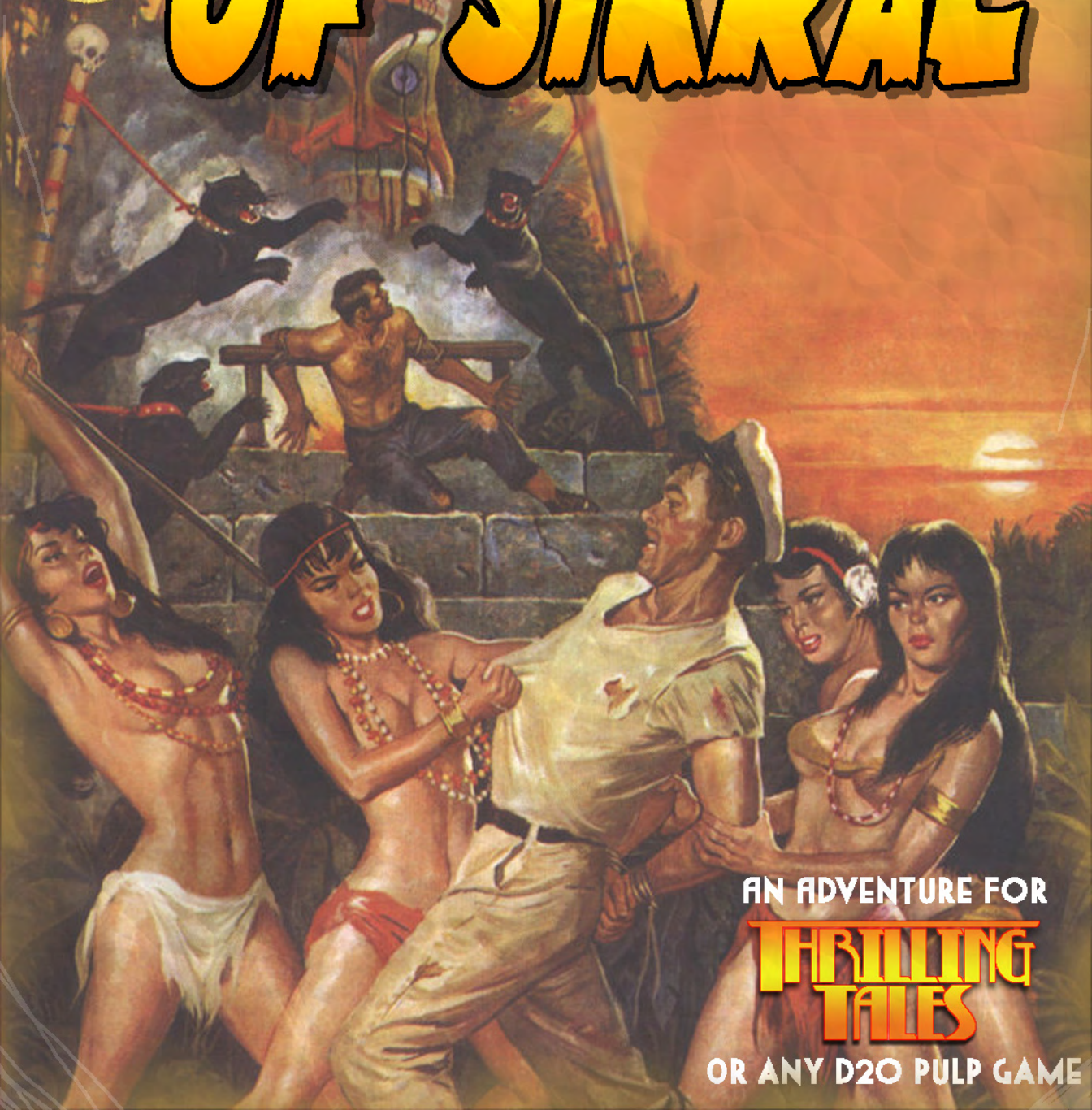




THE GOLDEN IDOL OF SIKRAL

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AN ADVENTURE FOR

**THRILLING
TALES**

OR ANY D20 PULP GAME

THE GOLDEN IDOL OF SIKRAL

by
Steven S. Long

When the review of a dead professor's papers reveals wrongdoing, the PCs find themselves chasing his unscrupulous nephew to Central America and into a long-lost valley where an ancient civilization unknown to modern man still lives. There they must explore — and survive — the temple of the frog-god Síkrál to prove themselves the true friends of the tribe and ensure that the professor's legacy is not exploited and destroyed.

BACKGROUND

Deep within the jungles of Nicaragua there once lived a people known as the Quicháru. Although they traded extensively with the Maya, the Aztecs, and various South American tribes, they remain almost unknown to modern men. Unlike the Aztecs, Mayans, and Incans, they did not build large stone cities (only a few step-pyramid temples); their writing mostly

carved notches in wood, was not permanent enough to survive until the twentieth century; their stone carvings are mainly symbolic and religious, not representational or historical. The only depictions of them are in a few Mayan murals.

One man, Professor Anderson Brisby, made it his life's work to rediscover this forgotten civilization. Using only the scraps of data he could gather from Mayan murals, he began to search for the remains of the Quicháru. While exploring the wilds of Nicaragua he came across a remote valley, hidden under jungle growth and a covering of misty clouds. Descending into it, he found not the ruins of the Quicháru civilization, but the Quicháru themselves! For centuries one last tribe of Quicháru have lived in that valley, isolated from the outside world, carrying on their native traditions and worshipping their gods, including

SPIRIT OF THE CENTURY

This adventure, and each subsequent adventure released by Adamant Entertainment in the coming year, is dual-statted. In addition to the original system, the adventure also features stats for the **FATE** system used in ***Spirit of the Century***, from Evil Hat Productions.

Information specific to SOTC games can be found in grey boxes like this one throughout the text.

the three most important ones: Ab Kínchel, the feathered serpent, god of wind and rain; Yuhásin, god of crafts and wisdom; and Sikrál, the golden frog, god of fertility and power.

Professor Brisby spent several years among the Quicháru, learning their language and their ways. He was especially fascinated by the cult of Sikrál, the chief of their gods and the one most often depicted in idols and temples. The old step-pyramid temple of Sikrál, several miles away from the Quicháru village, was no longer used by the tribe. Centuries ago, the last of the priests died without passing on the knowledge of the deadly traps that guarded its inner sanctum, reputed to hold great wealth, and no Quicháru has even dared to climb up the pyramid's side since. Professor Brisby carefully recorded all the legends about the temple, including one about a fabulous idol of Sikrál, made of solid gold, which supposedly was hidden there. He even sketched the idol based on word-of-mouth descriptions and surviving stone statues of the god: a golden frog, about 5" x 5" x 5", with a wide-open mouth and solid emeralds for eyes.

Brisby finally returned home to tell the world about his findings. In fact, he wrote a book describing all aspects of the Quicháru civilization. But he pushed himself too hard, causing the malaria he contracted in Central America to recur again and again. Shortly after he finished the book his frail body succumbed to the disease, and he passed away. His will left his anthropological legacy to the university he'd been associated with for decades.

Unfortunately, before Professor Brisby's papers could be inventoried, his unscrupulous nephew Randolph got into his study. In need of money to finance his gambling debts, Randolph was captivated by the Professor's elaborate descriptions of the Quichárus' golden "trinkets." He stole the book and flew to Nicaragua. He found the Quicháru and wormed his way into their society, becoming a trusted

SECRET SQUADRON MEMBERS:

Set your Decoder to Code X-4:

**3-18-18 21-26-17-21-23-22-15-1-
19-15-16-5-21 12-15-18-18
17-7 7-4-19-7-5-20-7-20
19-14-22-16-26-8-14 5-7-4-19
2-7-3-22!**



advisor to the chief, Five Deer, just like his uncle had been. He now schemes to steal all the wealth of the friendly tribesmen and make his way back to civilization a rich man.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

One or more PCs become involved in Professor Brisby's estate. Several months after the Professor's death, the PC who's been working with Brisby's papers realizes something's missing: the book the professor had planned to write, and to which his notes make numerous references. After they talk to several of Brisby's friends and servants, the PCs learn that Randolph went into Brisby's study and spent several hours there the day before the reading of the will. When they investigate Randolph, they uncover his sudden departure and his gambling debts.

Realizing what's happened, the PCs set out on Randolph Brisby's trail. They must travel to Managua, Nicaragua, and thence to the Valley of the Quicháru. But Randolph is ready for them. He told the Quicháru evil men who wanted to hurt them would follow him. The Quicháru, thinking him their friend, believe him.

When they see the PCs, they take them captive. If the PCs are foolish enough to fight back, they end up looking like pincushions. The PCs are brought before Five Deer and Randolph, who denounces them. But the PCs, having studied Professor Brisby's notes, know enough of the Quicháru and their language to respond and challenge Randolph.

The PCs' knowledge of his tribe's customs and language confuses Five Deer. He decrees that the PCs must be tested to determine whether they speak the truth. At Randolph's suggestion, the test is this: they have to enter the temple of Sikrál and bring back the golden idol! After being taken to the pyramid, the PCs climb to the top and find the way to enter the "inner sanctum." There they must confront and defeat a series of traps based on Quicháru myth, find the idol, avoid one last trap, and leave with the golden frog in their hands. Once they return to the village, Randolph is judged to be a liar and is cast out. The heroes return home with several Quicháru artifacts and a wealth of knowledge about this new and fascinating civilization.



PART ONE: JOURNEY TO THE LOST VALLEY

The adventure begins a few months after the death of Professor Anderson Brisby, an explorer and anthropologist who specialized in the Americas. He died as a result of repeated bouts of malaria weakening him over the last half-year or so before his death.

During his long career, Prof. Brisby visited much of Central and South America, made many friends, and wrote a dozen books concerning the history and tribes of the region. While he made no Earth-shattering discoveries, he did much to advance mankind's knowledge of his chosen subject. (If possible, introduce an elderly Prof. Brisby as a friendly NPC prior to this scenario, so his death will have more meaning for the heroes.)

At the request of the university Prof. Brisby worked for, a PC (or PCs) who's a known expert in the field of anthropology has been inventorying his papers and belongings to determine what may be worth publishing, and what should be archived. (If no PC is appropriate for this role, use a friendly NPC who reports his findings to the PCs.) After weeks of work, the hero has come to a conclusion: something's missing. Some of Brisby's notes on a subject that had long intrigued him — the enigmatic Quicháru people, who died out centuries ago — were organized as if he intended to write a book on the subject. The notes have some intriguing mentions of the Quicháru, including references to their gold jewelry and a "golden frog god," but there are odd gaps in them. The more the PC has worked with the Professor's papers, the more certain he's become of an unsettling conclusion: Brisby *did* write a book about the Quicháru... but it's been stolen.

INVESTIGATING THE THEFT

Having realized that Professor Brisby's definitive work on the Quicháru, the only book ever written about that tribe, is missing, it's up to the PCs to find it. Time for them to put on their investigators' hats and look into the situation.

The obvious first step is to interview the Professor's associates. He mostly worked at his large country home, where he had a staff of five servants, but he also maintained an office at the university and often did research in its library.

Interviews of the Professor's colleagues at the university, the librarians there, and his students turn up nothing. He hasn't confided in any of them about his recent work; in fact, he was unusually secretive about it, as if he had a big academic surprise planned.

Interviews of the Professor's servants — a butler, two maids, a cook, and a gardener — prove more fruitful, if the PCs ask the right questions. Both the butler and one of the maids witnessed something important. When they found the Professor's body in his bedroom, they called the authorities and his next of kin, his nephew Randolph Brisby. (When Randolph's name is mentioned, have the PCs interviewing them make Sense Motive check (DC 15). If they succeed, they notice that both the butler and the maid bristle a little at the mention of Randolph's name; they don't seem to like him)

Randolph arrived first, checked on his uncle's body in the bedroom, then ducked into the Professor's study and shut the door. He was in there for about 10 minutes, then emerged

with a valise he didn't have previously and left before the police arrived. No one's seen or heard from him since.

RANDOLPH BRISBY

This information should be enough to tip off the PCs to the fact that Randolph stole the Professor's completed book manuscript and some of his more important notes. That should shift their focus into investigating him.

Randolph lives in a nice, though not luxurious, apartment in a well-to-do neighborhood of the campaign city. He doesn't have a job; he lives off a small but adequate trust fund established for him by his late parents. As the Professor's servants can tell the PCs, he liked to live beyond his means, and was fond of fast living and Jazz Age fun; the Professor had to bail him out of tight spots with loans on several occasions.

If the heroes hit the streets and succeed with a Gather Information check (DC 20), they'll learn an interesting fact: Randolph was an inveterate gambler, and not a very good one. In fact, over the past year he's racked up a debt of nearly \$10,000 in a couple of underground casinos owned by the Fratianno mob, and the Fratiannos have been looking for him to get their money... or blood.

OFF TO NICARAGUA

By this point, if the PCs haven't figured out what happened, have them make Intelligence check (DC 15), with a +2 Circumstance Bonus. PCs with Investigation may use that skill instead, with the same DC and bonus. If they succeed, they realize Randolph stole the Professor's book and notes, which probably mentioned some sort of valuable relics, and headed off to Central America to try to find the treasure to pay off his gambling debts and set himself up in a better lifestyle. If the heroes want to recover the book... and maybe the treasures!... for posterity, they're going to have to move quickly!

Drawing the clues require several Investigation rolls -- a Fair roll will lead the PCs to the Servants, where a Fair Investigation or Empathy roll will reveal the fact that none of the servants like Randolph Brisby very much.

Investigation of Brisby will rake a Good Investigation roll to reveal the connection to the Fratianno mob. The realization that Randolph stole the book (assuming the players haven't already figured it out) only requires a Fair roll.

Getting to Nicaragua is a relatively easy matter even if the PCs don't have their own team plane or anything like that. From any major airport in the United States they can arrange a flight (though it will take several "hops" to get to Managua); from any port they can obtain passage by ship, which would take 4 to 8 days, depending on the location of the port and the quality of the vessel.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, is still rebuilding and recovering from a devastating March, 1931 earthquake. However, the PCs should have little trouble finding a hotel they can stay at and obtaining the guides and bearers they're going to need — all they have to do is spread enough cordobas around and many doors will open.

Nicaragua itself leads a chaotic existence. As of 1935, American troops have been withdrawn. General Anastasio Somoza's forces killed rebel leader Augusto Sandino in February, 1934, but the rebels continue to struggle against the government of President Juan Sarcasa (who in June, 1936 will be deposed by Somoza).

If you want to extend or expand the adventure, you can embroil the PCs in all of this. For

example, maybe a group of rebels (or bandits masquerading as rebels) takes the heroes prisoner during the trek to the valley of the Quicháru, forcing the PCs to think quickly and fight bravely to escape with their lives, employees, and baggage train intact. Even worse, the rebels might capture them after they're returning from the valley laden with treasure....

TRACKING RANDOLPH

Once the PCs are on the ground in Nicaragua, they can start asking around about Randolph Brisby. If they succeed with a Gather Information check (DC 20), they learn that Randolph was in the city roughly a week ago, hired a group of bearers, and set off into the jungle. No one's seen or heard from him since. GM's may see fit to raise the DC if the PCs do not speak Spanish or lack the good sense to hire a native to help them.

Again, Investigation rolls apply here, requiring a Good result.

FINDING THE QUICHARU

Following Randolph's trail and locating the Valley of the Quicháru requires two things. First, the heroes have to figure out which way to go — they can't just hike blindly into the jungle and trust to good luck.

Fortunately, they have the bulk of Professor Brisby's notes. With a Research check (DC 20), a hero can pull together enough references from the notes to assemble a reasonably trustworthy map to the Valley of Quicháru. PCs with at least 5 ranks of Decipher Script should receive a +2 synergy bonus to the check. As always, the PCs may opt to take 20 on this roll, in which case it takes them 1d4x20 hours worth effort to put together the map.

Putting together a trustworthy map to the Valley of Quicháru should take a Good Academics roll.

Based on Brisby's notes, the heroes estimate it will take about a week to hike into the interior and find the Valley... assuming no difficulties (foul weather, bandits, getting lost...) arise along the way.

Second, they have to outfit an expedition. This means hiring guides, bearers, and translators who can speak the dialects of the countryside folk and the languages of the native tribes, buying or renting mules and horses, buying food and other supplies, and so forth. This, too, will take from one to three days.



PART TWO: VALLEY OF THE QUICHARU

Unless you want to add some scenes or lengthen the adventure as described above, at this point you can probably fast-forward to when the heroes reach the Valley. Throw in a few minor trail encounters (a venomous serpent that almost bites a PC, a particularly beautiful waterfall, a bearer and mule falling off a slippery mountain trail to their doom...) to add some color if you like.

Eventually the heroes find themselves standing on the edge of a large, fog-shrouded valley. It's been an arduous trek to get here; it's not surprising the Quicháru have remained isolated and undiscovered for so long. Off in the distance... is that the top of a pyramid-temple peeking through the fog?

Eager to reach the end of their journey, the heroes take the barely-visible trail leading into the valley. They proceed down the trail, slowly and cautiously, for several hours. Eventually they reach a small clearing that looks like a good place to stop and rest for a while.

CAPTIVES!

Suddenly, the hairs on the backs of their necks start to tingle... something's not right here! (The PC's should make Spot checks, opposed by the Quicháru warriors Hide checks to determine if they are surprised or not.) Without warning a large group of native warriors steps almost-silently out of the forest around the clearing – they're all around the heroes. The natives are pointing bows with drawn arrows at the PCs and their bearers, but that's the extent of their hostility. Before any of the heroes gets trigger happy, have them make Sense Motive checks (DC 15) to realize that if the natives just wanted to kill them, they'd have started firing from the cover of the forest.

If the PCs are foolish enough to try to fight their way out of this one, they're going to end up looking like pincushions. For every member of the party there should be at least 1d3+1 warriors. Assuming they take the party by surprise or win initiative, they will Ready an action to fire their bows if the PC's attack. The only sensible course of action is surrender; if necessary, have the heroes make WIS or INT checks (DC 15) to realize this if the players have lost their grasp of the obvious. It's okay; it happens to Pulp heroes all the time.

Once the (surviving) heroes surrender, the Quicháru leader will order them to kneel on the ground so that his warriors can tie them up. At this point, the hero who's been inventorying Professor Brisby's papers, and any other hero working closely with him on that project, discovers that a little knowledge has rubbed off on him — he can understand Quicháru speech, albeit haltingly. He understands enough to get the gist of the leader's orders and communicate them to the other PCs. (Similarly, those PCs know a little about the customs and civilization of the Quicháru.)

Once all the heroes and their bearers have been restrained, the Quicháru warriors will frog-march them further into the valley. Reaching the village of the Quicháru takes only a couple more hours.

The Quicháru warriors are Good minions, organized into two groups of three for every Player Character present. (Just in case your players get foolish and start a combat...)

FIVE DEER

The warriors “escort” the heroes into the Quicháru village and right up to a large home on a hill in the center of town — the house of the Quicháru chieftain or king, obviously. If you’d like to add an element of romance to the adventure, have a comely Quicháru maiden notice and fall for a handsome hero as the PCs are led through town.

In the walled compound right inside the main entrance of the king’s house, the heroes are made to kneel once more. Once they’re on the ground, the chieftain, Five Deer, emerges from inside the house. He’s an old man, probably in his fifties, with greying hair and plenty of wrinkles and scars to show he’s lived a long, hard life. He’s got a certain regal bearing about him and is wearing much finer clothing than the other Quicháru the heroes have seen.

Accompanying Five Deer is a white man the PCs instantly recognize as Randolph Brisby — he looks a good bit like his uncle. He’s clutching a thick leather valise and sweating in the tropical heat. He looks a little nervous to see the heroes, but is obviously “in good” with Five Deer.

If any PC tries to speak to him, a native warrior attempts to whack that PC in the head with the butt of his spear for 1d6 nonlethal damage; repeated attempts to speak will earn further beating of increasing severity.

This will be a rap on the head for health stress damage.

After Five Deer’s had the chance to look at the PCs, Randolph Brisby begins talking to him earnestly in Quicháru. Any heroes that can understand the language (in bits and pieces because they have studied Professor Brisby’s notes or because they have the Linguist Smart hero talent) quickly get the impression that

Randolph is denouncing them. The GM may also allow a Dedicated hero with the Empathy talent to make a Sense Motive check (DC 20) to come to a similar conclusion.

A Good Academics or Empathy roll will provide the desired result.

He’s warning Five Deer that the heroes have come to steal his land and enslave his people, that they’re known criminals in the outside world. After he speaks urgently for a minute or so, Five Deer raises a hand and he instantly stops talking.

Five Deer looks back at the heroes. In halting English (taught to him by Professor Brisby) he asks, “Why come here?” The heroes now have a chance to explain themselves. If they can do so in Quicháru, they will earn a look of surprise, perhaps even appreciation. Whichever hero does the talking (or most of the talking) should make a Diplomacy check. A hero with 5 or more ranks in Bluff gets a +2 synergy bonus to this roll, with another +2 circumstance bonus for speaking Quicháru, if appropriate.

This should be handled by a Rapport check, against Five Deer’s Resolve. (Five Deers stats can be found in the appendix of this adventure)

PCs may use Empathy or Academics as a complimentary skill to this roll.

IF THE ROLL FAILS

Failure means the chief believes Randolph and distrusts the heroes. (He has no particular reason to distrust Randolph; he's the nephew of a great man Five Deer considers a friend and has done nothing deceitful... yet.) He decrees that the heroes must be tested "according to the ancient ritual" the next morning.

The PCs are allowed to sleep (under heavy guard) in one of the huts. They are being watched at all times, but they can try to mount an escape if they like. The odds are strongly against them, and it's probably the end of the adventure if they succeed, but you never know what may happen. If possible, try to roll with their plans and give the Quicháru a chance to see that they're honorable people so Five Deer's willing to let them enter the temple, as described below.

If the PCs wait for the "ancient ritual," they're awakened at dawn and led to the center of the village. There the shaman has built a fire in a large stone bowl. The ritual is simple: one of the heroes must reach into the fire, grab one of the burning coals, and hold it aloft without crying out in pain or letting the expression on his face change. If he can do that, the tribe is willing to let the heroes prove themselves more trustworthy than Randolph.

To pass the test, one of the PCs must succeed with a Fortitude or Will Save (PCs choice, DC 20). Despite the fact that they may take no damage, even Tough heroes with the Fire Resistance talent will still feel the pain and need to make the roll. Failure means the Quicháru execute the heroes by throwing them off a tall cliff onto jagged rocks. Hopefully the heroes have a few Action Points to spend to avoid that unpleasant fate.

The hero who grasps the coal takes 1 point of fire damage; Treat Injury cannot heal this damage. For the rest of the adventure, any

DEX checks or skill checks involving the use of that hand suffer a -2 penalty.

The test is a contest of the hero's Resolve or Endurance (player's choice), requiring a Good result. The hero will take a single mild consequence -- "Burned Hand" -- as a result.

IF THE ROLL SUCCEEDS

If the hero's speech rings true, Five Deer begins to have doubts about Randolph. Maybe these new outlanders are speaking the truth. After all, this Randolph seems to be a pale shadow of his fine uncle. The heroes deserve a chance to prove that they do not intend the Quicháru any harm — and, in fact, that they're willing to help the tribe. "Your word sound noble," he says. "Tomorrow have chance prove worthy, prove friend of Quicháru."

The PCs are allowed to sleep (under heavy guard) in one of the huts. They're watched, but not as closely as if the chief distrusted them. Still, the odds of an escape are poor... and in any event, why escape when things seem to be going....if not well, at least not dismally?

If you had a pretty Quicháru girl notice one of the handsome male PCs earlier, this is a perfect time to bring her back into the story. At an opportune moment she sneaks into the hut and brings the PC some food, and perhaps a little advice.

PART THREE: THE TEMPLE OF SIKRÁL

Quicháru warriors awaken the heroes at dawn. They're led back to Five Deer's house, where the warriors free them from their bonds. If they give their word to do no harm to the chief or his people, Five Deer will give them back their weapons and gear — over Randolph's strident objections.

The chief now explains what the heroes must do to prove themselves trustworthy and a friend of the Quicháru. "To sun-set is temple of Sikrál." He points in that direction; the PCs can just see the top of the temple-pyramid they noticed on entering the valley through the morning fog. "Old temple. Not used by Quicháru any more. Cursed. But still golden idol of Sikrál is there. Must enter temple, get idol, bring idol to Quicháru, break curse."

With that, the Quicháru feed the heroes a breakfast of fruit, and then a large troop of warriors escorts them to the temple. The warriors obviously aren't happy about the job — they clearly don't want to get anywhere near the temple — but they do as Five Deer orders.

THE TEMPLE

The temple of Sikrál is a large step-pyramid with a small structure on top, similar in most ways to certain Aztec and Mayan structures. Each of the steps is about 13 feet tall, and

there are ten of them. A staircase leads up the temple to the top, where it terminates just before a large rectangular altar. Even today, after countless rains and exposure to the sun, dark bloodstains are readily apparent on the top of the altar and running down both edges of the staircase.

The warriors (none of whom speak English) motion the heroes up the stairs. To get into the temple, the heroes must walk to the top, enter the tiny structure behind the altar, and find the concealed door that reveals the stairway going down.

When the heroes first enter the tiny, dark structure (it's about 10' x 5', roughly the size of a car), they disturb a colony of bats that roost inside. You can play this for fright, humor, or however you wish.

Concealed in the floor is a stone trapdoor that gives access to a spiral staircase. Finding it requires a successful Search check (DC 20). There are no traps on the door or anywhere else in this little room. The trapdoor weighs just over 2200 lbs. As such, it requires a STR of 28 to lift it. Obviously, several characters can work together to achieve this task.



Finding the door -- a Good Alertness roll.

Opening the door -- Weight Factor 14.

THE SECOND LEVEL

The spiral staircase leads down about 70-80 feet into a large chamber. The column around which the stair winds is lightly carved with scenes of Quicháru warriors, gods, demons, and monsters. The figure ornate garments including a pectoral in the shape of a frog's head — appears frequently. The staircase is open, with no railing, so they may fall off if they're not careful, if you want to add a note of danger. There's no light in the room at all, so they'll need torches or lanterns (which they hopefully thought to include with their gear. The stair terminates at the floor below (or so it appears now...).

The heroes may suspect that there's a trap on the stairs... and they're right. About a third of the way down to the room below, one of the steps is a pressure-plate that triggers a group of spear-like spikes to project out of the central column. The character on that step and the two above him have a chance to be hit by the trap (+12 melee, 1d8). The spikes remain in place to block the way down (though since they are wood — hardness 5, 10 hit points - cutting through them isn't difficult... if the characters have the right tools or weapons). Finding the trap requires a Search check (DC 20). Disarming it requires a Disable Device check (DC 20).

To find the trap: Good Alertness Roll.
Disarming the trap: Good Burglary Roll.

Affected Character and 2 above must make Great Athletics or Alertness rolls, or suffer Moderate Consequence, "Impaled".

Individual areas of the Temple will be described in the appropriate sections, but overall, the Temple has the following aspects: **Dark, Ornate Carvings, Still.**

Eventually the characters get down to the floor level of the room (hopefully more or less intact!)

Here's a description of the room; you can read it aloud to the players if you like:

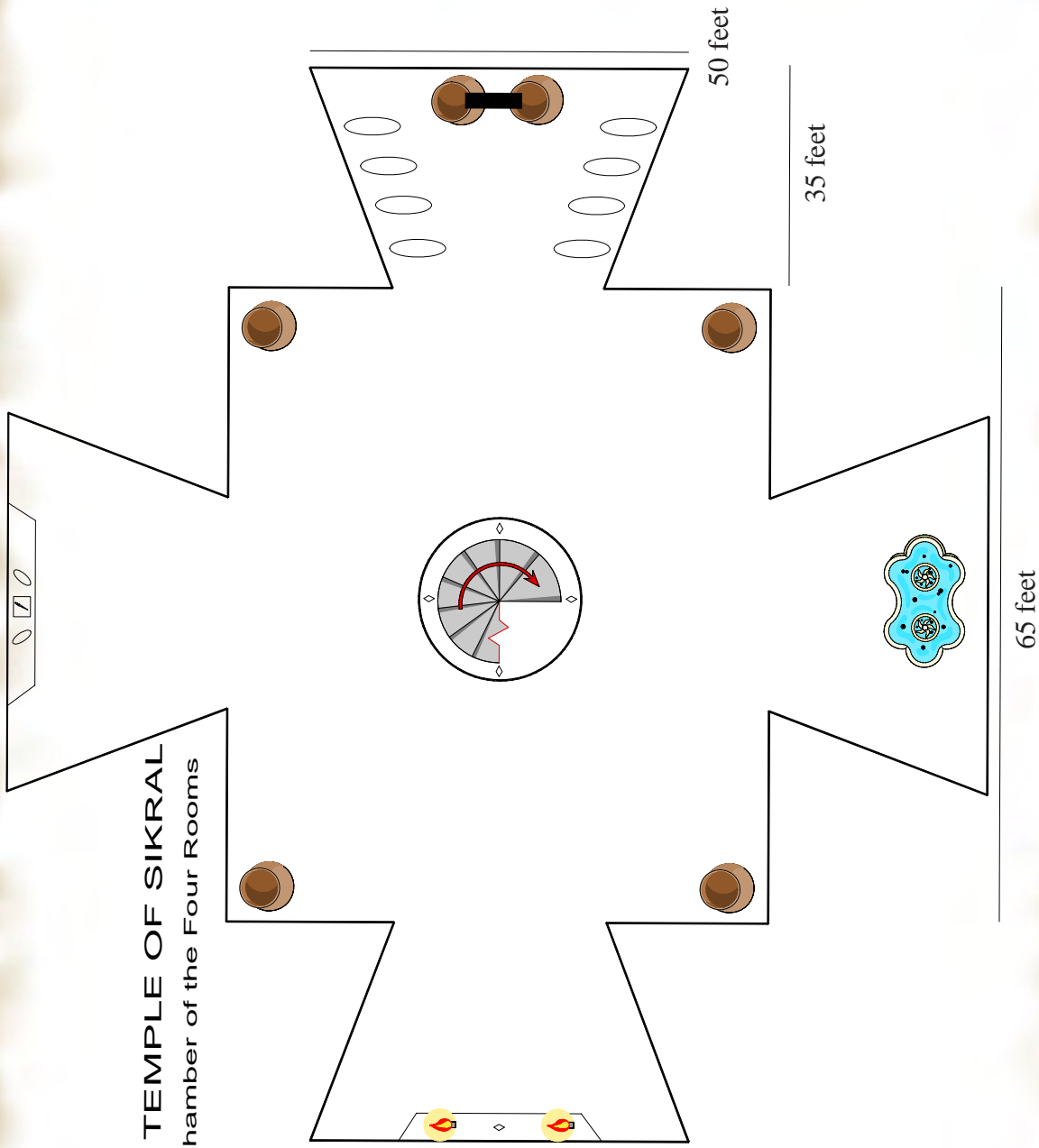
The room the stairs lead down into is a square room, about 65 feet long on a side, with a sort of triangular-shaped hallway or chamber leading straight outward from each wall. The floor is made of flagstones and is surprisingly (though not perfectly) level.

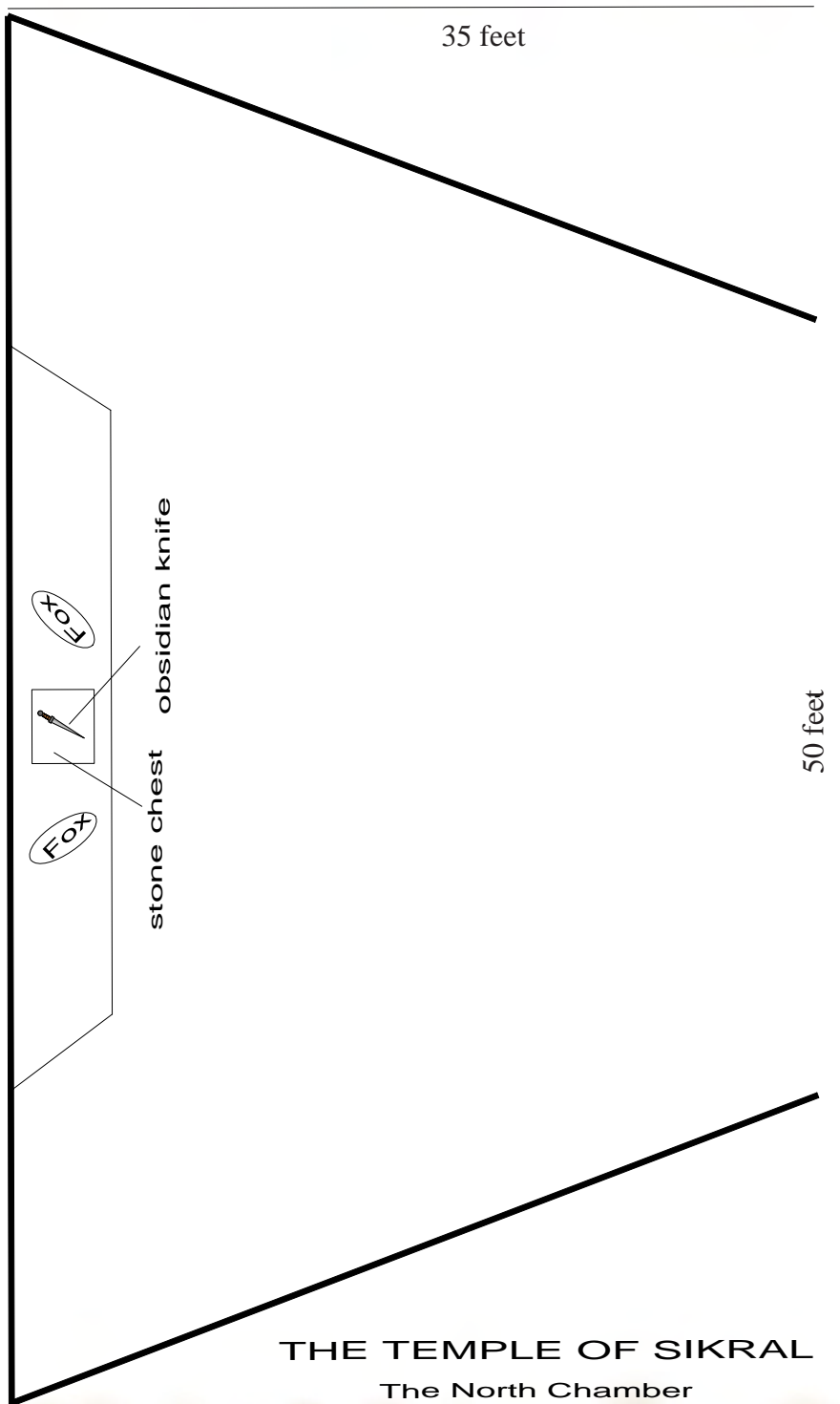
Painted on the floor around the spiral staircase is a band of white about two feet thick. In this band, directly facing each hallway, there's an inch-deep diamond-shaped depression cut into the floor. The long axis of the diamond is about six inches long and the short axis about half that. The white paint does not cover the inside of the depressions, but they otherwise seem unremarkable.

Beyond the white band around the stairway, the floor of the room is a beautiful mosaic made of thousands of tiny stone tiles. It depicts a tableau from Quicháru mythology in which Sikrál brought the Quicháru fire, then led them to their home, fighting demons and monsters along the way to keep them safe. The walls of the room, like the central column, are carved with scenes from Quicháru mythology. Given a week or more in here, a hero with the right background could learn some fascinating things about the Quicháru and their religion.

THE TEMPLE OF SIKRAL

The Chamber of the Four Rooms



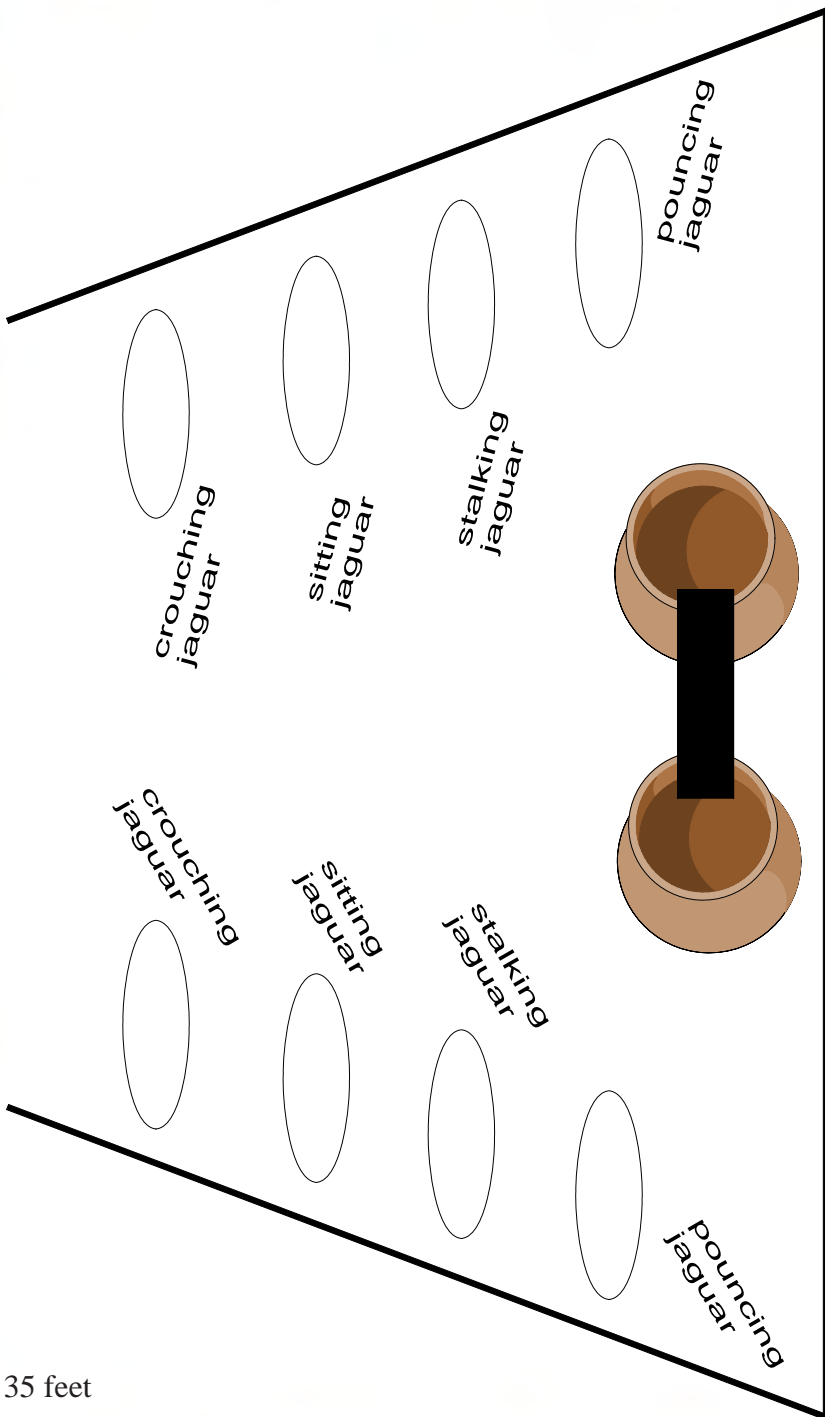


THE TEMPLE OF SIKRAL
The North Chamber

THE TEMPLE OF SIKRAL

The East Chamber

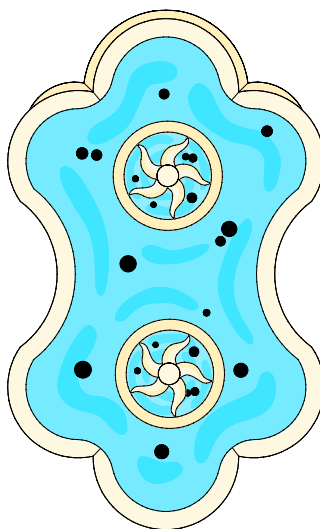
50 feet



35 feet

35 feet

50 feet

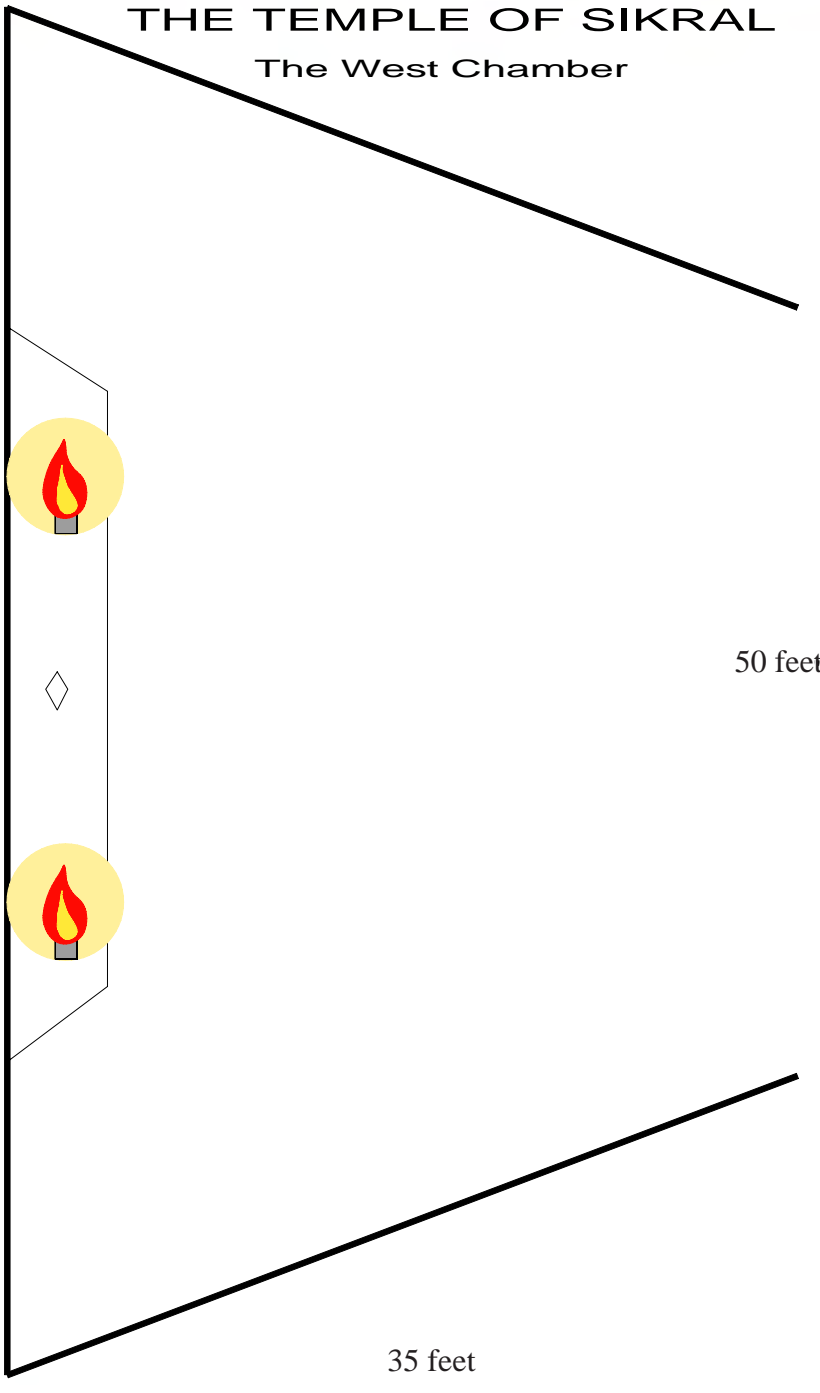


THE TEMPLE OF SIKRAL

The South Chamber

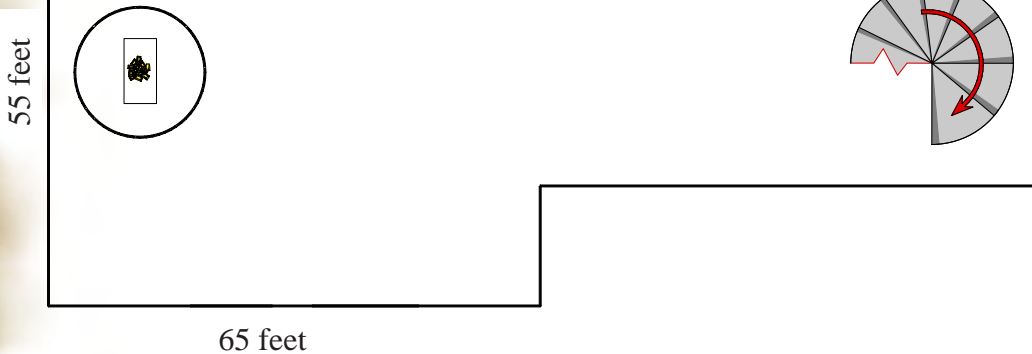
THE TEMPLE OF SIKRAL

The West Chamber



THE TEMPLE OF SIKRAL

The Center Chamber



In each corner stands a large stone urn. The entranceways to the four chambers leading off the center room are each decorated arches.

These five rooms — the central room and the four halls/chambers that lead off of it — embody Quicháru mythic concepts. The Quicháru cosmology and philosophy envisions a world of five directions: north, east, south, west, and center. Each one has certain associated symbols and concepts, which have influenced the decor and traps in the rooms related to them.

A character who examines each of the depressions and makes a Search check (DC 22), realizes that together they act as some sort of trigger... but for what he's not sure. Just pressing on them won't do the trick; the depressions have to be filled somehow before the trigger will activate. To find the proper "keys," the heroes must brave each of the four chambers — north, east, south, west — and survive their traps.

The investigation of the triggers requires a Great roll with either Investigation or Engineering.

Each of the four chambers is of equal size — the far wall is 50 feet, and from the entranceway to the far wall is 35 feet.

THE NORTH ROOM

The archway leading into the north chamber is made of a lighter-colored stone than the rest of the central room and is carved with eight intertwined lizards. In the chamber itself, the walls and floor are painted a featureless black; the ceiling is also black, but with many tiny white rings representing the stars. Along the center of the north wall runs a table-like ledge; sitting on it are two foxes flanking a stone box about a foot wide and broad and four inches deep. On top of the box is an obsidian dagger.

In Quicháru thought, the North is associated with the number 8, the color black, the evening star, storms, and animals such as the fox and the lizard (both of whom play "trickster" roles in Quicháru myth and legend). "Unlucky winds" blow from the North, and misfortune often dogs people born on a day linked with North.

The stone box is not locked and is thicker than it looks; it weighs 440 lbs. and is lightly carved with abstract Quicháru designs. Inside it there's a diamond-shaped stone plaque about six

inches long, three inches wide, and an inch thick — it fits into one of the depressions in the main room's floor (see above). The plaque is lightly carved on one side with a scene of a fierce storm rolling over the Valley of the Quicháru. It weighs 5 lbs.

The Trap: When the characters move the stone box in any way, or remove the stone plaque from the box, a stone wall descends from the archway leading into the room, trapping the characters inside. The GM should have everyone roll Spot or Listen checks (DC 15). Anyone that succeeds should immediately roll initiative, while anyone that fails is unable to act in the initial round due to surprise. The wall takes a two turns to descend, becoming flush with the floor on initiative 12 of the second turn. Any character that beats the walls initiative should be able to escape the room easily, as should any character that was able to act in the surprise round. If a character was surprised and comes up with a 12 initiative he will need to make a DEX check (DC 15) to get out in time. Anyone that fails the DEX check or has less then a 12 initiative is trapped inside.

Characters may instead try to stop the stone wall from shutting. The wall has an effective STR of 46 (+18 on STR checks), so holding it up by main strength alone may be tough. A better plan is to use the stone box or some other sturdy object to stop it from descending all the way. Given the boxes weight (440 lbs), a character of STR 16 can barely lift it and stagger 5 feet per round; it takes a character of STR 24 to be able to lift it and carry it over to the door in time (assuming he's fast enough in both terms of movement and initiative) to use it to block the wall. The GM may also allow multiple characters to try and carry the box together. Other possibilities include a crowbar or the like; if characters use an object that's not sturdy enough, it may merely slow the wall down instead of stopping it.

Any Character who's trapped inside won't have to worry about a slow death from starvation.

Beginning the round after the wall contacts the floor, the trapped characters learn that the "white rings" representing the stars on the ceiling are painted around tiny holes... because sand begins pouring in through them! The room will completely fill with sand in 1 minute (10 rounds), crushing and/or suffocating anyone trapped inside. The pour of sand may Trip characters, knocking them down and keeping them from moving around. It has a +3 to the opposed STR Check.

Detecting this trap requires a Search check (DC 20). Disarming it before it activates requires a Disable Device check (DC 25). Characters can also try to substitute an object of like weight for the plaque with a Sleight of Hand Check (DC 15); if they succeed, the trap doesn't activate. (You must decide whether the object they use is close enough to the plaque's 5 lbs for this to work; if not, the Sleight of Hand check is irrelevant.) The sliding stone wall can be raised from outside the room by a lever which is hidden behind a concealed panel to the east of the entrance (Search DC 20 to find).

Fair Alertness roll to hear the wall descending, then check for initiative (wall's initiative is Great). Wall descends in 2 turns. Players must move out of the room -- 2 zones, with the lowering wall giving a border value of 3.

Stopping the wall requires a Fantastic Might roll.

Sand filling the room in 1 minute -- during the minute they give the room the aspects **Sandy, Slippery, Filling up**. Unless the PCs can figure out a way to get out of the room, they will take suffocation damage -- treat the sand like an intensity 3 fire, dealing suffocation-based physical stress.

Detecting the trap: Great Investigation or Engineering. Disarming it: Superb Engineering, or something else....

THE EAST ROOM

The archway leading into the eastern chamber is made of a lighter-colored stone than the rest of the central room and is carved with eleven panels depicting gods, demons, or heroes of Quicháru myth. The walls of this room are painted yellow and orange; dominating the eastern wall is a large rising sun done in the Quicháru style in pure gold leaf. Lining the northern and southern walls are a series of stone statues of jaguars: one crouching nearest the entranceway, then one sitting on its haunches, then one in stalking pose, and finally one in the middle of leaping onto its prey nearest the east wall. Next to the east wall are two stone urns, similar to those in the main room but sealed. Propped across them is a stone slab, and on the stone slab are two solid gold statues of beetles about six inches long. With their mandibles the beetles are holding a diamond-shaped stone plaque about six inches long, three inches wide, and an inch thick. The plaque is lightly carved on the top with a scene of the sun rising over the Valley of the Quicháru.

In Quicháru thought, the East is associated with the number 11; the colors yellow, orange, and ochre; the Sun; and animals such as the jaguar and the beetle (especially the brightly-colored chuma beetle). The stone plaque, of course, fits into one of the depressions in the main room's floor (see above); it weighs 5 lbs.

The Trap: The stone slab is carefully balanced and weighted so that it doesn't break either of the urns (which are actually made of clay and painted to look like stone). Removing the plaque from the gold beetles causes them to unbalance and fall over, which in turn unbalances the system, causing the slab to crack open the urns, unleashing a swarm of ravenous, flesh-eating beetles! (How did the beetles survive in the urns all these centuries, you ask? Don't be impertinent. This is a Pulp adventure!)

Defeating this trap is a simple matter of carefully lift ing the stone slab off the urns before removing the plaque. Doing this without unbalancing or dropping anything is tricky, though. It requires two people of at least 16 STR to lift the slab, and each of them must succeed with a DEX check (DC 15). If either of them is too weak or fails the DEX check, the urns crack open; otherwise the characters are safe. The GM may allow more than two characters to lift the slab; however each character that helps must also make a successful DEX check.

If the urns crack, the cracks quickly spread across them, and in the next round they fall to pieces and the beetles go free.

The swarms will pursue the characters throughout the main room and all four chambers until destroyed or trapped somehow. (For example, clever PCs who know about the North Room's trap might try to lure the beetles in there and trap them behind the stone wall.)

Detecting this trap requires a Search check (DC 20); disarming it before it activates requires the actions described above. Characters can also try to substitute an object of like weight for the plaque with a Sleight of Hand Check (DC 20); if they succeed, the trap doesn't activate. (You must decide whether the object they use is close enough to the plaque's 5 lbs for this to work; if not, the Sleight of Hand check is irrelevant.)

Detecting the trap: Good Investigate or Engineering roll.

The Beetles are treated like a collection of minion groups – 3 groups for each character. Each group has 2 stress boxes, and a "swarm attack" of Good.

THE SOUTH ROOM

The archway leading into the southern chamber is made of a greyish-blue stone and is carved with four panels, each depicting a waterland scene with turtles, ducks, herons, and similar creatures. The walls of this room are painted in beautiful patterns of blue and green, and the ceiling with scenes of gentle rainclouds. The floor is decorated with a mosaic suggesting grasses and water-plants. The air in here is oddly cool and fresh despite the passage of years. Near the south wall is a small pool of clear, cool water. In the center of the fountain there's a sort of carved arch in the shape of quetzal-birds; where the two arms of the arch almost touch they hold a diamond-shaped stone plaque about six inches long, three inches wide, and an inch thick. The plaque is lightly carved on one side with a scene of the feathered serpent god Ab Kinchel causing a gentle rain to fall on the Valley of the Quicháru.

In Quicháru thought, the South is associated with the number 4, the colors blue and green, the morning star, good rains, fertility, and animals such as the turtle and quetzal-bird. It's generally regarded as a propitious direction; good luck is said to follow Quicháru born on a day linked with the South. The stone plaque, of course, fits into one of the depressions in the main room's floor (see above); it weighs 5 lbs.

There is no trap in this chamber – in fact, just the opposite. If the characters come to this room first, before any of the other chambers, they can retrieve this plaque without any peril. Furthermore, all rolls made to detect, disarm or counteract the traps in the other chambers receive a +2 luck bonus. If they visit any other chamber first, even just to step inside and look around, they won't receive this benefit. Detecting that there are no traps in this room requires a Search check (DC 25). Otherwise the characters are doomed to remain in doubt, waiting for the axe to fall...

If the PCs visit this chamber first, they'll gain a +1 bonus to all rolls made to detect, disarm or counteract the traps in other chambers. They do not get this bonus if they visit other chambers first.

Detecting that there are no traps in this room requires a Great Investigate or Engineering roll.



THE WEST ROOM

The archway leading into the western chamber is made of an ochre-colored stone and is carved with six panels depicting leaping deer. The walls and floor of this room are painted red. The ceiling is black, and dominated by a picture of Nantzucc, the Quicháru god of the moon. He wears elaborate ceremonial garb in grey and red, and his skin is a sort of pale yellow. He carries a spear with an odd crescent-shaped blade in his right hand, and in his left a cuahola (a sort of magical torch used by the Quicháru gods). Along the center of the west wall runs a table-like ledge; sitting on it are two brazier-like containers blazing with fire. Between them there's a diamond-shaped stone plaque about six inches long, three inches wide, and an inch thick. The plaque is lightly carved on one side with a scene of the moonlit nighttime in the Valley of the Quicháru.

In Quicháru thought, the West is associated with the number 6, the color red, the moon, and animals such as the deer and rabbit. The stone plaque, of course, fits into one of the depressions in the main room's floor (see above); it weighs 5 lbs.

The Trap: The players will likely suspect that the braziers are part of a trap, but they're wrong.

The trap here involves scything crescent-shaped blades swigging through the chamber on pendulums from the ceiling – seven blades, one for each line of squares in the chamber (which is 35 feet long from the entranceway to the west wall). If they pick up the stone plaque without disarming the trap, the blades immediately fall free from their niches and begin cutting back and forth through the room in a random pattern. When this happens, every character in the room should make a Reflex save (DC 20). Those that succeed suffer no damage this turn. Those that fail are attacked by the trap (+15 melee, 2d6+8/19-20).

If a character doesn't move, he can continue to dodge the blades cutting through where he's standing with a Reflex save (DC 15) every turn. Even if he fails a save, he may try again in subsequent rounds.

If a character moves, he must make a Reflex save (DC 20) for every square he passes through. Success indicates he dodges the blades and takes no damage. Failure indicates he suffers an attack. Even though these attacks are not actually an attacks of opportunity, GMs may allow a character with the Mobility feat a +4 to their Defense on a failed save. GM's may also allow a character to attempt a Tumble check (DC 20). If successful, the character may move up to 20 feet without having to make any Reflex saves. Only one Tumble check should be allowed per character per turn, however.

If a character decides to attack a blade as it swings at him, the pendulums are Defense 14, have 5 hardness and have 10 hit points.

Detecting the trap: Good Investigate or Engineering roll.

The blades are treated as if they're an intensity 3 fire, and add the aspect **Swinging Blades** to the scene. A character must move out of the room (4 zones, to represent the difficulty of carefully picking your way through the swiinging blades).

Anyone still in the room at the beginning of each exchange takes 3 stress from the blades, although this can be reduced by an Athletics roll (the PC attempting to avoid the blades) – although if PCs do that, they suffer a -2 on any movement attempt to get out of the room. (The effort of avoiding the blades means that it takes them even longer to get out of the room)

THE CENTER ROOM

In Quicháru thought, the Center is associated with the number 5, the color white, the star Cenzonaha (what we'd call Polaris, or the North Star), and the eagle. As far as the heroes can see at first, there is no "Center Room."

In fact, the room they first entered after descending the stairs — the square room with the four halls leading off of it — is the gateway to the Center Room. When the heroes place all four of the diamond-shaped stone plaques they found in each of the four other rooms in the four depressions (with the plaque found in each room in the corresponding depression), the spiral staircase they descended to get to this room begins to sink. (If the plaques aren't placed in the right depressions, the stairway won't sink.) It keeps sinking until where there was once a column, there's now a staircase going down. To put it another way, the staircase drops down one level, giving access to the Center Room below the main square room... but now the PCs are cut off from the way out because the staircase no longer connects to the structure above! (If the heroes remove all four stone diamonds from the four depressions, the staircase rises again.)

When they descend the staircase, here's what the heroes find:

The staircase ends at the flagstone floor of a wide corridor, its walls carved with depictions of the Quicháru gods, that leads west to a chamber. The entrance to the chamber is an arch carved with abstract Quicháru designs. In the chamber, the walls and floor are undecorated, and in the center of the room there's a raised circular dais two feet tall. In the center of the dais is a rectangular plinth four feet tall. On top of the plinth is the golden idol of Sikrál, a solid gold frog statuette about 5" x 5" x 5", with a wide-open mouth and solid emeralds for eyes. The statuette somehow seems to glow, providing a faint light in the chamber.

The Trap: The weight of the statue holds in place a simple but deadly trap. If removed from the plinth, it causes the entire room to sink, quickly trapping everyone in the room in what will become their tomb! The plinth will seem to "rise" as the room sinks; it's actually a rectangular stone column.

The room has to sink 12 feet to close off the entranceway and trap the heroes, which it can do in just two rounds. The room is 65 feet long and 55 feet wide. Escaping the trap is a matter of getting out of the room before it finishes sinking, stopping it from sinking all the way by wedging something in the entranceway (The trap has a STR of 65, though, so it had better be something sturdy), or being cautious enough to leave someone in the corridor. After the trap finishes sinking, a character in the corridor can use a concealed lever (Search DC 20) to cause it to rise again.

The GM should have everyone roll Spot or Listen checks (DC 15) to notice what is going on. Anyone that succeeds should immediately roll initiative, while anyone that fails is unable to act in the initial round due to surprise. The room sinks 6 feet on initiative 10 in the surprise round, and then another 6 feet on the next round. If a character does not have enough movement to get out before the room sinks the first 6 feet, he may need to make a Climb check to escape into the corridor. The DC is 15 if the character is tall enough to put his hands on the ledge (as most Medium-sized characters will be), but it is DC 20 if not.

Detecting the trap requires a Search check (DC 30), it cannot be disarmed. Characters can also try to substitute an object of like weight for the statuette with a Sleight of Hand Check (DC 25); if they succeed, the trap doesn't activate.

Detecting the trap: Fantastic Investigate or Engineering. Getting out of the room: 2 zones, with a border value of 4.

CONCLUSION

If the characters all get trapped in the final chamber, they'll die there once their food and water runs out unless they can find a clever way to escape. But hopefully they'll avoid that unpleasant fate. Once they make it back up to the main chamber, removing the four diamond-shape plaques causes the staircase to rise again so they can get out.

If the heroes return but without the idol, Randolph will convince Five Deer to sacrifice them to the Quicháru gods. The PCs had better figure out a way to escape, and fast... but hopefully it won't come to that.

Upon the heroes' successful return to the village with the golden idol, Five Deer judges that they speak truly and are friends of the Quicháru. Randolph Brisby, seeing which way the wind is blowing, seizes Five Deer and holds him hostage at gunpoint, at which point he becomes fair game for hero and Quicháru warrior alike and has very little chance of escaping the valley alive.

The Quicháru seize his possessions (including Professor Brisby's manuscript and notes) and gives them to the heroes. The Quicháru then hold a celebratory feast at which the heroes are made honorary members of the tribe, oaths of friendship are sworn, and the heroes receive many lavish gifts (and hopefully have the good grace to make some gifts to Five Deer and the tribe in return). The idol and other artifacts recovered from the temple must remain with the Quicháru, but the heroes may draw pictures of them or take photographs.



NPCS AND CREATURES

Quicháru Warrior

Fast Ordinary 3/Tough Ordinary 3: CR 5;
Medium-size Human; HD 3d8+6 plus 3d10+6;
hp 42; Mas 14; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 19,
touch 19, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +6 class);
BAB +4; Grap +5; +6 melee (1d8+1,spear) or
+ 7 ranged (1d8+1,bow); Full Atk +6 melee
(1d8+1,spear) or +7 ranged (1d8+1,bow); FS
5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL none; SV Fort +5,
Ref +6, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +2; Str 13, Dex 16,
Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8

Occupation: Adventurer (bonus class skills
Move Silently, Survival)

Skills: Craft (mechanical) +2, Hide +13, Listen
+5, Move Silently+15, Speak Quicháru, Spot
+8, Survival +10

Feats: Alertness, Archaic Weapons Proficiency,
Improved Initiative, Stealthy, Simple Weapon
Proficiency, Track

Possessions: Spear, Bow, Quiver of 12 arrows.

The Quicháru warriors are Good minions,
organized into two groups of three for
every Player Character present.

Five Deer

Charismatic Ordinary 4/Dedicated Ordinary
3/Tough Ordinary 1/Fast Ordinary 1: CR 8;
Medium-size Human; HD 7d6+7 1d10+1
plus 1d8+1; hp 48; Mas 12; Init -2; Spd 30 ft.;
Defense 15, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (-2 Dex,
+7 class); BAB +4; Grap +3; +3 melee (1d4-
1/19-20, knife); Full Atk +3 melee (1d4-1/19-
20,knife); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL none;
SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +6; AP 0; Rep +4; Str
9, Dex 7, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 16

Occupation: White Collar (bonus class skills
Diplomacy, Knowledge (history))

Skills: Bluff +15, Diplomacy +16, Gather
Information +5, Hide +5, Intimidate +15,
Knowledge (History) +12, Knowledge (theology
and philosophy) +11, Listen
+14, Move Silently +5, Sense Motive+10,
Speak Quicháru, Speak English, Spot +9,
Survival +7

Feats: Alertness, Archaic Weapons Proficiency,
Simple Weapon Proficiency, Stealthy, Track,
Trustworthy

Possessions: Fine clothing, knife

Aspects: Quicháru Chief, Old Warrior,
Distrusting of Strangers, Superstitious,
“Let the Gods Decide.”

Skills: Alertness (Average), Rapport
(Good), Investigation (Average),
Intimidation (Good), Leadership (Great)
Survival (Average), Fists (Average),
Weapons (Average).

Stunts: Brawler, Subtle Menace, Minions,
Reinforcements.

Stress: Health 3, Composure 3
Fate Points: 8

Randolph Brisby

Charismatic Ordinary 3/ Fast Ordinary 3: CR 5; Medium-size Human; HD 3d8+3 plus 3d6+3; hp 39; Mas 12; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 17, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +5 class); BAB +3; Grap +3; +3 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed) or + 5 ranged (2d6, revolver); Full Atk +3 melee (1d3 nonlethal, unarmed) or + 5 ranged (2d6, revolver); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL none; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1; AP 0; Rep +3; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 16

Occupation: Dilettante (bonus class skill is Gamble)

Skills: Bluff +14, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +5, Drive +9, Gamble+8, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (Art) +5, Knowledge (Streetwise) +5, Read/Write English, Read/Write French, Read/Write Quicháru, Sense Motive +3, Speak English, Speak French, Speak Quicháru, Sleight of Hand +10

Feats: Deceptive, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Quick Draw, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Trustworthy

Possessions: Smith & Wesson Model 10 (.38 revolver), 30 rounds of .38 ammunition, thick leather valise, Professor Brisby's manuscript and notes, playing card, dice, flask, nice watch, wallet

Aspects: In Debt to the Mob, Weasley, Silver-tongued Rogue, Man-About-Town, Eye for the Ladies

Skills: Alertness (Average), Deceit (Superb), Academics (Average), Fists (Fair), Guns (Average), Sleight of Hand (Average)

Stunts: The Honest Lie, Clever Facade, Con man.

Stress: Health 2, Composure 2

Fate Points: 5

Chuama Beetle Swarm

CR 4; Diminutive Vermin (Swarm); HD 9d8-9; hp 31; Mas 8; Init +4; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; Defense 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14 (+4 Size, +4 Dex); BAB +6; Grap -; Atk (2d6 plus poison, bite); Full Atk (2d6 plus poison, bite) ; FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ distraction, poison, darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage, tremorsense 30 ft.; AL none; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3; AP 0; Rep 0; Str 1, Dex 19, Con 8, Int 0, Wis 10, Cha 2

Skills: Climb +12, Spot +4

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bonus)

Combat

A chuma beetle swarm seeks to surround and attack any living prey it encounters. A swarm deals 2d6 points of damage to any creature whose space it occupies at the end of its move.

Distraction (Ex)

Any living creature that begins its turn with a chuma beetle swarm in its space must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Poison (Ex)

Injury, Fortitude DC 13, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Dex. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills

A chuma beetle swarm has a +4 racial bonus on Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks, and uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb checks. A chuma beetle swarm has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

The Beetles are treated like a collection of minion groups – 3 groups for each character. Each group has 2 stress boxes, and a “swarm attack” of Good.