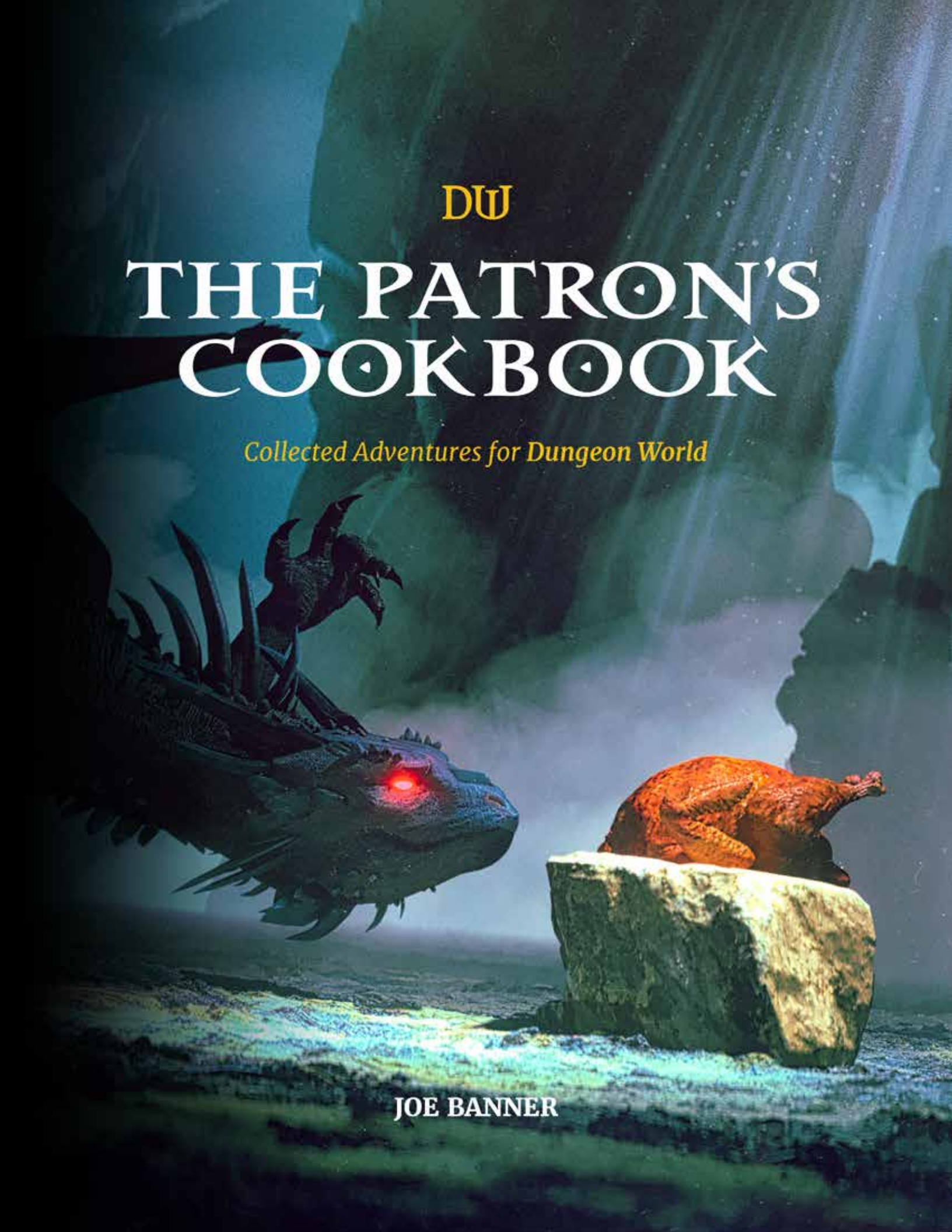


The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a cave. On the left, a dark, spiky dragon with glowing red eyes is shown in profile, looking towards the right. On the right, a roasted chicken sits on a large, light-colored rock. The scene is lit with dramatic, low-key lighting, with beams of light filtering through the cave openings in the background.

DW

THE PATRON'S COOKBOOK

Collected Adventures for Dungeon World

JOE BANNER

Thanks

About seven years ago, Amy (now Amy Banner, my wife) convinced me to start a Patreon. So if you have a problem with this book, blame her.
(Love ya, sweetheart ♥)

This work wouldn't have been possible without the ongoing support of my Patrons.
To everyone who has supported me over the years, thank you. Thank you for helping me *portray a fantastic world*
and may your lives be ever *filled with adventure*.

Credits

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Version 1 (Jan 2021)

CONTENTS

Playing the Game	4	Obri'usta	114
I'm On A Boat!.....	6	The Child & Eagle	118
Altai Keep.....	10	The Forest of Dust	122
Failspeake Gorge	12	Vectis 1769	126
The Sanguine Forest.....	16	Kursk.....	130
Trouble In Nekesti.....	20	Warrens of Odokar.....	134
A Stench in Nosjad	24	Knee-deep in Bryne	138
Aberrant's Eye	28	The Cult of Abraxas.....	142
Havenshine.....	30	By Beard and Ear	146
The Planarch Vault.....	34	Azulgunds Bane	150
The Walls of N'gogh.....	38	Call the Locksmith!	154
A Death in the Forest.....	42	Sulcata, the Tortoise-City.....	156
The Twitching Hive.....	44	The Canopy of Broken Kings	158
The Curious Contraption	50	Crannok's Peak.....	162
Kheluz-Gund	54	The Dhenze Lobeng.....	166
The Castle's the Key.....	58	Middenvally.....	170
The Quartz Monolith.....	60	Thenceforth a Roiling Storm	174
What's A "Love Letter"?	64	Eirik's Secret	176
Dominars Mountain.....	66	Welcome to the Jungle.....	180
A Masque at Midnight	70		
Fluxington's Folly	74		
On The Isla de Minas.....	78		
Over & Under the Ocean Free.....	80		
Six Flowers	84		
Downstream of a Dead Town	86		
The Tomb Of The Golden Child.....	90		
The Wolf of Otranto.....	96		
On Crystal Thews.....	100		
The Mansion on the Moors.....	104		
Shallow Sorrows	108		
A City Of Sparks & Cinders	112		

PLAYING THE GAME

Welcome! This is an introductory adventure toolkit for Dungeon World. Let's break down exactly what that means:

Introductory: I've written this book with new GMs in mind.

Adventure: The contents of this book have common themes, ideas and locations. These are to help you build a clearly-presented, exciting adventure to your players.

Toolkit: The contents of this book are not, in themselves, an adventure. It needs the input of you and your players as well.

For Dungeon World: I assume, before reading, you're familiar with the system. For example, I reference things like GM Principles, Moves, Bonds and Fronts on a regular basis. If you're not sure what any of those are, you can find them in the Dungeon World rulebook.

LORES & REALITIES

Throughout this book I've noted things to say when your players Spout Lore or Discern Realities. Reveal the text in italics if the player makes a high roll. For example:

"Images of the snake, the sun and the sword fill the area. Their positions and the offerings left nearby, suggest some religious significance. You once heard a tale of a scion of the sun god, 'the serpent who circled the world', who was slain by a blade of moon-stone."

PRINCIPLES

When I run a game of Dungeon World, I use these principles (alongside the ones in the rulebook) to keep the game moving. Like the principles in the book, they're there to help the GM fulfil their Agenda.

MAKE THE CAST DIVERSE.

Notwithstanding the obvious benefits, diversity makes your fictional world grounded and your NPCs memorable. Don't default to an all-white, all-male, English cast - there's enough of that in TV and film. Try an accent or two, even if it's just to introduce a new character.

ADD FANTASTIC TWISTS.

The first rule for GMs—as important as hit points are to PCs—is to Portray a Fantastic World. When you introduce a place or person, add or remove one thing you know will play on the player's expectations. If you just change one thing, your world will seem familiar, yet unique.

USE CLEAR, OBVIOUS LANGUAGE.

Don't over-describe something, or use abstract terms when a clear comparison would be easier to recognise. "The creature is about 45 kilograms, covered in red fur, with a barbed tail" is bad. "It's like a wolf, covered in blood, with a scorpion's tail" is better.

KEEP TAKING NOTES.

When the players add something interesting to the world, make a note of it. Re-incorporate it into play a session or two later. Offer opportunities for the players to add their mark. If they successfully Spout Lore, you might sometimes ask the player what they learn, for example. "Oh crap... remember those tracks you recognised? There's more of them, here, all around. And you can smell blood. How big did you say the wolves were, again?"

AVOID TELLING YOUR PLAYERS "NO."

You can say no, if a player wants to do something that's not in keeping with the game you want to run. But offer an alternative. The player will feel heard, and it confirms you're working together, not against each other. "You fly there by pegasus? Well, you don't have one right here obviously, but yes, you could get one. Maybe there's a grove of pegasi around here somewhere—how will you track them?"

IT'S OK FOR THEM TO SAY "I DON'T KNOW" OR "I DON'T CARE".

In most of these adventures, there are questions listed for you and/or your players to answer together - things that can influence the story you and your players will tell, and help to define how your shared world works. When asking these questions, tell your players "It's OK to answer 'I don't know', or 'I don't care.'" These answers tell you important things! If they say "I don't know", it means they're not averse to the idea, but don't have any ideas right now (or are leaving the door open for you to interpret it how you wish.) If they say "I don't care", they're telling you, honestly, they don't have any interest in seeing that aspect in the game, and you should refocus your ideas elsewhere.

Example: You're running *I'm On A Boat* and ask one of the players "how did a half-orc called Tim become cabin boy"? If they answer "I don't know", they don't have anything to add right now, but that statement gives the rest of the table (yourself included, GM!) an opportunity to offer suggestions. If they say "I don't care", then there's still opportunity for someone to chime in, but we can assume that player isn't really interested in the social aspects of having a half-orc cabin boy with an odd name in their game.

(In a similar vein, the options players pick for their characters tell me directly what sort of subject matter I should be using in the adventures with them. If no-one picks a cleric or paladin, for example, I won't bother including any undead monsters or religious aspects in this game, since it seems pretty likely the players aren't interested in exploring that.)

BRING YOUR OWN IDEAS.

I was so confident in my early games I wasn't going to 'railroad' my players that I made the mistake of only building off their answers. This left me feeling like I'd not contributed enough and the players didn't feel challenged.

LINK TREASURES AND MONSTERS.

Dungeon World players are rewarded for looting memorable treasures and defeating notable enemies. By linking the two, you're making both elements more interesting and cutting down your prep.

IN SUMMARY

This is an "introductory adventure toolkit". New GMs who've read the Dungeon World rulebook and are prepared to add their own spin on things will benefit the most from this.

There are sections of this book which are useful to read aloud, particularly when the players Spout Lore or Discern Realities. Save the bits in italics for when they roll particularly well.

Keep to the principles of play listed in the Dungeon World rulebook; the following might be useful, too:

- ◆ Make the cast diverse.
- ◆ Add one fantastic twist to everything.
- ◆ Use simple language.
- ◆ Always be taking notes.
- ◆ Avoid telling your players "no."
- ◆ Bring your own ideas to the game.
- ◆ Link your treasures to your monsters, and make both memorable.
- ◆ And, most important of all: have fun!

SQUIRE

Stakes, Questions, Understandings, Impressions, Rewards, Encounters

I've used most or all these terms in almost all the following adventures, so it's worth going over what they mean and how best you can use them in your games.

Stakes are taken straight from the Dungeon World rulebook - they're big problems that, if the party fails or does nothing, will inevitably come to pass. Most adventures have 1 or 2 stakes, generally related to key NPCs and/or events described in the adventure. Consider your stakes at the start and end of a session. Have the party failed to avert something that means a stake is more likely to happen? If so, how does the story and setting permanently change to reflect this?

Questions are a bit like stakes, but more low-key.

They aren't set in stone in the adventure as presented, allowing you and your players to interpret them as you see fit. In other words, your adventure session will be similar yet different to how other players' sessions go.

Questions marked with a **GM** symbol are best considered only by the GM, as they involve things neither the players or characters would have direct knowledge of. Other questions can be answered by the GM as part of their prep, or left open to ask the players as and when it becomes relevant in play.

Understandings are questions (as above) but we already know the answers. They're things that could be asked the players, but for the sake of writing the adventure, I've assumed the characters are already aware of. For example, if the adventure is the exploration of a dwarven mine, an understanding of said adventure would be "dwarves build great mines underground - sometimes they delve too deep."

Impressions are quick snippets of atmosphere and character you can use to colour the game as you play it. Dungeon World doesn't rely on keyed maps like other fantasy RPGs; it can be difficult to improvise the 'flavour' of an adventure on the fly. If you're drawing a blank, use an impression.

Rewards and Encounters (or sometimes **Enemies**) are the most obvious elements - interesting treasures the party can claim, and the things that will stand in the way of them doing so! Use some, none, or all of these in your adventures as you see fit.

I'M ON A BOAT!

Dear adventurers, pirates and ne'er-do-wells...

Following a string of exciting adventures the watch insist on calling "crimes", you have decided it might be a good idea to leave the country. To that end, you've secured passage across the sea.

- ◆ What are you wanted for in Port Landington?
- ◆ What did it cost you to book safe passage?
- ◆ Where are you headed? Who or what is waiting for you there?
- GM Has anyone else booked passage with them?

PORT LANDINGTON

- ◆ **Prosperity:** moderate
- ◆ **Population:** growing
- ◆ **Defences:** the port watch
- ◆ **Trade:** Umberto, Nosjad, Chalcedon, Xi
- ◆ **Other:** lawless, market
- ◆ **Resource:** kilibite ore, boats, alcohol
- ◆ **Guild:** The Boatmakers' club

Port Watchman

Group, Intelligent, Organised; ARM 1 (HP 8) ATT 1d8 CLOSE, REACH ★ Sound the alarm! ★ Hook an interloper and drag them to the cells ★ Keep an eye out for troublemakers
Instinct: To protect the port

If you were the one that booked passage on the Salty Mare, roll +CHA. On a 10+, pick three. On a 7-9, pick two. On a 6-, pick one.

- ◆ You got a fair deal
- ◆ You didn't have to leave in a hurry
- ◆ None of the crew saw your "wanted" posters
- ◆ You stayed on the captain's good side

You're expected to lend a hand with the ship's duties, but are welcome to share the crew's meals in return. It's mostly hard tack, jerky, fresh water and sour wine.

The trip should take a fortnight, luck and winds permitting.

This isn't the first time the ship's taken on passengers. The crew aren't inclined to slit your throat, but they won't stop you falling overboard, either. Of course, your actions towards them may change this!

THE SALTY MARE

A battered, but tough merchant vessel run by Captain Cassius, a semi-legitimate trader. Most of the crew are petty criminals trying to make a new life for themselves.

CAST

- ◆ Cassandra Cassius, navy officer & pirate captain
- ◆ Tim, the faithful half-orc cabin boy
- ◆ "Chuckles", the grumpy ship's cook
- ◆ Noogy, the turtle armsman

QUESTIONS

- GM Where will the Salty Mare end up?
- GM What's the most dangerous cargo she's carrying?
- GM How did a half-orc (called *Tim*) become cabin boy?

Captain Cassius

Solitary, Intelligent; **ARM 2 (HP 16) ATT 1d10 CLOSE**
★ Lead from the front ★ Go down with the ship
Instinct: To make good time and good money

Tim the Half-Orc cabin boy

Solitary, Intelligent; **ARM 0 HP 21 ATT [w2d10] CLOSE**;
Special qualities: Blessings of the deep blue ★ Deliver an important message ★ Ensure the journey is swift
Instinct: To make the captain's life easier

Noogy the Turtle Armsman

Solitary, Intelligent; **ARM 2 HP 12 ATT 1d6 NEAR** ★ Provide fresh weapons and ammo ★ Retreat into his tough shell
★ Deflect a blade or bullet ★ Blow something up
Instinct: To defend and repel invaders

CARGO MANIFEST

When you open a box of cargo, you find... (1d12)

1. An alarm bell that won't stop ringing
2. Glass vials of a rainbow-coloured liquid
3. A skeleton and it's personal effects
4. A children's stuffed animal toy
5. A live snake, as big as an ogre's arm
6. A replica of a wizard's manse in a snowglobe
7. Several bottles of fine (and powerful) liquor
8. The horn of an auroch, still bloody
9. An old pair of boots, muddy and well-worn
10. Captain Cassius' favourite dress
11. A bronze statue with beautiful ruby eyes
12. A bound manuscript by Ibn Al-Nadim himself

TREASURES

THE MAP OF GULLS

This old parchment outlines the migratory habits of seafaring birds (that being a route safest from storms.) Take +1 ongoing to navigate the seas when using this map. However, if you fail the roll the routes are proven to be outdated and the map becomes useless.

THE REEFMONGER'S KEYSTONE

An oddly-shaped piece of coral, said to have originated from the islands of the Calderan sea. As long as the keystone is in your possession, you dream of tentacled titans beneath the waves and the secrets of their deep cities.

When you own the keystone and spout lore, you may choose to use half-remembered knowledge from your dreams instead of your INT. If you do, you automatically pass (as if you rolled a 10+) and the GM holds 1. The GM may spend their hold at any time to describe an involuntary action your character makes (perhaps speaking in tongues or making an alien gesture). This action will draw the attention of intelligent beings nearby, inspiring fear, anger or nausea from them.

THE WATCH OF THIEVES

This verdigris and salt-encrusted pocketwatch looks like it hasn't worked in years - yet the hands do change positions from time to time...

The hour hand always points to the most expensive treasure in the room. The minute hand points to the nearest exit. The second hand points to the greatest threat.

OUTBREAK!

It's dinnertime on the Salty Mare and the mood is tense. The slop on offer smells even worse than usual and the last guy who complained got a bowl dumped on his head! Something's got Chuckles the chef more riled up than usual...

GM How many sailors are showing symptoms?

GM How, where and when did Chuckles get infected?

- ◆ What's the (alleged) cure for rotwhisker? Where on the ship might some still be found?
- ◆ Are you infected? (If yes, mark XP and roll+CON - see *Custom Moves*.)

FRONT

Horde / Humanoid vermin

Impulse: to breed, multiply and consume

- A very unpleasant dinner
- Infected sailors spread the disease
- Almost all the supplies are tainted
- The vermin's nest covers more than half the ship
- All the ship's officers are infected or eaten
- Doom: Chaos. The rats are out for flesh. Abandon ship!

CREATURES

Infected sailor

Horde, Terrifying; **ARM 1 (HP 3) ATT 1d6 CLOSE**

"Jones, you've been acting devilishly strange tonight. What the deuce do you mean, 'feed-feed man-flesh?'"

* Infect with a bite or scratch * Stop to feed

Instinct: To spoil

Chuckles, the infected cook

Solitary, Terrifying; **ARM 1 (HP 18) ATT 1d8 CLOSE *** Infect

with a bite or scratch * Vomit yellow bile * Lash out with a whip-like tail * Summon more rats

Instinct: To spread the infection

THE BLACK FLAG RISES

"For the attention of your captain: hand over your treasure now, or we will take your lives. (And your treasure.) Sincerely, Captain Ballista Flagg."

- A ship flying black colours is spotted on the horizon
- Ominous rumours about piracy spread across the ship
- A seagull delivers an ultimatum
- The Black Flag attacks in the night
- Doom: Destruction. The ship is sunk, it's treasures plundered!

CREATURES

Captain Ballista Flagg

Solitary, Intelligent, Organised; **ARM 2 (HP 16) ATT**

1d6+2 **2-PIERCING**

Captain of the Black Flag, scourge of the Shrouded Sea.

Polite to a fault. * Command her crew with an iron fist

* Make arrogant threats * Disarm and unbalance their opponent * Disappear in a flock of seagulls

Instinct: To rule the open seas

Master of Gulls

Solitary, Intelligent, Arcane; **ARM 2 (HP 12) ATT**
2d4 **NEAR, FAR**

This old one sold out his village in return for a place on the Black Flag. His sorcery and the captain's leadership have proven a fearsome combination.

* See through the eyes of a bird * Distract and overwhelm with a sudden flock * Create a curse of storms and terror

Instinct: see terror on the open seas

Scurvy Pirate

Horde, Organised

Instinct: To loot and plunder

3 hp 1 arm

Chipped cutlass (1d6 damage close)

- ◆ Make a daring advance or escape
- ◆ Get drunk and misbehave

CUSTOM MOVES

When you set the sails, roll +STR. On a 10+, you set the sails true and they catch the wind. On a 7-9, the sails are fixed well enough, but might not hold up to heavy weather or close scrutiny.

When you take the helm, roll +DEX. On a 10+, it's clear sky and blue seas. On a 7-9, there's trouble ahead, but you can give the crew enough time to react.

When you take part in a drinking contest, roll +CON. On a 10+, you drink everyone under the table. On a 7-9, you either win, but pass out for the next few hours; or come second to a particularly obnoxious opponent (your choice). On a miss, you fail spectacularly and let slip a fact you really shouldn't have.

When you chart a course, roll +INT. On a 10+, you avoid a catastrophe and earn the captain's respect. On a 7-9, your route is safe enough but narrowly avoids an obvious danger (rocks, whirlpools, sirens or rivals for example.)

When you take watch in the crow's nest, roll +WIS. On a 10+ ask the GM 3 questions from the list below. On a 7-9, ask 1. Take +1 forward when acting on the answers.

- ◆ Who or what is on the horizon?
- ◆ What looks strange about the sky or ocean?
- ◆ Where's the nearest body of land?

When you boost the crew's morale (spice up a meal, sing a nautical song, organise a card game) roll +CHA. On a 10+, the crew have your back. On a 7-9, most of the crew like you - but tell the GM which person you managed to annoy (the first mate or the captain's pet monkey for example).

When you feel a scratching in your gut, roll +CON. On a hit, you spend the next few minutes helpless, retching on the ground. On a 7-9, you also feel sick (-1 CON). On a 6-, in addition to the above one of the following symptoms manifests right now:

- ◆ Your teeth and nails grow sharper
- ◆ Your eyes glow blood red
- ◆ Fur is sprouting in new and scary places
- ◆ It's getting hard to think... (you're *confused*, -1 WIS ongoing)
- ◆ You lash out at the closest meat

If you show no symptoms after a day or so, the infection has not taken hold - this time. The more symptoms you acquire, the harder the infection will be to cure.



PHOTO BY ZOLTAN TASI ON UNSPLASH

ALTAI KEEP

*What grace the Altai mountains hold 'twixt gloomy bough and fertile knoll.
But shepherd, watch your ibex herd! For now the MOUNTAIN KING has stirred;
and templars, soldiers - heroes, all - will fail against his wrath disturbed.*

Centuries ago, the Minotaur Lords of Altai laid waste to a dozen villages before an army of templars could destroy them. Ever since, their mountain lair has lain abandoned. However, recent evidence suggests Altai Keep has new masters - or, somehow, its old lords have returned. If so, it may spell doom for the hundreds of families living off the fertile mountain land.

It will take heroes of renown to travel to this imposing fortress, find out who (or what) now lives in Altai keep and - if they mean to cause harm to the people - put an end to them.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Find out who has returned to the keep, and their intentions
- ◆ Discover what became of the missing villagers
- ◆ Recover the sword of Deacon Gorric
- ◆ Ensure Molekh and the minotaur lords stay dead

FRONT: THE REAPER'S RETURN

If no-one stops the return of the savage minotaurs, they will once again claim the mountains - and any who live on them - as their personal stomping grounds.

Impulse: to grow strong, drive their enemies before them

- Mountain shepherds go missing at night
- Molekh rallies his horned brethren
- A new templar army is repelled
- Uryl village is destroyed
- Doom: Destruction

STEADING: URYL VILLAGE

Prosperity Dirt
Population Steady
Defences Watch
Resources Ibex (goats' milk, fur, etc.)
Oath: Dzhambul village, The stolen faith
Other Blight (Minotaurs), need (heroes)

MONSTERS

Molekh the Reaper

Solitary, Large, Intelligent

In life, Molekh earned his title not only because of his boundless rage but another trait, less common among his kind: ambition. More innocents fell to this black-furred bull than the rest of the lords put together. Sadly, undeath has done nothing to diminish his fury or resolve. **Instinct:** to see his foes driven before him

18 HP 1 ARM

D10+2 Bloodstained Scythe (**REACH, MESSY**)

* Trample enemies underfoot * Demand tribute from the conquered * Make a deal to gain more power

Ghoulish Minotaur

Group, Large

Of the Minotaur Lords, only their leader was reborn intact in mind and body. The rest found the transition... difficult. Still capable of immense acts of destruction and cruelty, their undeath makes them even harder to kill. **Instinct:** to destroy in their master's name

12 HP 0 Armour

D8+1 Horns'n'claws (**REACH**)

* Bellow a savage cry * Damage something delicate

When you attempt to redirect a minotaur's charge, roll+CON. On a hit, you divert it into something else of your choice a few feet away: a wall, an enemy, a feature. On a 10+ you also avoid taking any damage yourself.

Sanguine Thrall

Horde, Organised

Most of the missing villagers were bled dry for Deanera to feed on. The rest now serve as a twisted parody of the courts of living beings. **Instinct:** to follow their master's will

3 HP 0 Armour

w[2d6] Silver cutlery (**CLOSE**)

* Provide sustenance and entertainment * Pray for release

Princess Deanera*Solitary, Intelligent, Terrifying, Hoarder*

Deanera was sent to Altai keep to raise the formidable minotaur lords from the crypts. The undead beasts were happy to ally with her dark masters in exchange for more power.

Deanara is now in the process of turning the dank halls into accommodation more befitting of a princess.

Instinct: to live in luxury

15 HP 2 ARM

b[2d10] Chaos bolt (**NEAR, FORCEFUL**, ignores armour)

★ Steal the essence (emotions, blood, magic) of others ★

Curse someone with frailty, rage or stupidity ★ Summon undead thralls

LOOT**MOLEKH'S REAPER**

Two-handed, +1 damage, 3 weight

A titanic scythe, half as tall again as a man. The carmine blade yearns for slaughter, but cannot abide rest. When you make camp and have recently spilt blod, the blade will deal +1 damage until you make camp again. If not, your mind is clouded with blood-red visions, making you confused (-1 WIS) until you kill something.

MAPHIDE HELM

A cloth hat, stitched together from ancient maps. When you fall asleep wearing the hat, you will see a place of potent magical power nearby in your dreams.

ROD OF THE SANGUINE

The vampiric priesthood reward their most fervent acolytes with obsidian wands like this one. When fed fresh blood from a sentient creature, the wielder will be able to hear the heartbeat of anyone nearby that would do them harm.

DUNGEON MOVES

When a roll is failed, when the rules call for it, or when the players look to you to see what happens next...

THE PARLOUR IS SPOTLESS

Something about this dining room doesn't add up. It's clean enough to serve royalty, but the braziers aren't lit - it's as cold and unwelcome as a grave. And there's a tang of copper in the air - blood was spilled here recently. Very recently.

THE MINOTAURS AWAKEN

The seal on the crypt shatters with a crash. An undead creature steps out of the opening, it's head crowned by a pair of horns each the length of a greatsword. Glassy eyes set on the party, it bellows a warcry. You hear the roar answered by another beast, then another.

THE WAY IS BLOCKED BY FROZEN DEBRIS

Your route ahead comes to an abrupt dead end. The corridor is blocked by a wall of ice and collapsed stone. Through the misty ice, on the other side, you can see some figures working away clearing the area. You could try and find a way through back via the parlour room, or try and break through yourself?

A TEMPLAR'S BLADE, SULLIED BY EVIL

Frozen into the wall is the corpse of Deacon Gorric. A sword - his own, going by the heraldry - is currently embedded in his torso. The blood of it's former owner still glistens on the blade, but the body appears to have been here for decades. You should be able to work the blade free of the ice, though.

OTHER MOVES:

- ◆ A frozen ceiling section collapses
- ◆ The thralls form a blockade
- ◆ The old straw pallet hides a minotaur trap
- ◆ The silver cutlery is cursed
- ◆ More minotaurs arrive from the crypts
- ◆ A cold wind blows out your torches
- ◆ A templar is reanimated
- ◆ You slip up on a patch of ice

LOCATIONS

The crypts smell of old snow and mountain dust.

Deanara's victims have been left here to rot, fel energy coursing through their remains. The tombs have been mostly ransacked, but a few whole weapons remain.

The feasting halls lie cold and unused, but not unattended. A dozen undead servitors stand silently, compelled to attack any invaders.

The parlour room is where Deacon Gorric made his last stand - it's a bloodbath.

An ancient shrine defaced with dark sigils stands in an atrium, attended by Deanera

Molekh's throne room is home to the minotaur lord himself, where he sits brooding on his plans to retake the mountains. Many maps of the region, sealed with a disturbing sigil (that of the vampiric priesthood) are scattered among the grisly trophies.

FAILSPEAKE GORGE

“By decree of MIRKA, she who protects us from those who would steal our body and spirit; Let any who would entrap or enslave an honest soul face no less than wrathful judgement. Let the templars stand as the executioners of this will for time immemorial.”

COMMANDMENTS OF THE MIRKASAN FAITH, 1.10

Since the emergence of the gnomes, the caverns below Failspeake gorge have been a hotly contested territory. For years, no side was able to claim the upper hand, but the recent arrival of a doomed human in search of power and a titanic ogre in search of dinner may finally settle the conflict once and for all.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

You and your gnome companions stand in the centre of a ogre midden heap, three levels underground. (No-one ever said this job was glamorous.) You’ve just found the remains of the Ogre’s dinner... Ludekai Chaeron, the very person you were sent here to rescue. A faint blue glow shines from several holes in the floor, dimly illuminating the hulking shape now blocking your way out. Slung over his back is an unconscious horse. He’s not seen you yet, but if you do nothing he’ll be close enough to spot you in seconds. What do you do?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ A abandoned minecart, gently creaking and full of ore
- ◆ The smell of damp straw and horses
- ◆ A backdraft of intense heat from deeper within
- ◆ The ground shakes and you hear the echo of a distant roar
- ◆ Faint sun/moonlight filtering down from far above you
- ◆ A ‘trophy room’ containing a diverse range of bones
- ◆ A cavern, excavated recently and professionally
- ◆ A house-size passage, crudely hewn from the rock
- ◆ A flickering elektrikey generator and it’s gnome owner
- ◆ The wind... right?
- ◆ Discarded gnomish gizmos, some with a charge or two
- ◆ The floor is covered with sticky blood and yellow feathers
- ◆ A very distinct laugh, from a passage to your left
- ◆ The air grows thin and difficult to breathe
- ◆ Elektrikey bulbs, flickering but active

QUESTIONS

Vh’orr the Voracious

- ◆ What tales have you heard of the ogre’s appetites?
- ◆ Why has this ogre settled here and not elsewhere?

The Gnomes & Kobolds

- ◆ How did the gnomes’ ingenuity save the party earlier?
- ◆ Why do the kobolds hold candlelight as sacred?
- ◆ Can the kobolds be bargained with? If so, what leverage can they be offered?
- ◆ What happened to the last mining party?

The Ghost of Ludekai Chaeron

- ◆ What acts of charity or corruption is Chaeron known for?
- ◆ Who asked you to rescue Chaeron, and what will happen now he is dead?
- ◆ What ritual did Chaeron’s wife ask you to conduct in the case of his demise?
- ◆ What signs of foul magic have you spotted already?

DUNGEON MOVES

When a player fails a roll, when the rules call for it, or when the players look to you to see what happens next...

A passage collapses

There’s a deep rumble from below. Dust sprinkles onto your head. The gnomes, on instinct, start running back up the passage. “COLLAAAAPSE!” they shout in unison.

The markings of the mountain-lord

Though partially mined out by careless hands, carved into the wall are the remains of some kind of mural. The image seems to depict some kind of exodus, overseen by a titanic, stout guardian.

A Kobold ambush!

A thick dust fills the air here, obscuring your senses at a critical moment. You feel cold metal at your neck and smell the sour stench of your opponent’s sweat a moment too late. A guttural voice whispers in your ear “You’re mine, trespasser!”

A pretty flower, glowing in the dark

There's a tiny flower sticking out of a rock here. It's glowing a faint shade of blue, brighter than the dim light of your torch. Something about it's solitary glow in these dim depths seems poignant and beautiful.

You need something from the carts

Another dead end! It looks like the tunnel continues beyond, but you'll need some of the explosives from the upper levels to clear it. Hopefully those kobolds aren't back for round 2...

Evidence of a failed mining expedition

The room is deserted, save a few dusty corpses. Picks and other tools lie scattered on the ground - it seems whatever fate befell them happened halfway through their work.

...what do you do?

CUSTOM MOVES**When you try and get your bearings after a cave-in,**

roll+WIS. On a 10+, you find a clue to get you back in the right direction: a gust of fresh air or the sound of dripping water. On a 7-9, you find the way out, but not before someone finds you first.

When you hang on for dear life and ride the minecart,

name where you'd like the destination to be and roll+CON. On a 10+, you stub a finger but get there otherwise unharmed. On a 7-9, something came loose and went flying in the trip - the GM will tell you what. On a 6-, you only got halfway! The GM will describe where you find yourself.

When a kobold catches you using a glowing flower

for illumination, they will brand you as a heretic of the worst degree. None must disturb the beauty of the light!

CREATURES**Vh'orr the Voracious**

Solitary, Huge, Intelligent, Organised, Terrifying

A **HUGE** ogre even by that race's standards, Vh'orr was caught eating his chieftain's personal supplies, then tried to hide his deceit by eating the chieftain. When not even an iron face-shackle was enough to curb his appetite, he was kicked out of the tribe and eventually settled in within the Kingsmine. So **FAR**, he's found plenty of passers-by whenever he fancies a bite...

Instinct: To smash, and eat, and smash, and eat...

9 HP 4 ARM

d10 damage Great Butcher's Knife (**REACH, MESSY**)

* Take a bite out of something * Tenderise his opponent/lunch * Tunnel through solid rock * Reveal a hideous face beneath his mask * Come back after being "killed"

When Vh'orr has been "killed" and you're busy doing something else (planning, fighting, negotiating, sleeping) roll+WIS. On a 10+, Vh'orr will appear soon (seconds or minutes) and you know precisely where from. On a 7-9, Vh'orr will appear soon but could come from one of two directions, the echoing of the caverns makes it hard to tell. On a 6-, Vh'orr bursts through a wall right in front of you!

Chaeron's Restless Soul

Solitary, Intelligent, Arcane

Though Chaeron's body was shattered and broken, his spirit still roams through the mines. Freed of it's corporeal chains, Chaeron intends to use the gnomes and kobolds' conflict as a cover to bring his dark master - a much older, more malign intelligence - back to this plane. **Instinct:** to summon more demons from the depths of the rock

18 HP

D8 damage The cold of the grave (**FAR**, ignores armour)

Special Qualities: incorporeal

Deceive or mock travellers

Tempt mortals with dark whisperings

Open a rift to the void below

When you hear Chaeron whispering in your ear,

roll+WIS. On a 10+, ask the GM any one question about the source of the whispering, they will answer truthfully.

On a 7-9, you are unnerved but otherwise unscathed.

On a 6-, the GM will ask you any one question about your greatest fear, and you will answer truthfully.

Denizens Touched By The Darkness

Horde, Small, Organised

When the darkness came these were the first in the line of fire, but proved to be unworthy. Now their souls are touched with shadow. (It's not their day, basically.)

Instinct: to escape doom

3 HP

w[2d6] damage Terrified strike (**CLOSE**)

* Babble incoherently * Flee any attempts at aid or communication * Stumble blindly into greater peril

A Clutch Of “Canaries”*Group, Large, Terrifying, Hoarder*

Blind and warped beyond their original design, who knows for what purpose. One of them still has the remains of a cage trapped around it's head. Their flesh is a sickly alabaster, their eyes a pale red. **Instinct:** to gather food and guard the nest
9 HP

b[2d8] damage CAWWWW! (**REACH**)

* Sing sweetly * Divebomb from above * Fly away with a morsel for the nest * Thrive where the air is particularly poor

LOOT**KEY OF THE DEMON**

An intricate puzzle box of Umberto design. With a little work, it can be configured into either a perfect cube (unlocked) or a perfect triangle (locked). When solved into a triangle, it will 'lock' any demon currently nearby, trapping them in the nearest sanctified space (a holy circle, a church, a cleric's body) until the box is unlocked again.

ALBINO HATCHLING

The baby is the size of a small dog, with a plume of dirty yellow feathers and a stunted beak. But it's soul is free of corruption and, if shown tenderness, will take one of the characters to be it's mother. It can't travel by itself, at least at first. The “mother” should write a new bond with the baby. The baby will stay with the party until it's old enough to fly away and start a brood of it's own.

ELIXIR OF INVENTION!

4 uses

A bitter drink popular with the gnomes. An exclamation mark has been stamped onto the bottle. When you drink a cup before using your intellect, you roll a d6+d8 instead of 2d6. If you drink more than 4 cups a day, you'll find yourself twitchy and unable to sleep. After a few days without sleep, you'll fall deep sleep for INT+1 days.

THE WAR BELOW

The Waxlight kobolds and Finkleswitch gnomes have been fighting for longer than either can remember. Both have the same legend: the god who made the mountain made one race to rule the caverns; and another to serve. Unfortunately, the records are unclear as to which race is which.

FRONT: HORDE / UNDERGROUND DWELLERS

Impulse: to defend the complex from outsiders

- The gnomes and kobolds wage war for territory
- Vh'orr decimates a gnome steading
- The kobolds besiege Finkleswitch enclave
- Ipmeek defeats clan patriarch Denny Finkleswitch
- The gnomes face a shameful exile from the mountain
- Doom: Impoverishment

STAKES

- ◆ What deal did the gnomes make with Chaeron?
- ◆ Do the gnomes have anything to do with the mutated creatures of the gorge? Does Chaeron?
- ◆ What losses will both sides suffer before the war is over?

THE WAXLIGHT KOBOLDS**Ipmeek Biter-fighter***Small, Solitary, Organized, Devious*

When a kobold kills a gnome, they take a cog or gizmo as a trophy. With two dozen kills, the tiny Ipmeek is barely visible beneath his plating made from shattered bulbs, bloodstained cogs and twisted sprockets. **Instinct:** To claim trophies from the fallen
12 HP 3 **ARM**

b[2d8] damage Beardsbiter (**CLOSE, MESSY**)

* Lie in wait, hidden as a pile of old junk * Use the darkness to his advantage * Strike with an unusual ferocity for his size

Kobold Glimmer-Keepers*Small, Horde, Organized*

As cave-dwellers, the Kobolds hold light as sacred - none more so than candlelight, it seems. Given the rarity of candles in a cave, those chosen to hold one are considered favoured indeed. **Instinct:** To protect the light

6 HP 1 **ARM**d4 damage Candle on a pole (**REACH**, 1 piercing)

* Illuminate a location * Burn an object or person * Flee if the sacred light is threatened

THE GNOMISH PEOPLE

Gnomes are studious, inventive and intelligent. They made contact with the rest of the world relatively recently, when explorers stumbled on their capital deep beneath the greatest mountain of Mirkasa.

Despite their generally friendly nature and good intentions, the gnomes are poorly trusted. Masters of bureaucracy, they have found their way into positions of administrative power in many towns. Their “electrification” is pushing the nation towards a new industrial age, but is poorly understood by the average villager.

Their holdings connect to many places below the earth. (How long have they been stealing from our mines, people ask?) To the average citizen, they have all the appearance of a scrawny, pale halfling. Where are known for their love of nature and fine food, the gnomes gain pleasure from the riches of the earth, and the technical delights they can create from it.

PLAYING AS A GNOME

If you choose to play as a gnome, you start with the following racial move:

- ◆ You always seem to have the right gizmo to get you out of trouble. When you're in a tight spot and rummage through your pockets, you find or cobble together 1 use of adventuring gear.

In addition to any other gear, you also start with 4 uses of *Elixir of invention*!

GNOMISH COMPANIONS

Ozzy, Felix & Sassi Finkleswitch

A trio of brave gnomes tasked with paving the way for their family to take control of the gorge once and for all.

When you make camp or begin a session accompanied by the gnomes, roll+CHA. If you have at least 1 bond with the trio, take +1 forward to the roll. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 2. Spend hold 1-for-1 to do the following, whenever you like:

- ◆ Create D6+1 uses of adventuring gear or bandages
- ◆ Add 1d4 to your damage
- ◆ +2 **ARM** against your next **ATTACK**
- ◆ Create a distraction or advantage

On a 6- you hold 2 and the GM holds 2. The GM can spend their hold to make one of the following moves whenever they like:

★ A gnome gets distracted by- ooh, shiny! ★ Someone doesn't take kindly to these dirty gnomes ★ A gizmo in a gnome's pocket goes haywire

Bonds

You may take one or more bonds with any of the Finkleswitches, normal limits apply (for example, if you are a wizard and already have three bonds, you cannot take any more.)

THE SANGUINE FOREST

"Tell me again the Bodigen are a "myth" when you find yourself at the mercy of some braying satyr, or those Nosjad witch hunters - only to find a silver dagger in your hunter's throat and your life your own for another day."

Elrosine, the amber daughter

THE WOOD THAT WOULDN'T DIE

Between Altai and Nekesti, the greying firs and skeletal birch trees become more dense and inhospitable. This is the final resting place of Mamut-bogh, the necromancer's favoured beast. His bones lie here still, jutting from the ground like rotten teeth. Smart travellers do their best to avoid this cursed place - and the wild, enigmatic creatures that nest within Mamut-bogh's ossified corpse.

QUESTIONS

- ◆ Why haven't the templars been culling the satyr recently?
- ◆ What tips have you been told to navigate the forest?
- ◆ How long since you last saw open land?
- ◆ How was Mamut-bogh finally killed?
- ◆ Who needs you to bring back a sprig of blissleaf?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Mamut-bogh's house-sized skull, trees growing through and around a pair of enormous tusks
- ◆ A satyr monolith carved from a shattered armbone
- ◆ An abandoned witches' hut halfway up a tree
- ◆ A child's shoe, discarded on an overgrown path
- ◆ The Braken river, fast-flowing
- ◆ A herd of deer, their antlers gently glowing in the mist
- ◆ A stagnant bog hidden amongst the tall bushes
- ◆ A halfway house, stocked with supplies

THE HUNT

The sanguine satyr are typical for their kind: brutish, primitive and violent. Though the templars' purges normally keep their numbers in check, the satyr have grown strong in the templar's recent absence. Already, the towns closest to the forest have come under heavy attack. It is up to brave warriors such as yourselves to cull the herd once and for all.

INTRODUCTION

You're halfway through a 2-day sweep of the Sanguine forest. (Consume a ration.) Just as you struck camp, the satyr launched their ambush. The echoing roar of some beast - bigger than the satyr, for certain - just echoed through the forests.

QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who just got ripped to pieces by the satyr?
- ◆ How have the trees turned against you?
- ◆ What's most valuable in the satyr's treasure heap?
- ◆ And, as always, what do you do?

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ More bloody satyr!
- ◆ The gorynych gets someone in its clutches
- ◆ The chase leads you deeper into the forest
- ◆ Worse creatures are attracted by the scent of your blood
- ◆ The Bodigen get you out of trouble, but you're now in their debt

FLORA AND FAUNA

BLACKBEARD'S DELIGHT

A pungent mushroom. It's formidable scent stings the nostrils and will linger for many days on whoever plucked it, no matter how hard they wash themselves.

THE DEVIL'S BUTTON

A rose-like flower with jet-black leaves and red thorns that feeds on the black rain summoned by the satyr. Seeing this in bloom is a sure sign the satyr are nearby. The flower is a key reagent in a number of unholy rituals.

OSSFIA CURATRIX

A curious moss that only grows where runes of warding have been carved into Mamut-bogh's skeleton. When you study the runes, roll+INT. On a hit, what you discover emboldens your allies. On a 10+, your study doesn't take a long time or attract unwanted attention. On a miss, what you discover terrifies your allies instead.

DIAMOND POSEY

It's said this glittering orchid only blossoms above gemstones - although there's no telling how far down they are. When you dig below a sprout of diamond posey, roll+hours spent digging. On a 10+ you discover a clutch of uncut stones worth d6x10 coin. On a 7-9, you only find one or two common malachite worth d6 coin for your trouble.

IRONBARK

A variety of pine tree, greatly valued for its sturdy properties. As the name suggests, its bark is as tough as iron; each needles is sharp on every side, like a double-edged sword. It's just as flammable as any other wood, of course. If you can find a way to collect the needles or strip the bark from the tree without hurting yourself, the needles could be turned into knives or the bark could be fashioned into a fine armour.

BLISSLEAF

A pale white shrub with delicate leaves, found most abundantly where foul earth meets fresh water. A salve made from grinding the fresh leaves will help cure a range of illnesses, or heal most debilities, or recover 2d10 HP.

MONSTERS**Felbeast Satyr**

Horde, Organized, Intelligent

Instinct: To hunt, for food or sport

7 HP 1 ARM

Horns and antlers (d6+1 damage 1 piercing Close)

* Toy with their prey * Gore their opponent * Be summoned (by the monster's roar or shamans' drum)

Felbeast Shaman

Horde, Organized, Intelligent

Instinct: To hunt, for food or sport

18 HP 2 ARM

Mystical rainstick (2d8 damage, **REACH**)

* Summon a torrent of stinging, black rain * Sow confusion and discord * Make a show of strength

The Gorynych

Solitary, Huge

According to legend, wherever Mamut-bogh's blood was spilt, the soil gave birth to his children. Venerated by the satyr and dreaded by honest folk, these "babies" are 5 tonnes of chitin and raw muscle. Their bestial faces are surrounded by a mane of goat-horns. Killing one will earn you fame and fortune, assuming there's enough of you left afterwards to enjoy it. **Instinct:** To patrol

21 HP 2 ARM

Savage claws (2d10 damage, 3 piercing, Reach, Messy)

* Announce its presence with an echoing roar
* Destroy the landscape * Tear someone limb from limb
* Sting with a vestigial tail of dark jet

THE BELEAGUERED BOATSMAN

By the time you come to the sluggish river, an old barge has run aground in the thick mud. Its owner is so busy trying to free her vessel, she hasn't spotted the satyr sneaking up until its almost too late! What do you do?

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What's the boatsman offered for your help?
- ◆ What shouldn't she have taken from the satyr?
- ◆ Who will die if the boat doesn't get back?
- ◆ How are the satyr adapted for river raiding?

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ The boat's hull comes apart
- ◆ The thick mud drags someone down
- ◆ The boat is freed - but nobody's on it!
- ◆ The ripples in the shallows attract giant water striders

MONSTERS**Water strider**

Group, Organized, Devious

Sharp proboscis (d6 damage, **CLOSE**, piercing 1)

6 HP 0 armour

Instinct: to scavenge

* Collect scraps of food * Prey on anything falling under the surface * Appear suddenly and silently in water

HIRELINGS**The Boatsman**

Loyalty 1, Cost: Safe passage along the river

Barge-handler: When you undertake a perilous journey on the barge, the worst result for the trailblazer is a 7-9.

Tradesman: When you make camp on the barge, you may supply with the boatsman.

TREASURE**The little book of repelling**

A notebook filled with sketches of various runes of warding. Each rune is designed to repel *something*, but it's hard to work out what rune repels what. When you brandish a rune from the little book, state the thing you are trying to repel and roll+INT. (If you have tried to repel this thing before, take +1 forward.) On a 10+, the thing you wanted cannot get any closer than *reach* distance. On a 7-9, your target is unaffected but you can name something else that is affected instead. On a 6-, the GM names what is affected.

THE MYTH & THE COURT

You've been invited to the court of the Bodigen, with no explanation as to what that truly means. The ancient scriptures say few are extended such an honour - so why you? The journey may cost you dear (and you, grizzled mercenary that you are, cannot help but consider the bottom line.) You do not know the consequences of going, but would ignoring the offer be worse?

You may either accept or decline the invitation. If you decline, nothing happens right now but in time, all will know you did not go to the Bodigen's court when asked. While you have not made an enemy of them, the Bodigen make it known to you their aid is forever closed to you.

If you accept, declare the one thing you cannot afford to lose right now - and yet risk losing to reach the court in time. Money; honour; glory; your sword arm; the wrath of your god; the results of a critical ritual: these are all acceptable answers, but you might think of something more specific. (Your life is yours to put forward if you wish, but be aware this is no petty wager.)

When you accept and travel to the forest court, you must complete a five-day *perilous journey*. Along the way, each traveller will find themselves tested: a seemingly-coincidental event that strikes when you are most vulnerable. Roll+your worst ability (if there's a tie, your choice.) The GM will describe the details as befits the ability, your roll and the fiction.

On a 10+, what you risked is safe. On a 7-9, what you risked is damaged, but can be recovered in time with effort on your part. On a 6-, what you risked is irretrievably lost. Though you may reclaim it, or an echo of it, it is cursed to never be within your grasp for long.

When you arrive at the Bodigen's court (on time or otherwise) you are greeted as a friend and trusted ally. The Bodigen understand and value what you staked in accepting, and wish to repay you in kind. What has been lost cannot be reclaimed, but they will do their best to honour your sacrifice in their name and ensure your life persists.

You spend as much time as you like with the Bodigen, in a realm of dappled amber twilight, fine dining and great beauty. After you return to the realm of the living, at the start of a session the GM may ask how your life was made more comfortable recently by virtue of some minor coincidence, unrelated to what you risked or lost. If you answer, mark XP.



PHOTO BY JESSICA FURTNEY ON UNSPLASH

TROUBLE IN NEKESTI

"I love sinners. They save me a fortune on lamp oil."

HIGH TEMPLAR LOGAN

You stand before the magistrate, his lips quivering with fury. The bloodied gnome by his side silently thanks you; but all around the mob are baying for blood. It was going to be the gnome's, but yours will do. They press in, hemming you closer to the bonfire. What do you do?

- ◆ How did you know the gnome was innocent?
- ◆ Why don't you trust the magistrate?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Windows hastily shuttered as you approach
- ◆ An iron stake thrusting out of a bonfire
- ◆ A cold jail cell, smelling of mildew and worse
- ◆ Gnome 'citizens' begging and scavenging
- ◆ A gnome tax collector, his eyes hard and red-rimmed

When you overhear your name muttered aloud and ask what their problem is, roll+CHA. On a 10+, you may ask one question of the speaker and they will answer to the best of their ability. On a 7-9 you can ask a question, but not without attracting unwanted attention from other nearby villagers.

When you take damage while trapped by the frenzied mob, choose one: take +1 damage now, take -1 forward, or put yourself at the mob's mercy. Watch out for the pitchforks!

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ A wagon is overturned, it's horses bolt towards you
- ◆ Flames reach ever higher, obscuring your vision
- ◆ The people scream for blood and point at you!
- ◆ The magistrate begins his trial against the gnomes
- ◆ The mob hinders your approach or exit

ABOUT NEKESTI

- ◆ Prosperity Poor
- ◆ Population Steady
- ◆ Defences Watch (The Templar citadel)
- ◆ Resources Wood, grain
- ◆ Oath: Kostromo, Nosjad, Sanguine Wood
- ◆ Other Blight (adventurers)
- ◆ Personage: Magistrate Kalareth

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What were the gnomes smuggling for the magistrate?
- ◆ Whose head do you recognise on a pike outside?
- ◆ How are the cells here? What did you do to get chucked in there (this time?)
- ◆ Who do you know here and why are they in your debt?

MONSTERS

Templar Guard

Horde

Instinct: To cast out their sinners

3 HP 1 ARM

Cast-iron cudgels (d6, **CLOSE**)

* Follow the orders of the just and righteous * Judge and/or burn a witch

Magistrate Kalareth

Solitary, Intelligent, Devious

Instinct: To solidify his power

15 HP 2 ARM

The beating of your life! (w[2d4], **CLOSE**)

* Turn the people against his enemies * Disappear into the crowd * Summon the army of teeth, if cornered

The Army of Teeth

Group, Arcane

Instinct: To serve whoever holds the bag

6 HP 0 ARM

Biting blades (d6, **CLOSE**, 1-**PIERCING**)

* Follow simple commands (fight, lead, guard) * Take the form of the race the teeth came from

LOOT

Bag of Teeth (Various)

3 uses, 1 weight

It's a bag of teeth! A detailed examination of the contents reveals teeth from several species, plus a larger smooth pebble engraved with a magic word. When you speak the magic word aloud and cast a handful of teeth into the air, a warrior will spring forth wherever a tooth lands. Each warrior will follow basic commands from whomever spoke the word for a few minutes before disappearing.

The Magistrate's Saber*5 weight, precise*

A saber, oddly heavy given it's flimsy construction, which could be deadly in the right hands. When you spend days training with the saber, roll+DEX. On a 10+, choose one of the following. On a 7-9, either take +1 forward the next time you train or choose 1 option now and deal your damage to yourself.

- ◆ The saber is now weight 0
- ◆ The saber's maximum range is now reach
- ◆ You ignore armour when using the saber
- ◆ You deal +1 damage when using the saber

When you've chosen all the options, you can't make the weapon any better, but weapon experts will recognise you as one of their kind.

THE MAGISTRATES' DEMESNE

The templars sent you in first, you don't know why. But there's something wrong with this old house as soon as you step foot in it. There's a faint rancour of sweet, sickly old vomit; the rugs, so recently cleaned; and this old butler before you, steadfastly not moving in spite of the warrant the gnomish bank gave you. A door - to the parlour? - swings open by itself and the butler glances at it, sweat beading his old temple. What do you do?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ A parlour, all the places laid but abandoned
- ◆ A gallery: generations of stern portraits
- ◆ An observatory with a gilded telescope
- ◆ Scratching coming from the attic
- ◆ A room-sized closet, hiding a secret passage
- ◆ Where is everybody?

STAKES

- ◆ Why do the family want the gnomes dead?
- ◆ Why is the home full of bad spirits?
- ◆ Where does the secret passage lead?
- ◆ How was the noble going to kill the gnomes?
- ◆ Why won't the templars come here?

MONSTERS**Spectral Ancestor***Group, Large***Instinct:** To ensure sanctity**9 HP 0 ARM**Withering touch (1d8 **CLOSE**)

★ Turn the environment against them ★ Make the past a reality again

Ornamental Observatory Trap*Solitary, Trap***Instinct:** To destroy witnesses and evidence**6 HP 2 ARM**Focused sunbeams (d10, ignores armour, **NEAR, FAR**)

★ Turn the room into ash ★ Make a vision of the past a reality

Skumm, the Rat King*Small, Solitary, Hoarder, Cautious***Instinct:** To rule over vermin as their king**3 HP 4 ARM**Fangs as big as yer'ARM! (w[2d10], **CLOSE**)

★ Summon his loyal retinue of rat-followers ★ Skitter away to a place of safety ★ Accept an offering

WORD ON THE STREET...

At the start of a session, or when the party hits the streets in search of answers...

1. An influential nobleman mistakes you for an assassin! He's away and screaming before you can mutter an apology, leaving D6x10 coin at your feet. He will inform the relevant authorities of his 'assault', though the sheriff knows the man, in spite of his influence, is prone to jumping to conclusions.
2. A scruffy pie vendor offers you a "free sample". If you partake, you suffer D3-CON health. (a negative result means you recover that much instead). If you decline, no matter how politely, you are hounded through the streets to the amusement of several onlookers.
3. The templars are recruiting citizens for their latest witch hunt. If you agree to join them, you are expected to report to the templar enclave at dawn tomorrow. (See those awaiting judgement, later.)
4. A gnome engineer is set upon by a band of brigands. His murderers, if successful, take only an intricate gold egg and his reading glasses, leaving his coin purse untouched. If you did nothing, you don't think you were spotted.
5. Wherever you go, it's the same rumour - the rain of shadows signals death. By the time you get back to your allies, dark storm clouds have gathered. Over the next few hours, a bitter black rain drenches the village; poisoning the well, making animals howl and go mad, and seemingly signalling the satyr's attack...

6. Exploring the brightly-lit streets of new Gnomington*, you are collared by an eager-eyed administrator from the Gnomish Trade Association. He's been looking for someone just like you! (See wacky gnomish schemes, later.)

** Every town has a New Gnomington, they're like Chinatown. How is this one different from others you've seen?*

AWAITING JUDGEMENT

MALPHONSE DAMSONTREE, seventh scion of that house. Guilty of trespassing on infernal ground and conspiring with the wretched. Still at large in the Kostromo slums.

THE NIGHTINGALE A witch and practitioner of heretical magics, linked to the recent corruption of Bodigen's glade.

KRILL KETTLEPIPE excommunicated from the engineer's guild but understood to be continuing his experiments into devilish arcana and elecktrickery from an abandoned wizard's tower south of Nosjad.

THULAGON COLDROAR accused of slavery and vicious bloodsport at the quarry pits north of Failspeake Gorge.

JALIRA ROSEBANE attempting to coerce the elves of Battlesbrook into their previous hedonistic lifestyle.

VLASTA SLAVIK convicted of betraying her templar brothers and escaping execution. Current location unknown.

DOBRI MYASKOVSKY wanted by the Gnomish Trade Association for petty larceny and tax evasion.

BROTHER ISSAC OF THE ORDER OF MARETH guilty of necromancy. Destroy on sight.

WACKY GNOMISH SCHEMES

1. I need a new samoflange! Bilby Buzzerbright owes me, go pick one up from his lab in the Franken Stead. I wonder how his experiments with etheric farming golems have been going?
2. Here, take this massive bag of money! You can even spend a bit of it as payment, if you like. If a tax officer asks, this gold is just "resting in your account", yes?
3. Dobbs? Is that you, Dobbs? I can't see so clear, nowadays. If only those foolish pilgrims hadn't stolen my spectacles...
4. I call it the "transistor"! It will redefine industry, but it must be placed on the highest hill (where the Shackleteeth goblins make their den) during the lightning storm tomorrow!
5. The templars call me a heretic, but really I'm just misunderstood! Now, would you be the person to speak to about procuring a variety of corpse dusts?
6. My velocipede is complete and ready for it's first lap around town! But these uneducated yokels (for reasons I cannot fathom) seem to have it in for me. What's the charge for you strapping folk to defend my latest invention?



PHOTO BY ANNIE SPRAT ON UNSPLASH

A STENCH IN NOSJAD

Standing on Mirkasa's eastern shore, Nosjad is a sprawling city and the countries' biggest port. Until a few decades ago, you would have called Nosjad one of the most fiercely traditional cities in the free world - but the efforts of it's new gnome population (whose exodus from their mountain homes is still a topic of great debate) have brought this realm of zealous witch hunters and dour-faced lumberjacks kicking and screaming into the modern age.

TELL THE PLAYERS THIS...

You are in Nosjad to earn your fortune, the same as most of this cities' million residents. To that end, you have come at the request of your sponsor - more on them shortly - to investigate a spate of missing persons in the shipping district. People have been going missing in the area around Remly Powersplurt's workshop for the last 3 weeks. There seems to be no pattern to the dates or victims, and no ransom has been posted. Uncovering the mystery of these disappearances alone will improve your reputation - but what your sponsor has to offer is even more enticing...

Don't tell the players this...

Remly Powersplurt is young and impulsive, but a brilliant engineer. His father was an engineer too, but made the mistake of dabbling with sorcery. Gnomes can handle their own magic (colloquially known as "elektrikery") pretty well, but other magics tend to be more than they can handle. That was certainly the case with Powersplurt senior, who managed to bungle a spell of transmutation and turn himself into a mass of acidic ooze.

Nobody learned the truth - to everyone else, Powersplurt senior simply disappeared. Young Remly never believed it though and after graduating with honours from Bronzehand artificer's college, dedicated his life to finding out what really happened.

Three weeks ago, Remly stumbled on the hidden passages below his father's workshop and the elvish spells he'd attempted to decipher. At the same time he unwittingly released the ooze (formerly known as dad) from it's prison and it's been feeding on random victims in the neighbourhood ever since. After each feed, it's snuck back to it's lair, but thus far retains enough humanity to avoid revealing itself to it's son.

Remly suspects a connection between the missing people and his father's work, but his personal involvement has blinded him to the truth. Remly is as keen as anyone to close the book on these kidnappings and is worried that anyone sneaking about will uncover his father's work too.

WHO'S YOUR SPONSOR?

Roll a d6 (or GM, choose one that appeals to you) to establish who is sponsoring the parties' actions in the shipping district.

1. Trannis Maloy, the highest-ranking human in customs and a former blacksmith who wants to beat the gnome bureaucrats at their own game.
2. Parsons Cooman, a lowly acolyte dedicated to spreading the good word, who sees the truth of things.
3. Cassandra Stoneglaive, a dwarf shieldmaiden who longs to die gloriously in battle despite the wishes of her father: one of the richest dwarves in Nosjad.
4. Remly Powersplurt, a gnomish engineer with a lot of pent-up guilt. He's been pegged for success by his colleagues.
5. Audrey Gable, wife of a missing noble (and secret mistress of cantrips and curses), who knows her husband is still alive no matter what the templars say!
6. Thessaly, who isn't actually a witch (though everyone believes she is one) with a plan for the perfect crime and a need to stay alive for just long enough to see it done.

(Note: Most of these sponsors were randomly generated from the tables in the back of the DW rulebook. Never forget about these tables, they're extremely useful!)

When you accept the job to discover the fate of the missing people, choose a reward and roll+CHA:

- ◆ A great big bag of money
- ◆ The respect of the common folk
- ◆ A favour owed from an influential politician
- ◆ A rumour of greater riches or power

On a 10+ you will also receive a lesser version of the reward up-front, as a show of good faith.

THE WORKSHOP

The Powersplurt workshop is an unassuming two-floor house on a quiet street in the gnomish quarter. To a casual observer, Remly's abode and habits don't drastically differ from any of the other hundreds of gnomish engineers in the city.

The lower floor is given over to workshop space, while the first floor is Remly's living quarters. Remly runs the workshop (open to his customers) by day, and usually retires upstairs to study and sleep by night. Below the workshop lies a semi-hidden generator room, and below that lies the true secret - access to an underground cavern where Remly's father now lurks.

DEALING WITH REMLY DIRECTLY

Remly's an engineer by trade - he provides freelance technical support and maintenance for gnomish contraptions. If the players wish to question him, they can approach him any day of the week in his workshop (if he hasn't approached them already.) He will claim (truthfully) to know nothing about the disappearances and, as a respected member of society, will react poorly to threats or violence to his person.

An *interesting fact* about Remly is he works for several local companies and is generally well-regarded.

An *interesting and useful fact* about Remly is although he is generally well-regarded, businesses affiliated with the templars don't trust him. The templars suspect he and his father (now missing) secretly dabble in sorceries beyond their control.

EXPLORING

The first floor (living space)

The first floor consists of a spartan bedroom, bathroom and kitchen area, scaled for gnomish living. Research papers and books cover every surface. If it's late at night, Remly will likely be sleeping up here.

- ◆ What literature from the templar's "forbidden lore" list do you spot amidst the research papers?
- ◆ There's a photo of Remly and an older gnome - his father - on the wall. They look happy. What are they doing?
- ◆ When you spend a few minutes investigating the books, roll+INT. On a 7+ you discover a range of books from gnomish electrickery to elvish spell-lore. On a 10+, also choose one:
- ◆ You pocket a copy of this year's encyclopaedia gnomica: gain d3+1 uses of bag of books;
- ◆ You uncover a Tensio's floating disc with one charge

The ground floor (workshop)

Filling most of the sizable workshop floor is the gnome's worktable, strewn with semi-assembled gadgets. There's a front and back door (both locked after hours with a simple deadlock.) The front is mostly glass windows. At night, a heavy tarp covers the table and anything on it.

Under the table lies a silvered chain attached to a pulley system that opens the trapdoor to the basement. (Anyone with an eye for magic or electrickery may also spot the fine copper wire, charged with electrik energy, leading from the tesla coils in the corner of the room to under the table.) The chain is trapped under a heavy table leg; while the table can be moved fairly easily, it might be difficult to do so quickly and/or quietly.

- ◆ What gizmos are on the table? Are they of any use?
- ◆ What are the tesla coils in the corner used for?

THE BASEMENT (GENERATOR ROOM)

The L-shaped basement is cramped even by gnomish standards. Technical manuals and more books fill the shelves. The walls are cold flagstone, but the air is warm and has a definite tang of ozone. A generator fills most of the room, humming with power. (It might be interesting and useful to note the generator is oversized, even by a typical engineer's standards.)

Behind the generator, the far wall is mostly obscured behind a curtain of copper wires. Careful examination will reveal the flagstones behind the wires have been removed and a secondary passage heads downwards. At the bottom of this passage stands a heavy door, also made from copper.

When you touch the copper (wires or door) without proper insulation, you're electrocuted! Roll+CON. On a 10+, you take d4 damage (ignoring armour) and the generator unfolds into a generator gnomem. On a 7-9, you take d8 damage instead. On a miss, the shock fries your nervous system - in addition to the damage, you'll feel shaky (-1 DEX) until you take a few days to recover.

THE CAVE COMPLEX

The stairs behind the copper door wind down for some time, becoming more roughly cut and slimy the further the party delves. Eventually the stairs open into a natural cave complex somewhere below Nosjad's sewers.

Some kind of study has been set up near the door, but is curiously devoid of books or other implements. Every surface is picked clean and bone dry - odd given the obvious damp of the sewage pipes. *(Some copper components have been set up here, but look corroded... or half-digested.)*

They may also hear the sounds of dripping and splashing getting louder - until eventually the ooze coalesces and gets the drop on them!

- ◆ Where do the outflow pipes eventually lead? Are there any other exits?
- ◆ What kind of treasures lie half-absorbed in the ooze?
- ◆ Are Remly's notes and the parties' intellect enough to restore his father's original form?

When you try and appeal to what's left of the ooze's emotions (like fear or love for his son) roll+CHA. On a 10+, it retains enough to parley, though it cannot speak. On a 7-9, it pauses for a moment, but doesn't change it's behaviour.

TREASURES

TENSO'S FLOATING DISC

(1 weight, d10x[charges] coin) Tenso's disc will float once activated and can carry up to 10 weight for a number of hours equal to it's current charge. When it's charge is depleted the disc drops to the ground (along with whatever it's carrying.) The disk can be switched off, conserving any remaining charges (rounding down.)

ANTI-STATIC GLOVES

(1 weight, touch, 4 coin) Another mainstay of gnomish technology, these jet-black gloves absorb electrickery harmlessly. Someone wearing them can muck about with uninsulated copper wire as much as they like.

SONIC SCREWDRIVER

(1 weight, touch, 20 coin) When you try and unlock a door with the sonic screwdriver, if you've opened a door of the same material (wood, stone, metal, glass, etc.) it opens! Otherwise, roll+INT. On a 10+, it's open! On a 7-9, it doesn't work on whatever you just tried it on.

OTHER ITEMS

- ◆ A piston-driven jackhammer - with broken pistons (close, 1 coin, 2 weight)
- ◆ A "high templar Logan" gnomish action figure (0 weight, D6 coin)

CREATURES

Powersplurt Ooze

(Solitary, Large, Amorphous, Stealthy)

When it escaped three weeks ago, it was the size of a rat. Now it's the size of a horse and growing every time it feeds. If this thing isn't stopped, we're going to have a B-movie on our hands. **Instinct:** To absorb
Special Qualities: It's all sticky!

21 HP 1 ARM

Gelatinous hug (d10+2 damage, **CLOSE**, ignores armour)

- * Digest anything but wood and leather
- * Stick to things (your blade, your equipment)
- * Emit a horrifying stench
- * Grow bigger with every meal
- * Protect it's son with it's last shred of humanity

If the ooze is burned (by flame, electrickery or magic) it takes double damage.

*If the ooze is exposed to water (from the sewer outflow pipes, for example) it will lose it's **armour** and some of it's stickyness.*

Generator Golem

(Solitary, Huge, Construct, Stealthy)

These robotic minions are frequently used to guard gnomish secrets such as this. To an outsider, these things look like hunks of gnomish technology... until it's too late. **Instinct:** to protect

Special Qualities: Robot in disguise

18 HP 3 ARM

Static gauntlets (d8 damage, ignores armour)

- * Hide as a miscellaneous piece of technology
- * Self-destruct explosively



PHOTO BY CLARENCE ONIMUS ON UNSPLASH

ABERRANT'S EYE

For 50 years, the gnomes of Altai and people of Mirkasa have lived together under a cloud of distrust. Only the gnomes know why they fled their mountain homes and they have not told this secret to others willingly, though they share their technology freely enough. Many a traveller has ventured north seeking hidden Gnomish cities, only to return home empty-handed - if they return at all.

The Aberrant's eye (named for the distinctive circular crater blasted out of it's side long ago) is the largest mountain in the Altai range. Rumours of a secret gnome expedition crash-landing in the eye crater have drawn the party to this very peak, but the rumour is common knowledge and they won't be the only ones making the difficult trip. What were the gnomes transporting? Where were they taking it? And will the party be the ones to successfully claim it?

GETTING TO THE EYE

Aberrant's Eye is miles from civilisation, so you'll want to start this adventure with a perilous journey. Depending on the world you've created, there may be alternatives: a wizard could do a ritual or someone could parley safe passage on an airship. No matter the method, always fill the characters' lives with adventure.

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What actually caused the gnomes' exodus 50 years ago?
- ◆ The gnomes was delivering supplies to make more airships and submersibles; documents in the captain's quarters suggest it was only one shipment of many. Why are the gnomes building so many vehicles? Where are they planning on going? Where are they building them?
- ◆ Who shot down the airship?
- ◆ Who's beaten the party to the crash site - were-bears, troggs, templars or hobgoblin nomads? Are they open to diplomacy?

LOCATIONS

THE EYE AND THE CRASH SITE

The main crater, accessible from the path winding up the mountains. The smoking remains of the airship still lie here. Unfortunately, as the party reach the lip they spot the other group already rooting around the crash site.

The party have the high ground - a tactical advantage. If they're looking to sneak up on the other group, they should take care not to dislodge any of the loose rocks.

The dirigible's balloon has burst and it's nose is crumpled into the stones of the crater. Most of the cargo has already been moved by the gnomes via a secret entrance, alluded to in the Captain's notes. The name Calamitous Defence is still visible written on the hull.

The party may find the following useful notes in the captains' quarters:

"...Service entrance latch in vent shaft"

A mostly-intact inventory, listing electrickery batteries, raw ores, dirigible canvas and other vehicle parts.

"...Security password: Gnomington."

SERVICE ENTRANCE

A latch just inside the trapdoor will reveal the hidden service entrance with a shower of rock and debris. This is the way the gnomes who survived the crash took the cargo, as indicated by the discarded pallets and gurneys everywhere.

The first two rooms are some kind of customs/security room, long abandoned. The place is lacking power, but if the party fiddles around with controls they could accidentally jump-start something (good or bad, depending on the roll!)

The twin double-doors securing each room are designed to lock back into place mechanically by use of springs, but the first set will give way under the strain and stay open.

Most of the consoles are covered in a thick coating of dust and cobwebs - no-one's been here for years, it seems. (Except that one console in the corner - see, the dust has been disturbed. Probably recently!)

There's no power in the room, nor does it look like there has been in a while. It's unlikely they used anything as fancy as a password to open the double doors.

VENT SHAFT

A concealed trapdoor in the centre of the eye leads directly into the waystation under the mountain. The trip is in pitch darkness for most of the way, and very cramped - you won't be able to reach your weapons until safely out the other side.

THE WAYSTATION

This area was once a major junction and meeting/office area, and should give the party an idea of what gnome civilisation was once like. Littered between bronze architecture laden with verdigris are discarded tick-er-tape serials. (These should include veiled references to whatever danger or compulsion drove the gnomes from the mountains, 50 years ago).

If the raiding party from part 1 were only temporarily driven off, this would be a likely place for them to launch a counter-attack.

THE ARCHAETORIUM

The original use for this room is a mystery, although the tall test-tubes and discarded fragments of notes suggest it was a lab of some kind. Though faded by age, several images of the surface world and the nearby city of Nosjad can be found nearby. A spark of elecktrickery remains in an emergency generator in the corner of the room.

When you find and activate the emergency generator, roll+INT. On a 10+, the lighting in this room and any below spurts back to life, at least for a few hours. On a 7-9, so do the old security systems.

THE VEHICLE WORKSHOP

The surviving crew of the airship are using the tools in this abandoned workshop to salvage their cargo. While they may not have directly hostile intentions, they are on guard after the crash and the party are likely to be seen as unwelcome guests. The lighting and security has been restored to this area. Captain Wizzleclicks will not hesitate to activate the sentries if the party make any false moves.

THE RAILWAY

The trail ends at this abandoned railway station. If the gnomes are still alive, their intention is to use the line to transport their cargo. What dangers lurking in old Gnomington may shuffle out of the darkness of the trainline? The answer may depend on what caused the Gnomes' exodus, but here's a couple of ideas...

MONSTERS**Terronok, the Ur-Trog**

Solitary, Large, Organized

A savant among Neanderthals, it was the shame of being brought low by such a primitive creature that has kept the gnomes' so secretive about their exodus. It remains to be seen if all their new ironclads and the like will be enough to defeat the "new trogg empire".

Instinct: to rule

20 HP (1 ARM)

Bony club (d12+4 damage) Forceful, Reach

* Club a foe senseless * Brutally shout for more of it's kind

The Bearstruck of White

Group, Organized, Intelligent, Cautious

Ferocious bear-men warriors from the polar seas who got sick of the "monster hunters" having all the fun. The bearstruck managed something no other race could - they discovered the Gnomes. **Instinct:** to crave glory
10 HP (2 ARM)

Warbeaten mace (b[2d8] damage 1 piercing) Close

* Defeat an opponent in one-to-one battle * Surround and disable an opponent * Form a defensive perimeter

Gnomington Arachnodroids

Horde, Tiny, Organized, Hoarder, Construct

For all the potential threats to overtake the gnomes, none would have guessed their own security system would be their downfall. **Instinct:** to defend it's territory
Special Qualities: Wall-crawling, Summoned by alarms
6 HP (2 ARM)

Electrified mandibles (d6 damage) Hand

* Swarm intruders * Overwhelm a single opponent
* Repurpose technology

LOOT**FROSTED BELL-JAR**

Whatever you put into this glowing, fist-sized bell-jar will grow without any nutrients. If it's supposed to grow, like a plant, it will reach maturity in a matter of days. If it's not supposed to grow, it will grow anyway but the process will take longer. I wonder what it will grow into?

HAVENSHINE

*The beastmen snort and caper in front of you, kicking up gouts of dust from the stone paved floor.
The eyes of this castle's previous owners stare down imperiously from a painting on the far wall.*

*Obvious exits are back, into the courtyard, out a vine-choked window to the garden,
or up the stairs to the first floor.*

*The biggest of the beasts charges at you, head down,
misshapen horns aimed at your stomach.*

What do you do?

WHO OR WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR?
(Choose one:)

- ◆ The head of the albino beast of Nekesti
- ◆ The Liber Laqueum from the library of Calandril's Blade
- ◆ A cutting of the white tree from the Garden of Light

WHAT THE PLAYERS DON'T KNOW...

Long ago, four warriors defended the land in the last great Beastman invasion. The beastman's shaman clouded the warrior's minds with a fel enchantment, indirectly causing the deaths of many before they could free themselves and win the day.

But the ensorcellment, however temporary, had earned the heroes the mistrust of those in power. They were rewarded with the fortress Havenshine - a pretty, but isolated castle on Mirkasa's northern coast. The message was clear: stay away from the people. Taking "early retirement", the heroes disappeared from daily life and their story was lost, for a time.

Now, a new beastmen invasion is underway. The PCs have avoided roving bands of hunters and come to Havenshine for their own purpose, unaware of the albino beastlord that intends to awaken the heroes of Havenshine to a dark spell once more...

THE COURTYARD & ENTRANCE HALL

When you examine the portrait closely, roll+INT. On any result, you hear the distant noise of a great battle. On a 7-9, the GM will tell you a truth about the four heroes. On a 10+, you may also ask the GM any one question about this castle.

Four statues stand in the courtyard (A good push could topple them onto a beastman.) They depict four warriors: a trapper, a ranger, a druid and a wizard.

This castle's stood on the cliffs for centuries. Going by the subsidence and cracks in the walls, it won't be here for another century. It might not be here tomorrow!

4-8 Beastmen Curs

Horde, organised

Instinct: to go down fighting

3 **HP** (1 **ARM**)

Tusks and horns (d6 damage, 1 piercing) Close

★ Gore an opponent, bloodily ★ Make a savage show of strength

CALANDRIL'S BLADE

Unlike the entrance the library is spotless, apparently kept clean by the half-dozen automatons patrolling the aisles. The shelves are filled with dwarven rune-tomes. The walls of the study area at the far end of the room are covered with trophies. You think you see some kind of shadow skulking around in the rafters above.

Calandril's spirit (in the form of a shadowy cougar) guards the library, but isn't out to harm the party. He won't help them either unless they can provide something he wants - putting his and the other heroes' souls to rest, or perhaps clearing their name from the battle of Daviston.

When you fiddle with anything in the room, it's probably booby-trapped. Roll+DEX. On a 10+, either you drop it in time, or you get it but the GM picks an option from the list below. On a 7-9, either it explodes (a fragment or two may remain) and the GM picks one option, or the GM picks two options - your call.

- ◆ A gust of wind blows the chandeliers out
- ◆ You're locked in
- ◆ You get a faceful of *Tagit dust* and fall into a light sleep
- ◆ The trophies in the room start manically laughing
- ◆ The servitors now see you as a threat

Before his death, Blade was in the thrall of the dragon Xelastras. Hidden amongst his notes is the location of the Xelastras' lair. Blade's ashes could be useful leverage with the dragon, or the location itself could be useful for all kinds of reasons.

Dwarven Servitors

Group, Construct

Instinct: to keep the library tidy and free of pests

12 HP (2 ARM)

Whirring bronze limbs (b[2d8 damage) **FORCEFUL**

* Tidy up a shelf or book * Self-destruct, revealing an explosive or gas trap * Answer only to the owners of the castle

The rune-tomes

(2 weight each; 1 weight for a dwarf) - would be worth a lot to the right buyer.

The Liber Laqueum

(1 weight)

A tatty notebook bound in orc-skin. Contains a wealth of knowledge on traps. When you set a trap, declare what it's for (e.g. "goblins"), choose two and roll+DEX. On a 10+, choose three. On a miss, the GM will remove one.

- ◆ The trap deals your damage to the target
- ◆ The trap ensnares your prey, for hours at least
- ◆ The trap targets two types of monster

The trap requires no gold or adventuring gear.

THE GARDEN OF LIGHT

Most of the wall on this side of the castle has already fallen into the ocean. The white tree hasn't, but only just - it's right on the cliff-edge. Between you and the edge is an vine-choked garden, broken up by the occasional feature or fountain. A troupe of battle-weary beastmen are fighting amongst themselves by the old oak tree.

The old oak tree is the corpse of a treeman, sacred to the Dryads that live here. The beastmen aren't fighting amongst themselves, they're fighting off the dryads as the garden comes to life around them!

At the foot of the white tree is an old skeleton, wrapped in vines and leaves. This is the druid Light's corpse, and his soul is still attached. Light cannot directly speak to the players, but his will is enacted in part through the dryads. If his corpse (and the tree) go over the cliff edge, his soul will never find rest.

When you drink the brackish fountain water, roll+WIS. On any result, you've become attuned to this garden - if you're willing, you can help Light escape his corpse and find peace. On a 10+, you take +1 ongoing to navigating the garden until the next time you rest. On a miss, you can still help Light, but the process will hurt.

Vineish Dryads

Group

Instinct: to provide food and protection for the garden

9 HP (1 ARM)

Whipping limbs (2d6 damage) **REACH**

* Distract and confuse with pheromones
* Rip interlopers to shreds * Draw sustenance from the ground

The treeman's last acorn

If you plant this acorn somewhere it can flourish, one day a forest will stand in that place - and the trees will remember it was you who made it happen. If you eat the acorn, you will absorb the long memories and raw natural energy of the treeman for yourself - this energy is very powerful, but how it physically manifests is up to the GM.

A cutting of the white tree (1 weight)

It is said the roots of the white trees grow together, connecting to the forest realm of Sengir - the elven god of nature. It is also said when the last white tree falls, Sengir's protection of the mortal realm will be over and "the lords of fire will reign free." A cutting, or the location of a white tree sapling, will carry immense religious significance for the forest elves. Wearing a fresh sprig of white tree on your breast is said to provide protection from infernal or unnatural flame, but will wither away after a few days.

WESTARA'S CATACOMBS

The crypt ahead of you is a cold, unwelcoming space filled with the corpses of beastmen. Ahead of you shuffles a white-furred beast-thing, it's mismatched, stitched body horrible to behold. It's attention is currently focused on the open coffin in the room. It doesn't seem to have noticed you yet. What do you do?

The albino beast has somehow been merged with the necromancer, Westara. Both souls vie for dominance, but there might be something of the necromancer's soul – some humanity – left to appeal to. You hope.

Three other tombs lie untouched. Someone strong enough could fling the heavy stone slabs at the monster to do some damage.

There's a beastman corpse in a strange slumped pose by the stairs, as though lying on an invisible wall. The final step is rigged with an enchantment – it lets creatures down, but not up again. Destroying the step would permanently deactivate the trap; or magic could be used to disable (and re-activate) the trap as needed.

When you appeal to Westara's soul within the abomination, roll+CHA. On a 10+ he will become lucid, for a time. On a 7-9 he will falter, but fail to break free of the abomination's hold. On a miss, the mix of dark energy in the body will further warp it.

Westara's Soul In The Albino Beast

Solitary, construct, terrifying

Special Qualities: stitched together

18 HP (2 ARM)

Miscellaneous limbs (2d6 damage) **FORCEFUL**

Instinct: to emerge dominant

* Raise a corpse from the dead * Struggle between human and beast minds

If it stalked the living, Blade had a bolt, trap or gadget for it. A monster hunter without compare, he always kept something for his trophy room. His encounter with the dragon Xelastras left him with serious unpaid debts.

To the long-lived elves and dwarves, Calandril's name still means something. Favoured by both races, this ranger mixed elven grace with dwarven knowledge. In life, he was accompanied by Mellencamp, his faithful cougar.

Brash but good-hearted, Light's wolfish features matched his personality. He loved all things in nature, and the gardens of Havenshine were his domain. He saved and nurtured many rare plants there before his death.

It wasn't long after the battle for Daviston that Westara thought talking back to a death god was a good idea. For her trouble, she earned a flayed face, a talent for stitching bodies back together, and a renewed interest in necromancy...

Mareth's Pin

A foot-long hollow bronze stake with a cork stopper on the end, used by necromancers as a quick-and-easy reanimation tool. Pour some of your own blood (from 1 hp to 6 HP's worth) into the stake, stab it into a corpse's chest, and the body will animate and work as an extension of your will. If you pull the stake out, the corpse turns back into meat and you suffer no further harm. If anyone else pulls the stake out, or the zombie is reduced to 0 hp you suffer an additional d6 damage (ignoring armour).



PHOTO BY JOHN ROBERTS ON UNSPLASH

THE PLANARCH VAULT

You've just landed on the Planarch Vault, a sky-fortress built to hold criminals too dangerous to simply kill. It's guarded by a team of wardens, mighty warriors each - but last week they didn't report in. You've been sent to find out why. Your job is to infiltrate the complex, rescue the wardens if possible, and ensure the vault is secure.

You're standing on a windy stone plinth, the entrance pad. One edge hangs out over open air; the other leads into the entrance. The majority of the fortress looms above you, cut out of the chunk of floating rock. Four guardsmen await you in the entrance hall ahead.

- ◆ Who sent you?
- ◆ Why don't you trust the guards?
- ◆ What here is broken or missing?
- ◆ Where's that oily smoke coming from?
- ◆ And, as always... what do you do?

LOCATIONS

ENTRANCE

A stone plinth, embedded with partially-concealed sigils of surveillance. Below you is a thousand feet of open sky. The plinth leads to an entrance hall with 2-5 shapeshifters in, disguised as guards. As soon as the players attempt to go further, they drop their disguise and attack.

Sigils of surveillance will reveal a disguised shapeshifter.

Dropping a shapeshifter off the edge may kill it, if it's too wounded to turn into a bird or something. Or it may survive and escape into Nosjad... whoops.

When you're outside and there's a wind up, roll+CON. On a 10+, you keep your footing. On a 7-9, choose one: you're forced to the ground, an item is blown away, or you are swept perilously close to the edge.

ELEVATOR

Another plinth in a smooth stone passage allows fast travel to (from top to bottom) the bridge and conference room, cells and basement. It will get about halfway to wherever the players want to go before the sigils of control give out and the lift freefalls to the basement level.

Sigils of control, mostly damaged, line the edge of the plinth. With the right incantations they could be repaired, restoring control of the lift.

BASEMENT

One of the engines keeping the vault afloat is here, damaged. Oliver the artificer is attempting to fix it, but will be ambushed by more shifters if not protected.

Oliver's an expert artificer and may have rigged up powerful magnetism-themed traps to defend herself.

Artefacts from the Warden's adventuring days lie scattered everywhere, including: a cutting from an ironbark tree, a possessed teddy bear labelled "GIZMO", a scroll of shadow walking (see the level 7 wizard spell) and an ordinary bronze key you find yourself pocketing (see The Key to the Hungry City.)

CELLS

Battling for his life against half a dozen shapeshifters stands REGULUS, loving every minute of it. A unconscious female guard is locked in the only intact cell. There's an altar to Fonghuang, the holy flame, in the warden's office.

The guard isn't a shapeshifter - if she regains consciousness, she'll ask a secret question (that any player who can spout lore will know the answer to, among other solutions) to prove her identity. The cell bars, on the other hand...

If you make an offering to the altar of Fonghuang, roll+WIS. On a 7+, you gain a halo of bright light (until the next time you rest) that can't be copied. On a 10+, anyone whose blood you shed will also be revealed.

CONFERENCE ROOM

The top few levels of the fortress are polished wood and marble instead of hewn stone - very posh, if a little old-fashioned. SILVER has barricaded himself in the vault's conference room, suspicious of anyone else. He's been living off the minibar since the problems started.

Despite the sturdy barricade at the one door, there is another way in and out of the room via the vents that Silver hasn't spotted.

The vault is partially built from Silver's old airship, the Anastasis. He has perfect knowledge of every control on the bridge and will happily use them - if he trusts you.

BRIDGE

The bridge is an absolute mess, a bloodbath. Drenched in Shapeshifter ichor is FREY THE FURY, master hunter. Unfortunately the controls have been destroyed in the fight and he doesn't know how to repair them.

If you can't land it, maybe you can crash or self-destruct the airship instead? This looks like the altimeter...

Frey's bow twists in his hands like it wants to escape. They say it's made from a dead shapeshifter.

The bridge and conference room level could be detached from the rest of the vault and used to escape (see The Airship Anastasis).

When you attempt to pilot the ship, roll+INT. On a hit, it's descent is slowed, but not stopped. On a 10+, you can change the anticipated crash site (at least until someone else messes with the controls.) On a miss, the falling speed increases - where's the lifeboats!?

- ◆ What is the Planarch Vault currently floating over? What will be destroyed if it crashes?
- ◆ Where could the vault be landed safely?
- ◆ What are the shapeshifters' plans for the people of Nosjad if freed?

MONSTERS

Shapeshifters

Group, Amorphous, Intelligent, Organised

The family have taken the opportunity to wreck the vault and are likely to be hiding everywhere. All they're interested in is deceit and chaos. **Instinct:** to frustrate and mislead

12 HP 1 ARM

Fleshy assault (b[2d8] damage, **REACH**)

- * Disguise itself as something or someone innocuous *
- Split the party *
- Disguise itself as a player-character *
- Shed disguise to avoid damage

The Mass

Solitary, Amorphous, Terrifying

When the shapeshifters escaped, some had been in solitary for so long they'd gone mad. They merged with each other, along with anything else they could find. The resultant mound of flesh, fat and gristle is a hideous thing. For Mirka's sake, don't let it touch you. **Instinct:** to be together, forever

21 HP 2 ARM

Fleshy absorb (2d10 damage, **CLOSE**)

- * Absorb a weapon or magical effect *
- Turn into a failed, monstrous reflection of it's attacker *
- Engulf something utterly

"White"

Solitary, Devious, Amorphous

Shapeshifters aren't known for their individual personalities, but this one has made a name for himself as being particularly ambitious and savage.

No matter what form it takes, this one has an obvious tell - a tuft of white hair, albeit usually concealed. Although this tell limits it's powers of disguise, the real danger is in who it's already killed... **Instinct:** to sow chaos

- * Hide in plain sight *
- Betray the party at the worst possible time *
- Escape and change disguise again *
- Lead someone into a trap

At the start of the session, roll a d4. White has already killed and disguised himself as this warden! He won't reveal himself immediately, but wait for the perfect opportunity to betray the party.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This went great in my playtest! I rolled a 3, so the party found "Regulus" in the middle of a scuffle with half a dozen shapeshifters. Naturally, Logan the templar did the righteous thing and jumped into the middle of the fray. Regulus was his usual cheerful, manic self. Between the two of them, they started to turn the tide, but Regulus lost his weapon... so Logan threw him his spare pistol, fully loaded.

By the time the shapeshifters were defeated, Logan was down to 3 hp and openly bleeding from a ragged gunshot wound...

THE FOUR WARDENS

FREY, THE FURIOUS HUNTER

No-one suffered more at the hands of the shapeshifters than Frey. After the year of Whispers, he spent years hunting them down in the wild, carving an enchanted bow from the flesh of their dead leader as an example. He hates being a warden, but since no-one knows the shapeshifters better than he, he's contented himself with making their lives as miserable as his. **Instinct:** to make shapeshifters suffer

16 HP 2 ARM

Called shot (d8+2 damage, **FAR**, ignores armour)

- * Make an impossible shot *
- Slow down pursuers with caltrops or bolas

Things Frey might say...

Where's Silver? His prize bloody airship is about to crash and he's the only one who can pilot it. (Also, do any of you know how to fly a sky-fortress?)

Have you seen Oliver? If she's not already been eaten by these putties, she needs to go fix the engines or recalibrate something so we stay afloat.

Regulus thinks he's the life of the party, but he can take care of himself. Just don't let him out of your sight - nobody's safe alone in here.

OLIVER, THE ARTIFICER

Despite some nasty rumours from her youth, Oliver has been a valued member of the city. She has good relations with the gnomes, and had a hand in the development of many of their electrickery-powered inventions. Of course, she kept some of the best projects for herself, like her overclocked power glove. Instinct: to study in peace

12 HP 3 ARM

Energised glove (b[2d10] damage, **CLOSE**, ignores armour)

- * Attract or repel something with the power glove
- * Ignore or absorb a powerful blow

Things Oliver might say...

Have you seen Silver? Dashing-hero type, fancy sword and pistol? He should be on the bridge, or near it.

Regulus tends to do his own thing a lot. I know this isn't the most trustworthy of situations, but that old clown will come through when you need it.

Frey scared me back when these things were all locked up - seeing them all running free might tip him over the edge.

REGULUS, THE FOOL

If Regulus ever regrets leaving the order of the flame, he's not mentioned it. Believing in himself over a higher power made life a lot more interesting, but he's always come through when his colleagues were in trouble. Instinct: to look out for number one

12 HP 1 ARM

Whatever he can find (d8 damage, **CLOSE**, **FORCEFUL**)

- * Sneak off without warning
- * Strike when they least expect it

Things Regulus might say

Hi, how's it going? Lovely weather we're having, eh?

The others? Who knows? I don't know about you, I'm here to have a good time.

Sure, I used to pray to the old shrine, but not anymore. She don't keep me warm like she used to.

SILVER, THE DASHING PILOT

Although his beautiful ship might have been rebuilt into a fortress, Silver still thinks of himself as the roguish sky-pilot. This is the first time in years he's had to get serious again, but that's OK - it'll make for a great new story to tell! Instinct: to survive today (and brag about it tomorrow)

12 HP 1 ARM

Duelling pistols (b[2d6] damage, **NEAR**, precise, 2-**PIERCING**)

- * Use the environment to make a daring escape
- * Inspire allies or cow enemies with a grandiose gesture

Things Silver might say

Where's Frey? I'd have assumed he'd be here to rescue me by now.

Where's Oliver? She needs to get down to the basement. Something's wrong with the engines, I can feel it.

Where's Regulus? Actually scratch that, he's probably off doing something crazy stupid.

TREASURES

OLIVER'S POWER GLOVE

4 weight

A bronze gauntlet studded with wires, linked to a gyroscope-like generator worn on the back. It's so bad. When you rest, hold 3. Spend hold 1-for-1 to:

- ◆ Use the glove as a weapon (forceful, near).
- ◆ Attract or repel something metallic as big as your hand.

SIGIL OF FONGHUANG

This tiny obsidian rune carved in the likeness of a phoenix will give off a bright, hot glow in the presence of falsehood. If you lie while holding the sigil, the obsidian will turn cold and dark until you make amends to whoever or whatever you lied to.

THE SHIFTING BOW

2 weight, far, precise

This meticulously crafted longbow is carved from the treated remains of a shapeshifter and still retains its malleable properties. The bow remains soft and pliant when not in use, making it easy to stash away or hide (wrapped around an arm.) At its bearer's wish It can be made to look like any solid substance, including wood, stone, metal, flesh, or ice. Although the bow can change its shape, its size and mass remain constant (so it couldn't be shrunk and fit into a pocket, for example.)

THE AIRSHIP ANASTASIS

Silver's airship was a formidable sky-cutter once, and with some TLC it might be again! The ship can fly with a skeleton crew of 4, but is best crewed with at least 10. When you travel many leagues as quickly as possible in the Anastasis, roll+WIS. Take +1 forward if the ship has at least 5 capable crewmen on board. On a hit, you get there when you intended. On a 10+, you don't have to break something vital (a rare component, the crew's morale, international trade routes) to do so.

THE KEY TO THE HUNGRY CITY

This normal-looking bronze key will magically fit any lock. When turned, it will open and the door will lead to the city of Dis - the ultimate refuge for those who need to lie low. But beware, for when you unlock the doors to the city of Dis, they cannot be closed again, and in time, the hungry city will consume your world.

See Dark Heart of the Dreamer (by Jonathan Walton) for more information on the planes and the ravenous city of Dis!

- ◆ The Planes Explored by Schirduan (1 weight, 50 coin)
- ◆ A bottle of Oskabad Merlot (1 weight, 75 coin)
- ◆ Warden's nightstick (1 weight, close, D6 coin)

EPILOGUE

When the adventure is over and the players have done all their post-game stuff (resting, supplying, carousing etc.) roll + however many named wardens the players saved. On a hit, they've decided to come out of retirement! On a 10+, one of them (GM's choice) has a job for the party to investigate the crater on Aberrant-eye Mountain.

On a miss, weeks later the party hears rumours the wardens fled Nosjad under mysterious circumstances. And wasn't that chair over THERE when you left the room this morning...?

THE WALLS OF N'GOGH

You're on your way through this land on your way to save - or murder - the duke. (Which? Who is paying you to do this? Why?)

At the end of a long day's travel, you find the hills covered with a mysterious, dense fog. Fearing you'll lose your path, you have decided to stop in some nearby ruins for the night - only to find the ruins have been rebuilt since the last time you came here. (When was that, exactly?)

With night fast approaching, there seems to be no other option but to head inside. No-one stops your entrance at the open gates, nor do you find anyone on the paved marble streets. How odd.

What do you do?

WHAT THE PLAYERS DON'T KNOW

This city was once known as N'gogh, home of the dread wizard N'gogh'va. For centuries his ageless corpse lay buried, transfixed by a blade of meteoric iron - the only material that could penetrate his ensorcelled hide. It was by chance a foolish farmer stumbled on the wizard's tomb and, seeking fortune, removed the blade from N'gogh'va's corpse.

Now free, the wizard is gathering his strength before completing the task he began aeons ago - conquering the earth. A last twinge of humanity drove him to bring his old city and its people back from the dead, which is what the players have unwittingly stumbled upon. However, the city's folk are only a pale reflection of their past selves; once N'gogh'va has recovered his strength, the city's presence will become permanent.

There are three ways the wizard could be defeated. Firstly, the sword that once impaled him could strike him down again, if recovered. Removing the connection between the wizard and the ancient spirits that power him would render him mortal once more. Or if the city itself could be wrenched back into the past where it belongs, it would take N'gogh'va (and possibly the party) with it.

THE BOULEVARD OF SOULS

The last rays of sunlight turn the marble buildings lining the city's boulevard into shades of pink and orange. Directly ahead, the long road ends with a squat, round temple. The streets look clean and deserted, as though everyone left in a hurry. Night fast approaches. What do you do?

The buildings are houses, shops and the like; most are unlocked. The upper windows have no glass or bars.

When you leap up into a 1st-floor window, roll+DEX. On a 7+, you get in no problem. On a 10+, you avoid making a mess or drawing attention to yourself.

DEPARTED CITY GUARDS

Group, Organised

Special qualities: incorporeal

For the most part, the city guard lie long dead in the ground, dreaming. But if N'gogh'va wills it, or the city is threatened, the guards will rise from their slumber. Instinct: to defend the city

3 HP (1 ARM)

Cold Spear (w[2d6]damage, **REACH**)

- * Take a criminal alive * Form a defensive perimeter
- * Return to their slumber at dawn

What's in the houses?

- ◆ The hide of an Umbertoan tiger-bat - a creature not seen in centuries.
- ◆ An acolyte in the middle of prayers. He may mumble something of use regarding the riddle of the temple.
- ◆ A vase made of silver with a bronze snake coiling around it. The snake's eye is a ruby worth around 30 coins.
- ◆ The Mystic (see below).

The Mystic of N'gogh

The mystic is the only one willing or able to directly help the party. She will explain the city has been dragged out of the past, and is aware the party are from her future. She'll help if they agree to save her distant descendant, alive in this time period.

She doesn't know her descendant's name, only that she wears the same jewelled tiara as her and is "in a position of great power and danger." If they refuse, the fortune teller disappears in a cloud of mist and does not return.

If they agree to help she will answer three questions to the best of her ability. After that, the guards arrive; by the time the party has dealt with them, she will have vanished into the mists.

HIS MIGHTY TEMPLE

The temple squats at the far end of the boulevard, carved from marble and green stone. The steps lead up to a heavy stone door, fixed shut. Embossed into the door are three bronze images depicting sunrise, noon and sunset. The top step of the temple is engraved with the words: "I stand in front of you, but you cannot see me."

The answer to the riddle is "the future". If the players guess this and correctly press the symbol for sunset, the door will open without resistance. (If the players need a not-so-subtle hint, you could draw their attention to the setting sun.) Alternatively, "Bend bars, lift gates", "Tricks of the trade" or similar class moves may be used - that's fine too, but in these cases N'gogh'va (see later) will definitely be aware of their entrance.

If the players take too long outside the temple gates, night will fall and the city folk will waken to a mockery of their old life - including the guards, who will see them as trespassers.

LOCATIONS

THE TEMPLE ATRIUM

The atrium has a tall, domed ceiling. The centre is filled with a stone globe, gently spinning in the air by magical means. Two dozen prayer mats are meticulously arranged around the globe.

The globe doesn't look like any representation of the world you've seen before. Is it a version of the world from long ago, or perhaps a different world altogether?

Images of the snake and the sun fill the area. Clearly, these symbols must have some religious significance. You once heard a tale of a scion of the sun god, "the serpent who encircled the world". He was felled by a magic blade.

THE CONFESSIONALS

Two box-rooms split into two, one side for the priest and the other for the person giving a confession.

In one of the confessional boxes a man's corpse has been discarded. He doesn't look like he comes from the city. (He is in fact the simple farmer who awakened N'gogh'va. He's probably got quite a lot to confess if a cleric was to "wake him up"!)

THE LIVING QUARTERS

The stairs up end at a heavy locked door, leading to an opulent living area: study, washroom, kitchen and master bedroom. You can hear screaming coming from the other side of the room.

The door is be easy to unlock with the right tools, but difficult to force open or smash down. The door is also designed to lock automatically. There is no lock mechanism on the inside, making it effectively a prison.

Trapped in the quarters is Victoria, daughter of the Captain Aurius of the Chalcedon expeditionary army. The wizard captured her and intends to make her his bride.

What's the girl doing in a place like this?

THE ROOM OF ANCIENT SPIRITS

Behind the atrium is another room, this one taken up by four marble statues of scaled, humanoid figures - the ancient spirits. N'gogh'va himself is silently praying to these figures, but will welcome the party if disturbed.

These four figures might correspond to the pantheon of ancient spirits from ancient mythology. They were said to grant immense power, transforming decaying mortal forms into ever-living titans of meteoric iron. But in return they demanded a constant tribute and connection to their

If you shatter the marble statues of all four ancient spirits, N'gogh'va's spiritual connection to his gods will be severed and he will become mortal again. (You'll also incur the wrath of the four ancient spirits.)

If you try and appeal to the ancient spirits, roll+WIS and state what you would have them do. On a 7+, you get it at a time that suits the ancient spirits (but not necessarily you), but must provide them with a regular tribute, either flesh, knowledge or victory (pick one; the GM will give more details.) On a 10+ you get it immediately.

What connection, if any, is there between the religion of the sun and serpent and the ancient spirits?

THE CAVERNS

This old tomb, accessible from either confessional or the marble stairs at the far end of the atrium, is where N'gogh'va's body was kept for aeons, impaled by the blade of meteoric iron.

Unlike the rest of the city, this space was not restored to how it looked in the past; the painted frescoes have faded with time and are covered with centuries of dust and rubble. The floor is split and cracked and a colony of bats roost in the vaunted ceiling.

Circling N'gogh'va's empty sarcophogus is an effigy of a giant snake. Driven into the tomb, almost to the hilt is a sword of meteoric iron.

Careful observation of the 'effigy' will spot the snake is very slowly breathing. It's alive! It will awaken if too much noise is made or the sword is threatened.

You're reminded of the tale of the scion of the sun god, who was buried under the world. Some know the story ends with the scion transfixed by the only blade that could kill him. There's a blade - but where's the scion?

Going by the guano stains on these stalactites, there's probably a roost of bats above here. A loud noise or thrown rock would probably be enough to distract them.

The Giant Snake

Solitary, Devious, Huge

An ancient guardian summoned from the depths of the wizard's memory to guard the one thing that can deal him harm. **Instinct:** to guard the sword for it's master

18 **HP** 2 **ARM**

Crushing coils (2d8 damage, **REACH**)

★ Crush a lesser creature with it's great bulk ★ Flick acid from it's fangs

When you face the ancient gaze of the giant snake, roll+WIS. On a 10+ your actions are slowed, take -1 forward. On a 7-9, you find yourself unable to move forward, though you can retreat if you wish. On a 6-, you become rooted to the spot until the snake is killed.

N'gogh'va The Wizard, Scion Of The Sun & Serpent

Solitary, Large, Divine, Arcane, Hoarder

Special Quality: Meteoric iron skin

When the dusky tigerbats of Umberto swooped high above the skies, and the great saurus roamed the plains that would one day be Chalcedon, the wizard king N'gogh'va ruled with an iron fist. His magics, a gift from his patrons from a plane of reality much older than ours, granted immortality and rendered his skin unbreakable. In time, one man came to forge a weapon that could break the demon's shell, and used it to bind him - leaving his sleeping corpse as a warning to others. But in time, warnings became hearsay became myth, and so it was a foolish mortal unleashed this terrible evil upon the world again.

Though the lands have changed, N'gogh'va's plans have not. His iron will sustains this echo of the past, a reminder to him of former glories, in time, he will see the world crushed beneath his sandalled foot once more.

12 **HP** (0 Armour)

Contemptuous swipe (2d6+1 damage, **FORCEFUL**)

★ Ignore a blow and continue planning ★ Pursue anyone interrupting his plans ★ Take a pretty bride to rule in hell



PHOTO BY JAMES WHEELER ON UNSPLASH

A DEATH IN THE FOREST

Adventurers! You stand beside a pleasant, bubbling brook at twilight. The scent of pine needles and fresh moss lies heavy on the air. A chill wind scatters leaves around your feet. A bloated corpse is lying face-down in the water. He seems to have been drained of all his blood.

- ◆ Who or what do you believe killed this man?
- ◆ On whose behalf are you investigating his murder?
- ◆ What did the witch say would happen here, in ten days?
- ◆ What did the cultists in town need you for?
- ◆ And, as always, what do you do?

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ Night falls, or the moon is obscured by clouds
- ◆ The ghost-stones whisper secrets
- ◆ You stumble into bear territory
- ◆ The cult won't take no for an answer
- ◆ You find yourself back at last night's camp
- ◆ The door to the witches' hut is open
- ◆ A hunter is caught in his own bear-trap, vulnerable
- ◆ The murder victims' spirit will not stay quiet!
- ◆ The witches' prophecy is early

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Dimly glowing ghost-stones, scattered everywhere
- ◆ A shadow across the branches
- ◆ The last rays of sunlight filtering through the trees
- ◆ An owlbear's deserted nest
- ◆ The still-warm ashes from a recent camp
- ◆ The entrance to an old cave, studded with bones
- ◆ The jangle of a peddler's cart, travelling the forest road
- ◆ Chilling winds when the sun goes down
- ◆ A carpet of pine needles, softening yours and others' footsteps
- ◆ A few wizened goats in a clearing, talking to themselves
- ◆ An old stone bridge, studded with ancient heraldry
- ◆ A witches' hut with a surprising tenant
- ◆ A bush filled with delicious ripe berries
- ◆ The husk of a dead tree struck by lightning

When you find yourself in the forest after dark, roll+WIS. On a 10+, the GM holds 1. On a 7-9, the GM holds 2. On a 6-, the GM holds 3. The GM may spend 1 hold at any point before sunrise to do one of the following:

- ◆ Make your torch go out
- ◆ Lose track of something useful in the undergrowth
- ◆ Announce that you think you're being watched

When you trust the ghost-stones to lead you home, roll+WIS. On a 10+, a friendly spirit will help and answer a question to the best of its ability along the way. On a 7-9, a spirit answers the call, unwillingly. On a miss, a malicious spirit takes advantage of your confusion.

BACKGROUND

Who actually did the deed?

Choose one of the following, or let your players' rolls dictate who the real culprit was. It can be assumed that one or more of the following creatures is also in the forest - possibly within earshot of the party at the beginning of the adventure!

The Beast That Did The Deed

Solitary

Instinct: Protect its kin

15 **HP** 0 **Armour**

Irregular talons (d10+2 damage, **CLOSE**)

The Man That Did The Deed

Solitary

Instinct: To avoid getting caught

12 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Foreign blade (b[2d10] damage, **CLOSE**)

The Cult That Did The Deed

Horde

Instinct: Appease their god

6 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Ceremonial daggers (d6 damage, **MESSY**)

The Fiends That Did The Deed

Group, Large

Instinct: Revel in the chaos left behind

10 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Slathering maw (d8+2 damage, **CLOSE**, 2-**PIERCING**)

- * Put on an innocent face
- * Implicate the PCs in the murder
- * Attempt to strike again before dawn

ITEMS

PINE-SOAKED WAKIZASHI

Close, precise, 1 weight

An elf sword, glossy with layers of resin, buried to the hilt in a very old tree. Gods know how long it has lain here, but in the manner of all elf things, it has absorbed some strength of the forest during its long rest.

When the blade is struck against natural ground, the hilt elongates turning the weapon into more of a polearm or glaive. (This looks really impressive to most common folk, except elves who've seen it all before.) As a glaive, the weapon gains the reach tag and glows with the light of a dozen fireflies, but doubles in weight and requires two hands to use. Speaking of fire, the weapon is particularly susceptible to it. If ever brought into contact with flame, even for a moment, it will burn up faster than dry leaves.

THE DEED THAT'S ON THE MAN

Hidden in the dead man's jerkin is some kind of legal document, meticulously scrawled in dense script.

When you spend time (hours) deciphering the legalese, roll+INT. (If you get a solicitor to do it for you, roll+hundreds of coin spent.) On a 10+, you discover a loophole that means you, as the bearer of this document, have a legal claim to inherit all the man's previous possessions. On a 7-9, you also inherit his debts.

FOREST CREATURES

Critter Swarm

Horde

Instinct: Run, rabbit, run!

3 **HP** 0 Armour

Tiny scratches (w[2d6] damage, **CLOSE**)

Wolf Pack

Group, Stealthy, Organised

Instinct: To hunt

6 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Bloody jaws (d8+2 damage, **CLOSE**)

Mama Bear

Solitary, Terrifying

Instinct: Protect the children

14 **HP** 0 Armour

Hugs! (d10+2 damage, **CLOSE**, **MESSY**)

When you try to calm a creature of the forest, roll+CHA.

On a 7+, they choose one: they lash out at you, back away with their tail between their legs, or no longer see you as a threat. On a 10+, they definitely won't lash out at you.

* Track and hunt with uncanny accuracy * Get between you and your real target * Mistake your actions for hostility

THE TWITCHING HIVE

You're in a dimly-lit sandstone room, deep within a ziggurat built by giant ants. Your twin elf guides are looking very nervous.

One of the four stone slabs around you is piled with ores, another with mouldy plant-life. A fungus the size of a tree has sprouted from it.

You spot several twitching shadows shuffling towards you. The ants seem diseased, their faces swollen and discoloured. More of them are swarming from the southern corridor.

- ◆ Where is this ziggurat located?
- ◆ What threat do the ants pose to your people?
- ◆ Why are the elves so nervous? Why do they want your help destroying the queen?
- ◆ When did you see trolls and ants working together?
- ◆ Who avoided triggering the yellow spores around the entrance? (Let's find out! Everyone roll+DEX. If you have Trap Expert, take +1 forward. On a 10+, you avoided exposure and did it quietly. On a 7-9, you avoided either exposure or detection, your choice. On a 6-, you avoided neither.)
- ◆ And, as always, what do you do?

BACKGROUND

WHAT THE PLAYERS DON'T KNOW

Most trolls know better than to stray within reach of the ants, but those unlucky enough to be caught face a grim fate. The ants cultivate a special parasitic fungus that only affects trolls, making the normally rampant beasts docile. Other species have offered a king's ransom for the ant's secret weapon, but the ants know how dangerous the spores could be if they get out of control and keep their existence a secret.

Unfortunately, that's exactly what's happened here. Spores from another colony, carried by one of the pack-trolls, unwittingly turned into a strain that affected ants as well. Once the queen was infected, the whole colony was doomed.

Most are already dead, but those infected and still mobile roam the halls for fresh victims. So far, the parasite only affects ants, but if left unchecked who knows how far it could spread.

HOW DO THE ELVES FACTOR INTO THIS?

Relationships between the elves and ants have always been tense. The ants control most of the mines in this area, the only source of a magical ore that the elves rely on for sustenance. Although the ants are well aware of this advantage over the elves, open hostility is rare. On the other hand, the elves are not above petty theft if the opportunity presents itself.

AND THE SPIDERS?

The spiders are something of a mercantile caste between the elves and ants. They try to act as peace-makers and middlemen; for the most part, this has worked well for everyone.

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Efficiently-cut sandstone walls, covered with moss
- ◆ Cloudy, spore-filled air
- ◆ The sound of shuffling bodies through the walls
- ◆ Pale, luminescent fungus
- ◆ Open mineshafts rich in mineral wealth
- ◆ Twitching shadows, from somewhere nearby
- ◆ An uncomfortable humid warmth
- ◆ Lumbering shapes

NPCs

NOSTARION & ELENIEL, THE ELF GUIDES

These twin desert elves are rangers. Their job is to scout the wastes for more supplies of the magicite the elven families of the northern forests desperately need. Having encountered the PCs - strangers in a strange land - they've proposed a truce in exchange for wealth and the favour of the court.

Both elves are pale, but Nostarion is paler. He is skilled with the longbow, but a coward at heart. The horror of the infected hive may well be too much for him - he's seen a lot of grim things in the desert, but few as bad as this.

Eleniel is the close-range specialist of the two, and more sturdy. She hefts a steel greatsword like it was almost nothing. Brave and more loyal (but most loyal to her kin) she accepts the horror of the hive as a challenge to be overcome.

If the players (or her brother!) suggest leaving, she'll point out the potential devastation this infection could cause if left to spread to other colonies - or worse, other species.

At the start of a session or when the elf twins owe the party one, roll. Roll+1 if they have already found some magicite to snack on. On a 10+ hold 3; on a 7-9 hold 2; on a 6- hold 2 but one of the twins starts acting irrationally. Any player may spend hold, one-for-one, to have an elf do one of the following:

- ◆ (Nostarion) Add +d6 damage to a volley
- ◆ (Eleniel) Add +d6+1 damage to a hack & slash
- ◆ (Either) Take the full force of a blow meant for a PC

PII'TREB, THE SPIDER-KIN ENVOY

En route from his clutch, Nat'rob found himself stranded in the wastes and was welcomed into the colony on the eve of the infection. Although unaffected by the fungus (yet) he was forced into hiding as the colony turned into a bloodbath. He's currently hiding in a store cupboard, wishing he was back home. If rescued by the party, he'll be forever grateful.

If Pii'treb escapes the ziggurat alive, word will spread among the spiders of the parties' actions. Pii'treb will offer the party sanctuary with his clutch and a fine reward from his trader's supplies.

FRONTS

THE INFECTED COLONY

Cursed place

- The infection takes root in another colony
- The infection spreads to another species
- One race attempts a radical quarantine
- The ants or another race are effectively wiped out
- Doom: Pestilence

THE ELVES' ADVANTAGE

Ambitious organisation

- The elf council learns of the fungus
- The fungus is intentionally spread by elf rangers
- The ants find out, and declare war
- Doom: Chaos

STEADINGS

Although this colony is well past saving, there may be others out there for your party to travel to. Here's how you go about making them:

MAKING YOUR OWN ANT COLONIES

By default, an ant ziggurat is moderate, booming, guard, exotic (royal jelly), resource (ores), oath (other ant colonies), personage (the queen), craft (sandstone). In addition, choose one:

The colony is suffering the early stages of fungus infection; -population, +lawless, blight(fungus)

The colony is built on a rich, but well-known mine; +prosperity, +guard, blight(raiders)

The elves have openly attacked this colony before: +guard, emnity (elves)

The colony currently lacks a queen: -personality, -exotic, lawless

The queen has latent magic abilities and the colony reveres her as a living god: +arcane, +divine, +guard, emnity (nonbelievers)

MAKING YOUR OWN SPIDER CLUTCH

By default, a spider clutch is moderate, steady, watch, resource (goodwill), craft (trade goods). In addition, choose one:

The clutch is a prominent meeting place amongst the tribes: +prosperity, +market

The clutch makes it's home in an underground cave or webbed between the northern trees: +safe

MAKING YOUR OWN ELF CLAN

By default, an elf clan is moderate, shrinking, garrison, safe, elven (duh). In addition, choose one:

The clan lives a life of luxury and are heedless of harsh realities: -safe, -defences, exotic (drugs & experiences), lawless

The clan is militant and a base for ranger patrols: +defences, +guild (rangers)

ITEMS

ROYAL JELLY

This viscous substance is harvested and stored for use in the development of new queens. It is highly valued by many species for its anti-ageing and restorative properties, though the effects on non-ants can be much more erratic.

When you eat the royal jelly, you instantly recover D6+6 health. In addition, you also suffer one of the following effects, depending on what you rolled.

1-3 You continue to heal an additional 1 hp every time you rest, for another 6 days. At the end of this period, choose a physical characteristic from an ant or similar insect; this spontaneously grows from your body.

4-6 Your dreams are plagued by visions of glorious, multi-limbed creatures for several days. When you awake, you find you share the ants' vast knowledge of herbs and ores. Other ants will instinctively know you have consumed royal jelly and will react appropriately - either reverence, friendship, or jealous hostility.

DUNGEON MOVES

AN OLD CAVERN GIVES WAY

There's a mighty rumbling, and the sound of mandibles chewing through stone above. A huge chunk of wall falls over the entrance where you stood a moment ago!

YOU HEAR THE TROLLS APPROACH

Over the chittering and delicate puffs of blooming fungus, you hear a mighty crashing and banging from below. Something's on its way - it sounds bigger than an ant, it's dragging chains or some kind of metal weapon behind it.

YOU FIND AN ANT IN THE EARLY STAGES OF INFECTION

The ant is stood in the corner, but when they turn around you spot the tell-tale marks around their eyes. It's only a matter of time until the infection takes over their brain. For now, the poor creature is desperate to join you, and may become violent if turned away.

THE ELVES DESERT YOU TO CONSUME MAGICITE

The battle is over, but where did those damned elves run off too? You find them by the slab of ore, rooting through it. They stop and turn to face you as you approach. Robinel at least has the sense to look guilty; Nathanos has an eerie red glow around his eyes.

SOMEONE IS INFECTED

Someone starts stuttering. Their eyes look kind of... swollen. *Uh-oh.*

LOCATIONS

MOSS-FILLED ENTRANCE

A sandstone staircase, leading to the top of the ziggurat. The finely chiseled walls are filled with revolting yellow fungus.

When you breathe in the yellow spores, roll+CON. On a 10+, you're hacking and wheezing, but you'll live. On a 7-9, you're hacking and wheezing, and it doesn't go away until you make camp. On a 6-, it really doesn't go away. You might want to see a doctor.

WELCOME HALL

Devoid and empty of life, the welcome hall lies oddly abandoned. Some of the yellow fungus has made its way in here, but it's more easily avoided.

You think there's some of the ants' hieroglyphs carved into the walls, hidden under the mold. Closer examination reveals carvings of the ziggurat. Crude examples of ants & trolls travel through the ziggurat, carrying goods downwards to the queen.

THE SORTING ROOM

This is where the players start (see introduction). It's a long hall where the ants collected their wares before they were moved elsewhere in the ziggurat for processing. Several infected drones enter from the northern corridor, already in the throes of infection.

The fungus growing through the rotted plants looks dangerous, but only seems to be triggered by close proximity.

There's a few shards of raw magicite - a precious magical mineral - half-buried in the ores. The elves seem very interested in the stuff. Elves have been known to drain essence from magicite as a source of nourishment.

The western wall is carpeted in more moss, but the wall isn't stone - it's a thick leather tarp. The treated hide has kept out the worst of the parasite, and several trade goods, fine herbs and rare gems lie intact in this room.

When you search the discarded supplies, roll+WIS. On a 10+, you find up to 40 coins' worth of raw materials, or an equivalent value amount in dungeon gear (adventuring gear, rations, bandages etc.) On a 7-9, you also find one option (your choice) from the list below.

◆ A cloud of spores

- ◆ A sleeping troll
- ◆ Enough magicite to make the elves jealous

Infected Drone

Horde, Organized

Instinct: to spread the infection

Special quality: Insectoid, Hive Mind

7 HP 1 ARM

Crushing Mandibles (d6+2 damage, **CLOSE**)

* Act with mindless intent * Entrap something in mandibles * Twitch and wrench spasmodically

THE CURING ROOMS

This was where the feral trolls were brought to be 'cured' and turned into the ants' slaves. For now, it seems to be deserted. A roughly-hewn passage leads down to the mines.

Pii'treb the spider-clan envoy is hiding here, beneath a pile of dirty rags. He will initially lash out, believing the others to be infected, but if calmed down will happily join the group if it means escape. The players don't understand his language, but the elves do.

There's a lot of rampant fungus here, but it doesn't seem to be the same strain as the others. The spider was hiding in it for a long time, though...

When you closely examine someone for signs of infection, roll+INT. Take +1 forward if you've examined an infected ant already, or if you've had experience with the species you're examining before. On a 10+, both; or they aren't infected right now (your choice.) On a 7-9, pick one:

- ◆ You know how long until they turn
- ◆ They won't realise they're infected unless you tell them, or it's too late

FUNGAL MINES

This is where the trolls once mined ore for the ants. The seams of iron and magicite are eerily lit by luminescent mushrooms. Troll corpses lie in every corner, now host to strains of the fungus. Unfortunately, some of the trolls, though ridden with spores, are still mobile.

When the red spores waft towards you, roll+DEX. On a 10+, you turn away just in time. On a 7-9, you turn away, but you fail to spot something important. On a 6-, a single spore makes it into your eye, putting you in agony. Wash your eye out with fresh water right now, or face the consequences.

Fungal Ash Troll

Group, Large, Organized, Forceful

Instinct: to ensure the fungus' growth

Special quality: Bloated with infection

18 HP 4 ARM

Growth-studded hand (d8+5 damage, **REACH, FORCEFUL**)

* Shrug off horrible injury * Distribute more spores
* Take root in a wet, warm place

BROOD HALLS

This was the living quarters for the ants, once. There is evidence of a civil war as the non-infected struggled to escape or destroy their infected brothers. Evidently, they did not succeed. The stench of rot is everywhere and the air is dense with drifting spores. There is a narrow tunnel carved into the ceiling, apparently freshly dug. You think you hear the sounds of erratic digging coming from it.

If an infected drone manages to escape to the surface, it could spread the infection further. That's not something likely to be good for anyone.

The bodies all look dead, but it's hard to tell. You think you see some of the 'corpses' twitching, though it could just be the fungus overtaking their bodies. (Eurgh!)

When you pass through the grey spores, any exposed metal (swords, armour, belt buckles) begins to corrode away. The longer you stay there, the worse it gets.

Royal Guard

Horde, Small, Cautious, Intelligent

Instinct: Protect the budding fungus

4 HP 1 ARM

Crude spears (d6 damage, **REACH**, 1 piercing)

* Loose a feral troll * Collapse into a cloud of spores
* Pin a creature down for infection

QUEEN'S LAIR

A heavy sandstone slab blocks the way to the queen's chambers. To open it, the mandibles from one of the royal guard must remain clamped shut on the carved lock system. (The rest of the ant is optional!)

It is a great honour for a royal guard to become "the lock" - the one responsible for keeping the queen's door open or closed. It is said their mandibles could snap a spine in half.

The lair itself has been almost entirely overtaken by great roots and tendrils of fungus. The queen herself still sits in the centre, alive after a fashion - her immense egg sac overtaken by the parasite to breed disgusting, mobile fungal monstrosities.

Fungal Queen

Solitary, Huge, Terrifying

Instinct: Foster the fungus

18 **HP** 2 **ARM**

Gouts of spores (1d12 damage, **NEAR**, ignores armour)

* Reveal hordes of fungal mites from her egg sac

* Sprout fungal tendrils everywhere * Summon the remains of a royal guard

Fungal Mites

Horde, Tiny, Terrifying, Devious

Instinct: To take root somewhere warm

3 **HP** 0 armour

Spontaneous growth (d4 damage, **CLOSE**, ignores armour)

* Overwhelm a larger, warmer creature * Take root and bloom rapidly * Take root and bloom much later



PHOTO BY PETER F. WOLF ON UNSPLASH

THE CURIOUS CONTRAPTION

You're in a clearing in front of an abandoned mansion. There's a strange contraption of glass and bronze ahead of you. Someone is fiddling with the bell-jar apparatus at the bottom of it. The contraption has already started sparking and fizzing. You hear the footfalls of the interloper's companions rapidly approaching.

- ◆ Why must the contraption never be used again?
- ◆ Where is the nearest settlement from here?
- ◆ (For the smart PC) What might happen if the contraption is destroyed?
- ◆ (For the strong PC) Who do you know that tried to kill the master of that castle? When was the last time you saw them alive?
- ◆ (For the sneaky PC) Who else did you avoid on the way here? How long until they realise you're here?
- ◆ (For the divine PC) How is the contraption interfering with your gods' presence? Has this made your abilities too powerful to control, or less effective than normal?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ A musty citadel on a mountain, deemed unlucky to locals
- ◆ Choked forest all around
- ◆ The smell of worm-eaten books
- ◆ Distant whispering and chanting
- ◆ The creaking of doors opening and closing
- ◆ The rattling of bones, or chains

BACKGROUND

WHAT THE PLAYERS DON'T KNOW

Many years ago, a powerful wizard named Dirastratus fled his homeland after a ritual to speak to the dead he conducted went very wrong. Hunted by witch hunters and hired mercenaries alike, he fled for many years before finally settling in this abandoned castle. Believing himself free from his hunters, he delved further into studies his people had considered forbidden.

Lost in his pursuits and closed away from the wider world, Dirastratus barely noticed as years of isolation became decades... and decades, centuries.

Over the long years, scores of would-be heroes came to slay the 'foul necromancer'. Most of them became fodder for the wizards' experiments, their souls burned as fuel and their bodies discarded or toyed with by the wizards' less scrupulous 'students'.

Eventually, it was not dark rituals or a templars' blade that killed the wizard - simply time. Dirastratus died in his sleep, only to find his own soul trapped by an instrument of his own making. With no way to continue his beloved experiments, Dirastratus' immense mind finally curdled into madness.

But the stories of the wizards' home have not been forgotten. Now, a new interloper, hungry for knowledge, has been drawn here. If the PCs don't stop them, they will return the wizard to the land of the living - and this time, he will not be content with simple study!

FRONTS & GRIM PORTENTS

Danger: The glass contraption

Place of power (impulse: to be controlled or tamed)

- The glass contraption is activated
- Whoever activated it is granted their hearts' desire
- Whoever granted the wish breaks free
- Impending doom: Destruction

Danger: The wizard is free

Power-mad wizard (impulse: to seek magical power)

- The wizard is released
- The wizard finds a body
- The wizard completes his research into the afterlife
- The wizard turns his research against the living
- Impending doom: Chaos

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ An adventurer's half-burned soul returns from beyond
- ◆ Dirastratus plays poltergeist
- ◆ A lightning storm strikes the soul tether on the roof of the mansion
- ◆ One of the interlopers' rivals turns up
- ◆ One of the merchants' products is cursed
- ◆ The feral vampire in the lower study smells the players' fresh blood, and breaks free
- ◆ The wizard possesses the body of the interloper

ITEMS

THE SIX-BLADED KNIFE

A curious flick-knife once carried by the witch hunters of Dirastratus' homeland. Each time the blade is opened, it is made from something new - one time it may be made from pure diamond, another it may be constructed from hatred rendered solid. Despite it's name, the blade rarely (if ever) appears as the same material twice.

THE SADDLE OF SULTAN

5 weight

Lying across his skeletal remains is the bridle and saddle of Sultan, Dirastratus' former palfrey. Sultan's soul is trapped in the soul tether, but if the saddle is brought close it will break free and come to rest in the saddle itself.

From then on, whoever holds the saddle will be able to summon Sultan. The ghostly mare can ride as fast as any normal mount, but carry no load bar it's rider. Sultan can pass through any non-magical wall or obstacle as if it wasn't there, but it's rider cannot.

LOCATIONS

THE CLEARING

Though few dare mess with it, the curious contraption is well-known to the locals. The interloper is here, caught mid-ritual by the players. (Solitary, d10 damage near, 12 hp 1 arm. Instinct: to activate the contraption)

Who is the interloper?

Choose your favourite, or roll randomly to decide who the interloper is.

- ◆ Siegfund Jarl, a professor of phrenology with a perfect memory, attempting to learn how to unlock the latent powers of the mind.
- ◆ Bahlgahast, a vampire thrall armed with a venomous whip, looking for a cure for her terrible thirst.
- ◆ Euclides, an old centaur with an eye of pure mercury, seeking a weapon to end his races' constant civil wars.
- ◆ Ambrose Addlefizz, a gnome warlock drawn here to corrupt the contraption in the name of her gods.
- ◆ Guttrekk, a crippled orc ranger who wants to become the best pathfinder in the world.

- ◆ Leta Ray Fi, exiled from the faerie realm for accidentally learning the name of her king. If she can find a way to forget the name, she believes she may find a way home.

THE STABLES

The wizards' old stables, long since abandoned. The interloper's companions were messing about in here when they heard the PCs approach. (Group, d8 damage close, 6 hp 2 arm. Instinct: To see what the contraption does. A saddle of fine leather, well preserved, still lies on a skeletal steed. Though 5 weight, it could fetch an excellent price.)

THE ENTRANCE HALL

The front door is locked and barred, possibly by magical means. Inside, half a dozen football-sized stone runes hang from the ceiling. More are spread throughout the building.

(When the runes are activated, roll+INT. On a 10+, the runes will glow when you are near. On a 7-9, all the runes in the mansion will glow for the next few hours, alerting anyone else living here of your presence.)

THE WARLORD'S CHAMBER

The room appears to be a laboratory. A suit of armour lies on an operating table, half-opened as though in the middle of an autopsy. (The interior of the armour was once filled with blood and guts, but seems to have been partially replaced with wooden carvings.)

THE SQUIRES' PARLOUR

Before the wizard made this his home, the former occupants used this room for parties. Several unbound spirits feverishly dance around, doomed to constantly re-enact their cherished memories. (Horde, d6 damage close, 3 HP. Instinct: to haunt)

THE MERCHANT'S HALL

A passing trader once rented this space from the wizard to sell his wares. Though the shop closed long ago, he - and more bizarrely, his products - still linger. (The trader sells common supplies - adventuring gear, rations, bandages etc. He will answer a single question from anyone who buys something from him. Though his wares appear solid, they will crumble to ash when the players leave the mansion.

THE LOWER STUDY

A balcony-level overlooking a sunken pit, containing a beastly vampire. (The silver guard rail meant to keep him contained has become pitted and eroded from years of neglect.) (Solitary/large, b[2d10]+2 damage close, 16 hp 2 arm. Instinct: to feed)

SHRINE TO MARETH

A wicker effigy of a man made from raven feathers, stood in a simple altar to the death god Mareth. (If you make a blood offering to Mareth, then the next time you die you find yourself back at this altar at half health.)

THE WIZARD'S BEDROOM

Lavishly decorated but faded with age. The wizards' crumbling skeleton still lies in the bed. (When you read his diary, you discover something before it crumbles to dust. Roll+INT. On a 10+, you discover 2. On a 7-9, you discover 1. On a 6- you discover 1, but the wizard discovers something about you.)

- ◆ A rote or lvl 1 spell, usable once
- ◆ An interesting and useful fact about the wizards' life

THE STUDY GROUP

A cabal of liches are studying Dirastratus' notes in an upper library. They do not take kindly to interruptions. (Group, d8 damage near, 6 hp 3 arm. Instinct: to learn forbidden truths)

THE ROOFTOP OBSERVATORY

Dirastratus has already partially broken free of the tether. It's only a matter of time until he fully crosses over. (Solitary/arcane, d10 damage reach 2-piercing, 16 hp 2 arm. Special quality: spectral. Instinct: To return to the lands of the living)

THE SOUL TETHER

Mounted on the highest point of the mansion like a lightning rod, the soul tether traps ghosts. It requires life essence to function properly - blood will do.

When you attempt to empower the soul tether, roll+CON. On a 10+, you suffer d4 damage and the wizard suffers d8 (ignoring armour.) On a 7-9, you both suffer d6 damage. On a 6-, you suffer d8 damage and the wizard suffers d4.

Every time you use it after the first, you take +1 forward but suffer an additional 2 damage. If the fine saddle from the stables is brought near the tether, it will become invested with the soul of Sultan, Dirastratus' faithful steed - see ITEMS.

EPILOGUE

When Dirastratus has been defeated, the tether is destroyed and a freed soul will offer the players useful information.

Whoever earned the most XP this session, choose which of these three souls you most want to meet and which you definitely don't want to meet:

- ◆ A witch-hunter, with secrets of his forgotten order
- ◆ A lesser demon, who knows the path to great power
- ◆ A grizzled mercenary, who remembers where their stash is kept

When you've chosen, roll. Roll+1 if the glass contraption was not activated either. On a 10+, it's the one you wanted. On a 7-9, it's not your first choice, but not your last either. On a 6-, it's the one you didn't want.

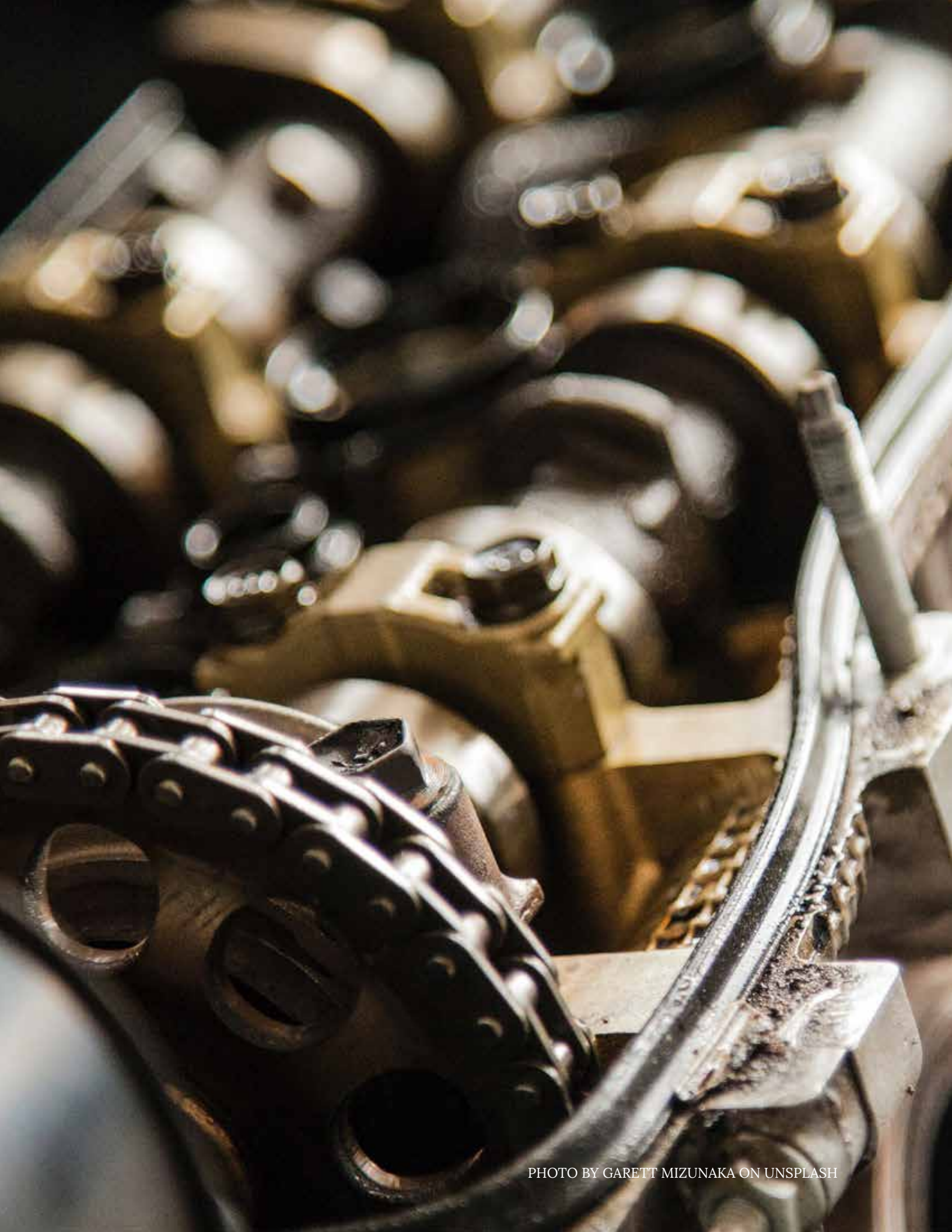


PHOTO BY GARETT MIZUNAKA ON UNSPLASH

KHELUZ-GUND

Built by the dwarves long ago, the Kheluz-Gund is a transport – a towering convoy of earth elementals. You were hired to ride the convoy and guard a particular piece of cargo. Right now, you and the cargo are secured in the middle carriage. The other passengers are going about their business while outside you hear the dull booms of the elementals on their passage through the deep dark.

One of you organised this gig, against their better judgement. One of you just realised your ticket is missing and the inspector is fast approaching. One of you just noticed Shrikebats fluttering outside the carriage window, and you're not sure whether that's a problem yet. Decide who's done what, now.

THE ONLY WAY TO TRAVEL!

If you organised this gig...

...The cargo is a heavy locked chest (5 weight) lashed securely and sealed with expensive locks. Why did you take the job, against your better judgement? Who is the client? Who's waiting for the cargo at the end of the line?

If your ticket's missing...

...When did you realise it was gone? The burly dwarf conductor is checking the ticket of someone you saw earlier... someone who, now you think about it, bumped into you "by accident" earlier. [GM – roll randomly on the table below.] The person is handing "their" ticket to the inspector right now. What do you do?

If you just heard the Shrikebats...

...You're the first to notice a furred, man-sized shadow sweep past the window. Shrikebats usually keep a wide berth of these convoys – what might be drawing them closer? You hear a thump from on top of the carriage, just above your seat. What do you do?

WHO ELSE IS ON BOARD?

- ◆ Nomud-khaz, a former rival of one of the players who just wants to retire in peace
- ◆ Firis Atoll, a nymph travelling in disguise looking for her lost love
- ◆ Cassandra Stoneglave (formerly of Nosjad) a young dwarf with little knowledge of battle who wishes for a glorious death
- ◆ Pretta Mongrish, a recovering Bloom addict with a powerful sponsor
- ◆ Rubi Kickskirts, a dangerously sexy woman spoiling for a good fight
- ◆ Epicharmus of Kos, world-renowned bard and last of his bloodline.

OTHER QUESTIONS

Are the earth elementals enslaved or willing?

How do you get from one cabin to another? Something as crude as rope bridges, or a technological/magic solution? Are you (as passengers) supposed to leave your cabins mid-ride?

For the cleric: Under or through which god's domain does the convoy pass? Where (which location, or which part of their runes) are the dwarves' defences against the god's wrath most vulnerable?

For the wizard: How are the cabins kept stable? What happens to the passengers in the event of an emergency?

For the fighter: The convoy is a difficult target to raid, but not impossible. Where's the most likely place on the route for an ambush?

For the thief: What's the easiest way to the (your choice) cargo cabin/guard's room/dining cart? What risk does this easy route involve?

IMPRESSIONS

THE CONVOY

- ◆ Elementals: rough bodies, finely-cut heads
- ◆ Fine dining; stout dwarven meal and elf wine
- ◆ The cargo hold carried under an elemental's arm
- ◆ The guard, on the last elemental's back
- ◆ The navigator's cabin, lashed to an elementals' chest
- ◆ The dwarven conductors: equal parts miners, abseilers and ticket inspectors

THE PATH

- ◆ Silent lakes the elementals wade through
- ◆ A detour around a greatwurm den
- ◆ A rockfall, requiring the elementals to raise their arms to protect the carriages
- ◆ Areas of utter darkness
- ◆ Areas of blinding, luminous fungus

WHERE DOES THE LINE END?

- ◆ Walad-luum, the sea beneath the mountain
- ◆ The Yellow nest, a dwarf hold occupied by orcs
- ◆ The human town of Earthsend on the surface
- ◆ It doesn't. It's a circular route around the greatest dwarf enclaves

PORTENTS AND DOOMS

DANGER: THE THIEVES' AGENDA

Impulse: to steal their macguffin

- The person evades detection or capture
- The person gets into the navigator's carriage
- The convoy is stopped or re-routed
- Doom - impoverishment | The person gains what they intended to find; denying it to the people who wanted it (and denying the players their reward.)

DANGER: THE DRAGONBROOD AMBUSH

Impulse: to stop the convoy

- The shrikebats disrupt a carriage or elemental
- The kobolds make their move
- The kobolds summon their deep-dragon patron
- The dragon takes down one of the elementals
- Doom - Destruction | The convoy is either broken up during the fight, or destroyed altogether

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ An elemental goes berserk or is wounded
- ◆ A link between carriages or elementals is broken
- ◆ Your ticket is refused
- ◆ You earn the enmity of another passenger
- ◆ The convoy is forced to stop
- ◆ An important cabin has an unexpected guard

CUSTOM MOVES

When you hold on to the roof of a moving carriage, roll+CON. On a 10+, your grip is firm but something you're carrying isn't - the GM will say what. On a 7-9, your grip isn't firm - say what you do to improve your position (and face the consequences the GM describes) or drop right now and take your chances. On a miss, you fall into the clutches of something or someone unwanted.

When you try to talk to the grumpy conductor, roll+CHA. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 2. On a miss, hold 1 in addition to whatever the GM says. Spend hold 1-for-1 to do one of the following:

- ◆ Avoid taking you to the guardroom
- ◆ Follow a simple command that's in their best interests
- ◆ Take your advice against their better judgement

When you try to make out what's approaching in the gloom, roll+WIS. On a 10+, the GM will give a clear idea of what's coming towards you. On a 7-9, the GM will give a clear idea of either the number of creatures approaching or their appearance, not both. On a miss, whatever's approaching gets the drop on you instead.

When you attempt to disconnect or reconnect a carriage, roll+INT. On a 10+, you do so quickly and easily. On a 7-9, unless you have a conductor to help, it either takes longer or is less safe than you wanted (your choice.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The dining cart is the oldest carriage still in service and is known to include rare and otherwise lost examples of magical architecture. In particular, the runes on the underside are designed to slow the carriage's descent and protect the occupants in the event of a drop.

The chests of the elementals are embedded with dozens of mithril nails (see Terra's Nail, in items.) It looks like the dwarves use these nails to control the elementals - whether by coercion or force, it's hard to say.

The vast underground lake of Guzuz-ziram (the Iron lake) is said to get its luminescence from the glimmering metal deposits that lie below the surface. Others insist the glow comes from the half-hidden treasure haul of Axterox, the great cave drake.

TREASURE

CACHE OF BLOOM

Three doses of an illegal, opiate-like drug distilled from the spores of cave fungus. If you sell the drug, roll+CHA. On a 10+, choose two and earn d6x10 coin, or take the 7-9 result (your choice). On a 7-9, choose one and earn d4x15 coin. On a miss, earn d6x5 coin and the GM chooses one.

- ◆ The authorities don't find out
- ◆ You don't get someone addicted
- ◆ You aren't seen as a rival by the other pushers

Every time you take a dose, mark XP and become addicted! From now on, if you don't take a dose at the start of a session, the GM holds 1. The GM may spend hold to do one of the following:

- ◆ You lash out because of your withdrawal
- ◆ Your addiction puts you in a tricky position
- ◆ You start "blooming"...

If you go three or more sessions without taking the drug, you're no longer addicted.

GMs: I leave to you what beneficial effects—if any—
"blooming" endows on the victim.

THE FLUTE OF KOS

The last heirloom of Epicharmus' bloodline, a well-used and chipped ivory flute. When you play the flute to an audience, roll+CHA. On a 10+, you may ask a question of anyone who can hear you, they must answer honestly. On a 7-9, the GM will reveal something to you from an NPC, but it's up to you to make it useful. On a miss, your playing irritates or infuriates a listener, possibly to the point of violence.

TERRA'S NAIL

2 weight, close, ignores armour

A sharp spike as long as your forearm, made from mithril. The length is traced with delicate runes. The conductors use nails like these to communicate with their elementals. When you hammer the nail into the body of a sentient creature, the creature (if it survives) will be able to communicate with you telepathically. Once embedded in a creature's flesh, the nail cannot be removed.

CREATURES

Conductor

Group, Intelligent, Organised, Cautious

Instinct: to ensure the safety of the convoy and it's passengers

6 HP 1 ARM

Giant ticket stamp (d8 damage, **CLOSE**)

* Hold a fare-dodger captive * Travel quickly from one cart to the next

Shrikebats

Horde, Small

Instinct: to react to sudden light or movement

3 HP 0 Armour

Shrieking wings (d6 damage, **CLOSE**)

Flutter and surround someone

Carry someone away

Earth Elemental (Unchained)

Solitary, Huge

Instinct: to show the strength of earth

27 HP 4 ARM

Smash! (d10+5 damage, **REACH**, **FORCEFUL**)

* Turn the ground into a weapon * Meld into stone *
Rip the convoy apart

Dragonwhelp ambushers

Horde, Intelligent, Organised

Instinct: lure something home for their draconic patron

4 HP 0 Armour

Burning brands (d6 damages) **CLOSE**

* Drop down from above * Call for help

GÜRN, BARBARIAN OF THE UPPER REACHES

One day, Gürn looked at his people - once hunters and plunderers, now little more than farmers - and declared he was not content. Leaving meant missing his brother's rite of succession, but this was a small price to pay to bring blood, gold and glory to the mountain tribes once more.

Thanks to his efforts, when his soft cousins under the mountain think of the dwarves of the peaks, they shudder in fear. It is a life of death and destruction, that may yet lead to a messy end... but Gurn would have it no other way.

GURN THE MONSTER

Gürn's **instinct** is always to seek blood, gold and glory. He should be treated as a solitary monster with the intelligent, organised and hoarder tags.

Whether with his axe or bare hands, Gürn's blows deal d10+2 damage. He has 12 hp and a thick mountain bear-hide (killed with his bare hands for his rite of succession) grants him 1 arm.

Gurn is rarely anything but a whirling dervish of destruction. When he makes a move, it's usually something greedy or messy (or even better, both!) Taking his right of salvage for example, or splitting something asunder with a death-blow.

GURN THE HIRELING

Though proud, Gürn is not beyond working with others, if they can pay his cost: blood, gold and glory.

As a hireling, Gürn starts with loyalty+0 and 4 points distributed among the following skills:

Barbarian: When you deal damage while Gurn aids you, add his skill to the damage done. If your attack results in consequences (like a counter attack) Gurn takes the brunt of it: reduce his skill by 1.

Mountain man: When Gurn leads the way across the cold mountains, you succeed any Perilous Journey of a distance (in rations) lower than the tracker's skill automatically.

Fearsome reputation: While you are in Gurn's company in a place of food, drink or entertainment, everyone present treats you with fear or grudging respect. You also subtract Gurn's skill from the cost of weapons and adventuring gear.

THE CASTLE'S THE KEY

You knew you couldn't take the elves at their word when they said this castle's been abandoned for generations, but here you all are: up to your necks in peril. Again.

One of you figured out the key was able to magically change shape, granting access to the secret room. One of you kept everyone together during that ambush in the smoke-filled room. And one of you (there's always one!) is currently pinned to the wall by a poison barb trap. Decide who did what, now.

If you solved the puzzle of the first key, describe what you found glittering in the bundle of tattered rags in the secret room, and why you took it (1 weight). You've got first dibs, but the other players are aware what it is and that you took it. You also have the key (1 weight.)

If you kept everyone together, tell the group who or what tried to ambush you in the smoke-filled room. Luckily you spotted them first and got everyone out without injury - almost. You took a nasty cut to the sternum that just won't heal properly, even with magic. Hold 1 right now, and hold 1 again every time you do something physically straining (a sprint, a leap, holding a heavy door, a dodge from a blow, etc.) up to a maximum of 3. When an enemy strikes you in the sternum, spend all your hold and suffer an additional d4 damage for each hold spent.

If you're the poor fool stuck to the wall, here's the good news: mark experience. Here's the other good news: the half-dozen bolts trapped you against the wall, but none of them pierced your skin. Everything else is bad news: you can't reach the bolts unaided, the rest of the party are on the far side of the room, and one bolt is dripping bright green ichor onto your shoulder, which stings like crazy. Take 1d4 damage (ignoring armour) right now, and you'll suffer more if someone doesn't get you free in the next couple of minutes.

By the sounds coming from the corridor, your ambushers from the smoke-filled room have caught up with you. Everyone who isn't hanging around - what do you do?

CREATURES

The Ambushers

Horde, Intelligent, Organised

Instinct: to ensure Yhagni is never awakened

3 HP 1 ARM

Crystal blades (d6 damage) **CLOSE, 1-PIERCING**

The Rival Party

Group, Intelligent, Organised, Hoarder

Instinct: to get to the heart of the castle first

6 HP 1 ARM

Cold & pitted steel (d8 damage) **REACH**

Yhagni, the demi-god

Solitary, Planar, Intelligent, Large

Instinct: to enact great change, for better or worse

20 HP 0 Armour

Maddening touch (d10+3 damage), **CLOSE**

QUESTIONS

What are you attempting to do for the elves in this castle? Why do you need to do it?

For the Fighter or Barbarian:

You know you're not the first party sent on this task. Who do you know who came here before you, and what was their fate?

For the Wizard, Cleric or Paladin:

The elves locked away Yhagni, the demi-god in this castle. What was the half-god's domain, and why do the elves wish to unleash it now?

For the Thief or Bard:

This castle is filled with ancient elven relics. Who might be interested in fencing it for you?

The ancient tales of this castle say the elves used it as a 'pillar of last resort'. Last resort against what?

For the Druid or Ranger:

Long ago, the surrounding forest rose up against this very castle, deeming it an abomination. The castle itself resisted this. What evidence still remains of this battle?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Glowing stone, hovering uncertainly
- ◆ The roots of a great tree weaved amongst a ritual room
- ◆ A place of power, all but drained by another interloper
- ◆ Others who attempted this task now just dust and rags
- ◆ The sense of being watched by many eyes
- ◆ The feeling of a heavy weight upon your mind, the deeper downwards you go
- ◆ The room holding Yhagni, studded with psychic wards to contain his physical essence

LOCATIONS

THE ANCIENT GATE

A great stone gate, ripped apart by thick roots and branches. Numerous geodes and crystals, pulled up from deep below along with the roots, dot the area. A corpse, twisted into impossible angles, can be spotted within the seemingly-dead roots

When you dodge away from a reawakened root, roll+DEX. On a 10+, it blocks your path, but you keep out of it's grasp. On a 7-9, the root wraps around your arm, leg or chest (GM's choice.) On a miss, the forest starts to awaken.

THE OLD GARDENS

Remains of what was once a tranquil grove. More crystals, embedded into the ground, stone and bark. Perhaps they have some kind of magical use?

When you try to unlock the power of the crystals, roll+INT. On a 10+, you see a vision of the central chamber, where Yhangi is kept. On a 7-9, you see one of the other rooms instead. On a miss, someone sees you instead.

THE HALF-FINISHED CAVERNS

An area that looks only half-complete - or half-demolished. What were they trying to do here?

When the cave-in begins, roll+CON. On a 10+, you're a little shaken, but basically whole. On a 7-9, the sharp crystal debris rips great holes in leather and steel alike - take -1 arm ongoing. On a miss, the crystal makes it through to your skin too - take d6+2 damage.

THE ORACLES' PROMONTORY

A spartan living space where the castle's keepers rest.

Rifling through the occupant's personal effects results in d3 supplies (rations, bandages or adventuring gear.) The fact they have these items also suggests they're mortal...

YHANGI'S CHAMBER

A stained stone pit, lined with psychic wards. In the centre is Yhangi's physical essence, locked in place.

Yhangi can communicate with the adventurers. If they wish to parley, his freedom could be used as leverage but destruction of the elves is more likely to enrage him.

OTHER DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ A cave-in separates and disorients the party
- ◆ A magical effect thought defunct reactivates
- ◆ The ambushers track the parties' progress
- ◆ The forests' war begins anew
- ◆ More bloody elves turn up

FRONT: YHANGI AWAKENS

The elven scripts tell of a great doom that nearly befell their race, and the demi-god they made - Yhangi - designed to rebuild the earth in their image. Yhangi's power proved too difficult to control, so the creature was locked away. But the elves' war against the desert ants goes poorly, and some factions have decided Yhangi must be unleashed once more.

Danger: The power of creation

Impulse: to terraform the ashlands

- Yhangi is released
- The ant's ziggurats are overrun by rampant growth
- The fire wyrms of the mountains are quenched
- The elves set up new colonies in the ruins of the ziggurats

THE QUARTZ MONOLITH

*Rising a hundred feet over the western shore of Chalcedon,
the Quartz Monolith stands in stark contrast to the rolling hills and fields around it.
No-one knows where it came from. Or what it's doing here...*

If you want a more traditional start to your adventure, read the traditional intro to the players and start the party in Quartzcamp, late afternoon. If you want to kick off the adventure in the middle of the action, read the in medias res intro aloud and start the party within the monolith.

TRADITIONAL INTRODUCTION

A team of archeologists and philosophers have arrived from the city to study the monolith and discover whether it is a threat or an asset to the Chalcedon empire. Their studies have revealed two things: the quartz is magical, and the monolith is incredibly (some would say impossibly) old.

The team has blasted a tunnel into the monolith, revealing a honeycomb of corridors inside. Of the forty surveyors sent to investigate, only one returned. Whatever she saw left here almost catatonic with fear.

After many days journey, you have arrived in Quartzcamp and stand in front of Magnus Nielsen, grand theologist of Chalcedon city. He is telling you how happy he is you answered his summons and is keen to discuss the terms of exploration with you. In one hand he holds a bunch of contracts to be sign. In the other, a sample of your reward: a quartz dagger, sharp enough to cut steel.

IN MEDIAS RES INTRODUCTION

You've been exploring these glassy, mirrored corridors for hours. Or is it days? You've lost count. What were you trying to find?

Who was the navigator? They should roll+WIS. On a 10+, you have a good idea of your position within the monolith and the time of day. On a 7-9, you're not sure where you are but remember the way out. On a miss, you lost your way a while ago but haven't told the others yet.

With nothing to show for your efforts so far, you've taken a short break in a mirrored intersection. Who's on watch right now? It's hard to tell, but you're certain you caught a glimpse of a large, shadowy reflection at the end of the corridor around the corner. You could alert the others, or quietly try to find out more about the individual first.

What do you do?

IMPRESSIONS

OUTSIDE

- ◆ A perfectly-cut cuboid of quartz reaching to the clouds, lodged in the mountains since the world was young
- ◆ The monolith's great shadow, plunging anything under it into twilight
- ◆ The edges, still sharp enough to cut steel after millenia
- ◆ The smooth surface, polished to a mirror sheen and cool to the touch
- ◆ The lightning storms that are attracted to the quartz at night

THE CAMP

- ◆ Magnus Nielsen, grand theologist of the cult of Quartz
- ◆ Quartz equipment, brittle but sharp
- ◆ The stair to glory, the only entrance into the monolith, thirty feet off the ground
- ◆ Frida Larsen, the only person to leave the monolith alive

INSIDE THE MONOLITH

- ◆ Polished halls, like a hall of mirrors
- ◆ A corridor, slick from a curtain of water
- ◆ A distant echo, like indistinct chanting
- ◆ An inner light reflecting down from somewhere above, getting brighter the higher you go
- ◆ The remains of a previous adventurer, his bones partially fossilised into quartz
- ◆ The Quartz titan, a sleeping god poised on a crystal throne

OTHER QUESTIONS

- ◆ (For the bard or ranger) Who were you intending to meet at the campsite, but never turned up?
- ◆ (For the wizard or cleric) Why were you denied entry into the Chalcedon academic society?
- ◆ (For the thief) Who could fence old relics like these for you discreetly?
- ◆ (For the fighter or paladin) How would the quartz fare as a weapon? Would the sharpness make a good weapon, or is it too brittle?

- ◆ (For the druid) How have the land's spirits taken to the quartz intrusion?
- ◆ (For a spiritual character) What songs do you hear from within the crystal? Why do they fill you with dread?

THE CULT OF QUARTZ

It was Magnus Nielsen's dreams of ultimate power that brought him to the monolith, but after studying too many murals man was not meant to see, he has been turned into an unwitting thrall of the monolith's keeper.

He and his acolytes have crafted themselves magical quartz weapons. When activated with the right rituals - mostly involving blood sacrifice - the weapons will activate.

Every death invests the titan with more power, bringing him closer to his full strength.

- The theologist's weapons are complete
- The acolytes sacrifice themselves
- The empowered weapons reap many deaths in the camp
- The titan's power is magnified
- Doom: The camp is massacred and the titan empowered

Stakes

- ◆ Will anyone discover the acolytes' intentions?
- ◆ Will the theologist regain/retain his humanity?
- ◆ What will happen to the weapons when their work is done?

THE TITAN SLEEPS TONIGHT

At the pinnacle of the monolith stands a glittering throne room, shaped or grown from the stone with unerring clarity. Seated upon the throne is the crystal titan, a warlord of a bygone age who was imprisoned within for crimes so heinous they threatened entire civilisations.

If the academics or adventurers strike too deep, they risk breaking the seals that they never realised kept their empire of steam and steel so safe.

- The academics breach the sanctums
- The ancient shaper is killed
- The song of quartz is sung aloud
- The titan's slumber is disturbed
- The titan awakes
- Doom: The titan awakes, threatening the land once again

Stakes

- ◆ Who will disturb the titan's slumber?
- ◆ Will the shaper be able give it's warning?

LOCATIONS

STEADING: QUARTZCAMP

By default, Quartzcamp is poor, steady, militia, resource (quartz) and religion (the cult of quartz). In addition, when the party arrives in Quartzcamp pick at least one of the following:

The recent lunar eclipse seemed to have a mutating effect on the wildlife in the monolith's shadow: +blight (quartzfiends)

A cadre of crystal nomads have come to the monolith after years of aimless wandering, but their intentions do not align with that of the academics. +faction (crystal folk), lawless, +defences

The dwarves are bankrolling the academic's operation, keen to prove the monolith has nothing to do with them. +dwarven, +resource (ale).

When you parley with the grand theologist, you don't need leverage ('I will always hear the requests of my children') but roll+CHA. On a hit, he understands your concerns but is not necessarily sympathetic to them. On a 10+, you avoid revealing your own intentions. On a miss, the theologist (mis?)interprets your request as a threat or insult to his cause.

THE STAIR TO GLORY

A crudely blasted corridor at the foot of the monolith, leading about thirty feet upwards into a pristine-ly-cut corridor.

The edges of the corridor appear to be shrinking - almost as if the breach is healing itself.

The demo-packs of the academics pack quite a punch! You don't want to be nearby when one goes off.

Quartzfiends*Group, Intelligent, Organised***Instinct:** to become one with the monolith**6 HP 2 ARM**Shred (d8+2 damage) **CLOSE, 2-PIERCING**

★ Tear through solid metal ★ Move as fast as light

★ Overrun them

Ensorcelled Quartz Blade*Group, Magical, Construct*

These weapons were constructed in secret by the theologists from scraps collected from the monolith entrance. When covered by the blood of a suitably ensorcelled host - the theologists themselves, for example - the weapons come alive and seek to fulfil their destiny. **Instinct:** to return to their true master

Special quality: floating weapon

6 HP 1 ARMSlice (d8+2 damage) **CLOSE**, ignores armour**THE MONOLITH INTERIOR****THE WINDING CORRIDORS**

The mirrored halls within the monolith twist and turn seemingly at random. Between the lack of natural light, the constant reflections and irregular design, it's very hard to keep your bearings.

When you shatter the walls of a crystal corridor, roll+STR. On a hit, you do it precisely. On a 10+, you avoid scratching yourself on the sharp edges (d6 damage, 2-piercing.) On a miss, you either don't break through or the shattering continues further than you wished, GM's choice.

Insane Academics*Horde, Organised***Instinct:** to escape the shadows**3 HP 0 Armour**Ruined scraps (d6 damage) **CLOSE**

★ Have a moment of clarity ★ Wander blindly into trouble

The Shaper

Solitary, intelligent, organised, construct, cautious, large. He appears to be some kind of caretaker. He probably knows all the secrets of the monolith, but he doesn't speak common and his people skills leave much to be desired. Good luck! **Instinct:** to maintain the titan's prison

16 HP 2 ARMD8 damage (Crystal staff) **2-PIERCING CLOSE**

★ Reshape or repair the quartz ★ Travel through solid walls

THE THRONE ROOM

The quartz quarters of the titan itself, hidden behind polished walls. The mirrored floor imperfectly reflects those stood upon it, yielding twisted, disorienting reflections. On closer inspection, the throne seems more akin to the stocks; something designed for restraint, not comfort.

When the eyes of the crystal titan open, start a count-down (6 boxes). When his eyes are upon you, roll+DEX. On a 10+, you avert your gaze before attracting his attention. On a 7-9, mark a box. On a miss, a fragment of his great dream escapes into the world and mark a box. When all the boxes are marked, the titan awakes.

The Titan*Solitary, intelligent, organised, construct, divine, HUGE***Instinct:** to wake from eternal slumber**24 HP 3 ARM**Crystal gaze (2D8 damage) **2-PIERCING NEAR**

★ Call a quartz weapon to his side ★ Plan world domination ★ Shatter the monolith

POOL OF SILVER

A pool of cool water, dripping down from a crack far above and coalescing here. Other than the steady stream tumbling down from above, the waters seem supernaturally placid.

When you bathe in the stream of shimmering silver, roll+CON. On a hit, anything touched by the water is cleansed - wounds are cleared of infection and food is washed free of spoilage. On a 10+, any debilities are also washed away. On a miss, you and your belongings are cleansed but the waters are left murky and muddied after you exit.

SAMITE MURALS

A series of effigies and designs on one section of wall appear to tell more of a story of this place. In some places it looks like a much cruder hand has carved their own interpretation of events over the original murals.

When you study the murals of brightest samite, roll+INT. On a hit the murals reveal a hidden truth about this place. On a 10+, you recognise yourself in the murals; the GM will tell you a way that your destiny is linked to the monolith.

MIRRORED AMPHITHEATRE

Located in one of the higher tiers of the monolith, this wide bowl-like area catches the light and focuses it in the centre like a spotlight. If you stop and listen, the echoes and chimes of the quartz around sounds almost like the distant cheers of spectators.

Glimmer-Fairies*Horde, Tiny, Magical, Organised, Terrifying***Instinct:** to consume non-crystal

3 HP 0 Armour

Sting (d4+2 damage) hand

★ Strip someone to the bone ★ Swarm over them

When you bellow a challenge in the light of the amphitheatre, roll+CHA. On a 10+, you hear the ghostly audience calling your name - while you stand in the light, take +1 ongoing to defeating your foes in honourable combat. On a 7-9, if your opponent refuses your challenge or flees, their mind will be bombarded with the audience's jeers. On a miss, the audience takes your challenge as mockery instead.

ITEMS

When you discover something in a partially fossilised knapsack or pile of sharp dust... (choose one, or roll D6+WIS)

1. You spot an ambusher reflected in the wall!
2. A half-complete map of the monolith's interior, with a secret passage marked
3. A worn satchel (1d3 adventuring gear)
4. A chisel with a diamond-hard edge
5. A crude but useful message etched in the wall
6. A copy of *Liber Minrali* (as bag of books, 1 use)
7. An expensive cut of gemstone (2 weight)
8. A bag of silver dust (a potent reagent)
9. An agate that sings when near crystal-folk (1 weight)
10. A demo-pack (near, 1 use, dangerous, awkward, forceful, +d6 damage, 2 weight)

DUNGEON MOVES

When the players roll a miss or look to you for answers...

- ◆ The shaper is threatened or weakened by the titan
- ◆ The titan's awareness manifests
- ◆ The mirrored walls lead you astray
- ◆ A panicked academic gets in the way
- ◆ An academic's demo-pack misfires

USEFUL LISTS**Archeologists**

Gauteron, Rolft, Malcolm, Issac, Elisa, Melisa, Claris

Theologists

Pluvius, Terachore, Alger of Nieve, Marie, Solanus, Daniel Chaminade, Pieter Folli, Elmer of Iyx

Instincts for academics

- ◆ To get back to the university
- ◆ To earn personal prestige
- ◆ To get back at a rival
- ◆ To uncover a true mystery

- ◆ To pay off a debt

Crystal folk

Archaetrix, Diamo, Ferrous, Cordite, Imperma, Krox, Proz, Britta

Instincts for crystal folk

- ◆ To protect/destroy the throne
- ◆ To understand humanity
- ◆ To revive the under-empire
- ◆ To deliver a message
- ◆ To make amends
- ◆ To craft items of beauty

WHAT'S A "LOVE LETTER"?

First posted on joebanner.co.uk, currently featured in Reddits' Dungeon World Syllabus

If you frequent the DW communities online but haven't played or read Apocalypse World yet, you may have heard the term "love letter" before but not be sure what it means.

In brief, it's a few paragraphs written specifically for a player or players to bring them up to speed on their situation, usually after a break or big change of scene.

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE

(Taken from a recent conversation with a friend and fellow GM – names and monsters withheld to avoid spoilers!)

The last session, the players killed an ogre and reclaimed a cache of magic items in the name of the paladin's god. However, the GM was keen to keep the story moving along – it would be more interesting to fast-forward to six months later and deal with the repercussions of the players' new-found power.

We decided the best way to get the players up to speed was with a love letter. We didn't decide the specifics, but in general the letter would tell the players:

- ◆ It's six months since they killed the ogre
- ◆ They've been on the trail of someone who fled the scene last game (it's all about people, remember)
- ◆ We're going to do a custom move now to determine whether you found him and where you're living now.

We decided the letter would read something like this:

Congratulations on the loot, guys! The ogre is dead and you're starting to get known as people who Solve Problems. Good for you! Since you picked up those magic items, six months have passed. You've (probably) found yourself a place to live and you've been hot on the trail of that cultist who fled the scene. Everybody roll+whatever you've been using to bring this guy to justice (STR if you've defeated him in combat, INT if you've outsmarted him, WIS if you've tracked him for weeks, etc.) We'll take your results as a group average – 10+ results cancel out 6- ones.

On a 10+, he's dead and everyone knows it. You've gotten a good place in the city, but someone's dropped a familiar corpse on your doorstep.

On a 7-9, he's dead, but it cost one of you something – the GM will say what. You're living in a local town well enough, but don't have the scratch to turn down a job if it comes your way – even if it is something boring, like defending the caravans from goblin attacks.

On a 6-, you either got the guy at great cost or he got away, your choice. You're holed up in some backwater village on the road to the city. You've still got the magic items of course, and the shirts on your backs – but precious little else. You need food in your belly, whetstones for your swords and a place to rest your feet – but first you'll need money to get all that!

No matter the roll, what do you do?

I see you at Mr
Gods I have seen Mr Gray it
if I hope that he is I am
Master through in a few Days
me An Answer respecting the
will much Oblige
Yours

Wm. Whinn

DOMINARS MOUNTAIN

The Dominar Estate, ever under siege by the savage mountain clans, has been all but destroyed. In desperation, it's lord has called his banners to launch one final assault. He intends to either wipe the clansmen from his family's land, or die trying.

The clan's leader - a dangerous escapee from the Chalcedon stockades - is known to Lord Dominar. You and a dozen others are part of his retinue, striking over steep hills towards the leader's camp at the peak.

You've been on the path for three days. Yesterday, Lord Dominar took an arrow in the sternum; he won't stop moving long enough for it to heal properly.

You hear bestial howls echoing across the craggy rocks. Do the clansmen have hounds? Or something worse? You aren't sure.

What do you do?

FACTS ABOUT DOMINAR MOUNTAIN...

Stately Dominar mansion has been in disrepair for some time. The clans started their pillaging shortly after the current Lord Dominar inherited the land from his father.

Mount Dominar - or Mount Shaggy, to it's inhabitants - is mostly home to dour farmhands and grizzled trappers. Technically they are vassals to the estate, but most have either thrown their lot in with the tribes or are keeping clear of the conflict.

The main path is a snaking dirt trail through rocky ravines and open lands - travellers must always be mindful of an ambush. At the peak lie the tribes' main base: six smaller camps surrounding the leader's oversized tent.

Common sights on the moors include the remains of would-be inventors (usually with their failed experiments) and the spoor of large beasts, often with tracks suggesting a much larger hunter in turn.

Wildefowl nest in the mountains and are raised by the farmers. Herds of the large, avian-esque creatures are a common sight.

Lord Dominar's retinue includes half a dozen hungry, scared peasants armed with pitchforks; the lord's aged housekeeper, Yosei; Taagen, a reformed tribesman; and the PCs themselves.

QUESTIONS

- ◆ (For the strong PC) How'd you convince the local farmers to point you in the right direction?

- ◆ (For the smart PC) Yosei is from Xi, the under-realm. What dealings have you had with Xi, for good or ill?
- ◆ (For the sneaky PC) You've heard of this new tribes' leader... he escaped the Chalcedon stockades over a year ago. What was he in for?
- ◆ (For the spiritual PC) Do these mountains have a spirit? How might you appease it, to make your journey easier?

THE SIX MOUNTAIN CLANS

The Splintered Fist were previously ruled by Taagen Wiseeyes. After speaking out against the dwarves' leadership, Taagen was beaten within an inch of his life and cast off the mountain.

The Chickenjaw clan still practices what civilised folk call "alectryomancy". It's said their leader, Alaric the Stone, has a streak of basilisk blood in his veins.

The Rising Sun were, until recently, the weakest of the clans. Aarven killed their leader while they slept, claiming leadership of the clan through rite of combat. Stolen weapons and supplies from Dominar's estate has improved their strength considerably.

The Bonetorc suffered greatly at the hands of Lord Dominar's father. Their leader, Boudiga, has offered six herds of wildefowl for the current Lord Dominar's head, and another two for his groin.

The Runefists have a high number of dwarves among them, and were the first clan to swear fealty to Aarven after his 'ascension.' Thanna Modgred has earned Aarven's trust, but is secretly preparing to take leadership from him should he fail to take the Dominar estate.

The Emberlocks were almost wiped out when an rogue artificer's experiment backfired. The survivors are slowly rebuilding their strength. Chieftain Middleklix is said to be fascinated with the outsider's technology, and has even ordered her best shaman get it working again...

BATTLE FOR THE MOUNTAINS

CAST

Lord Dominar is an aged gentleman with regal bearing. His 'savage friends' on the mountains have ruined his home and honour to the point where he doesn't care.

Yosei is housekeeper of the Dominar estate and once Lord Dominar's nanny. Though aged, she has agreed to unleash her potent wind witch powers against the enemy.

Taagen is a muscle bound brute with weary eyes and cautious to a fault. He has defected from the mountain tribes in exchange for glory, but his loyalty remains in question.

Aarven is a dwarven convict with a scarred face and connections everywhere. Having escaped prison, he is the one who united the mountain tribes and leads them against Dominar.

Lamoth a mage of the shadows, subtle in manner and missing a leg. He arrived at the mountains six months ago under unusual circumstances; he was the one who convinced Aarven to unite the mountain tribes. Having seen the dwarfs' foul manners first hand, he may be amenable to switching sides.

STAKES

- ◆ Does Lord Dominar command respect from his followers?
- ◆ How will Yosei's powers save or doom her beloved lord?
- ◆ Will Taagen stay loyal to the lord, or double-cross him?

AARVENS ASSAULT

Though Lord Dominar's force is significant, it still pales in comparison to the strength of the mountain tribes. Without further help, the lord's assault is doomed to fail, leaving the Dominar estate at the mercy of the tribes.

- Lord Dominar's expedition is outnumbered
- The Lord and his allies fall in battle
- The tribes overrun the Dominar estate
- The Estate is used as a staging base for further raids
- Doom: The Dominar estate becomes a byword for raids and misery in the surrounding lands.

YOSEI'S PROPHECY

Yosei believes Dominar will accomplish great deeds in Chalcedon. Her presence nearby allows her to maintain an ancient aegis that protects Dominar from harm. None but her know of this, if another catches her in the act they may get the wrong idea.

- Yosei is acting suspiciously
- Taagen starts trailblazing her
- Taagen catches her in the act.
- Yosei is killed
- Doom: the aegis is lifted making Dominar vulnerable

WILDEFOWL

The wildefowl (*gallus fesus*) is a partially-domesticated herd animal about the size of a large dog. Common to mountainous environments and reared primarily as a source of food, wildefowl meat and eggs are highly nutritious and will keep fresh for weeks.

A distant relation of the basilisk, wildefowl are best known for their dense pebbled skin caused from their consumption of small rocks in their natural mountain habitat. Although generally harmless, herds will stampede if spooked and farmers must take care when high on a mountainside to avoid startling their flock.

The soothsayers of ancient Chalcedon observed wildefowl feeding habits as part of their alectryomancy, or divinations. Today the practice is rare, though it's not unknown to find the odd mad wizard observing a farmer's flock from afar.

Wildefowl flock

Horde, organised

Instinct: to follow the herd

3 HP 0 Armour

Frenzied peck (d6 damage) **CLOSE**

* Drive something off the mountain * Slow down with a petrifying glance

Tribal Trappers

Horde, Intelligent, Organised

Instinct: to trap something nice for supper

3 HP 1 ARM

Ragged bow (d6 damage) Near, Far

* Prepare a cunning trap * Release the hounds!

Lamoth*Solitary, Intelligent, Organised, Cautious***Instinct:** to fight for the winning side

Special qualities: incorporeal

12 HP 1 ARMShadow magic (d10 damage) **CLOSE, NEAR**

* Change sides unexpectedly * Misdirect with shadows and light * Engorge the shadows in the soul

Aarven*Solitary, Intelligent, Organised, Cautious***Instinct:** to rule**12 HP 2 ARM**Mace (b[2d10] damage) **CLOSE**

* Gloat over others * Answer a challenge

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ The mountains are full of traps
- ◆ Someone falls down a crevasse
- ◆ Dominar is captured
- ◆ Yosei's weather spell spirals out of control
- ◆ Someone (Taagen or Lamoth) switches sides
- ◆ You hear the start of a rockslide
- ◆ A retainer startles the wildefowl herd
- ◆ A group of noisy, fleeing farmers
- ◆ The trappers reveal their pet (a warg, troll, or basilisk)

EPILOGUE

When you kill Aarven in view of the clans, roll. If more than one chieftain saw the fight, roll+1. If no chieftains saw your fight, roll-1.

On a 10+, the clans present will swear fealty on the spot (and vouch for you for any who didn't see.) On a 7-9, the chieftains are unsure of your worthiness. (After all, look what just happened to the last outsider who tried to claim leadership!) They may not obey you until you establish dominance. On a miss, one chieftain - the GM may say who - covets your position. He or she will not make a move tonight... but they will make a move.

If Lord Dominar dies, roll. Roll+1 if Aarven is dead or the clans are no longer a threat (GM's call.) On a 10+ a rival baron nearby will claim for the estate. As the closest witnesses, one or more of the PCs may dispute the claim in the Chalcedon courts. On a 7-9, over the following weeks the surviving clansmen strip the estate of all wealth, leaving the estate broken. On a 6-, the clans, galvanised by their first victory, strike out to nearby territories.



PHOTO BY SIMON FITALL ON UNSPLASH

A MASQUE AT MIDNIGHT

You stand on a sandy beach in western Chalcedon. The calm sea breeze and gentle afternoon sun lie at odds with the chaotic hustle surrounding you: frantic crewmen setting up podiums and stalls; early revelers keen for a stolen drink; po-faced enforcers, their iron sabatons crunching softly on the sand.

This is Pewsey, a picturesque seaside resort on the social up-and-up. Mayor Tacitus' son has come of age and tonight there is to be a commemorative masque in the young lad's honour. You and yours are here after your last adventure, looking for an opportunity to celebrate victory - or commiserate defeat!

Who organised your last job together? Tell the group what it was then roll+WIS. On a 10+, the job went well! Everyone is a little richer in pocket and spirit right now. On a 7-9, the job was a success, but barely. After bed and board, you're no better off than you started. On a 6- the job was a wash - whoever rolled, strike off half your adventuring gear, rations and ammo (or the equivalent value in coin) right now.

Which among you is the best at hearing rumours? Since you arrived, you've heard murmurs from the townsfolk. Roll+WIS. On a 10+ the GM will give you two names; on a 7-9 three names; on a 6-, four. The townsfolk keep mentioning these names, along with words like 'assassination' and 'tonight!'

Who's the most likely amongst you to take advantage of all this poorly-guarded drink? Roll+CON. On a 10+, you're feeling merry! On a 7-9, pick one: you're outright drunk (-1 WIS) or an enforcer saw you swipe that last flagon and is heading your way. On a 6-, both.

The beach is packed with people, but just a moment ago you saw someone familiar in the crowd - one of the people you heard rumours about earlier. They had something in their hands... something from your last adventure! (Maybe a gem you failed to claim, a contract now signed with another adventuring party, or simply your due reward.) What do you do?

A MURDER MOST HORRID

At the stroke of midnight, as the entire town stands enraptured by the performance of the Masque players, one of the NPCs below intends to slice the throat of Mayor Tacitus. It's likely all of them will be close to the Tacitus table come midnight.

Duke Thorncombe: obese and dressed in an ill-fitting, expensive coat. It's rare he is seen without a goblet in hand and a worried expression on his face.

Reiner Cheapfields: estranged nephew and heir to the Cheapfields family fortune. Usually seen doing his best to mingle while decked out in his families' highly technical, ceremonial armour.

Sister Chumleigh: a simple friar in spare robes, kindly extolling the heresies of such a garish event to any who'll listen.

Madame Strigér D'Esrodine: master of the revels and stage manager for tonight's masque. She'll be laughed out of high society if things don't go perfectly tonight.

Sir Eastcastle: a down-to-earth man in simple garb. In spite of his noble bearing, he is well-respected by the local farmers.

Tedd: Sir Eastcastle's faithful manservant whose usual response to a question is "I wouldn't really know a lot about that, sir."

Lord Dominar: a "gentleman warlord". His regal bearing and noble silks stand in contrast to the wolfshead cloak pinned to his shoulders. His companions, dressed in goat hides and refusing to dance, don't look like locals...

Whodunnit?

In my playtests, I intended Lord Dominar to be the murderer. However, the GM should feel free to pick whoever they want before the adventure begins, or even someone from a previous adventure.

THE MASQUES & TABLEAUX

Before midnight, the masque performers will be putting on several tableaux - smaller scenes commemorating notable events and fictional tales, performed by a troupe of costumed actors carefully posed and theatrically lit.

Two crews take it in turns to perform. When they are not on stage, they are likely to be preparing with the rest of the troupe, or taking a quick glass of wine in the refreshments tent.

THE TABLEAUX

From 6pm and on the hour until midnight, choose a new tableaux from the list below that the players portray on the main podium.

- ◆ Pre-imperium Chalcedon: A land of rolling hills, split between druidic covens and petty fiefdoms.

- ◆ Chalcedon today: a depiction of the Chalcedon empire, a steam-fired continent at the peak of industrial revolution.
- ◆ A city of ice and fire: The Mirkasan capital, Nosjad, wreathed in thick snows and overrun by witches and beastmen.
- ◆ The Siege of Umberto: The recent demonic assault in Umberto, the desert city. (If you have played *Shadows of Umberto*, you will know whether this ended in victory or defeat.)
- ◆ Savage Oppression: Tribal invaders in green and grey frog masks, tearing apart a Chalcedon airship. (If you have played *The Green Scar*, you may have some idea of the story from the frog's perspective.)
- ◆ Civilisations of yore: A beautiful and ancient city (akin to ancient Rome) ruled by titans of obsidian and marble.
- ◆ What lies below: The lands of Xi, the under-empire; a land of great riches, with stranger dangers lurking in the shadows.

WELCOME TO PEWSEY

Formerly a fishing market with good transport links to the capital, several nobles built lavish summer homes in Pewsey. This had the effect of drawing further wealth to the town and triggered a transition from simple fishery to a getaway for the rich and privileged.

PLACES IN PEWSEY

The market quarter: the market is about a mile from the coast and has changed little, despite the town's influx of cash. The market, inns and housing are mostly owned by local fishermen and farmers. Mead, mutton and a straw bed can be found at the College Arms for a fair price.

The coast: Pewsey's stone beach has been gentrified in the last few years; the discarded flagons and drunk fishermen have been largely replaced with bathing-houses and day-trippers from the capital. Tonight, the beach is in spotless condition and a bright red podium has been erected for the players.

The Tacitan terraces: Between the market and the beach lies these suites and apartments, mostly home to the rich and famous. Many are for sale, but cost a fortune. Doctors, dentists, barbers and beauticians can be found in the area in addition to fine dining, polite entertainment and a lavish aquarium.

Pewsey park: An acre of landscaped ground between the renovated coastline and older quarter. This has mostly been built in the traditional Chalcedon style, with prim hedgerows, trailing roses and bordered flowerbeds. The occasional oak tree has been planted as well. Much of the gardens have been covered tonight by the nobles' gaudy pavilions.

When you Spout Lore, you may recall...

... the Chalcedon imperium fought and lost against the people of both Mirkasa and Umberto on two separate occasions.

... the duke of Havenshine has been unable to pay his dues to the capital in some time, and has been threatened with seizure twice already.

... the Cheapfields estate is still being heavily fought over following the death of family patriarch, Obadiah Cheapfield, in mysterious circumstances overseas.

... Sir Eastcastle was passed over for mayorhood in favour of Tacitus. Although he was respectful of the choice, it was unpopular with the locals.

... Lord Dominar's estate has been the target of mountain-man raids for years. The last you heard, he'd died defending his lands.

If you've played Dominars mountain...

This document assumes you've not played my previous adventure, *Dominar's Mountain*. If that's the case, then without the PCs help Lord Dominar lost everything stopping the clans. In the end he managed to kill their leader in open battle, and claimed leadership of the clans by their ancient laws.

After recovering, Dominar is now looking to enact revenge against any who failed to answer his call for help. Top of the list is mayor Tacitus, but the list might also include the PCs themselves.

If you've played *Dominar's Mountain* already, then the lord will likely recognise the characters and act very differently. He might not even be alive any more... but then, when has a little thing like death kept a good NPC down?

FRONTS

THE WAYFARER'S PERFORMANCE

The Wayfarer performers are one of the most famous troupes in the world. A bad review, no matter the circumstances, is considered utterly unwarrantable. If someone or something is responsible for ruining the play, they have the money, means and connections to ensure a bitter and deadly revenge.

Impulse: to strike out at those that ruined them

- The performance is disturbed (a performer dies on stage, the stage is destroyed)
- Days or weeks later, the wayfarers track down the person responsible for ruining their performance.
- Innocents linked to the target are found dead in increasingly gruesome ways
- Months later, the wayfarer's target is killed in 'an unfortunate accident'.
- Doom: Destruction (The wayfarer's revenge results in a trail of deaths and chaos as they track the target.)

LORD DOMINAR'S LEGACY

When Lord Dominar called his banners, the (then-lord) Tacitus was in the middle of securing his position in Pewsey and declined to help. Lord Dominar has not forgotten nor forgiven this slight, and intends to ruin Tacitus' big night by way of making things even.

Impulse: to ruin his former allies' well-being

- A cold reception between Dominar and Tacitus
- Dominar spikes the fire-juggler's drink, sabotaging a tableaux
- Dominar's barbarians start getting rowdy
- The barbarians take offence at the nobles and draw swords
- Doom: Usurpation (The event is ruined, people have died, and if Tacitus himself isn't dead then his career certainly is.)

ENEMIES

Lord Dominar's Wolfpack

Group, Close, Intelligent, Organised

Goathide-wearing savages with a selection of axes, swords and foul smells between them. Barely tolerated by the nobles, it's only a matter of time before one of them rubs someone the wrong way. Possibly literally.

Instinct: to eschew conventions of the civilised world

6 HP 1 ARM

d8 damage (war axe)

- * Claim something that's not theirs
- * Brazenly flaunt authority
- * Gang up on someone
- * Start a crude contest

Drunken Revelers

Horde, Close

If you're looking for fun, you've got to expect to run into a few of these. Right? **Instinct:** to start trouble

3 HP 0 Armour

w[2d6] damage (bottle)

- * Start a ludicrous drinking game
- * Make threats to someone dangerous
- * Make an embarrassment of oneself

Pewsey Enforcers

Horde, Close, Intelligent, Organised

Ah, the humble guardsman versus the slurring drunk. Never mind goblins, trolls and demons - this is what fantasy battle is all about! **Instinct:** to maintain order

3 HP 1 ARM

d6 damage (spear)

- * Form ranks
- * Make an arrest
- * Patrol an area

TREASURE

(Roll the damage die of the strongest attacker)

1. A pretty felt wallet, empty
2. Free bed and board at a local's home
3. Free drinks all night
4. The everlasting thanks of a lesser noble
5. A stuffed coin purse
6. A pair of silver cufflinks
7. A golden ticket
8. A valuable piece of objet d'art
9. A goblet inlaid with gold and jade
10. A magical potion or tincture



PHOTO BY JULIO RIONALDO ON UNSPLASH

FLUXINGTON'S FOLLY

You're following mossy train tracks into the town of Fluxington, on the trail of something called "The Phlogiston Engine." You have it on good authority this device will fetch a high price in Chalcedon city.

But as you crest the hill and survey the town for the first time, you're not sure it's worth the trouble! A foul, coppery smell assaults your nostrils. Any houses still standing are black with mold, their gardens choked with weeds. Disuse and decay lies everywhere. You pass a sign: "Welcome to Fluxington: town of the future!"

You come to the top of the high street. From a dilapidated visitors centre - complete with model village - three locals rise to meet you. Their skin and teeth are ash-grey; their eyes a pale bronze. Each of them have replaced some of their limbs with mechanical substitutes. They regard you coldly, weapons bared but not drawn.

What do you do?

PROLOGUE

This prologue is a chance to show players how Dungeon World works, and give an idea what destroyed the town. It doesn't include any player characters (PCs), so can be done before character creation if you're starting from scratch.

If someone hasn't played before, encourage them to take one of the roles below. Up to two players can join in; there's no risk to their "main" character - in fact, they'll get a small reward if they take part! If you have more than two people who want to join in, whoever has played Dungeon World the least has priority.

FLUXINGTON: 45 YEARS AGO

Dorik, the technician: Foreman for the phlogiston engine, Cheapfield's new flagship creation. You're very nervous about today's grand reveal, and frankly, in over your head. Tell the other players your age, sex and race: they can be whatever you like. When the GM tells you to roll, take two six-sided dice (2d6,) roll them, and subtract 1.

Reward: When you make your character later, in addition to anything else they planned the job and got an advance payment of d6x15 coin from their fencer, Lux (an engineer in Chalcedon city.)

The air in the engine room is thick with copper dust and grey smoke as Dorik oversees the phlogiston engine's official launch.

A fresh-faced worker runs by too quickly, knocking the papers and equations out of their hand. As they stoop to collect them, another nervous young techie asks frantically "sir, was it supposed to read 8.72 or 8.27 on the capacitor? Because it's reading 9.71..."

When Dorik attends to the problem, roll. On a 7+, the readings show a catastrophic failure - everybody out, now! On a 10+, you also spot the cause: a simple miscalculation in the etheric mill regulator. On a 6-, everything is well within tolerance, you're sure it'll be fine...

Cheapfield Junior: an eight-year old boy with white hair. Your father has brought you to the unveiling ceremony for some kind of mechanical device, in the middle of nowhere. When the GM tells you to roll, take two six-sided dice (2d6,) roll them, and add 1.

Reward: When you make your own character later, they are carrying a phlogiston meter (1 weight) in addition to their usual kit. The meter beeps in the presence of high levels of phlogiston.

On a podium at the Fluxington etheric mill, Clovis Cheapfield is giving a speech on his family's newest invention: the Phlogiston engine. A safe, secure power generator to propel Chalcedon into the modern age! His son stands nearby, as do a crowd of bronze-armoured guards and retainers.

Son, it's your eighth birthday today! How are you feeling right now? Bored, fascinated, anxious?

Without warning, the mill explodes in a cloud of green and purple smoke. People are screaming, timbers and scaffolds rain down from above. Most are vaporized by the explosion or pinned by rubble.

Junior: over the chaos, you hear your father cry: "Obadiah! Run for your life, son!" A guardian looms nearby, armour dented but still whole. What do you do?

When Obadiah tries to escape, roll. On a 10+, he's out. On a 7-9, he must leave something behind - a treasured toy or keepsake, perhaps. On a miss, he escapes but not without suffering an injury that will plague him for the rest of his life.

If a character isn't being played, ignore the questions in italics and treat any rolls as though the player rolled a 6.

FLUXINGTON TODAY

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ The overgrown train tracks leading out of town
- ◆ Rivers of grease and detritus
- ◆ Tattered pennants laid out for a recent festival
- ◆ A conspicuous, oily bloodstain on the cobblestone road
- ◆ Scrawled graffiti: "The model is broken", "they lied" and similar
- ◆ The ancient handleways, leading to every part of the village
- ◆ A bronze chestplate, rusted and overgrown with black grass
- ◆ The constant coppery smell on the air
- ◆ Clouds of glittering, chattering geardust
- ◆ Men, women and children with grey skin and dull bronze eyes

MOVES

When you force your way through a crowd of piston-heads, roll+STR. On a 10+, you force a space through the mob for yourself (and anyone behind) for a moment or two. On a 7-9, you're through if you can unhook whatever it is of yours that's just gotten snagged on a wayward gear. On a miss, the piston-heads close ranks - and the pistons start firing...

When you are in possession of a wayhandle and attempt to ride the handleways, roll+DEX. On a 10+, you're on your way - name your destination, you'll be there first. On a 7-9, you're on the handleways, but there's a break in the line before your destination - you'll only get part of the way. On a miss, you're latched on, but choose two: your grip is tenuous; you're not moving yet; or someone/something is right behind you.

When you attempt to move through a cloud of gear-dust, roll+CON. On a hit, you're through, but: on a 10+, some of the dust has latched to your clothes and gear. On a 7-9, the dust is on your hands and face. On a miss, you're not through the cloud yet.

When you pray at the shrine of Pneumaticism, roll+INT. On a hit, you may choose to gain great knowledge from the anointed series of tubes if you sacrifice a secret only you know in turn. (You must speak it out loud, into the mouthpiece, within earshot of the priests and anyone else nearby.)

On a 10+, it does not have to be an absolute secret - describe something new about a creature or place you've encountered before. On a miss, you hear a whispered truth you didn't want to hear.

When you are exposed to the Phlogiston engine's core, roll+WIS. On a 10+, your mental fortitude defies this psuedomagic - you take +1 forward to the engine's effects. On a 7-9, you feel your mind lapse, but only for a moment. On a miss, the latent phlogiston in your mortal mind starts to burn away!

ENEMIES

Pistonheads

Horde, construct, intelligent, organised

These mechanised humanoids are an ironic testament to the dangers of etheromancy. Constant exposure to etheric energy has withered their limbs, but the mechanical substitutes are powered by the same energy that's killing them. **Instinct:** to gather more energy

6 HP 1 ARM

d6 damage, **FORCEFUL** (powered limbs)

* Stand in mute defiance * Display hive intelligence *
Act in a surprisingly human manner

Pneumatist Clerics

Group, arcane, intelligent, cautious, organised

A few valued pistonheads have learned (or think they've learned) how to 'appease' the engine. These few have set themselves as deacons of a new priesthood. **Instinct:** to revere the engine

7 HP 1 ARM

d8 damage, 3-**PIERCING**, **FAR** (crude etheromancy)

* Cast a techno-magical spell * Analyse their surroundings * Act with ruthless efficiency

Geardust Cloud

Horde, tiny, construct

These microscopic workers are impossible to maintain outside of a phlogiston-generated field. However, without proper maintenance these devices now run rampant. Locals know that to linger in the coppery clouds, even for a moment, is to invite death. **Instinct:** to disassemble

3 HP 1 ARM

d4 damage, 3-**PIERCING**

* Take something apart * Sanitise a surface
* Block a way out

Professor Elemental

Solitary, Arcane, Intelligent

A well-known travelling bard, Elemental is the latest in a long line of agents to observe the town. Unlike the others, he isn't interested in the money as much as the opportunity to help these poor people. **Instinct:** to help the people help themselves

12 HP 1 ARM

Etheric Accordion (d10 damage, **FAR**, 2-**PIERCING**)

★ Harness the elements in a song ★ See through deception ★ Reveal an immunity to the fallout ★ Engage in a battle of sick rhymes

LOCATIONS

THE TRAIN LINE AND THE FARMLANDS

The closest active station is half a days' walk away across rolling hills. The vegetation gets increasingly bleak the closer the party get to Fluxington. The static figures on the horizon aren't scarecrows. Beware their gaze when the sun goes down.

THE MODEL VILLAGE

A miniature replica of what the village was once meant to be. Presided over by 'mayor' Chavspike. The mayor and his goons know of the engine, but is paranoid - he believes anyone asking questions about it are Cheapfields agents looking to finish the job they started. Furthermore, they believe the engine's energy is the one thing keeping them alive, and will react violently to anyone who lets on they intend to deactivate it.

THE HANDLEWAYSTATION

A sky-rise tower that's a hub for every other location in the town, via handleway. Most pistonheads have grafted wayhandles to themselves to make travel easier, although hand-held devices are commonly found.

THE SHOPS

There are a few odd shops providing meat, bread and common supplies to the occasional travellers and each other. A bit of greyish meat and bread can be bought by way of rations, as well as adventuring gear and other common supplies. The townsfolk are grey-skinned and not prone to conversation.

THE ROGUES' SCYTHE

Once a chapel to Mareth, now a (usually very quiet) tavern. Like the merchants, the innkeeper is grey-skinned and not very talkative. However, Professor Elemental can often be found here - the players will almost certainly get his attention. If you spout lore, you may recall Mareth is an old god once popular in Chalcedon. If you make an appropriate offering at the old shrine of Mareth, you are granted some useful knowledge or boon related to your deity's domain. The GM will tell you what, and what might be an appropriate offering.

THE CHAPEL OF PNEUMATANCY

The main power plant, as the population got increasingly paranoid the engine began to be guarded and even revered. Now, the plant looks more like a church, converted with crude religious trappings. The door is locked, and the mysterious clerics don't let just anyone in.

THE RUINS OF THE ETHERIC MILL

Not even the townsfolk dare venture near this area, which decades later is still little more than a dusty crater. An open conduit is present just below the surface, which leads directly to the location of the engine. The area is heavily irradiated and home to the worst mutants and thickest geardust clouds. (If you played the prologue and the son left something behind, whatever it was should be stumbled upon in the ruins - left pristine by the etheric fallout.)

THE PHLOGISTON ENGINE

During the early development of etheromancy, the Phlogiston engine was one of several attempts at a device that could independently contain and regulate etheric energy. Initial tests were promising: the engine was able to generate tremendous amounts of energy with only a modicum of maintenance.

Touted as the solution to the nation's economic and industrial problems, the engine's test-site was converted, at great expense, into a model town representative of this brave new era. But on the day of the opening ceremony, disaster struck. One of the mechanics made a minor miscalculation, leading to a breakdown of the regulator at the etheric mill. As a result, the mill - and nearly everyone in it - were destroyed.

The chain reaction left a pall of fallout across the entire town. In the following months, more side-effects were discovered in the survivors: discolouration of the skin, eyes, and bones, physical deterioration, and bouts of severe anxiety and paranoia. Even worse, these changes were hereditary. The engine still worked, but was incredibly temperamental: some days it ran as intended, others it would fail to start at all.

Lacking the means to safely dismantle it, the Cheapfields family quarantined the town and spread rumours of sabotage by a third party. The truth was, the family was both unwilling to clean up its own mess and keen to study the long-term effects of exposure.

In the decades since, they have sent their own agents in secret monitor the engine and its effects on the population. These agents are misled into believing the engines' is responsible for containing the mutative energies, rather than prolonging them.

To the select few even aware of its existence, it's believed removing the engine safely would go a long way to making Fluxington truly habitable again. But to do so would mean braving the irradiated town and its mutant population, not to mention Cheapfield's deluded agents. Who would be foolish enough to try that?

ETHEROMANCY

Etheromancy is the conversion of latent energy from the etheric plane into a physical, kinetic force. Essentially, the technology is vampiric: it converts latent psychic power into physical energy.

Etheromancy is most commonly used to store energy on a mass scale and empower mechanical devices: pistons, gears, lightbulbs, radiators and so on.

The Cheapfields family were the first to bring etheromancy to the public eye and regard it as a science. In the decades since, it has united the nation and propelled it into an industrial revolution. Other nations have similar methods of power generation (such as the "eλεκtrickery" of the gnomes of Mirkasa) but few are as stable or simple to maintain.

To overcome the early problems from the phlogiston engine and similar devices, the etheromancers have started tapping other planes as sources of 'fuel' instead. The long-term consequences of this are yet to be discovered.

Many individuals practice etheromancy as an alternative school of magic. Technically this is illegal, but unfortunately there's often a fine line between legitimate etheric enterprise and power-mad wizardry.

ON THE ISLA DE MINAS

We're going deeper underground...

How long have you been trapped here? Days, weeks?

You remember flashes - your attackers appearing through the storm, your ship splintering around you, being carried to this gods-damned place. Since then, it's been fishy gruel, iron cuffs and a pick in your hands.

(So, who captured you? Tritons, pirates, or orcish natives?)

But today's going to be different. You're lashed together and put to work as usual, but today's the day you break out of here. After all, you have a plan. Right?

What do you do?

LOCATIONS

THE MINES

A sprawling underground mine, well below sea-level. The torchlight flickers weirdly against the glowing rocks. Sea-wall breaches and drownings are all too common.

Impressions: Deep, dark, cold, wet, gleaming, sharp, echoing, discarded weapons, piles of malachite, moon-stone and orichalcum

THE BARRACKS

A series of dorms (or similar) for the mine guards and workers. In one or more locked rooms, you're likely to find your missing equipment.

Impressions: Warm, stocked, secure, modern, guarded, cramped, well-lit, mostly locked, populated

THE FISSURE

A still pool, found in the deepest spot of the mines. A doorway to an ancient evil? Or a way to escape?

Impressions: Underwater, coral, feeling of being watched, fishies, sandy, gloomy, an expanse beyond, a dark below, freedom above

THE ISLAND

You don't remember much about the island from before you were captured. Your captors live here and use the jungle for food and sport. They might not be the only residents.

Impressions: Crude camps, dense jungle, Crates of fish, gunpowder or magical vore, open docks, shark-infested waters, a beached ship

THE SHIPWRECK

Where you finally ran aground. What's left of your old life may yet be here, left to rot by your captors.

Impressions: (un?)Dead friends, ignoble scavengers, discarded supplies, a clue or two, a chance to get home, riptides and sharp rocks.

STARTING EQUIPMENT

Each of you currently has one adventuring gear, a mining pick (awkward, 2 weight, close) and a few rags for clothing and warmth (0 armour.)

Anything precious and unique to you (fighter's weapons, bard's instruments, wizard's spellbooks or ranger's pets, for example) is in the hands of your captors. Everything else was lost in the attack, or destroyed since.

However, the most quick-fingered amongst you has 'found' something useful. Decide amongst you who, then roll+DEX. On a 10+, pick 2; on a 7-9, pick one; on a 6- pick one but the guards are suspicious.

- ◆ A bronze key from the barracks
- ◆ An easily-concealed dagger (touch)
- ◆ A pinch of black powder, requiring only a spark
- ◆ The name of a guard sympathetic to your plight

If you would normally have a spellbook, roll+INT. On a 10+, you tore a page out before your captors took it. You have one spell of your choice and all your cantrips prepared. On a 7-9, you've scrawled your cantrips onto a hidden sheet of blank paper, kept hidden from the guards. On a 6- you have your cantrips, but had to use your blood as ink. You're *shaky* (-1 DEX.)

OTHER QUESTIONS

You're currently bound together in pairs by iron chains. Who is bound to who? Anyone left over is bound to Captain Longshanks (see *Your Fellow Captive*.)

For The tough one: Which of the natives' trials did you pass, or fail? (If you failed, mark XP and the GM will make a move when you next encounter them.)

For The sneaky one: Which pirate king or queen's domain are you in, right now? (If you're on bad terms, mark experience.)

For the spiritual one: Which god is said to rule the tritons and the Tyranean sea?

What might you have you done to anger this god?

For the learned one: You recall the tritons' hatred of _____ and greed for more _____ will always be their downfall. What was it, again?

What shattered the Shattered Islands?

YOUR CAPTORS

Prison Guards

Group, intelligent, organised

Whether pirate, native or triton, the prison guards are brutish and cruel examples of their kind. They take pleasure in flaunting your lack of freedom.

Instinct: to contain

6 HP 1 ARM

Stolen arms (d8 damage **CLOSE**)

* Threaten something precious to a PC * Make an example of someone * Get tempted by wealth

Pirates

Sundberg, Efraim, Landstrom, Krak or Spetsig

Orcs & Goblins

Azbag, Shaggash, Targle, Ukrog or Khub

Tritons

Sriss'tiz, Long'zj, Ruuzel, Kharidys or Naj'entuz

TREASURE!

Well-crafted pick: (1 weight, precise) Well, it's still a pick. But it's lighter than the last one!

Coral-studded armour: (1 arm, worn, 1 weight) Leather or chainmail, whichever you prefer.

Flowerfish poultice: (3 uses, 1 weight) Each use heals 2D4 hp but leaves your senses numb (-1 WIS) for about 10 minutes.

A broken compass: (1 weight) Always points towards the nearest, largest source of gold. Unless that gold lies north.

Maldito Idiota: (1 weight, close) A dagger with a spike and channel in the grip. When you strike with the dagger, lose D4 health and deal that much damage forward.

Tigerstooth powder: (1 use, 1 weight) Puts a spring in your step! (+1 ongoing to DEX rolls for about a day.) If you spout lore before taking it, you also recall it causes erectile dysfunction.

YOUR FELLOW CAPTIVE, LONGSHANKS

A halfling "merchant" from Chalcedon. When you met him, he was a well-dressed, fine example of halfling-hood; now his red captain's jacket hangs raggedly from his frame.

However his eyes are still bright and clear - when you give the signal to escape, he'll do what he can to help and follow.

Falco punch: (Skill+2) When Longshanks helps you attack, add his skill to the damage done. If the attack results in consequences (like a counter-attack) Falco takes the brunt of it.

Yarr harr, fiddle-de-dee: (Skill+2) When you enter a nautical location (such as a boat or pirate town) as part of Longshanks' crew you will be treated with the same friendship and respect as Falco himself. You also subtract his skill from anything you buy in that area.

OVER & UNDER THE OCEAN FREE

*The Ocean! She's a fickle lass,
Through times of calm or strife.
Though nowhere in my travels
Have I found a fairer wife.
- OLD SAILOR'S POEM*

Between the shores of Chalcedon and Mirkasa lies the Tyranean, a green-blue gulf of ocean many leagues across. Travel by sea is dangerous, but for those that can't afford an airship ticket or magical means, what choice is there?

Dozens of islands lie scattered across the ocean, many inhabited by isolated natives or spurned outlaws. As you might expect, piracy is a frequent problem; but the secrets of the shattered islands may reveal an even greater threat. For they say there was another continent here, once - and whatever shattered it does not sleep easily.

DIOS VIA, DAWN

You're in the town square of a tiny fishing village, half-hidden amongst the islands of the Tyranean atoll. A group of locals are frowning at you; the big one in front has fresh blood on his knuckles. An old man sobs behind you, clutching his raw cheek. The big one shifts slightly - he's sizing you up.

QUESTIONS

- ◆ This place isn't your final destination. Why did you have to stop here, and where are you ultimately headed?
- ◆ How did you get to this ocean island?
- ◆ Why did the big one attack the old man?
- ◆ The old man's shown you something, accidentally or otherwise, that makes him worth saving to you. What is it?

STAKES

- ◆ Will the townsfolk leave without a fight?
- ◆ Will the old man survive?
- ◆ Why are the villagers so paranoid?

RUMOURS

- ◆ The tides are coming in more than they're going out.
- ◆ Daily baptisms in saltwater will keep the demons away.
- ◆ This land is sacred to the elements.

WHO IS THE BIG VILLAGER?

- ◆ Carlos Gillespe, a farmhand
- ◆ Jens Adrison, a known liar
- ◆ Christof Cockles, a fisherman
- ◆ Whalos Adams, a travelling merchant
- ◆ Dickard Roose, a clever academic
- ◆ Matthias Van Hamilfast, a man with a secret job

THE TOWN

Dios Via is a semi-waterborne town comprising most of an island in the Tyranean sea. Its people are descended from the island's original inhabitants and generations of roving sailors who by chance made landfall here. The town is always under threat of discovery, whether by pirates or worse.

By default, Dios Via is prosperity: moderate, population: steady, defences: watch, trade: fish and salt, personality: the wise man. In addition, pick two complications:

- ◆ The island is well-hidden, but isolated: +safe, -trade
- ◆ Pirates know of the island: +blight (piracy)
- ◆ The corruption from the temple has already spread: -population, +blight (Oceanic corruption)
- ◆ The island folk's magic is powerful, but no substitute for a town watch: -defences, +arcane
- ◆ The island lacks arable land: +need (grain), +trade (passing merchant vessels)

A DESECRATED TEMPLE, SUNSET

The temple is miles from the coast, yet the walls are covered with seaweed and coral. The sigil lies untouched on the altar, just like the old man said, at the far end of the temple. Between you and it, the floor is flooded ankle-deep with seawater. In places, the water is somehow flowing upwards - it's already formed a swirling whirlpool on the ceiling.

QUESTIONS

- ◆ Which of you knows the old man, and why do you owe him a favour?
- ◆ Which god is the sigil dedicated to? (Perhaps Saint Bellomere, Cuccino the harvest spirit, or Death Unrefined.)
- ◆ How might the sigil be used to cleanse the temple?
- ◆ Where have the "coral demons" struck before?

STAKES

- ◆ What will come out of the portal?
- ◆ What happens when the sigil is used?
- ◆ What influence does the sigil's god still hold, and will it help or hinder the players?
- ◆ Who or what has corrupted the temple, and why?

Coral Demons

Group, Intelligent, Organised

Dessicated water elementals. Their existence on this plane is difficult, but not impossible. **Instinct:** to maintain a foothold in the drylander's world

8 HP 1 ARM

Salt-stained trident (d8 damage **CLOSE**)

* Reform from a water source * Drag someone into the portal * Launch a chunk of shrapnel-like coral

TREASURES OF THE TEMPLE

- ◆ A rusted spear that once pierced the cheek of a demon.
- ◆ The drowned remains of the temple's chief priest.
- ◆ A book of holy sacraments, written in blood.
- ◆ The peasant's last offerings for a mild winter - clay pottery, simple tokens, rotten fish and coin.
- ◆ The tomb of the temple's founder, long since dead.
- ◆ An urn of fresh spring water, somehow free of corruption.

A BATTLEFIELD, EVENING

You stand on this former battlefield, an eerie disquiet in the air in the aftermath of the old man's abduction. His final words still echo in your ears: "remember the rites!" For now you're in no danger, but there's no telling what his abductor is capable of. What do you do?

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What denizen of the Oceanic plane abducted the old man?
- ◆ Why are you compelled to get him back?
- ◆ Other than the old man, what did you lose in the fight against the elemental's allies? (If it was something significant or irreplaceable - GM's call - mark experience.)
- ◆ Who's still conscious enough for you to get some answers out of, maybe?
- ◆ Which of you has been to the Oceanic plane before? Why aren't you looking forward to the prospect of returning?

STAKES

- ◆ Will the old man be returned safely?
- ◆ What is the abductors plan? Will the PCs foil it?
- ◆ Will somewhere be consumed by the Oceanic plane?

Creating a rift between planes

Anyone who knows the appropriate rites (symbols, phrases and gestures) can attempt to create a portal from one plane of existence to another. In order to do so, you'll need at least one of the following (for each of the below, hold 1:)

- ◆ The willing aid of another with knowledge in these matters
- ◆ The blood (or ichor, or whatever) from a denizen of the plane you're going to
- ◆ The blessing of a god whose domain overlaps with both where you are now and wherever you're going
- ◆ (If your current plane has a sun and moon) The right time - cold planes are best travelled to at midnight; warm planes are best travelled to at midday

When you attempt to create a rift, roll+hold. Take -1 if you're trying to make a portal stable enough for yourself and others. On a 10+, the rift is pretty stable - it will harmlessly dissipate in about 10 minutes. On a 7-9, it'll require someone on this side to keep it open; to dive through a rapidly closing portal is to defy danger. On a 6-, the portal is wildly unstable - not everyone gets through without leaving something behind, or something unexpected gets in or out.

THE OCEANIC PLANE,
TIME UNKNOWN

You lie soaking wet on a bulwark of wet sand and coral. All around you is water - the horizon, the walls, almost everything but where you stand.

You remember the roar of the ocean, a hunt of some kind... your quarry! You chased something down here.

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you remember of the chase?
- ◆ Have you travelled across the elemental planes before?
- ◆ What evidence of your quarry do you see around you?
- ◆ There's another 'bubble' of dry land a short swim away. What do you see in there that might cause trouble?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Fragments of wherever you came from
- ◆ Bubbles of dry land, some within swimming distance
- ◆ The aquatic denizens of this plane
- ◆ Walls of translucent water
- ◆ Coral buildings
- ◆ Bio-luminescent seaweed

CUSTOM MOVES

When you swim from one bubble of land to another, roll +CON. On a 10+, you get across no problem. On a 7-9, you're wheezing for breath when you get there. On a miss, if you don't leave something of the GM's choice floating free, you're drowning.

What do you know of the Oceanic plane?

(When they spout lore, on a 7+ they know at least one.)

- ◆ Its residents are no more 'demons' than we are, though they may look like it.
- ◆ Natives of the planes might see our world and it's peoples as a curiosity, a threat, or a resource.
- ◆ The ecosystem of our world and the planes are intertwined.

Krakenson

Solitary, Intelligent, Organised, Arcane

Half squid, half elemental (don't ask where they came from.) Usually has 6 to 8 arms, depending on the father.

12 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Pseudopods (b[1d8] damage **REACH**)

- * Wrap someone up * Drag someone into the depths
- * Vomit forth inky water * Squeeze through tiny gaps



PHOTO BY SGR ON UNSPLASH

SIX FLOWERS

ANEMONE

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Greek anemone means “daughter of the wind”, from áneos “wind” + feminine patronymic suffix -one. The Metamorphoses of Ovid tells that the plant was created by the goddess Venus when she sprinkled nectar on the blood of her dead lover Adonis. The name “windflower” is used for the whole genus as well as the wood anemone *A. nemorosa*.

Anemos, the wind daughters: Born of a lost love between a goddess and a mortal, these elementals take root near water wherever great conflicts have taken place. Instinct: to remember

When you ask an Anemos how the conflicts of the past can help you, roll+WIS. On a 10+, the secret she imparts is clear and relevant. On a 7-9, the secret is muddy, but certainly relevant. On a miss, the conflict of the past will cause more problems for you now!

CALLA

...is a rhizomatous herbaceous perennial plant growing in bogs and ponds. The leaves are rounded to heart-shaped ... The fruit is a cluster of red berries, each berry containing several seeds.

The nets of Calla: (1 weight, reach, near) a distinctive heart-shaped net used by the bogtreaders clan of the Callan lowlands. When you hack and slash or volley a man-sized target with a Callan net, if you deal damage you may choose to entrap your opponent harmlessly instead.

Callan Hunters: (worn, +1 arm) wax-treated knee-high boots worn by the bogtreaders clan during their swampland hunts. While you wear these boots, when you defy any environmental danger of the Callan swamplands (sinking mud, potholes, entrapping vines etc.) any result of 6- counts as a 7-9.

HIBISCUS

The hibiscus is used as an offering to goddess Kali and Lord Ganesha in Hindu worship. In the Philippines, the gumamela (local name for hibiscus) is used by children as part of a bubble-making pastime. The flowers and leaves are crushed until the sticky juices come out. Hollow papaya stalks are then dipped into this and used as straws for blowing bubbles.

The Hibiscy'bara: (Group, Divine, Intelligent) This horse-sized, furry rodent is considered holy by the local populace though its flesh is a delicacy elsewhere in the world. They feed on hibiscus and other sweet, natural vegetation.

When you hunt the hibiscy'bara in its natural habitat, roll+WIS. On a 10+, you kill several of the creatures - once salted and ready for travel, they'll fetch a fine price back home. On a 7-9, the hunt costs you - resources or health, GM's choice. On a 6-, the hunt is fruitless and the locals are aware of your heresy.

LILY

The fleur-de-lis or fleur-de-lys (plural: fleurs-de-lis) is a stylized lily ... that is used as a decorative design or symbol. It may be “at one and the same time, religious, political, dynastic, artistic, emblematic, and symbolic”, especially in French heraldry.

The Knights Sur-de-Lis: This knightly order was formed centuries ago to protect church and kingdom. At times they've been praised as romantic heroes and saviours of the throne; at others, thieves and cowards.

By default, a keep Sur-de-Lis is Poor, Shrinking, Guard, Need: Supplies, Trade: Local Farms, Oath: The Kingdom. As a group, choose one more:

The knights are noble: +Prosperity, +Divine, +Emnity (enemies of the kingdom)

The knights are corrupt: +Prosperity, +Lawless, -Oath, +Emnity (the Kingdom)

The kingdom is at war: +Population, -Prosperity, +Blight (rampaging hordes)

ROSE

The rose is used as a symbol of love and compassion in many countries... The meaning ascribed to the rose depends on context; general examples include the romantic love of roses given on Valentine's Day, as part of courtship or for an anniversary; filial love in the case of mother's day; compassion in the case of a funeral.

When you give a rose to someone...

...as a symbol of a bloodline shared, roll+STR.

...as a symbol of imminent death, roll+CON.

...as a symbol of compassion, roll+WIS.

...as a symbol of romance, roll+CHA.

On a 10+, the gods smile on your adherence to tradition and favour your intentions. On a 7-9, the gods do not favour your intent, but are compelled to help by tradition. On a 6- someone believes your intentions insincere - your target, the gods, or an involved third party.

TULIP

A bulbous spring-flowering plant of the lily family, with boldly coloured cup-shaped flowers... Tulips became popular garden plants in east and west, but, whereas the tulip in Turkish culture was a symbol of paradise on earth and had almost a divine status, in the Netherlands it represented the briefness of life.

The Lale Devri, the Pale Tulips: (close, 1 weight, precise) These enchanted swords are the symbolic weapons of the Knights Sur-de-Lis. No two blades are quite the same colour, or shape. Though there were once hundreds of blades, the methods of turning the steel have been lost. It's believed the blood of a dragon is needed to make a Lale Devri.

When a Lale Devri is unsheathed in sunlight, an elemental effect relative to the blade's colour becomes apparent. When a red blade is unsheathed for example, the air turns dry and fires blaze higher; when a blue blade is unsheathed, the wind turns cold and wet. No two effects are quite the same.

DOWNSTREAM OF A DEAD TOWN

*Twenty years ago, something happened in Sherford. It stands there still:
lingering, like a half-forgotten nightmare.*

*But one man's nightmare is another man's dream. Rumours persist of forgotten treasures
and arcane secrets, hidden beneath the town's remains.*

What has brought you here? What will you find?

And what will it cost you?

Once upon a time, Sherford was a popular place. It's position on the river meant it saw a lot of trade, while the nexus of ley-lines below it drew a lot of attention from hedge wizards and other sorcerous types.

The doom of Sherford began with the interest of the dragon Demophon. Although his kin cared little for the knowledge of mortals, Demophon - a mere whelp at eighty years old - had developed a morbid fascination into alchemy. Unfortunately, in spite of his 'hobby' the dragon had no more empathy for men, elves, dwarves and the like than the rest of his kin.

Twenty years ago, a failed experiment of Demophon's destroyed the town. The arcane fallout blasted the houses, polluted the river and, worst of all, turned the survivors into half-dead monsters.

Demophon felt no guilt. Though his experiment was technically a failure, he was quite satisfied with the results. He continues his studies today, relying on his draconic strength to keep any roving undead at bay.

As for the townsfolk, most lost their minds twenty years ago and are little different from any other zombies. The few who retained any self-awareness still search desperately for a cure for their curse. Unfortunately, the townsfolk - lacking in academic knowledge, even in life - often cause more harm than good with any potential 'cures' they do find.

A NEIGHBOURING VILLAGE

If you're not a fan of starting in the middle of the action, or want to give your players time to prepare, start them here.

Give the village a name (perhaps Painswick, Blanche or Hawksford, or something relevant to your players.) The village is sparsely populated and defended, but has a tavern, blacksmith and (unusually, for such an out-of-the-way place) an arcane vendor selling simple reagents. By foot, the village is a day-long perilous journey away from Sherford.

If the party needs an NPC to send them to Sherford, the arcane vendor (a nearsighted halfling named Geblin) will ask them to deliver a package to his client, Demophon. In return, he's willing to offer an original copy of the Codex Vicarious, a tome said to contain the names of several elemental dragons (or whatever filthy riches will appeal to your players.)

RUMOURS ABOUT SHERFORD

Roll+CHA: On a 10+, tell two; on a 7-9, tell one; on a 6-, tell one, but exaggerate or distort it somehow: "Sherford is home to many zombies, and some have the eyes of demons."

- ◆ Sherford's townsfolk are all zombies.
- ◆ The only thing still alive in Sherford is a mad wizard.
- ◆ There's magic below Sherford, powerful and ancient.
- ◆ They say Sherford can be saved, but no-one can agree how (faith, magic, killing the lead zombie, etc.)

A FEW MILES DOWNSTREAM

Unless you're in a hurry, start the game here.

The players are travelling on a filthy canal barge to deliver a magical reagent to their target, a man(?) in Sherford named Demophon. What is the reagent?

- ◆ A criminals' head, wrapped in silk
- ◆ An icy gem that makes the bearer appear dead
- ◆ The town deed to Sherford, a strip of cursed land

Without warning, crude crossbow bolts fill the air. The barge starts to drift towards the west bank - the ferryman has taken an arrow in the sternum and his considerable bulk is slumped bleeding over the tiller. What do you do?

Mystery Crossbowmen

Instinct: to secure important supplies

D6 damage

6 HP 0 Armour

★ Capture the boat, take no prisoners ★ Reveal their undead nature

If the attackers fail to stop the party, any survivors will slink off and inform the others at the village temple. Unimpeded, the boat will reach Sherford in under an hour.

By foot, it's a three-hour perilous journey across either silted-up, muddy land (west bank) or fallow, dry farmland (east bank.) Walking in on either bank is a perilous journey - substitute days for hours and rations for adventuring gear.

SHERFORD: EASTERN SIDE

If the party have made their way to Sherford by boat or you're running a shorter game, start in the town square. If they've walked in from the east bank, start them at the entrance.

East of the river lies Sherford's old town square along with a host of abandoned buildings. Only the most mindless undead (see Gurge, the former priest) roam here - they fear seeing some reminder of their former lives.

THE TOWN SQUARE

Next to a rotten dock that barely takes the parties' weight lies the town square. No-one's been here in a long time - the cobbles are choked with weeds. The town is hemmed in on three sides by empty houses; the bridge to the western side and the river on the fourth.

If someone searches the discarded market stalls, they'll turn up D4+WIS adventuring gear. If they ask about other items, tell them anything perishable went foul decades ago and all the ammo seems to have been used up ("the fletcher's cart has been conspicuously turned over.")

THE ENTRANCE

Rotten wooden stakes border the town on all sides - they can be snuck through or forced, although doing so doesn't help the party much. The road from the north-east is open and unguarded - a sign hanging from one pin welcomes visitors to Sherford, with a crude relief of a sun and bridge.

Other Buildings & Impressions

- ◆ The blacksmith's house, defensible at a pinch
- ◆ The Stoney Rose, an abandoned tavern
- ◆ A rotten mill opposite the bridge, liable to fall apart
- ◆ A stable filled with rot and horse skeletons
- ◆ The occasional crippled zombie, easily put down
- ◆ Signs of a magical calamity (witchlights, ghost echoes, three-eyed crows, etc.)

Gurge, The Former Priest

Solitary, Divine, Construct

A fresh-looking zombie in simple religious garb (though spouting lore or discerning realities may reveal something about him that's twenty years out of date.) After the curse, he used the last of his sanity to cast Turn Undead on himself. The result drove him mad and made him a pariah from the other townsfolk. **Instinct:** to find release

12 HP 1 ARM

Ravenous bite(b[2d8] damage)

★ Cast corrupted prayers through decaying lips

When you are bitten by Gurge, roll+CON. On any result, other than dealing damage nothing happens (though feel free to add "...yet", especially if they roll low.) Though Gurge's teeth are sharp and rotten, this should be the first sign to the party this isn't a regular zombie plague.

SHERFORD: WESTERN SIDE

If the party walked here from the western bank, start them at or near to the temple entrance.

The stone bridge is slick with rain and moss, but solidly built. Easily spotted glinting among the moss is a silver heart-shaped locket. Inside are two paintings of a man with intense eyes and a sickly-looking woman.

Two structures dominate the western side: the temple to Mareth, and the reeve's old house on the hill. Both appear to be lit from within. From the bridge, it takes about 15 minutes brisk walk past more derelict homes to reach either. Unlike the eastern side, the area is mostly clear of weeds, though the buildings are still rotten and derelict.

AREA ENCOUNTERS

For every 10 minutes the party are on the western side, roll 1d6 and count down the list to find the encounter. (Mark an encounter off once resolved.) If any of the crossbowmen survived to report back, roll twice and take the lower result.

1. A dozen bloated and damp zombies (horde, D6 damage near, 6 hp 1 Arm) appear from the direction of the riverbank. They will try to drive the party towards the temple, vomiting inky black water at them. If any player is doused in the black water, roll+CON. On a 7-9, they will feel a chill in their bones even in the middle of a summer's day until cured by magical means. On a miss, the chill leaves their teeth chattering and limbs knocking, making them shaky (-1 DEX) until cured.

2. The party member with lowest wisdom sees a spirit dressed in wizard garb on the road ahead. Roll+WIS. On a 10+, they may ask one question of the spirit before it dissipates. On a 7-9, the spirit answers nothing before lunging at the party member. On a miss, the spirit was a harbinger of doom – roll again on this table.
3. The corpse of a dead adventurer with an iron chestplate lies in the rubble of a half-collapsed building. Play up the definite possibility it's a zombie – but it isn't. The corpse has been stripped of weapons and ammo, but a pouch of halfling pipeleaf (6 uses, 0 weight) is still intact. If someone wants to take the armour, they're defying danger (probably with strength) not to have the rest of the building come down.
4. A half-mad undead in torn clothing will speak two or three lines of explanation to the party before lapsing into nonsense ramblings ("the reeve on the hill didn't protect us, we keep him safe in our house...")
5. An undead hunter with a crossbow and mud-stained, but intact clothing will hail the party. If the party asks more than a few questions of him, he'll suggest returning to the temple for answers. If they fail to answer or attack, he'll defend himself.
6. Bells can be heard chiming from the direction of the temple, calling the undead home for the day. Any zombies that hear the bells will be instantly quieted and, if still able, will ignore the party and start shuffling towards the temple. The bells will continue for about an hour, after which the effect ends.

THE TEMPLE OF MARETH

The temple is run down, but well lit – the fires are more to keep away the dark than the cold. If the bells aren't ringing by the time the party gets here, they will start just as they approach. No-one will stop their entry, but they will be coldly directed to Charon (standing at the altar overseeing her people's return) if they have any questions.

If you hold the icy gem that makes you appear dead, you will be taken for a townspeople provided you don't draw attention to yourself. If you fail to prove you're a town member (by answering a question about the town incorrectly, for example) your disguise will be revealed.

Charon, The Reeve's Wife

Solitary, Arcane, Construct

Charon's husband (the man with intense eyes from the locket) was the town Reeve. After he died, She kept the townsfolk together. She is fiercely protective of the town, but coldly indifferent to the plight of others.

Instinct: to save her people

15 HP 1 ARM

Fine Crossbow(b[2d6] damage **NEAR, FAR**)

★ Conduct a ritual incorrectly, with terrible consequences ★ Rally undead forces

If you offer the locket to Charon, she will be very grateful to whomever returned it. The locket could definitely be considered leverage if someone wanted to parley with her.

If you offer the item to Charon instead, she will offer the party free passage and whatever might interest the party in return for the deed or the gem. (She will make a show of checking the legitimacy of the deed first, but doesn't actually have the knowledge or the means to do this.) She doesn't recognise the criminal's head, and has enough corpses besides.

If someone brings up Demophon, Charon will explain who and what he is and honestly offer whatever she can for the alchemist's head, which she will subsequently use to complete a ritual (see Epilogue.)

HAIL MARETH

Sconces line the walls either side of the temple. One or two still have a few scraps of paper, quill and inkpot next to them; the inkpots are filled with blood. A rotten hand lies in one sconce; another is stuffed with bloodstained scraps listing grandiose tales of simple deeds ("My toil in the stone fields lasted three days and one, and I cleared six hundred and sixty six weeds in your name, thrice blessed and twice cursed.")

If you refill an ink pot with a few drops of your blood, lose 1 hp but take +1 ongoing to all CON rolls until the next sunrise.

If you dedicate a recent selfless act to Mareth by writing it on a scrip, whoever you helped the most with the act will find themselves immune to exhaustion and disease for a week.

THE REEVE'S HOUSE

The Reeve's house is the only building that shows any sign of care and attention. The gate is open and the front door is unlocked, but some unknown force keeps the undead away.

The party will find themselves in an entrance hall, well-swept and furnished. Most of the ground floor rooms are tidy, but unused. Before the party can do much searching a voice from upstairs (Demophon) will politely ask them up to his laboratory.

Demophon

Solitary, Terrifying, Cautious, Hoarder

6 HP 5 ARM

Bite (b[2d10] damage, 4 piercing **CLOSE MESSY**)

Special Qualities: Elemental blood, Half-finished experiments

Demophon is a young red dragon with a basically humanoid form. His top half is a brilliant red; his lower half is still covered with half of his previous molt, like a jumpsuit cinched around his waist. A wealth of spectacles and similar crown his head and he stands hunched over his studies. When the party enters, he will motion at them to drop the package on the table and leave without moving away from his work.

Although he isn't one to receive guests regularly Demophon doesn't have anything against the party personally. The party are free to rest in any of the rooms on the ground floor, refill their packs from the charred meat in the pantry, or ask a few questions relating to Demophon's work.

If you have experience with the arcane or alchemy, when you study Demophon's work roll+INT. On a 7+, the GM will describe what he's working on at the moment; on a 10+ you notice a flaw in his work. If you mention it to him, he will be honestly grateful to your assistance, and may ask you more questions on the subject.

If you bring up the zombies or Charon, Demophon will show indifference to the creatures and their plight unless the party offers something useful in return for his help (see epilogue.)

If the party lingers or demands payment, Demophon will offer a 'tip' of 2D4 dragon scales. Each is harder than steel and about the size of a thumbnail. (They might be currency for dragon-kind, be turned into potent arrowheads, or sold to a reagents vendor.)

If the party threatens Demophon or keeps him away from his studies, he will insist they leave. If they don't, smoke will begin pluming from his nostrils and he'll draw himself up to his full height (about 10 feet.) If the party attacks, he will shake the last of his molt free with a roar...

EPILOGUE

If the party deliver the item and escape Sherford unscathed, word will reach their employer of the job complete. In the future, the party may hear of an undead town

If the party offers their services or something of real interest to Demophon in return for curing the townsfolk, Demophon will be open to negotiation. Recreating the experiment and curing the people will take Demophon 3D6 days, minus the INT of anyone who stays to help him with his work. If no-one stays to help, he will lose interest after about a week and cure only about a tenth of the population.

If the party brings Charon Demophon's head, she will attempt a ritual that *should* reverse the curse. Spoiler alert: Charon will pronounce the ritual wrong, turning Demophon's head and the surrounding region, (including, quite possibly, one or more players) into a hellish chimera of stone and undead flesh with Demophon's head on top.

This hellbeast will spend the next several months ravaging the countryside unless anyone is able to stop it...

THE TOMB OF THE GOLDEN CHILD

Ten days ago, infamous Umberto con artist Malkreth Fezance broke into one of Umberto's oldest pyramids - the necropolis of Nebu Khaba. With the help of a tracker named Buddy, he attempted to steal enchanted burial supplies, but the trip went south and only Mal returned.

What Mal isn't aware of is his former partner didn't die in the pyramid after all. Seriously wounded and left for dead, Buddy bound his wounds using bandages plundered from ancient . In doing so, he doomed himself to a terrible curse.

When Mal returns to the pyramid with the players, they will all need to unravel the mystery of what happened to Buddy - and what terrible evil his actions may have unleashed!

GETTING STARTED

If this adventure is a one-shot or to kick off a campaign, tell the players they've been hired as bodyguards and explorers by Mal, start asking questions and give them half a day to gather supplies in the Umberto markets.

If this adventure is part of a campaign, tell the party whatever special item or knowledge they are currently looking lies within the tomb, along with their share of Mal's relics.

GETTING THERE

It's four days' perilous journey to the pyramid and Mal intends to leave this evening, whether the party are ready or not.

If the journey takes too long or the party fails to scout the area correctly, they'll find a cadre of guards on their tail - they want to arrest Mal on suspicion of Buddy's murder. They will definitely pursue as far as the pyramid, but might fear to follow the PCs inside.

Mounted Guard

Instinct: to uphold the law

6 HP 1 ARM

D8 damage REACH

Questions

- ◆ Bard, go ahead and use your Bardic lore on the necropolis of Nebu Khaba.
- ◆ Cleric, what foul heresies did Mal say about your deity? Why didn't you kill him there and then?
- ◆ Druid, what vision of danger have the spirits shown you?
- ◆ Fighter/Barbarian, how have you gotten on the wrong side of the Umberto city watch? What might clear your name?
- ◆ Paladin, what is your quest? How have Mal's actions endangered their very soul?
- ◆ Ranger, your pet did not want to enter the necropolis. How did you finally convince it to do so?

- ◆ Thief, what fanciful poison did you acquire in the Umberto market? (Whatever it is, it's 1 use, touch.) If you had to escape the town guard to acquire it, mark experience.

- ◆ Wizard, something in the pyramid - you're not sure what yet - is a place of power. What ritual do you intend to complete on it?

BREAKING & ENTERING

The necropolis of Nebu Khaba consists of half a dozen ancient pyramids. Mal will lead the players to the top of the smallest, where he'll reveal a partially eroded block uncovering a steep shaft into the complex.

If the players spout lore about the necropolis, they will recall most of the pyramids - tombs dedicated to the oldest lords of Umberto - have been partially excavated. However, only one of the chambers has been explored in this pyramid; the rest of the structure is sealed behind a thick obsidian slab.

It's a grueling 40-minute descent down the slope and doing so without dropping or falling is defying danger by enduring. On a 6-, the unlucky PC falls down dragging anyone beneath them along, and the party lands in the chamber with a loud and undignified thud.

If they didn't drag anyone down with them, they sprain their ankle (D4 damage, and they can't run quickly until they next make camp.)

THE CANOPIC CHAMBER

At the bottom, the party finds some kind of preparation chamber. Stone slabs were piled high with jars of oil and blessed wraps, but the jars have been emptied and the wraps torn to pieces. (There's about 3-uses worth of bandages left, which Mal will pocket if no-one else does.) Directly below the shaft is an week-old ominous red stain. Blood-drops lead to the nearest table, then a flight of stairs; other corridors lead up, down and out of the room. A dull glow can be seen from one; the air feels fresher from another.

As the party take all this in, a clatter will echo from the far side of the room. The culprit is a pretty black cat with a collar made of bandages. Catching the cat without making a loud noise or scratching oneself is defying danger. If the collar is removed, the cat will turn to dust. Inspecting the bandages will reveal they're similar to the ones from the table: impossibly old, treated in some kind of resin, and inscribed with hieroglyphics.

The first time there is a loud noise (the cat meowing, for example) there is a noise like stones tumbling and the sunlight from the shaft disappears. Half the ladder falls down the gap.

Where do we go from here?

The party are free to explore the pyramid however they see fit. If they follow the blood-drops, they will find themselves at the hall of the golden child first; if they follow the glow, they'll find the furnace first; otherwise, they'll end up wherever you feel like putting them.

All the chambers are linked by corridors covered in more hieroglyphics describing the story behind the golden child. Several items are also left on reverential display here (see useful items.) If the items are disturbed, the hieroglyphs studied, or the party simply takes too long, have the most obvious culprit roll on the table on the next page.

Once the party have explored a few of the chambers and been forced to roll on the table a couple of times, tell them they hear a dull tolling, as though from a massive bell, then silence. Buddy's just died trying to fend off the priests, and now the spirits possess his remains (see fronts.)

1. Two blocks slide into place and start to slowly come together, trapping the party. What do you do?
2. The PC becomes deliriously thirsty. They will consume D3 rations' worth of water, then retch the contents onto the floor, becoming weak (-1 STR.)
3. The PC can only speak and understand ancient Umbertoan from now on.
4. Anything mundane and metal in the party's possession transmutes into copper.
5. The party discovers a bronze puzzle with four troughs for different liquids. If solved, they will unlock the vivarium (see The Vivarium.)
6. The PC suddenly remembers the life of one of the buried priests. (See the priest's influence.)

7. The PC hears a scratching behind a wall. Roll+WIS. On a 10+, there's a slave's skeleton behind the wall; on a 9- there is nothing. On a 6- the noise doesn't stop until they leave the pyramid.
8. The PC with the highest STR feels an intense, searing pain on their shoulder. An glowing purple Umbertoan sigil has been burned into their flesh. Someone with a spellbook can translate it into a random level 5 wizard's spell after 24 hours' study.

LOCATIONS

THE THRONE OF THE SPONSOR

One of this room's walls is sheathed in a wall of half-melted silver and gold coins, with gemstones embedded within. Several of the gems have come loose and lie on the floor. Also embedded within the wall is the "sponsor" - a humanoid skeleton with eyes made from rubies.

If someone attempts to leave the room with a gem, the eyes will blaze red and the gems will turn into guardians.

6+ Gem Elementals

Instinct: to collect a tithe (of coin or blood)

4 HP 2 ARM

D6 damage **CLOSE**

- * Rapidly form from the party's collected treasures
- * Bring a tithe to the throne to be absorbed

If someone attempts to communicate with the sponsor, he will demand an offering (a coin or some material wealth) placed into the wall, where it will quickly take hold and melt in. For each separate token left (different currencies are acceptably different to each other) the sponsor will answer a question to the best of his ability.

THE BLESSED SLAVES

A tomb filled with half-wrapped mummies, in ornate but simple (carved stone) tombs. A skull rolls away as the party passes through, but the wrappings around these slaves drain life, not sustain it - the slaves are long dead. If the wrappings are removed, the skeleton turns to dust.

If you take and use any of the bandages yourself, roll+CON. On a 10+, they snap and turn to dust, proving useless. On a 7-9, they hold, but heal no health yet - roll again in a little while (in a scene or two, say.) On a 6- the magic starts to take effect - the player suffers D4 damage and is cursed with weakness (-1 STR) until blessed or healed by magic.

THE VIVARIUM

Sealed behind glass walls deep within the pyramid is a tiny oasis. Magical lamps cast a sunny yellow light on the abundant plantlife and a pool of gently rippling water. The glass is difficult to break, but not impossible; alternatively the doorway may be unlocked (see random encounters.)

Sealed inside is a gigantic crocodile, once the young king's prized possession. It has grown large in it's lord's absence.

Sobek

Instinct: to gorge

12 **HP** 2 **ARM**

b[2d10+2] damage **CLOSE MESSY**

- * Consume something utterly
- * Block an opening or exit with it's bulk

THE HALL OF THE GOLDEN CHILD

Lain with great care and reverence on an obsidian plinth at the end of this vast room is the mummy of a small child, a gold mask upon his head. Armoured forms sit silently in sconces around the dais.

If a PC discerns realities or spouts lore, they might see the damp wrappings glistening beneath their armour; this might mean they are treated with whatever that liquid was in the jars - possibly some kind of after-life-sustaining resin?

Incidentally, though the wrappings around the armoured forms glisten, the golden child's ones don't.

If the golden child is approached or spoken to, nothing happens. The child, like the slaves, is dead as dead can be. If his resting place is disturbed or the mask taken, the child will collapse into dust.

Nothing may happen yet beyond a dry whispering chuckle in the wind, but make no mistake - the PCs have just unwittingly unleashed an ancient demon back into the world of the living!

THE FURNACE

A great furnace blasting waves of heat appears here. This has been stoked with more of the bandages and oils that Buddy burned in his madness. Some scraps still remain; if anyone tries to sift through them (Mal will, if no-one else does) one of the priests will take control of the tatters: an elemental-like creature made of a mix of the stoked hot coals, and tatters of enchanted bandages.

Furnace-priest-thing

Instinct: to return to the land of the living

12 **HP** 1 **ARM**

D10 damage **CLOSE**

If one of the party members has remembered the life of a priest, they will recognise him dancing within the flames.

When killed, the charred remains of the creature will never fully cool. They can be used to stoke a fire, communicate with the infernal realm, and probably other interesting things too.

THE SACRED ALTAR

A great bronze bell hangs in the centre of the room and two pits descend in opposing corners. If the party arrive here later, they'll find Buddy's remains. Unless they ring the bell immediately, the priests will complete their possession and strike out at the living.

If the bell is rung, Buddy and anything undead will be stunned for as long as the bell tolls, but everyone in the room roll+CON. On a 10+, you can act as normal, but won't be able to hear anything for a day or so; on a 7-9, you can't act either unless you find a way to cover your ears; on a 6- the tolling is enough to leave you shaky (-1 DEX) even if you do plug your ears.

If the players get here early, there might be a shred of Buddy's humanity left to talk to. The minstrel will try to get him to explain why he destroyed the priceless artifacts, which may interrupt the player's attempts to talk to him. Before long, the priest's influence will take over fully and the players will have to talk to them instead (see fronts.)

THE OBSIDIAN DOOR

Piled up against this solid obsidian block lies the last of Buddy's supplies: D6 adventuring gear, D6x10 coin's worth of gems and 2D6 ceremonial wraps. An empty jar of canopic oil also lies nearby. If the party get here quickly, Buddy might be here too; probably weeping at his failed attempts to escape.

Although the door is inaccessible from the outside, there's a series of concentric locks built into the door on this side - it looks a bit like an ancient calendar. A plaque below the locks reads "the child's first and last wish is our release."

The answer is the golden child's birthday; someone might know this because it's a holy date in the Umberto calendar, or for some other reason of their own devising.

THE ORIGINAL DIG

Beyond the obsidian door lies the priest's tombs. These were exhumed years ago - the PCs may have seen one of the mummies from here, as it's on display in an Umbertoan museum.

Shafts of sweet sunlight pierce an excavation hall beyond the tomb chamber. From here, any survivors can escape into the Iron Desert. Then it's just a four-day perilous journey back to civilisation...

FRONTS

BUDDY'S FAILED ESCAPE

Buddy fell from the shaft and broke his arm during the original descent. On hearing his screams Mal left him for dead, but Buddy survived. Delirious and desperate, Buddy drank canopic oil to slake his thirst and dressed his wounds with sacred wrappings. He will not survive long in any state, but right now, the cursed bindings and the priest's influence fill his mind.

- Buddy gathers his supplies at the obsidian door
- Buddy fails to open the obsidian door
- Buddy flees to the altar room and rings the bell a final time
- Buddy dies
- Doom: Whatever remains of Buddy's humanity is stripped away, replaced by the priest's malign intelligence.

THE PRIEST'S INFLUENCE

After sacrificing the golden child to seal away a demonic incursion, the priesthood were ritualistically buried in these tombs themselves. But decades ago their tombs (in the old dig) were uncovered and pried open. Since then, the priests' spirits have roamed the pyramid, unable to escape and driven mad by their imprisonment.

Poor Buddy, his body already half-transformed by the necrotic energies of the wraps, is the perfect vessel for the priests to escape into. If they do, it is unlikely to bode well for the living.

- The priests attempt to possess Buddy's body
- Buddy dies, his body taken over by the priests' souls
- The liche-priest opens the obsidian door
- The liche-priest flees into the desert to plot revenge against the living
- Doom: The people of Umberto suffers the

liche-priest's wrath.

Buddy, Possessed

Instinct: to escape the tombs

16 **HP** 2 **ARM**

B[2d10] damage **CLOSE**, **FORCEFUL**

- * Hex, curse or constrict a foe
- * Use a hidden passage of the temple
- * Summon the restless dead

Armoured Guardians

Instinct: to protect the dynasty

6 **HP** 2 **ARM**

D8+2 **CLOSE**

Skeletons

Instinct to silence the living

6 **HP** 0 **Armour**

D6+2 **CLOSE**

USEFUL ITEMS

Mostly found resting on bone plinths among the tombs...

SAMITE SPYGLASS

An accurate, clever device for scanning the landscape. When you use the spyglass to survey the horizon (when discerning realities or scouting, for example) take +1 forward.

LOCAL MAP

A leathery map of the Iron Desert. When on a perilous journey, the lowest result your party can get for the trailblazer is 7-9.

BLINK STONE

A delicate purple gem of ancient Umbertoan design. Look into the stone and it will show you the closest place of relative safety. Shatter the stone and you will be transported to that place.

MUBRAK'S CANE OF CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Close, stun, 1 weight

The magi lord Mubrak had an unconditional fear of the poor, and used this wicked cane to ensure they kept their distance. (All the good it did when they poisoned his wine.)

Attacks made with the cane deal no damage, but will stun for a few moments - see the Ranger move *Called Shot* for ideas.

ARROWS OF THE ASP

3 ammo

Each arrow is a fragile, magically sealed casket containing a dozen horned vipers. If struck by an arrow, the initial attack does -D6 damage but the target is quickly swarmed by the venomous, biting snakes.



PHOTO BY GAURAV D LATHIYA ON UNSPLASH

THE WOLF OF OTRANTO

*The night is long and your campfire burns low. Though this spot is well-defended,
there's evidence someone before you put up a fight here - and lost.*

*What did Lord Varkas of Varkas Keep do to earn the Count of Otranto's displeasure?
What has the Count promised you for Varkas' head?
Did the previous campers leave anything of interest?*

*A solitary cry echoes through the trees, followed by a long howl.
The pines start shaking violently, though there's little wind to trouble them.
Nearby - but which direction? - a twig snaps.*

What do you do?

QUESTIONS

Barbarian: Why is Illyria important to the count? And to you? When did she go missing?

Bard: What sordid tales did the drunk man in Otranto reveal about the count? (Also, never forget your bardic lore...)

Cleric: Why do no gods watch over Kazakov?

Druid/Ranger: What happened to all the wolves in Otranto forest?

Fighter: You came here once before, to claim a magic chalice. What did the chalice do, and how did you lose it?

Paladin: When the errant knight Sir Walpole returned from his quest here, how was he... changed? What did it take to bring him down?

Thief: Your fence can fetch a great price for an expensive tapestry that once hung in Varkas Keep. What does it depict?

Wizard: Why is the moon always full above Otranto?

THE LORD & THE COUNT

For over twenty years, a feud between Varkas and Arkya has simmered. Arkya coveted rulership of the Otranto vale from the Varkas family; when Lord Varkas was found to be infected with lycanthropy, Arkya's voice was the loudest at casting the family out.

In the years since, Arkya's role in the messy affair has left him guilty and paranoid. He wishes for an end to the whole thing, but his pride and fear of Varkas' vengeance have made him cowardly. Whatever recent crime Varkas has committed, it's finally given Arkya the excuse to put Varkas and his kin to the sword once and for all.

While Varkas may have gotten older and slower, he has not been idle. Having spread his curse to a score of outcasts and traitors over the years, he and his 'court' spend their days plotting Otranto's downfall - or at the very least, in Varkas' eyes, the count's.

While Varkas' feral blood makes him savage, his wits are still sharp and his manners impeccable. He is rarely alone, but will not attack the players immediately if they don't threaten him. Indeed, if they show willing he would be more than happy to offer them power and a role within his organisation in exchange for the count's head.

ILLYRIA

Where Illyria features into all of this is one of those Dungeon World-y "play to find out what happens" sort of questions. As GM, ask the players and see what comes of it.

Originally, I had it in mind she was Varkas' granddaughter and Arkya's betrothed; by the end of the playtest game, her lineage had only been implied, but regardless she was the only one still alive to rule Otranto!

Regardless of the player input, be sure to treat her as a real character with her own desires rather than a simple damsel in distress. She is ambitious and not particularly afraid of Varkas or the count - why?

OTRANTO

Otranto is a settlement in the southern lowlands of Mirkasa. Despite favourable living conditions, the region is widely considered cursed - strange beasts stalk the forests and no matter the time of year the moon appears full in the sky.

Until a few decades ago, Otranto was ruled by the Varkas family. When the current Lord Varkas was discovered to be a werewolf, he and his family were driven out.

By default, Otranto is Moderate, Steady, Watch, Resource (furs & lumber) Personage (Count Arkya) and Blight (Lord Varkas). In addition, choose two:

- ◆ The next-closest town is Sherford, no less than a week's travel away: Trade: Sherford, +Market
- ◆ Otranto has direct links to the capital by magical or other means: +Prosperity, +Defences, +Trade: Nosjad, +Market
- ◆ The town is a popular meeting place: +Population, +Lawless)
- ◆ The elves keep a community here to study the moon: +Arcane, +Elven
- ◆ The region lies close to the country borders: +Defences, Emnity (A steading across the border)
- ◆ The route from Otranto to Varkas Keep is a five-day perilous journey.

ABANDONED FARMHOUSE

If you've played a few games of Dungeon World already, this farmhouse is a great place to bring something in from a previous campaign. If this game is a one-off or you're just not feeling imaginative, here's a few ideas from some of my previous adventures:

- ◆ A 'family' of sentient undead (see Downstream of a Dead Town) fled along the river and wound up here. The father is mostly feral, but can be calmed down by the wife or child. The child is the only one with an intact throat, and thus the only one who can actually talk to the party.
- ◆ The family will only attempt to harm the PCs if they pose a direct threat or threaten to give away their location to others (e.g. witch hunters.)
- ◆ A half-starved crystalline man who escaped the Quartz Monolith has been here for a few nights. Most of the rusty farming equipment is strewn around, half-eaten. If the party can offer a steady supply of 'food' (rich metals and expensive stones) and can find a way to communicate, the crystal man will be happy to join them. (I'm thinking he's a gentle giant like Groot from Guardians of the Galaxy, but feel free to play him up as more fearsome as you see fit.)

- ◆ Shapeshifters continue to infiltrate the countryside even now, months after the Planarch Vault was breached. Be sure to play up the 'abandoned' nature of the farmhouse, and the constantly moving furniture. Though vicious, the shapeshifters are isolated and weak and will attempt to scare the party away over engaging in direct combat.

THE RIVER OTT

The river flows quickly through the region, and this bridge is the only ford for miles either way. If the party are gearing up for a climactic final battle with Count Arkya or Lord Varkas out of town, this is the place to set it.

THE FOREST

This is where the game begins, with the players already on their way to Varkas Keep on the orders of the count. The forest is deep, dark and dense, with nothing but the whispering of the wind and the occasional muted howl.

Demi-Wolves

Horde, Intelligent, Organised

Instinct: to claim fresh meat

4 HP 0 Armour

D6 damage (claws)

- * Climb a tree effortlessly
- * Dive onto them from above
- * Fight over them
- * Inform their lord

VARKAS KEEP

The old keep overlooks the forest and most of the Otranto region. Even from a distance, the disuse of the keep proper is clear - the whole building slumps at an awkward angle. After Lord Varkas turned, most of the staff were killed or fled. In the years since, Lord Varkas and his army of outcasts have expanded the catacombs below the keep and lurk there, plotting their revenge against the town.

The front gates lie rotting off their hinges and any searches of the upper levels reveal they've long since been abandoned and ransacked. A heavy trapdoor in the lower levels, usually guarded by 2-3 wolfmen, shows signs of regular use and leads into the catacombs.

If the party explore the hill around the keep, they might also find a smaller, secret passage that leads them straight to the Giant's Sleep (see below.)

THE CRYPTS

Directly below the trapdoor is the Varkas family crypt. Lord Varkas regularly keeps this area in good condition - he may be a tyrant, but he was raised to respect his elders. The area is a fine example of gothic architecture, with conspicuous skeletons everywhere.

There is little of material wealth left. However, when you examine the tombs, roll+WIS or +INT (your choice.) On a 7+, you learn something about the Varkas family. On a 10+, you also avoid desecrating something you shouldn't have.

THE ENTRANCE

The freshly-carved halls below the tombs are crude, but sturdy. If the thief is here to claim a tapestry, it will be hanging here as a mockery of cultured living. Beyond this lies the dining area and several other warrens for bedquarters.

THE DINING HALL

A wide gallery of sorts has been carved and filled with a variety of furniture reclaimed from the keep above. A wide trestle table housing 7-12 senior demi-wolves takes up the centre of the room, with Lord Varkas at the head of the table.

Varkas will be happy to hear the party out if they speak, keen on some interesting sport for once. If they threaten him directly, he will give his men the order to attack.

Senior Wolfman

Group, Intelligent, Organised

Instinct: to keep their lord amused

8 HP 2 ARM

D6+2 damage (jaws)

* Follow orders

* Give in to savagery

Lord Varkas

Solitary, Intelligent, Organised

Instinct: to take back what's rightly his

12 HP 2 ARM

b[2D8]+2 damage (Cleaver)

* Engage in polite discourse

* Show his feral side

* Let others do his dirty work

* Rend something limb from limb

When you explore the wolfmen's quarters, roll+WIS. If you don't smell of fresh blood (IE you haven't been injured or got blood on your blade yet) take +1 forward.

On a 10+, the warren's occupant isn't here - you claim D4+WIS in adventuring gear, poultices, rations or ammo (you may mix and match as you see fit.) On a 7-9, the wolf is in their warren, asleep. On a 6-, they aren't asleep!

THE GIANT'S SLEEP

A 10-foot square helmet lies here, apparently designed for a giant. An inscription below it reads in ancient gothic: "Otranto's leadership shall pass to it's true owners when they return to claim their seat." Nesting inside it is a ogre-sized werewolf, apparently fully feral.

Full-Wolf

Solitary, Intelligent, Organised

Instinct: to claim fresh meat

12 HP 2 ARM

D8 damage (jaws)

* Open a hidden passage

* Bark a challenge

THE FATE OF OTRANTO

DANGER: THE WOLFSMARCH

Lord Varkas grows tired of his empire of dirt. The younger wolves grow ambitious. Three moons' hence, the Demi-wolves will march upon Otranto and claim it for themselves.

Type: Hordes - Barbarians

Impulse: To grow strong, drive their enemies before them

- Varkas' wine runs out
- Varkas is challenged by younger subordinates
- Varkas leads the Demi-wolves south
- The gates of Otranto are broken
- Doom: Chaos - Lord Varkas' reign leads to blood and ruin as the demi-wolves grow powerful enough to harass the region.

CAST

- ◆ Lord Varkas, formerly of Otranto, a tyrant and werewolf
- ◆ Arkya, the current count of Otranto, formal and ill-suited to warfare
- ◆ Illyria, an ambitious woman closely linked to the count
- ◆ The Demi-wolves, Varkas' company of outcasts and traitors



PHOTO BY TOM VACHON ON UNSPLASH

ON CRYSTAL THEWS

Once, this land of gentle fields was stained black with the blood of demons. But the Arelim order, hunters of the foul and profane, put the monsters to the torch or trapped those too powerful to destroy within their great stone sepulchres. Their task complete, the order disappeared into the mists of history... for the most part.

More recently, a family of crystalline entities fled here following their escape from the Quartz Monolith. Feeding on the corrupted minerals below one of the sepulchres, the creatures were warped into blood-hungry monstrosities - a terrifying blend of earthen elemental and necromantic fury.

The crystal-kin have been striking isolated settlements for some time, but as their hunger has increased, they have gotten all the bolder. The eldest of the village elders has made an ancient petition to summon the Arelim once more... but all they have managed to find are the PCs!

Will they be enough?

QUESTIONS

- ◆ How did you come to hear of the old man's summons? What prompted you to answer?
- ◆ Barbarian, normal weapons won't be enough to stop these creatures. What do you intend to use instead?
- ◆ Fighter, what could you fashion from these monsters' skin?
- ◆ Cleric, the Arelim put a stop to the monsters in this area once before. Where are they now?
- ◆ Bard, use your Bardic lore... also, what tales have you heard of the Quartz Monoliths? Where did they come from?
- ◆ Druid, Are the crystal-kin from this earth, a plane beyond, or somewhere else?
- ◆ Ranger, Do crystal-kin have crystal animals? Or plants?
- ◆ Thief, What might be left of value in the old tombs? What valuable gems often encrust a crystal-kin's hide?
- ◆ Wizard, a tomb of the Arelim is likely a place of power... but what happened to the last wizard that tried to use one?

TRADITIONAL INTRO

The town elder has treated you like lords since you arrived. You sit across from him now, discussing the threat to his people: "blood-soaked monsters of stone and crystal", he claims. (That's a new one.) But your meeting is interrupted by the blacksmith. "My boy, they've taken my boy!" He cries.

The blacksmith's house looks like it's been hit by a train. There's a few hours until dawn, but the townsfolk are keen for you to follow the monsters' trail right now.

What do you do?

IN MEDIAS RES INTRO

Crystal-kin, you can handle. Vampires, sure why not. But crystalline vampires? That's a new one. The village elder led you here, to this broken sepulchre; standing guard, a blood-soaked creature of copper, quartz and gravel. Spitted on one of the titan's crystalline shoulders is the blacksmith's son. The monster's spotted you, and he's pissed.

What do you do?

THE MAUSOLEUM

Once an innocuous hillock, the monsters have used the earth-bending abilities to carve a new home for themselves beneath the tombs. In doing so, it looks like half the sepulchre itself has been thrust out of the earth. The largest of their kind, a savage creature named Feronite, currently stands guard.

Getting there

- ◆ A three-day perilous journey from the village (perhaps Nooksbark, Ennet Bend, or Curland.)

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ A hill, where there wasn't one a month ago
- ◆ Broken architecture, jutting out at odd angles
- ◆ Conspicuous bloodstains everywhere
- ◆ A strangely wrought tunnel, heading underground

Feronite, the Guard

Solitary, Terrifying

A mass of bloodied stone, ores and gemstones. He was a warrior once, but all that matters now is the blood of the living. **Instinct:** Need more blood!

10 HP 3 ARM

Bloodstained rocks (d10+5 damage, **FORCEFUL**)

- * Drain their life force
- * Return from bloodstained soil
- * Break them apart

THE ANTECHAMBER

Nestled within the sepulchre is what's left of the final resting place of thirteen Arelim warriors, and with them, a dark secret. After all, vampiric infection was a working hazard for these vampire hunters... so what did they do with their brothers and sisters who turned?

Getting There

- ◆ Via a bronze-and-pewter lock inscribed with sigils of warding
- ◆ A fissure in the ground, ripped apart as though by massive hands
- ◆ Through a man-sized passage carved out of the mountain, leading to a hole beneath one of the coffins

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Half a dozen ornate coffins, some bent open
- ◆ Arcane locks of bronze and silver
- ◆ A strange hissing or tapping from one of the coffins
- ◆ A great fissure in the ground, providing a way down

QUESTIONS

- ◆ Where are the other six coffins?
- ◆ What became of the other occupants?

CUSTOM MOVES

If you spout lore, you recall thirteen coffins once rested here. Records differ as to whether these coffins held the Arelim orders' most vile foes, or their greatest warriors.

If the coffins are ignored, the next time the party passes the antechamber the coffins will have been smashed open, apparently from the inside.

Nuriel, the Fallen Hunter

Solitary, Terrifying, Intelligent, Cautious

If one of the coffins is approached, the PC may hear a scratching or tapping from within. This coffin contains Nuriel, the first to be turned and interred here. Though he's gone without blood for centuries, if fed a little blood he can be reasoned with. He only speaks in low gothic, but is aware he needs time to feed and recuperate over waging a battle with the living. **Instinct:** To return to the lands of the living

10 HP 1 ARM

Elongated claws (d10+5 damage, piercing 2)

* Retreat into darkness * Make a deal or pact * Regain strength from drinking * Spread the curse to others

THE BLOODIED CAVERN

The rest of the vampires the Arelim hunted down were burned, their ashes thrown into this great pit, without ceremony. Over the years, their remains mixed with an underground stream and the tainted mess has slowly seeped into the lower caverns. It was this mixture that turned the crystal-kin when they stopped to feed on the rocks in the area.

Getting there

- ◆ A passageway carved - or sculpted? - from the raw stone
- ◆ Through a fissure in the old stone leading to shallow stream

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ A blasted entrance/exit, leading down
- ◆ Ancient stone shaped like hot wax
- ◆ A pool of blood-red water, best avoided
- ◆ A rumble or roar from deep below

CUSTOM MOVES

If you drink tainted water, you become sick (-1 CON) until cured by a chorus of Arelim Hospitallers (or a force of similar potency). Drinking at least a pint of blood from the living will also protect you for 1+CON days, or until you next feel sunlight.

If you touch tainted water with your bare skin, roll+CON. On a 10+, it leaves you feeling dizzy but otherwise whole. On a 7-9, the next time you feel sunlight you take D4 damage.

FORCE BEGETS FORCE

Dozens of fist-sized crystals hang at head height. Inscribed somewhere in the crystalline language are the words "force begets force." Sections of the cavern have been partitioned with rude slabs of glassy crystal. Several weakened villagers, cows, and other things with blood from the area are trapped in each section.

Getting there

- ◆ Via a glassy, transparent surface weak enough to shatter
- ◆ Along a damp, sliding slope, filled with corpses that tried to get out
- ◆ Through an underwater passage of (hopefully) clear water

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Beautiful bioluminescent light
- ◆ A strange stillness in the air

- ◆ The muted whimpering of the captives
- ◆ A cow carcass, drained of blood
- ◆ A still-living villager, now a thrall of the crystal-kin

CUSTOM MOVES

If a glass surface is shattered (by brute force, magical means, or whatever) anyone with a spiritual connection to the earth (including dwarves, druids or crystal folk) will feel like someone just walked over their grave.

If a crystal is knocked, it will start swinging side-to-side like a pendulum. The crystals don't really follow the rules of physics; although light as air while still, when moving they become much heavier than their momentum suggests. A crystal that has swung back and forth a few times will deal greater-than-expected damage to whatever strikes or attempts to stop it's movement. After a few dozen swings, being hit by the crystal is like being hit by a sledgehammer.

If one of the crystals is carefully plucked and brought into contact with the wall, it will turn into a harmless, faint yellow gas for as long as the crystal is in contact with it.

(It should go without saying that anyone holding a crystal should be really careful about keeping body parts out of the wall.)

If dropped, the crystal will fall to the ground like a ten-ton weight and shatter. Every few weeks, one or two fresh crystals sprout from the ceiling and grow down.

A CLEAR CAVE

Neither the bloody water nor the vampires have made their way into this section of the caverns yet, though a few tell-tale lamps have started to bud.

The only other occupants of this cave are a troublesome nest of Water Beetles. The water is only dirty here, but if they move (or chase someone) to a cavern with infected water, the party might have a problem...

Getting There

- ◆ Through cold, wet corridors of natural construction
- ◆ Past a collapsed passage that may seem, at first, to be a dead-end

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ A clutch of water-beetles, playing in tainted water
- ◆ Strange stalagmites, formed over centuries

Water Beetles

Horde, Small, Hoarder

Naucoridae Subterraneus. More of a nuisance than their pyromaniac cousins, but they do tend to nest around tainted sources of water, where their abilities can best keep predators out of their domain. **Instinct:** To harass
3 HP 0 ARM

Waterspout (0 damage, **NEAR**)

- * Burst from a source of water * Spray water at intruders * Spread infection

WHAT REMAINS

The walls slope down and around in awkward shapes, trapping the bodies of several crystal-kin ranging in size (from halfling to ogre.) All of them show signs of vampiric infection, but appear to be in a state of torpor.

Getting there

- ◆ Via a rapid descent through the bottom of the cavern, requiring some feats of dexterity
- ◆ Through a tightly-enclosed, claustrophobic passage
- ◆ Through a geomancer's lock, requiring no small amount of arcane knowledge to open

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Frozen, horrid shapes of crystal-kin in great pain
- ◆ The passage of someone with powers of geomancy, in great fear for their life

The Trapped Crystal-Kin

Group, Terrifying

These monsters in varying states of vampirism sought to turn the last uninfected member of their group, the Shaper. Though he managed to trap them all in this cavern, he may not have yet escaped infection...

Instinct: To spread the curse

10 HP 2 ARM

Claw (d8 damage, **MESSY**)

- * Inflict an infectious wound * Break free
- * Start a cave-in

CUSTOM MOVES

When you edge your way past the outstretched hands, roll+DEX. On a 10+, something snatches at you but you avoid it. On a 7-9, something grabs you - leave behind whatever was grabbed and go free, or remain trapped. On a miss, something grabs you and breaks free of it's entrapment.

When you closely examine one of the crystal-kin, roll+WIS. On a hit, you learn something new about the vampiric curse or the crystal-kin species, your choice. On a 10+, both.

THE NEW WARREN

A great cavern filled with cool water. An 'island' of crudely shaped rock sits in the centre, with a narrow, uneven bridge forming the only crossing.

Getting there

- ◆ At the end of the passage of remains
- ◆ Via a loooong drop, from the bloodied cavern

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ A chilled cavern, far underground
- ◆ Sculptures molded from the raw earth, getting increasingly erratic
- ◆ No bloody carcasses to be seen

The Shaper

Solitary

This crystal-kin, once a geomancer helping forge his people's homes, was the only one who didn't eat the cursed earth. Infected relatively recently after fleeing his brothers and sisters (see the Remains of the Others) he continues to resist the curse but is fighting a losing battle. **Instinct:** to cure himself

Special quality: Shape rocks like soft clay

10 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Geomancy (d10+5 damage, **FAR**, piercing 2)

- * Make something from the earth
- * Resist infection
- * Give in and feed

THE MANSION ON THE MOORS

Once upon a time, an elderly lord made a deal with the devil in the comfort of his lavish country home.

"I want to live forever," says he.

"Oh aye?" says the devil. "And what of your dynasty? You'd live out your days only to see your kin grow old and rot in front of you? What life is that, my friend?"

That gave the old lord pause, for though he was greedy, he wished his bloodline to grow strong too. "Very well. I want to live forever, and I want my family to live forever."

"Oh aye?" The devil piped up again. "So you and yours would see all the days. But how will you live? As a beggar? You would see your fine house and it's holdings turn to dust?"

The lord, ever in fear of losing his wealth and status, considered the devil's proposal. "Very well. My house, myself, my cousins and all - we shall live forever, here upon the moor!"

"Done!" The devil replied, and his grin was so wide and sharp it could cut have cut the heavens open.

Upon the moors, they say, on the coldest summer nights and the fiercest winter rains a stately family home can be spotted on the horizon. But if you enter, you may join the dynasty that lives forever. And as an old lord learned a very long time ago, that is the worst thing one might wish for.

THE MANSION

Solitary, Huge, Planar, Construct, Amorphous

This ancient and stately manor is said to appear on misty moors on the bleakest nights of winter. Possessed by the spirit of it's former lord, his devotion to family has devolved over the millennia into a hunger to feed on the psychic potential of those trapped inside.

In time, the rooms come to reflect the twisted desires and worst impulses of those entrapped as their humanity is drained away by their 'father,' the mansion-lord. Instinct: to sustain itself on those it's captured

- ◆ Entrap them within itself
- ◆ Move through the material plane without rhyme or reason
- ◆ Get them lost in it's corridors
- ◆ Reveal a vestige of it's former self
- ◆ Reveal a vestige of a consumed soul
- ◆ Drain them of their humanity
- ◆ Offer release for some, at the cost of others

PLAYER INTRO

You've been trapped in this crazy mansion for what feels like hours. You came in through the front door, but when you tried to leave you impossibly found yourself in the same hallway you just left. None of the rooms lead where they should.

QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who, among others, has been 'kidnapped' by the house recently? Why are they so important

to you now?

- ◆ Who saw this house once before, as a child? When it appeared in the misty hills above your home, who did it take that was dear to you?
- ◆ Which of you found an empty room that feels, somehow, like it was meant for you? (Mark experience; the GM has some bad news for you.)

CUSTOM MOVES

When you are in a room that's meant for you, a stately voice tells you your friends will leave unharmed if you agree to stay forever. Leaving the room after hearing this is probably defying danger.

When you aim to leave the mansion, go through a door and roll+WIS. On a 10+, you discover a clue to the exit's appearance, or if you've found two clues already the exit is within your reach. On a 7-9, the exit or a clue is nearby, but it may be guarded or closely hidden.

When you aim to face the lord, find your allies, or anything else, go through a door and roll. (If you've found the room that's meant for you, roll-1.)

On a 10+, the room contains your goal, or the means to get to it nearby. On a 7-9, the room contains someone else, who may help or hinder your quest. On a miss, the room contains nothing - it's your room again, and it's calling to you...

STAKES

- ◆ Will the party rescue whoever was kidnapped?
- ◆ Who will choose to sacrifice themselves?
- ◆ Can the mansion's spirit be reasoned with, or must

it's rotten heart be cut out?

- ◆ Where does the mansion threaten? What will be left of it?

GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ When the party found themselves back in the hallway, how had it's atmosphere suddenly become a lot creepier?
- ◆ Assuming they don't kill the lord of the mansion in the basement, what is the other secret exit to the mansion? (In my playtest, there was a window to the outside world in the attic.) What clues can you drop along the way so the party knows they're getting closer to the exit?
- ◆ What's the state of the people the party came to save? How has the corruption of the house started to affect them?

CLUES

The attic above is an exit true, for only ascending brings release; though the lord and master would have you stay, and offers his own form of peace. (no windows anywhere else in the mansion; a painting of the world outside as seen through a window; familiar smells from air vents and chimneys.)

The lord below is old and cruel, but even he was once mortal; if you descend, will you be his end? Beware the glowing portals! (there's less resistance if the party heads 'down' rather than up. Doors of all kinds infest the basement, leading everywhere but out.)

GM MOVES

When a player rolls a miss or looks to you to find out what happens next, do one of the following:

- ◆ Rearrange the rooms around them
- ◆ Release something that's been trapped too long
- ◆ Reveal the humanity the corrupted once had
- ◆ Emphasise the corruption of those imprisoned
- ◆ Play with the laws of physics, gods and magic

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ A disused kitchen, smelling of old flesh and soot
- ◆ An enclosed atrium or greenhouse, in greco-roman style
- ◆ An untouched dining room, all cobwebs and dust
- ◆ A vaunted chamber, a figure sat in one of the twin thrones
- ◆ A monk's sparse bedroom, with a straw pallet and bucket
- ◆ A fanciful master bedroom, silks rotted with age
- ◆ An indoor forest, walls carved from the living wood
- ◆ A huge chess board, pieces set for a new game

- ◆ A mirror reflecting the party in the near future; most of them dying horribly, but one (chosen at random) living like a lord
- ◆ An underwater hall, containing bubbles of air and treasure

Denizen Of The House

Solitary, terrifying, intelligent, organised

12 HP 1 ARM

b[1d10] damage

Instinct: See 36 denizens for more creature details and motivations.

ROOMS TO TEMPT THE UNWARY

- ◆ Barbarian, Fighter: A brutal throne, their men or women prostrate beneath it; That bar in Bucksberg with the pleasant ale and the comfiest bed you ever slept in. ("Maybe just a quick nap...")
- ◆ Bard: A stage, facing an audience of thousands all keen to hear your every word.
- ◆ Cleric, Paladin: Your God incarnate with you at their right hand; the one sin you can't resist; a host of followers, in dire need of protection and leadership
- ◆ Druid, Ranger: Your land, in danger - the forest aflame, poachers attacking the savannah; your land at peace, seemingly a way out of the house (yet far too easy.)
- ◆ Thief: treasure, more treasure than you've ever seen; and the means to claim it as your own; an impossible configuration of traps and puzzles to finally prove your skill;
- ◆ Wizard: The one book you always wanted, yet when you read it, the first page never seems to end. A seclisium within which you might continue your studies and grow wise in safety.
- ◆ Your loved one's things, dotted around at random.
- ◆ An exact replica of your childhood home.
- ◆ Your family home at Christmas.

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

The Mansion on the Moors is a great adventure o run as part of a 'jobs board' or selection of smaller quests demanding your players' attention. It's initial impact on the world, while disconcerting, might not present an immediate threat (especially if the person or people aren't as vital to the PCs as you thought!)

The longer the mansion is allowed to linger, the more powerful it will grow. If they don't try to rescue their ally in time, they may miss their chance. (There's a great opportunity for a party that failed to rescue their ally previously might encounter the house again, only to find their former ally still inside, corrupted by the houses' influence.)

GRIM PORTENTS

- The mansion claims someone important
- An expedition doesn't return
- The mists grow in size and virulence
- The mansion corrupts a place of importance
- The mansion claims many more victims
- The mansion fades away once more
- Doom - Pestilence: Whatever was here before has gone now. All that is left when the mansion fades away are bleak moors, chilling mists, and ghosts lost on the wind.

36 DENIZENS

Trapped by the mansion and twisted by it's malign influence

The first living souls were the lords' own family, but they could not sustain him for long. Soon, the house returned to the material plane to claim some fresh victims, and the stories began.

Every soul trapped within the house was once a living thing, just like the PCs. Eventually, each of them found an empty room - their room - where they were offered a choice: live here forever and your allies walk free; or leave together, and continue to wander until you starve or worse. Of course, each of them made the first choice, and most have regretted it ever since.

Once trapped, the new 'cousin' cannot leave their room, though they may shift it's trappings to suit their liking. The longer a cousin is trapped, the more of their humanity is drained and the more they are defined by their sins. Those that have been here for many hundreds of years are fierce, demonic things that crave the souls of the living almost as much as their master does.

When the party does something the house doesn't like (seeking escape for themselves and others, dealing the house harm, seeking a way to banish or destroy it) another denizen will be released to stalk the party. You may wish to send these against the party individually, or send them as a group.

Depending on how much of their humanity is left, their instinct may be to seek rescue, vent their rage at containment, find another to take their place, or they may be too far gone to care either way.

The following denizens represent six of the seven deadly sins. The last, gluttony, is represented by the lord himself - sprawled obscenely in the mansion's basement.

LUST

Lady Isabella Veidt

Who tried everything to live forever, but in the end found everlasting life not to her liking.

Elise, the Everchild

Who was turned against their will at the tender age of 12, and has remained 12 for a very long time.

Tyrus, of the court of Raneb

Who witnessed the dawn of the city of Umberto, and is fated to return to see it's fiery end.

The Witch of Slennsford

Accused of heresy by the monks of Mirkasa, and fled to the mansion in desperation.

Mandragora, the lady's lost love

Who lusted for the lady Veidt, and in doing so doomed himself to never find her again.

Asmodeus, the host of dragonflies

A swarm of baleful hellfire, whose demonic energy makes for a cousin most dear.

SLOTH

The Flybound Corpse

One of the first entrapped, now more rot than man.

Odan Ogran, The Sunken Pillar

Who, upon finding she could conjure any food they desired, conjured all of it.

Seamus Wisht, the boar

A man fit for the hunt - once.

Necrul, the gloat

Whose forgotten magicks spelt the end of a nation.

Calaway, the Pallbearer

This obese fool brought his master here, believing he could return him to life. Not only did it fail, but the urn never runs out now no matter how much he scatters the remains...

Septus Forsworn, the maggot knight

Who grew gluttonous with victory, and dared the very gods with his martial prowess.

PRIDE

Necrotos of the plains

The first necromancer, he claims - though only his undead vassals will confirm it.

A rat king

Teeth and tails and adventurer's entrails - that's what this rat king is made of.

Kairam Hamdan, the patient one

He's been here since before Mansion, or Moor.

Lois Schmidt, the stricken player

Dance with me, friends! Dance the dance of life!

Doctor Longshoreman

Where he came from, he claims, a PhD in "necrotic sciences" is perfectly legitimate.

The Tooth Fairy

As in, the first tooth fairy. The one who didn't stop with teeth. Hell, it didn't stop with spines.

WRATH

The dancing swords of Karkadann

The strigoi said Karkadann was so skilled a smith, he must bind his soul to the blades he wrought. How right they were.

Israphel, beyond the pale

Banished from the lands of Yog, Israphel awaits and plots the return of those who betrayed him.

The Shaggy Dog

Three times he entered the mansion, and evaded capture every time. But he had to go a fourth, didn't he?

Khorbus, the bloodied

Four of them entered, and in time, four of them were captured. Of the fifth, we do not speak.

Ossicone, the Bannerman

When a mad general attempted to conquer the mansion, it cost the soul of his own banner-bearer. Unfortunately, the general escaped and is still waging pointless wars today.

The Imp of Atropos

Oh, it's not so bad here for a lowly imp. You'd be amazed how much chaos you can cause in just one room...

GREED

Zalmoxis, the Striga

The king of ghouls, he called himself. Rotten little king, of his rotten little throne.

The Last Morlock

Quibir tried to have this one executed, but it escaped. Who knows what it could cause back in the realm of the living.

Ashley, second sister of the hearth

The first one threw her through the door and ran for the exit. Bitch! And Mother always said she was the clever one...

The clown of the western marches

"You're all stupid." The jester remarked to his fellows. "See, they're going to be looking for army guys."

The Duke of Linkwood Motte

No-one goes to Linkwood Motte anymore, not since the Duke's keep vanished. It's far too misty...

St. Ignatius, of the winter bird

A monk that sought to bring the light of the divine to the home of the cursed. He wound up like the others, screaming to a god that could no longer hear him.

ENVY

Tzala'char, the eagle

Of the four that entered, Tzala'char was the last to be snared. His companions were his pawns. When none were left? Checkmate.

Shadhavar, the was-a-man

What he is now defies description. Have fun with that one, GMs!

The Malal, anarchy incarnate

After wandering the halls for seven hundred years, Malal came to realise he was not the master of chaos he believed.

Jessica Marlowe

Another full moon? But it's been a full moon every night for the past century!

Severglut, the construct

Was the house ever happy when this one arrived! A stitched abomination. So many souls in one neat package!

Tunegu, troll shaman

The spirits warned him of the mists. Why didn't he listen?

SHALLOW SORROWS

You're in the middle of the Mudflats and need to get a package to pier 117 in the Trotts before this evening. But a would-be ally is convinced you're trying to steal it.

They're insisting the deal's off and demanding you hand the package back.

Worse, you've just spotted Lord Tinmann's goons are on your tail.

They've seen you with the package - you're all complicit now. If you stay here arguing, you'll all be captured, or worse.

What do you do?

STAKES

- ◆ Will the package be delivered?
- ◆ What will Tinmann, the despotic ruler of the docks, do to get it back?
- ◆ Who is the would-be ally?
- ◆ Who sold you out?

QUESTIONS

- ◆ The goons knew to find you here - someone sold you out! Who might it be?
- ◆ What's in the package?
- ◆ How does it hinder Tinmann and help his enemies?
- ◆ Who thinks you're going to steal it?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Rotten wooden jetties
- ◆ Silted-up shores and crude lean-tos
- ◆ Infrequent tides and patches of treacherous deep silt
- ◆ Junkyards old, rusted parts and broken automata
- ◆ Tinmann's distinctive sigil, a metal cast of his own face, on everything he owns (buildings, ships, people)

REWARDS

- ◆ Gold, and the ear of someone important
- ◆ Scavenged Techno-gizmos from Chalcedon
- ◆ Powerful elektrik tools from the Gnomes, gifted in good faith to help remove Tinmann from power
- ◆ The emnity of Augustus Tinmann, earning you respect elsewhere

ENEMIES

- ◆ Bronze automata, imported from Chalcedon
- ◆ (Spring-heeled) Jacks, modified human enforcers
- ◆ A one-off model of Automata, built especially for water combat

AUGUSTUS TINMANN

The Untouchable Traitor

A well-set, domineering nobleman, Tinmann controls over 90% of the docks in Nosjad on behalf of his Chalcedoni sponsors.

When a dockside explosion crippled him and nearly ruined his career, Augustus Tinmann turned to his nation's rival, the republic of Chalcedon, for support. In return for saving his life and restarting his business, he promised that in five years, the Nosjad docks would be in their hands. He managed it in two.

Tinmann is never seen in public without his distinctive bronze life-support machine, crowned with a mask in his own likeness. This mask can be seen on everything Tinmann owns - warehouses, boats and even watchmen badges.

It's said if you can see a Tinmann mask, Tinmann can see you. Many have tried to avoid (even refuse) giving Tinmann his cut. Their remains hang over the Sorrows, swinging in studded bronze gibbets over the silted waters.

A private union of his foremost detractors, including the dock workers' guild, the Gnomish Free Radicals' Society and the Templar Council have put a price on Tinmann's head - though nobody's been able to claim it. Despite the threats, Tinmann hasn't stopped appearing in public, surrounded by a small army of cold-hearted servitors. Though he might have bought the docks, the boats and even the people's bodies, will he be able to buy the workers' hearts?

TINMANN'S EMPIRE

Type: Corrupt Government (impulse: to stay in control)

- A would-be ally is destroyed, utterly
- An faction based outside the docks (e.g. the templars, the gnomes) fail to drive out Tinmann
- More reinforcements and supplies arrive from Chalcedon
- Doom: The docks are undeniably, totally under Tinmann's leadership and none remain to oppose him.

GM Moves

- ◆ Someone important is kidnapped or ransomed
- ◆ A powerful ally is bought out or bribed
- ◆ Tinmann cracks down on opposition in the docks
- ◆ Tinmann's agents observe from a distance
- ◆ Tinmann makes an offer they can't refuse
- ◆ Tinmann spots a double-cross early

WORKING FOR TINMANN

If the party works for Tinmann, they'll find him a powerful, hospitable ally... so long as their actions help make him more powerful. If they cost him money, communicate with the enemy (he'll know!) or even considers leaving the docks, he'll arrange a series of 'unfortunate accidents'. "Keep your friends close... but your enemies closer!"

Tinmann's agents and allies include:

- ◆ Moriar D'Gaulle, an outcast from Chalcedon
- ◆ Kanaloa, a water shaman from the Tyrrhenian
- ◆ Ahti-teka, a disgraced gnome forced to deal with the enemy
- ◆ Grannus Rusalki, an outwardly loyal Templar in Tinmann's pocket
- ◆ "Naughty" Nyx, most senior of Tinmann's Jacks

A TRAVELLERS' GUIDE TO THE SORROWS**THE MUDFLATS**

A dismal, rain-soaked sprawl of jetties and warehouses where most of the houses and shops are located. When people in Nosjad talk of 'the Sorrows', this is what normally comes to mind.

If you're looking to shop in the area, this is about as good as you're going to get without travelling half a day into the city centre or paying Tinmann's exorbitant prices in the Yard.

DEMON'S BELL

An old, abandoned lighthouse. The gnomes tried to wire up the place with their elecktrickery once, but only half a dozen of the workers returned raving about ghosts. No-one's supposed to have been back since, though locals swear the lights come on from time to time.

FELSTRAD MALL

The old centre of trade for Nosjad Docks until Tinmann muscled the old lords out of business. Unregulated by Tinmann or the authorities, the most violent or disturbed tend to lay low here.

THE TROTTS

Anyone looking to get a boat in or out of Nosjad without Tinmann knowing will take the Trotts. It used to be the main trade route for Nosjad, but since the trade dried up at Felstrad Mall the waterways have become silted up. Tinmann's Jacks and bands of scavengers prowl the banks now, looking for any ships that have run aground.

TINMANN'S YARD

The heart of Tinmann's empire. Fancy and modern, very unlike the rest of Nosjad. Iron faces lie on every door. Anyone who lives here is very likely to be in Tinmann's pocket.

NORTH PALATINO

A temple of Saint Mirka sits here, though like most things unrelated to Tinmann's profit it has now fallen into disuse.

SOUTH PALATINO

One of the first Gnome villages was built here, but nowadays it's a staging ground for Tinmann's latest "projects". It still has a lot of cultural significance for the gnomes; they'd reward anyone who can help them claim it back.

OPERATING IN THE SORROWS

When someone wants to purchase something in the Sorrows, it is inevitably either a waterlogged, inferior hand-me-down from the Mudflats, or the real deal but 25% more expensive than usual. If it's obvious you come from Chalcedon (GM's call, but you should expect it is) the prices are cheaper, but anyone who isn't in Tinmann's pocket will treat you with suspicion.

Food keeps poorly in the squalid, saturated environment. When rations are consumed, roll(-rations consumed by the party.) On a 10+, nothing else has spoiled yet. On a 7-9, discard 1 extra ration right now. On a 6-, discard an additional d3 rations instead.

Working the docks is arduous, back-breaking work but may earn the trust of the locals. When you do so, defy danger with CON. On a 7+, in addition to anything else you earn a night's safe rest. On a 10+, you also learn something interesting about where you worked or who you worked for – the GM will tell you what.

You may want to hide this last move from the players, at least until after it's been triggered or they learn more about the area.

When you return to a poor, but familiar region of the Sorrows (a friendly face, shop, or meeting place) it will have been washed away by the authorities or the tide. Whoever was there before is gone too, though the new tenants may have some idea where they went.

ENEMIES

Automata

Group, Construct, Relentless, Tough

Tinmann originally imported these bronze constructs as his personal police force. Although formidable, their tendency to malfunction when exposed to water makes them easily avoided in town. Unwilling to give up on his investment entirely, Tinmann still employs the Automata on the higher levels of the docks or en masse against repeat offenders. **Instinct:** to pursue and capture
 * Chase something relentlessly * Ignore all but the heaviest physical harm * Malfunction violently when exposed to water

Spring-heeled Jacks

Group, Nimble, Excessive, Fast

Tinmann's second foray into a personal army has been designed from the ground up. Consisting of modified humans and other detritus, brainwashed into following Tinmann's commands to the letter and refitted with all manner of bronze devices – including spring-heeled feet to navigate the docks quickly, hence the name. **Instinct:** to subdue or execute
 * Arrive or disappear without warning * Navigate the docks and silted banks effortlessly * Lead them into a trap * Hunt them

Automata Mk II

Solitary, Construct, Huge, Relentless

Some enterprising Etheromancer back in Chalcedon has sent this hulking construct to haunt the waterways of Nojad on Tinmann's behalf. He's already put down 3 would-be rebellions. If he's not stopped soon, Tinmann might be convinced to order an army of them. **Instinct:** to pursue and execute

* Chase them anywhere, relentlessly * Beat them and their allies into submission * Protect it's master
 * Reveal an unexpected enhancement



PHOTO BY MAGNUS OLSSON ON UNSPLASH

A CITY OF SPARKS & CINDERS

*Standing on Mirkasa's eastern shore is Nosjad, it's capital and largest port.
It is from Nosjad's docks the people of Mirkasa trade with the wider world.*

*The cities' numerous gnomish workshops churn out new wonders of "elektrickery"
every day, brightening the homes of it's people while their ruler,
the holy Palatine of Mirka, attends to their spiritual wellbeing.*

*To an outsider, Nosjad might appear to be the perfect home:
buildings lit all hours by gnomish magic, strong walls to keep the beastmen at bay,
tireless templars to deal with the witches - much nicer than the shadowy souks
of Umberto city, or the mutated horrors of New Chalcedon.*

But of course, things are rarely so simple...

THE OLD DOUBLE-CROSS

Two of Nosjad's foremost gangs, the WIDE BOYS and RIBBON MEN, will attempt a trade this afternoon. You know the place, you know what's at stake, and you know one will double-cross the other. The question is, what will do you do with this information?

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What has gotten the party caught in the middle of Nosjad's gang wars? (Perhaps you are protecting business interests, answering a difficult favour, or doing it to get out of punishment)
- ◆ Which group is double-crossing the other?
- ◆ Which group do you support, if either? Why?
- ◆ Who or what is the trade?
- ◆ Stakes
- ◆ Will the double-cross go off as planned?
- ◆ Who will get caught in the crossfire?
- ◆ Will the violence escalate further?

ENEMIES

The Ribbonmen

Brutal, Hard-line, Rich

Gaudy-dressed, sour-faced, well-equipped. They representing some very important folk.

The Wide Boys

Diverse, Rowdy, Charming

A motley crew from the slums and bawdyhouses, looking for their cut. They make themselves out as freedom fighters, but not everyone buys it.

REWARDS

- ◆ A humble briefcase, holding riches or answers
- ◆ Control of a gang or territory
- ◆ Freedom from a powerful organisation
- ◆ An audience with a reclusive politician

AREAS

- ◆ A elektrik power tap, encrusted with wires and surrounded by powerless folk
- ◆ An old theatre preparing for a new director's latest piece
- ◆ A waystation for horses and horseless carriages
- ◆ Five points, the centre of town
- ◆ The oldest surviving statue of the nation's patron, Saint Mirka

RUMOURS & ODDITIES

Roll the dice, tell the players, then go on an adventure!

- ◆ The Planarch vault has been left untouched since it crashed ten miles south of Nosjad's borders several months ago. No-one knows whether the shapeshifters imprisoned within survived, so folk have taken to creating their own tests (most bizarre and painful) to prove the identity of strangers.
- ◆ The Palatine is said to be descended from the saintly blood of Mirka herself, yet it is also known she died a virgin. The gnomes claim they have means to test the Palatines' blood, which may explain the recent call to have gnomes barred from practicing Mirkatism.
- ◆ Mirkasa's cow population is almost extinct following a harsh winter of beastmen raids and uncompromising storms. The Nosjad Cheesemakers' guild has been forced to close it's doors. Milk, beef and cheese are rapidly becoming a delicacy.
- ◆ A new card game from the Tyrrhenians called *Baraja* is taking the taverns by storm. It's a bit like chess meets Magic the Gathering. Gnome bookies have started cashing in by offering player credit in return for favours or payment with interest.

NAVIGATING THE MEAN STREETS

Cobbled from the forbidden writings of Vornheim and the Last Gasp Grimoire

When they're trying to get from A to B in a dense, confusing city:

Roll 1d8. The direction the top point of the d8 is facing shows the direction they need to go in. (Directly away from you, GM, is north.) The result of the D8 is how many streets away the destination is (or if this is obvious, how severe the obstacles are on the way.)

Roll 1d4. The 3 points of the D4 are three routes (streets, alleys, shops or similar) immediately obvious to the players. If one point of the D4 lines up with the D8, then great, there's an obvious route. If not, they'll have to explore a little first.

Ask the party:

- ◆ Which way is north? How do you know this?
- ◆ What is this borough? How do you know this?
- ◆ Where is your destination? How do you know this?

If their answers aren't satisfactory (your call) have the party make the appropriate tests: streetwise, 2d6+CHA, whatever. Then, tell the party as much or little of what you've found as you like.

(If they passed all or most of any tests called for, tell them more than you would do otherwise.)

THE GNOMES OF NOSJAD

When the gnomes first arrived in Mirkasa over fifty years ago, they believed their races' days of technological superiority were behind them. Time after time gnomish refugees would be chased out, their gizmos and gadgets branded as heresy by the small-minded village folk.

But for all the common folks' jeering, Mirkasa's political and military power was decades behind it's neighbours. In the capital, Nosjad, the gnomes found an opportunity to turn this around and make both themselves and their Mirkasan supporters a force to be reckoned with.

Within a few short decades, the gnome's technological and administrative improvements had brought more wealth into the country than it had seen in years. By the turn of the century, the gnomes' position in Mirkasan society was centred... despite the mutterings of a few less enlightened detractors.

Such a meteoric rise has allowed a select few to become very rich indeed. Today, there is a huge divide between rich and poor, with most of the authorities in the pockets of one lord or another. Protection rackets are all too common. What's more, while Nosjad's docks are overflowing with rare trade, common goods remain perilously rare.

Anyone who comes into possession of these sorts of things in bulk - furs, ores, even a bit of humble cheese - can make a lot of money on the black market, if they don't mind drawing attention from anyone looking for a little "tribute."

OBRI'USTA

You're at OBRI'USTA, on the borders of the Imperium, overlooking the Titansbane fens.

The giants were banished there after their last great war failed.

One day, they might return. After tonight's watch is over, who will be in your debt?

*It's night. A faint smell of methane drifts past. Occasionally, a witchlight
or two sparks up over the swamps. There's a lot of them, tonight.*

Who's standing guard on the ramparts?

The rest of the garrison is quiet. Who's playing cards with the other guards in the barracks?

Greco is still complaining of scratching in the walls.

He's been going on for so long, you're starting to believe him.

Three criminals are locked up below. One falls over, choking.

The others back away, fear in their eyes. Are they sincere?

Or is it a ploy? Who's guarding the prisoners tonight?

The night air is broken by a single hearty roar.

More roars echo in response.

The giants are returning. Right now, you're the only thing in their way.

What do you do?

CROWN OF THE MERE

STAKES

- ◆ What will be lost when the last giants go to war?
- ◆ Will the giants reclaim the old bones of their king?
- ◆ What manner of defence will the free people muster?
- ◆ What will happen when the last giant dies?

QUESTIONS

- ◆ When did the giants' war end? (Years, decades or centuries ago?)
- ◆ What was Jack Dyson, the titanslayer who raised Obri'usta from the giant king's bones, to you? (Your ancestor, your god, your hated enemy?)
- ◆ What horrors did the giants inflict on your people?
- ◆ What defences can you muster before the giants get here?

FLOORS

- ◆ The Ramparts, charged with spiritual energy
- ◆ The Commander's Quarters and the angelic pillar
- ◆ The Army, and 2 secret rooms
- ◆ The Barracks, dorms, and murder-holes
- ◆ The Atrium and the halls of honour
- ◆ The demonic pillar, the unlucky rooms, the shrine
- ◆ The Storehouses, the secret escape tunnel, the lockboxes

REWARDS

- ◆ The bones, brains and blood of dead giants
- ◆ Honours and accolades from Obri'usta's founders
- ◆ The banner of the fens, reclaimed from a giant champion
- ◆ An eye for foresight, learned during your time in the garrison

ENEMIES

Giants

Huge, crude, angry

Rotwhiskers

Small, swarming, infectious

Convicts

Unruly, self-serving, desperate

HOW BIG IS THE GARRISON?

Roll 2d6 (+nothing):

2-6: 6 guards, all of whom are former convicted criminals serving time here instead of prison.

7: 7 guards with little training and less experience; but all of decent moral character and no desire for crime.

8: 8 guards. One is a notorious criminal; another a gruff but capable constable assigned to keep an eye on them.

9-10: 10 guards. Two are petty crooks, here on parole; another a celebrated war hero past their prime.

11-12: 12 guards with no significant criminal history. At least half have been stationed together here for over six months.

FLOORS OF THE TOWER**THE RAMPARTS**

It is said that the bone-white ramparts were the giant king's teeth, pulled from his mouth one by one as a final insult before his execution. Each has been carved with enchantments of farsight, so that the wardens may see far into the Titansbane.

A trapdoor with a busted lock provides easy access up or down.

THE COMMANDER'S QUARTERS

The third floor is dominated by a white marble pillar, adorned with images of soaring angels. (It's twin rests in the basement.) Both were said to have been recovered from the giant king's gullet, who swallowed them whole for his own foul purposes.

A lifelike statue of the last commander has been placed in the quarters. It is sculpted in an awkward and violent pose, arms raised to strike something. The soldiers will be unwilling to go into details, but any veterans who may have known the last commander will admit the old general had a temper if pressed, and that the statue is oddly lifelike.

When an act of violence is committed in sight of the angelic pillar, the object of said violence (such as a sword, or the attacker themselves) should roll+WIS. On any result, they have earned the ire of an angel and will begin to ascend - whatever that means for them.

(In the commander's case, it meant being turned into stone when he struck out at his concubine.)

The quarters themselves are spartan and unadorned. With the exception of one slightly nicer pillow, they're no more comfy than the dorms below.

Any of the PCs are welcome to take the role of commander - the garrison will have no complaints, but may mention the role is known to be unlucky.

THE ARMY

The army is filled with a glut of ivory swords and breastplates, carved from giant bones. The breastplates need fresh leather straps and the swords need sharpening.

One person could probably get about D3+DEX items per hour battle-ready. D6+WIS ammo can also be found by the first person that cares to look.

Any giants who spot someone wielding these relics are very likely to favour them as a target.

There are two secret rooms in the army. One has been converted into a rather profane sex dungeon - its existence will be a surprise to the garrison, but anyone who's been here a while will assume it belonged to the previous commander.

The other hasn't been touched in years, but contains some delicate dwarf rune-tomes. Whoever finds them first uncovers D3+INT/WIS (whichever's higher) tomes, and each tome contains a lvl 3 cleric or wizard spell of the GM's choosing. Each tome allows the spell to be cast once, after which it crumbles to dust.

THE BARRACKS

Two dorms, a common room and a sparse medical station. The common room holds most of the guards' personal effects, a round table for playing cards and usually some kind of tapped keg (with an optional sleeping soldier wrapped around it.)

The medical chamber is mostly empty, but clean. The chamber has three small windows - murder-holes, used to shoot arrows towards the swamps from relative safety or pour boiling liquid onto anyone attempting to breach the front door.

When you scrounge bandages from the medical station, you find D6+WIS. If you take them, you deny them to the NPC guards who may need them in the future. If you only have a few minutes to get them, you only get D3+WIS instead.

THE ATRIUM

The front door is man-sized and built from giant bones and sturdy oak. It's stood for generations, and intricate protective runes have been carved by its dwarven creators all over the door.

If the front door is closed and bolted, when a giant or similar large creature comes-a-knocking, roll it's damage dice and subtract the result from 10. If the result is a negative number, the creatures' going to get through in less than a minute, no matter what the PCs do next. If it's a positive number, draw that many boxes on a piece of paper that everyone at the table can see, and fill in the first.

When someone rolls a miss, (or whenever it's dramatically appropriate) consider filling in a box instead of what you'd do normally. (You probably want to be filling in a box every few minutes of real-time, regardless of the players' actions.) When all the boxes are filled in, the door's broken down.

The entrance hall is flanked by two "halls of honour" filled with empty plinths, as all the trophies were tidied away in the storehouses years ago. The main atrium proper is typically used as a dining room and communal space by the garrison.

THE BASEMENT

The basement is considered unlucky, probably due to the huge evil pillar that some idiot installed in there at the end of the giant's war.

There's three cells on this floor, two small and one large, currently holding three prisoners. In a few days, the city watch will arrive to collect these men and women for their trial.

At least one has eaten spoiled food, and is already suffering the early stages of Rotwhisker infection (see Fronts.)

The centre of the floor is taken up with a carved obsidian pillar, the opposite of the marble pillar near the top floor. The pillar seems to absorb any light brought near, keeping the basement perpetually dim. Careful study (made all the harder by the light-distorting effect) will reveal several demonic figures carved into the pillar's base.

When an act of peace or healing is committed within sight of the demonic pillar The eyes of whoever was healed will turn completely black, and they will go blind for D3-WIS days. Their eyes will remain black even after they regain their eyesight.

THE STOREHOUSES

The bottom floor has been largely kept aside for storage. One room is a food larder, another a wine cellar. Others are filled with old war trophies and leftover 'building materials' - yellowing bones, of all shapes and sizes.

There's a shrine to a well-known deity (a PC's, if they have one; otherwise perhaps Mareth, Morad or Saint Mirka) in one of the side rooms. At least one of the garrison will be religious enough to tend the shrine regularly.

The southern bottom wall is cracked and brittle. In one corner several bricks have been carefully broken down and tucked away. Behind them lies a tunnel leading to the fens, which was left by the builders to be used as an emergency escape route and subsequently forgotten.

The giant's rotwhisker scouts have rediscovered the exit and have spent the last few weeks sneaking away supplies, and possibly leaving signs of contamination in their wake...

DANGER: ROTWHISKER INFESTATION *Humanoid vermin*

Rotwhisker (more correctly, *Mus Iratus*) is a chronic infection of the brain believed to have originally occurred through poorly sanctified food. The disease, once it takes hold, will cause the victim to mutate into a crude beast-like form and begin craving the uncooked flesh of it's kin.

Although most commonly found on ships with poor hygiene, a recent outbreak in the city led to dozens of infectees being rounded up and shipped to the fens. Unfortunately the afflicted have only thrived there, preying on highwaymen and other stragglers.

Impulse: to breed, multiply and consume

Criminals, Awaiting Trial

Instinct: to find safety

6 HP

1d8 damage **CLOSE**

Rotwhisker Afflicted

Instinct: to spoil)

3 HP 1 ARM

1d6 damage **CLOSE**

GM MOVES

- ◆ Scratch and scurry inside the walls
- ◆ Surge upward at the worst possible moment
- ◆ Overwhelm and consume the prisoners
- ◆ Poison the supplies
- ◆ Steal the bones for their lords, the giants
- ◆ Infect a well-respected ally

DANGER: THE GIANT'S LAST BATTLE*Wandering Barbarians*

After the giants lost their last war, the survivors fled to the fens in disgrace. They've continued to gather away from civilisation, waiting for the time to strike.

One of their number has now risen up - a champion to lead the giants to glory or die trying. He has sent the Rotwhiskers first to weaken the human's defences.

The champion intends to see Obri'usta reduced to rubble, then the army will march onwards. Who knows how much chaos and destruction they will cause if not stopped?

Impulse: to grow strong, to drive their enemies before them

Titansbane Giant

Instinct: to wage war, one last time

12 **HP** 2 **ARM**

1d8+5 damage, **CLOSE, REACH, FORCEFUL, HUGE**

Giant Champion

Instinct: to seek victory at any cost

12 **HP** 1 **ARM**

1d10+5 damage **CLOSE, REACH**

CAMPAIGN FRONT: THE GIANT'S WAR

- Obri'usta is besieged
- The giants reclaim their old lord's bones
- The giants march north, to the city
- The giants pillage isolated villages
- The banners are called to fight the giant army
- Battle is met on the fields south of the city
- Doom: Destruction (the giants' campaign leaves a trail of ruin in it's wake.)

GM moves

- ◆ Overwhelm a weaker force
- ◆ Perform a show of dominance
- ◆ Abandon an old home, find a new one
- ◆ Grow in size by breeding or conquest
- ◆ Declare war and act upon that declaration without hesitation or deliberation

THE CHILD & EAGLE

An informal, yet infamous accolade from the Vectis Guild of Craftsmen

In the heyday of the Guild of Craftsmen, awards and ceremonies were frequent, varied and numerous. One in particular remains notorious to this day: the coveted Child and Eagle cup. Any member of the guild could be entered regardless of race, creed or profession; the winner was voted for in secret by the nominees, typically over a night of rowdy drinking and spirited argument in the titular pub. (The “award” was a pint of ale of the winner’s choice, usually served in the dirtiest cup available.)

The award was an opportunity to show praise for some of the more eccentric guild members “off the record”, in cases where to be seen as directly supporting the inventors or their creations might have been seen as politically or economically unwise.

The Child and Eagle ran for about forty years. Some years after the fall of the guild, several identical records of the winners and their inventions were donated to the Vectis central library. Each contains exhaustive material on the prize-winning inventions and the lives of their creators, which in turn has inspired many a future creator to fresh heights of infamy. The hall of fame (of which the following entries are only the briefest extract, you understand) reads like a biography of Vectis itself: a slice of urban life in the midst of a magical, technological revolution.

USING THE HALL OF FAME

Whether a GM or a player, you might find it fun to incorporate the Child & Eagle into your steampunk setting. Fictionally, these stories are framed in Vectis, a prominent city in the Chalcedon republic. Feel free to swap these names for ones that will resonate better with your fellow players. (More adventures and information about Vectis can be found in Vectis: 1769 and Sanderson Distillery.)

You might also take these ideas to inspire your next Steampunk-themed character. Maybe your character was a previous winner, or trained by one; perhaps they stumbled on a faded copy of the hall of fame and found themselves inspired by it.

If you’re inspired to create your own inventions yourself, I encourage you to ensure each one has a look, a purpose and a flaw. Try to sum up each of these in a few words and make them as memorable as possible. If you’re a player, be sure to work with your GM to make sure your invention complements the wider fictional world.

Remember also that each invention was awarded the cup for their infamy and invention, not their effectiveness or success. Flaws in particular should reflect this – they should be obvious, frequently apparent and – most importantly! – very, very entertaining to watch.

MATTHIAS BRIMLEY

Created the incorrigible lifter from a bar of superplanar metal, fizzy lifting oil and a sheepskin hide. Looks like a glittering harness (that can be worn under normal clothing,) reinforced with metal strips at the bottom and sides.

Its purpose is to constantly levitate the wearer approximately three feet into the air while activated, with propulsion controlled through twinging of specific nerves and muscles in the posterior. Its flaw was that overuse resulted in atrophied leg muscles, leading to trouble walking or running. (Personal accounts of Brimley’s impotence were never conclusively linked to this apparatus.)

BELLEDORM PRETA

Created the sigil of bedazzlement from an ounce of metal, wood, more metal and a pinch of gunpowder. Looks like a standard sigil of the guild, although it could be designed to take the form of any kind of seal.

Designed to be a convincing forgery of a real seal and hide a small explosive charge, for the purposes of wounding or blinding a would-be inspector. Its flaw is the quality of the forgery was wholly dependant on both its creator and their knowledge of the seal to be copied.

FOOLHAUS FULEHAUSE

Created the Fulehouse igniter from a box of common matches, a quart of hog fat (rendered into a concentrated syrup) and a pinch of gunpowder. Looks like a box of ordinary matches, albeit slightly shiny under scrutiny.

Designed to react – explosively, with much greater force than one would expect – when thrown in a fire. Its flaw is it becomes useless if wet or pierced, as this compromises the rendered fat.

TRENT FORSTORB

Created the Screen of Greenery from a 10-foot square sheet of dyed cloth, a bucket of clear automaton oil and a 3-inch cube of treated bone carved from a dead animal. Looks like a 10-foot roll of ordinary cloth (generally rolled up when not in use) with a small off-white cube hanging off the bottom.

When hung flat, its designed to perfectly simulate the homeland of the animal (Trent used a cow skull, hence his prototype showed a green field). Although on a two-dimensional plane, it looks strikingly like the real thing at a distance. The smarter the animal used, the more effective the illusion. Its flaw is that sometimes, the animal's spirit will try to take its revenge on the owner.

REDELBART WEISS

Created the length of uncommon iron from an old crowbar, a gold pocket watch, a sphere of molten glass and the finger bone of a bitter rival. Looks like a crude mace, with a clear sphere at its end, laced with gold and with the finger bone embedded at the tip.

Designed to transfer the wielders' hatred toward their target into their attacks. Its flaw is the glass is incredibly fragile, and it is less effective than an actual mace against foes you don't have a grudge against.

DEVINA ELROG

Created the pyroquatic polarity adjuster using a large bar of silver, 50 gold coins (melted), a cube of ice, a sprig of burning juniper, and a dwarf skull. (Elrog's notes mention a human skull may be used instead, but never an elf's. This is probably because a dwarf ran off with her elf mother.)

Looks like a silver cube about six inches across, interlaced with vaguely magical scriptures. It is always either very hot or very cold to the touch, and sometimes both at the same time. It is designed to turn any source of flammable oil into water; and/or any source of water into a pale green gas. (It will only work on reasonably pure water - if a human drinking it would become seriously sick, the device will have no effect on it.)

Its flaw is twofold: the gas is highly toxic if breathed in; and its effect on water has a habit of 'jumping' to other nearby targets that may be out of sight, like lakes, puddles and underground rivers. (When Elrog accidentally used it on her father-in-law's private well, the toxic fumes compromised the entire estate for years.)

CYGAR EAZIG

Created Eazigs calming element from a filament of fine lead wire, a matchbook, three measures of sunflower oil and a finger-sized cylinder of tin (copper, silver or steel may also be used.)

The element is designed to calm the nerves; a cheaper, safer, alternative to tobacco. Arbalists and crossbowmen are known to use the element to steady their hand without making a spark near their gunpowder.

If you own an element, when you volley and roll a 7-9 you may choose to take a long drag instead of the other options (you also deal damage.)

Going more than a day without any kind of smoke is likely to make you nervous and twitchy. The long-term effect on one's health and breathing have not been fully researched...

PRINCE TORAG VI

Devised Torag's Lottery from a phial of quicksilver, a box made of ironoak and a deck of playing cards. Looks like a deck of playing cards in a clasped box, carved with a specific series of dwarf runes. Each card has a dwarf rune written in thick script and is edged and glazed with a thin layer of quicksilver. Exactly half the cards have a positive effect written on them, the rest have a negative effect.

When you draw a card from the lottery, roll+nothing (If you're using the rules for it, from Funnel World, you could roll+LUCK.) On a miss, the fates frown on you and the GM makes a move. On a 7+, the GM picks a suit from the list below.

The next time you're called to make a roll to do something related to that suit, you can use the score you just rolled instead. On a 10+, if you don't like the GM's first choice you can ask them to choose an alternative instead.

- ◆ Pentacles: Wisdom, Religion, Divine magic
- ◆ Wands: Intellect, Dexterity, Arcane magic, History
- ◆ Cups: Charisma, Constitution, Politics
- ◆ Swords: Strength, Combat, Honour

CARLA MIA

Created Mia's Beloved from a cherished childhood toy (a stuffed animal in Mia's case, although a toy soldier or similar could work too) half a pint of blood from a trusted friend, two bronze gears and a fine filament of tarnished gold.

It looks much like Mia's childhood toy, reinforced with the gears and filament. Once activated, the Beloved will carry out simple verbal tasks given by its owner, like a familiar.

Its flaw is linked to whoever donated the blood. If the donor is killed, or the friendship between the creator and donor ends, the beloved will crumble to dust.

ADVENTURE STARTERS

You're in a dusty library. There's a book in your hand with three pages torn out. The pages show half of some important schematics, a diagram of a device you need built in order to save your life. Slipped into the book is a note: "The clock tower, 3pm tonight".

- ◆ Who wrote the note?
- ◆ Why have they taken the pages?
- ◆ Why is time running out for you? (And possibly others?)
- ◆ What is the device? How can it save you?
- ◆ What do you do?

The inn is filled with raucous cheer. A group of inventors are celebrating. One of them just won an award, for an invention they stole from you. The atmosphere is tense as you approach. Your rival stiffens in their chair, a frothing mug of ale to their lips.

- ◆ Who here knows the rival cheated? Why haven't they spoken out?
- ◆ What is the invention? How did the rival come to claim it?
- ◆ Who is the rival to you?
- ◆ What's likely to happen if you start trouble here?
- ◆ What do you do?

A mechanical wyvern has set fire to a field. Terrified inventors are fleeing left and right. The wyvern's creator is clutched in the wyvern's claws. The wyvern's control switch is clutched in the inventor's hands. Scrap metal and other junk lie everywhere - the remains of the other inventor's works. The fire is already spreading.

- ◆ Who paid you to sabotage the wyvern?
- ◆ Who else knows of your sabotage?
- ◆ What was the wyvern's intended purpose?
- ◆ Did you submit an invention to this contest? What state is it in?
- ◆ What flaw have you spotted in the Wyvern's movements or construction?
- ◆ And, as always... What do you do?



PHOTO BY MATTHEW WARING ON UNSPLASH

THE FOREST OF DUST

The oldest texts refer to six ancient cities as the collective birthplace of civilisation. The first is not written here.* Three still survive today: Umberto city in Umberto, Vectis in South Chalcedon, and Nosjad in Mirkasa. Another's true location is believed to have been on the Green Scar: "an island of emerald green, the final throne of the Dygra."

The last is known only as the Forest of Dust. It is believed lost, its works and people ruined. But if you were to travel deep within the Umberto desert, through burning sun and winding sandstorms, you would find a ravine, hidden for millenia. The Forest of Dust lies within - eroded to its foundations, but there nonetheless.

Through eroded scraps of sandstone, witchlights flicker in the dusty gloom - the dead of the Forest do not lie easy. Trapped here by their own sorcery, they haunt the region as the wraith-like Dust-of-Men. Though unable to stop the erosion of their land, they do whatever they can to guard their legacy from the living.

The only mortals to stand up to the Dust-of-Men are the Bashi-Bazouks. They are exiles, bold and desperate, soldiers who failed their caliph. From their camp they range through the gutted ruins for relics, seeking a king's ransom with which to buy back their honour from the caliph.

If only they knew what lay in the centre. Fire-Lies-Contained is a creature of fire, imprisoned long ago by the Dust-of-Men. It is said his rage is boundless, but this is a lie. He was mistaken for a demon long ago, and desperately seeks his freedom.

** GM: The first isn't written here because I'm assuming it would be useful for you to make this up yourself...*

RUMOURS

The following could have been heard in the universities of Chalcedon, the souks of Umberto, or the wharfs of Nosjad.

Regardless, what is stated is commonly known. (What is in brackets is not.)

- ◆ The Bashi-Bazouks seek to quench the Fire. (False - they seek to claim it.) When they do, the ghosts of the city will be put to rest. (False.)

- ◆ Fire-Lies-Contained's rage is eternal. (False.) Fire-Lies-Contained is a demon. (False.) Fire-Lies-Contained comes from the Infernal realms (True - its a fire elemental.)
- ◆ The Forest of Dust was once a great city. (True.) Its people were great wielders of magic (true) and protected the realms of men from demons (false - they captured "demons" for their own selfish ends.)
- ◆ The forges of the forest can bind souls to steel. (True.) The forge has burned for a thousand times a thousand years (true... but it doesn't burn now.)
- ◆ There are 100 ghosts in the Forest of Dust (true.) Until each is put to rest, Fire-Lies-Contained's prison cannot be broken. (false.)
- ◆ The Bashi-Bazouks deserted the field in battle. (True, but they did so to out-manoeuvre Umberto's enemies; their actions won the battle.)

STAKES

- ◆ Will Fire-lies-contained be released?
- ◆ Will Fire-lies-contained be destroyed?
- ◆ Will the Bashi-bazouks be pardoned?
- ◆ Will the Dust-of-Men be exorcised?

QUESTIONS

- ◆ How did Fire-lies-contained come to be captured?
- ◆ How did the city come to be destroyed?
- ◆ What did the Bashi-Bazouk commander bury in the forest?
- ◆ How can Fire-lies-contained return to its native realm?
- ◆ Can the Dust-of-Men be appeased?

GETTING STARTED

This introduction assumes the party are starting in the middle of the ruins, with trouble fast approaching.

If you would prefer a less perilous introduction, you could start them in the Bashi-Bazouk's camp, Umberto city, or beyond. In fact, this could be an adventure in itself...

TRAVEL

The Forest of Dust is hidden away deep in a dusty desert. In my campaign that means its 5 days perilous journey from Umberto city, across miles of desolate sand and canyons ripe for an ambush. Once they reach the ravine, they have to find the city itself.

There's a rope-and-pulley elevator, well hidden and maintained by the Bashi-bazouks. Crude but effective, its big enough to carry a dozen men. Each trip (up or down) there's a 2-in-6 chance of an attack from a single Dust-of-man. It leads from the corner of the city's south-east wall to the surface.

If the party are leaving the elemental plane of fire (e.g. by magical portal or ritual) there's a 1-in-6 chance they'll appear in front of Fire-Lies-Contained's prison instead of their intended destination. The portal will collapse behind them almost immediately...

In the spirit world, the city is as whole as it was in life. The Dust-of-Men, who were once the priests and magickers of this place, may be able to transport the players into the city in return for a dangerous bargain.

In theory, the underground domains of the antfolk extend as far as the Forest of Dust. Navigating their compounds may be possible from the northern ziggurats. Several have been abandoned to the fungus pox recently...

SANDSTORMS

The Forest of Dust isn't just a name. For every 30 minutes or so the party spend in the ruins, or any time someone (a player) coughs or sneezes, hold 1.

At 3, visibility is halved from the dense storms.

At 5, everyone's DEX is halved until the storm subsides.

At 7, reset hold to 1.

The GM can spend hold, one-for-one, to make a GM move (see below).

GM moves for the Forest of Dust:

- ◆ The sandstorms get worse
- ◆ The Dust-of-Men or their minions emerge
- ◆ The prison of Fire-Lies-Contained is weakened
- ◆ They feel Fire-Lies-Contained's influence
- ◆ The Bashi-Bazouks leave you to your fate
- ◆ The Bashi-Bazouks covet your magical items

THE BASHI-BAZOUK'S CAMP

Dusty, cramped, and filled with raucous soldiers. By default, the settlement is Poor, Shrinking, Guard, Need (Supplies), Trade (Umberto City), Oath (The Caliph of Umberto). Choose one:

- ◆ The Bashi-Bazouks have unlocked some secrets of the Forest: +Arcane, -Population
- ◆ The Bashi-Bazouks have turned to religion to keep the dead at bay: +Divine

Choose one problem:

- ◆ The keep's commander is old and ailing, and his lieutenants vie for leadership: blight (lack of command)
- ◆ Morale is terrible, and soldiers have taken to pilfering from one another: lawless, -population
- ◆ The Dust-of-Men have found a way to strike at the keep: blight(Drakes-of-Dust), need(exorcists)

THE ANVIL OF DUST

Circular ruins suggest a communal, almost religious area. At the centre lies a finely-wrought anvil. There's space inside the anvil to light a fire. The anvil isn't fixed to the floor - three strong men could move it, if wished.

The space is designed to be filled with magical fire, but a powerful soul is needed as a spark. Fire-Lies-Contained's would work. Once lit, the anvil can be used by a trained blacksmith to create Soulswords (see rewards).

If destroyed, the release of magical energy will create an unstable portal to the Infernal realm (the home of Fire-Lies-Contained.)

THE TREE OF GOLD

An immense oak tree with golden bark. Its trunk is bloated - Fire-Lies-Contained is trapped within. Occasionally he may break an arm or foot free with a blaze of fire, but in his centuries of imprisonment he has never escaped - the golden branches bend like rubber, but never break.

The tree can be neutralised by water - any bark splashed will lose its golden lustre and be broken as easily as any natural bark.

Fire-Lies-Contained can hear everything outside the tree as normal, and will wrench open a hole large enough to peek through if he wants to communicate.

There's a 1-in-6 chance of a golden seed lying in the dust; more may be found at the top of the tree, if someone is willing to climb it and search. If planted in dry soil - and never watered, not even by rain - it will grow into a golden tree. Golden boughs may be shorn off using magic and/or careful application of water; or the seed may be sold for an inordinate amount to the right buyer of magical items.

OTHER LOCATIONS

While searching the city, the party may stumble onto one of the following:

THE GARDENS

Once green and verdant, now a wasteland of silken dust. Remains of beautiful stone sculptures lie half-buried in the sand. The Drakes-of-dust use this place as their personal den.

When you cross the gardens by foot, roll+DEX. On a 10+ you get where you wanted. On a 7-9, you're halfway there and on reasonably solid ground, but the rest of the way is blocked by silken quicksand. On a miss, you're falling through the dust as though it was water.

THE SOUK

Empty, echoing with the whispers of market day. When you discern realities here, on any result you get the sensation that something is analysing you back.

THE PALACE

Empty. An embossed metal tablet lies in the stone wall, showing the bloodlines of ancient kings. (If accurately translated, it proves the current Caliph's bloodline is illegitimate.)

REWARDS

When encountering the Dust-of-Men or their servants, there's a 1-in-6 chance of finding a drake's collar on their remains. There is a chance any Bashi-bazouks encountered may already have either a collar or soulsword. (Note the collars can't be taken from them, as they turn to dust as soon as they are put on).

DRAKE'S COLLAR

A simple golden bangle, inlaid with runes that hurt the eye. Before they became ghosts, the Dust-of-Men used these collars to control their drakes.

When you put the collar on, it burns white hot for a moment - burning the runes into your skin - before crumbling to ash. From then on, when you are directly attacked with magic (i.e. a magic missile or similar, targeting you) roll+WIS. If you're still in the desert, take +1. On a 10+, both. On a 7-9, pick one:

- ◆ The attack is dispelled
- ◆ Your drake briefly manifests, dealing 1d6 damage (ignores armour) to your attacker
- ◆ On a miss, the Drake suffers damage. Roll 1d6; on a 1, the Drake is permanently destroyed.

SOULSWORD

Blades forged on the Forge of Dust, imbued with the souls of the living. Often, these may be encountered as enemies (see enemies.) If reduced to 0 hp what's left of the sword will still have a soul attached to it.

Soulswords can strike at the dead as surely as they can the living. If used to kill a mortal, there's a 3-in-6 chance the weapon will shatter under the weight of absorbing too many souls.

RELICS OF RENOWN

Any one of these rewards, if presented to the caliph, would be enough to restore the Bashi-Bazouks' honour. If the Bashi-bazouks realise the party are holding onto any of these items in secret, they'll turn on them in an instant.

Golden Seed

See The Tree of Gold above.

The Anvil of Dust

See The Anvil of Dust above.

THE HORN OF STORMS

A mythical object from the heydays of Oasyr, a horn of bone and gold about as long as an orc's arm. It was used by the city's people to control the sandstorms around the city. It might be found hidden in the dust, especially near to the old city walls.

The horn is designed to be played in long, low blasts (like a didgeridoo). When you blow the horn, roll+CON. On a 10+ you may accurately control the winds around you - you can quiet them to nothing, or create a whirlwind. This affects an area of about half a mile around you and lasts until the following dawn. On a 7-9, you can quieten the wind around you, but not make them wilder. On a miss, the storms refuse to follow your command. If you actually know how to play a wind instrument (like a horn, saxophone or didgeridoo) take +1 forward.

ENEMIES

Bashi-Bazouks

Horde, Intelligent, Organized

An irregular regiment from the Caliph's army exiled for (seemingly) deserting the battlefield. **Instinct:** earn a pardon through stealing items

3 HP 1 ARM

Scimitar (1d6+2 damage Close)

- ◆ 5-in-6 Bazouks will have ensorcelled blades, allowing them to strike at the ghosts.
- ◆ 3-in-6 Bazouks will have scavenged a collar of a Drake-of-Dust, protecting them (slightly) from magical attack.
- ◆ 2-in-6 Bazouks will take offence at a random PC over some perceived slight or prejudice.

If ignored: The Bazouks will continue to range into the city, hoping to find a way to recover the Forge of Dust or Fire-Lies-Contained

If attacked: They will fight back with wild abandon. If word gets back to the keep the party killed one of their brethren, the Bazouks will all turn against them - they may be a bunch of thieves and killers, but they look out for each other.

Law of reverse ninjitsu: If the party are facing a single Bazouk, they do 2d6+2 damage instead.

The Dust-of-Men

Group, Intelligent, Organized

Ghosts of the people who once lived here. Impulse: to guard what they built in life, including the prison of Fire-Lies-Contained

3 HP

Ghostly Touch (1d6 damage, ignores armour)

Special quality: Intangible

If ignored: They will continue to harry anyone carrying magical items within the city limits.

If attacked with mundane weapons: These will have no effect. They will laugh cruelly and continue their attack.

If attacked with magical weapons (especially one scavenged from the city): They will wail with rage and summon allies, usually 1d6 Drakes-of-Dust.

Drakes-of-Dust

Horde, Organised

Spectral hounds used by the Dust-of-Men to guard their city. **Instinct:** to follow their master's commands.

5 HP

Spectral claws (1d6 damage, ignores armour)

Active Soulwords

Solitary

6 HP 1 ARM

Spectral **ATTACK** (2d6 damage)

Fire-Lies-Contained

Solitary, Intelligent, Organised

21 HP 2 ARM

Burning hands (2d6 damage, ignores armour)

Special quality: Burning

A fire elemental mistaken for a demon and imprisoned against his will. For centuries he has raged against his prison, but he ultimately fears death and the mortals who imprisoned him.

Instinct: to return to the plane of fire (AKA the Infernal realm, which some mortals mistakenly consider to be hell.)

If ignored: He will alternately plead with whoever comes nearby for release and rage violently against his cage.

If destroyed: He will leave a burning ruby - the crystalised remains of his essence.

If released: He will be in his saviour's debt. He will seek to find a way back to his home realm. If the party help him with this too, he will offer a way of communicating or even summoning him in the future.

VECTIS 1769

*Life as an adventurer is frequently not all it's cracked up to be.
Before the gold and glory comes violence, bloodshed, frustration and misery.
(The key, of course, is ensuring as few of these are your own.)*

*Some may choose this path, but others have it thrust upon them.
Nowhere is this more apparent than Vectis, an island-city off the coast of Chalcedon.*

WHAT HAPPENED?

NEW YEARS DAY, 1769: the city of Vectis, of the Greater Chalcedon Republic. You stand outside the hall of guilds with a dozen of your peers. You have all heard rumours of your guilds' disbandment. The doors are sealed; the lights are off. One man, desperate for answers, throws a brick through a stained glass window. There is no response from within.

In time, you learn your guildmaster was assassinated. Rumours abound regarding the Etherium's involvement, but nothing is proven. Without your guild's security and resources, other unions get the best of the cities' trade. You are left with less... comfortable work.

Six months later, you have assembled to consider your options. Of the dozen that gathered in front of the hall, you are the last still in this city, alive. The barman brings your drinks, then lingers, palm outstretched. To your embarrassment, you realise you don't have enough. What do you do?

Most of the nation has been plunged into economic depression. More than 1000 craftsmen have lost their jobs. Many of them roam the streets, living in shacks cobbled together from junk. The guildmaster's granddaughter was last seen living in a hovel in Lavender Park.

Members of the Etherium frequently take what few jobs remain - and aren't taking on new members.

With so many clever but desperate folk on the streets, crime is at an all-time high. For the right sort of individual, that means opportunities...

RUNNING IN VECTIS

Vectis might be a good fit for your gaming group if:

- ◆ You're looking for less dragons and dungeons, more intrigue and twisting alleyways.
- ◆ You want steampunk, but not too much steampunk.
- ◆ Your players want to incorporate crafting into their characters.

GETTING STARTED

Explain the situation

Read or summarise the inset info on page 2 to your players. (Even better, get one of them to read it aloud.)

Make your characters

Create characters using the system of your choice. (Suggest the party could all be former guild members, but don't insist.) For ex-guildies, ask a few of the following questions:

- ◆ What was your former trade?
- ◆ Did you know the guildmaster personally?
- ◆ How long had you been a member?
- ◆ What happened to those that tried restarting the guild?

If you're using Dungeon World, you could suggest new players start at level 2 and take the Guildsman compendium class right away (see later.)

Get playing!

Play the bartender. Highlight how frustrated he/she is with penniless guilders. Encourage the party to plan, fight, or craft their way out of their financial difficulties.

SCUNSTEAD APARTMENTS

You're paying a paltry sum to live in Scunstead Apartments, a shabby block in the gold-and-jade district east of the old guild hall. 75 coin a week between you nets a cramped studio that you think was once a spacious bathroom.

You pay your coin to a priest of Mareth, who collects on behalf of one Violet Yunger. If you don't have the rent, you'll be thrown out by a pair of burly goons. (There's a 4-in-6 chance they were ex-guildsmen, likely blacksmiths.)

Alternatively, you can all spend a day before your rent is due sweating in Yunger's workshops in the basement. This work is back-breaking, illegal and demeaning - but it might beat being homeless.

WHO LIVES NEXT DOOR?

- ◆ A man in the process of auctioning his buxom wife to the highest bidder. There's a 2-in-6 chance the wife is a faerie or vampire.
- ◆ An stable-handler formerly of the Brow and Dove Inn. After the inn burned down the ostler was blamed, and has been destitute since.
- ◆ An iridescent bronze dragon, the size of a housecat. He's too small to hoard gold, so he hoards pennies instead. (Every night, the dragon will steal a total of 2d6-2 coin from his neighbours.)
- ◆ An alchemist and former guild member who is polite, but reveals little. His or her father is a prominent member of the Etherium and may have planted their child in the apartment for their own purposes.
- ◆ A pit fighter whose glory days are long behind them, but saved little for retirement. They can often be found wading in the canals after dark, illegally fishing or dredging for lost treasures. (You'll frequently hear the sound of their damp, heavy footsteps as they ascend the stairs in the early hours.)
- ◆ An elderly watchmaker who lost everything when the guild of craftsmen fell. He spends his days in bed or on the steps, drinking and staring at his nimble hands.
- ◆ A young preacher of Saint Mirka, from distant Mirkasa. She dresses in furs all year round and doesn't speak common very well. There's a sword twice her height strapped to her back.

What are they making in the basement?

- ◆ Bricks of a rare alloy made from a mixture of tin, saltpetre and treated human skin. Yunger intends to implant one of these bars in as many properties as possible, to ward off demonic possession.
- ◆ Great vats of what appears to be molten gold, but if allowed to cool will turn into common lead. (Several "workplace accidents" have lead to a number of mysterious lead "sculptures" appearing around town...)
- ◆ A new strain of coffee laced with a etheric catalyst designed to make it highly addictive.
- ◆ Voltaic coal - the rendered corpses of earth elementals, broken down and exported to Mirkasa. (The gnomes are known to buy the stuff at a high price.)

- ◆ Powdered devil-bone. Not the most uncommon of materials, but Yunger's selling in bulk...
- ◆ A miracle cure for gout, poor breath, and the bends. (Actually just a mix of powdered leeches and donkey fat.)

UNPLEASANT JOBS

- ◆ The duke of Ferol's prize pugs need walking; unfortunately their main route was recently taken over by the Gabbiani.
- ◆ Entering a strange contest, "Go Johnny Go Go Go Go!" the rules of which are poorly understood. It involves a mad dash through the streets. At certain seemingly arbitrary times, knives are drawn by onlookers.
- ◆ Helping smuggle a cache of sweetleaf into Vectis via canal barge, after dark. (Sweetleaf is a dangerous and very illegal narcotic.)
- ◆ Doing some menial, backbreaking work for the Etherium. If you can swallow your pride and keep your head down, you might get the chance to investigate the organisation.
- ◆ A charismatic but undisciplined former guildmate intends to petition the courts tomorrow to release more information on the guilds' closure. A show of force by yourselves may help his case, and you're not sure he'll survive the event alone regardless.
- ◆ A rich domestic client will only take on ex-guildsmen for his work. His TV (or fantasy equivalent) is on the fritz, and you'll need to explore the estate cellars to fix the issue. Mareth only know what's down there...

WHAT'S ON THE STREETS?

Roll 2d6 during the day. Roll 1d20 after dark.

1-6 Ministers of Mareth

Mortal members of the national cult, armed with scythes and cudgels. Their faces are always hidden by bird-like masks. They want to convert others to their faith. Will not tolerate the Etherium, whose views on spiritual energy are considered heresy of the first order.

7-9 Former guildsmen

Your former colleagues, fallen on hard times. Armed with whatever scraps they can find, but probably not as well as you. They want to claim your works and pass/sell them off as their own.

10-12 Gabbiani

A huge mutant strain of seagull that has stabilised over time into a distinct sub-species. Each one is about the size of a small horse. Their beaks are oversized and serrated - they use them to saw through bones and tough meat. Once simply a nuisance, their numbers have gotten out of hand recently. The Etherium's efforts at containment seem to have only summoned more of the things. They only want to guard and expand their (alleyway-sized) nests.

13-16 Confounded Devils

Demons, summoned through accident or design, usually by someone belonging to (or looking to impress) the Etherium. They want to return home, which is usually best done by striking a fast bargain with a mortal. A devil can be petitioned for a single favour if their true name is learned and whispered aloud.

A devil's appearance and abilities typically reflect the last mortal to feel anger towards them and are thus always changing. Freed from the mortal plane, their extra-planar forms are glimpsed in nightmares by those who know their true names.

17-20 Apprentices to the Etherium

Hooded figures wrapped in thick silk and bright leather, with random attributes and equipment. They move and talk as humans. They want to avoid suspicion, or remove bystanders. If their flesh is exposed to cold air, it is prone to becoming brittle and shattering like glass.

WHAT GOT DREDGED UP LAST SUNDAY?

- ◆ A devil trapped in the body of a whale for seven times seven years. It's about ready for a new vessel, but is unable to transfer to a body that can't breathe underwater.
- ◆ A sentient school of fish, collectively aiming to enrol in the etherium. The loss of one of their number represents the loss of roughly 14 seconds of memorised spells, which depending on the rest of the spell could be vital. It wants to prove itself ready for school.
- ◆ The corroded hull of a trawler from Xi. Stuck to it's remains were some lime-green barnacles, that lashed themselves to the first innocent bystander they could. They've begun to multiply. (Hot steam is the best way known to remove them.)
- ◆ A coiled, writing mass of trunks and tentacles. It says it's name is Hydrax Oon, formerly of the green abyssals. It seeks asylum from it's former masters.

- ◆ Terrance Fosset, a renowned fisherman who his wife claimed was lost at sea. He was washed up with no memory of his former life, only brief violent flashes of what sounds worryingly like an attempted murder.
- ◆ Seventeen dead sharks. Each one shows the signs of ether-dust poisoning - tell-tale streaks of silver in the eyes and extremities.

VIALET YUNGER

A human woman in her fifties (actually much older.) She had a devil excised out of her in her teens. It shows: her skin is bone-white and paper-thin, her hair lank. Her gaze is always focused just behind you, like she's staring at your ghost. Her voice is quiet and raspy. Her mouth is tight and cruel, like her purse. She dresses well, but her fashion sense is about three decades off. Her bodily fluids have more in common with lithium. (Lithium is corrosive, and gives off toxic fumes if mixed with water.) She is never out of earshot of her strange companion, the hollow piper.

Her experience with possession left her full of resentment. She likes to dominate others the way the devil dominated her. She is rarely seen in public, and when she is, only accompanied by her piper and bodyguards.

If threatened: If physically threatened, she will shout for her guards. Otherwise, Yunger will threaten to have the characters blacklisted by the both the courts (a bluff) and the church (not a bluff).

If ignored: she will continue about her business; namely making a lot of money by treating her tenants like slaves while simultaneously forcing them to work on her illegal operations.

If her piper is or forced to stop playing, even for a moment: She will turn hysterical and fly at whoever's responsible in a rage.

If she can't hear the pipers' tune for more than about a minute: the entity EDIMMU will return and re-possess Yunger, tripling her strength and health and setting her lithium blood on fire.

A HOLLOW PIPER

The piper is a soulless being that does not need to eat, breathe or sleep. It constantly plays an erratic tune on it's piccolo. Yunger can often be heard long before she's seen, and folks have come to dread the dissonant noise of her piper.

If threatened: the piper will do nothing, but Yunger will act as though she had been threatened herself.

If ignored: will continue to stay within earshot of Ms. Yunger and play it's tune continuously.

The Song

Devils cannot abide the song, it interferes with their connection to the physical plane. If the tune is stopped for any reason, for any length of time (even to take a breath) the effect ends immediately.

While normally the song loops indefinitely, there is a rarely-heard introduction. (Any player attempting to re-create the song's effects would need to play this introduction, too.)

A PRIEST OF MARETH

The Priest is an ordained minister supplied by the church in return for a generous annual gratuity. He sometimes collects the rent, and is the one to ask if there's a problem with the apartment.

Generally, he is the public face of Yungers' affairs; an irony, given his face is always covered by a ceremonial mask. He wants to conduct Yunger's affairs with a minimum of fuss.

This is actually the third priest to work with Violet. The first was pulled to pieces by a mob of tenants; the second lasted less than a year before the piper's music drove him to suicide.

If threatened: will summon guards, possibly by magical means.

If ignored: will continue seeing to Ms. Yunger's affairs, including throwing out unpaying residents.

COMPENDIUM CLASS: THE GUILDSMAN

When you dedicate time to tinkering in a workshop on interesting gadgets, you may take this move instead of your normal options when you level up:

CRAFTSMAN OF THE GUILD

When you want to create an interesting, unique piece of technology, describe it to the other players. Every object has a LOOK, a PURPOSE and a FLAW. The GM may ask you more questions about the object, answer them as best you can.

The GM will tell you one primary element and one or more secondary elements you will need to make your object.

Elements are ingredients (minerals, bones, reagents or chemicals.) They may be mundane or magical. An ice pistol might need metal, gunpowder and frozen holy water.

When you have (at least) your primary element and several uninterrupted hours in your workshop, roll...

+STR if the thing is mostly forged, like a sword or shield;
+DEX if the thing is mostly constructed, like a gun, watch or special tool;
+INT if the thing is mostly programmed or summoned, like a relic or familiar.

On a 10+ the ingredients are used and you've made what you wanted. On a 7-9, it is less effective or the flaw is worse (GM's call.) On a miss, the object is a failure - you use the elements, but don't create the object.

If you don't have all the secondary elements, a result of 10+ counts as a 7-9 instead.

The GM may tell you creating the object is impossible without fulfilling one or more of the following criteria:

- ◆ Upgrading or repairing your workshop
- ◆ Spending longer on the project (weeks, months..)
- ◆ Getting the help of another group or individual
- ◆ Securing a very particular component
- ◆ Risking significant harm

Once you have taken Craftsman of the Guild, the following count as class moves for you:

Learning Process

When you successfully create an object in your workshop, mark XP.

Cautious User

When you fail to create an object, you only expend one element, of your choice.

Reinforced Workshop

When you fail to create an object, your workshop will no longer need to be repaired.

Prototype

If you use twice as much of the primary element, take +1 forward to your craftsman roll.

KURSK

*A quaint farmstead of wood and old iron, surrounded by rotting wheat.
You might come here investigating strange tales of witches up to no good,
or the cursed wheat getting up at night and terrorising the neighbourhood.*

WHERE IS IT?

The hinterland region of Mirkasa, a few leagues north of the Umberto border. From Nosjad city, you'd travel for about a week through a dozen or more backwoods and villages, until the cold forests give way to rolling farmland. From the Malachite mines, you'd have to cross the breadth of the Iron wastes and likely contend with one or more Templars once you crossed the border.

WHAT'S ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

A witch hiding in the region has cursed the old Kursk farmstead so that every 7th seed – whether planted in the ground or a woman's belly – will grow fast, foul, and cruel. There's a few possible suspects as to who the witch (or witches) are. The Kursks are your typical backwater farming family; they've got a few dubious secrets, but it seems they're just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

MEET THE FAMILY

Waldegund Kursk

Solitary, Intelligent

Waldegund is the oldest member of the family and something of a matron. She's built like a brick house and a keen shot with a crossbow; she served with the Mirkasan arbalists in her youth. She mostly keeps to herself, relying on her son to take care of the day-to-day work. She ignores her daughter where possible, or treats her with scorn when she can't. She hasn't seen the wise woman of the fields since Lhamia's birth, but blames her for the current crisis (and any other failings of her family to boot.) She misses her late husband dearly, and his death is a grim reminder of her own mortality. She wants to keep her family together and safe, even after she's gone. *If Waldegund is a witch*, then she actually wants to live forever with her dead husband and gains the moves raise the dead, imperfectly. The curse is the 'imperfect' aspect of her initial attempts. Unless stopped, the curse will spread rampantly while Waldegund and her whole family will live on, in a manner of speaking, right in the middle of it.

12 HP 2 ARM

1d10 damage NEAR

* Protect a family member * Nail a target from fifty paces * Stare death in the face

Benedict "Benny" Kursk was found dead in the fields six months ago, apparently of natural causes. His loss has been felt keenly by the family, some of whom are coping better than others. His body is buried in a fresh plot by the family shrine. He doesn't really want anything, because he's dead, but if someone pulls his soul back from the dead all he'll want is to return to the grave.

Henri Kursk

Solitary, Intelligent

Henri Kursk is Benny and Waldegund's twenty-one year old son, and the only one still on the farm. With his father's death, "he's the man of the house" – but he's struggling to keep the farm running. Truth be told, he'd sooner sell it, but deep down he wants to make his parents proud, and keeping the farm going is the only way he can see himself doing that.

10 HP 1 ARM

1d8 damage CLOSE

* See to the duties in the farm * Hide behind his mother's skirts * Display an unexpected act of bravery

Lhamia Marie-Rose

Solitary, Intelligent

Lhamia Marie-Rose (*nee* Kursk) left the farm about a decade ago with a travelling bard from Chalcedon. The marriage lasted all of ten months, but while abroad she found a new calling in the priesthood of Mareth. Recently, her visions showed the doom of her family line, prompting her return home. But there's no love lost between her and her mother and ultimately she only wants to witness death first hand.

As part of the duties of her faith, she is tasked with gathering the secrets of the dead. Where this requires magic, she'll prefer to do this in secret. Any secrets she does learn, she'll write on a scrap of paper and send back to the church by raven.

If she is a witch, she actually wants to claim the secrets of life eternal instead. In this case, she'll keep all the scraps of paper with her, stuffed in her robes and pinned to her sleeves. The curse is only the start of her research – if allowed to continue, or conduct it on more people, it will be very bad news.

10 HP

1d8 damage CLOSE

* Cure light wounds * Ease someone's passing * Learn something from the dead * Conduct last rites

Mizra'im*Solitary, Intelligent*

Mizra'im is an old druid and wise woman from Umberto; bone white hair, skin like old leather. She's lived in the hills for longer than anyone can remember and helped bring Henri and Lhamia into the world. She's rarely seen without Anais, her lizard familiar. She's trusted locally, but any templar would regard her 'wise ways' with a lot of suspicion. Although kindly, she knows her way with a skinning knife and more than a few poisons too. Ultimately though, she wants to live out her days in peace.

8 HP**2d6 damage CLOSE**

★ Cast a complex healing ritual ★ Invigorate or poison with a drug ★ Offer cryptic advice ★ See things through her familiar's eyes

If Mizra'im is the witch, she actually wants revenge against the Mirkasan people for massacring her family when she was a child. Anyone she helped bring into the world (certainly Henri and Lhamia, and a 5-in-6 chance of anyone else thirty or younger raised in the area too) is cursed, and will spread the curse to their children too...

WHO'S THE WITCH?

Choose, or pick at random who the witch is before the game begins (between Waldegund, Lhamia or Mizra'im.)

STAKES

- ◆ Who's the witch?
- ◆ Who'll survive the curse?
- ◆ Will the curse spread beyond the farm?
- ◆ What will the witch do if they escape?

OTHER QUESTIONS

- ◆ What other secrets are the Kursks hiding?
- ◆ What can they offer as a reward?

REWARDS

- ◆ Honour and more from the templars, in return for a known witches' head
- ◆ The spirits of the Kursk family, who know more than they're letting on
- ◆ The matron's old battleaxe, only used for wood for years, but destined for greater
- ◆ The druid's fetishes, which could be used for powerful magic
- ◆ The priest's wards, powerful tools in the hands of the devoted

AREAS**THE "MATRON'S GUARDHOUSE"**

A small, pretty cottage on the edge of the farmstead near the road. Waldegund built it herself shortly after her marriage, for when she needed some space away from the family. While her husband was alive she didn't use it much; now, she's hardly anywhere else. There's a simple pantry, a glass-walled study filled with flowers and a warm study. Mounted on the study wall is Waldegund's old crossbow, still loaded with a single silver bolt. Spread throughout are several awards and accolades from her time in the army, as well as reminders (pretty stones, a painting or two and other mementoes) of her husband.

If Waldegund's a witch, hidden under the papers will be a necromantic spell or two detailing how to raise the dead.

THE HOMESTEAD

A well-built family ranch. Henri is the only occupant, living in his childhood room. The master bedroom is vacant, as Waldegund tends to doze in her 'guardhouse' instead. Lhamia's room has been turned out and has nothing of her former life, so she continues to live in her caravan.

A smaller pasture holds two cows – Svenja and Moo – and a clutch of chickens. Henri takes care of them and himself with what little fresh food he has left.

If Lhamia's a witch, then Moo – her childhood favourite – will be dead. (Lhamia will pretend to be sad about this, and might even accuse her mother of killing her favourite cow out of spite.)

THE ROTTING FIELDS

Two acres of waist-high wheat, green and rotting but somehow still standing. The whole area smells terrible, sweet and sickly like day-old vomit. The ground is slimy and treacherous, though the family insists there's not been a good rain for a week. You swear you hear rustling all around you, even when you're standing still. If the crops are cut down, by the next day more rotten wheat will have grown in its place.

If you explore the fields at night, the crops will twine together into shambling humanoid things that want to turn you into fertiliser.

Crop-things: Horde, Organised, Construct, 3 hp, 1d6 damage close; Moves: pull themselves together, emit a cloud of poison (reach, ignores armour), spread the virulence further

THE FAMILY SHRINE

A simple cenotaph of stone and iron, dedicated to the last few generations of Kursks. Inspection of the statue will confirm only Benny is actually buried here; the others all died in one or another of the countless Umberto/Mirkasan border conflicts.

Some Kursk ancestors are Adelai, Travis, Mischa, Benoit, Angelica and Carsten. Carsten Kursk was a famed templar, and war hero of Mirkasa. If you petition the Kursk ancestors for aid, roll+WIS. On a 10+ a spirit answers, and offers what advice or blessing it can. On a 7-9 the spirit offers no aid now, but its blessing when the Kursk estate is safe. On a miss, mark experience and you learn the ancestors spirits have started to become corrupted...

THE PRIEST'S CARAVAN

Set up as far from the guardhouse as possible. Lhamia has (or had, see below) a sturdy horse called Brutus. The caravan smells of lavender, and is stocked with texts dedicated to Mareth and plentiful travelling supplies. An untuned guitar that once belonged to Lhamia's ex hangs on one wall, worth a pretty penny to someone.

If Mizra'im's the witch, Brutus will be missing (drawn away in the night to stop Lhamia escaping the families fate.) What's left of Brutus will be found in the fields some time later, likely intertwined with an attacking crop-thing.

THE DRUID'S SHACK

A few miles south of the farm, nestled in a verdant swamp. (Think Shrek's house from the first movie.) The house used to be a two-storey affair, but the lower half apparently sunk into the muck a long time ago. The remaining bedrooms have long since been converted; a balcony window serves as a front door.

If Mizra'im isn't the witch, the rot will have already begun to take hold on the edges of the swamp. If the crop-things aren't kept in check, progressively higher numbers of them will assault her home every night.

When the crop-things attack the shack at night, start a countdown (draw six boxes, filling in the first.) Roll Mizra'im's damage; if she scores less than 6, she fails to drive them off significantly – fill in another box. When all the boxes are filled in, her home is fully corrupted.



PHOTO BY STEPHEN RADFORD ON UNSPLASH

WARRENS OF ODOKAR

"There were twelve of us, at first. They got Leland, his wound wouldn't stop bleeding. He kept keening, like a dying pig.

Swarund put him out of his misery, but his wailing was enough to signal more.

They came from the dark. They howled like dogs and smelled of copper. I would swear the one that got my leg used to be our lighter-boy.

Now I sit and wait. When the wind blows, I hear their distant howls. I will not be kept waiting long, I think."

If this is the first time you've run a game of Dungeon World, have everyone create their characters. (There's a guide for making quick and dirty characters at the end of this book.)

When you're ready to start, read the passage above. Tell the PCs they're currently taking a short break at an abandoned campsite and one of them discovered the note in a bloodstained saddlebag. (The saddlebag is intact, and allows the wearer to carry +1 weight.)

While they ponder the note, tell them they ventured into these old caverns - the Warrens of Odokar - in search of treasure, fame or fortune. Allow them to introduce their characters, and discuss what it is they're here for. (See Rewards for some examples.)

When they've finished, a howl echoes through the tunnels before them. The air grows hot and dusty. The shadows grow ever longer as the party's torches burn on. What do they do?

THE WARRENS OF ODOKAR

As a child you heard of the Orcish Reds, their ghoulish leader Odokar, and the squalid warrens where they made their last stand.

The Orcish reds were an army and a plague. Their bloodlust could never be slated. It took an alliance of dwarf and spider-kin to finally put an end to their fiendish ways.

The bloody army made their last stand in these catacombs. Even now, decades later, evidence of their defeat lies everywhere. The crude-carved walls are stained red. Few treasure-hunters dare to delve this deep; there is much potential for fanciful spoils.

Before the party got here, some fool managed to resurrect Odokar. Maybe they did it to appease a dark god; maybe they did it to fulfil some foul science. In any case, the deed is done, and the mad ghoul is loose again. It falls to the party to put him down again, or at the least escape the warrens and warn civilisation.

FACTS REGARDING ODOKAR THE GHOUL-THING:

- ◆ It was returned to life with only a measure of its intelligence, but is remembering more all the time.
- ◆ It is cursed to seek the blood of its enemies, and may pass this curse onto anyone it wounds.
- ◆ It has a fear of fire.
- ◆ It will attempt to split up the party, and deal with them one by one
- ◆ It hides in shadows; the darker the area, the higher the chance of an encounter
- ◆ It is a physical thing, but can contort itself to move through small spaces.

ENEMIES

Odokar the Mad Red

Solitary

12 HP 2 ARM

1d10+2 damage Close, Reach, Messy

The reanimated remnants of a deranged orc warlord. He was put down long ago, but some idiot resurrected him. Then died. Now the Mad Red stalks his former tomb. He wants to recruit a new army of Orcish Reds.

Clues to suggest Odakar is nearby:

- ◆ Fresh corpses, drained of blood
- ◆ Deep gouges in the stonework
- ◆ A distinct rust-red smell in the air
- ◆ An NPC, lost and bleeding
- ◆ Orcish Reds, baying for blood

Orcish Reds*Group***6 HP 1 ARM**

1d8+2 damage Close, Messy

Creatures (roll or choose: spiderkin, orc, dwarf, elf, human, troll) infected with Odokar's bloodlust. **Instinct:** to drain the living

Spiderkin*Guard: Solitary, Stealthy, Intelligent, Cautious***6 HP 1 ARM**d8 damage **CLOSE****Young Brood***Horde, Stealthy, Cautious***3 HP 1 ARM**1d6 damage **CLOSE**

The spiderkin claimed this land after Odokar was put down as their territory. You may find a lone guard who wants to protect his kind's interests, or a young brood who want to truss up a victim.

Dwarf Miners*Group***10 HP 2 ARM**1d8 damage **CLOSE**

The dwarves may claim they have a fair stake to the land, but really these miners just want to get rich mining mithril. However, if they've found the Orcish Reds first, they just want to get the heck outta there!

ABOUT THE DUNGEON**CONNECTIONS**

- ◆ Aumidar, a dwarven outpost about a league away
- ◆ Ban-Kala, a clutch (city of spiders) about half a league deeper down
- ◆ Chalcedon, a human nation far above, unaware of the potential threat below their feet

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ Odokar, or his Reds, get their scent
- ◆ They're sent round in circles
- ◆ The spiders/dwarves get the wrong impression
- ◆ Blood starts dripping from the ceiling

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Blood... old blood, everywhere
- ◆ Crude relics to a cruder god
- ◆ Rusted armour from many races

LOCATIONS**SITE OF A FORMER BATTLE**

Battlegrounds are common in the caverns, largely untouched for decades. A good eye will spot elf, dwarf and spider remains in the ruins. Old swords and armour are common, though most have rotted away or been tidied by spiders.

BLOOD-PIT

A crudely-dug pit for holding gladiatorial games and other heretical blood rituals. Odokar will never deign to enter these; he remembers when he observed the twisted bloodsports of his army from on high. Instead, he will drive any infected towards the pits and observe how the party react.

SPIDERKIN NEST (EMPTY)

When a party member attempts to cross a webbed nest, roll+DEX. On a 10+ they're where they intended. On a 7-9, they're stuck - move and they'll alert spiders. On a miss, mark XP and the GM makes a move.

There's a 3-in-6 chance of discovering decent equipment scavenged from the battlefields in any nest.

SPIDERKIN NEST (INHABITED)

Roll 1d6. On a 1-3, the inhabitants are infected with bloodlust. (They gain the messy tag, and may infect others.)

THE DWARVEN MINING CAMP

There are three dwarves in the mining party. They were ambushed by a group of spiders; one of them was wounded, leaving a tell-tale blood trail. If the dwarves aren't encountered until later, the Orcish Reds will have found them first.

A FLOATING OBELISK ROOM

Humanoid creatures built this at some point, though it probably (by the design) wasn't dwarf or spider. In the centre stands a narrow pyramid balanced impossibly on a stone globe. Humanoid stone gargoyles with awkward, abstract heads likewise squat upon stone globes. The globes are about the size of a tennis ball.

If the globe below the obelisk is removed, the pyramid will still hover in the air and the gargoyles will activate. The obelisk will then upend itself, screwing itself into the ground beneath it and drilling a hole down directly into Odokar's grave.

ODOKAR'S GRAVE, DISTURBED

A simple earthen pit. The one who resurrected Odokar buried their way in by mechanical means, or teleported in by way of magic (your choice.)

His remains lie nearby, along with some evidence of how he got here. Odokar's grave is adorned with a variety of sigils; if one spouts lore, they may discover the Red's aversion to fire, or other weaknesses.

REWARDS

What are you here in search of?

Fame

The dwarves and spiders made a truce following the death of Odokar the Red which hasn't been broken since. A team of dwarf miners went into the warrens in search of new prospects, but this is in violation of the compact made between the two races. The dwarf league of miners are keen to have a neutral third party enter the warrens and find the fate of the dwarves, without causing a political scene.

Meanwhile, there's been a lack of communication between the broods of the Warrens and those of Ban-Kala, the nearest spider city. This has deeply disturbed Envoy Pii'Treb, who fears infestation, warfare or worse. He will pay good money to anyone returning to Ban-Kala with news of the Warren Spider's fate.

Unbeknownst to both races, a Chalcedon explorer has struck a deal with a band of quartz elementals to begin digging operations in the area. Unwittingly, he has broken into the warrens, paving the way for the mad idiot to resurrect him. The explorer, Juvenal Detrouite, has been asking for more strong-willed explorers to enter the warrens and put an end to the chaos he started.

Magic

Left to accumulate in many nooks and crannies is a mysterious blue dust. It's clear this dust is some kind of sleep-inducing poison, though apparently only fast-acting when consumed. Someone spouting lore on the dust may learn a pouches' worth, added to food or drink, would be enough to put someone in a coma. The nature and origin of the dust is unknown, but it doesn't appear to form naturally.

Hidden beneath a partially-collapsed bloodpit (or elsewhere) lies a spring of pure cold water. A splash or two of the water is enough to cleansing the red rage from someone's mind, at least for a little while.

Discarded in Odokar's midden pile is a golden pistol. Its barrel has a vague blueish hue, possibly related to the blue dust. Any shots fired by this gun explode and reconfigure into tiny saws mid-flight, ripping their targets to shreds (and granting the messy tag.)



PHOTO BY BRADLEY DUNN ON UNSPLASH

KNEE-DEEP IN BRYNE

*Bryne (pronounced “Brinn” by people who live there, and “Brine” by those that don’t)
is a half-flooded university town on the flatlands of Leidensjaar.
It is kept dry and afloat by a variety of devices both mundane and magical.*

The party might come here to uncover some rare and magical thing from the university gardens, hunt something spectacular in the depths, or chase a suspect lying low (but not too low, else they’ll drown) in the knee-highs. The latter is presented here, with some additional general material at the end of this book.

INTRODUCTION

This scenario is designed as a one-off game for yourself and 1-3 players who are new to Dungeon World and/or tabletop roleplaying. It’s different from other scenarios I’ve written in that it spells out a lot of the preparation I’d otherwise leave to your own devices. (It’s inspired by Hatchet City, which is a similar scenario Vincent Baker wrote for Apocalypse World.)

Everything here is written for the GM, but there are specific introductions (we sometimes call them ‘love letters’) intended to be given to the players too. I’ve referred to players in vaguely descriptive terms like “the fighty one”, because sometimes a player might play a certain class, but not in the way originally intended. (For example, if a player wants to play a thief but is more interested on assassinating people than stealing things, they’re probably more of a “fighty one” than a “sneaky one.”)

CHECKLIST

More than a day before the game

Get comfortable with the Dungeon World rules – moves, damage, GM moves, that sort of thing.

Read through this scenario.

Have a read through of all the classes you’re going to bring. You don’t need to know them inside and out.

A day before the game

Re-read the scenario, especially the “Dear the...” love letters.

Think on the setting, what parts inspired you the most. Prepare to portray a fantastic world.

Consider your fronts. What threatens the players today? What will threaten them tomorrow if it isn’t stopped? What won’t be a problem today, or even next week, but if ignored will come back to haunt them, big time?

An hour or so before the game

One last skim of the scenario – monster stats, key names and players, that sort of thing.

One last read of the Dungeon Moves, from the DW rulebook. When the players roll badly and you’re not sure what to do? Do a dungeon move.

Think about your fronts again. What’s going to be causing trouble for the players from the get-go?

Make sure you’ve got everything you need – rulebooks, printouts, pencils, dice etc.

At the start of the game

Welcome everyone to the game, and announce the classes available. If this is your first time GM’ing, just offer these ones:

- ◆ The Barbarian (the fighty one)
- ◆ The Wizard (the magic one)
- ◆ The Ranger OR the Thief (the sneaky one)
- ◆ The Bard OR the Cleric (the spiritual one)

Let the players choose their classes – no duplicates. Pass each player a love letter, class playbook and damage die.

Explain how the game is a conversation, and start helping the players create their characters. As you do, ask them leading questions using their love letters as a kicking off point.

When every character’s been introduced, explain that you all know and trust one another, although you don’t have to like each other. You can write bonds now, or think of them during the adventure. Depending on the results of the rolls, you may have a definite starting point, or you can ask the party “what do you do?” and see where they want to begin their investigation.

DEAR THE FIGHTY ONE...

Start creating your character from the rules in your playbook.

You’re staying in a speakeasy somewhere in the Knee-Highs, which is the poor district of a mostly-flooded town called Bryne (pronounced “Brine”). You often make ends meet by killing those that someone wants dead, or protecting those with the money to hire you.

People are turning up dead in the Knee-Highs, corpses savaged as if by animals. Everyone's in uproar about it, the half-breeds are being blamed. Bounty hunters are flocking to the area, putting down would-be 'suspects' for a handful of coin.

Business is good right now! People want protection and bounties on half-breeds are high. Gain +2d6+STR coin, right now.

Unfortunately, all that business has drawn a lot of competition. Roll+CON. On a 10+ choose 1 to be true, on a 7-9 choose 2:

An old rival, Fangroon the Hardwood, is muscling in on your jobs.

A mob of drunken louts got lucky last night. You have your coin and your weapons, but little else.

You've been driven into hunting in deeper waters, and got some kind of weird bug. You're sick (-1 CON) until the bug clears.

On a miss, mark XP, all three, and the bug is something worse - you'll start showing weird symptoms in a day or two.

Have fun!

Your GM

DEAR THE MAGIC ONE...

Start creating your character from the rules in your playbook.

You're staying in a speakeasy somewhere in the Knee-Highs, which is the poor district of a mostly-flooded town called Bryne (pronounced "Brinn"). You usually make ends meet helping university students in the noble districts uptown, but times are tough and you've wound up in the slums.

An uptight mage called Hortus Botanicus had you blacklisted from practicing on the University grounds, and that's a bummer because the gardens are a magic-user's treasure trove of knowledge and reagents (not to mention your reputation.)

Work with the GM to describe why you got blacklisted - it's public knowledge, but it's up to you to decide whether it's all true or if Hortus framed you.

Also, the squalid environment is playing havoc with your physical and magical health. Roll+INT if you're a wizard, or +WIS otherwise. On a 10+ choose 1 to be true, on a 7-9 choose 2:

Some half-breed caught you between the ribs last week and it's still sore. Take D6 damage right now.

You're anethema to fire. Open flames dim and puff out as you go past; any attempts at fire spells become water ones instead.

You've got a nasty cold. In addition to anything else, when you miss, you sneeze. (This could be a problem if you're trying to sneak anywhere.)

On a miss, mark XP, all 3, and the adventure starts with you spectacularly failing to cure yourself with a ritual.

Have fun!

Your GM

DEAR THE SNEAKY ONE...

Start creating your character from the rules in your playbook.

You're staying in a speakeasy somewhere in the Knee-Highs, which is the poor district of a mostly-flooded town called Bryne (which posh people pronounce "Brinn" and common folk pronounce "Brine".) You make ends meet scavenging in the parts of town others fear to tread, and keeping an ear to the ground for good secrets.

People are turning up dead in the Knee-Highs, corpses savaged as if by animals. Everyone's in uproar about it, the half-breeds are being blamed. Bounty hunters are flocking to the area, putting down would-be 'suspects' for a handful of coin.

What've you figured out so far? Roll+DEX or roll+WIS, your choice. On a 7-9 ask me 1 question, on a 10+ ask 2:

Who's been implicated as a murder suspect?

Who's been spotted snooping where they shouldn't?

What's the half-breed's real agenda?

On a miss, mark XP and ask me a question anyway. If you rolled+DEX, on a miss you're a murder suspect, among others. If you rolled+WIS, the killer's caught wind of your snooping around.

Have fun!

Your GM

DEAR THE SPIRITUAL ONE...

Start creating your character from the rules in your playbook. You might get this letter if you're more of a "people person", like a bard. If so swap 'spiritual' for 'friendly'.

You're staying in a speakeasy somewhere in the Knee-Highs, which is the poor district of a mostly-flooded town called Bryne. Generally, you get by attending to the physical and emotional well-being of the common people (to induct them into your cult, appease your god, make a little coin from entertainment or whatever.)

People are turning up dead in the Knee-Highs, corpses savaged as if by animals. Everyone's in uproar about it, the half-breeds are being blamed. Bounty hunters are flocking to the area, putting down would-be 'suspects' for a handful of coin.

I'm going to give you a few people, you're a friendly face to all of them. Roll+CHA if you're a bard or paladin, +WIS if you're a cleric, or GM's choice if you're something else. On a 7+, choose one that's completely safe and secure right now. On a 10+, the GM will name one that's in direct trouble. On a 7-9 the GM will name two.

Hortus Botanicus, a stressed-out university mage you sometimes meet in confidence

Brokenfin, a young half-breed who claims to have seen the mystery killer

Carcharodon (Char), a spiritual leader of the half-breeds who knows a thing or two about their old heritage

Julie Craddock, owner of the Rusty Whetstone inn

On a miss, mark XP. and the GM will name two that are directly threatened right now and one more that's already dead.

Have fun!

Your GM

THE SITUATION

People are turning up dead in the Knee-Highs, corpses savaged as if by animals. Everyone's in uproar about it, the half-breeds are being blamed. Bounty hunters are flocking to the area, putting down would-be 'suspects' for a handful of coin.

IN DETAIL...

The half-breeds aren't the culprit - they're just another target. Brokenfin saw the real killer at work two months ago - Hortus Botanicus. Hortus has pushed himself to breaking point at work, but feels unable to vent his frustrations at work. Instead, he's taken to prowling the slums and ripping innocents to shreds.

At first it was 'just' half-breeds, but now he's moved on to people. Brokenfin would recognise Hortus and can describe his face, but doesn't know him by name. Hortus doesn't necessarily know he's been spotted, unless the spiritual one rolls poorly and you decide to make him a target.

The half-breeds are pissed! Since they have no idea about the killer, they're assuming the Knee-Highers have declared war. Even before the killings, the half-breeds weren't to be trifled with - that's why no-one ever goes in the depths. Now, they're massing in numbers. Someone needs to either talk them down, or seriously thin their numbers, else the Knee-Highs may soon become half-breed turf.

All this chaos and upheaval has left the common people in turmoil. The bounty hunters - mostly thugs and brutes - are causing their fair share of property damage, muggings, and other nuisances during their frequent celebrations. Religion has never had much traction in the slums, but the people have lost all their faith now. (A spiritual or charismatic sort might be able to inspire the people; what they do next is up to them.)

OTHER IDEAS FOR PLAY

FRONTS

The bounty hunters, half-breeds, and the killer might all be considered as potential fronts. The fighter's illness too, if it's serious. Remember: What threatens the players today? What could threaten them tomorrow? What isn't a problem now, but will come back to haunt them much later if ignored?

KICKING OFF

Start the party together - in the speakeasy they're using as a base, if nowhere else presents itself.

(If the magic one's rolled poorly, your starting point is the fallout from his/her failed attempt to cure themselves. Otherwise, the spiritual one's result will give you one or more potential allies in trouble; or maybe the fighter's rivals are causing trouble; or the sneaky one's gotten into trouble with their investigation.

WRAPPING UP

Once the party are aware of the killer's identity, things may progress pretty quickly. When confronted, Hortus will be too ashamed to admit defeat and will attempt to silence the PCs permanently. (Stat-wise, treat Hortus as a University Technician with the messy tag.)

If the party have proof of Hortus' actions (the word of a half-breed doesn't count) then they'll be rewarded handsomely by the university to keep this quiet. At the very least, the magical one will regain access to the university gardens. If they don't have proof, then they've just killed a university scholar in cold blood...

POINTS OF INTEREST

If you randomly need to put them somewhere in Bryne, roll 1d6. Add +1 to if they tend to mingle with nobility or one of them has a fancy qualification.

THE DEPTHS

The lowest parts of town. The great flood left these places underwater and no-one's had the means (or inclination) to restore them. Rotting roofs jut out of the water at odd angles, covered in moss and tidal mud. A tribe of selach got in here a few generations ago; all that freshwater and inbreeding has made them even more gross-looking, crude and savage than usual.

THE KNEE-HIGHS

As in the average depth of the standing water. Locals live in the reclaimed upper levels or on slums built on stilts. Bounty hunters turn a trade on the half-things found in the depths, which are often cut up and studied by the university.

OLDTOWN

Suffers regular floods in the spring and autumn, but otherwise not too bad. Rows of terraced houses arching over a thorough canal system. Poorer university folk live here, but won't linger on the streets longer than necessary.

UNIVERSITY LANE

Uptown, the main haunt of university staff and students. Generally the place is bone dry, but you'll often find residents wearing wellies anyway as some kind of ironic fashion statement. Floods are rare, but it's not unknown for the flood barrier to fail (usually after a student's been caught messing with it.)

UNIVERSITY GARDENS

The university doesn't have libraries, it's too difficult to keep the paper dry. Instead it has gardens full of magical plants. The gardens are generally attached to the university grounds, but also sprawl through the town, sometimes all the way back to the depths. Often a wing or two of the garden will break away in flood season and need either reclaiming or destroying - wouldn't want all those academic secrets floating free!

UNIVERSITY GROUNDS

The parts of the old grounds that survived the great flooding are meticulously maintained. Provided you don't look out a window, you could almost forget you're basically in the middle of a swamp. The foundations on the other hand are all below the water level, and it's a constant battle against erosion and water damage to keep them intact.

ENCOUNTERS

Roll 1d20 and add the score of the location you're in. (E.G. if you're in the knee-highs, add 2 to your roll.)

1-4: Bulette (solitary, huge, construct, 20 hp 3 arm / d10+5 damage, 3 piercing close, forceful) Want to devour everything in their path. Moves: Drag prey into deeper water; burst forth unexpectedly; swallow something or someone whole.

5-8: Half-breeds (horde, organised, stealthy 3 hp 1 arm / 1d6+2 damage close, messy.) Want to claim new territories. Moves: ruin a university building or garden; stalk something through the water; leave the bloody remains of their last prey.

9-11: Oldtowner/Knee-higher (horde) Want to get away from whatever trouble they're in. Moves: plead for help; offer hospitality or something mundane as reward

12-14: Oldtown Militia/Bounty Hunters (group, intelligent, organised, 6 hp 2 arm / b[2d8] damage reach.) Want to claim a reward first. Moves: reveal a cunning way to move through or attack in water; investigate trouble or keep something safe, for a price

18-20: University Technician (solitary, intelligent, organised, arcane, 10 hp 1 arm / 1d10 damage close, reach, near.) Want to preserve the university grounds and reputation. Moves: report what they've seen to their superiors; reinforce stonework with a powerful ward; declare a region or ritual beyond saving; deactivate a flood barrier

20+: University Scholar (solitary, intelligent, organised, arcane) Want to show off how clever they are. Moves: make an arrogant claim; delve into a risky location without backup; act on what others have reported to them; conduct an advanced ritual or spell; summon other university staff.

THE CULT OF ABRAXAS

A new theatrical troupe's performance has taken high society by storm. However, the troupe are leeching their audience of psychic energy in order to feed their master - a demon trapped in the astral plane.

INTRODUCTION

Among the winding wooden halls of Leidsdrasil, the party may come upon a certain door. This door appears to be made of beaten gold, with dozens of golden panels screwed into its front. If you were to observe the door for a while, you would spot any number of strange folk coming and going. Each appears secretive and nervous. (if you were to spout lore you might realise that they are all high-ranking members of society, generally in disguise.) The individuals leave together a few hours later, broad smiles on their faces and chatting excitedly.

One of the figures entering is someone known to you - perhaps Vitreous Zilicite, a lovable jeweller from the next district over who helped you fence some delicate materials once. But you don't see her leave with the others.

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

The cult of Abraxas have been putting on high-profile and incredibly secretive performances for some time. Entrance is by exclusive invite, but it's pretty easy to find someone who can hook you up. Performances occur all day and night, always from the same location and format: guests are welcomed, treated to a lavish meal, then spend the next few hours watching the performance.

What the guests are not made aware of is their meals are laced with a powerful new drug called verdigris. The drug enhances the user's connection to the astral plane, turning the performance (which is really quite pretentious and boring) into something transcendent and awe-inspiring.

Unfortunately verdigris also makes the user more vulnerable to attack from astral entities, like the cult's 'sponsor', Abraxas the demon prince. Abraxas has been feeding off the psychic energy of those tripping on verdigris, in order to gain the power to escape his astral prison. When he does, who knows what will happen - but it's unlikely to be good news.

Occasionally, someone with a lot of psychic potential (like Vitreous, or possibly the party themselves) will come see the show and display a natural immunity to the drug. In order to stop the secret of the show getting out, these individuals are taken aside after the performance, dosed up on some kind of tranquiliser, and put to work refining the cult's reagents for the night instead. The next morning, they're thrown out on the streets, usually believing they had "a particularly bad trip" and got mugged on the way home.

STAKES

- ◆ Will the truth about the cult and their 'performances' be discovered?
- ◆ Will Abraxas escape his prison?
- ◆ Will Vitreous, the friendly NPC, be rescued?

STARTING POINT

The adventure begins proper at the golden door, either on the trail of their missing ally (Vitreous) or in pursuit of whatever is so enthralling to so many of the nobility.

If you spend time questioning a rich and famous contact, roll+CHA. On a 10+, you learn there's a really fancy performance going on, and your contact can hook you all up with tickets in exchange for a trifling favour or cost. On a 7-9, the cost is beyond what you can afford right now, or the favour is something perilous/unpleasant. On a miss, mark XP, your contact knows nothing. The next day you're approached by a shady member of the troupe with tickets for a pittance - the troupe caught wind of your investigation...

If you try to blag entry at the door, you're defying danger, with the danger being suspicion and/or cost. On a 10+ you do it but choose one: suspicion or cost, paid immediately. On a 7-9, both. On a miss, both and mark XP.

If you try to pick the lock or break your way in, both can be done with a minimum of effort by a sneaky or strong PC respectively. Smashing the door down or getting caught breaking in all but guarantees a pitched battle between the party, cult members and panicking nobles from the off.

EXPECTATIONS

Unless the party have gone in guns blazing, they'll likely be led to the theatre to view the performance. If they all eat the dinner, they'll have a wonderful time, but wind up back in the bar having failed to learn anything. (Of course, nothing's stopping them from getting a ticket for the next performance.)

If at least one of them doesn't eat dinner, the cultists will attempt to dispose of them quietly, kicking off the adventure proper. From there, they may or may not discover the fate of their ally and uncover the full extent of the cult's plans. They may also discover the magical portals and other arcana, which may be useful for their own ends.

AREAS

ENTRANCE

Built from stout wood, painted gold. Roughly 60 gold panels are bolted on the front, each embossed with a noble's name or title. The door is locked with a standard latch and isn't particularly durable. Behind the door is a small auditorium leading to the theatre and ice-bar; a locked door, hidden behind some drapes, leads to the mystical bridge.

THEATRE

A spacious amphitheatre, with two dozen tables where the audience sit, eat and watch the performance. (There's a small area backstage for changing costume and such.) Waiters lead each party to their own table and provide a delicious hot meal of each player's choosing. (Vegetarian or religiously-minded options are easily provided on request.) Careful observation reveals each meal appears to subtly glitter in the dim light.

If you eat the meal, you've just taken a mind-altering drug (roll+CON - see verdigris, later) and the lavish performance strikes you as something both indefinable and yet intensely euphoric. and watch the show, you can't remember the details but vaguely recall an incredible experience. If you don't eat the dinner, mark XP and the performance looks like a load of pretentious nonsense.

A waiter comes round roughly halfway through the show to clear plates; anyone who hasn't eaten their meal will be politely escorted to the ice-bar (see below).

ICE-BAR

A bar built from chunks of crystal-clear ice. After a performance, the audience are encouraged to linger here (and buy exorbitantly-priced drinks.) The ice-bar leads directly to the kitchen, theatre and entrance.

If someone didn't eat their meal, there'll be escorted here early and meet a charismatic, seductive individual named Lene DeKapt. DeKapt appears to have also been escorted out of the show, but is secretly a plant by the cult.

They'll ask the PCs what they think of the show, laugh at their jokes... then offer a drink heavily dosed with tranquiliser.

Lene DeKapt

Solitary, devious

Impulse: to get them drugged

6 HP

d4 damage **CLOSE**

★ Offer a friendly face ★ Provide spiked beverages

★ Flee if threatened.

MYSTICAL BRIDGE

A magical portal covering the floor, about ten feet square. The portal is used to discreetly import objects and reagents from the astral plane, including the permafrost used in the ice-bar and several illegal reagents used in the production of verdigris. The portal is usually tended by a couple of cult members and several drugged-up prisoners (possibly including Vitreous.)

If a party member fails to activate the portal correctly, mark XP and an astral beast is summoned.

If wounded, Lene DeKapt will flee here (via the secret door in the entrance) activate the portal in an attempt to escape. Unfortunately, in her haste she'll fail to set it up correctly, scattering her essence across the astral plane. If the portal isn't shut down quickly, an astral beast will leap through as above.

"BELL JAR" ROOM

This is where the verdigris drug is concocted. The room is covered in various open flames and delicate glass apparatus, and usually staffed by half a dozen or more cultists. PCs must defy danger to navigate this area or avoid attacks without smashing a bottle or two (and spilling the volatile reagents everywhere).

A locked door connects this room to the kitchen - caches of prepared drug (a glittering dust) are carried out regularly. Another door, usually unlocked, leads to the mystical bridge.

KITCHEN

The kitchen is filled with a wealth of rich ingredients for preparing the lavish meals. A semi-famous cook works here, paid handsomely by the cult; an unassuming sous-chef (secretly a cultist) doses each meal with the drug before it's sent out.

OTHER HALLS

Beyond the Bell Jar room is a hall of several other converted apartments. Here, the cultists live, plan and work; at least one room is a makeshift prison/interrogation room, which is where anyone drugged up during a performance is likely to wind up. Another apartment is used as a storeroom for the prisoner's personal effects; searching this area will uncover some personal keepsake of a noble who went missing recently. (If they have not encountered Vitreous yet, they find a bloodstained keepsake of hers instead.) The final room they explore is the summoning room (below).

SUMMONING ROOM

A larger, more ornate version of the mystical bridge, lined with crystals of various shapes and sizes. Someone who spouts lore regarding magical items may recognise these as extra-dimensional communications devices. This portal appears similar to the mystical bridge but is mounted on a far wall instead. The portal is almost always inactive; once he has gained enough power, this is where Abraxas will enter the world from. One or more cultists are usually in this area, often in a state of drug-induced rapture; they may be attempting to communicate with their master.

TO OUTSIDE

One of the apartments on an upper floor has a rarely-used fire escape partially blocked behind some crates that leads the party back outside, the next block over from the golden door.

OTHER DETAILS

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What makes someone immune or resistant to the drug?
- ◆ Who is Abraxas? Who or what banished him to the astral plane, and why?
- ◆ What does Abraxas intend to do? What will happen to the cult on his return?
- ◆ How far along are the cult with their drug production? Is it still in the prototype stages, leading to some temperamental batches? Or is it ready for mass-production and already starting to hit the streets?

AREA

The mysterious golden door might appear in any city. (In real life, it was inspired by the front door of Supperclub Amsterdam, opposite a coffeeshop called Abraxas.) In the setting noted in these adventures, it's assumed to be in one of the districts of Leidsdrasil, the capital of Leidenjaar, on the north-west coast of the eastern continent.

REWARDS

No small amount of money, pickpocketed from drugged-up nobles or found in cult members' pockets

Several rare reagents and tinctures - ingredients for powerful rituals, poisons, or inventions

Proof of the cult's wrongdoings, which will earn a reward if taken to the authorities

ENEMIES

The Cult/Troupe Members

Group, devious

Instinct: to preserve the secret of their performances.

6 HP

b[2d6] damage

- * Use a slowing or petrifying drug
- * Summon reinforcements
- * Avoid a blow by an acrobatic feat
- * Drugged-up prisoners of the cult

Horde

Instinct: to mindlessly follow the cult's command.

3 HP

1d6 damage

- * Answer a summons en masse
- * Get in the way of a blow
- * Resist their master's orders, for a moment

Summoned/Escaped Astral Beast

Solitary

Instinct: to lash out in confusion.

1d10 damage

12 HP 2 ARM.

- * Leech someone's willpower or intelligence
- * Break out of confinement
- * Follow no-one's command

Abraxas, A Demonic Prince

Solitary, terrifying, divine

Instinct: to complete its hellish agenda in the realms of men.

18 HP 4 ARM.

b[2d10] damage

- * Claim servitude from mortals
- * Draw power from those on verdigris
- * Destroy the works of elves and men

VERDIGRIS, THE MIRACLE DRUG

In its basic form, the drug - commonly known as verdigris, or just "verd" - is a glittering blue-green dust. It can be snorted, but is more commonly cooked into a meal of hot vegetables and rice.

The drug exposes the user to another plane of reality. While under the influence, it induces feelings of intense pleasure but also exposes them to the infinite horrors of the realms beyond - first among them, the vast presence of Abraxas himself.

When you take verdigris, roll+CON. On a 10+ you feel a slight haziness for a few minutes, then nothing. On a 7-9, you feel a strange pop in the back of your mind, like a drop of water in a still pond, leaving you with a sense of calmness. On a miss, you spend the next hour in a state of euphoria that passes all too quickly. (If this were another game, I might say that on a miss, you open yourself to the world's psychic maelstrom.)

If playing this adventure as part of a campaign, on any result start or progress a countdown with six segments. Fill in another segment if/when each of the following happens:

- ◆ A member of the upper classes is found dead from verdigris overdose; the affair is quickly covered up
- ◆ Verdigris (or some cheap derivative) is discovered on the common market
- ◆ Verdigris is legalised and/or declared as a 'miracle' catch-all cure for anxieties, gout, etc.
- ◆ Abraxas expand their operation, setting up two or three more refineries across town
- ◆ All the cool kids are doing it. What do you mean you're not taking verd? Don't be such a square, man.

When you've filled in four segments, green-grey clouds gather over the city and refuse to dissipate. At five segments, magic-users find their abilities oddly reduced or erratic. When all six are filled, the entity crosses dimensions, appearing in the summoning room beyond the golden door; the bargain with Abraxas is complete.

EPILOGUE

What comes next depends on how well the PCs were able to uncover the cult's affairs, and whether or not they could rescue Vitreous and any other captured nobles.

If rescued, Vitreous will be incredibly thankful for the PCs help. She'll offer them accommodation if they need it; as well as an appropriately powerful reward (likely a magical gem, or elvish relic) from her personal archives. She'll also vouch for the party if they want to report the cult's activities to the authorities.

The cult's leader isn't described in this adventure. Perhaps it is someone operating in secret from among the city nobility, or (if she escapes) Lene DeKapt. Perhaps the troupe only represents one arm of the cult, and other cells are at large elsewhere?

A drug that connects its users to the astral plane may have long-term implications for the people of Leidsdrasil. Perhaps it leads to a spate of 'awakened' psychics and magic-users; perhaps it is addictive, leading to hordes of verdigris junkies becoming a threat to the city. Of course, these implications might apply to any players that sampled the drug too.

Abraxas' true goals are kept vague. Perhaps if the cult falls, he may find a way to communicate with the party directly. They may prove to be more effective pawns to him than the cult were!

BY BEARD AND EAR

Talk of warfare between the elves and dwarves has reached the human settlements of Earthsend, and Lord Faraday has dispatched you to find an solution to the violence. You have found the land in turmoil as the throngs of Skalfast Dragontamer wage their battles to destroy the hosts of Prince In'theri.

The Yellow Nest was levelled by a dwarf missile in the early days of the war, yet it still vomits hordes of displaced orcs into the countryside. Enthralled by the primordial power Sylvannic, the company of Lord and Lady Euryale have abandoned their prince and now claim the forests as their home. Two warbands race to claim the fallen star first - the engineers of Magda Mintsilver and the Bladesworn of Barharroth Gorge. Human huntsmen under the leadership of the wily Starlingray prey on the unwary, while marching armies continue their endless assault.

With no end in sight, who will the common people turn to for aid? The dwarves and elves look poorly on outside interference, and helping one side will no doubt earn the ire of the other. Before you left, Lord Faraday sent the templars of Estern plain to aid the stricken, but they are isolated and their numbers few.

Can Skalfast and Prince In'theri be made to see sense? If not, who will be the victor? Will there be any land left worth ruling? And will Earthsend and the human realms be next?

STAKES

- ◆ Can peace be found between elf and dwarf?
- ◆ If there is no peace, who will win the war?
- ◆ When the war is over, will Earthsend be next?
- ◆ Who will survive?

QUESTIONS

When did you visit the Yellow Nest? How did it fall to orcs?

What is the Fallen Star? How might the dwarves use it to empower their war machines? How does it feature in the Bladesworn's prophecy?

The power Sylvannic is the ancient knowledge of bark and bush, passed from seed to sap. How and why does it enthrall others? What does it intend to do with those it's enthralled?

Skalfast Dragontamer bears a grudge against the haughty Prince In'theri - something great enough to spark war. What was it?

Where is the dragon Skalfast Dragontamer (supposedly?) tamed?

AREAS

Fairmile, Oakshade, & the Heath - three huge and ancient forests suffused with the power Sylvannic.

Intherion - Prince In'theri's ancestral home. Includes several acres of hunting ground where giant stag roam.

Amon'elin - An elven observatory. Previously under the guard of the Bladesworn of Barharroth Gorge; they have since left for reasons unknown.

Usluk-dum - ("Dragon's mansion" in dwarvish) seat of Skalfast Dragontamer's power. The mines below the mountain are rich in gold and obsidian.

The Yellow Nest - formerly Azulgund ("Lonely Halls"). Overrun by orcs some time ago and obliterated in the early days of the war. The ruins are still infested with orcs.

Warrenstead - an isolated human settlement. Under the protection of Ardal, templar of the Estern Fields.

REWARDS

THE PROW OF THE ESTELLION

15 weight

A full-size bronze statue of an elf maiden, half buried in the rubble of a recent conflict. A successful Spout Lore will reveal this is from the prow of an elf airship. A 10+ will reveal this is in fact from the Estellion, formerly the pride of the elven fleet. Delivering the prow to either leader will practically guarantee an audience and go a long way towards proving your loyalty. (A horse and cart could carry the statue whole. Safely cutting the statue into up to 3 equal-weight pieces is defying danger with DEX.)

A POSSESSED BIRDCAGE

2 weight

A battered but whole birdcage, apparently of dwarven design. While underground a spectral canary will appear in the cage, granting dim light. The canary will 'die' (disappear, snuffing out the light) if danger approaches.

THE EVERHART

A simple elven necklace inset with a huge red ruby. It's beauty belies its true purpose - elven interrogators created it to improve their questioning (and question-able!) techniques.

When you discern realities on a person while wearing the Everhart, you get an extra clause: on a 12+, you learn their true heart's desire.

SYLVANNIC WILLOW BRANCH

A whip-like weapon, carved screaming from a weeping willow tree. Where the whip strikes flesh, it will leave cruel lashes that heal poorly, leaving ugly green scars. The wounds will re-open while the victim is in a wood.

A KEG OF HOGSBACK TEA

A keg of dwarf ale from the since-destroyed Hogsback Brewery. The keg is worth a great deal, untapped, to a dwarf army or settlement. If you tap the keg, gain 8 rations.

MAGDA'S SPRINGHEELS

A pair of boots engineered by Magda Mintsilver for travelling faster and escaping pitfalls. Although designed for dwarven feet, they could be modified to fit another race by any dwarven smith. The heels are reinforced with copper plate and clever springlock mechanisms, allowing the wearer to survive falls of up to 20 feet undamaged and escape narrow pits by bouncing from surface to surface. (Attempting either is defying danger with CON.)

NPCs**Ceridan, Elvish Hero**

Solitary, Devious

12 HP 1 ARM

Ceridan is an elvish folk hero, a scarlet pimpernel-type who is said to hide amongst the people, appearing to save them in their hour of need.

He leaves a distinctive throwing knife as a calling card, usually buried in the back of his latest target. Skalfast's son, Skalf Skalfastsson, hunts tirelessly for the rogue - the last target was his betrothed. Instinct: to be a legend to his people

Throwing Knives (b[2d10] damage far)
Duelling swords (b[2d8] damage close)

If encountered on friendly terms, Ceridan may join the group as a hireling. Ceridan will outright refuse to help if the group support the dwarves - they're more likely to make it onto his hit-list!

As a hireling, Ceridan has a score of 8. Distribute this score between his loyalty and the following skills:

Hero's Welcome - When you enter an elven settlement with Ceridan you will be treated as a friend by everyone present until your actions prove otherwise. You also subtract his skill from all prices in town.

Track - When considering a dwarven opponent while Making Camp, once camp is broken they can pick up the target's trail for a number of days' travel equal to Ceridan's skill.

Ceridan's costs are either Fame or an Elven victory. (See the hireling rules in the Dungeon World rulebook for more details.)

THE SYLVANNIC HOST

Lord Castur Euryale first heard the whispers of the power Sylvannic as a child, but it was only when he came to this war-torn land that he truly understood the meaning. Now he and his devoted wife hold court in the forests, empowered by forces of nature and charged with defence of their new 'realm'.

Lord Euryale rides into battle atop his faithful treeman Broadbitch, while Lady Euryale can often be seen on foot channeling the forces of nature instead.

Lord Euryale & Broadbitch

Solitary, Divine, Construct

16 HP 3 ARM

Great branch-limbs (1d10+2 damage **REACH**)
Sylvannic magic (b[2d8] damage arcane **NEAR**)

Lady Euryale

Solitary, Arcane

16 HP 1 ARM

Sylvannic magic (b[2d8] damage arcane **NEAR**)

Elves Infused With The Power Sylvannic

Horde

3 HP 1 ARM

Branchlike limbs (1d6+1 damage **REACH**)

ELF WARRIORS

Elf Soldiers

Horde

3 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Sword (b[2d6] damage **CLOSE**)

Instinct: to win the war

Barharroth Bladesworn

Group

6 **HP** 1 **ARM**,

Greatsword (b[2d8] damage **REACH**)

Instinct: to stop the prophecy

DWARVEN THRONG

Dwarven Clansman

Horde

4 **HP** 2 **ARM**

Hammer (1d6+1 damage **CLOSE**)

Instinct: to win the war

Mintsilver's Miners

Group

7 **HP** 2 **ARM**

Picks and Blowtorches (1d8+2 damage **CLOSE**)

Instinct: to seek the fallen star

OTHERS

Stalingray Bandits

Horde

3 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Trapper's bows (1d6 damage **NEAR**)

Instinct: to claim a toll

Yellow Nest Orcs

Horde

3 **HP** 0 **ARM**

Jagged blade (1d6 damage 1 piercing)

Instinct: to get tougher by fighting

THE TEMPLAR OF ESTERN

Ardal, Templar of Estern Plain

Solitary, Divine

12 **HP** 3 **ARM**

Estern Mace (1d10+2 damage **CLOSE**)

Holy smite (1d6 damage **NEAR**)

The Templars of Estern Plain have ever been few, for their powers are great and many are those who would petition their aid. Ardal is one of the oldest still in service. Streaks of grey run through his hair; his skin is scarred and worn from many battles.

His titanic battle mace has been battered and reforged many times, yet still burns with the templar's divine fury in combat.

A templar of Ardal's standing would be expected to have taken on a number of apprentices by now, but Ardal has only taken on one.

They died long ago, and Ardal will not speak of them now. Until a worthy successor presents themselves, Ardal will continue his eternal crusade against evil.

Instinct: to protect the weak

Ardal may be convinced to join the party as a hireling if they have made an effort to help him protect Warrenstead and/or vanquish the orc menace. As a hireling, he has a score of 7-10 (depending on the parties' efforts), two or more skills from the priest and protector and a cost of Good Accomplished. (See the hireling rules in the Dungeon World rulebook for more details.)

REGION: NO-MAN'S LAND

Contested Territory, Elven/Dwarven, Temperate, Old Woods and Dwarven Mines, Perilous

STEADING - INTHERION ACRES

Verdant hunting land, safe, lawful, civilized, resource (Hunting Grounds; giant stag emnity (Dwarves))

AREAS - FAIRMILE, OAKSHADE AND THE HEATH

Woodland, Perilous, Emnity (outsiders), Divine (power Sylvannic), Personage (Lord and Lady Euryale), Guard (Company)

SITE - AMON'ELIN

Elven observatory, Lawful, Abandoned, Arcane

STEADING - USLUK-DUM

Dwarven mountain, civilised, lawful, personage (Skalfast Dragontamer), guarded (Army) resources (gold, obsidian, et al.) emnity (Elves)

SITE - THE YELLOW NEST

Destroyed dwarf fortress/orc nest, perilous, blight (orcs) treasure (lost dwarf relics)

STEADING - WARRENSTEAD

Human settlement, guard (templar and militia) personage (Ardal, Templar of Estern Fields), shrinking, poor, unsafe, blight (orcs, elves, dwarves)

SILVERMURK

Abandoned Dwarf Mine

This roll is made by the GM.

When you explore a new area of the dungeon, declare who is going first and roll 2d6+areas explored (maximum of +3). Additionally, assign each d6 to either a theme or location below.

On a 10+, the party discover a vital clue, useful treasure, or escape route in addition to anything else. On a miss, whoever goes first marks XP and triggers a dungeon move of the GM's choosing.

When all themes have been encountered at least once, the dungeon can be considered fully explored, though it doesn't have to be.

THEMES (1D6)

1-2 Wandering beasts & natural dangers (pitfalls, rockslides, etc.)

3-4 Broken Dwarf Constructs

5-6 Forgotten Treasures, and the mad dwarves who covet them

LOCATIONS (1D6)

1-2 Endless natural caverns, glittering with un-mined ores

3-5 Abandoned dwarf homesteads

6 Magda's old laboratory

DUNGEON MOVES

When someone rolls a 6- or the players give you an opportunity...

- ◆ An 10-foot tall statue begins to crumble!
- ◆ Sounds of cruel sniggering - the sort many, many goblins might make - echoes through the tunnels ahead!
- ◆ A mad dwarf believes you've stolen his hoard, and claims a grudge against you!
- ◆ You encounter a rival treasure-hunter. They seem a bit too friendly...
- ◆ A titanic forge spills molten lead everywhere!
- ◆ With a great rumble and shower of rocks, the way back is blocked!
- ◆ They have a cave troll...

MENEL-TAMINE

Elven Airship Factory

This roll is made by the GM.

When you explore a new area of the dungeon, declare who is going first and roll 2d6+areas explored (maximum of +3). Additionally, assign each d6 to either a theme or location below.

On a 10+, the party discover a vital clue, useful treasure, or escape route in addition to anything else. On a miss, whoever goes first marks XP and triggers a dungeon move of the GM's choosing.

When all themes have been encountered at least once, the dungeon can be considered fully explored, though it doesn't have to be.

THEMES (1D6)

1-2 Wonders of elven construction

3-4 Elven enchantment - powers of air and skymetal

5-6 Elven battleplans and strategy

LOCATIONS (1D6)

1-2 Tenuous sky-ladders, leading ever upward

3-4 Dozens of elf craftsmen churning out common airship parts

5 Elf mages, enchanting the airships with their gravity-defying powers

6 A military presence - the general's office, or a barracks

DUNGEON MOVES

When someone rolls a 6- or the players give you an opportunity...

- ◆ A gravity-defying enchantment fails!
- ◆ The garrison is alarmed or summoned!
- ◆ A humble wood-weaver wants to be a hero!
- ◆ Storm-clouds gather - watch out for lightning!
- ◆ The general gets a good look at your face - she'll remember you, if she survives!

AZULGUNDS BANE

THE YELLOW NEST

Years ago, Azulgund was lost to Goldbane Greasetooth and his greenskin hordes. Its people were forced to abandon the city. In their wake, the elf ranger Khulorien “volunteered” to plumb the depths in their name, claiming he would return with Greasetooth’s head or not at all.

Only the most naive bystanders believed Khulorien – an egotist and rogue, even by the standards of rangerhood – acted out of a sense of honour. The dwarves were naturally furious an elf (of all people!) would deign to reclaim their honour for them. In any event, Khulorien was never heard from again. Suffice to say, the dwarves did not mourn his loss.

Today, Azulgund is a blasted ruin. The dwarves bombed the former city during the opening days of their war with the elves, spilling a veritable ants nest of greenskins into the surrounding countryside. Teague Tholinsson, heir to Azulgund’s former fortune, has hired the party to help him recover what little treasure may remain and discover the upstart elf’s final fate.

But the city is not the safe haven it once was. Stranger things than orcs and dwarves prowl the halls of Azulgund now. The peaceful, but slow-witted snails flee their former home, hounded at every turn by goblins and fungus-bred monsters. Goldbane still rules Azulgund, after a fashion – but a malign influence lurks in the shadows. And Khulorien is out there, somewhere – but will he be friend or foe?

NPCS

Khulorien, Dark Ranger

Solitary

12 **HP** 1 **ARM**

Longbow (b[2d10+2] damage, **FAR**, ignores armour)

Khulorien’s quest was never about honour. He infiltrated Azulgund on the orders of a council of elves to recover the Star of Conquest. This elven artefact was what gave Goldbane the power to unite the greenskins and overthrow Azulgund. With this powerful dwarf holding destroyed, the elves were keen to see the evidence of their meddling returned to them, for obvious reasons.

But by the time Khulorien found him, Greasetooth was already dead. The Star had drained his life and left him an undead ghoul, holding a grizzly court over zombified orc-things. Khulorien fought with a strength of desperation and only barely escaped that place with his life, only to wind up lost and starving in Azulgund’s endless halls.

By the time he discovered the Star of Conquest, he was too weak to resist it’s arcane influence. Khulorien is now the new master of the star – or perhaps it is the other way around. The elf lurks in the darkest corners of the ruins, hunting any who would cross his path.

TEAGUE THOLINSSON

Teague is the son of old Tholin Grudgebearer and the heir to the seat of Azulgund. He is a young dwarf with slightly more pride than sense, but his people look at to him as a beacon of hope in these dark times.

As a Hireling

Teague will venture into Azulgund with the party; if their numbers are too few, his honour guard may accompany them too. Teague counts as a hireling with skill 6, loyalty 2 and the price see Azulgund reforged. Distribute his skill points between the following, as you see fit:

Warrior – when you take to battle with Teague, add his skill to the damage done. If Teague fights alongside his honour guard, he adds skill+1d6 instead.

Taunt – in battle, a number of opponents up to Teague’s skill will treat him as a priority target. Add 1 to his skill for each honour guard by Teague’s side. Hordes will always target Teague before groups, who will always target him before solitary creatures.

Teague starts with 6 hp and armour equal to his loyalty. When Teague reaches 0 hp, decrease his loyalty by 1. If Teague ever reaches -1 loyalty, he will declare the mission a failure and sound the retreat.

Goldbane Greasetooth, Orc Revenant

12 **HP** 2 **ARM**

Bone-sword (1d10 damage, **CLOSE**, **MESSY**)

Enhanced by the power of the Star of Conquest, Goldbane wasted no time in amassing an army to lay waste to Azulgund.

As is often the greenskins’ way, Goldbane met his end at the end of his rival’s dagger. The Star, along with his other effects, were lost.

But even without the Star, Goldbane's cold dead body was compelled onwards. Now, the half-dead thing wars with it's still-living former armies.

Every orc destroyed is added to his skeletal ranks. Soon, there will be no living left in Azulgund. And once he has reclaimed his people, Goldbane may once again consider the outside world...

Goldbane's Skeletons

Horde

6 HP

Jagged bone (1d6 damage **CLOSE, MESSY**)

* Fall apart when their master dies * Tirelessly seek out the living * Offer tributes of bone and blood to their master

Yellow Nest Orcs

Horde

3 HP 0 ARM

Jagged blades (1d6+2 damage 1 piercing)

* Pick a fight with something bigger * Get stronger with each victory

Zyrna Fungusbref, Goblin Shaman

12 HP 1 ARM

Fungus magics (2d6 damage, **CLOSE, NEAR**)

In the chaos following Goldbane's death and resurrection, the mantle of leadership passed to Zyrna. The wizened goblin and his warband have been hopped up on psychotropic mushrooms since they arrived here, but to date the idiot's spells have proven to be the closest the orcs have to a turn undead spell. Even the other orcs turn to the Fungusbref shamans for protection, though it galls them to do so.

Yellow Nest Gobbos

Horde

3 HP

Jabbin' sticks (w[2d6] damage **CLOSE, REACH**)

* Argue with each other comically * Consume psychotrophic fungus * Shower them with rock salt, to no effect * Summon a greater threat * Gang up on them

Fungal Mole Rat

Group

6 HP

Vicious incisors (1d8 damage **CLOSE, 1-PIERCING**)

* Vent clouds of blinding spores * Explode when jabbed or jostled * Spit globs of sticky fungus

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

The giant snails lived below the dwarves in peace for years. But when the dwarves were driven out, the goblins took to hunting the snails for sport. They pelted their settlements with cruel rock-salt bombs and harried them with packs of vicious mole-rats. Now, only a single warren of snails remains.

In desperation, the great snail council dispatched the fastest of their number to race to the surface and seek aid. The party may encounter the last of these envoys in Azulgund.

The envoy is the size of a small cart. Its shell is etched in beautiful carvings, but scratched and dented from several battles. The envoy will beg the party help its people; if they agree, it will provide a map of Azulgund and the snail territories below, etched on a tiny shell. The envoy is sociable, if a little ponderous - it will be happy to talk about its people if the party are curious.

Being a particularly fast snail, the envoy can do about 3 miles an hour (a human's walking speed.) When it sees it's slowing the party down, the envoy will ask the party go on ahead.

Unfortunately, the envoy was travelling far too slowly to find rescue in time - the goblins destroyed the snail warrens weeks ago. A small horde of goblins and molerats will be living in the ruins, eating escargot out of baby snail-shells. The party can leave the goblins be, or take some small revenge for the snails' lost civilisation.

Elsewhere in the dungeon the party may encounter the final snail survivors, fleeing as fast as they can (!) up a sheer cliff surface. The cruel goblins harry them from small platforms and crannies, dislodging their climb or capturing them for their meat (especially the babies!) It will be a particularly heroic task for the players to scale the wall in time to save as many snails as possible...

Snail

Large, Solitary

16 HP 3 ARM

Pseudopods (1d10+1 damage, **CLOSE**)

In battle against goblins, it's a bit like an elephant being set on by a pack of hyenas.

* Repel attacks by its massive shell * Ensnare them in sticky slime trails * Deliver a vital message * Display a weakness to salt

AZULGUND, THE YELLOW NEST

Ruined City/Orc Warrens

This roll is made by the GM.

When you explore a new area of the dungeon, declare who is going first and roll 2d6+areas explored (maximum of +3). Additionally, assign each d6 to either a theme or location below.

On a 10+, the party discover a vital clue, useful treasure, or escape route in addition to anything else. On a miss, whoever goes first marks XP and triggers a dungeon move of the GM's choosing.

When all themes have been encountered at least once, the dungeon can be considered fully explored, though it doesn't have to be.

THEMES (1D6)

- ◆ The elves' treachery
- ◆ The dwarves' lost civilisation
- ◆ The goblin and mole-rat menace
- ◆ Goldbane's revenants
- ◆ Khulorien's hunt
- ◆ The exodus of the snails

LOCATIONS & PROPS (1D6)

1. Khulorien's discarded backpack, with instructions (in elvish) on the Star of Conquest
2. Evidence of Khulorien's evil hunt
3. The ruins of the snail warrens, overrun by goblins
4. Snail-folk fleeing up a sheer cliff-face
5. Greenskins battling their undead in ruined dwarf streets
6. The dwarven throne room, now Goldbane's arena

DUNGEON MOVES

When someone rolls a 6- or the players give you an opportunity...

- ◆ Khulorien gets closer
- ◆ Goldbane's revenants ambush the party
- ◆ They discover a patch of poisonous fungus
- ◆ The goblins are drugged up with psycho-tropic drugs
- ◆ The Star of Conquest exerts its influence
- ◆ A pack of mole-rats get the scent

TREASURES

KHULORIEN'S SATCHEL

Khulorien owed no small part of his reputation to his enchanted satchel, which endowed his adventuring gear with no end of magical properties.

Khulorien's satchel may hold 5 uses (1 weight/20 coins' worth) of adventuring gear at a time. When the satchel contains at least 1 use of adventuring gear and you rummage through it for a useful dungeoneering tool, you find what you need and cross off a use.

Any object thus used is one use only, but innately magical – it will have either twice the effectiveness of its mundane version, or some other magical property. Magic chalk will glow neon white; ten-foot poles will extend to up to 20 feet, ropes will take twice as much weight, and so on.

RAILMASTERS MAIL

Worn, +1 arm, 1 weight

A fine shirt of dwarven mail, intended for the railmaster of Kheluz-Gund. Powerful runes and words of power are woven into it with silver thread.

By speaking one of the three dwarvish phrases woven in the hem, the bearer may activate a special ability that will last until the next dawn:

- ◆ Mellon, kharâm: (Friend, brother.) No dwarf will threaten you or deal you harm, unless provoked. (Female dwarves will still follow these rules, but be able to small enchantment on you.)
- ◆ Urus ni buzra! (Fire in the deep!) You will feel pleasantly warm, even in the coldest depths.
- ◆ Ku bin-amrad! (He who is deathless!) Treat last breath rolls of 7-9 as 10+.

Speaking all three phrases does nothing. A dwarf versed in runespeak (Teague, for example) could translate the phrases for you.

THE STAR OF CONQUEST

This dark purple jewel is engraved with elven script, and glows with a baleful inner light.

Such is the jewels' power you gain +1 ongoing to all rolls that can result in your dealing damage.

However, while carrying the jewel whenever you roll a 10+ your character hears a distant whispering. If your roll was even, you resist the effects for now. If the roll was odd, your alignment changes from good to neutral, or neutral to chaotic, as the jewel's effects warp your very mind.



PHOTO BY CHOWSEP ON UNSPLASH

CALL THE LOCKSMITH!

Here's how it all went down...

A noble sought you out, by name. He heard your thief snuck into a certain temple (they did) and could do so again (they could... in theory.) He wants you to recover a certain relic from the temple, in return for a fine reward. One way or another, you've accepted.

Right now, you're in the middle of the temple. The walls are dripping with condensation. Why are all the torches lit? Where's that croaking noise coming from?

Never mind, let's get some backstory first...

THIEF (OR BARD, RANGER...)

So, good news - you did break in here once before, so you know this place fairly well. What did you take last time? Where is it now? What got left behind? Take +1 ongoing when you spout lore about this place, or take point and explore the dungeon (see later.)

Here's the bad news. You didn't tell the noble this, but you lost the key. Mark experience! What was the key? (A literal object, or some kind of spell?) How did you lose it? You still got everyone this far, but it's cost you - the GM will say what. (Equipment, your reputation, your well-being, the element of surprise, or something else.)

FIGHTER (OR BARBARIAN, PALADIN...)

There's someone else in here with you, the others haven't spotted the signs yet, but to you they're clear. It's an old rival of yours. (They're the opposite sex. Tell the group their name, a favoured weapon, their "calling card" and anything else you can think of.)

How did your rivalry start? What has it cost you so far? What has it cost them? Is it a 'my favourite enemy' kind of rivalry, or do you really want them dead? On whose orders might they be here?

CLERIC (OR IMMOLATOR, DRUID...)

You know the deity this temple serves - perhaps all too well. Give them a name - perhaps Virge, Shishpar, Pernach or Gada - and a domain and precept, from the list in the Cleric playbook. The deity's alignment is the opposite of your own. Is the religion popular or unpopular around here? Why?

The relic you're here to claim is 2 weight, describe it. By itself, it's trivial. What could it be combined with to create something more powerful... or profane? What might the noble plan to do with it?

WIZARD (OR ELF, SMART CHARACTER...)

You and the client have history. Where from? Are they a casual acquaintance, or close friend? You owe them a secret and very personal debt, tell us a bit about it. What might it cost you if you don't deliver the relic to the noble?

Since you know them so well, you had the last word when dealing with the reward.

Roll+CHA. On a 7+, you get that result (between the group) on the monster treasure table. On a 10+, roll again and take the highest result.

On a miss, your reward is 100 coin each and the noble will call in that personal debt you owe him when you get back.

EXPLORING THE DUNGEON

MOVES

When you take point exploring the dungeon, roll 2d6+WIS-areas explored. The GM will assign each 1d6 to either a location or danger.

On a 10+, you have the initiative - you start in a favourable position or with an exit in clear view. On a miss, the pointman marks XP, and you blunder into trouble or the danger ambushes you.

GM PREP

GM, if you want to craft an experience in advance, roll the above move a few times (assume the pointman has an average WIS of +1.) When you roll a 10+ or a miss, make a note of these points on the map provided.

LOCATIONS

1. A disused brewery, brewing something powerful
2. The lair of something best forgotten
3. A quiet cloister, sparsely furnished
4. A holy site, suffused with divine power
5. A mysterious altar, ready for a ritual
6. A secret chamber - and a revelation!

DANGERS

1. The last thing the players would expect, describe it
2. A crumbling ruin, dead end, or environmental hazard
3. A hidden trap, lock, or dead man's switch
4. The fighters rival
5. The temple keepers
6. The wrath of the gods, personified in some kind of glowing avatar.

ENEMIES**The Fighter's Rival***Solitary, Intelligent***12 HP**Favoured Weapon (b[2d10] damage, **CLOSE**)**Instinct:** to get there first*(GM, add more tags as per the fighter's description: NEAR, MESSY, FORCEFUL, cautious, arcane... definitely try and get MESSY in there.)***The Temple Keepers***Horde, Organised, Divine***3 HP**Holy cudgels and censers (1d6 damage, **CLOSE, REACH**)**Instinct:** to follow their god's precepts**The God's Wrath***Group, Divine, Intelligent, Organised, Hoarder***10 HP**Holy lightning (1d8 damage **CLOSE, REACH**, ignores armour)**Instinct:** to embody the domain of the deity**The Last Thing They'd Expect***Solitary, Huge, Terrifying***20 HP**Big meaty claws (1d10+3 damage **CLOSE, REACH**)**Instinct:** to throw them into a mad panic**TREASURE****THE CONTENTS OF THE RIVAL'S PACK**

5 Rations, 5 adventuring gear and... (1d10)

1. Their last will and testament, including letters to their next of kin
2. 1d4+1 throwing daggers
3. 2d4 uses of halfling pipeleaf
4. A fine pocket watch, worth about 1d6x10
5. A missive from the rival's client
6. A blood-smeared compass that always points towards the fighter
7. A bag of coin, about 2d6x10
8. A destructive or healing rune dedicated to the temple's deity
9. A magical potion or scroll
10. A glittering gem worth 3d6x100 coin

SPOILS OF THE TEMPLE

1. A tithe to the temple, worth 1d6x5
2. Healing poultices and herbs (2 uses, slow, 1 weight)
3. A holy tome or banned codex (bag of books, 5 uses, 2 weight)
4. A stone statue worth 1d6x10
5. A finely wrought bronze cudgel (close, 1 weight, +1 damage)
6. A shard of frozen lightning, it's properties unknown

SULCATA, THE TORTOISE-CITY

*Last month, an honourable pact found you returned to Sulcata,
a city on the back of a giant tortoise.*

*The Sulcatans have a problem. The great tortoise is on a collision course
with the broken bog. If it isn't stopped or redirected, it's liable to
meet a terrible fate - and the city with it.*

The founders of the city - the immortal tortoise-men - blame the recent increase in tortoise-meat harvesting from the Underside, the belly of the creature. The Undersiders rely on the meat for trade, and food. With the creature's death apparently nigh, they intend to claim their "pound of flesh" before the end.

It is evening. You are taking a modest meal together in the Silver Scute, a speakeasy hanging from the Underside. The atmosphere is tense. A patron is arguing loudly with the barman over the sale of tortoise-flank. The bar is full - there are people on both sides of the argument here, and the mood is turning towards violence.

Who's eating tortoise-flank right now? (Hint: it was cheap, tasty and filling.)

What's the details of this honourable pact? Why must it be fulfilled before the city reaches the bog?

What do you do?

STAKES

- ◆ Will the sale of tortoise-meat continue?
- ◆ Is this the end of the tortoise's journey?
- ◆ Will the city survive?
- ◆ What will become of its people?

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do the players think of the sale of tortoise-meat?
- ◆ How can the tortoise be communicated with?
- ◆ It's assumed life is good for those on the shell, and bad for those slung under it. What's good about living on the Underside? What's bad about living on the surface?

UNDERSTANDINGS

- ◆ The tortoise has wandered it's own course for centuries. The tortoise-men founded the city (then more of a town) when the beast was still young.
- ◆ On the surface structures are firmly fixed in place around the Abyssal spine, embedded in the centre of the shell.

- ◆ The underside is an upside-down land. Crawling beetles are used for transport, you always make sure your climbing-line is secure. Don't look down - it's a long way to the surface.
- ◆ The tortoise keeps it's own route; the city has little control over it. Something in it's immediate path is a big problem.

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Topside: Gently swaying towers, bright pennants, a languid atmosphere
- ◆ Underside: Ropes and galleys everywhere, everything's upside down, frantic movements at all times
- ◆ On the horizon: dust-clouds hiding the full extent of the calamity ahead
- ◆ Behind: a years-long trail across hill and plain
- ◆ Underfoot: standing armies, convoys of tradesmen, complex elevators up the legs
- ◆ On the head: A crown-like palace

REWARDS

- ◆ A fortune in tortoise-meat
- ◆ The means to communicate with the tortoise
- ◆ Baby giant tortoises, as mounts or companions
- ◆ A sweet gig as envoys of the tortoise-men

ENCOUNTERS

- ◆ The tortoise meets the calamity head-on, with consequences
- ◆ Someone tries to force the tortoise to change course
- ◆ The tortoise shudders and nearly collapses after the harvesting of too much tortoise-meat
- ◆ The city is "besieged" by an army on the ground or sky
- ◆ A corruption takes root in the tortoises' shell, with grave long-term consequences.

THE TORTOISE

...Is too large for traditional stats. (Like the tarrasque from the Dungeon World rulebook.) It is slow, ponderous, and difficult (impossible?) to communicate with.

A 300-foot length of abyssal stone is lodged into the shell. The blue-black spire is a focal point for all the buildings on the surface, and would probably cause the destruction of the city if removed. There are reports of a strange corruption in the spire (see Abyssal Slugs) that is causing the shell to crumble. The founder's creators also crafted the abyssal spire and refuse to believe the rumours of corruption.

TORTOISE-MEAT

It is harvested from the underside and prized in the city above. The harvesters claim they don't take enough to harm the tortoise. Their work ensures there's enough jobs for the labourers in the underside, and enough food for everyone.

The activists claim harvesting the meat is killing the tortoise, slowly or otherwise. They are mostly liberals, living on the surface away from where the harvesting happens.

THE FOUNDERS

The founders, AKA the Tortoise-men, are stone golems, crafted by the dwarves in a bygone age. They are like the ents from Lord of the Rings - ponderous and slow to change, like the tortoise. They were made so long ago, they've forgotten the original reasoning for creating the city (dwarf players or NPCs may posit their own theories.)

They cannot die of old age, but anything that could destroy stone could destroy them. Less than a hundred are still active today.

Any decisions relating to the city must be ratified by the founders, a process which inevitably takes weeks.

LOCATION: THE ALTAI STEPPES

The tortoise is currently heading south, towards the ocean. Behind it are leagues of flat hinterland and the mountain ranges, which the minotaur clans battle for dominance of.

Underside Harvester

Group, Organised, Intelligent

* Move quickly through the Underside * Butcher effectively

Underside Stag-Crawler

Solitary, Huge

* Capture or crush its prey * Follow it's masters command

Immortal Tortoise-man

Group, Intelligent, Arcane

Stone-skinned

* Take ages to come to agreement * Ignore mundane attacks

Abyssal Slug

Horde, Tiny

Infest something **NEAR** the spine

* Corrupt healthy tortoiseshell

Z'tfri, Hag of the Bog

Solitary, Arcane, Intelligent

* Turn rock to sludge, or vice versa; * Communicate with boglins and simple creatures

HIGHSHELL COURT

- ◆ A meeting place for matters of city-wide importance.
- ◆ The tortoiseshell building is in the very centre of the shell.
- ◆ The Abyssal Spire stands in the central courtyard, and stretches several feet above the building.
- ◆ A standing honour guard protects the founders.
- ◆ Several layers of carved basement descend below. Many are infested with abyssal slugs.

THE SILVER SCUTE

- ◆ A bar hanging from the Underbelly
- ◆ There is a secret meat-harvesting business in the top room.
- ◆ Side halls lead to bedrooms, storage and the kitchen. The smell of tortoise-meat is strong throughout.

THE CANOPY OF BROKEN KINGS

*The former god Hurakan and Eurasmir Klint have a score to settle.
Hurakan was destroyed at the battle of Stone Glade, shattering into hundreds of mortal
god-shards. As vengeance, the god-shards ambushed Klint in the night, scattering
his troops and leaving him seriously wounded.*

*Klint has vowed revenge for the injury, and would see every last piece of Hurakan destroyed.
His outriders scour the jungle - it is only a matter of time til they find their quarry.
But the god-shards have been planning, too. They intend to unleash a plague of hatred upon
their attackers, infecting them with mindless, contagious savagery.*

If this plague spread to the city, or the mainland, it could cause untold damage to the civilised world.

Recently, wealthy industrialist Obadiah Cheapfields discovered the location of the last world tree, Leidsdrasil. Intent on claiming it for himself, he spearheaded an all-out invasion to the primitive island where it grew.

What followed was a terrible, bloody war. Freelancers and steam-automatons clashed with the natives, backed by their savage gods. Every tree cut and tribesman killed weakened the god's power, and before long the fate of the jungle was sealed.

Today, the settlers have claimed Leidsdrasil as their new home. The world-tree's roots are dead. They wither and rot, and the rainforest turns to desolate swamp with them. It is only a matter of time before this slow death reaches the boughs. Regardless, thousands of settlers live in the canopy. Each scours the jungle for resources and raw magic to trade for a fortune in Chalcedon gold. Demand is constant - the tainted bodies of the Chalcedon nobility need magic like we need food and water.

Most of the jungle gods are dead. As each died, they shattered into dozens of hundreds of mortal shards, each a smaller facet of the old whole. Some seek to absorb more of themselves and return to true godhood. Others seek alliances in other lands, or revel in the simple pleasures of flesh and blood. For the rest, the war is far from over. From secret enclaves, they claim tribute from the remaining natives and plot a terrible revenge on the lands of the living.

CREATURES

A typical native is humanoid, passionate and devout. Choose an animal or plant they resemble: frogs, stags, birds, snakes, fungi, etc. They live in hidden camps and settlements throughout the jungle, or in overgrown ruins of crumbling white rock. They use simple technology, primal magic, and guerilla tactics. They travel fast and silently through the jungle (sometimes using wings or another natural ability.) In larger groups or out of their element, they are ponderous and vulnerable.

A typical god-shard is beautiful, tragic, and dying. They obey the laws of physics grudgingly, lacking the strength to bend or break them as they once did. Some are as small as an ant, others stand taller than a house. Many look mostly human. They may harbour grudges against mortal followers who abandoned them, or rival gods who did not stand with them. Their spells are boundless, but each use burns more of their life away. Some burn slowly, using the time to live among mortals. Others burn quickly, a spark of fire that lasts only a moment and consumes all in it's path.

A typical soldier is heartless, sterile, and hostile. They may be mercenaries or clockwork servants - soulless, in either case. They work for the settlers, usually guarding their settlements or putting down pockets of resistance. They tend to fight in small, elite groups. They prefer to utterly obliterate any opposition with superior firepower. They travel slowly on foot, but cross larger distances by airship.

A typical Chalcedoni noble is vampiric, greedy, and devious. Their homeland, Chalcedon, is a polluted ruin following decades of dangerous experiments. Their blood is pale and thin; their bodies flicker in and out of the corporeal world. Food and drink mean little to them, but they cannot survive without frequent infusions of raw magic. Some, like Obadiah Cheapfields, are over a century old. Some have mounted their bodies in clockwork suits of armour to counter their physical frailty.

THE ADVENTURE

Right now, the god-shards and their mortal followers slowly unbind the wards keeping the plague in check. The outriders' hounds have caught the scent, and will be upon them in a matter of hours.

Into this chaotic situation step our players. Chance has brought them right to the doorstep of the Bufo-bufo, hot on the trail of a missing artefact. Will they stop the ritual? Which side will they support? Will any of them live to tell the tale? Let's play to find out.

If running a one-shot or starting a new campaign, tell them they all arrived by airship several days ago. Give plenty of back-story on this jungle island, the Green Scar.

Hurakan's followers stole something important from the party. Whoever is the party's tracker (the ranger, if they have one; otherwise nominate someone) should roll+wis. On a 10+ they know three things about the thieves; On a 7-9, one.

- ◆ They are the Bufo-Bufo, a tribe of agile and poisonous frogs.
- ◆ The thieves serve Hurakan, a god shattered in the battle of Stone Glade.
- ◆ The object that was stolen could be used in an unbinding ritual.

On a miss, tell them one, but it took longer than expected to get there. Progress your fronts, as appropriate.

ABOUT THE CANOPY

The Canopy of Broken Kings is a marshy clearing, about a mile across. Thick jungle trees surround the base. The tops of the trees have curled together at the top, like a cone pointing to the sky. The closer you get to the centre of the circle, the darker and boggier the ground becomes.

All six tree trunks are covered with beautiful, primitive carvings, stretching all the way to the canopy. The carvings on two of the trees hide stairways to the canopy. Each tree is about 100 feet tall. The woven canopy at the top hides a treetop village, which is where the ritual is being conducted.

CUSTOM MOVES

When you work together to search a wide area, everyone roll+wis. If the highest roll is a 10+, pick one and the rest are true. If the highest roll is a 7-9 or 6-, all are true. Players that roll lowest bear the brunt of any consequences.

- ◆ You find something useful or interesting
- ◆ One of you isn't trapped or cut off from the group
- ◆ No-one suffers harm
- ◆ You do it quickly

If it takes them any time at all, consider your fronts. The natives above are planning war and would post frequent lookouts. The company of soldiers are set to arrive a few hours after the players do.

Living within the bog is Kyra, an animated marble statue. Kyra keeps two basilisks as pets, being immune to their petrifying gaze. The pets roam free and are a constant threat to anyone wandering in the bog. The bog is littered with petrified frogmen and other humanoids. The only other living creatures are unnaturally large and savage wildlife (bugs, amphibians, birds) and clouds of biting midges.

Custom move - the curse of hatred: When you are bitten, take 0 damage but defy danger with con; on a 9 or less, your wisdom is effectively halved until you're cured; on a 6-, doing anything that isn't violent is defying danger with wis. The sickness is spiritual in nature, requiring a divine cure or act of extreme wisdom (GM's call on what this might be). If the plague of hatred is successfully unleashed, the effects are as written except the curse can now be transmitted by touch, and if you are infected and spread the curse, mark XP.

ABOUT THE VILLAGE

The canopy hides the Bufo-bufo village - a mile-wide stretch of simple tree-houses partially carved into the upper branches of the trees. The tribe wasn't responsible for twisting the branches together - the trees have been like that for as long as anyone can remember. They pray to a 'stone god' in the canopy below. They know her to be an immortal, vengeful and beautiful god, who turns those who affront her to stone. (Kyra is actually an immortal golem. She cannot turn anyone to stone, but her pet basilisks can.)

So far, the dreadful war between the invaders and the jungle-folk hasn't affected the Bufo-bufo. The village is split between those who intend to wait for this to blow over, and those who wish to fight for their jungle. The latter, finding their patron god indifferent to their prayers, began to worship Hurakan instead. When the god fell, the dozen surviving god-shards retreated to the canopy, where they now seek to unbind the curse.

- ◆ Prosperity: poor
- ◆ Defenses: militia (warriors and god-shards)
- ◆ Resources: wildlife, plants, medicine
- ◆ Other: divine (Hurakan), arcane (magic focus), hidden

FRONTS

THE RITUAL OF HATRED

- Clouds of buzzing red midges escape into the bog
- A prominent NPC is infected by the curse
- The stolen object is consumed in the ritual
- The final stage begins
- DOOM: The plague of hatred is released

THE OUTRIDERS APPROACH

- Crashing is heard from the jungle nearby
- The outriders find the grove
- The outriders cause great harm, or are driven off
- The outriders make their way up the trees
- DOOM: The tribesmen and god-shards are murdered, indiscriminately

ABOUT KYRA

One of the earliest casualties of the jungle war was a god of spacetime. When they died, the ripples in the continuum pulled several souls from the past and future into the present. One of these was Kyra, a marble golem from a civilisation that died over 8000 years ago.

Though the Green Scar is about as far removed from home as one could get, Kyra has adapted well. She barely feels the sweltering heat. She neither eats nor drinks, and her marble skin cannot be bitten, rendering her immune to practically any poison. She is fiercely intelligent and understands common, as well as the strange language of the Bufo-bufo.

Her home is filled with chunks of white marble, evidence of her lost people. She keeps two barely-domesticated basilisks as pets (naturally, she is immune to their stare.) She takes an odd pleasure in finding their petrified victims, which she often arranges in curious formations throughout the swamp.

Generally, she keeps to herself. She is bemused that the Bufo-bufo treat her as a god, but tries not to get involved. She's met one or two settlers in the jungle, and even learned a few pertinent points of history from them.

CREATURES

God-shard

6 HP 1d8 damage

* Reveal ancient power * Communicate with thought

Bufo Native

3 HP 1d6 damage

* Surround and overwhelm * Move fast through jungle

Outrider

6 HP 1d8 damage

* Ride fast * Summon reinforcements

Kyra

12 HP 1d10 damage

* Observe from afar * Ignore powerful attacks

Basilisk

6 HP 1d8 damage

* Turn to stone * Follow Kyra's orders

STAKES & QUESTIONS

- ◆ Will the canopy remain in one piece?
- ◆ Will the ritual succeed?
- ◆ Will the god-shards and/or Klimt be killed?
- ◆ How will this impact the rest of the jungle?
- ◆ How far will the disease spread?
- ◆ How loyal are the outriders to Klimt, and the Bufo to their god?
- ◆ What secrets of the ancient world does Kyra know? Is she like Yoda, a wise stranger hidden in the swamp?
- ◆ What magic is needed to restore petrification?

TREASURES

- ◆ A serrated knife. The hilt is inscribed with a marble frog. Slashes leave the skin forever ugly and warty, even after the wound heals.
- ◆ An unassuming remote control. When pressed, any Chalcedon artillery in range gain a firing solution..
- ◆ An outrider's buckler. Small and solid bronze, perfectly weighted for use on horseback.
- ◆ A canopic jar, early Umbertoan. What's this doing here? Worth a fortune to the right buyer in Leidsdrasil.

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ The steaming jungle - miles of greenery
- ◆ Oppressive darkness, shrouded by the trees
- ◆ Swarms of annoying insects
- ◆ Foetid smells near the centre of the canopy
- ◆ Dizzying heights from the tops of the trees
- ◆ Cunningly woven leaves and branches, a solid surface
- ◆ Beautiful carvings in the living trunks
- ◆ Evidence of recent war
- ◆ The odd broken body
- ◆ A discarded piece of bronze armour
- ◆ Dense, cold mists that smell of the grave
- ◆ An ear-splitting scream that lasts for mere moments
- ◆ The smell of fresh blood in a clean grove

CRANNOK'S PEAK

All gods live, die and live again. This is the right way of things; for no god is more than the sum of its mortal devoted. As we may learn from the pain of a burned hand or twisted ankle, so too may the gods profit from the bitter taste of death.

Thus, there is a compact: each god must pilgrimage to the godsworn grove once a century to spend a while as a mortal creature. They live, die, and are reborn.

This is the story of Crannok, the one who could not bear the nightmare of mortality. They denied the pilgrimage for seven times seventy years, hiding under cold stone and black ice.

You know this land as Crannoks Peak. It is an unwell-come place; the god's unrest seeps into the landscape, twisting grey stone and mortal flesh alike. Yet here you are.

Will you scale the mountain?

Will you plumb the old god's tomb?

Will you wake the fearful lord, and will it lead unto your doom?

Let's play to find out.

CRANNOKS PEAK

It is known Crannok was once a god of life; of the joy of creation, and the wealth of worldly gifts. It was this love that drove their fear, for what value is there for art and beauty in the grey lands beyond? So, Crannok diminished. Their countenance turned weary, their eyes red-rimmed; once they garbed themselves in radiance, now choosing a darker shade. (It is ironic their fear made them so alike, in form and function, to the keeper of the black gates.)

Crannok's peak has likewise stagnated. The air of the peak is heavy and silent. No birds or beasts call out. What little grass grows between the black ice is dark and brittle. Mortals once thrived here, but centuries of sterile monotony has driven all but one clan away.

Perhaps sensing his cold claim over the land is nearly complete, a savage plague has gripped the slopes turning men feral and murderous. The natives call it The Red Plague, and there is no cure.

STAKES

- ◆ Can Crannok be convinced to leave the peak?
- ◆ How far will the Red Plague spread?
- ◆ Can a cure be found?

CONNECTIONS

- ◆ Many leagues from civilisation or home

- ◆ A perilous journey to the mountain-top
- ◆ Less than a day's travel to Denziste, the last town

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Utter silence
- ◆ An icy chill over bitter trees
- ◆ An abandoned village, lost to the snows
- ◆ An oddly artistic pattern glimpsed in the fog
- ◆ Centuries of graves, unadorned
- ◆ A blood-red beast, standing in stark contrast
- ◆ A carved stone passage, leading down

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What neighbouring regions have been affected?
- ◆ What ores and riches lie untapped beneath the mountain?
- ◆ What rewards might you claim if you could convince this god to make their pilgrimage?

ENEMIES

Infected Beasts

Solitary

Instinct: spread fear and anger

12 **HP** 1 **ARM**

1d10+2 damage, **MESSY**

* Move in unexpected ways * Sniff out an act of creativity * Appear unassuming at first * Leave evidence of a bloody massacre * Infect another beast or weak-willed creature

An Unsightly Rabble

Group

Instinct: spread the curse, unwittingly

6 **HP** 1 **ARM**

1d8 damage, **MESSY**

* Display tell-tale signs of infection * Believe the party are infected * Form deluded mobs * "Cleanse" with torch, spear and blade
Farmers, villagers and travellers, infected recently. While they still believe themselves in control, their bloodshot eyes and the inky stains around their lips tell a different story.

Revenants, Long Dead

Horde

Instinct: to snuff out life

3 HP 1 ARM

1d6 damage

★ Shuffle from a hidden place ★ Pursue relentlessly

AREAS**VILLAGE: DENZISTE**

Poor, shrinking, militia, blight (infection)

Choose one or two:

- population: less than a dozen villagers remain
- +defences, religious: the village was once home to a religious order.
- +resource (iron): the village is built on an old mine.
- +dwarf: The village is a dwarf throning.

Choose one problem, in addition to the blight:

- +lawless: The villagers left are thieving and desperate
- +power (political): the village is a site of cultural significance; all eyes are on its potential saviours.
- +power (diabolical): The villagers belong to a dangerous and insidious cult.

To a bard, Crannok is the epitome of fear. His is the story that refuses to be told. He is their archdemon, their Lucifer. Plying one's arcane art upon Crannok's Peak is, in short, the toughest crowd you ever did face. When you sing songs or ply your arcane art, you feel the weight of the mountain upon you.

When you scale the mountain, anything creative you bring with you is changed or destroyed. Wine tastes of still water; fine foods turn to ash in your mouth. Makeup and adornments lose their lustre; marching songs die in your throat.

Tulwar dispatched the last revenant with ease, stepping into the elevator with care, but no hesitation. It descended along a hexagonal shaft, perfectly cut into the centre of the lake. "Now, at last, I may find some answers," Tulwar mused to himself. His mind was racing. Though he scarcely dared dream of it, perhaps some long-forgotten treasures were kept down in the darkness too - enough to warrant coming to this gods-forsaken mountain.

The elevator's iron gates creaked open. Though Tulwar could only assume he'd reached his destination, everything beyond his pale torch was blackness. But a tentative first step found purchase on the frozen ice, and as his eyes adjusted he realised the hollow lake formed a tremendous, ancient cavern.

What was that? Some formless noise, echoing. A saner soul would have dismissed it, but Tulwar keen for some measure of success, started cautiously onwards.

More suddenly than expected given the light of his torch, a titanic head loomed out of the darkness towards him. Everything below its nose and right eye was buried under thick ice. Its skin was hard and glossy, covered in a veneer of frost. Its left eye rolled in its socket to observe him, ice creaking and cracking as it did so. A heartbeat thundered in Tulwar's ears.

When he came to four days later, he could not recall his ascent from that damnable place, nor whose blood was on his hands.

THE FROZEN LIBRARY

A deep-cut, lonely passage leads from the peak of the mountain to a cast-iron gate. Beyond, you will find the Frozen Library, where Crannok hides in solitude.

There are no shelves or stairs in the library, just artwork piled upon artwork. Sculptures toppled side-by-side, make winding stairways leading downward. Hidebound books line the walls like so many bricks. Every scrap of space is covered in canvas, paper or sculpted marble. Yet every piece is covered in such a thick veneer of frost as to be almost illegible.

Such is the mind of the god Crannok - by hiding from their fate, they deny their own existence. Crannok's titanic body can be found below the library, frozen and immobile.

CUSTOM MOVES

When you spend time and supplies thawing an artwork out, you may learn all you can from it. It will turn to slush the moment it leaves the library.

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Towering literature, stretching to cavernous ceilings
- ◆ Half-heard ideas and inspirations
- ◆ New creations, coalescing all the time
- ◆ A familiar artwork, half-recognised beneath the ice
- ◆ Slippery surfaces everywhere
- ◆ More total silence

QUESTIONS

- ◆ Is Crannok the god of creativity? If so, what does it mean for the world that they're here, 'shirking their duties'?

DUNGEON MOVES

- ◆ A piece defaced affects its real-world counterpart
- ◆ Towering artworks topple, splitting the party
- ◆ A bard or creative type goes mad
- ◆ A ghostly artist (solitary, 10 HP) entombs them
- ◆ More plagued or undead follow them in
- ◆ A vital memory is forgotten

THE DHENZE LOBENG

*What happened to those errant men, who dreamed of fancy fame?
They ventured to the Godsworn grove, rich with wealth unclaimed.
They woke the Dhenze Lobeng, a beastly soul who dreamed of fire;
And in their haste for riches ended on a funeral pyre.*

The jungle is dark and hot. The screams of a wounded god echo behind you. It is the Dhenze Lobeng, shaggy green fur drenched in blood. It is gaining on you.

The air stinks of ozone; savage four-armed men hurl spells like so many rocks and stones. Half your guide's face is bloody ruin; they shout words to no-one in particular in a language you don't understand.

You reach the cliff-edge without warning, your haste almost taking you over the edge. The shouting is getting closer.

Who is your guide? What danger did they help you avoid? What do they keep doing that has given you cause for concern?

What lies below? A Druid or Ranger may have learned there is a base camp at the foot of the cliffs, but the safest path lies behind a waterfall, slippery and perilous.

What Gods watch over this land? Clerics and the like may know gods come to this jungle to live, die, and live again.

And, most important, what do you do?

THE DHENZE LOBENG

Solitary, Intelligent

12 HP 1 ARM

Crush (1d10+2 damage)

* Travel quickly through dense forest * Chase the party relentlessly * Accept worthy tribute * Face the black gates with dignity

Once a century, every god must take a mortal form so they may learn the pain and humility of those who worship them.

Many choose to do so in this jungle, where ancient magic permeates the trees and the mortals still respect nature. Hence the grove is sworn to the service of many gods, after a fashion.

The Dhenze Lobeng takes a form of its own choosing: A shuddering, humanoid thing as tall as a cart. Most of its body is covered in shaggy green hair. It propels itself forward on two huge ape-like forearms and a pair of spindly legs.

Its head is obscured by a dark red mask, or perhaps its face is simply rigid and unmoving. Below the face a second, human body dangles like some obscene bib. The body is dressed in a tribal loincloth, and other bangles normally worn by the four-armed men can be seen about the creature. Instinct: to learn what it is to be mortal

THE FOUR-ARMED MEN

Group, Intelligent

6 HP

Spell-speak (2d6 damage **NEAR**)

* Cast a complex spell with ease * Release a dangerous spell through speech * Keep the jungle safe * Intermediate between god and mortal

Humanoid, with sharp talons for feet and an extra pair of arms. Their language is complex, for each sentence is also a spell; understanding them is both difficult and risky.

For centuries they have respected any gods passing through their lands, and - as a rule - the gods respect them. Foreigners such as the party are rare, and may have been mistaken for gods themselves at first. Instinct: to protect the gods of their forest

LOCATIONS

AN ABANDONED CAMP

A camp at the foot of the cliffs, currently deserted. One might spout lore or discern realities to recall passing near this camp on the way in, or spot a plume of dirty smoke rising through the treeline.

THE TRADERS ALTAR

Seated beside the ashes of a recent fire is a bronze statuette of a large cat, with a crest of wings on its head. It squats, buddha-like, its mirthful eyes open and expectant. The cat is a lucky symbol said to bring fortune to travellers. If a new fire is lit, one eye will wink shut. If you leave an offering of coin, gain +1 forward when you next roll on the treasure table.

The camp's owner is a Xin peddler named Zhou Zhongyu. She is accompanied by her two bodyguards: Xiao Qingwa, a mute toad-man, and Theodosia, a bald and burly Mirkasian woman covered in witch-brands.

Zhou Zhongyu*Solitary***Instinct:** to obtain the rare and precious**12 HP 1 ARM**Peddle-stick (1d8 damage **REACH**)

* Sell wares for money or knowledge * Retreat if threatened * Claim a unique object first * Hunt for Treasure

When you ransack the camp or Zhou's corpse, roll+WIS. On a 10+, check your roll on the standard treasure table. On a 7-9, roll 1d6 on the table now and you also find a map indicating where the real stash is held, deeper in the jungle. On a miss, you spring a poison needle trap; once this is resolved, you find a single ration and the map.

Xiao Qingwa*Solitary***Instinct:** to acquire items for Zhou**12 HP 1 ARM**Flexible tongue (1d10 damage **NEAR**)

* Jump a great distance * Fight equally well in land or water * Steal a weapon or object with their tongue * Leave the talking to Zhou

Theodosia*Solitary***Instinct:** to guard her boss**10 HP**Bare fists (1d10 damage **CLOSE, MESSY**)

* Take a blow meant for another * Appear invisible to gods and devils

DISCOVERIES & DANGERS**A TESTIMONY OF SACRIFICE**

If you find Zhou Zhongyu's map, it will lead here.

Five statues face one another, standing on a plinth. The spaces between the plinths are criss-crossed with lines, 4 per plinth, leading to each of the other statues. In the centre, observed by all the statues, is a magic weapon. Whomever observes the weapon sees something different - perhaps a sword, or a lance, or a scythe. Regardless, it seems, somehow, made for them. It is clear what you could accomplish with such a mighty weapon at your command.

The statues are gorgons, named are Euryale, Stheno, Phorcys, Scylla and Ladon. If a gorgon cannot see at least two of it's kin, it will revive. If all five are staring at one another, they will return to their stone state.

Euryale is the only gorgon wearing (sculpted) clothing, and also the only one who is mortal (12 hp.) She is beloved by her sisters, and any harm upon her they see will be met by savage revenge.

When you deal damage to an immortal gorgon, the creature recoils but there is no mechanical effect. When you deal damage to Euryale, fictionally and mechanically, her injuries should be made clear and obvious. Instinct: to protect what is most precious

The Gorgons*Group, Hoarder*

Bronze talons (1d10 damage)

* Split them up * Slow them down * (Euryale) Destroy interlopers * (Others) Keep Euryale away from harm

For each gorgon staring at you, hold 1. When two or more gorgons stare at you, roll(-hold)+CON. On a 10+, your muscles stiffen but you can power on through. On a 7-9, you are petrified for as long as at least one gorgon looks at you. On a miss, you are petrified, in full or part. The cure is magical, if it exists at all.

RIVER TAKOCHAY

The uneven river that flows through this place, sometimes slow and steady, other times fast and raging. When you attempt to cross the river, while doing so the GM may use the following move against you: The waters' pace changes dramatically.

A DEDICATION TO A FOUR-ARMED GOD

A disturbing mural of an humanoid creature with four arms. The four eyes are particularly lifelike and seem to follow you everywhere. If you disturb the offerings already left, or fail to leave less than a multiple of four offerings in return, you draw unwanted attention from the god or it's followers.

QUICKSAND (SIGNPOSTED)

A section of jungle covered with crude strings and bells. The strings and bells are both a warning of the quicksand nearby, and an indicator to the locals that something has gotten trapped. If the strings and bells are knocked repeatedly, they make a great echoing noise - a party of four-armed men will come to investigate.

CONSIDER, ALSO...**STAKES**

- ◆ What domain or power does the Dhenze Lobeng rule?
- ◆ What will happen to this Godsworn grove, so rich in treasure?

CONNECTIONS

- ◆ Many leagues from civilisation
- ◆ Days of travel to the coastline

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Silent altars to ancient gods
- ◆ Dense jungle, but no birdsong
- ◆ Relentless, sweltering heat
- ◆ A glittering in the air; the taste of ozone
- ◆ Eyes on their backs, beyond the treeline

QUESTIONS

- ◆ Which of their gods came here to die?
- ◆ Who do you know who came here before? Where are they now?
- ◆ What rare plants would make for a fine potion or poison?
- ◆ How might the spell-soaked bark and stone be made into mighty weapons?
- ◆ Why don't you trust your guide?



PHOTO BY MIKE BLANK ON UNSPLASH

MIDDENVALLEY

*Strange rumours abound of odd folk and freshly-discovered treasure
amidst the quiet fields of Middenvalley. What can be found in the ruins below?
Who are the ratty-folk, and why do the Middeners want them dead?
What became of the village of Sorrowchurch?*

Let's play to find out.

This adventure is presented in three parts; each part has their own introduction and is designed to take a few hours. The parts are interconnected; play them in order, or pick and choose as you see fit. If you're pressed for time, use the last chapter and start your players in the caverns.

I playtested this game with both Into the Odd and World of Dungeons (the rules-light version of Dungeon World) but the version presented here is really meant for the latter. The region is a human-centric backwater, and outsiders are uncommon.

A COLD WELCOME

It's dark outside, but the mood in the inn is darker. The barmaid takes your pay hurriedly, without a smile or banter. The other patrons keep half an eye on you and go about their business in hushed tones. Without warning the front door bursts open, framing three small forms against the storm outside. They are human, but foreign and strange to your eye.

Two are injured; one is barely conscious. The third squeaks a terrified plea for aid: "The creature! The creature from below! Help us!" The barmaid's face is flush with anger. "We don't take your folk in here!" The ratfolk stand motionless in the door.

You're here chasing rumours of treasure in the nearby caverns. Who have you told? Who have you hired from around here as help?

You saw half a dozen folk like these on the road today, strung up. What did that make you feel? (If you asked, folk told you they were unwelcome bandits and got what they deserved, then charged you double for your drink.)

What do you do?

THE MONSTER IN THE FIELD

A short dash from the village, three giant tentacles snake out of a massive sinkhole in the middle of an old field. A dozen or so of the small folk are attempting to beat the tentacles back with pitchforks and butcher's knives.

Whipping Tentacles

Solitary

Instinct: to drag below

16 HP 1d8 damage

Strange-folk mob

Horde

Instinct: to fend off

3 HP 1d6 damage

QUEER AS FOLK

Middeners are the kind of backwards-thinking countryside folk who tend to have good intentions, but savage methods - think Dunsmouth, The Wicker Man, or the BBC comedy The League of Gentlemen. (In my game, I tried to make every Middener look normal, but weird - they all had big, red watery eyes like they'd been crying all day.)

The talk of the region is what is to be done about "the ratty problem" - the squat, hairy travellers who've been frequently caught squatting in barns, stealing food, and similar.

People around here aren't easy to deal with. When the party encounter a stranger (alone or as a group) roll 1d8+2d6.

On a 7- they don't trust anyone but their own kind, including you. On an 8-14, they'll be civil; they're slow to trust, but you could help change their mind. On a 15+, they're surprisingly open-minded and will help you and anyone who isn't a threat.

Extra Rules: Specific NPCs

The 1d8 represents their head. A high scorer might have had a proper education; a low scorer can't read.

The 2d6 represents their hands - how open-handed they are. If the scores are distant (like 1/6) the NPC is honest and plain-spoken. A roll of 4/4 might suggest they're secretive, in denial or prone to lying.

(These rolls reflect an NPC's starting beliefs and prejudices. If the party saves the life of a previously intolerant local, they might be a lot more supportive from then on.)

“IT’S KICKING OFF, PRU...”

The stink of peat and sulfur lies heavy in the air. Two sides eye each other across the street, floodwaters running ankle-deep. A mob of sullen farmhands stand on one side; a horde of short, rat-like folk on the other. The rat-folk’s eyes are full of fear, but their weapons are held tight.

The leader of the farmhands points a pistol at the rat-folk, his eyes as cold and grey as the drizzle.

- ◆ Why are the two sides fighting?
- ◆ How do you know the one with the pistol? (Friend or foe? Noble or peasant?)
- ◆ How do you know the one leading the rat-folk?
- ◆ How’d you get caught up in this fight?
- ◆ Whose side are you on?
- ◆ Who strikes first?
- ◆ What do you do?

WELCOME TO SORROWCHURCH

A few miles down the road lies Sorrowchurch, an abandoned village the ratty-folk have made their new home.

There’s not much left to Sorrowchurch than a few flooded streets, a couple of decrepit houses, and the old mill. The rest was either washed away with the church in the storm of sorrows. (People around here didn’t put as much faith in the church after that.) About the only thing still in one piece was the old mill, tending the sluggish and flooded waterways.

In my playtest, the old mill-owner tried putting the ratty-folk to work in his mill, but they rebelled and took the village as their own. A local noble, excitable but bigoted, put together an old-fashioned angry mob to drive the ratty-folk out of the region and clean out the caves below.

LOCATIONS

THE OLD MILL

Dungeon move: Something stirs in the caves below

A rotten wooden structure over a swollen river. The wheel is busted. 1d4 burly ratties guard the structure at all times. Beyond lies the sinkhole leading to their old caverns.

HIGH STREET

Dungeon move: a be-tentacled corpse (see below)

Covered in ankle-deep water. Half a dozen rotten buildings slouch over the marshy cobblestones. When they look for a tactical advantage, roll+wis. On a 10+, it’s obvious and easy to reach - they’re there. On a 7-9, they’ll have to defy danger (probably using dex) first. On a miss, you get there, but the GM describes what’s waiting for you.

A Bloated, be-tentacled corpse

12 HP 1d10 damage

- ★ Grapple and infect ★ Appear from nowhere
- ★ Spread panic

What the party take for a bloated human corpse shuffles to its feet with a gurgling roar. Half its face is eroded away with budding tentacles. Any ratty-folk in the vicinity panic and try and get as far from it as possible. If there are any middeners nearby, one immediately gets ensnared in its grasp. Instinct: to make more of itself

THE DOLOROUS BISHOP

Dungeon move: They don’t get what they paid for

Once the public house, now a staging ground for the ratty-folk. If the party visit here as friends, this is where they could get supplies before venturing underground. All food and drink for sale is mushroom-based (fungus rations, truffle mead etc.)

DEEPER UNDERGROUND

A many-limbed thing fills the narrow cavern, reeking of rot. Whipping tentacles lash back and forth; you think you see parts of men and cave-dwellers beneath, grossly intertwined. Beyond the creature stands a carved stone entrance - a step closer to your goal, and a better place to fight besides.

- ◆ Who or what do you recognise within the creature’s mass? (Perhaps the face of a dead colleague or a previously lost trinket.)
- ◆ What have you come to claim from the cave-dweller’s abandoned homes?
- ◆ You passed an idol of some significance to the cave-dwellers earlier. How did it keep these things at bay? Why isn’t that power helping now?
- ◆ What blocks the way back home?
- ◆ How close are these creatures to reaching the surface?

FRONT: TENEBROUS TENTACLES

Six months ago, an incautious ratty scholar named Nazra accidentally spilled his blood on a black, glassy egg he discovered deep beneath the caverns the ratties called home.

It quickly became clear the monsters fed and bred on dead flesh, clotting together corpses into some kind of unholy chimera. Once rigor mortis sets in, the corpses collapses into a nest of sorts, leaving whole caverns uninhabitable. This is what infests the ratties old home, and why they fled to the surface. If the monsters make it to the surface, who knows how far they might spread...

DANGER: THE TENTACLES SPREAD

Cursed Ground (impulse: to spawn evil)

- The ratty-folk's warnings are ignored
- The caves are completely infested
- The tentacles take root on the surface
- Impending Doom: Pestilence The tentacles take over Middenvally and threaten to overtake the entire region.

Betentacled Zombie

Solitary

Instinct: to make more of itself

12 **HP**, 1d10 damage

* Grapple and infect * Appear from nowhere

* Spread panic

Whipping Tentacles

Solitary

Instinct: to drag below

16 **HP**, 1d8 damage

DEEPER LOCATIONS

A NARROW CAUSEWAY

Dungeon move: the party slips down to the bottom!

(If using the introduction for Deeper Underground, the adventure starts here.) Beyond lies the caverns that make up the ratty-folk's former city. Several pools of standing, oily water stand nearby - the dungeon move "More monsters emerge..." was written for this, and similar areas.

There is another route - harder to spot, but too small to let the fiends follow. If they take it quickly, ask what they leave behind so they can squeeze through, or defy danger (dex).

A WRONG TURN

Dungeon move: the smell of brine; then, a sheer drop!

A natural corridor winds downward, excavated quickly, and by hand. The route steepens quickly, and ends in a sudden drop to more caverns, far below.

A FOOLHARDY BARRICADE

Dungeon move: treasure, guarded by a single mad rat

A home barricaded with rubble and old wood. Behind, maybe a dozen ratty-folk had their last stand... but apparently didn't have enough food to go round. (There's a 4-in-6 chance a single rat remains, still gnawing the bones of their comrades.)

AN ALTERNATE ROUTE

Dungeon move: The ratty-folk - possibly infected - have escaped into the countryside...!

Another passage leads north for several miles, eventually making its way to daylight. A half-decent tracker could deduce many small groups of ratfolk have gone this way, all heading north. It would seem not all the ratfolk are in Middenvally after all...

COMMON AREAS

- ◆ A spore-ridden pool, glowing blue
- ◆ Hall of gathered surface curios
- ◆ Abandoned/Infested trade halls
- ◆ A sheer cliff, criss-crossed with shallow caves
- ◆ Infested "crop" of tentacle-things
- ◆ A human camp, abandoned

MORE DUNGEON MOVES

When the players fail a roll, look to you to see what happens, or the rules call for it...

- ◆ A passage collapses
- ◆ You find treasure, infected with spores
- ◆ An idol - and sanctuary from the monsters - under threat
- ◆ You encounter a rival hunting party, with something of value
- ◆ Your supplies are lost, exhausted, or tainted
- ◆ More monsters emerge, from oily waters
- ◆ They have to proceed single-file
- ◆ An exit is blocked by a ratty-folk trap

TREASURE

When you find a hoard of treasure, roll 3d6+1d10+1d20.
The total, times 100, is the total value.

The 3d6 are mundane tokens, coins and trinkets.
If the 3d6 score is highest, most of the value is in a single, bulky, mundane item, like a fine painting or stack of deeds.

The 1d10 is a rare gemstone and finery. If the 1d10 is highest, the single most valuable item is small and easily transported, like a ring or precious gemstone.

The 1d20 is oddly-shaped magic and other arcana. If the 1d20 is the highest result, hidden among the riches is a magic item.

MAGICAL EFFECTS (1D6)

- ◆ Your eyes glow red, but you can see in the dark.
- ◆ You don't need to breathe, but take double damage in daylight.
- ◆ You can eat anything but salt, which becomes toxic.
- ◆ You're immune to parasites and infection, but sick up anything you eat on a 4+.
- ◆ You fear nothing, but the effect is neutralised for a few hours by sex, alcohol, pipeleaf, chocolate etc.
- ◆ You gain +1 arm and your skin glows gold; those that fear the light will target you first.

THENCEFORTH A ROILING STORM

There is a town on the far shores of human civilisation, where the lands of man overlap with the former empire of the dwarves. It is called Rædasfjurd, and it is doomed.

A tidal wave comes for this portside town. It is judgement given form; a storm to wash away the sins of the town's wicked. Those that can, flee; but the majority—innocent and guilty alike—cannot.

You have business here before the wave hits. Ancient knowledge, or perhaps a memorable treasure, buried below the cobbled streets. Or possibly a last request – a call for vengeance from valued kin.

There are four days before the wave breaks. None have returned from the storm's path, save odd Captain Thaddeus. The wave crests the horizon now: shades of black and gold against the endless blue. It is a promise: when it strikes, no soul or edifice within the city shall be left standing.

STEADING: RÆDASFJÜRD

A coastal town ruled by terror and thievery

Prosperity: Moderate
Population: In Decline
Defenses: Guard

Most mundane items are available, some types of skilled laborers.

The population is less than it once was. Some buildings stand empty.

There are no less than 100 armed defenders available. There is always at least one armed patrol about the steading.

Resources: Salt, fish, dwarven relics
Enmity: The Dwarven enclaves of old
Trade: Other townships, by sea; cities of man, by perilous land travel
Personage: Volokh Hong
History: Former dwarven enclave; the humans betrayed their dwarf allies (see Spout Lore)

STAKES

- ◆ Can Rædasfjurd be saved?
- ◆ Will the players decide it's worth saving?
- ◆ Will the source of the wave be discovered?
- ◆ Who will command the Stout Tiller?

Volokh Hong, Bandit Captain

Solitary

12 HP 1-Armour

b[2d10] damage CLOSE.

Instinct: to save themselves

WHEN YOU SPOUT LORE...

In the heyday of the dwarven empire, Rædasfjurd was a famous enclave. Over time, the human population has overtaken the dwarven one.

Worse, the humans pay little respect to their dwarven neighbours, peddling dwarven relics dredged from the sea floor. The remaining dwarves lack the manpower to reclaim their town.

The wave has hit other towns, seemingly at random. But there is a pattern: only settlements with ancient grudges against the dwarven enclaves are targeted.

There is an old dwarven legend of a ghost ship that unleashes judgement against oathbreakers. (It is a common bedtime story among dwarves, but little known among humans.)

QUESTIONS

These questions don't all need to be answered! One or more may be relevant; or useful in placing the characters in the wider world.

If the player characters include a dwarf, how are they related to the town militia?

What secret or relic does Arrelas, a fence from a distant city, want the party to claim before the storm hits?

Why has Thaddeus, the last captain brave (or mad) enough to chart a course ahead of the wave, recruited the party into his crew? How does he claim to control the storm?

FOLK OF RÆDASFJÜRD

Thieves-in-passing, apprentices to the criminal guilds; untested, perhaps not beyond redemption? (Horde, 3 hp, 1d6 damage close. Instinct: to distract from the real threat)

Common Townsfolk, including trapped sailors, merchants, tradesmen etc. (Instinct: to save themselves)

The Nightmerchants, sellers of black market desires. (Solitary, 12 hp. Instinct: to profit from the sins of the town)

Jokull captain of the dwarven honour guard. Honour demands they serve their town, even though this means serving the human settlers that sell their relics. The all-dwarf militia includes Hrefna and others.

Volokh Hong, lord of Redoubt Bay; also heir to the criminal empire that festers at the cities' heart. Currently holed up in Rædasfjöld keep, confident the walls will stop the wave. He is wrong. (Solitary, 12 hp 1-Armour, b[2d10] damage close. Instinct: to save themselves from judgement)

DENIZENS OF THE DEEP OCEAN

The Roiling Storm, a mile-high tidal wave on a collision course with Rædasfjöld. (Instinct: to wash away.)

Thorgrim Treefoot, captain of the Stout Tiller and secret master of the Roiling Storm. (Instinct: to destroy Rædasfjöld)

Matilda Thorsdottir, rebellious daughter of Thorgrim, who doesn't understand the grudges of her family. (Instinct: to sabotage her father's plans.)

BEYOND THE WAVE

The truth behind the storm's fury is not a magical or divine judgement, but a mortal one. A dwarven Ironclad, the Stout Tiller, sits in the eye of the storm at the apex of the wave. The ironclad contains an immensely powerful storm-maker device - the last of its kind - which generates and directs the wave's power.

Controlling the storm-maker and the ship is Thorgrim Treefoot, an exiled dwarf patriarch living on the ship and his family. Thorgrim and his extended family has travelled the waves for over two hundred years, living off the sea and righting ancient grudges between man and dwarf.

But not all of Thorgrim's family are so committed to his lonely crusade. Matilda, his daughter and youngest child, knows nothing of the outside world save what her family has told her. She is idealistic and rebellious, questioning whether all the lands of men are as evil as her family implies.

Should the party make contact, there is a good chance Matilda's suspicions about the wider world will be confirmed. Will it be enough for her to speak out against her family? Will the party learn how to stop the storm-maker, or even manage to convince Thorgrim to end his crusade in time? Let's play to find out!

FRONT: DOOM OF RÆDASFJÖLD

DANGER: THE WAVE HITS

- The storm appears on the horizon
- No safe passage can be charted by boat
- The outer islands are flooded/destroyed
- Doom: Destruction (The town is destroyed, washing away innocent and guilty alike)

DANGER: MATILDA'S AMBITION

- Matilda speaks out against her clan
- Matilda or her allies sabotage the storm-maker
- Thorgrim is injured or killed
- The means to repair the storm-maker are lost
- Doom: Rampant Chaos (The means to control the storm are lost)

THE DWARVEN CREW

- ◆ THORGRIM, clan patriarch, AKA Treefoot
- ◆ AUD THE WISE, clan matriarch, wife of Thorgrim
- ◆ GRETTIR THE FLINT, eldest son, fast learner, capable engineer
- ◆ MAGNUS SHALLOW-ARMS, Excellent sailor, middle son, de facto second in command of the Stout Tiller
- ◆ ASMUND, youngest son, spoilt, rebellious and work-shy
- ◆ MATILDA, youngest and only daughter, rebellious and independent.
- ◆ THORSOD OWLBEARD, Thorgrim's brother, eldest, most knowledgeable of the old ways
- ◆ KJARVAL, Aud's mild-mannered brother, and his bellicose wife, SKALD IRONTONGUE
- ◆ SKALFAST, an infant, son of Kjarval and Skald

EIRIK'S SECRET

You're making camp in a lee of rock amidst the Dokkfjall mountains. It is dark, and your campfire struggles to stay alight amidst the bitter cold and damp. (Your journey takes you around or over the mountain. Where are you headed? Why?)

Whoever spent the most (for example, a healing potion is worth more than dungeon rations) roll+cha. On a 10+, your intuition tells you something was off about that purchase - ask one question from the Discern Realities list, either about the merchant or the item. On a 7-9, ask one question about the item. On a miss, neither.

The supplies you bought in the last town begin to shudder and crack. Dozens of tiny blue centipedes burst their way out of the supplies! Even the weapons and armour are infested. (If it stands to reason you'd still be wearing these items, you're wearing them. If there's any doubt, roll+wis. On a 7+, you choose; on a 6-, the GM chooses.)

A warning shot screams into your campfire from somewhere in the darkness, dousing it.

What do you do?

Endopede Larva

Horde

Instinct: to feed on warm meat and nest in cold bones
3 HP 1D4 damage

* Hatch from hidden places * Gain power from intense cold/damp * Squirm around armour * Grow rapidly

Mysterious Ambushers

Group

Instinct: to claim treasure from larvae victims

6 HP 1 ARM 1D8 damage

* Ambush from a distance * Trigger a wave of cold
* Collect tribute for their bosses

NOTES ABOUT THE ENCOUNTER

The following may become clear after the conflict, and/or if the party Discern Realities or Spout Lore

The last town they visited was a quiet dwarven keep called Holmdaral. It's about a day's trudge back through the snow. Their ambushers' tracks lead back towards Holmdaral. The ambushers are (were) gnomes, armed with well-made dwarven weapons. The creatures are endopedes, a kind of millipede that thrive in the cold and damp. (They get much bigger!) If they're infesting the keep, they may not be hatching due to the warmth - you recall the place was particularly warm and dry.

OF EIRIK, THE MERCHANT

Eirik is the only merchant left in Holmdaral, and one of the wiliest. He'll sell to anyone - man, elf, dwarf, whoever. Everything in his store is stamped with his personal seal, and he takes great pride in his job.

Behind the counter is a spear he made in his youth, once wielded by the town's previous thane. On the face of it, everything about Eirik gives the impression of trust. (Of course, as soon as a player hears this, they'll know something is up!)

Why might the characters dislike or distrust Eirik?

- ◆ He's a pushy salesman.
- ◆ If someone asks too many questions, he'll change the subject or go back to selling.
- ◆ He'll treat gnomes (or halflings - is there a difference in your world?) especially well. You'd almost think he's scared of them.
- ◆ If a player attempts to rip off or steal from Eirik:
- ◆ He'll threaten the characters, but not resort to violence unless they damage the store. If they take the items anyway, he'll utter a dark warning and lock the door behind them.

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

Eirik, like everyone else in the hold, is in the pocket of the Gnomish Mafia. Eirik respects and honours the wishes of his thane, as is the dwarvish tradition. In this case, following his thane's command means working for the mob.

Eirik captures Endopede larvae and hides them in weapons, armour and supplies. to passers-by. When customers leave the warm, dry town, the eggs hatch and attack their victims. The mob's enforcers follow close behind, ambush the victims then take their belongings. The only people who know this are Eirik, the local mob boss (Clustercrank) and the town's thane, Gudmund.

WHAT'S UP WITH EIRIK?

Eirik is old and proud of his work. He respects his thane's bloodline (if not the current thane himself). He uses this and the threat of reprisals against him to justify selling the trapped items.

If the party confront him, he'll protest his innocence. Threatening to hurt or kill him will make him defensive. ("I'm a dwarf of the thunderous mountain, scoured of the stones of grungi... you just try it, surface-dweller!")

When someone gets Eirik the seller to talk, roll+STR if using threats of force, or roll+cha if using diplomacy. On a 10+, they learn all 3. On a 7-9, just the first two; on a miss, just the first one.

- ◆ The gnomish mob control the town.
- ◆ The gnomes have him harvesting endopede eggs from under the town, deeper in the mountain.
- ◆ The gnomes put the eggs in most of Eirik's items, to hatch when they're out of the town.

HOLMDARAL REGION

The Perilous Side of a Snowswept Mountain

Region: Dokkfjall ("Darkened Mountain")
Dwarven realm, isolated, unsafe, civilised

STEADING: HOLMDARAL

Secure, quiet, poor, personages (Thane Gudmund, Clustercrank of the gnomish mob)

Gudmund's Thanehall

Warm and dry, bright, spacious, empty

Inn, Smithy, Stables etc.

All warm and dry, dwarven, quiet.

Eirik's General Store

Warm and dry, well-stocked, affordable.

The cellar is really hot and dry; hides a secret trapdoor to...

Bedrock Catacombs

Cold, damp, dark. Wind deep into the mountain.
Infested (Endopedes, Stirges, other beasts)

- ◆ Half-finished mining attempts
- ◆ Dwarven Ruins
- ◆ Natural pools, canyons, dead ends
- ◆ Abandoned camps (or all campers dead)

STAKES

- ◆ The endopedes keep getting harvested
- ◆ Eirik keeps his shop running
- ◆ Gudmund the thane goes unpunished
- ◆ The gnomish mob get richer

QUESTIONS

- ◆ What lies on the safer side of the mountain? Why do the characters want to get there?
- ◆ Where are the other dwarf enclaves? Are they rare, or common?
- ◆ What other assets or locations are in the mob's pocket?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ The outer slopes: Fields of endless white; a bone-chilling wind; no sign of any other life
- ◆ Holmdaral: Hot, dry winds; the occasional dwarf; bright lights in empty houses
- ◆ Bedrock Catacombs: Constant dripping; treacherous ledges; distant flapping and clicking; huge caverns; discarded equipment; wriggling 'pede nests

REWARDS

- ◆ A bounty on Clustercrank (from whom?)
- ◆ Bounties for Endopede pelts/venom sacs/etc.
- ◆ Dwarven treasures, discarded in the deep

MONSTERS

Filio Clustercrank, Mob Boss

Solitary

What leads a gnome down the dark path of organised crime? Some see it as a means to lord over larger, more powerful folk. For Clustercrank, it is simple - he does it for profit. **Instinct:** to profit

12 HP 1 ARM

b(2D8) damage **CLOSE**

- * Make an offer they can't refuse
- * Inform the mob about the characters
- * Hide behind a wall of thugs
- * Reveal a clever gnomish gizmo

Adult Endopede

Group

Endopedes are icy millipedes, about as big as a dog. Their lifecycle is triggered by cold snaps: they thrive in cold, damp conditions, so the people of Holmdaral keep their homes warm and dry - especially the basements.

Instinct: to freeze warm meat

6 HP 1 ARM

1D8 damage

- * Unleash a blood-freezing toxin (bite, cloud)
- * Nest in cold, damp places
- * Protect their eggs and matriarch

Endopede Matriarch

Solitary

The matriarch is the main source of a nest's eggs. If attacked, her priority is to escape, hopefully leading her prey into an ambush or natural danger. **Instinct:** to survive and expand the brood

16 HP 2 ARM

1d12 damage **CLOSE**

- * Unleash a blood-freezing toxin (bite, cloud)
- * Lurk in the centre of a dangerous nest
- * Lay eggs everywhere
- * Summon adult guards

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

You're in an abandoned jungle village. It's abandoned because a twenty-five-foot tall millipede is fighting a similarly-sized Logging Golem.

The dozen or so surviving villagers fled south, towards the river. A score of manling mercenaries armed with pistols and blades just entered from the north. They're hot on the villager's trail.

The millipede bit off the robot's arm. The limb crushed and shattered the village Waystone, which looked very important. Dozens of hungry, fist-sized millipedes are growing and spilling out of the hole where the construct's arm used to be.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

- ◆ How was the Waystone important? What did it control, protect, or imprison?
- ◆ Why do you need to protect the villagers? How do you know their pursuers, including Sacha, their leader? (p.4.)
- ◆ Who do the pursuers and the Logger both work for?
- ◆ Who's still on the forest floor? What are they doing about the pursuers, the fire, and/or the millipedes?

USEFUL CHARACTERS

SACHA

Solitary, Mercenary, Savage, Capable

Armed with Sacha's Scythe.

Sacha is one of Cheapfields' most reliable (and best-paid) mercenaries, save for her occasional bouts of sadistic rage. Using the best equipment the company can provide, she and her like-minded warband are frequently sent to do jobs nobody else can - or will. **Instinct:** To take advantage of the weak and helpless

When has Sacha crossed paths with the party before?

12 hp 3 arm

1D10 damage close

- ◆ Set something on fire
- ◆ Reveal or summon a steamforged gizmo
- ◆ Hold something ransom
- ◆ Cleave something in twain

Logging Mercenaries

Group, Capable, Organised, Easily Led

6 HP 1 ARM

1D8 damage

Save their leader, the warband are armed less like warriors and more like an scholar's troupe. Their survey equipment makes them excellent scouts, able to scope an area well in advance of any threat. **Instinct:** to follow orders

Mournipede Larvae

Horde, Spawn of the great Mournipede

3 HP

D6 damage

* Overwhelm a target * Absorb physical or magical power * Consume something of great value * Gain in mass, suddenly

The Mournipede is no mere beast. It is a force of nature, a god-thing unleashed to defend the tribesfolk in their darkest hour. You'd need a cannon to breach its carapace, while hundreds of scuttling legs and biting mandibles rip its foes apart. These terrible armanents mask its true danger; the writing larvae that infest the wounds it leaves grow rapidly, consuming all as they do.

Instinct: To grow, and feed, and grow

What other god-beasts roam the jungle? How might they threaten or help the party in the future?

(If multiple creatures **ATTACK** at once, roll the highest damage among them and add +1 damage for each monster beyond the first.)

USEFUL MOVES

The giant creatures don't have hit points - they're too large to take damage in the normal sense. However...

When you scale one of the giant creatures, name where you want to be (the waist, the head, the arm...) and roll+dex. On a 10+, you're there in as much time as you'd expect. On a 7-9, it takes longer or draws unwanted attention. On a miss, you're not there yet, and caught in a precarious position.

When you attack a limb or vital system of a giant creature, roll+str. On a 10+ you immobilise it, or open up a weakness for others to exploit. On a 7-9, if you want to immobilise or open a weakness, you'll take harm or be put in a spot (GM's choice.)

On a miss you're caught between the creature's epic battle; the GM will describe what happens next.

When you tempt one or more of Sacha's warband to switch sides or surrender, roll+cha. On a 10+, they're considering it, but may need leverage or proof. On a 7-9 Sacha makes an example of them there and then. On a miss, they don't flinch.

When you attempt to lead the villagers to safety, describe the haven you're aiming for (a naturally safe space, magical enclave, or something else) and roll+wis. On a 10+, you know how to get there and what risks (if any) lie in your path. On a 7-9, you know the location and rough direction, but not the route. On a miss, you'll have to settle for a less secure or simpler alternative.

THE LOGGING CAMPAIGN

CAMPAIGN FRONT

What ancient knowledge or power be lost forever when the last native dies?

Who or what will grow strong from the collected resources of the jungle? (Wood, Stone, Magic)

DANGER: THE JUNGLE LOGGERS

- The natives must flee the Logger's path
- An ambitious sadist swears to 'clear the jungle'
- A prominent native or god-thing is captured, humiliated, and executed
- The loggers reveal an unstoppable new power
- A final counter-attack by the native survivors fails
- Doom: Destruction (the natives are scattered or killed; the jungle is stripped bare.)

- ◆ Can Cheapfields - the source of the Loggers - be bargained or reasoned with? If so, what is his cost?

DANGER: THE MOURNIPEDE, AND OTHER GOD-THINGS

- A number of god-things survive, and thrive
- A monstrous creature of bark and bone is born
- The creature learns of its divine heritage
- The god-things destroy the one thing that could stop them
- The creature claims tribute over mortal kind
- Doom: Tyranny (The god-things' strange new offspring rule mortals, by force and fear.)

- ◆ What objects or knowledge could bind or break a rampant god-thing?

MAGIC ITEMS

SACHA'S SCYTHE

Reach, 2 weight

Sacha's weapon looks more like an industrial tool than a weapon of war. The scythe ignores armour and cuts through most surfaces with little trouble - wood, stone and even steel. However, its size and weight make it cumbersome to use at close quarters and require both hands to wield.

STEELWHIZZ SHARPENER

Close, 1 weight

This rare screwdriver-sword is a prized possession of company engineers. The layered bands of argothite, bronze and mithril provide a perfect degree of poise and balance, making it precise in a fighter's hands.

Constructs - even non-sentient ones - fear its disassembling touch, and will do everything they can to avoid facing the wielder in battle. Constructs wounded or killed by the sharpener count as having the hoarder tag - roll the damage die twice and take the best result.

THE ZERO DARK

Close, 1 weight

A perfectly black orb, warm to the touch. If held aloft in near or total darkness, it will cast a dim blue light that diffuses through the entire area (google "Hollywood Darkness".) If exposed to any amount of daylight the orb shatters, revealing a minor demon.