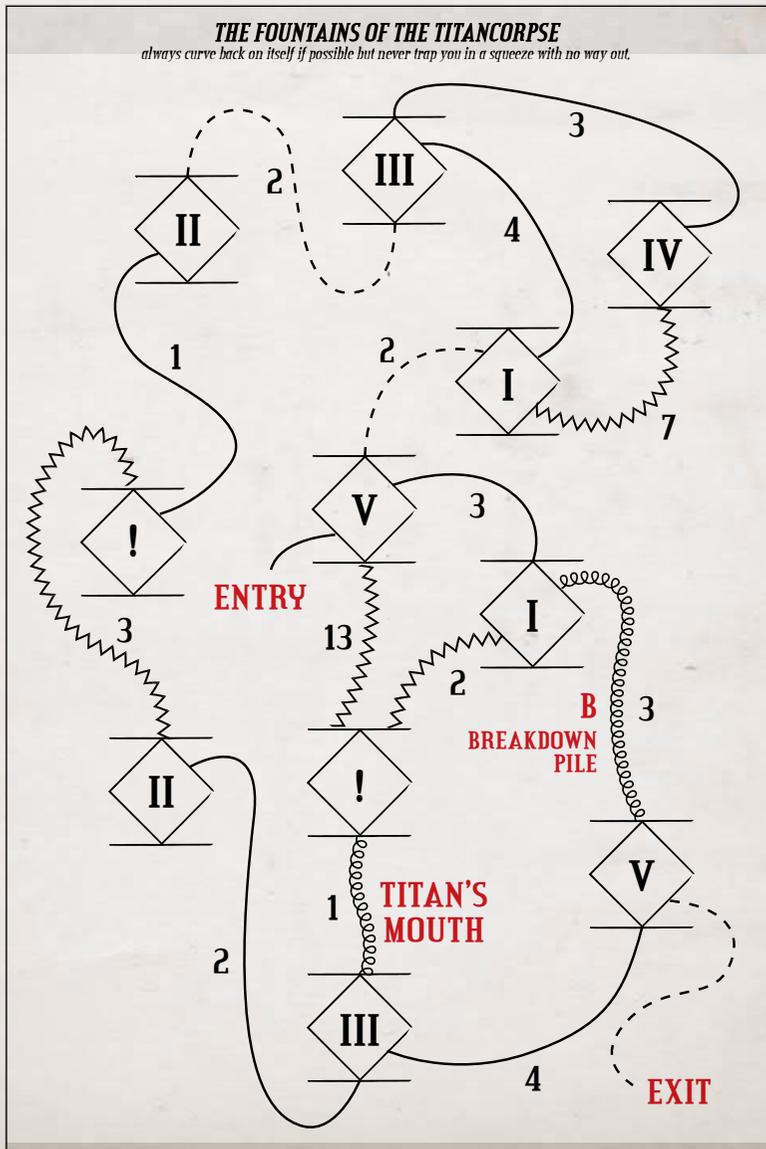


**REPEAT THESE STEPS TO
CONTINUE EXPANDING THE
CAVE SYSTEM...**

STEP FOUR: COMPLETE THE CAVE SYSTEM

Continue to create some more caves and fill out the system. When connecting up caves that already exist, you don't always need to roll for all the exits and in true old school

fashion, once you have a sound idea of what you are doing you can ignore the rules and jam stuff in wherever you like.



LARGE SCALE MAP GENERATION: AN EXAMPLE

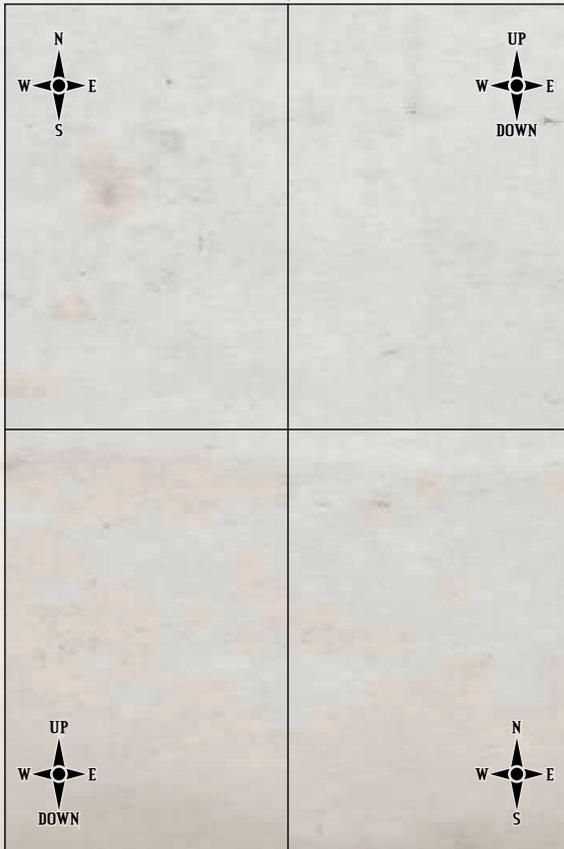
NOW WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT the creation of a large-scale map. Get another piece of paper and a bunch of coloured pens.

You can also do this with hex paper. In this case we are going to use blank paper so it's easier can see exactly what we do.

Ok, now for probably the weirdest part of all Veins mapping...

STEP ONE: CREATE QUADRANTS

- 1. DIVIDE THE MAP** into four like this example below.
- 2. ADD A COMPASS TO EACH QUADRANT.** In the top left and bottom right quadrant add a standard North/South/East/West compass. In the top right and bottom left quadrant add a vertical compass, with North replaced with Up, and South replaced with Down.



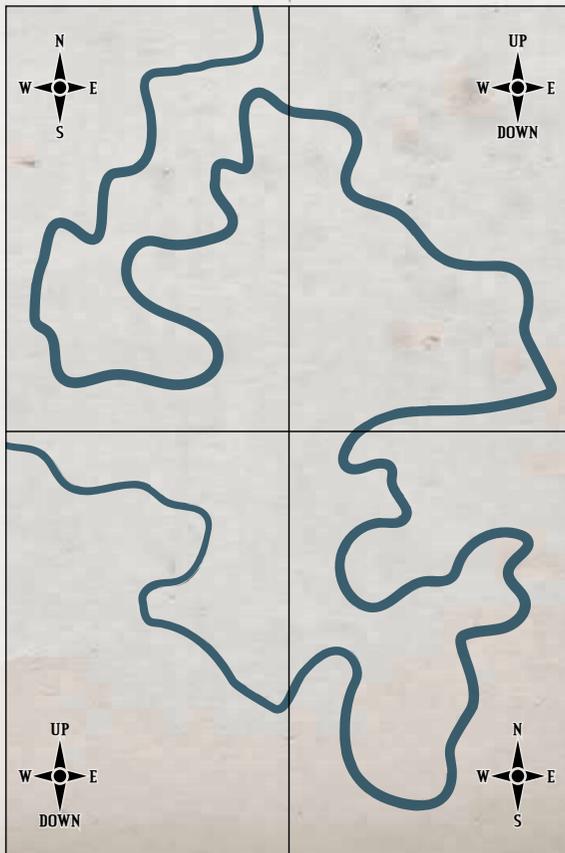
STEP TWO: ADD A ROUTE TO THE MAP

Think of a route as a large, obvious passage of one kind or another. It might range in size from a corridor to a huge motorway tunnel or even a cyclopean cavern or a series of linked caves. The important thing is that the route is visible and accessible. Explorers in the Veins do not have to search to see where it is and all of it is theoretically passable.

To decide what route to put in we might choose to roll on one of the Routes Tables (see p.243), but it's always good to have a river in Veins, especially near the surface, so we will draw that in first.

Here is our map with the river added to it, drawn in blue. To draw a river we start at the top of the page and then swoosh our line back and forth till there is a bit of it in every quadrant.

Remember the important thing about a river's behaviour is that it can't link back up with itself and that in the vertical quadrants it can never go up, it must only go down or across.



STEP THREE: ADD A SECOND ROUTE TO THE MAP

For this one I will roll on the second of the Routes Tables (p.243).

(Ok, I got another river, but that's both boring and complicated so in true old-school fashion going to roll again until I get something good.)

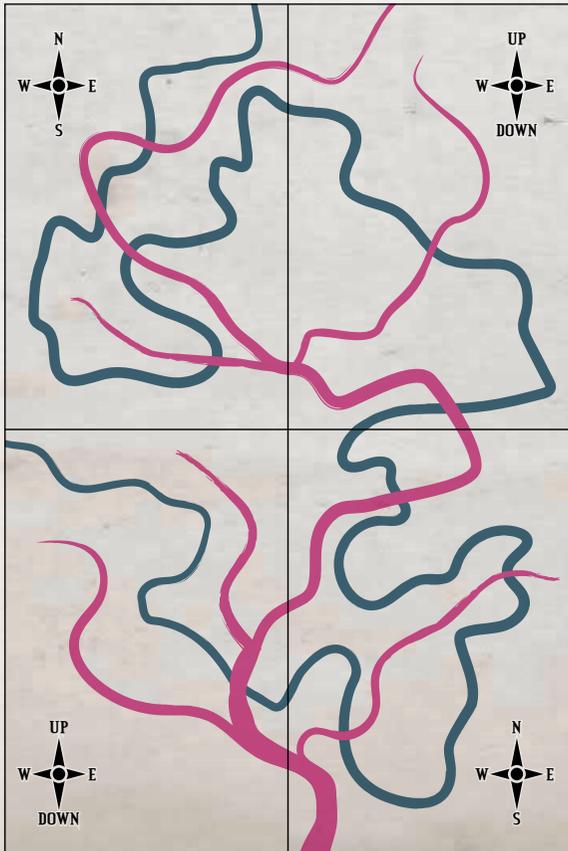
18 - Fungal! Ok, we can work with this.

Below you can see how I drew Fungal passages on the map in a nice pink pen. There is guidance on how to do this in Fungal route section (see p.253). Look at that description of a fungal passage and think about how you would describe it to your players if they were inside it. Imagine being at any point on this map where

the two lines cross and think about how you would describe that point to your players.

When you look at each particular quadrant you describe directions the PC's can move in terms of the compass for that quadrant.

So in a horizontal quadrant you might say "Ok, you are by large river going roughly south west to north east, crossed by a minework going north to south." In a vertical quadrant you might say "You are looking at a huge waterfall or torrent. You can try climbing up or down, there is also some kind of minework leading from the upper west to the lower east."



STEP FOUR: ADD A THIRD ROUTE TO THE MAP

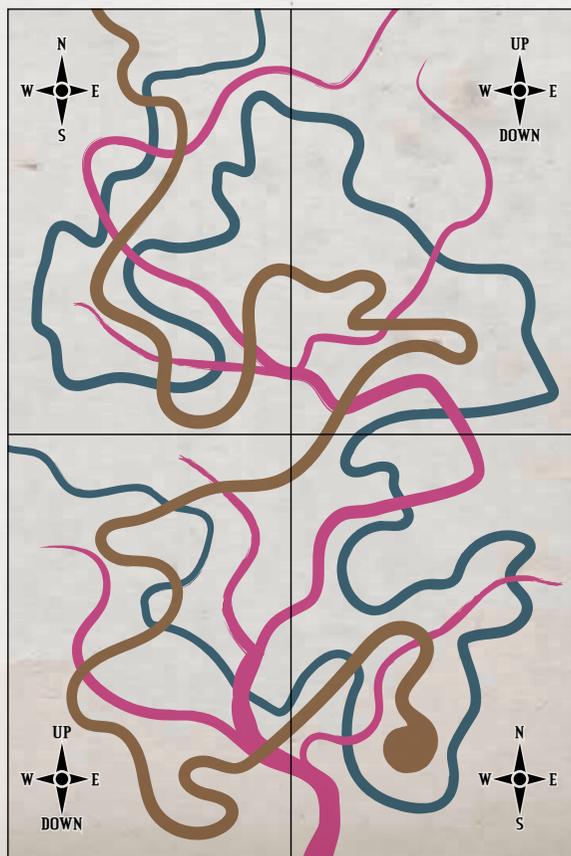
Rolling again on the second of the Routes Tables... 20! A Burrow! Another cool, weird one. Here is out map with a burrow added in brown.

Think about the roaring of the cold water and the cool air that goes with it, the strange winding and growth marks of the fungal passages and the vast gouges and claw or finger marks of the burrow torn in the stone.

Some things to decide now are which crossroads of two routes will have small tribes or groups there, which crossroads of three routes will have large settlements and

built polities, and what the thing that made the burrow is. Giant Kaiju? Defeated godling? Mega-worm? And is it still alive in its burrow? Is it sleeping, dead, awake or moved on?

(Yes it would be great to have a settlement-generator in here but the book was already HUGE and I needed all that space for madness generators, darkness types and insane art works. You can probably make up your own using the monster section. We will put one in a sequel if this book doesn't bankrupt the publisher.)



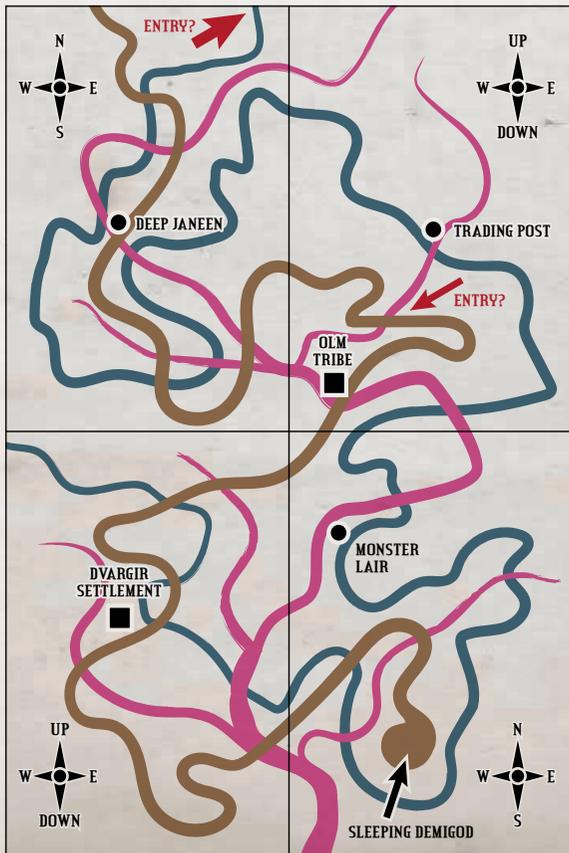
STEP FIVE: ADD ENTRY POINTS AND SETTLEMENTS

Now we have our initial map we can Start Our Adventure. If this is the first entry of the players to the Veins and they are entering from the surface (i.e. not already in a dungeon or megadungeon) then it should be either on the top of the upper Vertical quadrant or near the top of the upper Horizontal quadrant.

I've used red arrows to point out some places you could start. The larger arrow is a good place to start if you are coming in straight from the surface, the smaller arrow is a good place to start if you are already underground.

I've also put in some possible settlements and encounters usually found at intersections of the routes for strategic or trade reasons or for ease of access to passing prey.

One more thing you can do if you are not using hexes is to draw in a scale saying either "24 hours travel" or "12 hours travel". In most cases (using standard Veins rules) you will roll for an encounter every 12 hours of "normal" travel and PCs can cover about 4 miles every 12 hours.



GLOSSARY

ANIMALCULE

An animalcule is an old term for a microscopic form of life originated by Anton van Leeuwenhoek, the first human being on record to ever observe the microverse. His observations were made around the 1670s so, if you are playing a pseudo-historical version of *Lamentations* set in Europe, your PCs could possibly travel to Delft and meet him. If you do, don't tell people in general that the air and water are swarming with tiny invisible creatures. Even the Royal Society suspected van Leeuwenhoek was insane.

The calcium shells made by some ocean-dwelling animalcules in prehistoric eras are the basis of chalk and limestone in the earth today. Since the limestone reacts with water in an irregular way, it is one of the only stones in which complex cave systems are commonly formed. The fictional 'cave-world' envisaged in this book is an amplification and intensification of the human experience of real cave systems, systems formed in limestone, limestone made by animalcules. Therefore, in a sense, this book is a result of the actions of these tiny creatures.

CHARCAROMEN

Either sharks with some of the form and abilities of men, or men with the capacities, appetite and morphology of sharks. The question is an open one.

DYNO

In climbing a Dyno is a 'Dynamic Leap' in which every part of the climber's body is momentarily out of contact with the surface of the stone. It's the kind of ultra-exciting thing you should do a lot of in films, games and when safely roped in a climbing centre and avoid like fuck in the real world. If you succeed, you will look like a brave, ultra-competent daredevil who lives on the edge; if you fail your utter humiliation will at least be short, as effectively you just jumped off the stone that was holding you up. A Dyno is especially useful for doing dangerous and exciting things in vertical combat.

FLOWSTONE

A kind of sheetlike calcite deposit formed by the seeping of water into a cave. A similar process to that which causes speleothems like stalactites and stalagmites. Flowstone is most commonly a deep pearly white, but it can pick up any kind of taint or pigment from the surrounding stone, exhibiting a range of possible colours, usually formed into bands. Flowstone is deeply beautiful and, perhaps more than any other single element, contributes to the otherworldly sense of underground spaces. It is also very smooth and difficult to climb upon.

LUMINOL

Luminol is a synthetic liquid which will chemiluminesce when it comes into contact with blood. In the real world, a thin spray of Luminol is used by forensic investigators to reveal the location of blood stains, even if they may have been cleaned up. In the world of *Veins*, Luminol is synthesised by Dvargir chemists and used as a trade currency leading to its wide distribution.

Luminol gives off a regular pleasant soft blue light that feels vaguely science-fictional. Ridley Scott would enjoy it.

(Experienced *Veins* dwellers will know that as well as blood, Luminol also reacts with human poop, though this kind of insider information is never given out for free.)

MACEMAKER SILK

The fifth of the six valid trading qualities of spider silk known in the *Veins*:

1. **WHIPSILK.** Given as a status symbol to slaves broken or evil enough to be appointed overseers over their fellow slaves without immediate supervision. (If you are seen wearing this you will be assumed to be a slave overseer.)
2. **STORMSILK.** Colour of a storm sky and rough to the touch. A common wearing silk.
3. **CHAINSILK.** If braided can form a strong rope or chain. Practical. Carries a little cultural 'cool' as it is used for its toughness. Worn by the young or those trying to project an image of capable ability.

4. **CLIPPERSILK.** Tough, noted for its ability to survive long journeys without losing its sheen. Not well respected in the upper class but won't get you thrown out of a party. A bit of a Bourgeois upwardly-mobile low-rent social climber silk.

5. **MACEMAKER SILK.** Valuable enough that, if worn, one can be considered to have 'made ones mace', that is, to be powerful enough to be able to smash in the heads of your immediate underlings without much questioning about why, exactly, you did that.

6. **WINDCRADLE SILK.** Like a flowing wearable steam of folded smoke. Often totally illegal to wear outside the highest ranks. Highly valued by traders as a light, tough, high-value currency.

NEUROVORE

A genius-level creature which feeds on the brains of sentient beings and whose culture and civilisation is built around that act.

OCCULTUM

A black, apparently massless, edgeless and weightless coin worth 50 gold pieces. Each gold piece is worth 50 silver pieces so an Occultum coin is worth 2,500sp. Occultum can be used to make magical transactions for things otherwise unavailable, like souls, fates, dreams and dooms. The preferred currency of choice for very high-status beings and major Kingdoms. Sages claim that the first Occultum coins were minted in express imitation of the 'Obol' used in the lands of Pernicious Albion (<http://gloomtrain.blogspot.co.uk/>).

PITCH

'Pitch' has a number of complex technical meanings in climbing and caving. The key meaning for us is a very steep, vertical ascent or descent, usually in which ropes or ladders are a necessity and in which someone climbing or descending may swing totally free of the rock. You don't need to know that much about climbing as your characters know a lot more and they can take care of the details.

PSIHEMOTH

A water-dwelling and madness inducing creature the size of a killer whale with the intellectual capacity of a high-level AI. A psychic behemoth.

SILENT TONGUE/SPEECH

A subtle and expressive language composed of minor or near-invisible bodyshifts, slow twitching of the fingers, seemingly-passive glances, shifts in breathing and complex flows of facial expression. A kind of stealth sign language, common to intelligent travellers and high-status individuals in the Veins.

TRAVERSE

A traverse is a lateral or sideways movement across a rock face. Imagine climbing onto the long shelves at a library or bookshop, holding on facing the books, and working your way from one end of the shelf to another. Specialists and those with good climbing skills will do this fluidly, crossing their limbs in a series of long, smooth, flowing extensions, making the rest of you look like a bunch of lumbering fools. A traverse can be a description of a place, so locked to its geography that it becomes a noun: "up past the traverse on the left", as well as an action: "we must traverse to reach the gate."

TROGLOXENE

Trogloxene creatures are 'cave guests' which live part of their life cycle in a cavelike environment, but cannot survive there entirely. Bats are a common example of a Trogloxene organism; they roost in caves but fly out to feed.

In this book, Wild Lamenters are one of the few Trogloxene creatures and if you find them you know that there is, somewhere, an accessible escape to the surface world, though it may only be accessible via flight. There are also Troglobite Lamenters: white, pigmentless and crazed, relics of failed breeding experiments, who roost along the borders of vast inland seas or even stranger biospheres, and who can survive their whole lives underground.

In a sense, this book is a story about whether the Player Characters are Trogloxene, or Troglobite.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

THINK OF IT AS A RUGGED MACHINE. The book contains many parts. Not one part of it is essential for its use. No-one could read, memorise and use all of the rules and ideas inside in one go.

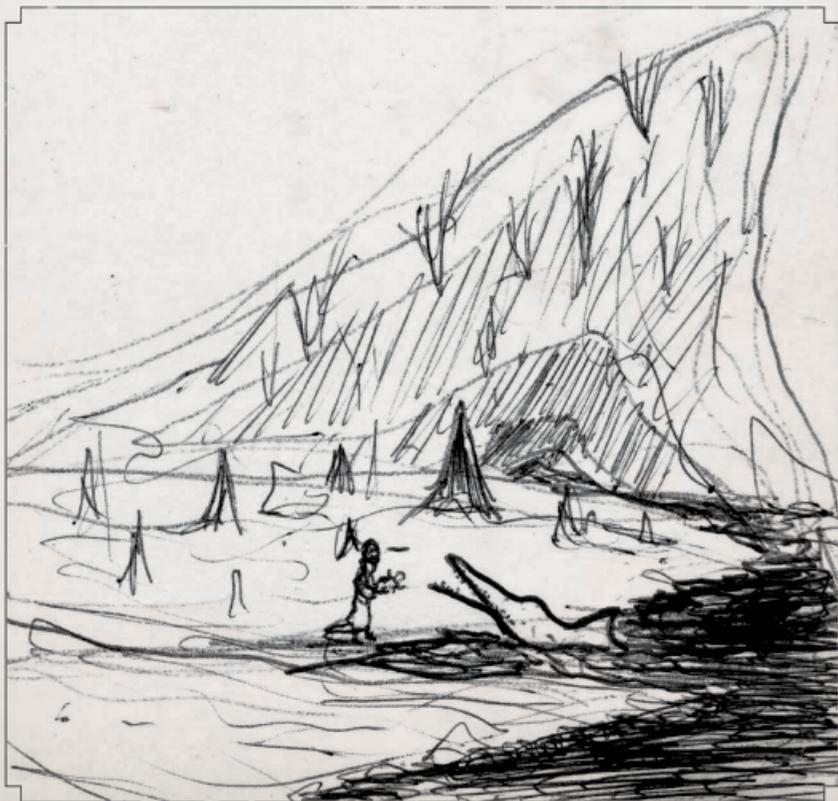
Instead, take whatever you find most interesting and use that.

If you wish to use more then bring it in whenever.

The game is not closely arranged like an iPhone or a modern car, it's more like a Citroën 2CV or an AK-47. The pieces are built in loose configuration so that all the chaff-of-use should shake off them when they work.

It's made to be hacked, pulled apart and botched together. Everyone I know does this anyway so I made it with that in mind.

If you do use the whole book as one, it should work coherently. Collectively it's meant to be a river of pitch that flows through you and forces you to think differently. I get sick of living in the world, so I put a piece of my internal world into this book so it could travel through other people's minds. Then they would have to live in my world and daydream about cannibal aesthetes and conspiracy machines rather than me having to live in theirs and think about property values and local schools.



SOURCES FOR THE QUOTES

P.2 TITLE PAGE

"Dost thou forget from what torment I did free thee?"

– The Tempest by Shakespeare

P.8 ENTRY TO THE UNDERWORLD

"The frightful bulk of night..."

– Cathedrals of France by Auguste Rodin

P.12 THE PARIAHS OF THE EARTH

"Now we descend into the world of shades"

– Ten Years Under The Earth by Norbert Casteret

P.154 CULTURES IN THE VEINS

"It might seem hardly worth questioning the idea that the world is made for seeing"

– Trilobite!: Eyewitness to Evolution by Richard Fortey

P.184 LIGHT AND DARK

"I have observed a brilliant scintillation in the eyes of man himself but only once"

– Phosphorescence: Or, The Emission of Light by Minerals, Plants and Animals
by Thomas Lamb Phipson

P.204 ENCUMBRANCE, EXPLORATION, CLIMBING AND TRAVEL

"Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom and Endurance"

– Prometheus Unbound by Percy Bysshe Shelley

P.220 GENERATING THE VEINS

"Illimitable ocean without bound"

– Paradise Lost by John Milton

P.281 ITEMS, TREASURES AND SPELLS

"The welding gun, by some freak of its coil's field attunements"

– Richard Shaver

P.319 MADNESS AND CHANGE

"The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature is astonishment"

– Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful
by Edmund Burke

P.331 APPENDIX

"Today is the deed. We will account for it tomorrow."

– The Realistic Manifesto by Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner

P.368

"Art is not a plaything, but a necessity"

– Black Lamb, Grey Falcon by Rebecca West

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*"Art is not a plaything,
but a necessity,*

*and its essence, form,
not a decorative adjustment,*

*but a cup into which life
can be poured and lifted
to the lips to be tasted.*

*If one's own existence
has no form,*

*if its events do not come
handily to mind and disclose
their significance,*

*we feel about ourselves
as if we were reading a bad book."*



IN THE VEINS

EXPLORATION		LOST IN THE DARK
STAT	ROLL 1D20, AND COMPARE THE RESULT TO YOUR STATS, WORKING DOWN THE LIST BELOW.	
CON	If you roll equal or under CON then you only suffer the effects of the next fail. If you roll over CON, all further fails are cumulative and all apply.	
STR	Tired, act as one level lower till you rest and eat.	Dropped pack. Lose half equipment.
DEX	Group separated by a traverse (even) or pitch (odd).	The guide falls 1d10 x 1d10 ft.
INT	Encounter, team ambushed.	Encounter, team ambushed.
WIS	You don't know how to get back.	Loop back, team goes nowhere.
CHA	Lowest Charisma PC got separated.	Breakdown; experience point freeze till one PC assaults another

No. OF FAILS	TIME TAKEN TO FIND SOMETHING	TIME TAKEN TO FIND LIGHT
1	1d12 turns	1d20 hours
2	1d12 x 1d4 turns	1d20 x 1d4 hours
3	1d12 x 1d6 turns	1d20 x 1d6 hours
4	1d12 x 1d8 turns	1d20 x 1d8 hours
5	1d12 x 1d10 turns	1d20 x 1d10 hours
6	1d12 x 1d12 turns	1d20 x 1d12 hours

CLIMBING

TIME TAKEN TO STUDY THE ROUTE	ROLL REQUIRED ON 1D6
≤ 1 Round	1 in 6
≤ 1 Minute	2 in 6
≤ 10 Minutes	3 in 6
≤ 1 Hour	4 in 6
> 1 Hour	5 in 6

- Climber must be able to **SEE** the **WHOLE** climb route.
- If they cannot, or route changes unexpectedly, or if only part of route can be seen and they enter an unseen section, they must pause and roll again.
- If Climber has **MORE BOXES** on their equipment list **THAN THEIR STATS** give them access to **THEN THE NUMBER THEY REQUIRE ON 1D6 GOES DOWN BY ONE** for every extra box they use.

FALLING

FEET FALLEN	DAMAGE
10	1d6
20	1d6 x 1d4
30	1d6 x 1d6
40	1d6 x 1d8
50	1d6 x 1d10
60	1d6 x 1d12
70	1d6 x 1d20
80	1d6 x 1d50
90	1d6 x 1d100

HUNGER

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14
<input type="checkbox"/>													

HUNGRY

Spend or steal
300sp worth of food
...or eat someone

STARVING

Spend or steal
600sp worth of food
...or eat someone

DYING

Lose 1 level /day until dead. Die when you reach 0.
Spend or steal 1000sp worth of food
...or eat someone

CLIMBING DIFFICULTIES

	ABSEILING CLIMB	SLOPING CLIMB	HARD CLIMB	VERY HARD CLIMB	HUMAN LIMIT CLIMB	SUPERHUMAN CLIMB
STAT	FAILED CLIMB? ROLL 1D20, AND COMPARE THE RESULT TO YOUR STATS, WORKING DOWN THE LIST BELOW.					
CON	If you roll equal or under CON then you only suffer the effects of the next fail. If you roll over CON, all further fails are cumulative and all apply.					
STR	Tired. Can't climb back or help others. Act as 1 level lower for one Turn.	You slide to the bottom. Take falling damage for one third of the vertical distance.	Shaking; must rest on your foot holds for 1d20 seconds, then roll again to go on.	Grip failing in 1d6 seconds, must dyno forward to get out of it.	Fall. If you live, too weak to act for 1d20 rounds.	Fall. Exhausted. Save versus Paralysis or pass out for 1d20 hours.
DEX	Slip 10 feet on rope.	Scramble and spin, now facing wrong way. If slid, save versus Death or be knocked out for 1d6 rounds.	Feet slipping. Will lose foot holds in 1d6 seconds. Must pull to upwards hold, then roll again to go on.	Fingertip grip only. Can't dyno forward. Roll again to go back safely.	Fall. Land on spine. If you live, crippled till magically healed.	Fall. Spin in air. Land on head. Save versus Poison or die.
INT	Not enough rope - it ends 10 feet from bottom.	Tangled up with your pack, you will need help to free yourself.	No upwards holds. Must go back down. Can try again from bottom.	No way forward or back. Must grip on for 1d20 seconds to think, then dyno sideways.	Fall. No way forward. This climb may not be attempted again.	Fall. Execute perfect move into non-existent hold. If you survive, you no longer trust yourself. All climbs one level harder till you gain a level.
WIS	You abseil happily right off the end of the rope.	Disco leg: you freeze and need help to go on.	Downward holds are lost and your ropes are poorly placed. Must go up. Cannot assist others with this climb. They must roll separately.	Fully extended. Can't dyno, must grip and move forward within 1d10 seconds.	Fall. You scream as you go. Referee may trigger an encounter.	Fall, dislodging chunks. Roll 1d6 attacks against anyone standing below, doing 1d6 damage each and the Referee may roll encounter die.
CHA	Your flailing dislodges someone else; they roll too.	Your flailing dislodges someone else; they must roll on this table. You must choose who you dislodge.	You drop a random item. It hits someone below. (If you fall then you hit them. Share falling damage equally.)	Shameful flailing. If someone has you roped, they either let you go or fall themselves. Their choice. No one observing you will trust your choice of route.	Impossible situation and compounded poor choices cause you to lose all confidence and self-will. Your muscles spasm and you fall from shame. Observers test morale. Retainers may flee. PCs must fight at -1 level for a day.	Total mental breakdown leading to world-famous fuckup. You fall. If any NPC observes this it becomes appended to your name in life or death.

ENCOUNTER CHART

1D50	CAVE SHAPE	1D50	KINDS OF STONE
1	Rappel shaped like liquid poured from a curved glass	1	Petal-pink marble, almost glows
2	Splayed toad	2	Limestone stained with black clawing growths
3	Wine bottle on its side	3	Limestone stained with bright primary-colour chemicals
4	Sauce pan with lid and extra handle	4	Grim grey granite, quartz crystals like diamond eyes
5	Mouse sleeping	5	Densely fossil'd, Trilobite graveyard
6	Ladies' high-heeled shoe	6	Polished anthracite, mirror smooth
7	A strawberry	7	Storm-shaded slate in flaking cakes
8	Theatre-shaped space	8	Tusk-coloured limestone
9	Elephant-trunk shaft, bends, narrows and twists	9	Moon-bright calcite, slick and wet
10	Sea urchin	10	Tactile soapstone the colour of sick milk
11	Spread-fingered hand held palm-up	11	Beach-yellow sandstone, easily abraded by touch
12	Saxophone	12	Black calcite stained by oil and ash
13	Chain of pearls	13	Dark-blue granite like a late summer sky
14	Cow's udder	14	Limestone, beautifully banded like infinite cake
15	Upside-down blowfish with exits at eyes	15	Haematite veins glinting like stained silver
16	Bunny head	16	Fossilised guano floor and white-streaked walls
17	Squat, globular like a lead ball in a cradle of tubes	17	White, sharp, delicate gypsum flowers
18	Old-style telephone receiver	18	Ropes of entangled black lava in organic twists
19	Two cherries on a split stem	19	Star-bright fool's-gold-gleam in dark volcanic stone
20	Hammerhead shark	20	Limestone in sea-shaded intersecting rills
21	Big headphones	21	Limestone stained the colour of autumnal leaves
22	Eye-dropper	22	Coquina, Crumbly-jumbly conglomerate of coral shell
23	Toucan	23	Gleaming white calcite boxwork, shining water-slick
24	Three legged stool	24	Paper-white limestone stained by copper like a leaking pen
25	A bear with exits at nose and toes	25	Grey limestone, white calcite cysts like organic growths
26	Lip-island on roaring abyssal falls	26	Streaked with veins disclosing semiprecious gems
27	Crossed swords	27	Obsidian, polished into smooth razors
28	Lung-shaped	28	Rainbow-banded speleothems stained by unseen ores
29	Ring with a big diamond on it	29	Black basalt, ridged and frictive like a vinyl disc
30	J-curve ski jump slope, widowmaker at the peak	30	Cloud-coloured granite with black pyroxene and white quartz
31	Spine	31	Lumpen granite, grey, obsidian shards like tears in space
32	Two bells touching	32	Blinding, hand-staining halogen-white chalk
33	Barbell-shaped with linking tube	33	Red sandstone with fossilised trackmarks
34	Bat with wings spread	34	Pale gigantic bone, the cave a gnawed-away space inside
35	Lightning bolt	35	Ore-rich stone, black unlightable ferric walls
36	Pistol	36	Calm claystone the shade of earthenware
37	Muffin-shaped, walls bow out in a rim around the top	37	Coal cave, black and glimmering
38	Inverted giraffe	38	Rust, and beneath it, ancient steel
39	Two fish-hooks meshed	39	Banded serpentinite in tight green/black waves like EEGs
40	The inside of an inverse pyramid	40	Limestone with ghastly yellow sulphur rot
41	Rib-cage cave like the inside of a gigantic corpse	41	Stained flowstone glowing red-black-red like old blood
42	Vertical narrows like the cheese linking lifted pizza bits	42	Brown mudstone, frozen in its swampy wallows
43	Martini glass	43	Oil shale, dangerous, unstable, seeping black
44	An octopus with narrowing limbs leading off in a star	44	Limestone pyritised and filigreed in fool's gold
45	A U-bend on its side	45	Granite braided with veins of strangely stained ore
46	The inside of a vending machine, easily climbable	46	Limestone, colour of a ruined screen
47	A nautilus shell with smashable interior walls	47	Multicoloured sandstone formed from sedimented trash glass
48	A huge hourglass	48	Claystone the colour of old books, soft
49	Tall thin vertical caves linked by crawls top and bottom	49	Sea-shaded siltstone in gradual bands
50	Ice cream cone piercing the ice cream of another beneath	50	Limestone with green olivine like leaves of climbing plants

IN THE VEINS

1D50	SMELLS & SOUNDS · A LIVING THING	1D50
1	Smell: bitter sea. Sound: faint fizzling. An Alkalion.	1
2	Smell: darkest crypt. Sound: cackling. An Anglerlich.	2
3	Smell: cold ash. Sound: a dead tongue. The AntiPhoenix.	3
4	Smell: libraries and rot. Sound: tapping sticks. Arachnopolis Rex.	4
5	Smell: coins on the tongue. Sound: clean flame. Id4 Archeans.	5
6	Sound: skull-received radio noise. A hive of Atomic Bees.	6
7	A Gigaferret, stealth 5 in 6.	7
8	Smell: soot, chalk and oil. Sound: grating, wheezing. A Cancer Bear.	8
9	Smell: clean toilets. Sound: 'tk tk tk'. 4d6 Cambrimen.	9
10	Sound: metal grating on stone. A Castilian Caddis Larva.	10
11	Smell: shit, blood, pus. Sound: Moans, gasps. Id100 Cholerids.	11
12	Smell: old books, incense, blood. Sound: rushing wind. The Civilopede.	12
13	Smell: turned earth. Sound: mud cracking. A Cromagnogolem.	13
14	Smell: cold rancid meat. Sound: ultrasonic whirrs. 3d4 Egg Dead.	14
15	Smell: your own memories. Entry to an Eigengrau Lair	15
16	Smell: bad medication. Sound: stone on bone. Id4(ex) Fossil Vampires.	16
17	Sound: two voices linked. A Fungal Ambassodile.	17
18	Smell: mushrooms. Id20 Funginid Slaves and Leader.	18
19	Smell: attics and empty rooms. Stealth 5 in 6, A Gegenschein.	19
20	Sound: rocks in a rotating drum. A Gilgamash.	20
21	Smell: burning plastics factory. Sound: insectoid chattering. An Igneous Wrath.	21
22	Smell: Sulphur. Sound: primal phonemes. Id20 Ignimbrite Mites.	22
23	Smell: faint antiseptic ointment. 4d4 Knotsmen.	23
24	Smell: oil and guano. Sound: madness. Entry to a Lamenter Roost.	24
25	Smell: fresh refrigerated meat. Stealth 4 in 6, Mantis Shrimp.	25
26	Smell: almost human. Sound: fluting voices. 4d4 Meanderthals.	26
27	A Mondmilch pool.	27
28	Smell: ghost of a human scent. 4d4 Olm.	28
29	Smell: oil and iron blood. Sound: wine glass rims. An Oneirocetacean.	29
30	Smell: dead bodies. Sound: screaming. A Panic Attack Jack.	30
31	Someone takes your hand. A Phantom Hand of Gargas	31
32	Smell: pungent yeast. Sound: throat-choke grunts. 3d6 Psychomycosis Megaspores.	32
33	Smell: ash and old blood. Sound: broken animal growls. 4d4 Pyroclastic Ghouls.	33
34	Smell: faint clean hospitals. Sound: falling glass. A Radiolarian.	34
35	Hear: soft ridiculous plops. 3d20 Scissorfish.	35
36	Smell: tin burning. Sound: a furnace screaming. Id4 Sillichominids.	36
37	Smell: pigs. Sound: notable and extreme. 5d8 Sonic Pigs.	37
38	Smell: mortuary spices. Sound: babybones clattering. The Spectre of the Bröcken.	38
39	Smell: burning stone. Sound: lead bells. Id50 Splinterlads.	39
40	Smell: dogs and chlorine. Sound: scrabbling, panting. 4d6 Spotlight Dogs.	40
41	Sound: a distant screaming from above. A Still-Tor-Man.	41
42	Smell: greasy static charge. Sound: plinking glass. Id50 Stormsheep.	42
43	Smell: yeast. Sound: harsh animal voice. A Tachyon Troll.	43
44	Smell: formaldehyde, ammonia and blood. Sound: a wet shoe. A Tetracharcarodron.	44
45	Smell: old schoolrooms. Sound: deep thumping. TitanSkull Hermit Crab.	45
46	Sound: clacking, tapping. 4d4 ToRaptoise.	46
47	Smell: a little salt. Sound: faint clattering. A Trilobite-Knight.	47
48	Smell: sick children. A Trogloraptor.	48
49	Smell: musty cupboards. Sound: slight fluttering. 5d50 Ultraviolet Butterflies.	49
50	Smell: dry chalk. Sound: scrapes and grates. 2d4 Zombie Coral.	50

ONE HUNDRED ENCOUNTERS

1D100	ENCOUNTER	1D100	ENCOUNTER
1	Cancer bear camouflaged in carved marble.	51	Muttering voices ghost to you through the walls.
2	Crin's Crack, three miles long, one deep, four feet wide.	52	Gold-guarding golems confused by a rhyme.
3	Giant-Saint's tomb, safe retreat for those unarmed.	53	A silver thread leads through the shadow gate.
4	Silk-train of guarded slaves in single file.	54	Alric the organist pipes in his tomb.
5	Temple to the Void God, empty when full.	55	Riddle-Twist caverns are half-drowned, but safe.
6	Sombre Substratal anchorite, enraged.	56	Murdered clones of you, naked, stripped and torn.
7	Tombs of the Sphere-Lords, empty now, and smooth.	57	Hoarders of the mist-mould, under attack.
8	Umbral-Town, arranged in shadowed segments.	58	The Fear-King flees and begs for vengeful swords.
9	Blind Masons, traipsing and talking of stone.	59	Mobius-Fort of the Queen that wove time?
10	Olm on a vision-quest, what does he see?	60	The Arsenic road will get you there, half dead.
11	Ælf-Adal slavers are waiting for you.	61	The darkness here cups lamps and puts them out.
12	Mermaid Falls, water singing over bone.	62	Murdered map-merchant, his secrets un-found.
13	Igneous-Villa, civilised and Black.	63	The wing of a dead moth reveals a plot.
14	The MoonMaster General with his white guard.	64	Undead thieves guard the Twisted God's crown vault.
15	Temple to an expunged god, sunk long past.	65	Dive the vertical Archipelago.
16	Husks of boys, abandoned by the child-thief.	66	Walls scarred by something trying to get away.
17	Foxfire warrens, threats hide within the lights.	67	Thastrovect, the risk-mad gambling Lich.
18	Ælf-Wait city, sinking slowly in time.	68	The ghoul-priest gasps his final secret out.
19	Archean adventurers, statue-slow.	69	This maze hides Life-Knights, honourable undead.
20	Time's mandala, its never-ceasing monks.	70	Black-Smoker climb leads to Sulphurous wealth.
21	Morlocks with night-lamps and eye-seeking darts.	71	An evil Lord that hails you with your crimes.
22	The fortress-climb of Uncle Spine, well hid.	72	Robuskinot, the fence of stolen spells.
23	City of the Opaque Eye, ruled by Doom.	73	The waterfall hides secret city gates.
24	Olm on an epic migration rappel.	74	The Palace of Sighs is ruled by a Ghost.
25	Prison of the Daemon Choir, feared by all.	75	Insanity Crawl cannot be climbed sane.
26	Death dervish suicide squad, ride spiders.	76	Escaped slaves scream at the sight of you; flee.
27	Subducted Rocket Silo, ancient make.	77	Deep Janeen drifting on his carpet of gold.
28	Dugout town, built in old workings of war.	78	Hot girls in danger from a secret foe.
29	Bat-Riders, taking the tunnels at speed.	79	The Maze-Monkey made his own, and hides still.
30	Sacristy of Gloom, cloaked in sombre light.	80	This sinkhole takes you past Hell, but it's fast.
31	A Speleo-Mage and her seven thieves.	81	Sorcerer's Delve with beings of horrid light.
32	Tumour-Mound of the Termites Chaotic.	82	Fleeing thief, highly skilled, nearly dead, rich.
33	Mirror-Ville, accessed through volcanic glass.	83	The mine-monk holds heretic hordes at bay.
34	Stew-merchants carting their cauldron of slops.	84	Port-Vertical is empty now, and still.
35	The Energy Saint's electrical prayers.	85	The silk-bridge spiders charge a fleshy toll.
36	Frantic Cambrimen looking for a fight.	86	The Psy-Lord's Mind-Mines; cyclic escapees.
37	Shifting conch-cave of the stone-smuggling thieves.	87	Devils-Financial, disguised as things meek.
38	Hell-Town, kept by Cop Daemons bound in pairs.	88	The merchant's guards are dead, the bandits too.
39	Sleepy mage, cradled in her golem's arms.	89	The Sons of the Consuming One wait here.
40	Touch-Cut braille stone of the blind creator.	90	White-Diamond river hides silent stone isles.
41	A wall-crawling cannibal's quiet crusade.	91	The flesh-rift and its delicate consent.
42	Cavern-plain of endlessly shifting stone.	92	Seller of swords; broken, brittle, bejewelled.
43	Fishing village hidden under the falls.	93	Dragon seeks recruits, interviews in dreams.
44	Crime Bird rules a wandering orphan tribe.	94	This truth-obsessed Ælf broods still in her Hall.
45	The Lama-Troll, regenerating dreams.	95	A Frost-Giant ferry wades the fire, for gold.
46	Lamenters and lunatics migrating.	96	Signs of your passage where never you were.
47	Cave of Neutrality (not much goes on).	97	Phat-stacked abandoned aristocrat cats.
48	Cold-Volcano market of slaves and souls.	98	Abduct a princess, fat reward, you in?
49	Library of slaves, each memorised books.	99	The mage's labours hid a mighty Delve.
50	Lone child whose guard is the border of night.	100	Gigaplex Rapids need pilots with Math

THE ENDLESS DESCENT

At the deepest point of the dungeon, behind the throne, beyond the rooms where the battles took place, after everything is done and the enemy dead, there is a crack. A black empty space where the wall joins the stone floor, a foot and a half high and three wide. A breeze comes out. You'd never notice it. You could lie on your belly and fit inside.

IT NEVER ENDS

You have existed, up to this point, on the illusion of a plane, bordered by mountains, rivers, seas or the politics of maps, and this life has been a lie. Its borders are made up, its seas are gateways, its mountains are cradles of deep life. There is no plane.

You were raised within a history running back through recorded time, written in ink, carved in stone, scooped from clay, hidden in songs. Your primal myths are an eye-blink of the memory of that place. Your history is a candle burning out.

The real world, the deeper, more true world, is bordered only by light above and fire below, and perhaps not even by that.

*When you loathe gold for its weight and count your wealth by a radius of illuminated rock and think yourself lucky to do so, then you have passed into the **VEINS OF THE EARTH**.*

Expertly written and profusely illustrated by the veteran team of Patrick Stuart and Scrap Princess (*Deep Carbon Observatory* and *Fire on the Velvet Horizon*), **VEINS OF THE EARTH** is the most important and comprehensive guide ever published for gaming in the depths of the earth. Included in this essential work:

- *A detailed survey of over fifty new monsters and a half dozen cultures that lurk in the Veins.*
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