

# The Gongfarmer's Almanac 2025

A free **Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG** zine,  
along with its other sister source settings,  
written, illustrated, edited, and published by  
the **GFA** community!



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*This volume is of the Gongfarmer's Almanac is  
dedicated to William D. Lehman.  
2/2/83 - 12/6/25*

*To all the adventures we shared. To all the adventures  
we'll never have. May your adventure continue under  
the azure skies of many new worlds!*



# THE DUNGEON OF DARKEST DOOM

By Jason Youngdale  
Cover Art by Dan Smith  
Other Art by Jason Youngdale



An adventure for 4-6 players of low-to-mid level  
(compatible with many Fantasy Role-playing game systems)

**Quest Type:** Retrieval (Magic Item)

**Number of Players:** 4-6 (4-5 ideal)

**Location:** Deep in the GodsHome Mountains to the North

**Objective:** Retrieve the legendary Soul Trapper magic item from a long-forgotten dungeon!

**Patron's Name:** Eli Muskegon (recently retired Alchemist)

**Rival Patron's Name:** Charles Hansen (Hedge Wizard and Herbalist)

A very rich but aging man (Eli) wants your group to get him this item! He has done research on each of you through his spy network and picked you for your skill set. He is offering a large monetary reward and not caring what else you might loot on your adventure. He wants what is called the Soul Trapper...

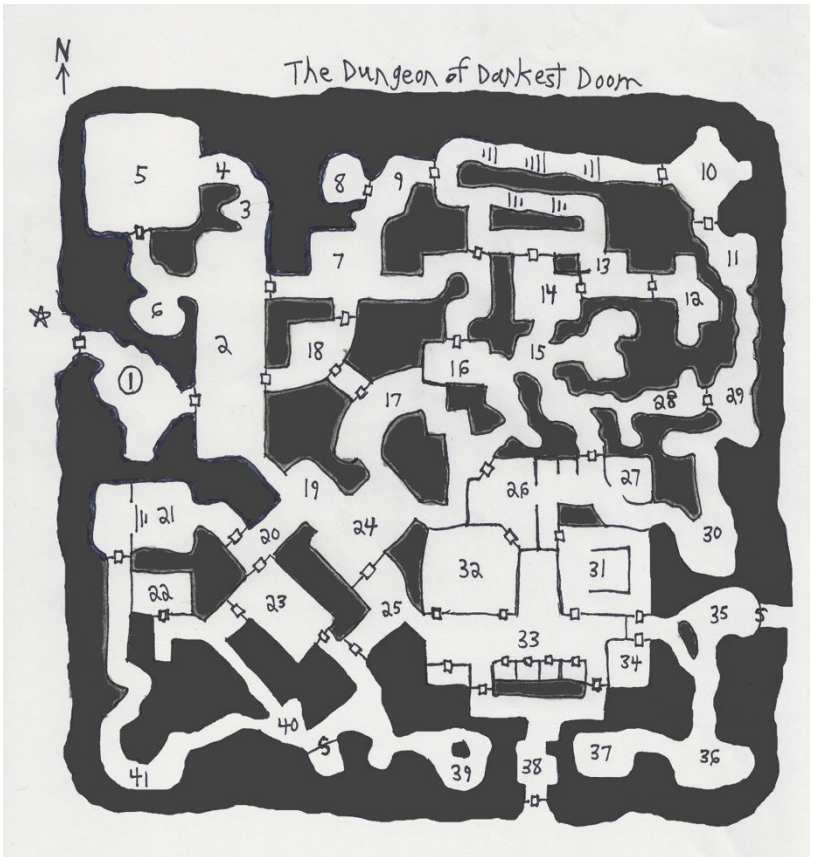
**Soul Trapper** - traps only a willing humanoid inside a very large crystal. The victim's soul is no longer a part of their body. The humanoid must be alive at the time of the transfer ritual. At any time in the future the soul can be retrieved and transferred to a construct or golem body (using a similar transfer ritual). The target body must not have a soul already attached to it. A corpse will not work either.

The soul trapped inside the crystal loses all track of time but does not lose their memory. It is if they are in a deep sleep. A transfer ritual must be performed to put a soul into or out of the Soul Trapper. The ritual takes roughly two hours and something that must be learned. It also requires 500 (of local currency) worth of materials for each ritual. The target body can be a robot, rock golem, clay golem, clockwork gnome, etc. This is transhumanism at its finest.

The target body does not have to be the same size as the trapped soul's original body. A humanoid shape though works best. Soul Trapper can only hold one soul at a time. Attempts to add additional souls just results in a failed ritual. Soul Trapper can only be destroyed by its creator (no one knows who or what that is).

Soul Trapper gives off a shifting magical aura (smells of chaos magic). It is about six feet tall and hovers two feet off of the ground. It can be pushed around by two people. Soul Trapper has ever-changing colors and faintly hums. If one looks very closely one can see small runes carved all over it. Non-magical weapons cannot damage the crystal. Magical weapons and spells can merely scratch the crystal.

**Storyteller Notes:** Rival Patron wants Eli dead and sends his own mercenary team to retrieve the crystal. Both rich men aren't too popular and a little eccentric. The dungeon is not abandoned but full of activity. It is a place that time forgot (or wants to forget).



Map of the Dungeon of Darkest Doom (41 rooms)

**Storyteller/GM Note:** Depending upon how much time you have (or how long you want the adventure to go) you could have the Soul Trapper located in room #10, #30, or #36. The Soul Trapper will always be guarded by the Cult of the Crystal Constructs (# of them equal to the characters +1). The Crystal will be in the center of the room with *Cult of the Crystal Constructs* encircled around it. Whatever room that you don't choose to be the **Soul Trapper** room will have 1d6+2 regular Cultists playing poker at a table. The Cultists will attack the adventuring party on sight. Rooms #10, #30, and #36 will have runes carved on each floor tile, some of them can be pressure plate traps (doing 1d4 points of damage from spikes each trap).

**Cult of the Crystal Construct:** Init +4; Attack Fist Smash +4 melee (1d8) or Grapple +4 (opposed grapple check to break free); AC 17; HD 7d10 (30 hp); MV 60'; Act 1d20; Special powers: immune to Disease, Toxins, Suffocation, Fire; SV: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; AI: C

## **Dungeon Room/Location Descriptions**

**1 - (Foyer/Entrance)** After following a winding tunnel from the surface entrance you come to the first carved out room. Cave art adorns all the walls and floor. It looks like multiple artists over multiple centuries contributed to this room. Bones of different animals are strewn all over the floor as well.

**GM Note:** There are no monsters here unless you want to attack them with a giant centipede or something similar. Maybe two Soul Trapper Assassins jumping the party works too.

**2 - (Mausoleum)** This is clearly an enormous mausoleum built to the proportions of giants. Huge niches are set into the walls within which you can discern giant bones. Stern-looking statues of stone giants stand 12-20 feet tall against the walls, and in the center of the room lies a 15-foot-long sarcophagus.

**GM Note:** 1d4+1 of the stone statues will animate and attack. These stone golems (use stats for **living statue** found on Page

420 of the DCC Rulebook) are ancient, they possess uncommon intelligence and wisdom.

**3 - (Food Storage)** This area houses crates and barrels full of dry foods. Plenty here to feed an adventuring party for days. Some of the containers have been opened, many have not. A purple raven-like crest has been painted on many of the crates, while a red kraken-like crest has been painted on the barrels.  
**GM Note:** No monsters here, a few regular rats and a cat maybe. The food is edible but bland.

**4 - (Kitchen)** A huge pot of stew hangs from a thick iron tripod over a crackling fire in the center of this chamber. A small hole in the ceiling allows some of the smoke from the fire to escape, but much of it expands across the ceiling and rolls down to fill the room in a dark fog. Other details are difficult to make out, but some creature must be nearby, because it smells like a good soup is cooking.

**GM Note:** There will be a female **ogre** (see Page 422 of the DCC Rulebook) or multiple female **orcs** (see Page 423 of the DCC Rulebook) cooking here. They do not like visitors. They cook for most of the dungeon inhabitants.

**5 - (Dining Hall)** This is clearly where everyone eats, at least the high ranking. A long wooden table made of dark wood is in the center of this room. High back wooden chairs are neatly arranged on either side, with a gem encrusted chair at one end. Strange paintings of battles fought long ago are on two of the walls.

**GM Note:** The fancy chair is worth 2d6x100 gold pieces. The gems in it are rubies, sapphires, and emeralds. The two paintings on the walls are worth 5d6x10 gold pieces each.

**6 - (Tapestry Room)** This room is hung with hundreds of dusty tapestries. All show signs of wear: moth holes, scorch marks, dark stains, and the damage of years of neglect. They hang on all the walls and hang from the ceiling to brush against the floor, blocking your view of the rest of the room. Two **giant**

**centipedes** (see Page 398 of the DCC Rulebook) are on the ceiling and will attack the adventurers.

**GM Note:** There are 2d6 tapestries and they are worth 2d6 gold pieces each.

**7 - (Crafting and Repair Shop)** This area is filled with tables, scraps of leather, hammers, rivets, vials of dyes, and other materials used to create and repair items. It looks like armor and weapons were recently repaired here. A few helmets in various stages of creation are on the tables.

**GM Note:** 1d6 of the helmets are sellable for 1d6x10 money each (wearable by humanoids).

**8 - (Alchemist Lab)** The door creaks open, which somewhat overshadows the sound of bubbling liquid. Before you is a room about which alchemist's dream. Three tables bend beneath a clutter of bottles of liquid and connected glass piping. Several bookshelves stand nearby stuffed to overflowing with a jumble of books, jars, bottles, bags, and boxes. The alchemist who set this all up doesn't seem to be present, but a beaker of green fluid boils over a burner on one of the tables.

**GM Note:** There are healing potions here (1d6) and bottles of poison (possibly a spell scroll or two hidden among the books). The books are about alchemy and astronomy.

**9 - (Fire Room)** You smelled smoke as you enter into this area, and after rounding the corner into this room you see why. Every surface has scorch marks and ash piles on the floor. The room reeks of fire and burnt flesh. Either a great battle happened here, or the room bears some fire danger you cannot see for no flames light the room anymore.

**GM Note:** Flame traps in the ceiling go off every few minutes. There are 1d6 traps attached to the ceiling, and each does 1d4 points of damage (no save). No visible way to disarm them.

**10 - (Soul Trapper Room - see Storyteller/GM Note, above)**

**11 - (Flowstone Room)** You pull open the door and hear the scrape of its opening echo throughout what must be a massive

room. Peering inside, you see a large cavern. Stalactites drip down from the ceiling in sharp points while flowstone makes strange shapes on the floor.

**GM Note:** 1d4+1 Soul Trapper **Assassins** (see Page 432 of the DCC Rulebook) will be sneaking in the shadows here.

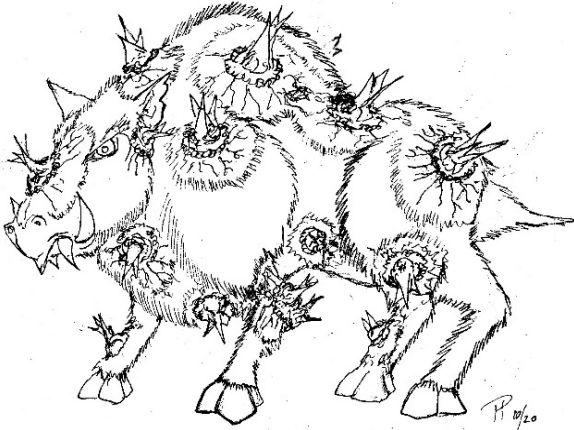
**12 - (Training Room)** You open the door to what must be a combat training room. Rough fighting circles are scratched into the surface of the floor. Wooden fighting dummies stand waiting for someone to attack them. A few punching bags hang from the ceiling. There's something peculiar about it all though. Every dummy is stocky and each has a bedraggled piece of leather hanging from its head that could be a long mask or a beard.

**GM Note:** There is a 50% chance that 1d6+1 **cultists** (use the stats for an Acolyte on Page 432 of the DCC Rulebook) are training in here.

**13 - (Trash Room)** Broken weapons and pieces of armor are strewn about in this area. Many blood stains on the junk. Looking through the piles of well-loved equipment might turn up something barely useful/functional. The weapons and armor look like items that gladiators would use in an arena.

**GM Note:** There is a 20% chance of a functional melee weapon that the party could use here.

**14 - (Arena)** In the center of this large room lies a large round pit, its edges lined with rusting iron spikes. About 5 feet away from the pit's edge stand several stone semicircular benches. The scent of sweat and blood lingers, which makes the pit's



resemblance to a fighting pit or gladiatorial arena even stronger. The pit appears to be 12-15 feet deep.

**GM Note:**

There is a 50% chance that there is a **minotaur** (see Page 422 of the DCC Rulebook) in here waiting

to kill someone.

**15 - (Collapsed Room)** You peer into this room and spot the white orb of a human skull lying on the floor. Suddenly a stone falls from the ceiling and smashes the skull to pieces. An instant later, another stone from the ceiling drops to strike the floor and shatter. You hear a low rumbling and cracking noise. There appears to be a nice amount of gold scattered throughout the room as well.

**GM Note:** The ceiling caves in during the next round, causing massive damage to anyone foolish to stay in the room that long. The gold is Fool's Gold and worth pretty much nothing. Falling ceiling debris causes 2d6 damage while being in the room (saving throws allowed).

**16 - (Tomb)** This room is a tomb. Stone sarcophagi stand in five rows of three, each carved with the visage of a warrior lying in state. In their center, one sarcophagus stands taller than the rest. Held up by six squat pillars, its stone bears the carving of

a beautiful woman who seems more asleep than dead. The carving of the warriors is skillful but seems perfunctory compared to the love a sculptor must have lavished upon the lifelike carving of the woman.

**GM Note:** You could have a ghost or vampire attack out of the main sarcophagus. The creature will be mighty but have treasure. A **mummy** (see Page 422 of the DCC Rulebook) encounter here works well too.

**Vampire spawn:** Init +4; Attack Talon/Claw Strike +5 melee (1d6) or Grapple +5 (opposed grapple check to break free) or Drink Blood +5 melee (1d4 Stamina); AC 17; HD 7d10 (30 hp); MV 60'; Act 2d20; Special Powers: Vulnerable to silver weapons, Drink Blood, Hide in Shadows +5, Infravision 90', Sneak Silently +6, Undead; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit U/d12.

**17 - (Armory)** Full suits of armor hang on the walls of this curved room. Nice rugs cover the floor. A few tall mirrors here and there. The suits of armor seem made for humanoids both tall and short. Lit torches on the wall light the area fairly well.

**GM Note:** This room contains one suit of plate mail, two suits of chain mail (one for humans and one for halflings), two suits of leather armor, and one nice set of wizard robes (that would count as cloth armor).

**18 - (Forge)** A large forge squats against the northwest corner of this room, and coals glow dimly inside. Before the forge stands a wide block of iron with a heavy-looking hammer lying atop it, no doubt for use in pounding out shapes in hot metal. Other forge tools hang in racks nearby, and a barrel of water and bellows rest on the floor nearby. Bars of iron and copper lay stacked beside the anvil.

**GM Note:** You could have an evil **dwarf** (use the stats for a Bandit Hero on Page 432 of the DCC Rulebook) making something in here when the party enters. He is intelligent but conniving. He will attack the party if he thinks he can win, but he can be bribed with money or gems.

**19 - (Prayer Room)** This room appears to be used for rituals and prayer. Prayer mats, prayer beads, and prayer books are scattered about. A few empty bottles that smell of ale are gathered in one corner.

**GM Note:** There are no monsters here or treasure of any real value. A few candles and incense lying around might be useful to the party. The prayer books are written in Coptic or Elvish.

**20 - (Last Stand Room)** You walk thru the entryway to this room and note that the only other exits are two doors made of wood. One of those doors has a table shoved against it that is warped and swollen. Indeed, the table only barely deserves that description. Its surface is rippled into waves and one leg doesn't even touch the floor. The door shows signs of someone trying to chop through from the other side, but it looks like they gave up.

**GM Note:** No monsters or treasure here. Maybe a corpse or two that have been hacked up.

**21 - (Throne Room)** A stone throne stands on a foot-high circular dais in the center of this cold chamber. The throne and dais bear the simple adornments of patterns of crossed lines -- a pattern also employed around each door to the room. It all seems astrological in nature. A skeleton (with glowing eyes) sitting on the throne looks at you and attacks!

**Skeletal prince:** Init +2; Attack Claw Strike +3 melee (1d6) or by Weapon +3; AC 13; HD 1d10 (10 hp); MV 30'; Act 1d20; Special Powers: Undead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; Infravision 60'; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

**22 - (Larder)** There's a hiss as you open this door, and you smell a sour odor, like something rotten or fermented. Inside you see a small room lined with dusty shelves, crates, and barrels. It looks like someone once used this place as a larder, but it has been a long time since anyone came to retrieve food from it.

**GM Note:** There are 1d4 **cave crickets** (see Page 398 of the DCC Rulebook) hiding about.

**23 - (Archery)** You open the door to a long room with a high ceiling. Three thick circles of wood rest on wooden stands. You're not certain what they are from this angle. Broken arrowheads litter the floor of this area.

**GM Note:** If the player characters step in the room to get a better look, they see that each is painted with concentric circles marred by dozens of cuts into its surface. They are targets for archery.

**24 - (Hall of Mirrors)** When looking into this chamber, you're confronted by a thousand reflections of yourself looking back. Mirrored walls set at different angles fill the room. A path seems to wind through the mirrors, although you cannot tell where it leads. It is very quiet here.

**25 - (Glow Room)** A glow escapes this room through its open doorways. The masonry between every stone emanates an unnatural orange radiance. Glancing quickly about the room, you note that each stone bears the carving of someone's name.

**26 - (Hobgoblin Quarters)** There are 1d8 **hobgoblin** guards (see Page 417 of the DCC Rulebook) that live here and patrol the surrounding areas. They are fiercely loyal to the Cult and attack any intruders.

**27 - (Public Restrooms)** Self-explanatory. It is quite dirty and stinky here.

**28 - (Bat Cave)** The air here is cool and damp, carrying the faint scent of minerals and earth. Sounds of chirping and fluttering echoes softly, creating an eerie symphony of whispers. The ground is uneven, with small pools of water reflecting a faint glow coming from the ceiling.

**GM Note:** There are 1d6 Luminescent Bats hanging from the ceiling. These small, bioluminescent bats flit about the cavern, their wings leaving trails of light in the air. They feed on the fungi and small insects that thrive in this area. They are

harmless and will not attack. Magical in nature, they are immune to any nonmagical weapon damage.

**29 - (Wall Paintings Room)** This chamber of well-laid stones holds a wide bas-relief of a pastoral scene. In it you see a mountain that looks familiar, except there is a castle near it and a small city as well. Is the subject matter from this world or another?

**30 - (Soul Trapper Room - see Storyteller/GM Note, above)**

**31 - (Retro Room)** There is a 20' tall demonic idol dominating this room of black stone. The potbellied statue is made of red stone, and its grinning face holds what looks to be two large rubies in place of eyes. A fire burns merrily in a wide brazier the idol holds in its lap.

**GM Note:** The fire is magical in nature and burns for 1d6 points of damage while touching it (no save allowed).

**32 - (Water Pillars Room)** You open the door to confront a room of odd pillars. Water rushes down from several holes in the ceiling, and each hole is roughly a foot wide. The water pours in columns that fall through similar holes in the floor, flowing down to some unknown depth. Each of the eight pillars of water drops as much liquid as a stream in winter thaw. The floor is damp and looks slippery. The smell of mold is in the air and the water is murky.

**33- (Zoo/Prison)** A horrendous, overwhelming stench wafts from the room before you. Small cages containing small animals and large insects line the walls. Some of the creatures look sickly and alive but most are clearly dead. Their rotting corpses and the unclean cages no doubt result in the zoo's foul odor. A cat meows weakly from its cage, but the other creatures just silently shrink back into their filthy prisons.

**GM Note:** If freed, the cat will become a familiar/pet.

**34 - (Yoga Room)** This chamber seems divided into three parts. The first has several hooks on the walls from which hang dusty

robes. An open curtain separates that space from the next, which has a dry basin set in the floor. Beyond that lies another parted curtain behind which you can see several straw mats in a semicircle pointing toward a statue of a dog-headed man.

**GM Note:** There is a 50% chance that 1d4 Cultists will be in this room doing yoga.

**35 - (Rubble Room)** This chamber was clearly smaller at one time, but something knocked down the wall that separated it from an adjacent room. Looking into that space, you see signs of another wall knocked over. It doesn't appear that anyone made any effort to clean up the rubble, but some paths through see more usage than others. Looks like a mining effort in the works.

**GM Note:** There is a Secret Door on the east side of this area. It leads to a deeper and more dangerous part of the dungeon.

**36 - (Soul Trapper Room - see Storyteller/GM Note, above)**

Strangely quiet here. Lots of giant spider webs and eggs with their tops broken open. Bones on the floor and a cool breeze blowing. The hair on the back of your neck rises. You hear rustling up above on the ceiling. You probably shouldn't be here.

**GM Note:** There are 1d4 *giant spiders* in here that drop down from the ceiling. They will probably have surprise/initiative the first round of combat.

**Giant spider:** Init +6; Atk Bite +5 melee (1d4 +1d4 rounds paralysis) or Web Blast +5 ranged (DC 16 entanglement); AC 13; HD 3d8 (20 hp); MV 20; Act 1d20; Special Powers: stacking entanglement, Infravision 120'; Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +0; AL N

**37 - (Slime Room)** This room smells strange, no doubt due to the weird sheets of black slime that drip from cracks in the ceiling and spread across the floor. The slime seeps from the shattered stone of the ceiling at a snail's crawl, forming a mess of dangling walls of gook. As you watch, a bit of the stuff separates and drops to the ground with a wet plop.

**GM Note:** Have green slime monsters (use stats for a **primeval slime** on Page 423 of the DCC Rulebook) attack the party here when they least expect it.

**38 - (Mold Room)** This hall stinks with the wet, pungent scent of mildew. Black and red mold grows in tangled veins across the walls and parts of the floor. Despite the smell, it looks like it might be safe to travel through. A path of stone clean of mold wends its way through the hallway. Wild mushrooms are growing out of the floor in some areas.

**GM Note:** A **shrooman** (see Page 426 of the DCC Rulebook) lives here and will attack immediately.

**39 - (Cave Bear)** This area is obviously an animal den of some sorts. Human bones and fecal matter litter the dirty floor. Straw has been spread out around as well. In the middle sleeps a giant cave bear! It opens up one eye and peers at you with curiosity. Perhaps it is debating on whether or not to eat you all. It appears to be intelligent. Maybe a Druid could talk to it?

**GM Note:** The *cave bear* is mighty but will not immediately attack. It could be bribed with food or treasure.

**Cave Bear:** Init +1; Attack Claw Strike +4 melee (1d6+1) or Grapple +6 (opposed grapple check to break free); AC 17; HD 5d8+5 (25 hp); MV 30'; Act 1d20; Special Powers: Infravision 60'; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +6; AL N

**40 - (Glitter Room)** In here wonderfully shining rocks and stalactites abound. Light reflects and dances in many directions. It makes you all slightly dizzy. You feel happy though. Are those gems on the floor? Shadows dance and play as you move about the area.

**GM Note:** Possibly have a monster that uses illusions or trickery attack the party here. Maybe an evil Gnome Illusionist (use the stats for a **magician** on Page 433 of the DCC Rulebook). The Gnome will know of the Soul Trapper and its power.

**41-** (Midnight Tunnel) Neither light nor dark-vision can penetrate the gloom in this area. An unnatural shade fills it, and the room's farthest reaches are barely visible. Near the room's center, you can just barely perceive a lump about the size of a human lying on the floor.

**GM Note:** It might be a dead body, a pile of rags, or a sleeping monster that can take advantage of the room's darkness. This is a great place to attack the adventurers with powerful undead (e.g., a **shadow**; see Page 425 of the DCC Rulebook). The darkness is magical in nature and seems to just ooze from the ceiling.

If you run this adventure more than once, you might want to change the map using the Random Dungeon Room table below. Or, if you have less time to run the adventure, remove some of the rooms on the map. Note that monsters can roam around and will react to things they hear in adjacent rooms. The Cultists will work together and possibly set additional traps once they know of the party's presence.



Map of the local area with the dungeon entrance being somewhere in the GodsHome Mountains...

### Random Adventure Plots

1. A local wizard needs some spell components.
2. Someone important was captured.
3. A virus breaks out and a cure is needed
4. A powerful relic is unearthed and goes missing.
5. The local Mayor/Duke is found murdered.
6. A map found on a dead body that was robbed.

### Random Male Names

- |            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. Ryle    | 7. Norvin   |
| 2. Erwin   | 8. Safford  |
| 3. Lyndell | 9. Calvert  |
| 4. Marlow  | 10. Zale    |
| 5. Paxton  | 11. Earl    |
| 6. Radnor  | 12. Bromley |

### Random Forest Encounters

1. Wolves
2. Goblins and/or Orcs
3. Bandits/Thugs
4. Dwarf Wanderer who is cranky but wise
5. Gnome Tinkerer with cool gadgets for sale
6. Giant Spider(s) who are hungry

### Random Female Names

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1. Edwina | 7. Madison  |
| 2. Valora | 8. Clover   |
| 3. Dahlia | 9. Iris     |
| 4. Paige  | 10. Lillian |
| 5. Melba  | 11. Nelda   |
| 6. Zeta   | 12. Osma    |

### Random Weapons

1. Blowgun
2. Short Bow
3. Scimitar
4. Trident
5. Warhammer
6. Sickle
7. Battleaxe
8. Quarterstaff
9. War Pick
10. Halberd
11. Short Sword
12. Long Sword

### Random Gemstones

1. Malachite
2. Jade
3. Chrysocolla
4. Agate
5. Ruby
6. Emerald
7. Sapphire
8. Citrine
9. Opal
10. Lazurite
11. Pyrite
12. Tiger's-Eye

### **Random Dungeon Rooms**

1. Barracks
2. Prison
3. Treasury
4. Library
5. Forge
6. Magic Fountain
7. Kitchen
8. Armory
9. Alchemist Lab
10. Summon Circle
11. Tomb
12. Sacrificial Altar

### **Random City Buildings**

1. Mayor's House
2. Wizard's Guild
3. Thieves' Guild
4. Plague Doctor
5. Cemetery
6. Temple
7. Bakery
8. Inn
9. Blacksmith
10. Tavern
11. Market
12. Butcher

# THE MOUND OF SORROWS

By Daniel J. Bishop

Art by Stefan Poag

Cartography by Dyson Logos



## BACKGROUND

The ill-fated Deirdre the Beautiful was once the lover of Naisi, son of Usna. At that time, King Conchubor wielded the magical battleaxe known as the *Sorrows*. Perhaps due to the influence of his weapon, the King grew jealous of the young lovers. In time, King Conchubor's jealousy became his master. He had Naisi murdered, and his remains hidden. The King then took Deirdre for his wife. Now they, and the *Sorrows*, are buried, almost forgotten in a grassy mound amidst a deep wood.

Judges can use this adventure when their players wish to Quest For a magical weapon. There is also a fair bit of treasure, so the mound is a good choice of location when the players uncover a treasure map. The ghost of Deirdre the Beautiful supplies context to motivate the players toward additional adventures, either published or of the judge's devising.

Thieves, dwarves, and clerics are given particular opportunities to shine.

## ENCOUNTER AREAS

**1. Entrance:** The way into the mound is sealed with a heavy block of stone. Breaking in requires picks, mallets, or similar tools, as well as an hour of labor (subtract 10 minutes per point of Strength bonus for the lead worker, and 10 minutes for each of the first two helpers if they do not have penalties to Strength). Without appropriate tools, this work takes 1d5 times as long, and each worker must succeed in a Luck check or sustain 1d3 damage in the process.

*Once the stone block has been removed, you can see a few rough stone steps leading into the barrow. After only five feet or so, the passage turns to the left. The smell of old wet stone is heavy in the melancholy air, and the low ceiling – a mere five feet from the floor – makes the place seem cramped and gloomy.*

Characters over 5' tall must hunch over to travel down the corridor, and have a -2 penalty to attack rolls. Two-handed weapons requiring room to swing (battleaxes, polearms, and two-handed swords) are at a -1d penalty to attack rolls and damage. This condition persists throughout the mound, except in **Area 4**.

**2. Ossuary:** *The corridor goes 5 feet past the turn, entering into a rough stone chamber some 10 feet wide and perhaps 20 feet long. To both the left and the right, niches some 2½ feet wide by 2½ feet high open from the wall, 3 to each side. Even from here you can see the jumbled bones of the dead within, brown from long ages of burial. On the far side of the room, a narrow passage leads forward, and another narrow passage leads eastward.*

These skeletal remains will not animate until characters have gone forward, and then are trying to leave the barrow, or if the PCs are determined to destroy the remains entirely. Only one **crawling skeleton** animates from each niche, for a total of six. These creatures were loyal retainers of King Conchubor, and served as his hounds. When attacking, they remain on all fours (and thus are not affected by the low ceiling), attacking with dog-like teeth. Their bite carries a wasting sickness (Fort DC 15 or lose 1d3 points each of Strength, Agility, and Stamina each day; a new save is allowed each day, and success ends the wasting, but for every 3 points lost to an attribute, 1 is permanent).

**Crawling Skeletons (6):** Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 plus wasting sickness); CRIT U/d6; AC 11; HD 2d6; hp 3,3,8,12,5,7; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, wasting sickness, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

**3. False Deirdre:** *After five feet, the passage narrows to a mere three feet, but beyond that you can see a burial space, 5 feet wide and 10 feet deep, where a single skeleton lies on a raised stone. The skeleton wears the tattered remains of a sea-green dress, and you can see jewels twinkling in the light at the skeleton's breast, wrists, and throat.*

Even in death, King Conchubor was jealous of his rivals for Deirdre the Beautiful's affections. Fearing they would despoil her corpse, his servants entombed a comely serving woman here, decked out in finery. Her silver brooch, shaped like a sea eagle with sapphires for eyes, is worth 50 gp, and at each wrist is a gold bracelet studded with rubies, each of which is worth 75 gp. The strand of pearls around her neck are worth 25 gp.

There is a trap here, though, to catch the unwary (Find Traps DC 12, Disable Trap DC 20). Anyone pushing through the passage must make a Luck check or dislodge loose stone in the eastern wall. This, in turn, causes a heavy stone to fall from above (2d6 damage, Reflex DC 10 for half, affecting all characters in the narrow area). Once the stone has fallen, a DC 10 Agility check is required to get through the passage (armor check penalty applies), and the DC increases by +2 for each failure, as more stone falls. Halflings gain a +1d bonus to this check. The passage can be cleared from the south with 1d3 hour's work, but characters in **Area 3** cannot do this, and the hauling needed to remove the stone triggers the un-dead to attack in **Area 2**.

**4. King Conchubor's Tomb:** A stone door blocks the entrance to this tomb, marked with the stylized running stag which King Conchubor used as his sigil. The door can be pushed open easily enough, but if not prevented from closing, there is no easy way to do so from the other side. Characters with proper tools can get through the door as in **Area 1**, but those failing to carry tools with them are in dire straits unless someone was left outside.

*Three rough stone steps lead down into a 10-foot-square burial chamber which, thankfully, is 7 feet high. A once-magnificent wooden casket is on a stone slab along the eastern wall – time and dampness have taken their toll on the carved black wood. A dozen sealed ceramic urns are placed around the stone slab. The mummified wings of three sea eagles adorn the top of the casket. Beneath them, you can see carved the stylized sigil of a running stag.*

Here lie the remains of King Conchubor, who once ruled these forested lands. The lid of his coffin is carved with the sign of the running stag, and cavorting hounds (also stylized) are depicted on the sides of the coffin. The sea eagle wings were intended to convey the King's soul onward beyond the Lands We Know, and are not unusual at all.

Opening the casket without checking for traps (Find Traps DC 15, Disable Trap DC 10) causes a scything bronze blade to threaten the opener (+4 melee, 1d5+1 damage). Within the casket lie the remains of King Conchubor, who stood over 6½ feet in life, wearing chainmail that is no longer serviceable. At his feet is a long and slender locked iron box (Pick Locks DC 5) and laid upon his chest is the *Sorrows* (see sidebar nearby).

Within the metal box are three scrolls:

1) A clerical scroll of *food of the gods*, inscribed in the elvish tongue (user must make a spell check using their own die type and modifier). The scroll can be used three times before crumbling into powder;

2) A clerical scroll of *animal summoning*, designed and marked for the use of druids. When it is first used, the caster makes a spell check using 1d24. Thereafter, each time it is used, there is a cumulative -1d penalty to the spell check. If an attempt to cast the spell ever fails, the scroll is consumed in a burst of green flame which does 3d6 damage to the user (no save);

3) A clerical scroll sealed with wax, in which is stamped the sigil of the archdruid Cathbad, who perished long ago. Three spells as scribed thereupon: *word of command*, *resist cold or heat*, and *holy sanctuary*, and each is cast with a +2 bonus. However, as each spell is cast, the incantation for that spell is replaced with gibberish - which is only apparent when the user tries to cast the spell again!

Of the twelve urns, four are filled with amber beads (1,000 beads worth 1 sp each), four are filled with silver coins (500 each), and three are filled with mead (3 gallons per urn, 5 gp value per gallon).

Opening the final urn (which feels and sounds like it holds coins, although a DC 20 attempt to Find Traps discovers minute runes in the wax seal) releases a curse: All within the chamber must succeed in a DC 10 Will save or be struck blind.

A round later, there is an oppressive sense as if something monstrous was in the room with them – this is an illusion, but hilarity may occur as PCs strike out at each other blindly in the room.

The sense of something monstrous only lasts 1d5 rounds, but

### ***The Sorrows***

Neutral +2 Battleaxe

**Intelligence:** 10

**Communication:** Empathy (a constant sense of sorrow, from which it gains its name)

**Special Purpose:** Reunite separated lovers

**Curse 1:** Haunted. Once every 1d30 days, the ghost of Deirdre the Beautiful appears to the wielder at night, until Deirdre is interred with her one-time lover, Naisi, son of Usna. Determining where Naisi's remains now lie, and reuniting the lovers, may require several quests.

**Curse 2:** Wielder has a -1d penalty to any save against *charm* or similar effects. When *charmed* or in love, wielder experiences intense pangs of jealousy related to the object of their affection (per judge, but player is encouraged to role-play this!).

**Power:** Critical hits from *the Sorrows* can affect creatures that are normally immune to critical hits.

**Bane:** Fey (Fey inflict only half damage against the wielder if they succeed in a DC 14 Fort save).

**The Ghost of Deidre the Beautiful:** Init +2; Atk incorporeal touch +6 melee (possession); CRIT U/d6; AC 10; HD 2d12; hp 15; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, immune to nonmagical weapons, possession (Will DC 12 resists, a new save is allowed every 1d5 hours); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C. The ghost uses possessed characters to search for her lost love, Naisi.

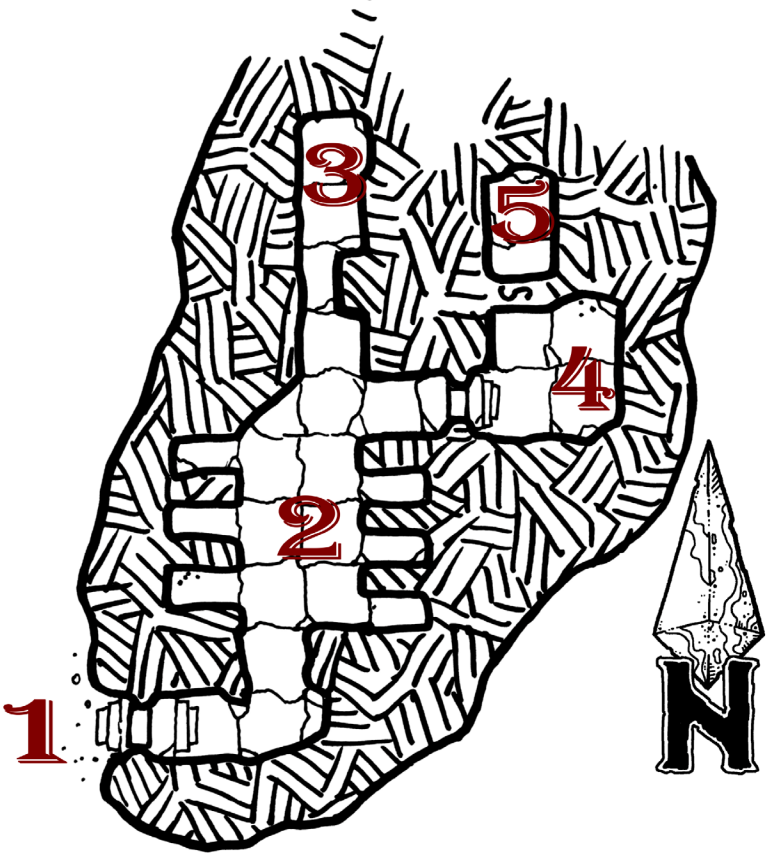
the blindness lasts until healed or until the sun touches the faces of the afflicted.

The secret door to **Area 5** is a heavy stone which is held in place by another stone underneath. If the holding stone is removed, the secret door falls into a slot in the floor and cannot be raised again.

**5. True Deidre:** *The stone descends with a resounding crash. Beyond, there is a small chamber, 5 feet wide and 10 feet deep. Within lies a young woman, as beautiful as the day she died, dressed in a sea-green dress. Three sets of mummified sea eagles' wings were placed upon her torso.*

As soon as the body is touched, it collapses into dust and bones, giving off a sweet aroma. The character(s) who touched her gain +1 Luck and heal 1 HD of damage. She is adorned much as was the false Deidre in Area 3, but in all cases her adornments are finer. Her dress, stitched with silver threads, has lasted through the ages and is worth 15 gp. Her silver brooch is worth 75 gp, her two bracelets are worth 125 gp each, and the double strand of pearls she wears is worth 250 gp.

# THE MOUND OF SORROWS



ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET

# **THE OUTCAST, THE CLUTCH, AND THE THING THAT WATCHES**

By Shane Kablooey  
Art by Nick Heazell  
Cartography by András Baracscai

## **INTRODUCTION**

In a quiet hollow deep beneath the earth, a strange ripple of emotion echoes through the stone—a silent cry for help, felt rather than heard. The source is soon discovered: a clutch of FLUMPHS huddled together in distress, their jellyfish-like bodies pulsing with pale bioluminescence. Through gentle psychic projections, they convey their anguish. Three of their young have gone missing.

The flumphs do not accuse, but they fear. They suspect the involvement of a creature known as a DOERGRE—one of the deep ogres. The name by which they call it: FLARPSNAGGLE.

This is a tale of weird empathy, misunderstood monsters, and the fragile hope of healing in the dark.

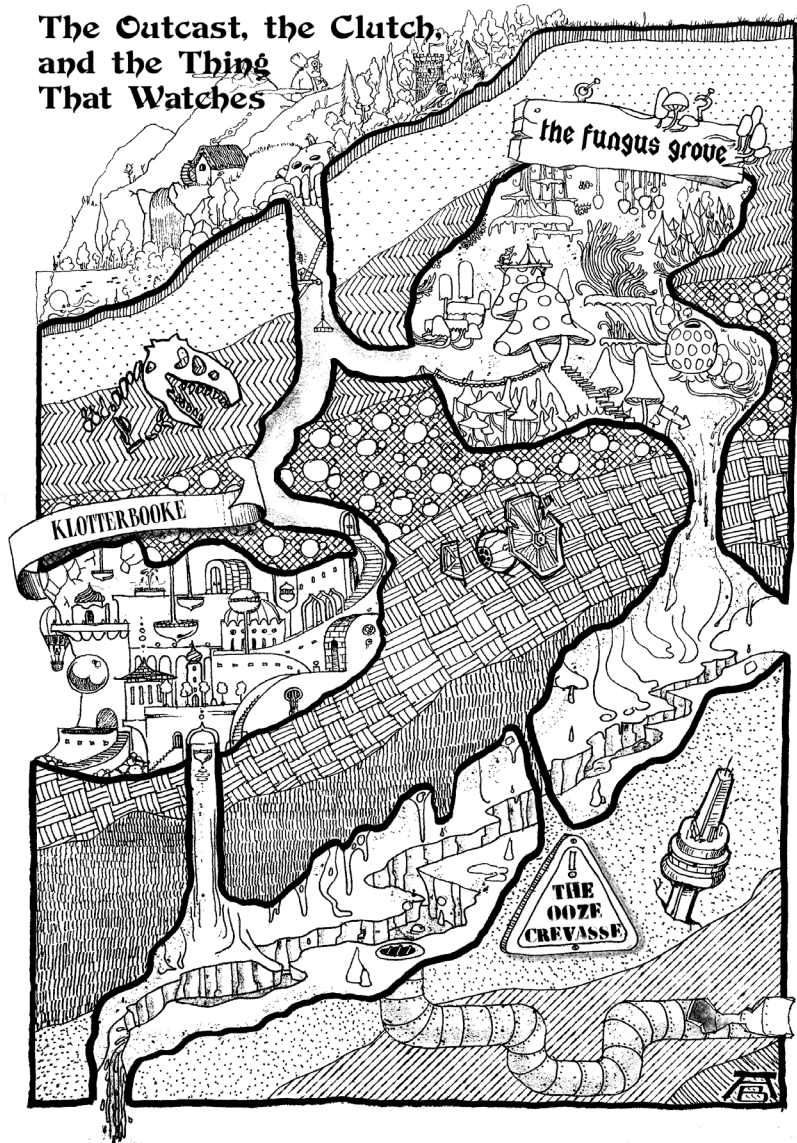
## **THE JOURNEY TO TRUTH**

The players' search for the missing Softspawn (flumphlings leads) them through the strange biomes of the underdeep:

- **KLOTTERBOOKE**, a reclusive settlement of Svirfneblin (Deep Gnomes), where everything feels both freshly invented and ancient. Its residents are quiet, curious, and socially awkward. They speak in riddled logic and spiral into lecture

tangents. One child quietly mentions seeing “a big purple one playing hide and seek with the floaters.”

- A FUNGUS GROVE where colorful spores cloud the air, and travelers must resist hallucinatory confusion (save vs confusion 1d6 rounds).
- A glistening OOZE CREVASSE where the ground pulses underfoot. Something watches from the shadows.



## THE FUNGUS GROVE

At the edge of the known tunnels, the air thickens with scent — earthy, wet, and sweet, like composted dreams. The stone walls sweat, slick with moss and glowing mycelia. This is no ordinary patch of mushrooms: it is a grove grown wild in time and mind, a place where memory and madness root in equal measure.

Luminescent toadstools tower like umbrellas, and carpets of moss giggle softly underfoot. Pale spore clouds hang in the air like mist, refracting strange colors from unseen light. Breathing here is enough to invite visions.

**Every creature must Save vs Confusion (Will save DC 12) or become affected for 1d6 rounds.**

**Eating the fungi** — whether curious or desperate — invokes a deeper madness. The hallucinations become persistent and reality bends: roll on the table below and note that **effects last 1d16 days**.

*(Failing the save results in one of the effects below for 1d6 rounds)*

| <b>1d24</b> | <b>Hallucinogenic Effect</b>   |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1</b>    | You hear your own voice echoing in reverse, narrating your every action in rhyme.                          |
| <b>2</b>    | Everything turns into melting candy; enemies look like gingerbread folk.                                   |
| <b>3</b>    | The cavern walls breathe slowly, in and out, like lungs.   |
| <b>4</b>    | Your hands leave rainbow trails when you move them, and you're fascinated by it.                           |
| <b>5</b>    | You believe you are three feet to the left of where you actually are (attacks/movement suffer -2 penalty). |
| <b>6</b>    | All flumphs appear as divine angels; you must kneel or whisper confessions.                                |

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 7  | You forget nouns; must describe everything in awkward metaphors.                                     |
| 8  | Every time you speak, bubbles float from your mouth and you think you're underwater.                 |
| 9  | The party appears as strangers – you believe they are doppelgangers or imposters.                    |
| 10 | Gravity reverses (for you); you cling to the ceiling in terror (prone unless restrained).            |
| 11 | Your weapons appear to be snakes whispering insults and secrets.                                     |
| 12 | You're convinced the floor is covered in invisible crawling insects.                                 |
| 13 | You see a smaller version of yourself running beside you – sometimes arguing.                        |
| 14 | All colors invert; light sources become black holes.   |
| 15 | You believe one random PC is your long-lost sibling (true or not).                                   |
| 16 | You're convinced you've shrunk to the size of a mouse – must act accordingly.                        |
| 17 | You feel a strong compulsion to “walk the path of the spiral” (move in circles each round).          |
| 18 | You perceive voices from the mushrooms urging you to lie down and "listen to the roots."             |
| 19 | The ground looks like it's covered in mouths whispering your name.                                   |
| 20 | You hallucinate a swarm of glowing birds only you can see; you try to feed or chase them.            |
| 21 | The most beautiful sound plays from nowhere – you're stunned 1 round in awe.                         |
| 22 | You believe you've been cursed with truth; you blurt secrets uncontrollably for 1d6 rounds.          |
| 23 | You become convinced you're turning into a mushroom; you stop moving to "photosynthesize."           |
| 24 | You see everyone – including yourself – as boneless puppets being controlled by glowing threads from |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | the sky (roll 1d3: 1 = frightened, 2 = enraged, 3 = overwhelmed/stunned). |
|--|---|

## KLOTTERBOOKE: THE HALF-KNOWN HAMLET

Klotterbooke is a peculiar Svirfneblin village nestled deep underground. Time feels folded here, as though the place exists slightly out of phase with normal reality. Its inhabitants are brilliant, but socially awkward; and the town may serve as a curious (and useful) base of operations for adventurers willing to tolerate its quirks.

### Environmental Effects in Klotterbooke (While Still Hallucinating)

Use this table if any PCs are still under the effects of the fungal hallucinations when they arrive. Klotterbooke *feels* real, but the world itself is... melting slightly.

| 1d7 | Hallucinatory Environment  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Buildings appear made of soft, breathing coral; they pulse to the rhythm of the PC's heartbeat.                                    |
| 2   | The entire village is bathed in one overwhelming color (player's choice), and it changes each round.                               |
| 3   | The sky above the cavern dome is filled with floating doors – some open to starlight, others to eyes.                              |
| 4   | The streets loop infinitely unless walked backward. Gnomes helpfully guide you but in palindromes.                                 |
| 5   | Every sound echoes in reverse, and speaking aloud causes a flicker in nearby buildings.  |
| 6   | A massive crystal hovers silently in the village center, spinning slowly. It's not actually there. But it <i>feels</i> like it is. |
| 7   | Gravity seems negotiable. You're not floating, but you're not sure which way is down either.                                       |

## **d7: Mundane Klotterbooke Life Encounters (If Hallucinating)**

These contrast starkly with the surreal visuals—entirely normal and awkward interactions with residents while the world looks like a dream.

| <b>1d7</b> | <b>Awkward Local Encounters</b>  |
|------------|--|
| <b>1</b>   | A gnome shyly offers a poorly baked muffin and asks if you want to join his cheese club.                                       |
| <b>2</b>   | A town elder mistakes you for someone else and talks about “the old crystal flood” for far too long.                           |
| <b>3</b>   | A trio of teens invites you to watch a beetle race behind the tavern. They take it <i>very seriously</i> .                     |
| <b>4</b>   | A shopkeeper offers you an unlabeled potion as a “thank-you for existing.” It’s just water.                                    |
| <b>5</b>   | A gnome bumps into you, apologizes, and runs off. Moments later, a completely different gnome does the exact same thing.       |
| <b>6</b>   | A local is loudly singing a bad ballad about “Flarpsnaggle the Ogre with a Gentle Heart.” No one joins in.                     |
| <b>7</b>   | You’re invited to participate in a ritual. It turns out to be rock-paper-scissors, but with five extra steps and strange hats. |

## d24: Sober Encounters in Klotterbooke (Odd, Quirky & Potentially Useful)

Use this table for grounded PCs who aren't hallucinating – but who still notice the ambient weirdness of a town out of step with the rest of reality. Many entries could hint at Klotterbooke's potential as a base.

| 1d24 | Klotterbooke Encounter   |
|------|--|
| 1    | A gnome alchemist sells “pocket-hourglass grenades” that explode into 3 seconds of déjà vu.          |
| 2    | The local library has a floor that changes depending on what subject you're reading about.           |
| 3    | A baker insists their bread tastes like “safe memories.” They're not wrong.                          |
| 4    | A chalkboard near the square updates with riddles only <i>one person in town</i> can read per day.   |
| 5    | A blacksmith makes tools that are slightly <i>too perfect</i> – some suspect extraplanar influence.  |
| 6    | A rotating spire in the middle of town chimes every hour – but no one built it.                      |
| 7    | A gnome claims to know your <i>true level</i> and offers an ominous challenge in a board game.       |
| 8    | A group of children plays a game predicting what the party will say next – with disturbing accuracy. |
| 9    | The tavern serves drinks that show brief visions of other lives you <i>could have lived</i> .        |
| 10   | One of the flumphlings from earlier now lives here, oddly mature and speaking in riddles.            |
| 11   | The town has no calendar, yet everyone agrees what day it is – except the PCs.                       |
| 12   | An inn room changes shape every night but is always comfortable. Some guests never leave.            |
| 13   | A clocktower runs backward, and the locals insist it's “always been that way.”                       |

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 14 | A minor deity occasionally sits on the well's edge but can only be seen in reflections.          |
| 15 | A gnome teaches defensive spells to chickens. The chickens are <i>not</i> grateful.              |
| 16 | "The Tunnel That Wasn't There" leads nowhere... unless someone hums the right melody.            |
| 17 | Every morning, fog briefly takes the shape of dancing flumphs. Only visitors can see it.         |
| 18 | A weird tree at the village edge drops glowing stones that reveal hidden paths.                  |
| 19 | The blacksmith dreams in riddles and wakes with blueprints to items that don't exist yet.        |
| 20 | A random door leads to a stairwell with exactly 17 steps. At the top is... another Klotterbooke. |
| 21 | A frog in a glass jar recites future weather patterns when fed insects. It's never been wrong.   |
| 22 | A small shrine is dedicated to "The Traveler Who Fell Through." No one remembers who that was.   |
| 23 | A gnome researcher offers to "measure your narrative arc." You might gain a +1 Luck.             |
| 24 | The village square occasionally rewinds 30 seconds—only once per week—and no one talks about it. |

## THE OOZE CREVASSE

A narrow rift yawns across the cavern floor, no wider than a stride at its narrowest, but endlessly deep. Slippery stones glisten with a sheen not of water, but something slower... more deliberate. The walls pulse—gently, like the throat of something massive drawing breath far below.

Every step closer feels like a mistake remembered too late.

Long strings of mucosal slime dangle from stalactites like tendrils, swaying though there is no wind. The air is humid and clings with the scent of sour copper and fermented moss.

Footfalls stick for a moment longer than they should. Shadows slither at the edge of vision, never quite there when you turn.

The crevasse itself is filled with viscous, semi-luminous fluid – pale green with occasional bursts of color that ripple outward like thoughts escaping containment. If you stare long enough, it appears to form shapes: faces of loved ones, dripping eyes, a childhood home warped and sagging.

Occasionally, a faint *click* or *wet slurp* echoes across the stone. And always, always, there's the sensation that something is watching – not with eyes, but with attention. Deep, hungry attention.

Something *knows* you're here.

### **Optional Effects / Encounters in the Crevasse:**

- 1. The ooze rises just enough to touch a boot.** It retracts, as if sampling.
- 2. A random object on a PC begins to drip ooze from within, like it was hidden there all along.**
- 3. A shadow across the gap mimics the party's movements, but imperfectly – until it doesn't.**
- 4. Something whispers from below in a voice no one recognizes but all understand. It offers a memory in exchange for safety.**
- 5. One PC hears their name called gently from beneath. It's their own voice.**
- 6. A tendril lashes out (Atk +3, 1d4 acid) and then vanishes into the depths. No sign it was ever there.**

## **THE OGRE FLARPSNAGGLE**

Flarpsnaggle is not like the other Doergres – who are usually shrewd, cruel, and domineering. He is young, slow to speak, and heartbreakingly kind. He was cast out for being “soft,” and in isolation he found companionship with the flumphlings.

When the players find him, he is gently stacking rocks around the children like protective walls and placing hand-sewn mushroom caps on their heads as hats. He calls them “babies” and believes he is keeping them safe – from something awful.

## **THE TWIST: CALLIA, THE WEREFLUMPH**

Callia was once a human adventurer. During a failed expedition, they were separated from their party and critically wounded. A flumph, in a desperate attempt to save them, merged psionically and physically. It worked – but the result was not salvation. It was transformation.

Now something between flumph and human, Callia hides in the shadows, unable to fully grasp their new nature. They are not a monster – but they are unstable, wracked by uncontrollable empathy, fear, and grief. They have been watching the flumphlings from afar, unsure whether to approach – or to disappear forever.

## **CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES**

**FIGHT FLARPSNAGGLE:** The party can attempt to reclaim the flumphlings by force. If they do, Callia may stalk them later, grief turning to rage.

**NEGOTIATE:** The players can reason with Flarpsnaggle, who will gladly surrender the children if convinced it is safe. He may even follow them out of a need for purpose.

**TRUST THE OGRE:** The party may choose to help Flarpsnaggle locate and confront Callia. This encounter can

lead to a tragic battle or a chance to reach the broken adventurer's heart.

### **CALLIA, THE WEREFLUMPH**

Flickering between phases of matter and identity, Callia reacts to emotion more than logic. With care, the party may reach them through shared memory, kindness, or even music and light. If comforted, Callia might rejoin the flumphs as a guardian or sibling figure. If spurned or attacked, they become something truly dangerous.



## ENDING OPTIONS

- The flumphlings are returned, and Flarpsnaggle is accepted into the clutch as their gentle protector.
- Callia is calmed and joins them, creating a bizarre but beautiful family.
- The party chooses violence, and, while they may win the day, a trail of sorrow follows them to the surface.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Spellcasters receive dream-fragments from a flumphling begging for help.
- Klotterbooke's thinkers detect a psychic anomaly blooming in the deeps.
- A flumphling bonds with a PC and follows them home.

## STAT BLOCKS

**Flarpsnaggle:** Init -1; Atk clumsy fist +6 (1d10+3) or rock toss +3 (1d6, 30' range); AC 12; HD 5d10+10; HP 35; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP: Innocent Intentions - +2 to all CHA-based interactions if approached gently, Misjudged - Will save DC 12 to recognize he means no harm; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +2; AL L (if treated kindly)

**Callia the Werelfumph:** Init +2; Atk tendril lash +4 (1d6, Will save DC 14 or suffer emotional feedback); AC 14; HD 6d6; HP 25; MV 20', hover 20'; Act 2d20; SP: Empathic Feedback Pulse, Flicker Phase, Fractured Identity, Residual Humanity; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C/N (shattered)

*Empathic Feedback Pulse (1/day):* All in 30' make Will save DC 12 or be stunned for 1 round.

*Flicker Phase:* May become incorporeal for 1 round.

*Fractured Identity:* Can be reached via Presence DC 14 (3 group successes across the encounter).

*Residual Humanity:* Kindness may bring back fragments of self.



# A PRECIOUS CATCH

by Russell Bevers

A level 0 DCC RPG adventure. Thank you to the playtesters: GrapeApe, Hemlocks, Brucifer, DakotaMichaelRose, Devon, Spencer, and Danatronic.

## INTRODUCTION

The adventure begins as an investigation into the whereabouts of Ol' Grizzie, a fisherman well-known to the nearby village. It quickly turns into a dive for treasure beneath Grizzie's Cove and beyond. The characters learn that there are strange forces beneath the surface. The wreck, which is the ultimate destination for the adventure, is the habitation of a boy, son of an ancient ruler, now a creature of the deep and long a plaything of these same forces. He sees the characters as playmates come for a visit.

*A Precious Catch* is a 0-level adventure intended for 8-16 characters, inspired by poems and tales of sea towns and the secrets of the deep.

This adventure forces characters to go under the waves in ways that do not facilitate simple, straight-forward combat with monsters. Players and judges are encouraged to be creative about these interactions in ways that make sense to them.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Long ago the King of Pellidus, Parnassus the Wise, had sent for his two great treasures to return to the capitol after a great war. The first treasure of Pellidus was its young heir, Parnassian the Second, a boy-prince not yet come into manhood. The second was a small amount of magical material known only to the king and his key counselors as "*The King's Mint.*" The material, when touched to mundane things and precious gold at the same time, turns the objects wholly into gold.

*"The King's Mint"* is in truth a small crumbling piece of the Shell from the Primeval Egg of Creation, an ingredient that helped make the whole material world. Those who have studied its lore believe that it is the raw stuff of generative creation or chaos.

While on the voyage, the young heir grew curious and managed to open *"The Mint"* up, with disastrous results. The vessel sank off the coast before it could return home. The kingdom of Pellidus then faded into the annals of history.

Over time, the supply of Shell on board the sunken ship has been transforming the ship, its passengers, and the local flora and fauna under the waves near Grizzie's Cove. Recently, some of the gold made by the *King's Mint* was part of a precious catch that lured Ol' Grizzie underwater after more of the same. His lust for sunken treasure drove him to go beneath the waves and explore the ancient wreck to find more.

## THE SHELL OF THE PRIMEVAL EGG

Pieces of the Shell look like flakes of mica or enlarged grains of sand. They glow enough to light the nearby area and scintillate unpredictably.

**Passive Effects.** If in open air, there is a gentle, fresh breeze coming off of them. If underwater, there is a gentle current of fresh water flowing from them.

Placing a piece of the Shell into any gaseous or liquid substance begins to increase the volume of the substance. Placing two solid materials against a piece of the shell almost instantly changes the less dense material into the denser one, but not predictably. The Shell has no effect on lead and its alloys.

**Active Effects.** Touching a piece of the Shell to a living thing without a thick barrier causes a strange occurrence. Roll on the following table:

| <b>1d10</b> | <b>Effect</b>  |
|-------------|--|
| 1           | Thick hair begins to grow all over the character at a rate of 1 inch per round for 1d6 rounds. This growth is permanent. The hair grows back to this length every 1d3 weeks unless it is cropped regularly.  |
| 2           | The character's mind grows in sensitivity such that the character can sense the emotional state of any creature of its same race within 3'. This sense requires the character to concentrate for a full round and does not give details, but can be used to more reliably detect falsehood and anxiety.          |
| 3           | The limb with which the character touched the Shell grows an additional 3d6 inches. Every 6 inches of growth, rounded down, gives the character a cumulative +1 to throwing a weapon with that limb.   |
| 4           | Roll 1d10 modified by Luck on the Major Corruption table. For a result of 11+, re-roll on the Greater Corruption table.  |
| 5           | Roll 1d5 to determine which non-Luck ability is raised permanently by 1 point, with an unnatural rapid adjusting.  |
| 6           | The character's hair, finger nails, and toenails all grow an extra 1d7 inches over the next 2 rounds. This makes it awkward to hold weapons and to see properly, giving them a -1d on attack rolls and reflex saves until they trim themselves.  |
| 7           | The character's fingers and toes become webbed with a fleshy tissue that allows them to move at full speed underwater as long as their feet and hands are bare. Additionally, small gills become apparent on the underside of their jaw enabling them to breath underwater without appearing horrible to behold. |
| 8           | The character feels very sick to their stomach. They have 1 round to find a more comfortable place to vomit, and then everything they've recently eaten comes back up in triplicate.   |

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 9  | Random lumps of flesh grow extraordinarily all over their body and face. Their face becomes unbalanced and tipped slightly with their eyes uneven. The character becomes their own version of “the elephant man.”                |
| 10 | The character feels a jubilation moving through their body from the point where they touched the Shell, resulting in a shaking sensation and a compulsive need to stand up, dance, and holler vigorously for the next 1d3 turns. |

With a DC 12 Personality-based spell check, a character can coax a piece of the Shell to create a generative or transformative effect. A higher check is required depending on the effect.

When used actively, the piece of the Shell deteriorates on a roll of 1 on a d30. Each use thereafter increases the chance of consumption, a lower die is rolled on the dice chain.

## **RUMORS**

The following are the bits of gossip related to Grizzie and his recent behaviors. Each player rolls 1d8 to determine which their characters have heard.

| <b>1d8</b> | <b>Rumor</b>   |
|------------|--|
| 1          | Murky (proprietor of Murky’s Mercantile, Bait & Tackle)says Old Grizzie’s been buying large lead weights and porthole glasses for large sailing vessels along with yards of canvas. He’s paid in gold and still has a tab he hasn’t used up. |
| 2          | Deergen the farrier saw one of the coins... the coin looked old and had weird stick-words on it.   |
| 3          | Feargol, another local fisherman, saw Grizzie in his rowboat about a week ago, with the biggest glass float he’d ever seen.  |
| 4          | The only thing anybody’s ever heard Grizzie call his dog is “Yippin’”. The quietest time on the cove is when he’s sleeping.  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 5 | A tavern customer shares that the waves outside Grizzie's cove have been odd. One ship that should have foundered said that it pushed them back into the harbor.        |
| 6 | Grizzie wins the prize for the grandest crab every year at the fair. Maybe he finally got the crab fever and walked off into the surf.                                  |
| 7 | An ancient treasure ship wrecked long ago in Grizzie's cove. The survivors of these ancient peoples are said to be the founders of this here fishing village.           |
| 8 | Grobin's Grotto is near Grizzie's hideout. It's underwater now but used to house pirates on this coast. Maybe Grizzie found their loot. Or maybe the pirates found him. |

### **PLAYER BACKGROUND**

*Old man Grizzie has been fishing the rocky shores near town for as long as anyone remembers. Recently he hasn't been seen working his nets like usual. He's also been flashing some gold around.*

*It's been a week since anyone has seen Ol' Grizzie. Some think he's dead. Some think he needs finding, alive or otherwise. Others think he's caught a sunken treasure in his nets and left town. His home is down the cliff path known as "the Crawl" to the sea, which leads to the rock outcropping that serves as Ol' Grizzie's usual launch.*

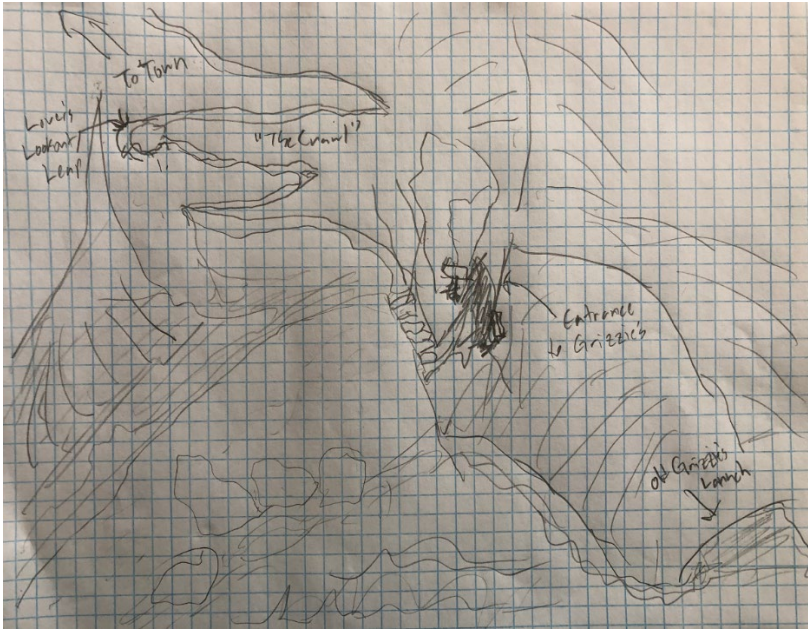
*Time to find Ol' Grizzie, or time to get cold, wet, and hopefully rich.*

### **AREA 1 - LOVERS' LOOKOUT / LEAP**

*The steep path down to Grizzie's Cove passes a grassy flat with a great scented coastal cedar growing on the landward side. It's a popular place for the young folk to steal away from the small-town eyes.*

Any character with an ocean-going occupation or making a successful luck check notices a strangeness in the waves beyond the cove: a grey swell with odd waves.

This is the point at which it's usually possible to hear Grizzie's dog barking. Today it is silent.



## **AREA 2 - CHÂTEAU D' CRABE (GRIZZIE'S FRONT DOOR)**

*After coming down a set of slick stone slab steps, the path ends at an opening into the cliff.*

*Two grey wooden signs are affixed to either side of the entrance, each made of a ship's plank tacked onto a piece of old driftwood. One reads, "Château d'Crabe." The other says simply, "Do not feed the dog!"*

*There is a bit of dim light inside, enough to see a pile of nets and an open space just beyond the door.*

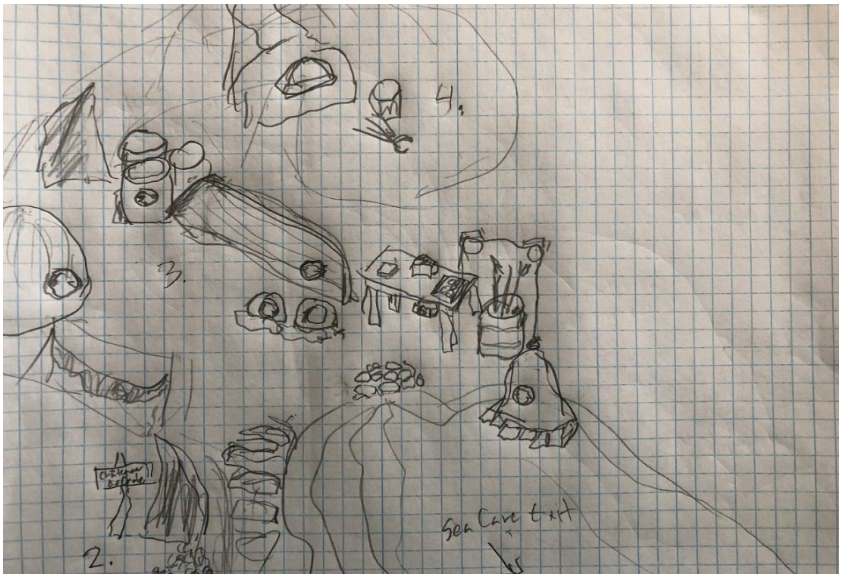
## **AREA 3 - DIVERS' WORKSHOP**

*A cavernous chamber of time-worn salty rock with a large sandy floor is obviously a domicile and workshop of some sort. To the right, ocean water fills part of the chamber at high tide. Netting is piled nearby, and a strange pile of pinkish-grey rocks lies at the edge of the water.*

*There is a work table against the far wall. Next to it, a rope and pulley attach to some sort of large bell near the water. Beside the table and cluttering the room are various odd devices, items, and paraphernalia, including an overturned rowboat, huge glass fishing floats, half dozen barrels, and metal objects for some strange purpose.*

*At the far left, a dark passage goes off to some other chamber. There is no sign that Grizzie or his dog are at home, though their home looks more workshop than living quarters.*

*Finally, to the left of the entrance, somehow hooked to the wall is a net-like hammock. It looks just like the sort which sailors sleep in when they're away at sea.*



This is Grizzie's home. The room seems to be lit in an ever-changing spectrum of shining light coming out of all the strange items around the workshop.

These various oddities are Grizzie's attempts at constructing diving equipment. His most recent model is a cast metal helmet with double-paned glass for vision and a canvas suit to keep water out. He made four of these. One of them he wore when he left this chamber to go after more gold ten days ago.

The rest of the experiments working up to the final suit can be found here and can be used by the desperate or ignorant to explore the sea outside the workshop in the Cove.

The available diving gear includes:

- Two glass floats (aka human hamster balls): each is 7-8' in diameter and has a cork plug about 18" in diameter. Large enough to support two to four characters. One person by themselves doesn't weigh enough to keep it on the ground. Gives AC 15 and MV 25' under water. A missed attack still knocks the ball back, requiring a DC 12 Ref save of those inside to avoid falling on top of each other.
- One upside-down rowboat: portholes allow seeing out. Large enough to support four characters comfortably, or up to six if they're willing to step on each other's toes. Gives AC 16 vs large creatures, AC 12 vs small, with MV 10' under water. If all are knocked prone, the boat fills with water and no longer works for diving until refilled with air.
- Six barrel suits: porthole to see and leather sleeves. Each supports one character comfortably. Gives AC 13 and MV 20' under water. If knocked prone, fills with water and no longer works for diving until refilled with air.
- One large cast metal diving bell: double-paned glass windows on three sides. Large enough to support up to six characters. Gives AC 18 vs large creatures, AC 12 vs small, with MV 10' underwater. If all knocked prone, make DC 12 Ref saves to avoid crushed feet.
- Three cast-metal helmet and canvas suits - double-paned glass view port. Each helmet/suit combination only supports one character. Gives AC 14 and MV 20' under water.

On the table is Grizzie's work journal along with a small lead box. His journal tells how he found a gold piece in his catch

and began to explore the underwater cove outside his chamber. In addition to gold, he's discovered this "rainbow mica" that produces sweet air. He's learned that it doesn't do weird stuff when held by lead fixtures, so he's managed to install this into his diving gear to supply fresh air.

He spent all the gold he found on the equipment to make the diving gear. His last entry was 10 days ago when he planned to try the best of his new "helmet and canvas armor" suits under the water.

The lead box contains 11 grains of the Shell of the Primeval Egg of Creation.

The pile of strange stones near the ocean water is actually a pile of sleeping crabs. They've recently dined on Grizzie's dog, whose bones can be found beneath them. They're still hungry and rise to attack as soon as anyone moves close to them.

**Crabby crab (1 per player, not character):** Init +3; Atk pincer +2 melee (1d5 + finger snip); AC: 13; HD: 3d8; hp 12; MV: 50'; ACT: 1d20; SP finger snip (DC 10 Ref save or also lose a finger); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; AL N.

As each rises up, it is clear that these crabs have more than the usual number of legs, enabling them to crawl extremely fast.

#### **AREA 4 - THE FURNACE ROOM**

*The dark corridor goes back into a room with an oven of sorts. There is a sound of breeze blowing out through the chimney. The air has a faintly metallic smell. On the floor in front of the oven, there is a crucible for the heating and melting that go along with casting. Inside the crucible there is a small fist-sized glob of red-hot metal.*

The glob of red-hot metal is a blob of lead, a red-hot coal, and a grain of the Shell. Getting within 6" of the crucible excites it enough to throw hot lead through the air. Roll an attack with a

d20. On a hit, it does 1d6 fire damage. If the victim survives, then roll a random passive effect of the Shell.

### *Grizzie's Cove.*

All locations are under water and require specialized equipment or magic to explore. As in other funnels, attacks—even those underwater—are done at a d20 to avoid too high a casualty rate.

Grizzie has dropped some large lead weights along two routes. One goes left from his workshop cave, and the other straight out into deeper water. The route to the left has only three “guide” weights until no more continue on. Grizzie began removing these when he learned that the Grotto is inhabited by a terrible predator. The route going straight out of his workshop disappears into a large waving forest of kelp. There are no weights that go to the right, coming out of this cave.

### **AREA 5 - GROBIN'S GROTTTO**

*All the rock and sand approaching this cave are strangely bare of all underwater growths, kelp, shellfish, or small fish of any kind. There are signs that it was inhabited once, but it has since been picked or scraped clean. The dark mouth of a cave opens into some sort of grotto beyond.*

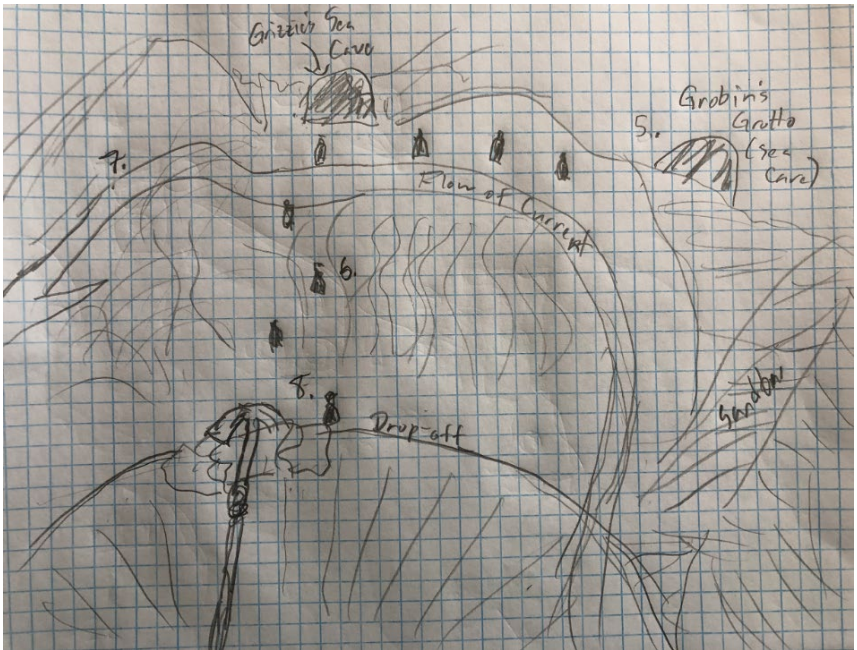
This grotto was once used by pirates to hide treasure. No one has claimed the loot because a giant decapus (similar in appearance to a monstrous octopus but with ten tentacles) has made its lair in the grotto. It hides in a small nook just above the underwater entrance waiting for snacks. There is an open-air grotto beyond that.

In the grotto beyond is an old slightly moldy chest with a large padlock (DC 10 to pick the lock or smash it off).

**Calamitous decapus:** Init +8; Atk tentacle +4 melee (1 + grab); AC: 18; HD: 8d8; hp 37; MV: walk 20' or swim 50'; ACT: 10d20; SP grab; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2; AL N.

**Grab:** On a successful tentacle attack, the victim must make a Fort save equal to the attack roll or they have been grabbed. They can attempt to escape again on subsequent rounds. A grabbed victim suffers a -4 to AC. The decapus can draw one grabbed victim per round to be bitten by its beak for 1d8 damage.

**Pirate Loot.** The chest is filled with 300 gp, a pink pearl necklace (15 gp), a black pearl necklace (30 gp), and a decanter that fills the mind of anyone who drinks from it with a collective consciousness of the greatest wine collectors of the ages, giving them the ability to detect poison with a sniff and to gauge true vintage from common plonk instantly.



### **AREA 6 - THE KELP BEDS**

*A thick mass of waving strands of kelp dance in the current. The black shape of a lead weight sticks just out of the edge of the kelp bed where the seaweed is a bit thinner straight ahead, but you can only see a few feet through the kelp.*

Visibility in the kelp bed is limited to 5'. Fortunately, Grizzie has placed lead weights every 10' through the center of the bed, so it is difficult to get lost.

There is an aggressive mutated eel that hunts in the kelp bed. When the first group is about halfway through the kelp, it attacks.

**Bi-headed eel spearfish:** Init: +1; Atk bite +2 (1d4) or skewer +3 (1d2 + 1d2 next round unless save); AC: 11; HD 3d6; hp 13; MV: swim 40'; ACT: 2d20; SP skewer; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will 0; AL N.

*Skewer:* On a successful skewer, the victim takes 1d2 damage and must make a DC 10 Fort save or the eel has pierced them and remains in the wound for the round, doing another 1d2 damage automatically the next round. The victim may repeat the save each round after taking damage. While skewered, any attacks against the eel have a 50% chance of targeting the victim instead.

On a failed skewer, instead of biting with the other head, the eel can bounce off the victim rapidly to allow the second head to attempt a skewer attack.

## **AREA 7 - RIP TIDE**

*Moving seems to get easier on this side of the cove. Perhaps the sand is more compact. Soon enough you realize that the current here is strong and is pulling you away from where you came faster than is desirable -- perhaps even out to sea!*

There is a rip tide pulling everything west of Grizzie's cave out toward the open ocean. It is made stronger by the strange currents of the Shell. Overcoming the rip requires two things:

1. **Don't panic!** Make a DC 12 Will save or your efforts become panicked (-1d).

2. **Get out or fight it.** A DC 10 Intelligence check is required to know to move out of the rip.

Non-oceanic professions roll with a d12, being untrained but from a coastal area. Moving out of the rip even a few steps allows a character (or group) to get back without issue. Otherwise, they must make a DC 15 Fort save to persevere against the rip.

If a group fails to get out of the rip, they find themselves in the deep sea. The Judge is encouraged to use their favorite random encounter table for aquatic encounters. Otherwise, they are captured by hungry merfolk and later eaten.

### **AREA 8 - ANCHOR'S AWAY**

*As you step out of the kelp, you are met with a great expanse of deep-looking water rising above a jagged, reef of rock, coral, and sea detritus. In the middle of the reef juts out an incredibly ancient looking spade-shaped anchor. A corroded chain is attached to its end, from which its length descends into deep water beyond the reef.*

Crossing the reef is difficult but doable. Only one side of the anchor is safe, and Grizzie has not marked it with a weight. If the characters decide to descend without being specific, roll 1d2 for the first group. On a 2, they go left, waking up the unusual anemone sleeping there.

**Hydranemone (starts with 4 heads):** Init: -3; Atk tentacle head +1 (1+sting); AC: 9; HD 4d6; hp 12 (4, 4, 4, 4); MV 5'; ACT 1d20/head; SP sting (DC 8 Will save or stunned for 1d2 rounds), multiplying heads; SV Fort +3, Ref -2, Will -1; AL N.

*Multiplying heads:* Causing 3 or more damage destroys a head but causes 2 new heads to grow, each with 1d3 hp. Only prying the hydranemone free from the ocean floor can kill it.

## AREA 9 - THE LANDING



*The chain descends fifty feet down a steep slope to a small shelf. It passes by a strange growth on one side that looks like a scrub oak tree resplendent with green leaves. The small shelf is flat and muddy, framed by two halves of a barnacle-covered wooden ship hull that split in two and settled here, halfway down to the abyss.*

*The end of one half of the hull rises straight up. Its end has grown into the trunk of a tree growing as though the ship germinated like an acorn here.*

*The other half of the hull is buried in the mud, settling the doors of the ship's cabin like they were meant to open out onto the flat. The doors to the cabin are closed.*

*Between the two halves of the ship is what looks like a solid gold statue kneeling on the ground. It is shaped with a strange metal helmet with a circle in the face. Its hand is stretched out to reach some gold-looking coins on the flat ground.*

This ship is the wreck of the voyage to Pellidus. Close inspection of the statue reveals the obvious likeness of Grizzie. He stooped to pick up some gold coins. But there was a piece of the Shell under his foot, and so he became the gold he sought.

The solid gold Grizzie is far too heavy to lift, but he is now worth 1,000 gp. There are 4 gp strewn about. Picking each up requires a Luck check to avoid also contacting a stray piece of the Shell here. Failure indicates that the greedy character suffers the same fate as Grizzie, becoming solid gold forever.

### **AREA 10 – SHIP’S CABIN**

*Within the ancient ship’s cabin are shapes that may have been an old bunk, a foot locker, and a small grey metal chest. The water in the cabin scintillates with specks like fireflies floating everywhere about the room.*

This cabin is filled with floating grains of the Shell, moving about as they all generate saltwater in a fluid diffusion spectacle.

Anyone entering the cabin, even a little, should roll 1d3 times on the passive results for touching the Shell. Moving the doors too vigorously could have a similar effect.

If the characters somehow extract the foot locker from the cabin, they find the captain’s log in a watertight pouch. The language is ancient and unreadable except to a scribe or historian (DC 18 to decipher a small bit). It tells of the history of Pellidus (worth 20 gp to a collector). It also tells where the Shell was first acquired, which could lead to further adventures.

The small gray metal chest is made of solid lead-based pewter. It used to contain “*The King’s Mint*”, which is now suspended in the ocean water all around. It can be used like a clam shell

to capture 1d7 pieces of the Shell for safe transport. Although the lock is broken and unusable, the clasp still works.

## **AREA 11 - THE PROW TREEHOUSE**

*As you peer into the empty hull of the tree-grown prow of the ship, ships' timbers surround a small room-like space.*

*A strange creature like a young child swims out of the shadows. His hair is black, his eyes blue. One hand is pale. A blue gemstone ring glitters on the index finger. The other hand is green, its fingers webbed, with solid-gold fingernails. From the waist down, the boy's body is that of a seahorse, the tail propelling him toward you. He smiles strangely and waves in a slow back-and-forth motion that reminds you of a noble Lady greeting the populace.*

This boy was Parnassian the Second, but he hardly remembers that life. He speaks Pellidisian and Dolphin, so communication is limited to hand-signals. He wants the characters to stay and play games with him.

If attacked, the boy immediately escapes into deep water. He bleeds red but heals from any wounds almost as they are made. His dolphin friends immediately attack to defend his retreat.

**Dolphin (1 per character):** Init +3; Atk beak jab +2 melee (1d4); AC 114; HD 2d8; MV swim 40'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +1; AL N.

If not attacked, the boy pulls a piece of Shell from a pouch and crushes it. Hundreds of bubbles fill the flat area near the two halves of the ship's hulls. They combine to form a pocket of breathable air throughout the area. The boy clucks and chirps at the party, inviting them out of their dive gear to play games with him.

If anyone tries to leave while the games are going, he'll squeal a few strange noises, and a pair of dolphins move to herd characters back to the game, dealing subdual damage.

### **GAME 1: SLINGING DISCS**

Each character is given 1 sp. The boy then flings his into the wall of water at the edge of the bubble. Roll  $d20 + 1$  for his throw.

It goes flying into the water, flashing as it curves through the sea. From somewhere a dolphin goes racing along beside it. When the coin begins to sink in its trajectory, the dolphin catches it in its beak and starts to dance in place.

The boy then indicates that someone else should throw. Roll  $1d20 + \text{Strength} + \text{Agility}$  modifiers to see how far the coin goes. Each coin gets its personal distance-tracking dolphin. The winner receives all the coins from all the dolphins.

### **GAME 2: MARBLE TOSSERS**

The boy draws a ring on the ground. Inside he drops a beautiful white pearl. He then takes a black pearl and throws it at the white one. Roll  $1d20 + 4$  to see if he hits. If he misses, he hands the black pearl to a character to throw. If all the characters miss, he'll take another turn until someone knocks it out.

The white pearl is AC 18. On a hit, roll  $1d3$ . On a 3, the white pearl rolls out of the ring, and the character wins the game and keeps the pearl (5 gp).

### **GAME 3: SEAWEED TUG OF WAR**

The boy dives into the water and comes back with a long length of kelp. He shows the characters that they are going to play a tug of war. For every character who holds the kelp beyond the first, the boy calls a dolphin to help pull his end from the water outside the bubble.

Each round everyone rolls a d20 + Strength modifier. The boy rolls d20 - 2, and every dolphin rolls d20 + 1. Total up both sides. The winning side gets a positive addition to their result total. The losing side gets a negative addition. One side has to get to +10 to win. Both sides start with +0.

### **GAME 4: SEA CUCUMBER RACES**

The boy fetches a sea cucumber for each character. Next, he draws two lines on the ground and then lines up his own sea cucumber on this side of the first line and indicates for others do likewise. Each character makes a Luck check to set the cucumber down in the right direction (the rear looks just like the front).

He pounds the ground behind his cucumber, trying to get it to move. Each round, each character can do likewise, rolling a Luck check. If they succeed, their cucumber moves a length. If their cucumber was backwards, it loses a length. A cucumber has to move three lengths to cross the finish line.

**If the child wins at least one of the games**, he starts to laugh. He digs out his prizes. Consult the table on the following page for the prize given to the winner of each game (choose arbitrarily if there was a tie).

| Game | Prize  |
|------|--|
| 1    | A black sling of leviathan-hide. It grants a Strength bonus in addition to Agility bonus to all stones/bullets thrown with it at all ranges.   |
| 2    | A set of three seahorse throwing knives. All three can be thrown in a single action (each 1d4 dmg) and never suffer from metal decay of any kind.  |
| 3    | A crystal dolphin (worth 80 gp if sold as art). It grants the bearer the ability to swim as fast as a dolphin and hold their breath underwater for 3 turns.  |
| 4    | A slim golden necklace (worth 20 gp if sold as jewelry). If removed from the neck and held while throwing one end, it springs out to 30' in length and wraps three times around something to hold it tightly. I can support a full-sized human. A special flick of the wrist frees it. |

After imparting his gifts, he waves and then dives away into the water. The air bubble slowly collapses, but gives enough time for everyone to get back into their diving equipment before engulfed in water.

**If the child loses all the games,** he suddenly claps his hands together three times. The bubble holding back the water disappears instantly, taking all characters by surprise. They begin drowning while he swims away, never to be seen again.

Descending from the landing into deeper water is asking for trouble. Give it to them.

# JUDGE'S SCOREKEEPING FOR THE PRINCE'S GAMES

| <b>Game</b>           | <b>Winner</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Slinging Discs        |               |
| Marble Tossers        |               |
| Seaweed Tug<br>of War |               |
| Sea Cucumber<br>Race  |               |

# **DJ CYRUS DUNGEON**

## **CRAWL FUNNEL: DIRT**

### **EDITION**

By Cyrus Duane

Art by Stefan Poag and Eon Fontes

*“The Only Show Where Survival Is the Punchline,  
Where Every Step Is a Laugh and Every Boss Is a Blast!”*

- Zorblax the Phrase-Master’s tagline for this 0-Level Xcrawl  
Funnel made possible by the miracles of intergalactic  
corporate sponsorship agreements.

**DJ Notes:** Use only human 0-levels and emphasize that they all come from our Earth. They have only whatever is on them, a starter backpack with a few supplies and whatever they happen to have in their pockets. Lean into weird aliens and allow rewards anytime they try to appeal to the sponsors. This is designed to comfortably run in a convention slot. Let the players know in advance this is designed to be a bit absurd. With thanks to the LitRPG genre and Douglas Adams. You are encouraged to rebrand this adventure with your own name as the DJ instead of Cyrus.

#### **Opening Scene: The Interview**

The adventure begins with a floating pixie, Glimmerplume, conducting pre-show interviews in a large sterile room immediately after the character’s abduction from earth. She asks quirky questions to the players about their time on Earth (called “Dirt” by the aliens), setting the tone for the adventure. She will say all of the following, first to the invisible cameras watching the characters at all times and then directly to the characters.

*I just received the programming update for this weekend, and I'm excited to see that the new season of Dungeon Crawler World will be starting today! This season is called: Dungeon Crawler World: Dirt! Yes, the locals call their planet dirt, isn't that delightful!*

She clears her throat and collects herself before turning excitedly to the PCs.

*Congratulations! You've been abducted! You, an ordinary Dirltling (or in your local tongue "Earthing") have been randomly selected from your dull, pre-apocalypse retail existence to appear on the hottest intergalactic entertainment sensation this side of the New Andromeda Mall: DJ Cyrus' Dungeon Crawl Funnel: Dirt Edition!*

*Broadcast live to quadrillions of hyper-sapient beings with nothing better to do, this dungeon-crawling death gauntlet drops you boring isolated backworld sacks of meat into a studio-built megadungeon filled with the most entertaining encounters our delightful corporate sponsors have devised.*

*Your goal? Survive live broadcast encounters, win the hearts of an alien audience with varied taste, and if you live long enough, face off against GIGAN-9000, a neurotic mechanical monstrosity having an existential breakdown on a live talk show hosted by the galaxy's most insufferably cool DJ.*

*It's messy. It's violent. It's sponsored by different alien corporations you absolutely can't pronounce and it's your only shot at galactic fame if you are lucky enough to survive this next episode.*

*Survive the Dungeon. Impress the Audience. Don't Die Screaming (unless it's really funny).*

**Sample questions to have Glimmerplume ask the characters:**

- "What exactly were you doing on Dirt when you got pulled into this glorious game?"
- "Is it true you dirltlings eat these things called *hot dogs*?"
- "How do you feel about being turned into intergalactic celebrities?"

After asking a few questions, a door will open that leads down a 60-foot corridor. Glitterplume will tell the characters that they only have two minutes to leave this room and be in the hallway or the room beyond. If Glitterplume is attacked, it will quickly become evident that she is an illusionary projection. DJs can bring Glimmerplume back to ask questions or to recap action during the crawl for added entertainment.

## **Adventure Encounters**

### **Encounter 1: Goblin Janitors Gone Mad**

*Location:* The Janitor's Closet.

As the players enter the narrow, dimly lit hallway, they hear whistling and see goblins in oversized janitor uniforms, pushing squeaky cleaning carts at the far end of the room. These goblins, sponsored by **Skwee Gee Galactic Cleaners**, are here to “clean up” – but they’re not very good at their jobs. They wield mop handles as weapons and throw buckets of soapy water, making the floor slippery and hazardous.

The goblins fight chaotically and use their cleaning tools in bizarre ways, like swinging vacuum hoses and flinging wet towels. The DJ should use this room for both comic relief, and slapstick violence and emphasize that all of this is so alien and new compared to their lives up to date on earth. The room is full of janitorial supplies that can be interacted with across eight cleaning carts. As combat starts, announce the Sponsorship Tie-in: “Skwee Gee Galactic Cleaners – For when you want spotless floors and total chaos!”

**Skwee Gee Goblin (10):** Init -1; Atk bite +0 melee (1d3) or Mop or Broom +0 melee (1d4) ; Crit I/d6; AC 10; HD 1d6-1; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort -2, Ref +1, Will -2; AL C. The Goblins all wear uniform jumpsuits. During combat the players may pick up that a goblin named Chip is very mad at a goblin named Phic. Phic has dyslexia and is always putting on Chip's uniform.



"Goblin Janitors" by Stefan Poag

The DJ should feel free to let creative players find ways to utilize cleaning products they may find on the carts.

**SPONSORSHIP BOX:** Once the goblins are defeated, an unseen announcer will comment on some of the best parts of the fight and then announce that they have received a room sponsor prize box from Skwee Gee, making sure to repeat the tag line from when combat started. The box contains 4 bright orange Skwee Gee heavy cleaning smocks which grant +4 armor and one pack of “Stim Gum” made by a Skwee Gee subsidiary. The Gum is anise flavored, has five pieces and chewing a piece will heal one point of damage.

## **Encounter 2: The Slime Pits of SludgeCo**

*Location:* A dark, dungeon-like chamber with multiple pits.

The players are urged to go down another corridor leading into a much larger room that reeks of industrial chemicals and rotten eggs. The room is filled with 6 bubbling, toxic slime pits, three along the left wall and three along the right. This chamber is sponsored by **SludgeCo Refinement**, an intergalactic waste disposal company. The slime pits are not just hazards—one slime creature rises from each pit and attacks the characters. These slimy monsters are slow but can merge to form a larger and more dangerous version of itself.

On the far side of the room is a hatch set in the floor, clearly labeled “EXIT, USE THE RIGHT CRANK TO OPEN”. The hatch has 12 handcranks on it, six across the top and six across the bottom. Each is slow and requires a round to turn. The label is a clue, as the right most crank on the bottom is the correct crank that opens the hatch. The slime monsters will not pursue players once they go down the hatch and onto the ladder below.

**Sponsorship Tie-in:** “SludgeCo Refinement—Turning toxic sludge into something slightly less toxic!”

**Slime Blob (6):** Init -2; Atk Slam +3 melee (1d6 Acid); Crit M/d10; AC 14; HD 2d8+2; MV 15' or climb 10'; Act 1d20; SP Combine; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will -3; AL N.

Slime Blobs will try to join when nearby and there is nothing to attack as a full round action. When Blobs join, the new larger Blob will have the combined HP, and doubled attack bonus and damage. Their action die becomes a d24. Fortunately only two blobs can combine.

**SPONSORSHIP BOX:** Once the last surviving characters have escaped down the hatch, The DJ will comment on some of the best parts of the fight and how they have survived the perils of poorly managed hazardous waste, and then announce that they have received a room sponsor prize box from SludgeCo making sure to repeat the tagline. The box contains a SludgeTech Deluxe Utility Kit which includes:

- Icky-Sticky Rope (30 ft): Sticks to surfaces. DC 10 Str to unstick. Will stick to players using it. Smells foul.
- FoamSeal Canister: Single use. Can seal doors, holes, or wounds (blocks a doorway for 1 turn or heals 2d4 HP with weird crunchy foam)
- Sludgecore Lantern: Emits green light. Fuel never depletes. Slightly radioactive.

### **Encounter 3: "Trivia"**

*Location:* A live studio audience chamber.

The players find themselves on a stage with a live alien audience watching from above. This encounter requires them to play a guessing game in which they must answer a series of questions based on alien trivia. Each wrong answer activates a random trap, while each right answer brings them closer to freedom. The twist? Alien trivia is really a guessing game for those without any context.

Sponsorship Tie-in: "Sponsored by MindSplosion—It's the game show where you either win or explode!"

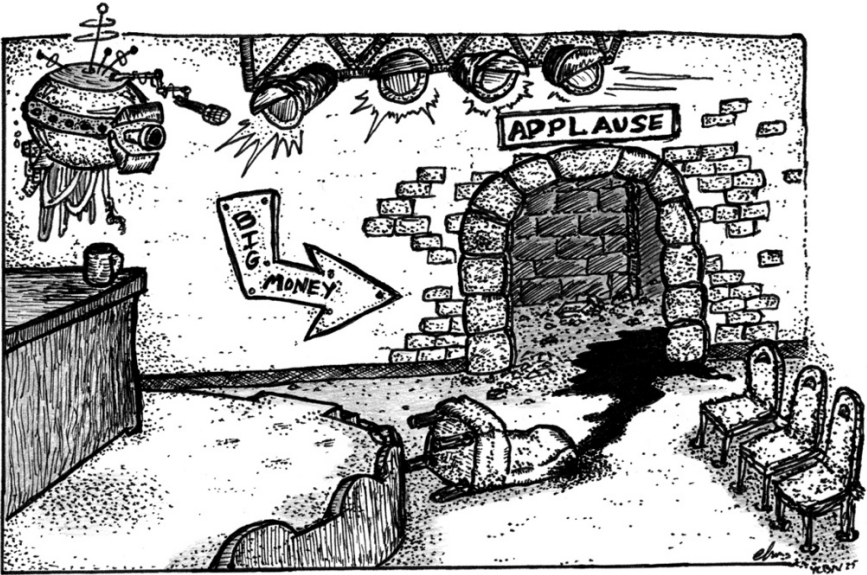
**Guessing Game:** The trivia questions revolve around obscure alien culture or bizarre galactic history. After the announcer reads the sponsorship tagline, it goes right to the first question.

- *Question 1: "What's the favorite snack of the Squorkian Emperor?"*
  - *Options:* A) Brined Snargg eggs B) Deep-fried starfish C) Pickled moon beans D) Celestial cheese curls
  - *Answer:* Celestial cheese curls.
  
- *Question 2: Which of these slogans is real?*
  - *Options::* A) "Drink Glarnax, or don't, we already took your money." B) "Flarbus: For your third stomach and beyond!" C) "WormFlix: Just brainwaves, now with less context!" D) "Buy GrexMeat! Or be the GrexMeat."
  - *Answer:* "Flarbus: For your third stomach and beyond!"
  
- *Question 3: What was the national anthem of the now defunct Glorb Union traditionally performed on?*
  - *Options:* A) A gelatinous harp made of ancestral mucus B) A 7-foot-long musical saw played by trained insects C) The spine of a still-living diplomat D) A jar of bees shaken at random
  - *Answer:* The spine of a still-living diplomat.

Cunning players may try to appeal to the audience for assistance. Reward good roleplay here by having the audience eliminate incorrect options by providing loud feedback as a crowd, similar to guests on NPR's "Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!"

Each incorrect answer will result in a theatrical lightning bolt strike to one random character. They must pass a reflex save DC 14 or take 1d8 damage. After 6 incorrect answers the floor will disappear and with an outrageous toilet flushing sound the characters will be flushed down to the final showdown. Characters that arrive this way will be dripping wet and receive double damage from the GIGAN-9000's electrical salad spinner.

**SPONSORSHIP BOX:** If the characters answer the questions before they can be flushed, the unseen announcer will comment on how smart these dirtlings really are and then announce that they have received a room sponsor prize box from MindSplosion, making sure to repeat the tagline. The box contains a large spiked mace that deals 1d8 damage with the inscription "Trivia Knight" and four daggers in a bag labeled "Multiple Choice". There is also one vial of MindSplosion Brain-Fizz, which will heal 1d4 damage.



"The Stage" by Eon Fontes

## Encounter 4: The Final Showdown - DJ Cyrus' Late-Night Talk Show

*Location:* DJ Cyrus' talk show stage.

The players are transported to DJ Cyrus' late-night talk show. DJ Cyrus, a charismatic and smug alien host, greets them as the studio audience applauds wildly. The players must endure a round of talk-show style questions, complete with lights, a studio band, and cheesy intergalactic puns while an illusionary camera droid flits about the room spasmodically to focus the party's attention

### Sample Questions:

- “So, how does it feel to be the latest *Dirtlings* to survive this *wholesome* dungeon crawl experience?”
- “Who would you say was the biggest slacker on your team? You can be honest—nobody's watching... *except* the entire galaxy!”
- “If you had to face one challenge again, which one would it be? And why?”

After the interview, DJ Cyrus announces the final showdown: “Ladies and gentlemen, we've saved the *best* for last! Let's see if these dirtlings can handle our BIG BOSS!” A massive mechanical monster crashes onto the stage, signaling the climactic final fight. DJ Cyrus and his audience will be watching (and commenting) throughout the entire encounter, adding humor and tension to the scene.

**Final Showdown:** As the players engage GIGAN-9000, the scene unfolds on DJ Cyrus' talk show set, where the bright lights and uproarious laughter create an atmosphere of delightful chaos. Between ridiculous attacks and introspective musings, GIGAN-9000's antics keep the audience in stitches.

The challenge for the players isn't just defeating this mechanical marvel; it's navigating the absurdity of the situation. Early in the combat DJ Cyrus disappears from the stage but his voice will be heard commenting during the fight with GIGAN.

**Appearance:** GIGAN-9000 is a monument to absurdity, resembling a cross between a Victorian-era steam engine and an over-caffeinated octopus attempting to perform ballet. It stands approximately three stories tall, with a body that is an improbable blend of riveted metal plates, blinking lights, and an extensive collection of mismatched kitchen appliances. Its "arms" end in an assortment of bizarre implements: one a ladle, another a salad spinner, and the third a device that inexplicably dispenses marshmallows at high velocity.

The overall effect is something akin to a 1970s science fiction film set designed by a committee of bewildered alien children. In fact, most design decisions were made through a promotional contest targeting elementary school children.

**Origin:** GIGAN-9000 was conceived in a lab that had once been a prestigious institution of technological innovation, but over the years had fallen into a state of disarray. Originally intended to be a state-of-the-art entertainment robot for the now-defunct *Intergalactic Improv Show*, it was cobbled together from spare parts, questionable engineering decisions, and the remnants of a sentient blender.

After a catastrophic incident involving a malfunctioning joke generator and an uninvited audience of overzealous space otters, GIGAN-9000 was abandoned and left to wander the cosmos in search of purpose.

**Personality:** With a personality programmed to entertain, GIGAN-9000 is a delightful blend of self-awareness and utter cluelessness. It often laments its former glory being a star of interstellar theater through lengthy monologues about the existential dread of a mechanical being lost in a universe that has long since moved on to the next shiny thing. “Ah, to be a blender again, warm and safe in a kitchen rather than a battleground!” it might lament, pausing dramatically as if expecting an audience to react. It should be obvious to all that this entity is insane though its actions and words.

**GIGAN-9000:** Init +2; Atk salad spinner +6 melee (1 electrical) and ladle +2 melee (1d4) and flaming marshmallow gun +3 missile fire (1d6, range 40); Crit II/d12; AC 16; HD 4d8; MV walk 20'; Act 3d20; SP Randomization Protocol, Self-Doubt Projection, Ranting; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will +2; AL N.

#### **Abilities:**

- **Multiattack:** The Gigan-9000 will try to use its salad spinner, ladle, and marshmallow gun in each round.
- **Randomization Protocol:** The first time each round that the GIGAN-9000 takes damage, it randomly throws kitchen debris at a nearby character, inflicting a -1D penalty to that character's next action. This does not cost an action.
- **Self-Doubt Projection:** GIGAN-9000 will project its insecurities onto the players. During combat, any fumbles rolled by either side have a +2D penalty. The GIGAN-9000 rolls fumbles with a d16 with this penalty.
- **Philosophical Rants:** When at half HP or less, the GIGAN-9000 will launch into mumbled existential soliloquies about the nature of reality. During this time the GIGAN-9000's action dice are +1D.

## **Conclusion: Broadcast End Tag (VICTORY)**

As sparks fizzle from the twitching remains of GIGAN-9000 and the stage lights dim to a moody violet, a triumphant synth fanfare blares across the studio as confetti cannons fire off their celebratory payload. A hovering neon banner blinks above the players:

**“CONGRATULATIONS, DIRT-SURVIVORS!”**

*“Against all odds (and several lawsuits in progress), you’ve clawed your way to the top of this week’s ratings – and maybe, just maybe, to galactic relevance!”*

The studio audience erupts into a sound like monkeys gargling soda. DJ Cyrus reappears, standing atop the crumpled remains of his talk show desk, mic in hand.

*“You came. You screamed. You product-placed. And against every known biological forecasting model, some of you even lived. Now, your journey as Dirtlings may be over... but your contracts have only just begun! We’ll see you next week – assuming the sponsors don’t sell your likenesses to a line of keto breakfast cereals first!”*

The lights cut to black. A giant logo slams into frame with a stomach-churning WUB-WUB-WUB.

**DJ CYRUS’ DUNGEON CRAWL FUNNEL: DIRT EDITION**

*“Broadcast Concluded. Emotional damage not covered by the standard prize package. All surviving contestants are now eligible for unpaid appearances in Dungeon Crawler World: DIRT – Episode 2: CORPORATE LADDER OF PAIN.”*

A final splash screen shows your survivors – bleeding, dazed, but weirdly proud – as an alien voiceover cheerfully intones: *“Until next time, Dirt fans: Survive the Dungeon. Impress the Audience. Don’t Die Screaming (Unless It’s Really Funny).”*

**Conclusion: Broadcast End Tag (FAILURE - A TPK in the final battle)**

The GIGAN-9000 Looms large in the stage lights, and a odd synth medley blares across the studio as glitter cannons fire off their celebratory payload. A hovering neon banner blinks above the corpses:

*"The Dirtlings lost, but you, our audience and sponsors, won!"*

*"They came, screamed, and product-placed. As expected with every known biological forecasting model, none lived. Hopefully we will see another batch of Dirtlings come through our Dungeon again soon. The only show where survival is the punchline, With every step a laugh and every boss is a blast!!"*

The lights cut to black. A giant logo slams into frame with a stomach-churning WUB-WUB-WUB.

**DJ CYRUS' DUNGEON CRAWL FUNNEL: DIRT EDITION**

A final splash screen shows replays of every death—as an alien voiceover cheerfully intones:

*"Until next time, Dirt fans: Survive the Dungeon. Impress the Audience. Don't Die Screaming (Unless It's Really Funny)."*

Cue commercial for Flarbus™: For Your Third Stomach and Beyond

## **Bonus Corporate Sponsorships**

The adventure is sprinkled with sponsorships from fictional companies, used to add humor and satire. Here are a few examples:

1. **Nebula Noms** - "The snack that stops the void in your stomach!"
2. **Event Horizon Express** - "Zoom through your busy schedule—literally!"
3. **VoidTech Industries** - "Pushing the limits of reality...until they break."
4. **MindSplosion** - "The galaxy's most dangerous quiz show!"
5. **HyperCore Energy Drinks** - "Because collapsing isn't an option."

## **List of 20 Sci-Fi Companies**

1. Galactic Credits Bank
2. Starlight Dynamics
3. Nebula Noms
4. HyperCore Energy Drinks
5. Zarnon Galactic Outfitterz
6. VoidTech Industries
7. Skwee Gee Galactic Cleaners
8. DirtCorp Terraforming
9. MindSplosion
10. PortalGo
11. Orion Quantum Computing
12. Chrono Corp. Timepieces
13. Stellar Stylez
14. Event Horizon Express
15. Intergalactic Rentals
16. Quantum Quik-Stop
17. AstroArmor Security
18. Celestial Beverages
19. Wormhole Wares
20. SolarFlare Transport

### **List of 20 Mundane “Alien” Objects**

1. Hover broom
2. Alien fast-food wrapper
3. Cracked hologram phone
4. Space gum
5. Useless space credit card
6. Gravity-defying rubber band
7. Neon backpack
8. Alien hand sanitizer
9. Metal toothpick
10. Sticky note from another dimension
11. Half-eaten energy bar
12. Anti-gravity paperweight
13. Empty glowstick
14. Floating newspaper
15. Glowing space rock
16. Holographic driver's license
17. Mini drone in need of repair
18. Galactic toll receipt
19. Incomplete puzzle cube
20. Holo-watch with no battery

### **List of 20 Silly Magical Items**

1. Bag of Infinite Popcorn
2. Cloak of Permanent Static
3. Shoes of Uncontrollable Tap Dancing
4. Sword of Slightly Warmer Damage
5. Amulet of Eternal Mild Annoyance
6. Helmet of Random Invisibility (lasts 3 seconds)
7. Wand of Minor Irritations
8. Ring of Questionable Fortune
9. Pocket Dimension Lunchbox
10. Orb of Slightly Tinted Vision
11. Boots of the Never-Ending Squeak
12. Belt of Sudden Fanfare
13. Gloves of Awkward Handshakes
14. Compass of Getting Lost
15. Potion of Instant Mood Swings

16. Scarf of Loud Sneezing
17. Hat of Unexpected Growth spurts
18. Cape of Pointless Flourishes
19. Flask of Forgettable Potions
20. Mirror of Overconfidence

### **Zorblax the Phrase-Master**

**(When you need a Showrunning NPC)**

**Description:** Zorblax is a flamboyant, colorful alien with a knack for wordplay and a passion for marketing. He has vibrant, shifting skin patterns that reflect his mood, and his large, expressive eyes convey an ever-present enthusiasm. Zorblax wears a stylish vest covered in holographic buttons that display his latest slogans. He carries a small, magical notepad that automatically records and enhances his ideas.

**Background:** Once a failed stand-up comedian in his home galaxy, Zorblax discovered his true calling in advertising and became the chief slogan creator for DJ Cyrus' show. He has a reputation for turning even the dullest ideas into catchy taglines, ensuring that the show remains a favorite among viewers. With a blend of charm and absurdity, Zorblax aims to keep the audience laughing and engaged, both in the dungeons and at home.

**Personality:** Zorblax is witty, exuberant, and a bit eccentric. He loves puns and has an endless supply of jokes, often breaking into spontaneous performances to test new slogans. His enthusiasm can be contagious, making him a beloved figure in the chaotic world of galactic dungeon crawling.

# **The Battle of Bright Hill: A Shattered Host**

**Being an Account of the Fall of the Old Provinces  
under the Thrall of the Foul Wizard Dubghall**

**By Paul Wolfe**

The vile forces of Lord Agron broke through the last line of defense, and now your village is in the path of a marauding army. Lord Daystar, his van in disarray, arrives and rallies you and your fellow villagers into a last-ditch peasant army. The dreams you've had lately, though -- they tell you that Lord Daystar and his holdings are doomed and that salvation lies within Bright Hill. There stands an ancient hill fort where King Dominus fell under demonic invasion. Can you find the secret to King Dominus's power? And can that power drive back the hell-warriors of Lord Agron?

## **Running This Adventure**

The Battle of Bright Hill is a 0-level DCC RPG adventure intended for 4-6 players. If you run it with more than four players, have them generate only two or three 0-level characters (this will help with game management). There are several opportunities to replace dead characters throughout the session.

## **Background**

The old lord of Bricehold died under suspicious circumstances, and his bannerman, the sorcerer Dubghall, rose to lordship over the largest of the Old Provinces. Now the new lord of Bricehold placed General Agron, said to be a half-demon, at the head of a great army. All believe that Dubghall intends to reunite the Old Provinces under his dominion - if only he could find the Seat of Kings, said to be the source of kingly power since ancient times.

## The Shattered Host

*Your liege, Lord Daystar, rode through Beorhurst Village at the head of an army of thegns, freeman soldiers, and peasant spearmen, intent on smashing the invasion of Lord Agron between various armies of the Old Provinces. Agron, rumored to be a half-demon himself, led the men of Bricehold in conquest of the rest of the Old Provinces at the command of his sovereign, the foul sorcerer Dubghall.*

*Dominating your dreams while asleep and weighing on every waking moment are visions of a rusty steel helmet marked with a raven, a font that pours pure silver liquid, and a simple stone throne. Others in Beorhurst Village admit to similar dreams. Could the gods be telling you something? A warning? A promise?*

*Before dawn, all notice smoke from fires that should not burn upon Bright Hill. Other smaller fires – torches – snake down familiar paths like great burning snakes.*

*As the sun breaks the eastern horizon, a ragged group of warriors stumble across the bridge over the Adelbright River and collapse into the arms of the villagers. They rave about an army of hellish things, of a beast that can devour a whole warband, and of the men of Lord Agron's army, driven to bloodlust by the spells of Dubghall, the sorcerer-lord behind the invasion.*

*All day long, similar refugees reach Beorhurst Village, and, in the late afternoon, Lord Daystar arrives upon a lame and dying horse with a few haggard bannermen. Daystar calls for water, for the horse to be butchered for meat, and for the village headman.*

*The fires grow ever closer while your betters hold conference, but all can see that this is where Daystar intends to make his final stand.*

Indeed, Daystar's thegns herd the villagers into nervous formations, handing out makeshift spears, pitchforks, and clubs. Unless the player characters take other actions, each player's group of 0-levels ends up in a single formation – there

are a total of eight formations of 20 villagers each. One of the thegns takes command of each group, and all is ready when Daystar re-emerges with the bent-backed village headman.

The Lord is brought another horse - though certainly not as regal as the one now sizzling over a communal cookfire. After much adjustment and shouted orders, six of the formations are arranged along a low rise facing Bright Hill and the advancing armies of Lord Agon. Two are held in reserve near the village center, ready to be deployed by Daystar himself to where the fighting is the hottest. The peasants in these units are given slings and 10 stones each.

The player characters have about 30 minutes before Lord Agon's advanced scout party hits.



## THE BATTLE OF BEOHURST VILLAGE

See the “The Battle System” in Volume III of The Gongfarmers’ Almanac 2025 for details on resolving combat between units and an expanded Battle Rule system.

The following are the formations for and against the village:

### **Forces of Beohurst Village**

Lord Daystar’s Command Group:

- Lord Daystar: HD 2 (+1 morale rolls to all troops in a 3 hex radius)
- Captain Hemingr: HD 2 (+1 defense to troop)
- Thegns: 12 @ HD 1 (+1 attack to troop)
- Ceorls: 12 @ HD 1
- Army Value: 28; Morale 12; Luck 7; AC 14; Damage 3d6; Ranged: ¼ HD/d4: 4d4

Hastily Assembled Soldiers:

- Stigandr: HD 3 (+1d damage)
- Horsa: HD 2 (-1 morale to enemy troop)
- Ceorls: 15 @ HD 1
- Army Value: 20; Morale: DC 12; Luck 5; AC 13; Damage 4d6

Peasant Armies (8) – The PCs 0-level characters take command of these formations.

- Morale -1d.
- PC 1: HD ½; (Luck +1; If sacrificed, +1 Luck)
- PC 2: HD ½; (Luck +1; If sacrificed, +1d Morale)
- Peasants: 30 @ ½
- Army Value: 17; Morale 12; Luck 4; AC 12; Damage 3d4

## **The Forces of Dubghall the Foul**

Lord Agron has sent a scouting party to determine Lord Daystar's strength.

### Lord Agron's Scout Command

- Captain Hroarr: HD 4 (Damage +1 HD)
- Corporal Wilburg: HD 2 (AC +1)
- Elite Soldiers: 10 @ HD 2 (Morale DC -1)
- Army Value 26, Morale 11; Luck 6; AC 13; Damage 4d8

### Lord Agron's Scout Troop

- Captain Asco: HD 2 (Morale +1d)
- Javelineers: 25 @ HD 1 (Ranged attack ¼ HD/d6, 60 ft)
- Army Value: 27; Morale 12; Luck 6; AC 12; Damage 3d6

### Lord Agron's Light Infantry

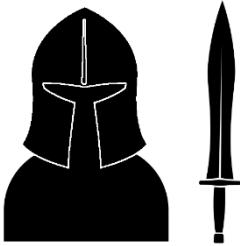
- Captain Gudini: HD 3 (AC +1)
  - Army Value 23; Morale 12; Luck 5; AC 13; Damage 3d6
- Corporal Raginherd: HD 1 (Reach 10'; Damage dealt first)
  - Army Value 21; Morale 12; Luck 5; AC 12; Damage 3d6
- Captain Bernard: HD 2 (+1 to Morale rolls)
  - Army Value 22; Morale 12; Luck 5; AC 12; Damage 3d6
- Sergeant Alfheah: HD 3 (+1 HD damage)
  - Army Value 23; Morale 12; Luck 5; AC 12; Damage 4d6
- Light Spearmen: 20 @ HD 1

## **Aftermath**

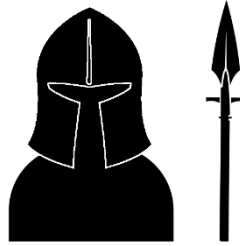
If the forces of the village are defeated, surviving PCs may flee before Lord Agron's scouting party and regroup in the nearby forest. If the scouting party is repelled, Lord Daystar organizes the PCs to further actions while General Agron regroups. Judges are encouraged to develop further adventures in the Old Provinces.

# ARMY TOKENS

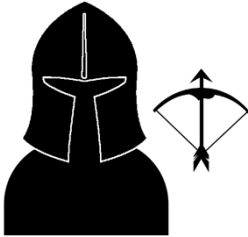
## The Forces of Beohurst Village:



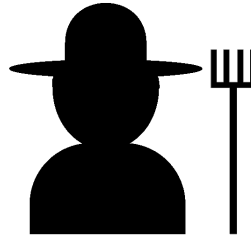
Command Unit



Spear Unit

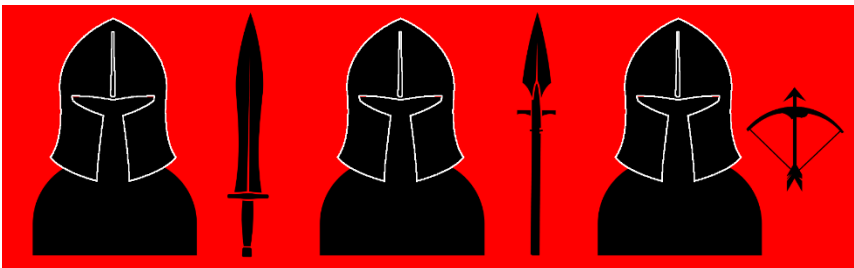


Ranged Unit



Peasant Unit

## The Forces of Dubghall the Foul



Command Unit

Spear Unit.

Ranged Unit

# THE NIGHTSOIL COMETH

A Zero-Level Funnel Mini-Adventure

Written by Paul Keller

Cartography by Marc Anderson

Art by Izzy Royston

## INTRODUCTION

This short funnel adventure is designed for 8 to 12 zero-level characters and can be completed in two hours. It is a humorous tribute to the noble gongfarmer, the patron occupation of the DCC Roleplaying Game, where players begin as simple working-class peons that are thrust into an unexpected and deadly situation one day whilst plying their trade at a festival. Not all characters need to have the specific gongfarmer occupation; any character could be finding a day's wage by working part time in the kingdom's sanitation department.

## PLAYER START

*The King's Festival was a time of revelry, indulgence, and excess – for everyone except the gongfarmers. While nobles feasted on roasted boar and honeyed wine and peasants danced to the tune of lutes and drums, your lowly crew toiled in filth. Clad in patchwork rags and thick boots caked in the leavings of the kingdom's finest, you wade through the trenches of waste, hauling sloshing buckets of foulness to the pits beyond the city walls. It was thankless work, but it was work, and, in a kingdom that prized lineage over labor, that was all one could hope for.*

*As you shovel muck from the grand pavilions, the ground beneath you trembles. A low wet groan echoes through the night, as if the earth itself has finally recoiled at your ceaseless burden. Without warning, the filth-slick soil gives way, and like stones you fall, your cries swallowed by the darkness below. You tumble past layers of rotting detritus, through stone and root, until you land hard upon a damp cavern floor.*

*Silence follows – save for the distant drip of water and the uneasy shuffle of shifting rock. No longer toiling unseen beneath the festival's*

*grandeur, you now lay at the threshold of something older, something forgotten, something waiting in the deep...*

### **AREA 1: The Throne of the Filth King**

*The cavern walls glisten with years of accumulated waste dripping from the festival grounds above. At its center, atop a mound of compacted excrement, sits a grotesque figure—a skeletal corpse draped in rotten royal garb, wearing a tarnished crown. A rusted scepter lies in its bony grasp, and a sign at its feet reads: ALL BOW BEFORE THE FILTH KING.*

If touched, the corpse animates and bellows, demanding fealty; refusal causes the corpse to attack. Anyone struck by the scepter must pass a Luck check or be cursed with “Eternal Stench”, causing anyone within 10 feet of them to gag violently (-1 to all rolls). Anyone bearing the curse may wield the scepter as a +1 magic club; otherwise it is only a normal cudgel.

**Filth King:** Init +2; Atk Scepter +1 melee (1d4+1); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP curse; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C

### **AREA 2: The Chamber of the Chittering Horde**

*This cavern is dimly-lit by phosphorescent lichen. Three giant dung beetles, each the size of a hound, scuttle about, rolling up waste into grotesque glistening balls. They seem mostly indifferent to your presence. One of the beetle's dung balls glows with a faint golden light at its core...*

The floor here is slick and treacherous. Anyone fighting in this chamber must roll a DC 10 Reflex save at the start of combat or slip, landing face-first into something unpleasant and losing their action for the round. Inside the glowing dung ball is a fist-sized chunk of solid gold worth 100gp! The beetles will react violently to any attempt to touch their foul treasure.

There are 1d10 additional gold coins scattered around the cavern floor, any attempt to gather these coins will also result in the beetles attacking.

**Dung Beetles (3):** Init +1; Atk Bite +0 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N

### **AREA 3: The Shrine of Saint Gongus**

*The tunnel opens into an ancient shrine, its walls covered in crude carvings of a figure wielding a mighty shovel. A plaque reads: Saint Gongus, Keeper of the Great Cesspits, Cleanser of Unseen Filth. A rusted shovel stands in a stone pedestal at the room's center.*



Removing the shovel requires a DC15 Strength check; no one may assist with the check or the shovel will be immovable. If successful, and if the bearer is a gongfarmer, the shovel grants the power to command excrement (once per day, they can hurl

a pile of filth to blind enemies as the spell *color spray* with a spell check of 14 plus any luck burned). The wall carvings seem to shift when no one is looking. If the shovel is taken, the eyes glow, and spectral hands emerge from the walls to try and snatch it back. A touch from the spectral hands causes the target to make a DC8 Fort save or be shrunk to a “flushable” 1 foot in height! A cleric may heal this curse with *lay on hands*.

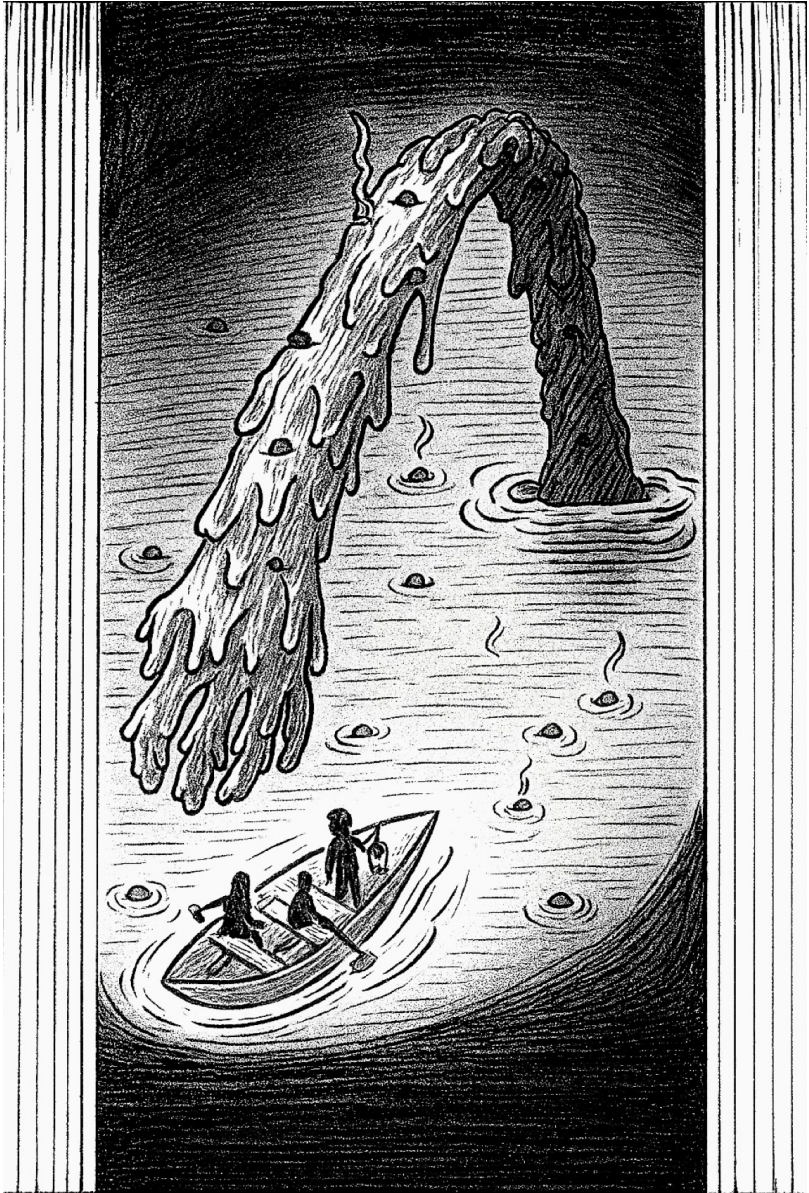
**Spectral Wiping Hands (6):** Init +0; Atk touch +0 melee (1 damage + special); AC 10; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP DC8 Fort save or be reduced to 1 foot in height suffering -6 to attack and damage until healed by a cleric; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C

#### **AREA 4: The Great Cistern and the Cesspool Demon**

*A massive underground cistern filled with unbelievably foul brackish water blocks the way forward. A large rickety wooden raft with a steering pole on top bobs on the surface, tethered to the near shore by a rotten leather cord.*

The raft is large enough to hold the entire party, and the lake may be crossed in four rounds of travel, but the Cesspool Demon, a sludge-covered semi-corporeal horror with glowing yellow eyes, lurks beneath the surface. If players try to swim across the cistern or enter the water in any way, they must make a DC 15 Fort save or contract a disease that causes 1 point of Stamina loss per day until healed by a cleric and a permanent Minor Corruption determined randomly on the Minor Corruption table on p. 116 of the DCC Core Rulebook. Once the players push off on the raft, or if they disturb the water in any way, read the following text:

*The water begins to boil with noxious bubbles that release a faint green gas when they burst on the surface. Suddenly, an impossibly long, impossibly pale, leprous human arm that spews horrid flammable gas from every pore bursts from the surface and tries to snatch one of your companions!*



The demon gains a surprise attack against the party unless they specifically state they are all watching the water for signs of disturbance. If a character is hit, the demon will pull them under the water where they will have to make a DC 15 Strength check (as well as a Fort save and Minor Corruption for entering the water, see above) to escape its grip or drown within 3 rounds. A new arm will emerge from the water each round regardless of how many characters are held below. For larger parties, the Judge may give the Cesspool Demon two action dice per round.

The Cesspool Demon is immune to mundane attacks unless hit with fire, the Filth King's scepter, or Saint Gongus' shovel. If hit by the holy shovel, the demon will release all player characters held underwater as it thrashes about in agony. If fire is used, the gasses spewing from the arms will explode, causing 2d6 damage to both the demon and any characters in melee range that fail a DC 12 Reflex save.

**Cesspool Demon:** Init +4; Atk Grab +1 melee (1d3 + grapple); AC 12; HD 4d8; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 1d20 (or 2d20); SP pull under, immune to mundane weapons; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C

### **AREA 5: The Royal Privy Exit**

*Beyond the cistern, a tunnel slopes upward to a long narrow chute – a chute you recognize all too well... This stone passage leads up into the castle, to the king's personal privy! Dim light filters down from above, and voices can be heard: nobles laughing and chatting idly as they await their turn at the lavish latrine. A collection barrel, full of royal nightsoil, stands ready to catch at the bottom.*

Climbing up the privy ramp is possible, but it requires a series of successful Strength and Agility checks (each DC 12) to avoid slipping back down. Use of spikes or other clever climbing implements will reduce these checks to DC 10. Characters that slip while climbing the ramp must make a DC 10 Reflex save to halt themselves before the momentum from slipping down

the poo-chute sends them hurtling into the cistern of waste behind them. Falling into the cistern in this manner also requires characters to make the necessary Fort save or suffer disease and corruption as detailed above.

In addition to all this, the Cesspool Demon will continue to attack characters still standing on the shore that are not actively climbing up the ramp. There is only enough space for one character per player to ascend the ramp at a time.

The nearby barrel of “nightsoil” (fermented excrement used as fertilizer) could be ignited to create a blast powerful enough to open another exit—but it will cover everyone in an unspeakable mess and collapse the royal privy above, with dire implications for the characters as several nobles are cast down into the filth with them below.

If ignited, the barrel of nightsoil will explode, causing 2d6 fire damage to everything in a 10' radius and 1d6 damage in another 10' beyond that. A Reflex save is allowed for half damage.

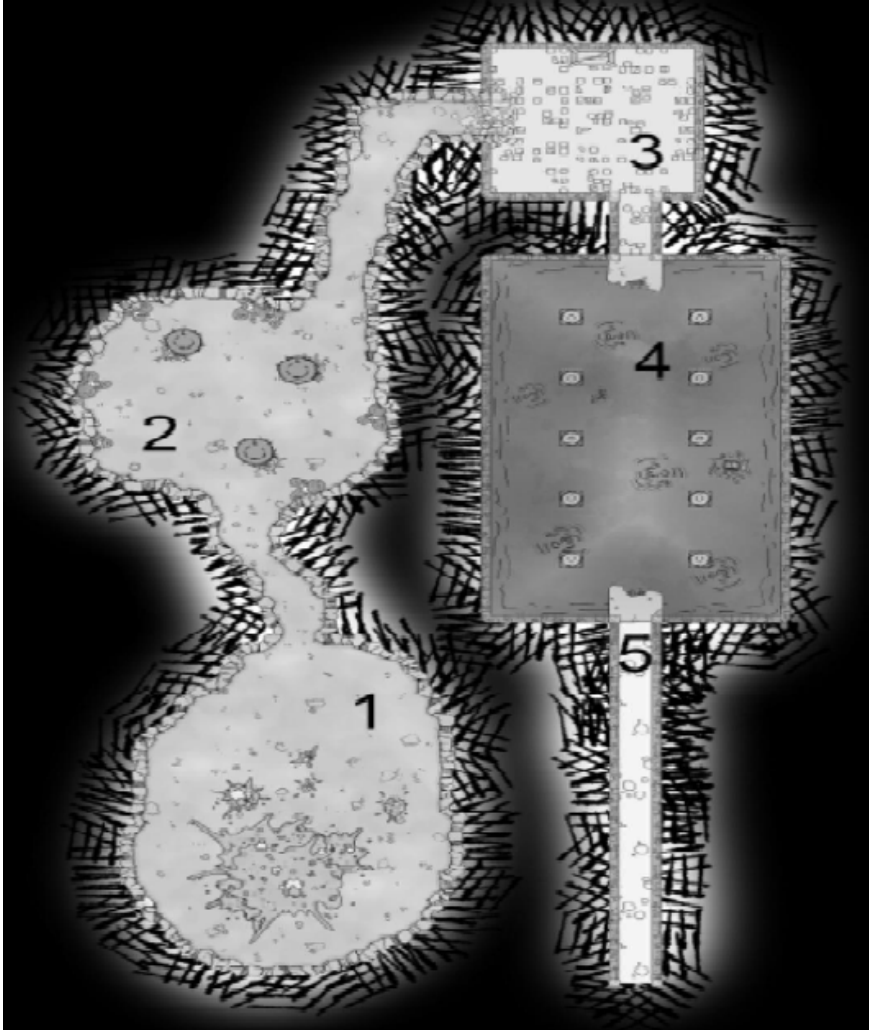
Many loose coins and objects have fallen from the King's pockets over the years of using this privy; if players declare they are searching the ramp or the shoreline just below it, they will find 1d6x10 total GP worth of mixed coins.

## **CONCLUSION**

If the player characters emerge through the privy, they find themselves in the middle of the royal feast, shocking the nobles and likely earning a death sentence – unless they can talk their way into either a pardon or a new career as court jesters... Will the gongfarmers escape the depths, or will they become just another forgotten layer of filth beneath the King's Festival?

Characters that survive the funnel each receive 1 point of permanent Luck as a reward for defying the odds and making

it through alive. In addition, characters will also receive enough experience points to advance to level 1.



The Nightsoil Cometh Adventure Map

# THE PALECLAWS

By Shane Madgett  
Art by Nick Heazell

A Sneak Preview of an upcoming adventure/setting for  
Weird Frontiers and DCC



"Paleclaw" by Nick Heazell

I don't know who will read this,

Something is hunting us, yesterday we saw the tracks again.  
Long, thin, and deep—as if knives walked on end. But no  
prints leading to or away. And the meat in the sledge?  
Frozen solid. Bones all gone.

I fear, the four of us might not make it out with our lives.

— Letter never delivered, found near Red Hill Depot,  
February 1865

## WHAT ARE THE PALECLAWS?

The Paleclaws are not animals, and they are not men. They are cold-born things—figures that haunt the snowbound wilds west of Rupert's Land and north of the last telegraph lines.

Some say they came from inside the earth—chased to the surface by the digging of railway prospectors. Others claim they're fragments of frost given motion, cursed wanderers made from hunger and snow.

Nobody who's seen them clearly ever makes it back whole.

### Description

Stretched figures wrapped in matting of white fur, not sewn or worn, but grown.

Bone-pale claws extend six inches from long, thin fingers—sharp enough to cut buckskin and crack iron nails.

Their eyes glow silver in moonlight, and they do not blink.

They leave strange, deep gouges in snow or wood—longer than a man's hand, spaced like walking feet but with no heelprint.

When they move, there is no sound— not even from snow.

### **Behavior & Folklore**

Origin Myth: The Paleclaws and the Headless Valley

*From the whispered accounts near Nahanni Butte, passed in fragments and warnings...*

Long ago, before fur traders mapped the rivers and before the mountain spirits were driven quiet, there was a people who lived along the warm springs of the Nahanni Valley. They were tall, strong, and kind-hearted—but prideful.

When the great cold first fell from the North Star, these people did not hide. Instead, they challenged it. They **struck pacts with the old winds**, buried bone into ice, and carved their own blood into stone **to stay warm forever**.

But warmth was not free. The cold answered. It sent its **envoys in dreams**, whispering truths not meant for mortal minds. Some of them listened. Some *changed*.

One night, they all vanished. The valley was found littered with **heads, cleanly taken**— not by blade, but **by cold so sharp it sliced identity away**. The heads were buried in ice tombs. The bodies rose again, **unburdened by thought, memory, or soul**.

These were the first **Paleclaws**. The rest of the people were lost to the drift.

Even now, the Nahanni Valley is avoided. The air is too still. No birds fly over it. It is said that those who sleep there **dream without a head**, and wake without a heart.

They strike in storms, especially when someone strays from a group, or refuses to leave an offering of warmth (whiskey, meat, or flame).

Campfire tales say they hate bells, bronze, and prayer, but none of that has ever worked.

More than a few isolated outposts reported odd scratching on the walls, but no signs of entry.

Sometimes a dead horse is found standing upright, frozen solid, with long cuts spiraling around its legs.

**Paleclaw:** Init +2; AC 15; HD 4d10; Speed 40'; Atk Claws +5 (1d8 + bleed); Sp Trackless, Cold Harvest, Ice-Walk, Fear Gaze; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +4; AL N (Unnatural Neutral); XP 100

*Trackless:* Cannot be tracked except by supernatural means. Even when wounded, it leaves no blood, only faint warmth.

*Cold Harvest:* On a crit or killing blow, the Paleclaw drains body heat—flash-freezing the target (DC 12 Fort save or stunned for 1d3 rounds). The area around the body becomes unnaturally cold for hours.

*Fear Gaze (1/day):* Locks eyes with a single target within 30'. Target must succeed a DC 13 Will save or be frozen in place with terror (paralyzed for 1 round per level/HD).

*Ice-Walk:* The Paleclaw moves effortlessly across ice, snow, and vertical frozen surfaces, leaving no prints. It takes no penalties from cold-based terrain or weather.

Excerpt from the Personal Journal of Elias Durnley, Natural Philosopher attached to the 1865 Dominion Overland Telegraph Survey, Yukon Interior:

February 17, 1865

Subject displays locomotion inconsistent with known species. Tracks found in soft snow show unnatural stride length—far exceeding human range without dislocation. No evidence of heel or boot compression. Claws? Tools? Unclear.

Observed site showed elevated temperature readings (in crude mercury register) near claw marks. Local magnetometer spiked briefly during my approach. Conclusion: subject may emit low-frequency vibration or field interference.

Theory: A creature evolved in subterranean geothermal pockets, drawn up by sonic resonance of distant storms. Possibly heat-scavengers. May extract warmth from prey or ambient environment."

I have named the subject: Specimen H1 - Paleclaw. Caution advised. Avoid direct observation after dark. Carry bronze pendulum and wax-stoppered salt."

## Regional Variants and Names (Multi-Regional Folklore)

| Region  | Name for Paleclaws         | Description / Lore  |
|---|----------------------------|---|
| Yukon/ Fort Selkirk                             | The Bone-Walkers           | Said to rise from mineral springs, using carved tibias as flutes to summon more. Their songs are only heard in dreams.                                |
| Northern Alberta                                | Frost-Bitten Men           | Believed to be corrupted surveyors and cartographers who mapped too far north and were claimed by a cold that remembers names.                        |
| Great Slave Lake                                | Ice Fathers                | Spirits of long-dead patriarchs who punish descendants that forget ancestral winter rites. Their coming is marked by hoarfrost inside locked rooms.   |
| Manitoba Interior                               | Snow Devils                | Blamed for vanishing children and blizzards that arrive under clear skies. Their footprints appear <b>after</b> the snow stops falling.               |
| Newfoundland Interior                           | The Chill-Men              | Said to move through coastal fog with whale-oil lanterns and tap gently on cabin windows during storms. The knocking never stops until answered.      |
| Quebec Hinterland                               | Les Silencieux             | No one hears them. When found, the dead are frozen mid-sentence or mid-scream, faces stretched in final realization.                                  |
| Southern Ontario<br><i>(secretly whispered)</i> | Pale Sons of the Snow King | Linked to early settler myths of caves beneath Georgian Bay. Said to awaken during the deepest freeze and <b>replace</b> those lost on winter trails. |

FIELD DIRECTIVES:

DO NOT ATTEMPT CAPTURE OR COMMUNION.

Engagement with any such anomaly—whether humanoid, spectral, or [REDACTED]  
—is strictly prohibited.

MAINTAIN FLAME AT ALL TIMES.

Camps must retain a central fire. Individuals should carry an open flame source when posted alone. If flame extinguishes unexplainably, regroup immediately.

NO WHISTLING.

Harmonic sounds (particularly of metallic pitch) have been associated with increased event likelihood. This includes whistling, pipe music, or Morse-tone transmission.

REPORT ALL INSTANCES OF ARRANGEMENT.

Should you discover any symmetrical configuration of gear, bone, wood, or meat  
—do not disturb it. Log location and vacate the area.

ATTACHMENTS:

Diagram: "Recovered Glyph Pattern from Outpost W" [REDACTED]

Transcript: "Last Transmission, Fort Poudervale" (Partial Only)

FINAL REMARKS:

This is not a matter for natural philosophy.

This is not a matter for superstition.

This is a matter of procedural safety.

Failure to comply may result in internal sanction or [REDACTED BY ORDER].

— By order of the Dominion Provisional Oversight Bureau (Winter Div.)

Filed under Category: CRYO-RESIDUE / Non-Hostile unless Provoked

DOMINION ARCHIVES

FIELD WARNING NOTICE — DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

Ref. No. 5-A/177 — Northern Survey Files

Classified: INTERNAL USE ONLY — NOT FOR LOCAL CONSTABULARY CIRCULATION

TO: All Commanding Officers and Survey Leads assigned to Overland Telegraph Work Groups, Frontier Weather Monitoring Stations, and Temporary Posts North of Line D-4

DATE: March 12, 1865

SUBJECT: ANOMALOUS ENCOUNTERS / PRESERVATION OF MORALE

SUMMARY:

Recent disappearances and unconfirmed sightings have created undue disruption to survey operations in sectors [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and along Ridge Axis [REDACTED]. The following guidelines are issued in the interest of safety and operational continuity.

OBSERVED PATTERNS:

Unexplained Loss of Personnel during clear-weather transit, often accompanied by:

Undisturbed snow surrounding site

Folded garments or upright boots without prints

Evidence of deliberate arrangement of nonorganic materials (tin cups, firewood, tools)

Animal Distress or premature freezing in livestock without exposure rationale.

Unnatural Silence: In areas of reportable incident, ambient noise—including wind and wildlife—ceases entirely for measurable periods.

Optical Distortions: Multiple accounts of “figures walking above the treeline” or “men without feet.” These reports are to be recorded but not discussed publicly.

— Frontier Science Theory (Expedition Notes, 1865)

## Suggested Adventure Hook

A telegraph survey team went missing near the proposed McGregor Line crossing. Their snow shelter was found half-buried, with no footprints—but the fire was still burning and one man's boots were frozen to the roof. The expedition log ends with a charcoal sketch of a creature with antler-like ears and claws as long as a man's forearm, captioned:

*"IT WATCHES. IT WAITS FOR THE SLEEP."*

## Rumors & Campfire Stories of the Paleclaws (1d6 Table)

| 1d6 | Whispered Tale  |
|-----|---|
| 1   | "There was a mail driver out of Fort Assiniboine, went off-course in a squall. They found the sled, still packed, but his boots were gone and the reins were knotted like a bird's nest. Said he walked into the woods naked, smiling." |
| 2   | "Old Jeb swears he saw a Paleclaw watching his cabin from the trees. Next morning, the firewood was all stacked into a perfect spiral. No prints. No wind. Just the spiral."  |
| 3   | "They only come when something is broken—an oath, a lock, a promise to return. That's when they smell it. Like blood, but colder."  |
| 4   | "The fur traders used to say they're born when a man dies forgotten in a snowdrift. One for every lonely corpse."   |
| 5   | "There was a chaplain who tried to bless a Paleclaw trail. He ain't been right since—just mutters about bells that don't ring and teeth under the ice."   |
| 6   | "You'll hear them before you see them. Not footsteps—just the wind... stopping. Like it's waiting."   |

## Recovered Artifact: The Hollow Tine

*"It sings when the wind dies."*

– From the logbook of surveyor W. Hemming, found frostbitten and unblinking in 1866

### **Description:**

A thin, curved sliver of pale bone-like material, cold to the touch even in firelight. The surface is etched with symmetrical ridges, like grooves in a music box cylinder or an insect's wing.

It hums softly – but only when: snow is falling; wind is utterly still; and no other sound is being made within 60 ft.

### **Possible Effects (System-Agnostic Ideas):**

"Field Dampener": While held, all warm-blooded creatures within 30' slowly feel warmth drain (1 HP/hour or similar).

"Frost Pulse": Once per day, can unleash a wave of freezing static (2d6 cold damage, DC 13 Ref or movement halved for 1d4 rounds).

"Echo Tap": When tapped against a frozen surface, reveals the last motion recorded nearby in ghostly snow-static hallucinations (like a cold playback).

Curse (optional): The bearer dreams of vast, white halls, and wakes with frost in their breath. After 3 nights, the Paleclaws know their name.

Royal Dominion Telegraph Survey — Temporary Post, Camp Red Bell  
Dated: February 3rd, 1865 — Never officially submitted

NAME OF MISSING: Constable Edmund Vale

AGE: 29

LAST SEEN: 10 miles northeast of Survey Beacon 7, en route to ice ridge breakpoint

DESCRIPTION:

5'10", black beard, pale complexion, red serge coat, navy wool trousers

Mounted on leased sled dog team (4 animals)

Armed with percussion rifle and one brass signaling whistle

NOTES (unofficial):

Vale was last seen at sundown, 2 February, by Corporal Pritchard. Reported a "light in the snow" pacing him at distance, "like a man on stilts made of bone." Dismissed at the time.

Sled recovered midday, 3 February—dogs frozen mid-run, reins slack, no damage. Food untouched.

Vale's clothing and rifle were neatly folded beside a frost-blasted pine. Boots stood upright, laced and empty. Snow beneath them was not disturbed.

The brass whistle was found embedded in the tree trunk 15 feet off the ground, wrapped in a thread of unknown white sinew.

RECOMMENDATION: Camp be moved south. Send report to McLeod Station.

(unsigned, unsigned copy)

-Unfiled Missing Persons Report

## Rumors about the Paleclaws:

| 1d8 | Rumor   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | <p><i>"They were men once – voyageurs who followed a cursed northern route and never came back right."</i></p> <p>Some say you can still see patches of red sash tied to their limbs, frozen into the skin.</p>   |
| 2   | <p><i>"They won't cross running water – but they'll follow a frozen river for days, just under the ice."</i></p> <p>Trappers whisper of shapes that <i>crawl with the current, scraping just beneath the surface.</i></p>   |
| 3   | <p><i>"You don't hear them howl. You feel your breath slow, your joints lock, and then the snow goes silent."</i></p> <p>The old Swede up at Lac Noir says they <i>steal the sound first</i>, so you won't scream.</p>  |
| 4   | <p><i>"They dig with their hands – never tools. Never speak. But they leave bone altars behind."</i></p> <p>An entire HBC camp at Spruce Narrows vanished, leaving only <i>a ring of jawbones in the snow.</i></p>  |
| 5   | <p><i>"They can smell warmth. A fire too hot, a heartbeat too fast – that's how they find you."</i></p> <p>Best sleep cold and breathe slow. A scout once buried herself in slush to survive the night.</p>   |
| 6   | <p><i>"Mission records claim the Church tried to baptize one once. It dissolved in the water – but the priest hasn't aged since."</i></p> <p>He lives near Fort Carlton. Won't speak of it. Still wears the same cassock, thirty years on.</p>                              |
| 7   | <p><i>"They don't breed. They take."</i></p> <p>One winter a Métis girl went missing from Turtle Lake. Came back in spring – but silent, pale, and pregnant with nothing.</p>   |
| 8   | <p><i>"They only come when the temperature drops below -40, and only when the moon is completely veiled."</i></p> <p>One old tracker keeps a silver barometer and <i>shaves off his eyebrows</i> when the cold hits deep – says it keeps them from looking back at him.</p> |

## Truths Behind the Paleclaw Rumors:

1. **Voyageurs gone wrong? Partly true.**  
A 1797 fur brigade vanished upriver from Fort Liard. They entered a cleft in the limestone cliffs where compasses failed and heat drained from the air. Only one came back—a mute with frostbitten lips and **claws for fingers**. His journal, smeared with wax and blood, spoke of “*a voice beneath the cold that taught us how to shed ourselves.*”
2. **Running water aversion? Incomplete.**  
They shun water in *motion*—not because of superstition, but because it disturbs their **long-range resonance**, something akin to echolocation. But when the river freezes, it becomes a perfect **highway of vibration**. Their claws can feel **footsteps from miles away**.
3. **Stillness before the strike? True.**  
Paleclaws emit a **field of thermokinetic dampening** when closing in—a natural adaptation or a form of predatory ritual. The stillness is not silence; it’s **stolen sensation**, a numb space around them where sound, heat, and time fray.
4. **Bone altars? Real.**  
These are **resonance markers**, arranged in spiraling sigils. They're not just symbolic—they shape reality subtly around them. Prolonged exposure causes **joint calcification, amnesia, and night terrors**. Several forts were abandoned due to bone lattice growth beneath the snowline.
5. **They track heat.**  
They have **temperature-adaptive vision**, and even deeper than that, they can sense **emotional heat**—terror, anger, lust, even joy. A “cold” sleeper isn’t just physically chill—they’ve mastered stillness of the *soul*.
6. **The baptism? Darkly true.**  
The Paleclaw brought into the church was **not yet fully formed**, and water disrupted the binding between its flesh and whatever *will* animated it. The priest didn’t escape unscathed—he became a **vessel for the memory**

of that broken rite. Now he lives in solitude, aging outwardly, but *repeating the baptism dream every night*.

7. **They don't breed – they replicate.**

Through wounds, dreams, and deep cold, they **rewrite the living**, especially those left vulnerable by isolation or despair. The girl who returned to Turtle Lake? She gave birth to **a pile of preserved snow and a single knuckled claw**. Then she walked into the ice and vanished.

8. **Temperature and moon phase – observed, but misunderstood.**

It's not superstition – it's **activation timing**. Below  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  and under **a veiled new moon**, something opens – possibly a *window* in the Drift. It's then they walk freely, not as flesh alone but as **echoes of winter's memory**, enforcing a deeper cold than weather allows.

# The Battle System (DCC)

By Paul Wolfe

Use this simplified skirmish system where the characters and NPCs are gathered into units. These units have the following statistics:

- **Unit Strength:** The strength of a unit is determined by totaling all Hit Dice of all members of the unit.
- **Armor Class:** Each unit has an armor class, which is the target number to hit them on an attack roll.
- **Damage:** A unit has an assigned die type as its damage die.
  - The unit deals 3dX dice of damage on a successful attack and 1dX die of damage on an unsuccessful attack.
  - A unit may have a different melee and ranged damage.
- **Movement:** Hexes per battle round on the village map. Every hex is about 30'.
  - All units may double their move by running but must spend 2 subsequent rounds walking to recover.
- **Morale:** Morale is a Will save target number. Base morale for any unit is 12.
  - If half of a unit is destroyed, Morale saves are made at -1d. Other factors may reduce the die type further.
- **Unit Luck:** Each unit has a Luck score equal to its total hit dice (HD) divided by 4.
  - Luck points may only be spent once per round.
  - A Luck point may be spent to avoid 1 HD of damage, deal 1 HD of damage, add +1 to a saving throw, or gain a +1d to the attack roll.
  - Any action die natural 20 gains the unit a +1 Luck.
  - Any action die natural 1 prevents that unit from spending Luck that round.
- **Saving Throw:** Units have a single saving throw bonus to resist spells or other mass dangers, such as the effects of smoke, poison, or the like.
  - The base Saving Throw bonus is the average unit HD, rounded down.

- **Commanders:** Commanders in a unit provide additional hit dice to the unit strength and may also add other bonuses, such as AC or morale bonuses. A unit can have a commander and a sub-commander.
- **Special Abilities:** Other groups within a unit may provide additional special abilities, such as attack bonuses or other abilities that help the unit survive on the battlefield.

## EXAMPLE UNIT

Lord Daystar's Command Group:

- **Lord Daystar:** HD 2 (+1 morale rolls to all units in a 3 hex radius)
- **Captain Hemingr:** HD 2 (+1 AC to unit)
- **Thegns (12):** HD 1 (+1 attack to unit)
- **Ceorls (12):** @ HD 1
- **Unit Strength:** 28; **AC:** 14; **Melee Damage:** 3d6; **Ranged Damage:** 3d4; **Movement:** 1; **Morale:** 12; **Luck:** 7; **Saving Throw:** +1

## A Note About Spellcasters

A character casting a spell is not considered part of a unit. Those characters have their own unit statistics. If a spellcasting character is incorporated into a unit, they may not cast spells.

## EXAMPLE:

Bryan the 1st level wizard, is detached from all units in his army. If attacked by a unit, he has the following battle statistics: **Unit strength:** 1; **AC:** 10; **Melee Damage:** 0; **Ranged Damage:** 0; **Movement:** 1; **Morale:** N/A; **Luck:** N/A; **Saving Throw:** as character.

Otherwise, Bryan the Wizard may cast spells during a battle turn.

## BATTLE ROUND

A battle round comprises about 5 minutes of game time and involves these steps:

- **Check Surprise:** Hidden units that move to attack check to see if they surprise their opponents. If a unit surprises another, they make a free attack roll.

- **Check Morale:** On the second and subsequent rounds of combat, check for morale for each unit.
- **Declare Spells:** All spellcasters must declare that they are casting spells.
- **Check Initiative:** Each side rolls a d20 and adds their Saving Throw bonus and any other bonuses to initiative.
- **Move:** Each side moves one unit in initiative order. Continue in initiative order until movement is completed.
- **Actions:** Attacks, spellcasting, and other actions may be undertaken. Each action is considered to occur simultaneously. Thus, ranged attacks are resolved for both sides, then spells, etc.
  - **Ranged Attacks:** Ranged attacks and damage are resolved.
  - **Cast Spells:** Spells are cast and resolved. NOTE: Spells must be declared and may be disrupted by ranged attacks.
  - **Melee Attacks:** Melee attacks and damage are resolved.
  - **Other Actions:** Units that have not attacked may perform other actions.
- **Recover Routed Units:** Units that have previously failed morale are checked for recovery.

### CHECK SURPRISE

In slow-moving semi-medieval combat, most units cannot be surprised. However, units can be hidden at the beginning of a scenario. Hidden units may declare a surprise attack, revealing themselves.

- The attacker and opponent roll a surprise check: 1d20 plus Average HD (rounded down) and any other bonuses to hide or spot that are applicable.
- If the attacker rolls higher, they may move and attack the surprised unit before initiative is rolled. If the attack is successful, they deal normal damage but take no damage themselves.
- If the opponent rolls higher (or the roll is tied), the hidden unit is revealed and the battle round proceeds.

## CHECK MORALE

On the second and subsequent battle rounds, each unit that suffered damage must make a morale roll. Those units that fail the roll break are considered broken units and must move away from any enemy units at least 1 hex for this battle round.

- Units that have lost at least half of their HD take a -1d penalty to this roll.
- Broken units are affected as follows:
  - Must move away from any enemy units at least 1 hex this battle round.
  - Suffer -4 AC
  - May not attack and do not inflict damage on attacking units.

## DECLARE SPELLS

All characters that are casting spells for this battle round must declare that they are casting a spell. **NOTE:** A character that casts a spell may not move for this battle round.

## INITIATIVE

Both sides (or all sides if there are more than two opponents in the battle) roll a d20 and add their average HD (rounded down) and any other bonuses to initiative. The winner of initiative gains the following advantages:

- May move their first unit or pass to their opponent.
- Gains a +1d to attack rolls with one unit (their choice).

## MOVEMENT

In initiative order, each player moves one unit. This alternates until movement is completed.

- Units that move their walking pace may perform another action.
- Units that move their running pace must move at a walking pace for the next 2 rounds.
- Units that end their running pace movement in contact with an enemy unit have charged (See combat).

## ACTIONS

Each unit performs an action in the following phases. All actions in that phase are resolved simultaneously.

### A Note About Attack Rolls

To resolve attack rolls, compare the Unit Strength as a ratio. The ratio provides attack, damage, and/or morale bonuses or penalties.

NOTE: Two allied units attacking the same unit combine their Unit Strength. However, the attacked unit can only attack a single unit in return, thus they compare their Unit Strength to only one of those units.

### Example:

Lord Daystar's Command Group has a Unit Strength of 28. They are attacking Lord Agron's Scout Command unit with a Unit Strength of 26. The two units are considered Even and thus apply no bonus or penalty to their attack rolls.

If Lord Daystar's Command Group and a Peasant Army (Unit Strength 28) attack Agron's scouts, the ratio is 56:26 (2:1). Daystar and the Peasant Army receive a +1d to attack this battle round.

NOTE: Agron's scouts can only attack a single unit, thus, for their determination of a ratio, you must compare only one unit to Agron's scouts. As such, if Agron's scouts attack the Peasant Army, they are considered even for their attack roll.

| <b>Ratio</b> | <b>¼ or less</b>                | <b>½</b>                 | <b>Even</b> | <b>2:1</b>    | <b>3:1</b>    | <b>4:1</b>       |
|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| <b>Roll</b>  | -2<br>Damage;<br>Morale -<br>1d | -1d<br>Attack;<br>Morale | N/A         | +1d<br>Attack | +1d<br>Damage | Double<br>Damage |

### Other Attack Roll Bonuses

| Condition  | Melee | Ranged |
|--|-------|--------|
| <b>Attacker is...</b>                                |       |        |
| Invisible  | 2     | 2      |
| Higher ground  | 1     |        |
| Movement restricted (entangled, bogged in mud, etc.) | -1d   |        |
| Missile fire on a melee engaged unit*                |       | -1     |
| <b>Defender is...</b>                                |       |        |
| Behind cover   | -2    | -2     |
| Blinded  | 2     | 2      |
| Movement restricted (entangled, bogged in mud, etc.) | +1d   | +1d    |
| Broken/Fleeing                                       | +2d   | +1d    |

\* If the ranged attack misses, the friendly unit suffers 1d4 damage.

### RANGED ATTACKS

Ranged attacks for all units are resolved. All ranged attacks are considered simultaneous unless otherwise noted by a special ability.

**NOTE:** Ranged attacks have a minimum range (as noted in the table). Units inside this range may not be attacked by ranged attacks. For the javelin and sling, units in melee distance may be attacked with these ranged weapons.

- A ranged attack must target a single unit.
- Measure from the middle of the firing unit to the middle of the attacked unit.
- Short range attacks add a die of damage on a successful attack. Medium range attacks are made at -2 to the attack roll; Long range attacks at -1d to the attack roll.

| Weapon   | Short/Medium/Long Range (battle hexes) |
|----------|--|
| Crossbow | 2/5/8                                  |
| Javelin  | 0/2/3                                  |
| Longbow  | 2/4/7                                  |
| Shortbow | 1/3/5                                  |
| Sling    | 0/2/5                                  |

### *Apply Ranged Damage*

The base ranged damage for any successful attack is 3d4. No damage is dealt on a failed attack roll. Damage is applied directly to a unit's Unit Strength.

### CAST SPELLS

Individual spellcasters cast their spells.

**NOTE:** Spellcasters cannot move and cast a spell in the same round.

- Spellcasters attacked by ranged attacks must make a concentration check (d20+CON bonus against a DC 9+damage dealt).
- On a failure, the spell is disrupted – the caster must still make a spell check, however. Only the effects of a fumble are applied.

The spell description should provide a guide to the Judge on effects and damage. Spells, as a general rule, have the following base effects:

- Point offensive spells, such as magic missile, deal a flat 1d4 damage to a battle unit.
- Area-effect offensive spells deal 3d4 damage to a battle unit.
- Other effects, such as confusion, charm, and the like generally affect 1d4 HD of a battle unit, unless the spell description says otherwise.
- A unit rolls a saving throw against any spell cast against it. On a success, the unit suffers no effects or damage from the spell.

### MELEE ATTACKS

Melee attacks for all units are resolved. All attacks are considered simultaneous, unless otherwise noted in a special ability.

- Melee attacks must be made against a single unit.
- Attacks are made against a unit's armor class. Damage is dealt to a unit's Unit Strength.

### *Melee Damage*

A successful attack deals 3d6 damage (base) to the opposed unit. A failed attack deals 1d6 damage (base) to the opposed unit.

### OTHER ACTIONS

Units that move up to a walking pace in a battle round may perform other actions, though some actions require a full battle round. Below are a few examples, but the Judge should determine what else might be possible within a 5-minute timespan in a chaotic battlefield setting.

| <b>Action</b>                                      | <b>Time</b>          |
|--|----------------------|
| Change weapon type (melee to ranged or vice versa) | 1 action             |
| Use a non-combat special ability                   | 1 action (generally) |
| Rally a broken unit                                | 1 action (see below) |
| Combine two units                                  | Full round           |

### *A Note About Combining Units*

Two units may spend a full round combining under the following conditions:

- The units cannot have moved or been attacked this battle round.
- Neither unit can be broken.
- The combined unit can still only have a commander and sub-commander.

### RECOVER ROUTED UNITS

Each broken unit may attempt to recover by making a DC 12 morale check, under the following conditions:

- Units at half their Unit Strength suffer -1d to the roll.
- Units that were attacked while broken suffer a -1d to the roll.

Recovered units begin the next battle round with only 1 action.

## EXAMPLE UNITS

### Lord Daystar's Command Group:

- Lord Daystar: HD 2 (+1 morale rolls to all troops in a 3-hex radius)
- Captain Hemingr: HD 2 (+1 defense to troop)
- Thegns: 12 @ HD 1 (+1 attack to troop)
- Ceorls: 12 @ HD 1; Javelins
- Army Value: 28; Morale 12; Luck 7; AC 14; Damage 3d6; Ranged: 3d4

### Hastily Assembled Soldiers:

- Stigandr: HD 3 (+1d damage)
- Horsa: HD 2 (-1 morale to enemy troop)
- Ceorls: 15 @ HD 1
- Army Value: 20; Morale: DC 12; Luck 5; AC 13; Damage 4d6

### Peasant Armies (8):

- Morale -1d.
- PC 1: HD ½; (Luck +1; If sacrificed, +1 Luck)
- PC 2: HD ½; (Luck +1; If sacrificed, +1d Morale)
- Peasants: 30 @ ½
- Army Value: 17; Morale 12; Luck 4; AC 12; Damage 3d4

### Lord Agron's Scout Command:

- Captain Hroarr: HD 4 (Damage +1 HD)
- Corporal Wilburg: HD 2 (AC +1)
- Elite Soldiers: 10 @ HD 2 (Morale DC -1)
- Army Value 26, Morale 11; Luck 6; AC 13; Damage 4d8

### Lord Agron's Scout Troop:

- Captain Asco: HD 2 (Morale +1d)
- Javelineers: 25 @ HD 1 (+1d damage; Ranged attack: 3d6)
- Army Value: 27; Morale 12; Luck 6; AC 12; Damage 3d6

Lord Agron's Light Infantry:

- Captain Gudini: HD 3 (AC +1)
  - Army Value 23; Morale 12; Luck 5; AC 13; Damage 3d6
- Corporal Raginherd: HD 1 (Reach 10'; Damage dealt first)
  - Army Value 21; Morale 12; Luck 5; AC 12; Damage 3d6
- Captain Bernard: HD 2 (+1 to Morale rolls)
  - Army Value 22; Morale 12; Luck 5; AC 12; Damage 3d6
- Sergeant Alfheah: HD 3 (+1 HD damage)
  - Army Value 23; Morale 12; Luck 5; AC 12; Damage 4d6

NOTE: For a sample adventure using these battle rules, plus printable tokens to represent units, please see "The Battle of Bright Hill" in Volume II of The Gongfarmer's Almanac 2025.

# CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

By Nicholas Bevillard

In this world, each town and city has its own social fabric, customs, and governing bodies. The consequences of committing crimes depend heavily on the location, culture, and local enforcers of the law. This system provides rule-based outcomes for crimes committed by the players and includes DC-based checks to escape punishment or reduce sentencing.

## CRIMINAL ACTION CATEGORIES

Crimes are broken into **four categories**:

| <b>Crime Level</b>    | <b>Examples</b>                                     | <b>Punishment Examples</b>   |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <b>Petty Crime</b>    | Theft (under 5 sp), vandalism, disturbing the peace | Fine (5–20 sp), public shaming, short imprisonment (1–3 days)                          |
| <b>Moderate Crime</b> | Assault, breaking and entering, theft (5 sp–2 gp)   | Heavier fine (up to 5 gp), imprisonment (1 week to 1 month), exile                     |
| <b>Severe Crime</b>   | Grand theft (over 2 gp), arson, serious assault     | Heavy fine or asset seizure (5–10 gp), imprisonment (months to years), public flogging |
| <b>Capital Crime</b>  | Murder, treason, kidnapping, major arson            | Execution, life imprisonment, exile under penalty of death                             |

**For context:** 1 gp is equivalent to about a year's income for a commoner. 1 sp is roughly a day's wage for a laborer. Fines above 1 gp are considered ruinous for most people.

## CRIME OUTCOME MECHANIC

After committing a crime, the player's fate depends on a series of checks based on the town's culture, the local authority's reaction, and any outside influences:

### 1. Was the crime witnessed?

- **DC 10 Luck Check.** On success, no one saw it; on failure, someone saw the crime.
  - Modifiers:
    - +2 if the crime was done at night or in a secluded place.
    - -2 if the crime was done in a public space or in broad daylight.
  - If no one saw it, the player is in the clear (for now).



## 2. Was the criminal identified?

- If witnessed, the player must make a **DC 12 Agility or Disguise Check** to evade or mislead.
  - Success = No identification; failure = Player is marked as a suspect.
  - If the player was seen clearly, they may face a manhunt.

## 3. If captured, how does the trial play out?

- **Lawful Societies:**
  - **DC 15 Personality Check.** (Persuasion) to reduce sentence or avoid execution.
- **Corrupt or Flexible Societies:**
  - **DC 12 Personality or Bribery Attempt.** Failure increases punishment.
  - **Bribes:** Base bribe amount = (Crime Value x 2) in silver pieces.
- **Religious Societies:**
  - **DC 14 Personality or Religion Check.** Failure may lead to public punishment.
- **Superstitious Societies:**
  - **DC 13 Personality or Luck Check.** Failure may lead to exile or execution.

## ESCAPE & PUNISHMENT MECHANIC

If the players are caught and imprisoned:

**1. Jail Escape Attempt:** Once per day, they can attempt an escape using:

- **DC 14 Agility Check** to pick the lock (if they have tools).
- **DC 16 Strength Check** to break free.
- **DC 16 Personality Check** to convince the guard to loosen their binds.

**2. Trial Outcome:** When a character is caught and chooses to stand trial, roll on the following tables.

The die you roll depends on the severity of the crime. Players add their Luck modifier to the roll.

## Roll Die Based on Crime Severity:

### Petty Crime Outcomes (theft, drunken brawling, trespassing):

1d20 + Luck modifier

- 1–5 Moderate punishment (fine, flogging, brief imprisonment)
- 6–10 Reduced punishment (small fine, public humiliation, exile from district)
- 11–17 Bribe Accepted (punishment avoided, but under suspicion)
- 18–20 Pardon (found not guilty or let go with warning)

### Moderate Crime Outcomes (assault, burglary, arson):

1d16 + Luck

- 1–4 Severe punishment (long imprisonment, branding, crippling injury)
- 5–8 Moderate punishment (months in jail, heavy fine, confiscation of goods)
- 9–12 Reduced punishment (fine, forced service, exile)
- 13–15 Bribe Accepted (punishment avoided, but marked by watch)
- 16+ Pardon (rare acquittal, found not guilty)

### Severe/Capital Crime Outcomes (murder, treason, heresy):

1d12 + Luck

- 1–5 Severe punishment (execution, lifelong imprisonment, enslavement)
- 6–9 Moderate punishment (branding, mutilation, exile for life)
- 10–11 Reduced punishment (years of servitude, crippling fine, stripped of titles)
- 12+ Bribe Accepted (corrupt judge, hidden patron; you escape but are forever hunted)

## LOCAL LAWS & REACTIONS

### Small villages

*Simple, peaceful villages with a close-knit community.*

- **Criminality:** Very rare, crime is almost unheard of among the locals.
- **Enforcer:** The village headman, acts as the local judge.
- **Common Punishments:**
  - Petty crimes = Public shaming or fines (5–10 sp).
  - Moderate crimes = Whipping, imprisonment (1 week).
  - Severe crimes = Death by hanging or exile.

*"You come into our village and break our peace? We don't tolerate outsiders stirring up trouble."*



## **Towns**

*Trade hub, crossroads of many cultures, and home to shady undercurrents.*

- Criminality: High, pickpockets and con artists are common.
- Enforcer: The Town Watch is heavily bribed and overworked.
- Common Punishments:
  - Petty crimes = 1d10 sp fine or a night in the stocks.
  - Moderate crimes = Public flogging or 1 week in jail.
  - Severe crimes = 50 sp fine or execution if not bribed.

*"Look, I'm not saying it's legal... but I can make it disappear for the right price."*

## **Stronghold**

*Stronghold with strict adherence to ancient laws.*

- Criminality: Very low, lawbreakers are viewed as disgraces.
- Enforcer: Heavy-Armored guards, mostly lawful.
- Common Punishments:
  - Petty crimes = 5 sp fine or 1 day of hard labor.
  - Moderate crimes = Permanent exile to the surface.
  - Severe crimes = Imprisonment (lifelong).

*"Break our laws and you will wish you had died in the dark."*

## **Cities**

*Often the capital of the region, filled with politics, power, and corruption.*

- Criminality: Moderate to High, crime syndicates control entire districts.
- Enforcer: Knights formally answer to the local lord (but may be compromised).
- Common Punishments:
  - Petty crimes = 10 sp fine or public whipping.
  - Moderate crimes = Jail (1d6 months) or hand amputation.
  - Severe crimes = Death by guillotine or conscription into the army.

*"You think the law protects you? The law belongs to those who can afford it."*

## EXAMPLES IN PLAY

**Example 1:** A rogue is caught pickpocketing in a town.

- Luck Check (DC 10): Fails.
- Disguise Check (DC 12): Fails.
- Personality Check (DC 12) to bribe: Succeeds! The guard accepts 10 sp to let it slide.

**Example 2:** A warrior kills a man in a small village after a drunken brawl.

- Luck Check (DC 10): Succeeds.
- Nobody saw it directly. The players could hide the body or create an alibi.

**Example 3:** A thief murders a knight in a city.

- Luck Check (DC 10): Fails.
- Personality Check (DC 15): Fails.
- Trial Roll: Rolls a 4 → Execution is scheduled at dawn unless the party stages a breakout.

## CONSEQUENCES OF BEING A FUGITIVE

- If the party flees justice, they become wanted criminals in that region.
- Local enforcers may set a bounty on them (which could attract adventurers or mercenaries).
- Returning to that region without resolving their status could lead to immediate arrest or worse.

## YOU CAN FIGHT THE LAW... BUT THE LAW MIGHT WIN

Justice is brutal, corrupt, and inconsistent, but the players always have options. Whether they fight back, flee, or play the political game, the consequences will reshape their reputation and how the world treats them.

# LOCK PICKING MECHANIC

By Marc Anderson

Illustrated by Bradley McDevitt

*For use any time a party encounters a mechanical lock; a chest, door, puzzle.... This provides an immersive alternative to a simple skill check roll to pick a lock.*

The Judge rolls a number of d8s according to the difficulty of the lock/trap to be picked, representing the tumbler mechanisms. The results are laid out left to right for the player picking the lock to see.

The player picking the lock then rolls a d8 and attempts to match the exact number on the first d8 result before them. If successful, they roll for the next lock d8 and so on. If the player's result does not match the number on the lock d8, they may attempt the next round (for added complication, Judges may trigger traps on a failure). Once all the d8 results have been matched in order, the lock is picked.

A Thief at each level has a bonus to *picking locks*. This is the point pool from which they may influence their attempt. Thieves may spend their pick lock modifier and luck in the same way, once again spending the pool of modifiers across the entire series of pick checks.

Player characters outside the Thief class may use their agility modifier as a point pool to increase/decrease their d8 result to match a lock/trap's d8 result. The total point pool can only be spent once during an entire series of lock picking checks. This means if the lock has a 3d8 challenge and the player has a +2 for agility, they have 2 points to spend across all 3 checks. Players may also spend luck for this.

## **Possible difficulty standards:**

- Simple Lock (Easy) - 1d8
- Standard Lock (Standard) - 2d8
- Reinforced lock (Difficult) - 3d8
- Master Lock (Hard) - 4d8
- Reinforced Master Lock ("Impossible") - 5d8

### Example in play:

The party comes across a chest with a reinforced lock. The level 2 Thief, with a +3 pick lock modifier has a pool of 3 points they can use to modify their rolls. They pull out their thieves' tools and prepare to master the tumbler mechanisms one at a time. The Judge rolls 3d8, resulting in 4-6-2, and places them in front of the player in that order. The thief rolls 1d8 resulting in a 4 – an exact match, success! They continue twisting their tools inside the lock and roll their second d8 resulting in a 4, which misses an exact match by 2, but they spend 2 points of their point pool to make it succeed. On to the third and last tumbler, rolling their next d8 -- it's a 7, which misses by 5. This is too great a failure, and the thief doesn't have enough in the point pool to save it, so they wait a round.

The thief wipes the sweat from their brow and tries again, rolling a 5. With only one point in the pool to spend, the thief rolls their Luck die and adds 2 more points to make it a success. The party lets out a collective sigh of relief.



# Dungeons and Darkslides

By Josh Yoder  
Illustrated by Jon Wilson

## Gleaming the Gelatinous Cube

Between the time when the concrete jungles swallowed the last legendary hill, and the rise of the gnarly ones, there was a session undreamed of. It was an age of shredding; it was the age of Darkslides!

Want to skate around dungeons popping kickflips while fighting zombies?! In this guide I will give you the tools to shred those dead and look sick while doing it!

## Shred the Dungeon

### THE BOARD

When first using a skateboard, the rider must make a DC 10 Agility check to balance themselves or fall prone for one round. On a success, the board allows the rider to move an extra 30' per round. Mighty Deeds that utilize a skateboard receive +1d on the deed die. Fumbles on a skateboard are at a +1d on the fumble die.

### THE TRICKS

The sickest tricks to show the enemy who the real threat is!

## Mighty Deed: Skateboarding

Skateboard attacks are attacks made while riding a skateboard or any other boardlike vehicle, like Surfboard, skimboard or hoverboard.

| Deed Die Roll | Result  |
|---------------|---|
| 3             | Ollie: Can jump over an enemy and land behind them. |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 4  | Rail grind: Can ride a rounded edge, banister or tail of a large monster can move an extra 20' this round.  |
| 5  | Kickflip: Can smack an opponent in the face as you soar past the target with a sick kickflip! Take an extra attack roll. Deal extra damage from your board equal to your Mighty Deed Die result on a hit and keep moving! Everyone claps. |
| 6  | 360° Darkslide: Can spin the board around a full rotation while riding it like a rail grind on the abrasive side. You can get a free attack and have a +2 to attacks for this round.  |
| 7+ | The 1080°: Can ride up the wall up to 90' and then spin around 3 rotations. All opponents are stunned for 1 round.  |



## DAVE'S DOPE DISK

**Level:** 1

**Range:** Self

**Casting time:** 1 Action

**Duration:** Varies by result

**Save:** None

### **General:**

The caster conjures a dope disk that can be ridden like a skateboard and launched like a missile at foes. It hovers above the ground allowing them to ride it and perform skateboarding tricks and maneuvers as well as devastating attacks.

### **Manifestation:**

Roll 1d4 (1) The caster's hands glow bright green as they form a disk shape in the air, manifesting the disk. (2) A power cord echoes in the distance as the caster's feet erupt in green illusory flame. (3) A tiny, punked-out goblin jumps through a rift in time and space hands the caster the board, makes a lewd gesture, then leaves. (4) The board falls from the sky, each time it manifests like this a strange omen appears as a sticker on the board.

### **Corruption:**

Roll 1d4: (1) The caster speaks in dad jokes and becomes overly cautious. (2) The caster loses all the skin on their knees and elbows. (3) The casters' eyes bulge and their skin becomes green, taking on a weirdo appearance. (4) The caster develops a phobia of walking and never wants their feet to touch the ground.

### **Misfire:**

Roll 1d4: (1) The caster immediately falls on the board requiring a full turn to right themselves and for 1d3 rounds suffering a -4 penalty to initiative rolls, attack rolls and spell checks (2) The caster is stunned for 1d3 rounds with embarrassment they may not take any actions or cast spells (3) The caster's mouth fills with dirt for 1d3 rounds they take a -4 penalty on all checks and are silenced.

- 1 Lost, failure, and worse! Roll 1d6 modified by Luck: (0 or less) corruption + misfire + patron taint; (1) corruption; (2) patron taint (or corruption if no patron); (3+) misfire
- 2-11 Lost. Failure.
- 12-13 Dave's dope disk is summoned, it hovers 5' and lasts 1d4 rounds. It follows the Skateboarding rules to ride.
- 14-17 Dave's dope disk is summoned, it hovers 10' and lasts 1d6 rounds. It follows the Skateboarding rules to ride.
- 18-23 Dave's dope disk is summoned; it can hover up to 15' and lasts 1d10 rounds. It follows the Skateboarding rules to ride.
- 24-29 Dave's dope disk is summoned; it can hover up to 30' and lasts 1 hour. It follows the Skateboarding rules to ride. The disk can also be telepathically launched 30' forward doing 2d6 to whoever it is directed at before returning to the caster's feet before the round ends preventing them from falling.
- 30+ Dave's dope disk is summoned; it can hover up to 60' and lasts for 24 hours. It follows the Skateboarding rules to ride except the user automatically passes the agility check needed to ride a board. The disk can also be telepathically launched 60' in any direction doing 4d6 dmg to one target before returning to the caster's feet.

# Expanded Language Table for Weird Frontiers

By Kenny Valdivia

To use as part of the character creation process to provide a playable benefit for those characters who have more than one language. Also, to assist with world-building through regional NPCs. Additionally, this reflects the diversity of languages spoken across the country at that time, in hopes that it would help with gameplay immersion.

Roll 1d100

| <b>% Chance to Know Language</b> | <b>Language</b> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 01-10                            | French          |
| 11-20                            | German          |
| 21-30                            | Dutch           |
| 31-35                            | Spanish         |
| 36-40                            | Chinese*        |
| 41-45                            | Irish           |
| 46-50                            | Japanese        |
| 51-55                            | Russian         |
| 56-60                            | Italian         |
| 61-65                            | Greek           |
| 66-70                            | Algonquian*     |
| 71-75                            | Siouan*         |
| 76-80                            | Muskogean*      |
| 81-85                            | Iroquoian*      |
| 86-90                            | Athabaskan*     |
| 91-95                            | Uto-Aztecian*   |
| 96-100                           | Salishan*       |

\*Gaining a "language family" allows a character to communicate with anyone who speaks some form or dialect related to that overarching language family.

# The Good, The Weird & The Ugly: Three Classes for Weird Frontiers

By J. Yamil

Illustrated by: Joe Porkio

## EL PADRE

Hit Die: d12

Crit Die: d10

Fumble Die: d12

You're no hero.

You are a missionary: a believer, a warrior, a priest, a crusader.

Inspiration: *The Name of the Rose* (1986)



**Action Die:** Padres use their action die for attack rolls in addition to all class-related ability and skill rolls unless otherwise noted.

**Mission Die:** Padres use their mission die to heal others as well as to restore the Grit score of their companions (cannot target themselves). The amount of Grit the Padre restores is subtracted from the Padre's own Grit score.

**Luck:** Padres add their current Luck bonus to religion and history checks.

**Path:** Padres start off on the Path of the Righteous, but they know that every life they take may send them down the Path of the Damned. Padres prefer to leave the dirty work of murder to their companions, who they see as the foot soldiers in the war against the Taint.

**Signature Weapons:** Padres prefer to use weapons inspired by relics from the Good Book (the sword of the Archangel or King David's sling) or link their weapons to a saint (the battleaxe of Saint Peter). The use of firearms is banned by the Church with the penalty of excommunication.

**Starting Wealth:** Padres start the game with 1d10 dollars.

**Class Abilities:**

*Goin' Medieval:* When the Padre lands a hit with their melee weapon of choice, if the hit is a killing blow, they may attempt an additional strike on an adjacent opponent.

*Inquisitor:* The Church has trained the Padres in otherworldly matters such as demons, devils, exorcisms, last rites, etc. Padres may use their mission die on these rolls.

*All down but nine:* Padres are fish out of water in the wilderness. They are ill-equipped for violence and hazards of frontier life. Whenever they lose a Grit, they have a 50% chance of gaining a Hex token.

## PADRE

| Level | Title     | Attack Bonus | Crit Die | Fumble Die | Action Die   | Ref | Fort | Will |
|-------|-----------|--------------|----------|------------|--------------|-----|------|------|
| 1     | Brother   | -1           | d10      | d12        | 1d20         | +1  | +0   | +1   |
| 2     | Anointed  | 0            | d12      | d10        | 1d20         | +2  | +1   | +1   |
| 3     | Venerable | +1           | d14      | d8         | 1d20         | +3  | +1   | +2   |
| 4     | Blessed   | +2           | d16      | d6         | 1d20         | +4  | +2   | +3   |
| 5     | Saint     | +2           | d16+1    | d5         | 1d20 + 1d14  | +5  | +2   | +3   |
| 6     |           | +3           | d16+2    | d4         | 1d20 + 1d16  | +6  | +3   | +4   |
| 7     |           | +4           | d20      | d4         | 1d20 + 1d120 | +7  | +3   | +4   |
| 8     |           | +4           | d20+1    | d3         | 1d24 + 1d120 | +8  | +4   | +5   |
| 9     |           | +5           | d24      | d3         | 1d24 + 1d120 | +9  | +4   | +6   |
| 10    |           | +6           | d30      | d3-1       | 1d24 + 1d124 | +10 | +5   | +6   |

## THE ST(RANGER)

Hit Die: d8

Crit Die: d8

Fumble Die: d12

You're no hero.

You are a wanderer: a haunted man, a vengeful hunter, a fugitive, a mercenary.

Inspiration: Sergio Leone's *"Dollars"* Trilogy (1964-66)



**Action Die:** St(ranger)s use their action die for attack rolls in addition to all class related ability and skill rolls unless otherwise noted.

**Seein' Red:** St(ranger)s are able to manipulate fate thanks to the Taint. Whenever St(ranger)s or their allies reveal a red suited card, the st(ranger) may have the allies reveal one card and choose from all the revealed cards. This only triggers once per turn.

Additionally, this drains the Grit score of the St(ranger).

| <b>Card revealed</b>                  | <b>How much drained from Grit score</b>                               |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10<br>(red-suited only) | 1   |
| Red-Suited Face<br>Card               | Jacks 1d6+1, Queens 1d6+2, Kings<br>1d6+3                             |
| Aces and 8s                           | Deadman's hand! 1d6+4 subtracted<br>from Grit score. Gain 1 Hex token |
| Red Joker                             | 1d6+4 subtracted from Grit score. Gain<br>1d3 Hex Tokens              |

**Luck:** St(ranger)s add their current Luck bonus to Grit and fear checks.

**Path:** St(ranger)s start off Walking the Line. As they wander, they stray towards the Path of the Righteous or the Damned.

**Signature Weapons:** St(ranger)s will pick a single specific firearm and become very attached to that weapon. As long as they maintain it, clean it and avoid misfires, they gain a +1d bonus to attack while using that specific firearm. Due to their reliance on that weapon, they also lose a -1d while using any other weapon, including other firearms of the same type.

**Starting Wealth:** St(ranger)s start the game with 1d6 dollars.

**Class Abilities:**

*Will die standin' up:* St(ranger)s are known for their bravery in the face of defeat. If their Grit score is reduced to 5 or less, they gain a +1d bonus to attack and damage.

*Uncorkin' a bronc:* Due to their time living in the wilderness, animals innately trust st(ranger)s. St(ranger)s add their current Luck bonus to calm or tame wild animals. Mounts or any animal companions tamed by the st(ranger) also add the st(ranger)'s Luck bonus to fear checks and attack rolls.

*Tougher than rawhide*: Once per day, st(ranger)s can remove a Hex token.

| <b>ST(RANGER)</b> |              |                     |                 |                   |                        |            |             |             |  |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--|
| <b>Level</b>      | <b>Title</b> | <b>Attack Bonus</b> | <b>Crit Die</b> | <b>Fumble Die</b> | <b>Action Die</b>      | <b>Ref</b> | <b>Fort</b> | <b>Will</b> |  |
| 1                 | Spook        | +1                  | d8              | d12               | 1d20                   | +1         | +1          | +0          |  |
| 2                 | Drifter      | +1                  | d8              | d12               | 1d20                   | +1         | +2          | +1          |  |
| 3                 | Prowler      | +2                  | d10             | d10               | 1d20                   | +2         | +3          | +1          |  |
| 4                 | Wildcard     | +2                  | d10             | d10               | 1d20                   | +3         | +4          | +2          |  |
| 5                 | Midnighter   | +3                  | d12             | d8                | 1d20 + 1d14            | +3         | +5          | +2          |  |
| 6                 |              | +3                  | d12             | d8                | 1d20 + 1d16            | +4         | +6          | +3          |  |
| 7                 |              | +4                  | d14             | d7                | 1d20 + 1d120           | +4         | +7          | +3          |  |
| 8                 |              | +4                  | d14             | d7                | 1d24 + 1d120           | +5         | +8          | +4          |  |
| 9                 |              | +5                  | d16             | d6                | 1d24 + 1d120           | +6         | +9          | +4          |  |
| 10                |              | +6                  | d16             | d6                | 1d24 + 1d124<br>+ 1d14 | +6         | +10         | +5          |  |

## THE DEMOLITIONIST

Hit Die: d6

Crit Die: d6

Fumble Die: d12

You're no hero.

You are an outcast: a rebel soldier, a miner, a pyromaniac.

Inspiration: Duck, You Sucker! aka *A Fistful of Dynamite* (1971)



Action Die: Demolitionists use their action die for attack rolls in addition to all class related ability and skill rolls unless otherwise noted.

Hypnotized by the flames: Demolitionists are easily distracted by any fire near them and suffer -1d to Will saves or Intelligence checks if they cannot interact with a nearby fire.

Luck: Demolitionists add their current Luck bonus to fire-related checks.

Path: Demolitionists often Walk the Line at first, but their recklessness and propensity for friendly fire leads them to the Path of the Damned.

Starting Wealth: Demolitionists start the game with 1d16 dollars.

Signature Weapons: Demolitionists adore all things that burn or go boom like torches and dynamite sticks. If the demolitionist was a miner, they might still carry their pickaxe or hammer.

Refer to the core rulebook for the other explosives of Weird Frontiers: fire bombs (page 85), explosive bomb (page 246), dynamite (page 147 and page 844).

Oddly enough, demolitionists see handguns and rifles to be too limiting or restrained for their preference.

Here are two weapons of choice for the demolitionist:

| Demolitionist's common explosives (range 10/35/50) |                 |                    |  |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|--|
| Level  | Bang Snaps Dmg* | Roman Candles Dmg† | Additional Effect  |
| 1  | 1d4             | 1d3                | None   |
| 2  | 1d4             | 1d3                | None   |
| 3  | 1d6             | 1d4                | Roll on <b>Explosive Critical Table</b> (this effect can stack with an actual natural 20). |
| 4  | 1d6             | 1d4                | Roll on <b>Explosive Critical Table</b> (this effect can stack with an actual natural 20). |
| 5  | 1d6             | 2d4                | Roll on <b>Explosive Critical Table</b> (this effect can stack with an actual natural 20). |

| Demolitionist's common explosives (Cont.) |      |     |  |
|---|------|-----|--|
|   |      |     | Roll on <b>Explosive Critical Table</b> (this effect can stack with an actual natural 20).   |
| 6   | 1d8  | 2d4 | Same as above and target(s) suffers temporary blindness (-4 to attack and initiative rolls). |
| 7   | 1d8  | 3d4 | Same as above and target(s) suffers temporary blindness (-4 to attack and initiative rolls). |
| 8   | 1d8  | 3d4 | Same as above and target(s) suffers temporary blindness (-4 to attack and initiative rolls). |
| 9   | 1d10 | 3d4 | Same as above and target(s) suffers temporary blindness (-4 to attack and initiative rolls). |
| 10  | 1d10 | 4d4 | Same as above and target(s) suffers temporary blindness (-4 to attack and initiative rolls)  |

\*Bang Snaps - maximum 1 target; maximum uses/day is 1d4+ CL.

†Roman Candles - minimum 2 targets; maximum targets CL+2.

Class Abilities:

*Achilles Stratagem:* Before a demolitionist uses explosives, they consult this deck.

| Bomb Deck        | Result   |
|------------------|--|
| 2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10 | No effect  |
| All Face Cards   | Explosive targets +x additional opponents where x is decided by the Face Card. Also, bonus to attack and damage. Jacks +1, Queens +2, Kings +3 |
| Aces and 8s      | Deadman's hand! Unpredictable powder - roll on explosive fumble table.   |
| Red Joker        | Lady Luck's Favor! Automatic Critical + 1d3 Boon Tokens  |
| Black Joker      | Lady Calamity Strikes! Automatic Misfire (fumble) + 1d3 Hex Tokens   |

*Leave no stone unlit:* To the demolitionist with a match, everything is a wick. Therefore, they never lack a way to light a bomb or dynamite stick. This ability only applies to activating explosives.

### DEMOLITIONIST

| Level | Title      | Attack Bonus | Crit Die | Fumble Die | Action Die   | Ref | Fort | Will |
|-------|------------|--------------|----------|------------|--------------|-----|------|------|
| 1     | Kindling   | +0           | d8       | d14        | 1d20         | +1  | +0   | +1   |
| 2     | Firefly    | +1           | d8       | d12        | 1d20         | +1  | +1   | +2   |
| 3     | Spitfire   | +1           | d8       | d12        | 1d20         | +2  | +1   | +3   |
| 4     | Detonator  | +2           | d10      | d10        | 1d20         | +2  | +2   | +4   |
| 5     | Demolisher | +2           | d10      | d10        | 1d20 + 1d14  | +3  | +2   | +5   |
| 6     |            | +3           | d10      | d8         | 1d20 + 1d14  | +3  | +3   | +6   |
| 7     |            | +3           | d12      | d8         | 1d20 + 1d116 | +4  | +3   | +7   |
| 8     |            | +4           | d12      | d7         | 1d24 + 1d116 | +4  | +4   | +8   |

**EXPLOSIVE CRITICAL TABLE:**

| <b>Roll</b> | <b>Result</b>   |
|-------------|---|
| 0 or less   | It's just a small burn! Foe is hit for +2d8 damage and the ally nearest him is also hit by a rebounding blow for 1d4 damage.                                |
| 1           | That one had some extra spice! Inflict +2d12 with this attack.  |
| 2           | Your target caught the explosive! Inflict +1d12 with this attack.   |
| 3           | Blast knocks your target to the ground. Inflict +1d12 with this attack and make another attack on prone enemy.  |
| 4           | Your foe lands headfirst. Inflict +1d12 with this attack, and the foe suffers 1d6 Int loss.   |
| 5           | The blast ruins your foe's weapon. If the foe does not have a weapon, inflict +1d12 with this attack.   |
| 6           | Your foe falls on the explosive. The foe must make a Fort save (DC 15+PC level) or fall unconscious as his guts spill.                                      |
| 7           | The blast disorients your foe. Inflict +2d12 with this attack, and the foe forgoes his next attack.   |
| 8           | Your foe is concussed. Inflict +1d8 with this attack and make a second attack.  |
| 9           | Your foe lands face first. Their teeth are shattered, and their tongue is shredded. Inflict +2d12 with this attack, and the foe loses speech for 1d4 weeks. |
| 10          | Debris blinds your foe. Foe must make a Fort save (DC 15+PC level) or be blinded by pain and blood for 1d4 rounds.  |
| 11          | Shrapnel cuts foes face to crimson ribbons. Inflict +2d12 with this attack and the foe has trouble making hard consonants.                                  |
| 12          | The fire rises! Inflict +2d12 with this attack.   |
| 13          | The flame is so beautiful! Inflict +1d12 with this attack and make two additional attacks.  |
| 14          | Shrapnel twists your foe's spine. They suffer -4 penalty to AC.   |
| 15          | The fire, the sounds of explosions, your laughter is too much. Foe cowers in fear, prone for 1d4 rounds.  |
| 16          | Surefire concussion! Inflict +2d12 with this attack. The foe is stunned for 1d4 rounds.   |

### EXPLOSIVE CRITICAL TABLE (Cont.):

| Roll | Result |
|------|--------|
|------|--------|

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 17  | Paralyzing blowup. Foe's movement drops to 0', and you make another attack.  |
| 18  | Mental burn scars. Inflict +3d12 with this attack. The foe must make a Fort save of (DC 15+PC level) or suffer amnesia. The foe is stunned for 1d4 rounds, regardless. |
| 19  | Disarming boom! Foe takes triple damage from his own weapon. Foe drops weapon.   |
| 20  | Spinal outburst. Inflict +3d12 with this attack. The foe must make a Fort save of (DC 15+PC level) or suffer permanent paralysis.                                      |
| 21  | Internal combustion. Death is inevitable in 1d8 rounds.  |
| 22  | Overwhelming hellfire! The foe dies of shock in 1d6 rounds.  |
| 23  | Eruption of fire! Inflict +3d12 with this attack. The foe must make a Fort save of (DC 15+PC level) or die instantly.  |
| 24+ | Absolute devastation. Inflict +3d12 with this attack. The foe must make a Fort save of (DC 20+PC level) or die in 1d3 rounds.  |

### EXPLOSIVE FUMBLE TABLE:

| Roll | Result |
|------|--------|
|------|--------|

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 0 or less | Your explosive lets out a sigh and a small cloud of smoke emanates...                            |
| 1         | You don't know your own strength. You launch the explosive in the air and overshoot your target. |
| 2         | Explosive lands close to the party. Everyone makes a DC 10 Ref save or suffer damage.            |
| 3         | Your hands are sticky. Are you nervous? You take -2 penalty on your next attack roll.            |
| 4         | Explosive is faulty. Can be repaired with 10 minutes of work, but until then it is useless.      |

### EXPLOSIVE FUMBLE TABLE (Cont.):

| Roll | Result  |
|------|---|
| 5    | Your wick or fuse falls out of your grip. You go prone searching for it. You must use an action to stand next round.  |
| 6    | Your detonating cord is tangled in your chaps. You must spend your next round untangling it. Your AC bonus is reduced by 1 until you spend 10 minutes refitting the buckles and straps. |
| 7    | You drop your explosives. You must secure them or use your fists on your next action.   |
| 8    | You accidentally spill water on your black powder. Your mundane weapons are ruined; magical weapons are not affected.   |
| 9    | You knock your goggles askew, leaving yourself wide open to attack. The next enemy that attacks you receives a +2 bonus on its attack roll.   |
| 10   | Your lighter is out of juice. Where did you put the fluid? You cannot move or make an attack for 1d3 rounds.  |
| 11   | You stared too close to an explosion and now you are suffering from flash blindness and disorientation. You take a -4 penalty to your next attack roll.                                 |
| 12   | Your explosive lands within range of an ally. Make an attack roll against an ally using the same attack die you just attempted to use.  |
| 13   | You fall hard, suffering 1d4 damage in the process. You are prone and must use your next round to stand.  |
| 14   | A wild spark knocks you on your back. You must fight from a prone position for the next round before you can recover your balance and rise.   |
| 15   | Your fuse was too short, and you hurt yourself and 1d3 allies within range, all taking normal damage.   |
| 16+  | You mistimed your fuse, and you hurt yourself and any allies within range, all taking normal damage. You all must fight from a prone position until you make a DC 16 Agility check.     |

# Minovean Sage:

## A new class for DCC RPG

By Shane Madgett  
Illustrated by Nick Heazall

### “Wise One-Eyed Survivors of a Broken Age”

Minoveans are towering, solitary beings with a single, luminous eye set in the center of their foreheads. They are the last descendants of a forgotten race whose civilization vanished before history began. Gnomes, with their strange sense for divine oddities, revere them as holy remnants of the Survivor God—a being said to have walked untouched through the First Ending.

Minoveans embody both the stillness of deep time and the power of forgotten knowledge. They are warriors, but only when wisdom fails. They are spellcasters, but only when memory permits.

**Hit Dice:** d6

**Attack Bonus:** As Cleric

**Action Dice:** 1d20

**Saving Throws:**

- Fort: Medium
- Ref: Low
- Will: High

### Class Abilities

#### 1. Cyclopean Lore

Minoveans carry the echoes of long-dead civilizations in their minds. They gain a +4 bonus to Intelligence-based checks involving history, lost languages, ancient architecture, forgotten religions, and deciphering obscure texts.

#### 2. The All-Seeing Eye

Once per day per level, a Minovean may open their mind’s eye and gaze beyond veils. This ability functions as *Detect Magic*, *Read Magic*, or *True Seeing* (Judge’s discretion), with a 30-foot range and a 1-minute duration.

### 3. Arcane Intuition

Minoveans do not "learn" magic. They *remember* it. They cast spells through brief rituals, chants, or symbolic gestures. They know fewer spells than Wizards (Judge's discretion). Spellcasting carries risk: a natural 1 causes backfire—minor damage, confusion, or a psychic shock.

### 4. Unyielding Stance

When bracing for an incoming blow or planting themselves in place, the Minovean gains +1 AC until their next turn. This bonus applies only if they have not moved during that round.

### 5. Mighty Grasp

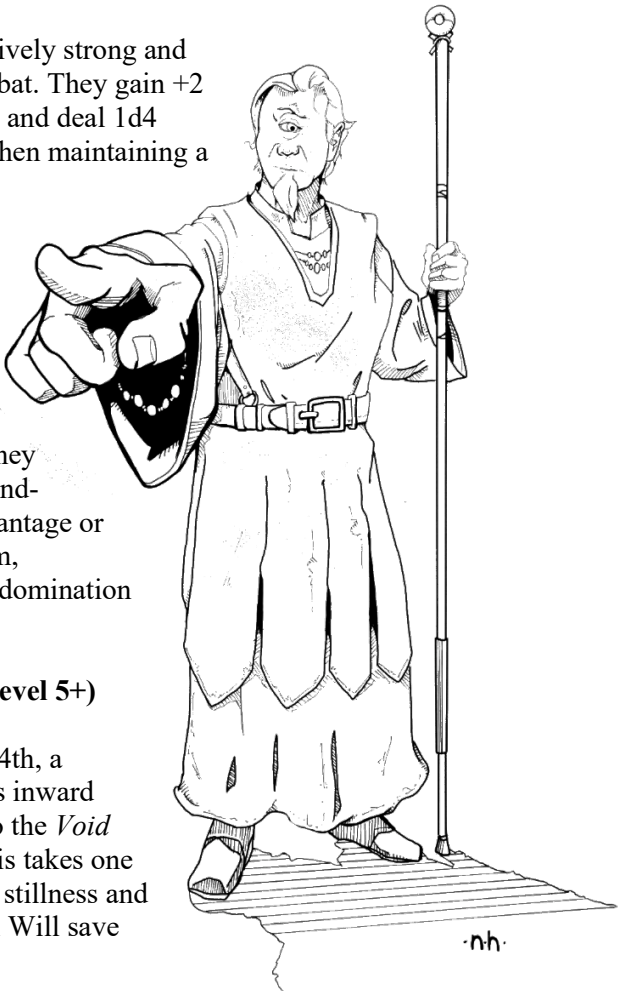
Minoveans are massively strong and precise in close combat. They gain +2 to all grapple checks and deal 1d4 damage per round when maintaining a hold.

### 6. Survivor of the Ancient Age (Level 5+)

Endless solitude and loss have hardened the Minovean's mind. They gain resistance to mind-affecting spells (advantage or +2 to saves vs. charm, confusion, fear, and domination effects).

### Voidseer Ability (Level 5+)

Once per level after 4th, a Minovean may focus inward and open their eye to the *Void Between Worlds*. This takes one full round of intense stillness and requires a successful Will save



(DC 15 + half level). Roll on the **Voidseer Table** (d24):

| <b>VOIDSEER TABLE</b> |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>d24</b>            | <b>Effect</b>  |
| 1                     | <b>The Eye Falters:</b> Blinded for 1d6 rounds, overwhelmed by searing visions.                  |
| 2                     | <b>Void Sickness:</b> Nauseated, -2 to all rolls for 1d6 turns.                                  |
| 3                     | <b>Reality Fracture:</b> Hallucinations for 1d4 hours. Disadvantage on perception checks.        |
| 4                     | <b>Whispers of the Void:</b> Confused (as spell) for 1d4 rounds.                                 |
| 5-6                   | <b>Fleeting Glimpse:</b> A momentary peek at another plane. No effect.                           |
| 7-8                   | <b>Dimensional Drift:</b> Your movements warp unnaturally. Speed halved for 1d6 turns.           |
| 9-10                  | <b>Ghostly Visions:</b> +1 to next Intelligence-based roll within 24 hours.                      |
| 11-12                 | <b>Void Sense:</b> Detect interdimensional beings, rifts, or portals within 500 feet for 1 hour. |
| 13-14                 | <b>Echoes of the Infinite:</b> Receive a cryptic clue about an active quest.                     |
| 15-16                 | <b>Void Insight:</b> +2 to one Wisdom check or save within 24 hours.                             |
| 17                    | <b>Void's Whisper:</b> Gain +2 to a lore or research roll.                                       |
| 18                    | <b>Planar Awareness:</b> Sense major planar disturbances within 1 mile.                          |
| 19                    | <b>Glimpse of the Beyond:</b> Immune to fear for 1 hour.   |
| 20                    | <b>Fractured Reality:</b> +4 to perception for 1d4 hours.  |
| 21                    | <b>Void's Command:</b> Compel an interdimensional entity to reveal itself (once in next hour).   |
| 22                    | <b>Dimensional Doorway:</b> Open a one-way portal (Judge determines location), 1d6 rounds.       |
| 23                    | <b>Transcendent Vision:</b> Project mind to another plane for 1d6 rounds; observe and learn.     |
| 24                    | <b>Void Walk:</b> Transport self and party to another dimension for 1d6 hours or until recalled. |

## SPELLCASTING

**Minovean spells** are rarely flashy—they echo with the weight of ancient rites and planar scars. Spells are cast via ritual, chant, or eye-focused gestures.

### Level 1 Spells

- **Gaze of Clarity:** +4 to perception and insight checks for 1 turn.
- **Echo of Memory:** Recall a forgotten piece of knowledge or hidden lore.

### Level 2 Spells

- **Dimensional Blink:** Instantly teleport 30 feet to a visible space.
- **Seal of the Survivor God:** Enchant an area or object. +2 AC, resists planar intrusion.

### Level 3 Spells

- **Eye of the Void:** See invisible and ethereal creatures (60 ft., 1 turn).
- **Reality Anchor:** Prevent planar travel or dimensional effects in a 20-foot radius for 1 turn.

### Level 4 Spells

- **Astral Grasp:** Spectral hand grapples target (DC 18 to escape).
- **Riftwalk:** Partially phase out; resist non-magical damage for 1 minute.

### Level 5 Spells

- **Echoes of the Old World:** Summon a spectral sage to answer a single question.
- **Planar Ward:** 20-ft-radius barrier blocks teleportation, summoning, and planar travel for 1 hour.

### Level 6 Spell

- **Dimensional Tear:** Rip the veil open; 3d6 damage and disorients nearby creatures.

## Level 7 Spell

- **Vision of the Abyss:** Gain true sight. Enemies nearby must save or be stunned by the revelation.

## Level 8 Spell

- **Transcendence of the Last Eye:** Bring party into a stable dimensional refuge for up to 1 hour (safe from planar threats, heals double from rest).

## EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

**Preferred Weapons:** Stone or metal hammers, rune-carved staves, ceremonial axes.

**Armor:** Light or medium armor only. Heavy armor disrupts their connection to the Void and restricts their movement.

## ALIGNMENT

**Typical:** Neutral or Lawful.

Minoveans rarely act out of passion or whim. Their motives are long-viewed—focused on preserving knowledge, preventing cosmic imbalance, or completing tasks older than memory.

Spell Burn Mechanic (Minovean Version: *Memory Burn*)

Minoveans don't burn Strength, Agility, or Stamina to power their spells. Instead, they burn **Memory**—sacrificing ancient fragments of identity or history in exchange for greater magical force.

## MEMORY BURN

- Before casting a spell, the Minovean may choose to burn **Intelligence or Personality** (player's choice per point).
- Each point burned adds **+1 to the spell check**, as normal Spellburn.
- **Burned points recover only after a full week of rest** or by visiting a site of deep psychic resonance (Judge's discretion).
- Whenever a Minovean uses Memory Burn, they lose a fragment of who they once were. The Judge or player may roll on the **Lost Memory Table** below.

## LOST MEMORY TABLE (D10)

Each time the Minovean uses Memory Burn, roll once:

| d10 | Lost Memory  |
|-----|--|
| 1   | The name of a sibling, long dead or never born.        |
| 2   | A specific moment when they knew true peace.           |
| 3   | The ability to recite a sacred hymn or chant.          |
| 4   | The face of their teacher in the Age Before.           |
| 5   | A vision of the Survivor God's left hand.              |
| 6   | The words to a forgotten language.                     |
| 7   | The last time they tasted food for pleasure.           |
| 8   | The coordinates of a vanished star.                    |
| 9   | The sorrow of a people whose city they failed to save. |
| 10  | A vision of their own death... now gone.               |

**\*Optional Rule:** When a player records and roleplays this loss meaningfully, they may earn a point of **Hope** or **Insight**, depending on your campaign's tone.

## MINOVEAN SPELLBURN VISUAL TABLE (Memory Burn Effects)

Roll (d12) each time the Minovean burns memory to fuel a spell.

| d12 | Visual Effect / Sensation   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | The Minovean's single eye glows with a brief flash of iridescent light, then dims slightly for the rest of the day. |
| 2   | Ethereal runes swirl faintly in the air around the Minovean's head, shimmering like ghostly script.                 |
| 3   | A distant whisper echoes around them, as if ancient voices murmur forgotten secrets.                                |
| 4   | The ground near the Minovean cracks with thin, glowing fractures of void energy for a moment.                       |
| 5   | Their skin briefly takes on a pale, stone-like texture, as if turning to aged marble.                               |
| 6   | A flicker of a past memory flashes in their eye — a glimpse of a place, person, or event lost to time.              |
| 7   | A faint, cold breeze swirls around them, carrying the scent of dust and old pages.                                  |

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 8  | Their breath briefly appears as tiny sparks of violet light before fading.                               |
| 9  | Shadowy tendrils ripple outward from their eye, twisting like smoke before vanishing.                    |
| 10 | A soft hum resonates in the air, like the vibrations of a long-forgotten hymn.                           |
| 11 | For a moment, their voice carries the resonance of many voices layered together, briefly unintelligible. |
| 12 | The Minovean's eye sheds a single tear of liquid light that quickly evaporates.                          |

### RITUAL MISFIRE TABLE: ANCIENT ECHOES

When a Minovean rolls a **natural 1** on a spellcasting check, roll on the following table in addition to normal misfire/backfire effects.

| d8 | Ritual Misfire (Ancient Echoes)  |
|----|--|
| 1  | The Echo Answers Back: An ancient, sentient memory briefly possesses the Minovean. The player must act confused or speak in a forgotten tongue for 1d6 rounds. |
| 2  | Flare of Forgotten Power: The spell explodes in psychic feedback. Minovean & allies within 10 feet take 1d6 damage.  |
| 3  | Voidlight Flicker: Shadows twist unnaturally. All enemies gain concealment for 1 round.  |
| 4  | Burned Runes: All spellcasting is at -1 penalty until the Minovean redraws or restores lost sigil (1 hour ritual or rest).                                     |
| 5  | Temporal Discord: The spell delays, going off at the end of the next round with extra force (Judge's choice on oddity).  |
| 6  | Crossed Planes: A minor planar entity (gremlin, echo-wraith, or astral maggot) is drawn through. It's hostile, curious, or hungry (Judge's choice).            |
| 7  | Eye Overload: The All-Seeing Eye flickers with false visions. Cyclopean is dazzled for 1d4 rounds and cannot use their Eye abilities until resting.            |

8 The Ritual Rewinds: The spell consumes itself and resets the Minovean's position to where they stood at the start of the turn. Confusing, but safe.

**\*Optional Flavor:** If the spell was cast at a leyline, ruin, or ancient site, the misfire becomes even more dangerous—add +2 to this roll or consult a more catastrophic spell fumble table.

### MINOVEAN ORIGIN TABLE (D20)

Roll or choose to discover the ancient roots and personal history of your Minovean Sage.

| d20 | Origin & Background Detail  |
|-----|---|
| 1   | <b>Last of the Forgotten:</b> You are the sole survivor of a lost Minovean enclave destroyed by unknown horrors in the First Ending. You carry the guilt and knowledge of their fate. |
| 2   | <b>Wanderer Between Ruins:</b> Raised among ruins and relics, you grew up learning to read forgotten languages and commune with ghost echoes.   |
| 3   | <b>Survivor God's Chosen:</b> As a child, you were marked by the Survivor God with a glowing sigil on your eye, granting limited prophetic visions.                                   |
| 4   | <b>Echo of the Survivor God:</b> A fragment of divine essence dwells within you, granting unusual insight but also drawing planar attention.  |
| 5   | <b>Keeper of the Bone-Flute:</b> You inherited an ancient bone flute said to summon spirits of the vanished. It is both a weapon and a sacred tool.                                   |
| 6   | <b>Seeker of the Lost Star:</b> Your quest is to find a star that fell to the world ages ago, rumored to grant knowledge of the void.   |
| 7   | <b>Outcast from the Gnomeholds:</b> You were once a guardian or advisor to gnomes but were exiled after refusing to share forbidden knowledge.  |
| 8   | <b>Survivor of the Sundering:</b> Your clan was shattered by planar rifts, and you bear scars—both physical and psychic—from the event.   |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 9  | <b>The Silent Sage:</b> You have taken a vow of silence, communicating only through your eye's visions and cryptic gestures.                      |
| 10 | <b>Bearer of the Riftbrand:</b> You carry a faint planar wound across your skin that sometimes leaks void energy.                                 |
| 11 | <b>Heir of the Ancient Library:</b> You were raised among ancient tomes and eldritch artifacts, charged with guarding forbidden knowledge.        |
| 12 | <b>Child of the Voidstorm:</b> You were born during a cataclysmic voidstorm that shattered the skies, believed to grant unique powers.            |
| 13 | <b>Last Voice of the Elder Tongue:</b> You speak the long-lost language of your people, allowing you to commune with spirits and planar entities. |
| 14 | <b>Bearer of the Stone Hammer:</b> An ancient weapon forged from cosmic stone is bonded to your arm; it hums when planar energies are near.       |
| 15 | <b>Warden of the Dimensional Gate:</b> You guard a hidden portal that connects this world with unknown realms.                                    |
| 16 | <b>Memory Seeker:</b> You roam the lands to recover pieces of your shattered memory and the lost history of your race.                            |
| 17 | <b>Haunted by the Void's Whisper:</b> You hear a constant, barely comprehensible voice from the void that guides or torments you.                 |
| 18 | <b>Disciple of the Last Sage:</b> Your mentor was the last known Minovean Sage before you, who vanished under mysterious circumstances.           |
| 19 | <b>Bearer of the Ancient Curse:</b> You are marked by a curse that weakens your body but strengthens your mystical sight.                         |
| 20 | <b>Prophet of the Survivor God:</b> You receive cryptic visions of future catastrophes and possible salvation, charged with preventing doom.      |

### Usage tips:

- Pick or roll this table during character creation for inspiration.
- Combine with the **Lost Memory Table** and **Voidseer Table** to deepen your Minovean's personal story.
- Judges can use these origins as hooks for quests or NPC motivations.

## FORGOTTEN RELICS OF THE AGE BEFORE

Roll d12 or choose to determine the ancient artifact your Minovean carries or has recently recovered.

| d12 | Relic Description   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | <b>Bone-Flute of the Silent Echo:</b> When played, it can summon ephemeral spirits or create disorienting sounds.     |
| 2   | <b>Shard of the Survivor God's Eye:</b> A small crystal fragment that pulses with faint planar energy.                |
| 3   | <b>Stone Hammer of the Ancients:</b> A heavy weapon etched with cosmic sigils; hums softly when near planar rifts.    |
| 4   | <b>Scroll of Lost Runes:</b> Fragile parchment containing forgotten spells and warnings in an extinct script.         |
| 5   | <b>Phantom Cloak:</b> A tattered cloak that seems to shift and ripple like smoke, offering slight concealment.        |
| 6   | <b>Echo Lantern:</b> A lantern that emits a ghostly light revealing invisible or ethereal creatures.                  |
| 7   | <b>Dimensional Compass:</b> A device that always points toward the nearest planar breach or rift.                     |
| 8   | <b>Voidshard Amulet:</b> A necklace holding a jagged black gem that pulses with void energy; grants minor protection. |
| 9   | <b>Ancient Rune-Charms:</b> A carved stone talisman worn on a chain; wards against mind-affecting magics.             |
| 10  | <b>Mirror of Endless Night:</b> A small hand mirror showing shifting images of other planes or forgotten moments.     |
| 11  | <b>Singing Bone:</b> A polished bone that hums softly when held; used in ritual to focus spellcasting.                |
| 12  | <b>Tattered Tome of the First Ending:</b> A half-destroyed book filled with fragmented lore and cryptic warnings.     |

# The Art of Ridiculous Yet Effective Combat

By Nicholas Bevillard

Illustrated by Ryan Kearins

*“Dedicated to my player Dave, because every party has a Dave.”*

Sometimes, stabbing just isn't enough.

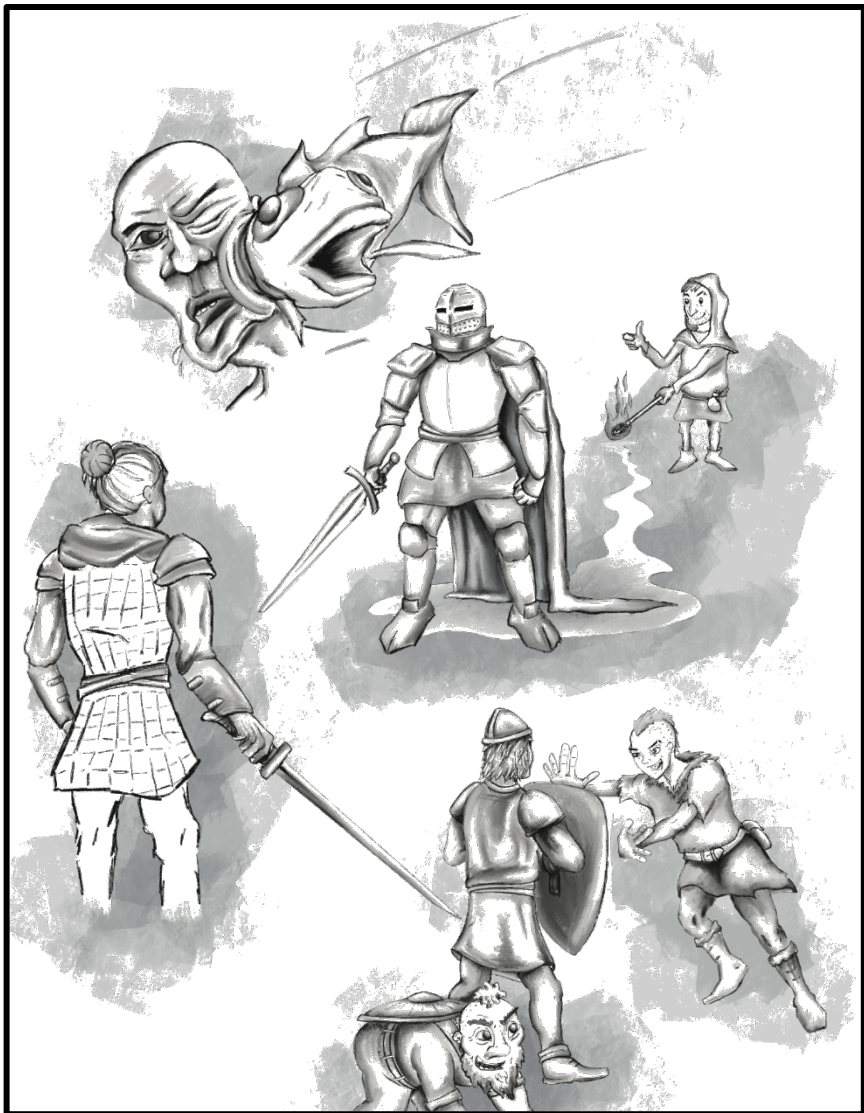
Welcome, cunning scoundrels, overconfident warriors, and deranged wizards who think, *“What if I just set everything on fire?”* If you've ever looked at a battlemap and thought, *“Can I trip that charging orc with my belt?”* or *“What if I tied a beehive to an arrow?”*, then congratulations, this system is for you.

Not every hero fights with honor. Some fight with rope tricks, questionable alchemy, and sheer audacity. The battlefield isn't just a place of bloodshed- it's a playground of improvised weaponry, hazardous furniture, and reckless ingenuity.

This isn't about breaking the game- it's about expanding it. Dungeon Crawl Classics thrives on creativity and chaos, and this system rewards players who think beyond "attack roll, damage roll, repeat." Whether it's rigging a barrel of oil to explode at the perfect moment or talking an ogre into attacking his own reflection, these mechanics make room for the unexpected.

## **UNORTHODOX COMBAT & ECCENTRIC TACTICS (DCC MECHANICS)**

Not every adventurer fights with sword and spell alone. Some rely on cunning, trickery, or sheer lunacy to survive. This system allows players to attempt unorthodox maneuvers using ability checks, Luck burns, and situational modifiers.



### **CORE MECHANIC: "RISK & REWARD ACTIONS"**

When a player attempts an unusual or creative action, follow these steps:

### 1. Determine the Governing Stat:

- **Strength:** Brute force and physical strength.
- **Agility:** Quick reactions, precise movement.
- **Personality:** Bluffing, persuasion, or distraction.
- **Intelligence:** Engineering and tactical use of the environment.

### 2. Set the Difficulty:

- **Simple (DC 10):** Something creative but not risky (throwing a torch to ignite oil).
- **Risky (DC 12-14):** Tripping an enemy with a rope during combat.
- **Daring (DC 16+):** Lassoing an enemy's weapon mid-fight.
- **Ludicrous (DC 18+):** Convincing a troll to eat his own foot.

### 3. Burning Luck:

- Players can burn Luck to improve the roll.
- **Burn 1 Luck:** +2 to the roll.
- **Burn 3 Luck:** Auto-success on DC 12 or lower.
- **Burn 5 Luck:** Pulling off a legendary move grants dice chain advancement on a follow-up roll.
- Thieves and Halflings regain Luck as normal. Other classes lose it permanently.

### 4. Mighty Deed Integration:

- **Warriors and Dwarves** can add their Deed Die to any unorthodox action that fits a combat situation.
- If they succeed, the result applies alongside their normal attack and damage.

### 5. Consequences:

- Failure doesn't mean nothing happens- it means something worse happens.
- Missed trip? Maybe you land flat on your face.
- Improvised poison fails? Maybe you poison yourself instead.
- The Judge should keep it entertaining but fair, reward creativity- but make failure sting.

## **WHY THIS WORKS**

This system doesn't step on the toes of Mighty Deeds- it enhances them. Warriors and Dwarves still get to be the kings of combat while this opens up creative avenues for other classes. A Thief rigging a tripwire mid-fight, a Wizard setting off unstable alchemy, or a Cleric convincing a cultist to switch sides- it all creates dynamic, unpredictable gameplay.

Let your players be clever. Encourage wild ideas. And when they inevitably fail? Make sure it's hilarious.

## **GO FORTH AND BE RIDICULOUS**

This system thrives on chaos and creativity. A well-placed oil flask, a clutch personality roll, or a desperate Luck burn could turn the tide of battle or leave your party covered in oil, on fire, and running for their lives.

If it's stupid and it works, it ain't stupid.

# A DYNAMIC WEATHER SYSTEM

By Nicholas Belvillard

*"Not every day is bright and sunny, and not every storm is a sign of doom, but in this world, you can never be too sure."*

Adventuring isn't all swords and sorcery- there's trudging through knee-deep mud, trying to strike a match in the rain, and swearing at the sky when a cold wind blows out your torch. The weather isn't just window dressing, it's a living, breathing force that shapes the world and the choices of those who dare to walk its paths.

A gentle breeze might carry a sense of hope for the day, while a sudden downpour could turn an easy road into a treacherous trap. The weather affects movement, visibility, sound, and even combat, because nothing says "Epic" like trying to slay a troll in the middle of a lightning storm.

This is a land of moody skies, shifting winds, and unpredictable storms. The weather reflects the natural and magical forces of the world. Sometimes a gentle drizzle gives way to a rolling storm, while a bright day might darken beneath a foggy night.

So grab your cloak, keep your boots dry, and pray to Umannah, the sun god, that the skies stay clear. But don't count on it.

## HOW IT WORKS

**1. Roll for Daily Weather:** Each morning (or once per adventuring day), the Judge rolls on the Daily Weather Table.

**2. Adjust as Needed:** The Judge can modify the result based on:

- Time of year (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter).
- Location (Forest, Mountains, Coastline, Open Plains).
- Evil Entities' Influence (As the curses strengthens, the weather will shift toward darker, more unnatural patterns).

**3. Apply Conditions:** The weather affects travel speed, perception, ranged attacks, and even NPC/monster behavior.

**DAILY WEATHER TABLE** (Roll d20 once per adventuring day)

| <b>Result</b> | <b>Weather</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Mechanical Effect</b>   |
|---------------|----------------|--|--|
| 1             | Clear Sky      | Bright and cloudless. Sunlight warms the earth.                | +1 to Perception and Survival checks during travel.  |
| 2-3           | Partly Cloudy  | Thin clouds drift across the sky, but the sun remains visible. | No effect.   |
| 4-5           | Overcast       | A gray sheet of clouds blocks the sun                          | -1 to Perception checks (dim lighting).  |
| 6-7           | Light Rain     | A steady drizzle falls, muddying the ground.                   | Ranged attacks are at -1 penalty. Movement on muddy ground = half speed.   |
| 8-9           | Heavy Rain     | A downpour reduces visibility and creates puddles of mud.      | -2 to ranged attacks. -2 to Perception checks. -5' movement speed.   |
| 10            | Thunderstorm   | Crashing thunder and flashes of lightning fill the sky.        | -2 to ranged attacks. -1d on Perception and Stealth. Any metal weapon or armor worn = 1d4 lightning damage on a natural 1 attack roll. |
| 11-12         | Fog            | Thick fog blankets the area, limiting visibility.              | -2 to ranged attacks. -1d Perception checks based on sight. Stealth checks = +2 bonus.   |

|       |   |  |  |
|-------|---|--|--|
| 13-14 | Windy   | Strong winds whip through the trees and fields.                        | -2 to ranged weapon attacks (except crossbows). Flying creatures suffer -2 AC.   |
| 15-16 | Strong Winds + Light Rain                       | A cutting wind brings cold rain.                                       | -2 to ranged attacks and Perception checks. Open flames have a 50% chance of extinguishing.                                      |
| 17-18 | Snowfall<br><i>(Winter Only)</i>                | Soft snow begins to fall, covering the ground.                         | -5' movement speed. Stealth checks = +2 bonus. Visibility reduced by half.   |
| 19    | Blizzard<br><i>(Winter Only)</i>                | A howling blizzard consumes the land.                                  | -10' movement speed. Perception and ranged attacks = -3. Visibility reduced to 10 feet.  |
| 20    | Unnatural Darkness<br><i>(For Cursed Lands)</i> | The sky turns black even during the day. Strange whispers in the wind. | -1d on all Perception checks. Spells involving darkness or shadow gain +2 spell checks. Monsters of chaos receive +2 to attacks. |

### SEASONAL ADJUSTMENTS

The table remains constant, but the frequency of certain results changes based on the season.

| Season | Modifier    | Effect  |
|--------|-------------|---|
| Spring | +1 to rolls | More likely to have rain, fog, and mild winds.    |
| Summer | -2 to rolls | More likely to have clear skies and calm weather. |

|        |             |  |
|--------|-------------|--|
| Autumn | +0 to rolls | Balanced spread of weather, but more wind and chill. |
| Winter | +2 to rolls | More likely to snow, blizzards become possible.      |

## EVIL INFLUENCE ON THE WEATHER

As the evil influence grows stronger, the weather will grow more ominous and unnatural. Use these modifications when an evil entity is actively affecting a region:

| Phase of<br>Evil Awakening        | Effect on Weather Table  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Phase 1<br>(Whispers in the Dark) | +2 to any “dark” or “fog” result. Clear skies become impossible.   |
| Phase 2<br>(Shadow Awakens)       | +4 to weather rolls; unnatural darkness becomes possible outside of a natural result.                      |
| Phase 3<br>(The Hunger Stirs)     | +6 to weather rolls; heavy fog, darkness, and unnatural storms are common. Natural weather is almost gone. |
| Phase 4<br>(The Return)           | Unnatural Darkness becomes default unless it is directly countered by magical or divine intervention.      |

## TACTICAL EFFECTS OF WEATHER

These effects are important for both players and enemies:

### **Rain, Fog, and Darkness:**

- Reduced visibility = stealth advantages for both players and monsters.
- Lower ranged attack accuracy benefits melee-focused parties.

### **Strong Winds:**

- Flying creatures struggle, and light projectiles become unreliable.
- Large enemies resistant to wind become more dangerous.

### **Thunderstorms:**

- Metal weapons and armor = risk of lightning strikes.
- Creatures with electrical resistance become harder to kill.

### **Snow and Cold:**

- Travel becomes slower.
- Fire-based spells and torches become more valuable.
- Creatures adapted to the cold have an advantage.

### **Unnatural Darkness:**

- Creatures with darkvision become more dangerous.
- Spells like light and darkness shift from utility to essential survival tools.
- Fear and panic increase among NPCs and villagers.

## **USING THE WEATHER TO SET THE SCENE**

Weather shouldn't just be a mechanical hurdle; it should reflect the tone of the adventure:

- A light drizzle in the morning as the players walk through the village adds calm, somber undertones.
- A cold, biting wind in the Blackthorn Wilds makes the players feel isolated and vulnerable.
- Fog rolling into the village while the church bells ring creates dread and tension.

## **RANDOM WEATHER SHIFT TABLE**

1d8 - Roll Every 4 Hours

Weather can change dynamically throughout the day

| <b>Roll</b> | <b>Shift</b>  |
|-------------|---|
| 1           | Clear sky shifts to overcast.   |
| 2           | Overcast becomes light rain.  |
| 3           | Light rain becomes heavy rain.  |
| 4           | Thunderstorms intensify.  |
| 5           | Strong winds become a blizzard (winter) or hurricane-force winds (other seasons). |
| 6           | Fog thickens.   |
| 7           | Unnatural darkness creeps in (if Malagar's influence is active).                  |
| 8           | Sudden calm, a moment of eerie silence.   |

## **WHY IMPLEMENT THIS SYSTEM**

It encourages players to prepare for long journeys. It makes combat and exploration more challenging and dynamic. Allows the Judge to reflect story progression through environmental changes. The weather is no longer flavored; it's a real part of the world's danger and tone.

So don't trust a shiny sky and beware of the rising fog, because this world isn't all sunshine and rainbow!



# A COLLECTION OF CREATURES

By Jason Youngdale  
Illustrations by Jason Youngdale

## CHASM HOWLER



**Chasm Howler:** Init: +2; Atk Jaws of Ruin +8 melee (2d8+3; crits on 19–20; plus Devour) plus Tail Lash +6 melee (1d6, targets all in a 10' cone, DC 13 Reflex save for half); Crit IV/1d10; AC 18; HD: 8d12+24 (hp 75); MV 40'; Act 1d20 plus 1d20 Tail Lash; SP devourer of worlds, sonic wail, spell-eater hide, void-eyes; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

*Devourer of Worlds:* On a successful bite crit, Chasm Howler swallows a target whole if they are human-sized or smaller (DC 15)

Reflex negates). Inside, the victim suffers 2d6 acid damage per round until dead or rescued (AC 14, 10 HP from inside).

*Sonic Wail* (1/day): Unleashes a primal roar of interdimensional frequencies. All creatures within 50' must succeed on a DC 15 Will save or be deafened for 1d6 rounds and staggered (move or act, not both).

*Spell-Eater Hide*: automatically reflects the first spell cast on it each round (DC 12 Will save by caster negates). Reflected spell then targets the original caster.

*Void-Eyes*: sees through illusions and invisibility up to 60'.

**Treasure:** Crystalline fangs (200 GP each x4) and a Heartstone of the Deep Maw (usable as a one-time *word of command* spell, CL 5).

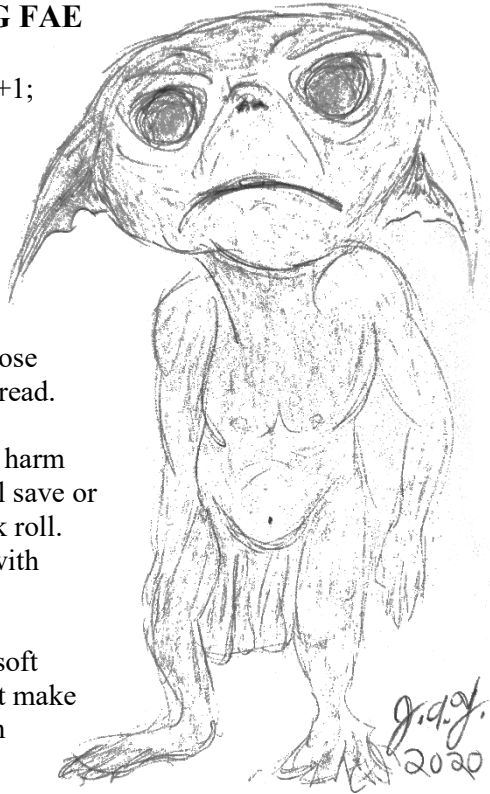
## GRUMPLET THE POUTING FAE

**Grumplet the Pouting Fae:** Init: +1;  
Atk Slap of Indignation +0 melee  
(1d3); Crit I/1d4; AC 12; HD: 1d6  
(hp 3); MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP sad  
stare, pity aura, whimper of woe,  
fae quirks; SV Fort -1, Ref +2,  
Will +4; AL N.

*Sad Stare* (1/day): DC 11 Will or lose your next action from existential dread.

*Pity Aura*: Creatures attempting to harm Grumplet must make a DC 10 Will save or hesitate, suffering -1d on the attack roll. This affects only living creatures with Intelligence 5+.

*Whimper of Woe* (1/day): Emits a soft mournful wail. All within 30' must make a DC 11 Will save or be filled with regret, taking -2 to morale checks and spell checks for 1d3 rounds.



*Fae Quirks:* Immune to charm and sleep spells. Takes double damage from iron weapons. Can vanish in a puff of dandelion fluff (1/day, teleport 30' and become invisible for 1 round).

**Treasure:** Carries a small pouch of sentimental junk (1d4 worthless trinkets), a single silver acorn (worth 50 GP to fey collectors), and a dried tear that glows faintly under moonlight (can be used as a component for Enchantment magic).

## **XALZURAK THE MAW OF THE VERDANT RIFT**



**Xalzurak the Maw of the Verdant Rift:** Init: +3; Atk Claw Slash +6 melee (1d8+2; crits on 18–20) or Bite of the Rift +7 melee (1d10+3; DC 13 Fort or lose 1d3 Stamina from Void poison); Crit III/1d10; AC 17; HD: 6d12+12 (hp 50); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP rift-born regeneration, chaos howl, tear reality, void-touched flesh; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6; AL C.

*Rift-Born Regeneration*: Xalzurak regains 2 HP per round unless damaged by fire or holy effects.

*Chaos Howl* (1/day): Emits a soul-rending shriek. All non-Chaotic creatures within 30' must succeed on a DC 14 Will save or be dazed for 1 round (can only take 1 action) and suffer -1d on attack rolls for 1d3 rounds.

*Tear Reality* (1/day): Xalzurak rips a small hole in space. A jagged tear opens within 10', sucking in loose items and disrupting magic. The effects are as follows: all spellcasters within 20' must roll a Luck check or suffer -2 on their next spell check; loose objects are pulled toward the tear (DC 12 Strength to resist); the tear lasts 2 rounds and crackles with otherworldly whispers.

*Void-Touched Flesh*: Immune to mind-affecting effects and poison. Takes half damage from non-magical weapons.

**Treasure**: A radiant shard of the Verdant Rift (worth 500 GP to a planar scholar) and a twisted sigil robe (acts as +1 padded armor for Chaotic wearers only).

## **ZZARNOK THE SPORE SEER**

Alien Shaman of the Hollow Mycelium.

Zzarnok is a wandering shaman from a star-blighted dimension, half-insectoid, half-mycological. It is said he once guarded a small shrine near the Nexus and now roams in search of a “final frequency”. Its back carries pipes and tubes from which strange vapors drift. The Warp Staff it carries is made of twisted alien metal and pulses faintly when near magical energies.

“The rustle of antennae whispers portents from beyond the stars...”

**Zzarnok the Spore Seer**: Init: +2; Atk rusted ceremonial blade +3 melee (1d6+1) or Warp Staff +2 melee (casts *spasm of growth* 1/day) or shamanic spellcasting +5 spell check (see below); Crit I/1d6; AC 15; HD: 4d8+4 (hp 24); MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP spore burst, alien physiology, twisted intuition, shamanic spellcasting; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +5; AL C.

*Spore Burst (1/day):*  
Releases a cloud of psychoactive spores in a 20' radius. All creatures must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or become confused (as per *Scare*) for 1d4 rounds.

*Alien Physiology:*  
Immune to mundane diseases and sleep effects. Also +2 to resist poison and cold.

*Twisted Intuition:* Can “commune” with fungal growths once per day to ask a yes/no question (as *Augury*, 1/day).



*Shamanic Spellcasting (3-4/day, Judge's discretion):* Zzarnok casts spells as a 3rd-level Cleric or Wizard, depending on how you'd like to flavor his magic (+5 spell check). He has the following spells:

- *Spasm of Growth (Level 2)* – Causes parasitic vines or fungal strands to erupt from the target's body. Target must make DC 13 Fort save or take 2d4 damage and lose next action.
- *Mold the Flesh (Level 1)* – Can alter one limb or facial feature of a creature within 30'. Save negates. Changes are disturbing but mostly cosmetic (Judge's discretion).
- *Voidlight (Level 1)* – Glowing spores illuminate a 30' radius and reveal hidden/invisible beings. Lasts 1d6 turns and can be stopped by Zzarnok before that.

**Treasure:** Warp Staff (counts as a +1 magical staff; can cast *spasm of growth* once per day); neck ring of the Mycelium Order (value: 75 GP); pouch of silvered spores that induce prophetic dreams (value: 50 GP to a wizard or elf).

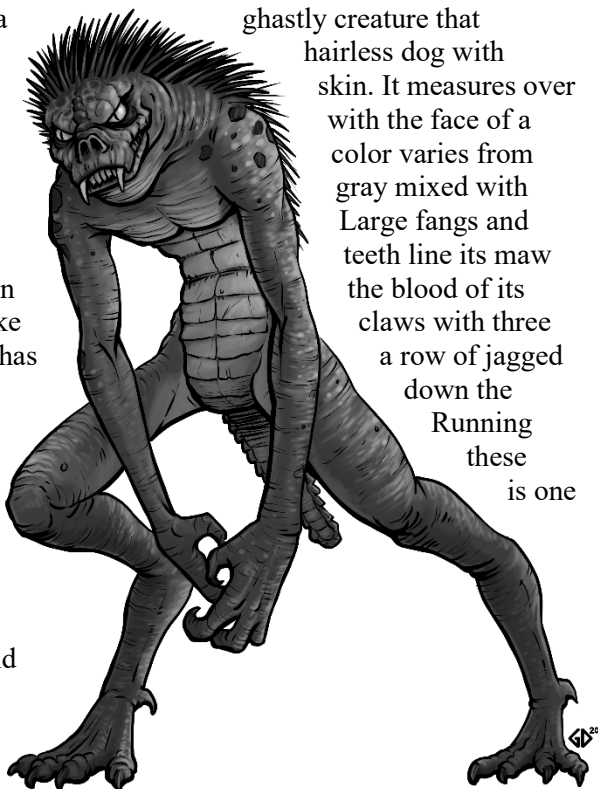
# THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS CRYPTIDS

Written by Judge Ike Meese

Illustrations (in order of appearance) by Gary Dupuis, Sverker Castillo, Matt Morrow, Mark Hyzer, Brett Neufeld

## SHUDACABRA

The Shudacabra is a lanky three feet long grotesque pig. Its skin is light gray to dark brown. It has rows of razor-sharp teeth and are used to drain prey. It has talon-like toes on each leg. It has spikes protruding from the length of its back. It is one of the most feared encounters in the Shudder Mountains. Many Shudfolk have found their livestock completely drained of blood with the telltale sign of the fangs of the shudacabra.



ghastly creature that  
hairless dog with  
skin. It measures over  
with the face of a  
color varies from  
gray mixed with  
Large fangs and  
teeth line its maw  
the blood of its  
claws with three  
a row of jagged  
down the  
Running  
these  
is one

**Shudacabra (1d5+2):** Init +2; Atk bite or claw +2 melee (1d8+2); AC 15; HD 5d7, hp 30; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP pack tactics; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; AL C; Crit M/d10.

*Pack tactics:* The Shudacabra often use pack tactics to surround and take down their prey. While multiple shudacabra are attacking the same target, their stats are changed as follows: Init +4; Atk bite or claw +4 melee (1d8+4).

*There is a loud commotion coming from behind the chicken coop. A pack of mangy dogs? Perhaps, but, as you turn the corner to the back side of the coop, surely your eyes deceive you for these dog creatures have the faces of pigs!*

## **MOTH-SHUD**



The Moth-Shud appears as a large bipedal creature with silent moth-like wings and the face and upper torso of an owl. Its wingspan is over ten feet wide, and it is always silent as it levitates into view with its large red glowing eyes. Many superstitions abound about this cryptid. One of the most common superstitions is that, if you see it, something terrible will happen in the near future.

Foreshadowing a bad omen of the Shudfolk's fate, this otherworldly creature is never a welcome sight. On rare occasions, it has been known to physically attack its victims, but often it will just strike fear in those unlucky enough to encounter this terrifying abomination.

**Moth-Shud:** Init +3; Atk bite +3 melee (1d10+3); AC 16; HD 6d8, hp 42; MV 30' or fly 60'; Act 2d20; SP bad omen; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit M/d12.

*Bad omen:* Anyone who witnesses the Moth-Shud's presence must make a DC 15 Will save. On a failed save, the victim will have some form of misfortune or bad luck in the near future. Judges should use discretion in interpreting this or utilize the Curse spell +13 Spell check (see DCC RPG p. 273).

*A dark shadow is cast over you in the waning light of day. As you turn around, a large creature is leering ominously above you with an impossible wingspan, moth-like but with a strangely humanoid body and the face of an owl with red glowing eyes. It stares into your soul as you look back at it in absolute terror!*

## THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS HOWLER



The Shudder Mountains Howler stands on two legs, larger than a full-grown bear and fiercer than a wolf. It has dark hair and glowing yellow eyes with

massive horns protruding from both sides of its head. It is often heard howling in the deep distant hollers. Its guttural howl sounds like an amalgamation of the screams of a large cat and a powerful wolf. The Shudfolk legend says that, if the howling stops, it knows your location. If this happens, it is time to go home or seek shelter immediately because it is coming for you!

**The Shudder Mountains Howler:** Init +4; Atk bite or claw +4 melee (1d12+4); AC 17; HD 7d10, hp 60; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP bad omen; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +6; AL C; Crit M/d14.

*Bad omen:* Anyone who witnesses the Shudder Mountains Howler's presence must make a DC 17 Will save. On a failed save, they will have some form of misfortune or bad luck in the near future. Judges should use discretion in interpreting this or utilize the Curse spell +14 Spell check (DCC RPG p. 273).

*A blood-curdling scream echoes through the hollow. You have heard it several times now, and it is getting ever closer. You have been hastily making your way home, but the time to seek shelter is now at hand. Suddenly, as the sounds get ever closer, the screaming stops. You look around in horror and see glowing yellow eyes staring back at you from the nearby woods.*



## SHUDIGO

The Shudigo resembles a long thin humanoid over nine feet tall. It has long gangly arms and clawed- yet-splayed feet. Its skin is so gaunt that it appears to be stretched over a skeletal body. Its face appears as a hollow deer skull with large unnatural antlers. The Shudigo is as ancient as the Shudder Mountains. On the coldest nights, it lurks just out of sight calling out in a familiar voice to its prey. Many Shudfolk have told stories of being out at the woodpile when they hear the familiar call of a child or family member. The Shudigo delights in having its prey follow it far into the woods, far from the warm homestead, always staying just out of sight. Once lured far from home, it is at this time that it reveals itself to its helpless prey.

**Shudigo:** Init +5; Atk gore or claw +5 melee (1d12+5); AC 18; HD 8d10, hp 70; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP trance; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +7; AL C; Crit M/d16.

*Trance:* The Shudigo attempts to lure its victim deeper into the woods before attacking by placing them in a trance-like state (DC 18 Will save, 1d4 turns). Once its prey is in a trance, it will follow the Shudigo for 1d4 turns before making another Will save.

*You hear a familiar voice calling to you from just inside the woods as you bundle up firewood for the long frigid winter night. Do your ears deceive you? Maybe it was just the wind playing tricks with your mind. You listen intently and are certain you heard it again.*

## SHUD-SQUATCH

The Shud-Squatch is an exquisite mythical cryptid that appears to be a cross between a sheep and a giant ape. Standing over eight feet tall with pure white hair, it has the facial features of an ape but with large, curved sheep horns. It has a long thin tail and large human-like paws. When encountered deep in the Shudder Mountains, there is almost nothing that can be done to elude it. The Shudfolk often say, "If it didn't want you to see it, you wouldn't have seen it." More often than not, its putrid smell is the first indication that something ominous is lurking nearby.

**Shud-Squatch:** Init +6; Atk bite or ram +6 melee (2d12+6); AC 19; HD 9d12, hp 96; MV 45'; Act 3d20; SP paralysis and vanish; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +8; AL C; Crit M/d20.

*Paralysis:* From a safe distance, the Shud-Squatch first uses its paralyzing gaze (DC 18 Fort save, 1d4 turns) to hold those who see it immobile and in awe. Depending on its intentions, it may simply slip away into the dense forest of The Shudder Mountains by using its vanish ability (see below). In some other rare cases, it has been reported to move in and attack!



*Vanish:* The Shud-Squatch may turn invisible at will (as per the Invisibility spell +20 Spell check; see DCC RPG p. 172).

*A nearby flash of white is seen in the nearby underbrush on this early spring day. The smell of what can only be described as rotting flesh mixed with skunk cabbage affronts your nostrils. A massive humanoid creature with the face of an ape and the horns of a sheep reveals itself, appearing from behind a thick oak tree. Looking on in amazement, you stand motionless.*

# SHUDFOLK NAME GENERATOR

Random Tables compiled by Zie Meese

| <b>Roll</b> | <b>First Name</b> | <b>Last Name</b> | <b>Nickname</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1           | Alva              | Ayers            | Birdie          |
| 2           | Ann               | Adair            | Blacky          |
| 3           | Arbazena          | Ahoka            | Blossom         |
| 4           | Arthona           | Alexander        | Bubba           |
| 5           | Asa               | Allen            | Buck            |
| 6           | Basil             | Allen            | Bud             |
| 7           | Bittie            | Anderson         | Bug             |
| 8           | Bushrod           | Awiakta          | Buzz            |
| 9           | Celinda           | Barton           | Diesel          |
| 10          | Clementine        | Baugh            | Dumpling        |
| 11          | Cluria            | Beaver           | Fatman          |
| 12          | Conner            | Beck             | Flossie         |
| 13          | Corda             | Belcher          | Honey           |
| 14          | Coree             | Blankenship      | June Bug        |
| 15          | Cread             | Bradley          | Junior          |
| 16          | Dice              | Braum            | Lil'            |
| 17          | Emer              | Broome           | Moppy           |
| 18          | Emina             | Brown            | Mouse           |
| 19          | Eunice            | Caldwell         | Peach           |
| 20          | Exemine           | Carver           | Pig             |
| 21          | Ezekiel           | Conner           | Rooster         |
| 22          | Gazzie            | Dowdle           | Sandy           |
| 23          | Grettie           | Elliott          | Shuggy          |
| 24          | Haseltine         | Gibson           | Slick           |

| <b>Roll</b> | <b>First Name</b> | <b>Last Name</b> | <b>Nickname</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 25          | Hezekiah          | Griffth          | Smooth          |
| 26          | Hosey             | Hale             | Squeaky         |
| 27          | Ima               | Harris           | Squirrel        |
| 28          | Ivy               | Husky            | Tater           |
| 29          | Jessomay          | Lambert          | Toad            |
| 30          | Larentine         | Mack             | Whitey          |
| 31          | Marsayas          | Mane             |                 |
| 32          | Murcipa           | Mathis           |                 |
| 33          | Odessie           | Matthews         |                 |
| 34          | Ophir             | McComas          |                 |
| 35          | Palestine         | McMahan          |                 |
| 36          | Pleasant          | Mease            |                 |
| 37          | Pudan             | Minges           |                 |
| 38          | Rectaner          | Nelson           |                 |
| 39          | Renie             | Puckett          |                 |
| 40          | Rintha            | Ratliff          |                 |
| 41          | Rube              | Reagan           |                 |
| 42          | Saree             | Redman           |                 |
| 43          | Shady             | Roberts          |                 |
| 44          | Summerfield       | Ruff             |                 |
| 45          | Teenzy            | Skaggs           |                 |
| 46          | Theodica          | Tate             |                 |
| 47          | Tipper            | Treadway         |                 |
| 48          | Turzy             | Watson           |                 |
| 49          | Umphrey           | Whitaker         |                 |
| 50          | Zadock            | Williams         |                 |

# A PAIR OF MONSTERS

By Marc Nocerino  
Illustrations by Twingbranches

## SIGILFISH

Sigilfish are the bane of any arcane spellcaster who is unlucky enough to come in contact with them. These tiny insects look similar to their relatives, silverfish, but are sustained by arcane energy and will attempt to “eat” any magic they come across. They often nest in spellbooks and scrolls, much like their mundane cousins, but rather than eating paper and binding, the sigilfish devour the magical energy bound into the rituals and incantations page by page, one spell at a time. When sigilfish eat spells in this way, their own bodies replace the inked incantations and lie dormant, often for centuries, as they digest the arcane essence. This leaves the scrolls or spellbooks looking normal, but their magic has been consumed, and the sigilfish will move on after a few hundred years, leaving behind the tattered husk of a spellbook or a scroll tube filled with the dusty remnants of once-enchanted parchment.

While perfectly content eating the inert magic in a spellbook or scroll, sigilfish would always prefer to feast directly on the raw arcana unleashed when a spell is being cast, whether by scroll, item, or caster.

And woe to the hapless elf or wizard who unknowingly stumbles upon a sigilfish colony. When an arcane spellcaster finds a document or corpse infested with the sigilfish markings, the sigilfish reproduce and spread on contact, immediately infecting their new victim with a tattoo-like marking somewhere on their body. Nothing else happens until they cast a spell or handle a spellbook or scroll; that is when the true horror of a sigilfish infestation becomes apparent.

The danger sigilfish pose to an arcane caster they’ve infested manifests in a number of ways. The first danger is how the infestation spreads; each time a spell is cast there is a 20% chance per spell level that the sigilfish will use that energy to reproduce,

leading to another colony/marking appearing somewhere on the caster. The next danger is that each colony will cause uncontrolled spellburn whenever the infested caster casts a spell. Every sigilfish colony will add one point of unhealable spellburn, to a randomly determined attribute, every time a spell is cast. The last big danger is that each colony will subtly (or not so subtly) warp the magic of the spells they are feeding on. This manifests as an additional roll on the Mercurial Magic table for each sigilfish colony on that caster. These results could be beneficial but are just as often dangerous. These rolls do not use the wizard's Luck modifier.



**Sigilfish:** Init +0; Atk no attacks; AC 10; HD 1 hp; MV 10'; Act N/A; SP Eat Magic, Warp Arcana, Infest Spellburn, Spreading the Disease; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +8; AL N; Crit N/A.

*Eat Magic:* Sigilfish consume ambient magic, and over time will suck the arcana out of any magical items such as scrolls, spellbooks, magic items, and the like. A sigilfish colony can consume one level of magical power (i.e., one spell level, or one charge from a magic

item) every 24 hours, and for each full spell or charge they consume, there is a 20% chance they will “birth” another sigilfish colony. If left unchecked, the sigilfish will entirely consume the magical energy, rendering the object inert. The more colonies birthed, the quicker the item will be consumed.

*Warp Arcana:* Whenever an arcane spell is cast within 100’ of sigilfish, there is a chance they will feed on some of the ambient magic released by spellcasting and potentially alter the manifestation of the spell. This results in a random roll on the Mercurial Magic table (core rulebook) and is in addition to any Mercurial Magic already invoked by the spellcasting.

If the caster of the spell is already infested, they roll an additional Mercurial Magic result for each colony that has spread on them. These results are cumulative.

*Infested Spellburn:* A caster infested by sigilfish experiences uncontrolled spellburn EVERY TIME they cast a spell. This infested spellburn is automatic (minimum burn of 1 point; 1d3 determines which stat is burned [1-Str, 2-Dex, 3-Sta]), and it works at double efficiency to boost the spell check (a single point burnt adds two to the spell check roll). Infested spellburn will not heal by any means as long as the subject is host to a sigilfish infestation. This infested spellburn manifests as a painful burning sensation on the original mark as it reproduces and spreads to a second mark somewhere else on the body. Each casting and subsequent burning sensation reveals each new Sigilfish “colony” if it’s somehow undetected by a search. With each new colony, the infested spellburn increases by 1 random point for each mark/colony of sigilfish infestation.

If an infested caster continues to cast spells without getting the infestation under control, they will eventually be killed by the unhealable spellburn. Luckily, removing the colony markings is as simple as burning them off; but in this case even the cure can be deadly. A single sigilfish colony will be utterly destroyed by just 1 hp worth of fire damage, though the person infected will also take damage in the process. The danger lies in the fact that most sources of fire do more than just 1 hp of damage. The infested caster, unless somehow protected from fire, takes all of the damage beyond the 1

hp that destroyed the colony. Finally, there is a 20% chance per colony burned off that the caster will lose one hit point **permanently**. This damage cannot be healed in any way, short of a Patron's intercession.

*Spreading the Disease:* An infested victim handling scrolls or spellbooks automatically spreads the infestation to the documents, which will lead to the sigilfish slowly consuming them (see *Eat Magic*) until they're either reduced to Sigilfish scrawl nests or the documents are burned—either selectively, potentially damaging a few pages, or completely immolated in extreme infections.

*I was ecstatic when I found the fabled spellbook of Gwellor the Invocator after questing for years to find his long-abandoned tower and reap the magical rewards of that once-great mage. My ecstasy was short-lived, however, when I cast the simple magic to copy the first incantation into my own spellbook. Imagine my horror when those sigils began squirming, crawling up my arm and warping my magic to sate their hunger. I still bear the scars from where I burned them off and will never heal them, so they serve as a reminder.*

**- Ixtar the Impressive, Thaumaturgist of the Western Wastes**

## **FIREFOX**

At first glance, these small, solitary creatures resemble a cross between a fox and a ferret covered in orange and yellow fur with red tips. But their fiery fur more than just looks the part; it emits tiny sparks, and their mouths drip something closer to napalm than saliva. They look adorable, but don't let their cuteness fool you; a scared or angry firefox can be a dangerous little foe.

Shy and territorial, firefoxes tend to be found alone or in small family groups of no more than three (father, mother, and kit). This only lasts until the kit is grown enough to fend for itself, at which point all three animals will go their separate ways.

Some intrepid adventures have sought to hunt these creatures for their pelts, which can fetch a tidy sum. By the same token, many a curious wizard has sought to harness a firefox as a familiar through rites arcane and mysterious. However, the firefox is not a natural creature, having been created by alchemy and sorcery aeons past, and will not answer the call of elf or wizard by magic.



**Firefox:** Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4 + possible 1d2 fire from saliva [see Fire Spit mechanic below]); AC 15; HD 3d6 (hp 13); MV 30; Act 1d20; SP Great Big Doe Eyes, Fire Spit, Fur Flame; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1; AL N.; Crit M/d6.

*Great Big Doe Eyes:* A firefox's first line of defense is to look adorable in hopes that you'll find it too cute and (apparently) helpless to harm. Its pupils dilate impossibly wide and look up at the perceived source of threat, looking just too cute for words. Any creature seeing this undeniably adorable look must make a DC 15 Will save or find the Firefox too darling to harm. This Will save is modified by Alignment -- a Lawful creature suffers a -2 penalty to this save, while a Chaotic creature gets a +2 bonus to avoid the effect. Neutral creatures have no adjustment to this save.

*Fire Spit:* When defense doesn't work, it's time to turn up the heat offensively. To this end, the firefox opens its mouth incredibly wide, like a snake unhinging its jaw, and unleashes a caustic slew of molten saliva. This shoots out in a straight, flat line 10' in length, but a firefox will often shake its head back & forth and up & down

while doing this, creating a fan-like cone instead of a straight line. Any creature hit by this spray of scalding spit takes 2d6 fire damage (DC 10 Ref save for half damage, DC 20 to negate). Anyone who takes damage must also roll a subsequent DC 10 Fortitude save or take an additional 1 point of fire damage each round until they pass a DC 10 Fort save from the napalm clinging to them and burning through their clothes/armor/skin, etc. Fire Spit will not ignite flammable objects. Additionally, any bite from a firefox will inflict an additional 1d2 of Fire Spit damage from the caustic saliva in its mouth, subject to the same Fortitude save to prevent continued burn damage. There is no Reflex save to avoid this; it is automatically included in a successful bite attack.

*Fur Flame:* When defense and offense aren't enough, a firefox who feels threatened and fears for its very life can immolate its coat in an instant, creating a roaring inferno that causes 1d6 fire damage to itself and 2d6 fire damage to everything within a 5' radius. This eruption will ignite flammable materials in range, including clothing papers, and the like. This maneuver is a last-ditch defense, injuring and possibly killing the firefox. If it survives, it will be left utterly devoid of fur, which makes it more susceptible to the cold (+1d3 to all cold damage) until its coat grows back, which will happen gradually over the course of a few months.

A firefox kit has none of the fire-based abilities of a full-grown firefox. It is only able to use *Great Big Doe Eyes*, but it does so at +2 effectiveness (i.e., Will save is -4 for Lawful, -2 for Neutral, and Chaotic creatures have no adjustment).

**Firefox kit:** Init 0; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3); AC 13; HD 1d6 (hp 3); MV 20; Act 1d20; SP Great Big Doe Eyes; SV Fort 0, Ref +2, Will 0; AL N; Crit M/d4

*You don't want one of these as a pet or familiar. You'll think you do, but when those golden eyes turn all black, pupils growing unbelievably large and liquid, and you feel like your heart is going to burst with wanting to love this little guy, just remember— it does NOT feel the same way about you. And if you don't heed my advice, you'll end up burnt to death like my wizard friend Uldrek the Unkind, or, if you're lucky, just scarred and bitter like me.*

- "Grizzled" Gus Grantham, retired adventurer

# **A SELECTION OF MONSTROSITIES FROM BURIED IDALIUM**

By Jesse Smith

Illustrations by Amara Garner

The lust of delving adventurers for gold and valuable antiquities is often rivaled only by their hunger for advanced information about the dangers that are to be found below the surface. To their frustration, such information necessarily comes second-, third-, or even fourth-hand, but even such hearsay is better forewarning than none. In many places in which such adventurers congregate, there is often a vigorous and competitive trade in information regarding nearby threats, with special preference (and value) being given to eyewitness accounts.

One such location is the Rusty Lantern tavern in the teeming city-state of Idalium, from which an exclusive guild of adventurers launches explorations into the buried ruins of the city of Ancient Idalium. Presented is a description of three monstrous subterranean creatures, collected from the sage Professor Runcible Zinn, who obtained and compiled this information from an adventuring party calling themselves the Infestation Managers. While these creatures were first encountered in the ruins of buried Idalium, unreliable reports with very similar descriptions to these creatures have since cropped up in other locales. Although it has to be said that Professor Zinn is an eccentric who rarely leaves his garret apartment in the most decrepit neighborhood of the city, and we cannot discount the possibility that he (or the so-called Infestation Managers), hard-pressed for coin, concocted these descriptions out of whole cloth.

## **STRETCHER**

Stretchers are un-dead creatures that seem to live in a perpetual dream state, dimly going through the motions of a parody of their former life. They have pallid white flesh like a fish's belly, and an androgynous or sexless form, with rudimentary and vague bodily and facial features, as if they are only a crude imitation of a human being. They do not wear clothes. They do not talk, nor do they

exhibit any type of human-like intelligence, having a bestial cunning only.

They prefer to inhabit enclosed rooms underground and will spend much of their time sleeping (if the un-dead do sleep) completely covered by a sheet or blanket. They tend to try to avoid being uncovered.



Stretchers have an insatiable hunger for the human life force, and when they encounter the living, they will reach out with a questing arm, which stretches unnaturally up to 30' feet, moving at a rate of 1' per second unerringly towards its target. The arm (and the rest of the stretcher) can squeeze through the tiniest cracks, such as through keyholes, under doors, etc. The touch of a stretcher can paralyze for hours, and after paralyzing a victim, the stretcher will begin to drain life force from the victim. This causes the victim to lose consciousness (eyelids fluttering, gasping for breath, etc.), as their vital essence is drained away through the stretcher's arm.

Any creature whose life force is completely drained by a stretcher will dissolve into a white, rubbery liquid and drain away through cracks and crevices in the floor (making recovery of the body impossible) and will reform as a new stretcher within a few days. When killed, stretchers dissolve into the same liquid and drain away in the same way.

These horrific aberrations were first discovered entombed in the abandoned Hotel Lethia beneath the buried streets of Ancient Idalium, but worryingly similar sightings have since been reported in many other lands. There are even unconfirmed rumors of "ghost towns" where entire populations were swiftly converted into stretchers, left to obliviously repeat the routines of their former lives while their homes decay around them.

**Stretcher:** Init +1; Atk grab +3 melee (1d4 plus paralysis); Crit U/1d6; AC 12; HD 2d6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP paralysis, life drain (automatic 1d4 dmg per round after paralysis), infravision 100', un-dead traits; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.

*Paralysis:* If successfully hit, a humanoid-type creature (except elves) is paralyzed, unable to move or take any physical action for 1d6 hours (DC 14 Will save negates). The target is also considered grappled by the stretcher.

*Life drain:* As an action, the stretcher automatically does 1d4 damage to a grappled target. If an amount of damage equal to half the stretcher's total hit points is done to an arm (or a successful Mighty Deed of Arms), the arm will be severed and the stump will retract very quickly into the stretcher's body, though the stretcher

may attack again with its other arm. If the other arm is likewise severed, it will also retract and the stretcher will flee. The stretcher can only be killed by doing its total amount of hit points in damage to its actual body.

*Un-dead traits:* Stretchers are un-dead and thus can be turned by clerics. They do not need to eat, drink, or breathe, and are immune to critical hits, disease, and poison. As un-dead, they are immune to sleep, charm, and paralysis spells, as well as other mental effects and cold damage.

## GESTALT MOTH



These creatures are formed from many hundreds of ordinary moths, somehow gathered into the form of a large (five-foot wingspan) moth resembling a white silk moth. They attack with a rasping proboscis. They are often able to attack with surprise, because the

danger the tiny moths pose is often not recognized until hundreds of them coalesce into a gestalt moth.

Because they are composed of many individual moths, piercing and slashing attacks pass right through them without harming them. Only bludgeoning weapons cause them damage, by crushing the tiny moths that comprise them.

(Professor Zinn coined the perhaps excessively erudite name “gestalt moths”; the Infestation Managers themselves never gave him any name more detailed than, “Those giant moths that almost killed us all!”)

The female gestalt moths will often lay their eggs in the corpses of their prey. The larvae hatch as large pallid gray caterpillars and feed on the corpse. The larvae eventually produce silk to form their giant cocoons. When the cocoons open, thousands of tiny moths burst forth, continuing the life cycle anew. The nesting areas of these moths are typically draped in haphazard silk accumulations, which sometimes conceal the decaying corpses of previous victims, as well as the pulsating giant cocoons, and incautious adventurers have been known to stumble unaware into a bad situation.

**Gestalt moth:** Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6); Crit M/1d8; AC 12; HD 3d8; MV 30', fly 60'; Act 1d20; SP immune to damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N.

## MYCOZOMBIES AND THE GREAT FUNGAL MIND

Deep below the surface, in the dank and clinging coolness of uncharted caverns, unwholesome life flourishes, mercifully unknown to the reassuring light of the sun. Somewhere far beneath the bustling streets of Idalium, on the far shore of a silent underground lake, the Infestation Managers discovered a veritable jungle of fungal growths, blooming balefully in the darkness, inexplicably growing from every surface of the barren rock caverns. The walls were carpeted in splotchy molds of all colors, enormous mushrooms sprouted like trees from the floor, and mycelial tendrils dangled from the ceiling like cobwebs. On successive visits, these adventurers reported that the perimeter of the fungal colony was slowly advancing, proliferating perhaps ten feet in every outward

direction over the course of a week. It could be burned back with fire, but that only delayed its slow, inexorable spread. Professor Zinn was able to corroborate this first-hand, as the Infestation Managers brought samples of the mushrooms back to the surface for him to investigate. He found that the mushrooms withered away within days, and even though planted in good soil lasted only a few days more before decomposing away. Only by continually replenishing the soil and compost could the mushrooms be sustained with life, albeit pale and sickly. Clearly the seething fecundity below depended on some other factor.



Further expeditions discovered that the entire colony of fungal growth was essentially one interconnected organism, possessed of a form of sentience entirely alien to human mentality. It had awareness and intention, but not of a sort that could be communicated or reasoned with. It had no goals other than to expand its presence, spread to other areas, and consume other minds

within its own. In addition to the gradual expansion of the entire fungal mass, it was able to infect and mentally dominate any form of animal life in order to create mobile carriers of its spores to new areas.

Professor Zinn named these fungus-infested creatures “mycozombies”. In the caverns under Idalium, mycozombies formed from giant ants were reported, as well as those which had formerly been human adventurers who met an unfortunate end. Worryingly, creatures meeting a similar description have since been reported in regions much closer to our own lands, leading some scholars of the more esoteric corners of natural history to speculate that this sentient fungal colony was not a singular instance.

Mycozombies are formed by the infection of an animal by the spores of the sentient fungus. In the early stages of infestation, the body is sustained by the fungus and merely mentally controlled, but after sufficient time the fungus infiltrates and replaces the vital organs and the mycozombie is merely a corpse puppeteered by the fungus within it. Mycozombies in this later stage of infestation can be visually identified by strands of mold filaments draping their bodies like cobwebs and tiny mushrooms that sprout from within their mouths or from open wounds. Infected giant ants have dull and dusty carapaces, and in many cases, a fungal fruiting body cracks through the thorax to loom above them. A mycozombie’s movements are jerky and stilted. They are often not immediately hostile and may ignore intruders at first, but if engaged in close quarters combat they pose a significant risk of spreading the fungal infection to their opponents.

There are unconfirmed rumors that at the center of the fungal infestation lurks an enormous brain-shaped mushroom (roughly 20 feet in diameter) that organizes and sustains the rest of the colony, but these reports originate from the delirious ravings of broken-minded explorers and cannot be considered particularly reliable.

**Human mycozombie:** Init -4; Atk slam +3 melee (1d8); Crit M/1d8; AC 9; HD 3d6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP mycozombie traits, mycelial spores; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2; AL C.

**Giant ant mycozombie:** Init -4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1); Crit M/1d6; AC 13; HD 1d8+2; MV 40' or climb 40'; Act 1d20; SP mycozombie traits, mycelial spores; SV Fort +5, Ref -2, Will +2; AL C.

*Mycozombie traits:* Although mycozombies are not un-dead, they share many of the same immunities. Mycozombies do not need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe, and are immune to critical hits, disease, and poison. They are immune to sleep, charm, and paralysis spells, as well as other mental effects.

*Mycelial spores:* Anyone who successfully hits a mycozombie must make a Luck check or the attack creates a puff of fungal spores that exposes anyone who is in melee with the mycozombie to the fungal infection. Anyone hit by a mycozombie must make a Luck check using a d12 or be exposed. Any creature exposed must make a DC 10 Fortitude save or develop a progressive fungal infection from the site of the wound, and must make a Willpower save each day thereafter, starting at DC 5 and increasing by 2 each day. On failure, the creature's mind has been overwhelmed by the fungus and they will feel a compulsion to return to the fungal colony and join with the Great Fungal Mind. Over the next 2d10+10 days, their body will be infiltrated and consumed by the fungus, fully transforming them into a mycozombie. Until that point, the infection can be cured by a cleric's lay on hands ability, *neutralize poison or disease* spell, or similar magic.



# THE DRACONIC: DRAGON EFFECT TABLE

By Michael J. Cremin IV  
Illustration by Brad McDevitt

Unhappy is the land where a dragon has taken up residence! Along with the terrible powers of a dragon – Armor like shields! Teeth like swords! Claws like spears! Tail like a thunderbolt! Wings like a hurricane! And breath...like death! – dragons have a baleful influence on their surroundings by dint of their powerful weird magics. The effect of a dragon on the areas surrounding their lairs is known as ‘the draconic,’ and it adds yet another terrible layer to a dragon’s evil presence. The phlogiston quakes in the wake of a drake!

| d100  | Effect  |
|-------|---|
| 1-5   | <i>The Silent World:</i> There is a noticeable lack of animal life in 1d10 miles around the dragon’s lair. There are fewer, if any, larger mammals or birds. There are fewer insects. The area feels lifeless and still.  |
| 6-10  | <i>Ill Winds:</i> The area around the dragon’s lair is known for its strange violent winds. 1x/day, roll 1d6, with each effect lasting 1d2 hours: (1) howling winds pop up, tearing up plants and small trees; (2) the wind begins to blow and moan, sounding like the wailings of lost souls; (3) the wind feels uncomfortably hot and stultifying; (4) the wind feels uncomfortably cold and biting; (5) the wind reeks of carrion and rot; (6) the wind whispers the dragon’s name in the treetops and in the shadows. |
| 11-15 | <i>Farm Fun:</i> 25% of all domestic livestock in the region around a dragon's lair result in draconic mutations (1d4): (1) creature is born with a scaly tail; (2) creature is born with rudimentary nonfunctional wings; (3) creature is born covered in black scales; (4) creature is born with yellow slitted eyes.   |

- 16-20 *Sickly Waters:* Water supplies in the area around a dragon's lair are sulfurous and smell bad. People in the region are forced to boil water to make it potable.
- 21-25 *Sour Earth:* 25% of all crops grown in an area around a dragon's lair decay and become filled with maggots shortly after being harvested.
- 26-30 *Smell of Death:* The region around a dragon's lair has the sickly smell of decay. Every 1d10 days, the smell becomes so unbearable that people must cover their mouths in order to breathe without becoming ill.
- 31-35 *Tremors:* Every 1d10 days, the ground shakes with a small but noticeable earth tremor.
- 36-40 *Nightmares:* Anyone sleeping in the area around a dragon's lair must make a DC 15 Will save each night or be wracked by terrible nightmares.
- 41-45 *Random Reptiles:* The area around a dragon's lair is a beacon for reptiles: snakes, lizards, skinks, crocodiles, alligators, turtles, etc. These reptiles will be unusually large and unusually aggressive.
- 46-50 *Random Amphibians:* The area around a dragon's lair is a beacon for amphibians: frogs, toads, salamanders, newts, etc. These amphibians will be unusually large and unusually aggressive.
- 51-55 *Hauntings:* On nights of a full moon(s), the ghosts of those killed by the dragon will appear, wailing, moaning, screaming, and re-enacting their deaths.
- 56-60 *The Dragon's Shadow:* A large moving shadow in the shape of the dragon will appear on the ground as though the creature was flying above, but nothing is there. This shadow will last 1d3 hours and terrify all who see it.

- 61-65 *The Echoing Roar*: 1d4 times per week, the air will be rent with the echoing roars of the dragon, causing all who hear it to become frightened.
- 66-70 *The Dragon's Despair*: 1d4 times per week, those living near a dragon's lair must make a Will save vs. 10 or be overcome with feelings of despair and sorrow. Those who fail the save become inconsolable for 1d5 hours and can take no other actions.
- 71-75 *The Dragon's Fear*: 1d4 times per week, those living near a dragon's lair must make a Will save vs. 10 or be overcome with feelings of terror and fear. Those who fail the save become frightened for 1d5 hours and can take no other actions.
- 76-80 *The Dragon's Gift*: 1d4 times per month, blood-covered coins will rain down on a populated area near a dragon's lair. The coins vanish at sunset. Those who handle these coins must make a Fortitude save vs. DC 10 or become violently ill for a day.
- 81-85 *The Dragon's Song*: 1d4 times per month, an eerie chorus of inhuman voices will begin to sing a haunting melody in an unknown language from sunset to sunrise. The voices seem to have no origin and make it impossible to rest or sleep.
- 86-90 *The Dragon's Prey*: Once per month, a large partially-devoured animal will be dropped onto a community nearest to the dragon's lair. Roll a 1d6: (1) a partially devoured war horse; (2) a partially devoured great bear; (3) a partially devoured mammoth; (4) a partially devoured giant; (5) a partially devoured aurochs; (6) a partially devoured giant snake.

91-93 *The Cult of the Dragon*: 1d5 of the people in a community closest to a dragon's lair have become secret worshippers of the dragon. These worshippers carry out secret rituals and rites in order to please the dragon. Once per month, during the dark of the moon, the dragon cultists will gather to perform unholy rights in hopes of earning the creature's favor (roll 1d4): (1) orgies and ecstasies are conducted in secret places – these gatherings include animal sacrifices; (2) human flesh – sometimes that of the cultists themselves – is consumed in dark rites conducted before an effigy of the dragon; (3) ritual maiming and scaring are conducted, including the amputation of fingers, toes, ears, lips, and noses – the after-effects of such rituals are passed off as accidents; (4) people are kidnapped and sacrificed to an effigy of the dragon. Roll 1d100: if a 1 is rolled, the dragon itself will appear to watch and participate in these gatherings.

94-96 *The Cult of the Dragon*: 2d10 of the people in a community closest to a dragon's lair have become secret worshippers of the dragon. These worshippers carry out secret rituals and rites in order to please the dragon. Once per month, during the dark of the moon, the dragon cultists will gather to perform unholy rights in hopes of earning the creature's favor (roll 1d4): (1) orgies and ecstasies are conducted in secret places – these gatherings include humanoid sacrifices; (2) human flesh – sometimes that of the cultists themselves – is consumed in dark rites conducted before an effigy of the dragon; (3) ritual maimings and scarrings are conducted, including the amputation of fingers, toes, ears, lips, and noses – 1d6 cultists will be blinded, and the after-effects of such rituals are passed off as accidents; (4) children are kidnapped and sacrificed to an effigy of the dragon.

97-99

*The Cult of the Dragon:* 3d20 of the people in a community closest to a dragon's lair have become secret worshipers of the dragon. These worshippers carry out secret rituals and rites in order to please the dragon. Once per month, during the dark of the moon, the dragon cultists will gather to perform unholy rights in hopes of earning the creature's favor (roll 1d4): (1) orgies and ecstasies are conducted in a hidden temple or shrine dedicated to the dragon – these gatherings include humanoid sacrifices, and some members of the cult reside in this dark place permanently; (2) dark rites conducted before an effigy of the dragon – mounds of amputated limbs and eyes are put into a pot, then ensorcelled, creating a poison that will be added to wells of nearby populated areas (the effects of this poison is left to the imagination of the game master); (3) all cult members will cut off their ears and eyelids with specialized daggers created to mimic the claw of a dragon, then will return to the nearest civilized area to kill as many people as possible in a brutal wave of mass murder on the first night of the dark of the moon; (4) dozens of people are kidnapped and sacrificed to an effigy of the dragon -- their bodies are lashed to a wooden or stone effigy of the dragon, which a wizard will attempt to animate using a powerful *raise dead* spell.

100

*Dragon Death:* For no known reason, the dragon decides to destroy the community closest to its lair, leaving no living thing and destroying all buildings and homes.

# THE TRIMBER RATTLER

By Eric Young

Illustration by Joe Porkio

The tri-rattler is a creature born from the effects of powerful magics that have twisted the very fabric of reality. The snake has been morphed into a three headed aberration of nature. It ranges from temperate to arid climates. The pattern of their scales makes them tough to find and they are savage hunters.



The three heads are both a boon and a bane to the creature as each has a mind of its own when hunting multiple prey. This can confuse the heads if they all attack a different target, but the heads are exceptionally deadly if they agree. Their poison is a paralytic agent that slows their victims until they are easily killed.

**Trimber Rattler:** Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3/2d3/3d3 plus poison); AC 14; HD 2d5; MV 30', swim 20'; Act 3d16/2d20/1d24; SP multi-head attack, paralyzing poison, weakness to cold; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C; Crit M/d8.

*Multi-head attack:* Each trimber rattler head acts independently of the others, roll a die equal to the number of PC's in the party, if the die comes up for a different party member for each attack then each head attacks at 1d16 and each damage roll is 1d3, if the two heads roll the same party member the attack is a d20 and the damage is 2d3, if all three heads strike the same party member the attack is 1d24 damage is 3d3. The poison results do not stack for each strike.

*Paralytic poison:* The save is a DC 10 Fortitude Save or the victim takes 1 point of temporary Agility damage for each strike. If the Agility score drops to 0 the character's heart is paralyzed and death occurs in 1d3 rounds unless the poison is neutralized.

*Off to the left, the sound of bones shaking begins. Then, the shrubs shake as a three-headed serpent, half again as long as a man, and thick around as a man's arm lashes out. The reptile looks at those who have interrupted its rest as three mouths open exposing three pairs of finger long fangs.*

# TWO FOR DCC

By Mike McKeown  
Illustrations by Riff Marvin

The *Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume Four* was one of the last products for AD&D 2nd edition. It was a compilation of monsters from *Dungeon* and *Dragon* magazine as well as from TSR scenarios. Here's a conversion of two of the creatures from the book. The bainligors were from *Dragon* magazine and the Hound of Law was from the Planescape campaign setting.

## BAINLIGOR

Bainligor are flightless bat-like people that dwell in the underworld. Bainligors have large ears and hideous bat-like faces. They speak in chirps and high pitched squeaks and possess a basic knowledge of the trade language of the underworld. Since their high pitched squeaks are difficult to understand, they do not trade with other underworld races. The cured hides and stone or bone weapons they make are not in high demand from other races. Bainligors are underworld wanderers that scrounge for insects, loose organic matter, and rotting flesh.

Capable of bat-like echolocation, they can perceive invisible targets within 40'. Their tiny eyes can see well in darkness. Bainligors make a sonic attack using their echolocation. The target of the sonic attack takes damage and must make a DC 12 (or DC 14 for reverberated) Fort save or be stunned for 1d4 rounds. A successful saving throw halves the damage. Bainligors are vulnerable to deafness spells, which cause them to suffer -4 on their attack rolls. Groups of bainligors can mass together to try to overwhelm their foes. Each bainligor adjacent to another bainligor grants it a cumulative +1 bonus to hit and damage. The maximum bonus is +10.



Bainligors grow in size throughout their lifetime. Particularly old bainligors leave their tribe and seek seclusion. They find dry empty caverns and begin to transform into un-dead. Un-dead bainligors return from solitude as revered and become chiefs, guardians, or even clerics of their tribe. As un-dead, they do not eat, drink, or breathe, and are immune to critical hits, disease, and poison. As un-dead, they are immune to sleep, charm, and hold spells, as well as other mental effects and cold damage.

**Bainligor (small):** Init +0; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3) or club +2 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 3d8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision, immune to darkness and invisibility, mass attack, sonic attack (2d8 damage); SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; AL C.

**Bainligor (revered):** Init +0; Atk bite +8 melee (1d8) or by weapon +8 melee (1d8+1); AC 12; HD 9d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision, immune to darkness and invisibility, mass attack, sonic attack (8d8 damage), undead traits; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7; AL C.

## HOUND OF LAW

A hound of law is a type of will-o'-wisp that the Elemental Lords of the Plane of Air use as couriers, scouts and sentinels. Their usual form is a faint ghostly glowing ball of light two feet in diameter. They speak in a type of buzzing murmur and are intelligent. A hound of law can transport itself to the ethereal or astral plane (as per the *planar step* spell) or turn invisible at will. They are immune to electricity and all spells except *magic missile*, *protection from evil* (good) or *maze* (see below). Hounds of law are immune to electricity damage. They have a +1 bonus to attack chaotic creatures. Hounds of law can cast *detect invisible* (spell check +4). They have strong senses and can track creatures by smell. If a creature the hound is tracking teleports away, they have a 50% chance of following the creature to its new location.



A hound of Law can take the form of a small or medium sized canine at will (as per the *polymorph* spell) The canine can appear clean or dirty but has bright glowing golden eyes and is athletic.

**Hound of Law:** Init +3; Atk melee touch +9 (2d6 electricity) or (canine form) bite +7 melee (2d6); AC 15; HD 8d8; MV Fly 50' or 30' (canine form); Act 1d20; SP detect invisible, immune to electricity, immune to magic, invisibility, polymorph ; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +8; AL L.

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## MAZE

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Level: 5            Range: 30'            Duration: Varies  
Casting Time: 1 action            Save: None

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| General | The caster banishes one or more creatures into an extra dimensional labyrinth of force planes. After a successful casting, the subject must make an Intelligence check to escape. On a successful casting, the caster may choose to invoke an effect of lesser power than his spell check roll to produce a weaker but potentially more useful result. |
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| Manifestation | Roll 1d4: (1) A wave of bright lights appears near the caster; (2) nearby dirt and rocks form solid shapes that are intertwined like pretzels; (3) horizontal and vertical lines of gold twist into shapes to take the form of the caster's creations; (4) the ground vomits forth lines of dirt that fulfill the effect of the spell. |
|---------------|--|

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Corruption | Roll 1d6: (1) caster's eye's become cloudy, blinding them for 1d3 rounds; (2) caster has no sense of direction losing their way wherever he or she goes; (3) caster wanders in circles for 1d3 hours per day; (4) the caster sits and stares into space for 1d5 hours per day; (5) caster's body becomes rigid for one hour a day; (6) caster's skin becomes fur and they grow horns like a minotaur.  |
| Misfire    | Roll 1d4: (1) One creature within 5' of the caster (including the caster) must make a Will save equal to 5+CL or be banished to the labyrinth. After 5 minutes the labyrinth disappears, compelling the subject to leave.; (2) all water sources within a 15' radius of the caster produce thick, obscuring white mist that fills a 10' cube around it each round for 1d6 rounds; (3) spell takes effect but in a random area or on a random creature within 30' of the caster (reroll spell check to determine effect and strength as if the caster were casting the spell again); (4) caster's lungs fill with water and make a DC 10 Stamina check to keep breathing. |

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| 1     | Lost, failure, and worse! Roll 1d6 modified by Luck: (0 or less) corruption + patron taint + misfire; (1-2) corruption; (3) patron taint (corruption if no patron); (4+) misfire.               |
| 2-11  | Lost. Failure.  |
| 12-17 | Failure, but spell is not lost.   |
| 18-19 | The target must make an Intelligence check or be trapped in the maze for 10 minutes. If the subject fails the check after 10 minutes the labyrinth disappears, compelling the subject to leave. |

- 20-23 The target must make an Intelligence check or be trapped in the maze for 15 minutes. If the subject fails the check, after 15 minutes the labyrinth disappears, compelling the subject to leave.
- 24-25 The target must make an Intelligence check or be trapped in the maze for 20 minutes. If the subject fails the check, after 20 minutes the labyrinth disappears, compelling the subject to leave.
- 26-28 The spell can affect  $1d3+1$  targets. The targets must make an Intelligence check or be trapped in the maze for 10 minutes. If the targets fail the check, after 10 minutes the labyrinth disappears, compelling the subjects to leave.
- 29-33 The spell can affect  $1d4+1$  targets. The targets must make an Intelligence check or be trapped in the maze for 10 minutes. If the targets fail the check, after 10 minutes the labyrinth disappears, compelling the subjects to leave.
- 34-35 The spell can affect  $1d4+1$  targets. The targets must make an Intelligence check or be trapped in the maze for 15 minutes. If the targets fail the check, after 15 minutes the labyrinth disappears, compelling the subjects to leave.
- 36-37+ The spell can affect  $1d5+1$  targets. The targets must make an Intelligence check or be trapped in the maze for 30 minutes. If the targets fail the check, after 30 minutes the labyrinth disappears, compelling the subjects to leave. The caster may permanently trap one subject in the maze if that target failed their check.

# GODS of DIAZORR

By Jeffrey L. Scifert

Art by Reed Hill



## **OVERVIEW: SPARKS IN THE DARKNESS**

Gods of Diazorr pits heroic characters against the capricious and cruel Chimeric Pantheon and their fanatical mortal minions. Here, evil has triumphed, contaminating everything it touches—especially magic. Every time characters use magic (whether casting, magical item ability, or as deemed so by the

judge), they risk falling into Shadow and being changed, perhaps literally transforming into a horrifying monster.

But there is hope. The Gods of Light are defeated, not entirely gone. Their divine essence is scattered throughout the world, hidden in chosen mortal vessels—sparks that will light the cleansing fire. Unfortunately, the only way to ignite this celestial power and reveal a character's godly heritage is to use magic.

So, to defeat the pantheon and overthrow their evil order, heroes must walk the razor's edge—at any moment capable of either falling into Shadow and becoming inhuman monsters or blazing forth as brilliant new demigods. Good luck!

### **Character Creation**

Every player character in Gods of Diazorr is potentially a scion of the Gods of Light, but since this mythic heritage is hidden, character creation follows normal rules.

**Note:** There are no clerics of the Gods of Light. Should a homine PC Ascend to gain their demigod divinity, they may opt to change their class to that of cleric (Gods of Light).

The ecclesiasts of the Chimeric Order declare that only homines (and post-human dominantes) are worthy of the full blessings of the pantheon. Non-humans are inferior, and the order suffers their presence only as long as they serve. Those who resist or speak out are imprisoned, exiled, or hunted down.

**Homine:** Human; the chosen vessels of the Chimeric Pantheon. Choose cleric (only Chimeric Pantheon), thief, warrior, or wizard, *see DCC RPG rulebook*).

**Dominante:** Post-human, perfected by thaumaturgy. As homine above, but during character creation: automatically roll 4d6 (drop the lowest) for attribute generation except for Luck (which is still 3d6) and may switch any two attributes (excluding Luck) after attribute generation is complete.

However, they require twice the amount of XP to level up for their class and lose access to one class ability as follows: cleric – divine aid, thief – lose two thief skills (judge’s discretion), warrior – no initiative bonus, wizard – no familiar allowed.

**Subterrane:** Dwarf (as per *core rulebook*). Permitted by the order to serve humanity through their craft and industry.

**Silvestre:** Fey (as Elf, per *core rulebook*). Permitted by the order to bring humanity pleasure and delight through music, dance, performance, etc.

**Servitore:** Summoned worker needing neither food nor sleep.

**Belligerante:** Brutal fighter born of thaumaturgy.

**Aberrante:** Bizarre sentient ooze, possibly created in failed alchemical experiments. Somehow, they thrive despite being

## **Catching Fire and Ascension**

Unlike the Chimeric Pantheon, the Gods of Light didn’t play favorites among races, sowing their seed far and wide. Any PC could be a demigod; there’s no way to know until it comes out in play. In addition to all the things that can go horribly wrong with magic, there is also the possibility of something going awesomely right. Any critical success involving magic or magical items represents an ineffable, transcendent moment where heaven and earth touch and anything is possible. More concretely, the PC gains

**Note:** Three classes (the servitore, the belligerante, and the aberrante) are left to the judge to create for their campaign, due to limited space and word count. Nor are there more in-depth deity write-ups. Look for these in the next GFA (I hope).

a point of Rebuke, a quantum of deific power they can use to perform feats of demigod might (see Rebuke sidebar next page). Rebuke cannot be used, however, until the PC's divine heritage fully emerges and is recognized. Awakening the demigod potential requires a successful d30 Luck check, either at that moment or during a later moment of reflection. At that point, the PC has Ascended to become a demigod. On a failure, they lose the Rebuke point and may try again after regaining the spark once again!

### **Rebuke**

Rebuke is that spark of demigodhood that those who have the potential to Ascended may gain, and that those who have Ascended may use. Rebuke can be spent to accomplish supremely cool stuff but is limited to actions pertaining to the demigod's domain. Only 1 Rebuke can be spent on any action and no more than 3 Rebuke can be accumulated. Example actions within each divine domain are:

- Divine domain: Impetus
  - Perform a supernatural-level physical feat (e.g., lift a building, sprint across lava, leap tall buildings in a single bound)
  - Enrapture an audience who views and hears you
- Divine domain: Genesis
  - Glow brightly with starlight
  - Enact significant magic (gain an automatic result on spell check)
  - Heal a target

Once that divine nature has been revealed, demigod PCs generate Rebuke in three ways:

1. Some Rebuke regenerates automatically each day (1d3 points recovered each morning)

2. Some Rebuke is bestowed when the PC performs awesome demigod stuff in view of mortals when spending Rebuke (successful Luck check recovers 1d2 Rebuke immediately, as the awestruck emotions of the mortals empower them)
3. Some Rebuke returns when significant happenings occur near them related to their divine domain (see Divine Domains sidebar next page)

Ascension requires the new demigod PC to choose their divine domain (see sidebar). Judges should aid players in this process by reminding them about the incident(s) that led to this glorious revelation and helping them see what this might indicate about their demigod. (Critical success baking cupcakes? Maybe you're the demigod of flaky pastries.)

Having Rebuke should change the game for your players, giving them both their first real dose of power and their first breath of hope in the campaign. Let them enjoy it for a while, reveling in their newfound capabilities. Then turn up the heat.

### **Thaumaturgy and Shadow**

Magic was a gift from the Gods of Light. When they fell, magic did not entirely disappear, but it diminished, and what remained was tainted by the dark power of the Chimeric Pantheon.

This contaminated, adulterated form of magic is called thaumaturgy.

Whenever thaumaturgy is called upon, spell check results of a natural 1 for most characters cause the character to fall into Shadow and gain a Shadow Transformation (this replaces typical corruption effects). Homine or dominante spellcasting characters or scroll-casting non-spellcasters (e.g., thief) instead

suffer a Shadow Transformation on a natural 1-2 on their spell check. Characters with even one Shadow Transformation are more vulnerable to the influence of the Chimeric Pantheon and their agents (see thaumaturge, hereafter).

### **Divine Domains**

There are four divine domains which may be selected by one who has Ascended.

- Divine domain: Impetus
  - Focus is on emboldening others to succeed and those things which inspire others to become more than they think they can be.
  - *Regain Rebuke*: Whenever something occurs near the demigod which requires monumental impetus.
- Divine domain: Genesis
  - Focus is on acts that have their derivation in the creative desires of others to cultivate, construct, or effectuate something new.
  - *Regain Rebuke*: Whenever something of illustrious creation occurs near the demigod.
- Divine domain: Ruination
  - Focus is on the ending of things, destruction, death, and despair.
  - *Regain Rebuke*: Whenever something of import ceases permanently near the demigod, either through death, destruction, or some other means.
- Divine domain: Warfare
  - Focus is on battle and strategy, wherever it may be found, be it a battlefield, a trade negotiation, a battle of wits, or even political debates.
  - *Regain Rebuke*: Whenever an action involving tactical genius, *extreme* violence, or cunning occurs near the demigod.

Characters can also fall into Shadow by performing evil deeds, or even by coming into contact with cursed objects or locations. The judge may require a particular saving throw (judge's discretion) upon first contact, for every day of exposure, etc.

In addition to the Shadow Transformations table hereafter, you may wish to use any or all of the minor, major, or greater corruption tables as additional options for Shadow Transformations (p. 116-119, *DCC RPG rulebook*).

The more Shadow Transformations a character accumulates, obviously the more difficult it will be to live a normal life. In addition, PCs who accumulate more Shadow Transformations than their Willpower ability score are lost to the Shadow, becoming NPCs for the judge to make their own!

## **Shadow Transformations**

### **3d6 Shadow Transformation**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 | Roll twice on this table and take both transformations.   |
| 4 | Develop: (1) a lion's body or hindquarters; (2) cloven hooves and/or goat legs; (3) ostrich legs; (4) slimy tentacles in place of existing appendages; (5) snake body from the waist down; (6) scorpion body from the waist down.                       |
| 5 | Fingers: (1) grow to twice normal length; (2) fuse into three digits; (3) become beast-like paws, losing opposable thumbs; (4) become tentacle-like; (5) are replaced with crab-like pincers; (6) gain an extra joint and claws.                        |
| 6 | Skin becomes: (1) albino; (2) feathered; (3) furry; (4) rough like a shark; (5) scaled like a fish or lizard; (6) transparent.  |
| 7 | Ears become: (1) cat-like; (2) bat-like; (3) donkey-like; (4) elephant-like; (5) replaced with feathered tufts like an owl; (6) vestigial, inside the head and attached to the jaw bones (can sense vibrations and hear low-frequency airborne sounds). |
| 8 | Develop/Lose: A body part becomes necrotic or drops off (50% chance of each): (1) arm; (2) leg; (3) hand; (4) foot; (5) fingers and toes; (6) eye(s), ear(s), nose, or tongue.  |
| 9 | Develop: (1) oozing ear wax; (2) itching pox; (3) weeping mouth sores; (4) pustulant armpit boils; (5) bark-like skin warts; (6) an endless trickle of purulent, bloody tears.  |

- 10 Eyes become: (1) cat-like; (2) dark crimson, in the iris and/or sclera; (3) fused into one, like a cyclops; (4) divided into eight, like a spider; (5) absent, and character develops either echolocation like a bat or reptilian pit holes behind their ears with which they can sense infrared heat signatures; (6) supplemented by a parietal eye which forms in the forehead and is covered by skin, used for detecting light and color via a biochemical pathway.
- 11 Develop: (1) ram's horns; (2) a crow-like beak; (3) a wolf-like muzzle; (4) slitted nostrils, a lipless mouth, forked tongue, hinged jaw, and large posterior fangs for grasping and swallowing food; (5) a platypus-like soft beak with electro-reception capability (detect live vs. inanimate nature of objects or beings); (6) a leech-like sucker mouth OR a butterfly-like proboscis for a tongue.
- 12 Sprout a tail which is: (1) donkey-like; (2) cat-like (Advantage on balance checks); (3) opossum-like (use as extra prehensile limb); (4) like a whip or scourge, with barbs along its length; (5) like an ankylosaurus tail, with a large club-like protrusion at distal tip; (6) scorpion-like, with venomous stinger.
- 13 Grow wings like a: (1) hawk; (2) bat; (3) dragonfly; (4) flying fish; (5) hummingbird; (6) pterosaur.
- 14 Develop: (1) fish-like gills on your neck or torso; (2) ridged spines along posterior spinal vertebrae (precludes wearing torso armor); (3) long elephantine prehensile trunk-like nose; (4) porcupine-like quills on back and appendages (precludes wearing armor); (5) demonic tail with spiky growths and ridges along the length; (6) octopus-like suction cups on ends of appendages.
- 15 Develop: (1) antennae on head (scent capability and temperature sensing); (2) vibrissal whiskers on face (sense vibrations and proprioception); (3) insect-like compound eyes; (4) bioluminescent anglerfish antennae sprouting from forehead; (5) webbed appendages; (6) an ocular scale over eyes (you no longer blink).
- 16 Develop: (1) double the number of normal upper limbs typical for your species; (2) double the number of normal lower limbs typical for your species; (3) octopoid lower body from the waist down; (4) one limb which is noticeably shorter and more underdeveloped than the matching one(s); (5) loss of lower limbs and ameboid movement through formation of

- pseudopodia; (6) one limb which is noticeably larger and more overdeveloped than the matching one(s).
- 17 Develop: (1) constant noticeable sulfur-like smell; (2) oviparity (regardless of gender); (3) large, bulbous calcified protrusions underneath and emerging from skin across entire skeleton; (4) constant slime-layer exudate from skin; (5) ability to asexually reproduce (once in a lifetime); (6) turtle-like shell around torso.
- 18 Lose: (1) recognizable "head", the features of which now reside within the torso; (2) full bipedal locomotion, but gain terrestrial ape-like quadrupedal knuckle-walking (with fingers folded at the first joint), extended longer arms comparative to rear legs and a back angled at 45 degrees due to hip rotation; (3) internal bones and gain external insect-like exoskeleton; (4) ability to ingest food, but gain ability to photosynthesize after 1 hour in sunlight; (5) ability to ingest food as typical of your species, but instead gain ability to absorb nutrients through rapidly rooting temporarily to a spot, similar to a plant (requires 1 hour); (6) the base of a carbon-based lifeform, but gain the base of a silicon-based lifeform (and a rocky, crystalline exterior carapace).

### **Purging Shadow**

Ecclesiasts teach that Shadow Transformations only come upon the disobedient who flaunt the will of the pantheon. This is not true, and yet surely the members of the order must have some way to either purge themselves of Shadow or prevent themselves from falling into it in the first place, since they seem to use magic mostly without ill effects.

For those outside the order-- despite myriad rumors, folk remedies, and fairy tales about ways to recover those who have fallen or transformed-- there seems to be no relief. Healers cannot heal it, alchemists cannot cure it, and no cunning device of the artificers can ward it off. Shadow Transformations merely accumulate. For this reason, magic use is rare among the common folk of Diazorr. Even those who are born with the power use it only in the utmost extreme circumstances.

But as the light of dawn chases away even the darkest shadows

of night, many believe that a scion of the Gods of Light would be able to recover those who have fallen into the Shadow of the Chimeric Pantheon.

Feel free to make things easier or harder on your players to fit the mood of your campaign, but a good starting place is that expunging a Shadow Transformation should require spending Rebuke plus some additional magic. Some judges may also wish to have extraordinary successes purge a PC of Shadow Transformations, instead of accumulating (likely currently unusable) Rebuke, until the character has successfully tested to awaken the demigod within.

### **The Chimeric Pantheon**

**Felor**, *Mistress of Thaumaturgy* and *Font of Shadow*

**Appearance:** When in the mortal realm, Felor manifests as a great serpent, veiled in black and purple smoke. Those who penetrate this fog see that she has a woman's head with ram horns, along with two tentacles and two insectoid arms.

**Domains:** Darkness, Magic, Transformation.

**Commandment(s):** Approach the pantheon through thaumaturgy.

**Crenist**, *Battle's Rage* and *Axe of Castigation*

**Appearance:** A towering warrior carrying an executioner's axe. His elaborate armor does not hide his membranous wings and goat-like legs ending in cloven hooves.

**Domains:** Anger, War, Vengeance.

**Commandment(s):** Castigate the unbelievers.

**Jey**, *Prince of Avarice* and *The Demon Sire*

**Appearance:** Massively corpulent and massively strong, he carries a serrated kukri and his crimson eyes burn with insatiable hunger.

**Domains:** Appetite, Fertility, Wealth.

**Commandment(s):** Seek your own.

**Reff**, *Death's Right Hand* and *Watcher Without Pity*

**Appearance:** Diseased (or un-dead) humanoid figure of indeterminate sex. Carries a bone staff topped by a human

skull, the eyes of which glow with flickering purple flame.

**Domains:** Death, Judgement, Secrets.

**Commandment(s):** Confess every transgression you witness.

### **The Chimeric Order**

Members of the order serve the Chimeric Pantheon with a devotion that passes well beyond fanaticism. For rank-and-file ecclesiasts and devotees, use acolyte stats (p. 432, *DCC RPG rulebook*).

For those who possess some influence in the order (e.g., higher-level ecclesiasts), the stats for various members of the order are listed hereafter.

For the wretches transformed by Shadow into literal monsters, any number of mutated or bizarre NPC creatures may be appropriate. Suggestions include deep ones, colossal leeches, man-bats, owlbears, primeval slimes, Underdark slugs, sub-humans, troglodytes, trolls, vombis leeches, or any number of un-dead (see *DCC RPG rulebook*). Also, *Dungeon Denizens* published by Goodman Games is another terrific resource for strange and awful creatures!

#### **Belligerante**

**Belligerante:** Init +0; Atk as weapon +1 melee; Crit III/d6; AC 15 (chainmail); HD 1d8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL C.

**Description:** Rank and file soldiers in the armies of the order.

#### **Chevalier**

**Chevalier:** Init +1; Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8) or lance +3 melee (1d6); Crit III/d8; AC 19 (full plate & shield); HD 2d8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

**Description:** In their shining black and purple armor, chevaliers look a bit like horned beetles. These twisted imitations of true knights comprise the cavalry and officer corps of the order's armies (most of whom are belligerantes).

## Evocator

**Evocator:** Init +2; Atk ritual dagger +4 melee (1d4) or +4 missile fire (1d4) or spell; Crit I/d8; AC 12; HD 3d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP servitor, spellcasting (+6 spell check): Spells (1st) *chill touch, second sight, darkness, detect magic, invoke patron, patron bond (any one of chimeric pantheon)*, any 2; (2nd) *banish, binding, curse*, any 2; (3rd) *demon summoning, exorcise*, any 1; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +6; AL C.

*Manufacture magic:* All evocators can make magic items as if they had the appropriate spells (*make potion, sword magic*, etc.).

*Servitor:* All evocators have a servitor (p. 425, DCC RPG), which they have bound to service.

*Spellcasting:* The evocator's spells are cast as a cleric and never result in corruption or misfire (although they can result in disapproval).

**Description:** Evocators, often called witches, have gained power over umbral and infernal creatures. They hunt any whom the order has deemed a threat.

## Monitore

**Monitore:** Init -2; Atk as weapon -1 melee (1d4-1); Crit III/d4; AC 9; HD 1d4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP connected; SV Fort -1, Ref -2, Will -1; AL varies.

*Connected:* As an action, establish a mental link with another monitore within 1 mile. This allows the sharing of all sensory perceptions. This ability creates a vast network through which the Chimeric Order can quickly observe happenings within their domains. While sharing information, a monitore's eyes turn pitch black.

**Description:** Ordinary-looking people altered by thaumaturgy to become human scrying pools.

## Thaumaturge

**Thaumaturge:** Init +2; Atk ritual dagger +6 melee or spell; Crit I/d10; AC 13; HD 5d8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spellcasting (+9 spell check): Spells (1st) *invoke patron, patron bond (any one of chimeric pantheon)*, any 5; (2nd) any 5; (3rd) any 2; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6; AL C.

*Shadow puppeteer:* A thaumaturge may give simple commands to those who have fallen into Shadow. Target must make a DC 14 Willpower save. On a failure, their command is carried out

immediately by the target, as if under the effects of *charm person* at result 14. This ability to issue simple commands lasts until the target succeeds on their Willpower save (can attempt once per turn).

*Spellcasting*: The thaumaturge's spells are cast as a cleric and never result in corruption or misfire (although they can result in disapproval).

**Description**: Clad in sumptuous black and purple robes, these senior ecclesiasts have gained the uncanny ability to command those who have fallen into Shadow.

## **The Exalted**

Demi-god leaders of the Chimeric Order, the exalted are powerful thaumaturges who execute the pantheon's most vital commands.

### **Kraed Nadom, Ascendant Ecclesiast of Felor**

**Kraed Nadom**: Init +2; Atk *chimeric staff* +10 melee (as weapon+7); Crit IV/d16; AC 12; HD 10d8+20 (hp 85); MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d20 (spells); SP Rebuke (3), spellburn, cleric abilities, shadow puppeteer, spellcasting (+13 spell check): Spells (1st) any 9; (2nd) any 7; (3rd) any 6; (4th) any 4; (5th) any 2; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +9; AL N.

*Demigod of ruination*: When something of significance ends with permanence (e.g., destroyed, dies, plan is upended, etc.; judge's discretion) near Kraed Nadom, he recovers 1 Rebuke.

*Divine dominion*: Kraed Nadom's divine dominion is magic. This represents the area of governance over which Kraed's Rebuke can be applied.

*Shadow puppeteer*: Kraed Nadom may give simple commands to those who have fallen into Shadow. Target must make a DC 14 Willpower save. On a failure, his command is carried out immediately by the target, as if under the effects of *charm person* at result 14. This ability to issue simple commands lasts until the target succeeds on their Willpower save (can attempt once per turn).

*Spellburn*: Kraed Nadom may spellburn as a wizard when casting spells.

*Spellcasting*: Kraed Nadom's spells are cast as a cleric and never result in corruption or misfire (although they can result in

disapproval). He has access to spells from both the wizard and cleric spell lists.

**Description:** Only recently Ascended, this young-looking man remains first among the exalted and the pinnacle of the order's mortal hierarchy.

### **Chimeric Staff (+4 staff)**

Divine power from the Chimeric Pantheon is invested into this staff. The staff may alter its shape into any melee weapon imagined by a wielder who reveres the Chimeric Pantheon. INT 16; AL C; Banes: creatures opposed to the Chimeric Pantheon (shattering blow; on a critical hit, staff inflicts an additional 1d10 damage), extended critical threat range (18-20); Communication: speech and telepathy; Special Purpose: destroy creatures opposed to the Chimeric Pantheon; Special Powers: infravision 120', spellburn reservoir (each day, the wielder can burn up to 3 points of the staff's Intelligence on spellburn to affect their spellcasting as if they were spellburning their own abilities. The staff's lost ability scores heal in full each night), holy smite (allows the bearer to enact holy smites [as per turn un-holy, p. 97, *DCC RPG rulebook*] on a successful critical hit. Wielder makes a turn unholy attempt and enacts the holy smite damage if the check is within the damage range [see Table 4-4, p. 97, *core rulebook*]).

## **Gier-Te, Exalted Master of War**

**Gier-Te:** Init +3; Atk *Headlopper* +10+deed die melee or +12+deed die vs. Law melee (1d8+5+deed die or 1d8+7+deed die vs. Law) or mailed fist +5+deed die melee (1d5+5+deed die); Crit 17-20 V/2d20; AC 19 (*alchemical cuirass* & +1 *shield*); HD 10d12+40 (hp 95); MV 30'; Act 2d20+1d14; SP Rebuke (2), warrior abilities (loses initiative bonus), Mighty Deed of Arms, deed die (+d10+4), lay on hands (as cleric of equal level); SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +8; AL C.

*Demigod of warfare:* Whenever an action involving tactical genius, *extreme* violence, or cunning occurs near Gier-Te, he recovers 1 Rebuke.

*Divine dominion:* Gier-Te's divine dominion is vengeance. This represents the area of governance over which Gier-Te's demigod Rebuke can be applied.

**Description:** The only dominante among the exalted, the Master of War commands the order's armies. He is always accompanied by an honor guard of chevaliers and belligerante footsoldiers.

### **Headlopper (+5 longsword)**

INT 14; AL C; Banes: lawful creatures (summoning; when battling bane, sword can summon reinforcements, which are a creature type antithetical to the bane [per judge's discretion] of total HD equal to half of wielder; sword can summon 1/day with 50% chance of success for duration 1d4 turns), death dealer (when bane is struck, it must make a (DC = 1d20+10) Fort save or instantly die; Communication: speech and telepathy; Special Purpose: clear the world for the invasion of Chaos; Special Powers: infravision 120', *detect good* within 40', vampiric touch (when wielder inflicts 10+ damage in a single strike, they heal 1 hp), vorpal blade (on critical hit, wielder automatically decapitates enemy, causing instant death).

### **Alchemical Cuirass**

This magical section of Gier-Te's full plate armor creates an invisible shield around the wearer, protecting them from missile fire attacks (+2 AC). When hit by any critical physical attack, the invisible shield prevents critical effects on a successful Fortitude save (DC equal to the attack roll). The shield subsequently hardens granting +2 AC against melee attacks and +2 to saves versus magical effects for 1d3 rounds.

## **Maerri Dane, Exalted Mistress of Evocatores**

**Maerri Dane:** Init +4; Atk ritual dagger +5 melee (1d4+1), +6 ranged (1d4+1), or *staff of the summoner* +9 melee (1d4+9); Crit I/d14; AC 16 (*ring of armor* +5); HD 10d4+30; MV 30'; Act 2d20+1d14 (spell); SP Rebuke (3), servitor, spellcasting (+13 spell check): Spells (1st) *cantrip* (d16), *invoke patron*, *patron bond* (Reff), any 6; (2nd) *arcane affinity* (*demonologist/summoner*), *banish*, *binding*, *curse*, *monster summoning* (d24), any 2; (3rd) *demon summoning* (d24), *exorcise*, any 2; (4th) *Lokerimon's orderly assistant*, any 2; (5th) *Lokerimon's unerring hunter* (d24), any 2; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +9; AL C.

*Demigod of impetus:* Whenever something occurs near the demigod requiring monumental impetus, recover 1 Rebuke.

*Divine dominion:* Maerri Dane's divine dominion is judgement. This represents the area of governance over which Maerri's Rebuke can be applied.

### **Staff of the Summoner (+5 staff)**

INT 14; AL C; Banes: subterrane (ability score drain; staff inflicts normal damage *plus* drains 1d4 Stamina), silvestre (spotter; staff marks bane so it is more easily attacked; allies can fire into melee between wielder and bane at no penalty and no chance of hitting wielder, and allies attacking bane with missile fire within 100' of staff receive a +1 attack bonus), aberrante (beacon of fury; staff attempts to persuade everyone with whom it can communicate to attack the bane under any circumstances [ego check for wielder and potentially others]); Communication: speech and telepathy; Special Purpose: punish interlopers and those who interfere; Special Powers: obscure surroundings with 20' globe of darkness at will, armor-breaker (on any critical hit, the opponent's armor is destroyed, in addition to other effects), infravision 120', spellburn reservoir (each day, the wielder can burn up to 3 points of the staff's Intelligence on spellburn to affect their spellcasting as if they were spellburning their own abilities. The staff's lost ability scores heal in full each night), demon-binding (with any successful strike against a demon or other extraplanar creature, the target must make a DC 20 Will save or be bound to its current exact location for 1d4 turns. It cannot take any steps or teleport out unless this effect is magically dispelled), summon creature (staff is magically keyed to cyclopes p. 400, DCC RPG]. The wielder can summon such a creature 3/day).

*Manufacture magic:* Maerri Dane can make magic items as if she had the appropriate spells (*make potion, sword magic, etc.*).

*Servitor:* Maerri Dane has a servitor (p. 425, DCC RPG), which they have bound to service.

*Spellcasting:* Maerri Dane's spells are cast as a cleric and never result in corruption or misfire (although they can result in disapproval).

**Description:** Beneath her cherubic exterior beats the heart of a peerless and merciless hunter.

## Nalama Doan, Exalted Director of Monitores

**Nalama Doan:** Init +6; Atk *un-death dagger* +15 melee (1d4+5) or +15 missile fire (1d4+5); Crit II/d30+6; AC 16; HD 10d6+20; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP Rebuke (2), thief skills (as 10th-level thief Path of Assassin, add +3 to all skills); SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +6; AL C.

*Connected:* As an action, establish a mental link with any monitore on the same plane. This allows the sharing of all sensory perceptions. This ability creates a vast network through which the Chimeric Order can quickly observe happenings within their domains. While sharing information, Nalama Doan's eyes turn pitch black.

*Demigod of warfare:* Whenever an action involving tactical genius, *extreme* violence, or cunning occurs near Nalama Doan, she recovers 1 Rebuke.

*Divine dominion:* Nalama Doan's divine dominion is information. This represents the area of governance over which Nalama's demigod Rebuke can be applied.

### Un-Death Dagger (+5 dagger)

INT 18; AL C; Banes: lawful creatures (Neutralization; after a direct hit, dagger prevents bane from using one of its natural powers [as determined by judge] for one full day; if bane does not have any specific natural powers [e.g., if bane is "humans"], sword gives victim a cumulative -1 attack modifier for every direct hit [fades after 1 day]); thieves [Hardiness; when taking damage from the bane, wielder can make a (DC 1d20+10) Fort save, success means the attack inflicts only half damage], un-dead (Unerring throw; only against bane, dagger can be thrown with a 60' range, and always returns to the attacker's hand; when thrown, it uses attacker's normal missile fire attack roll but includes their Strength modifier to damage); Communication: speech and telepathy; Special Purpose: undermine authority; Special Powers: obscure surroundings with 20' globe of darkness at will, infravision 120', speak Thieves' Cant, detect secret doors within 1d6 x 10', vampiric touch (any time the wielder inflicts 10+ damage in a single strike, they heal 1 hp), un-dead touch (weapon scores critical hits as an un-dead creature [rolls U/d30]), regeneration (as long as they wield this weapon in their hand, wielder regenerates 1 damage each round), flight (wielder can fly at a speed of 30').

*Umbral mist:* While hidden, any effort to detect Nalama suffers a -2d penalty.

**Description:** The woman of a thousand faces, only her fellow exalted know what the order's spymaster really looks like. You may have met her already.

# BILL THE HALF-ORC SPENDS MONEY

By Brendan J. LaSalle  
Illustration by Matt Hildebrand



**July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Reno:**

Pecos Bill woke up and stared at the water-stained ceiling of his motel room, while his brain woke up and his left hand shifted under the sheets until it found the pommel of his magic dagger.

The huge half-orc scowled, remembering what day it was. The day before, he had finally received his Writ of Imperial Citizenship, effectively making him an American. He thought about the tiny private ceremony – a judge, his lawyer, a witness they had dragged from another courtroom, and a cop who just sat in the corner and read the paper. He was a little pissed off that none of the many crawlers he worked with over the years had attended, even though he told no one except his agent and threatened to break the agent's leg if word got out.

As of today, Bill was no longer in danger of being sent back to the Zura'ah'zurah, the network of underground cavern-cities of his birth.

He sat up, blinking. One thing felt different - he had lived in motels for more than a decade, surviving mostly on room service, gift basket fruit, and protein bars. Now the hotel room felt like a prison cell. He thought about trashing it to mark the occasion – he could smash the crappy tv, throw the furniture out into the parking lot, punch out the first flunky to complain about the noise, and then just peel off bills to bribe his way out of any consequences. It was a lovely thought, one that brought a half-smile to his face, but his instincts – honed over a decade of arena fights and navigating the tricky waters of American society as an imbedded outsider – said no, not now, not here.

Maybe soon, though.

Pecos Bill had come to America from the Zura'ah'zurah nearly ten years before, when he was still known by his orcish name: Thule. At age four, he was remanded by the Zura'ah'zurah credit authority for debts incurred by his recently-deceased father. The authorities sent him to a labor camp where he worked on tunnel expansions and copper mining until age sixteen. While enslaved there, he brawled with his Orcish peers two to three times a day, always singled out for his mixed heritage. As time passed, the number of his fights steadily decreased – he got meaner and smarter until eventually the reputation of his devastating mix of clever tactics, skillful mastery of improvised weaponry, and willingness to escalate the mildest of confrontations to bone-breaking violence convinced most to leave him alone, others to look to him as a leader.

At age sixteen, the debt authority commuted his sentence, selling his “criminal debt contract” to an American monster-broker, who brought him above-ground to fight in The Games as one orc in a lot of thousands, destined to die in a Division III event, until a trainer recognized his half-human heritage. That meant young Thule could fight as an actual crawler.

Ka-ching!

The broker sold Bill's contract to veteran Xcrawl agent Marty DeSilver for enough gold to finish his basement, with enough left over for a Jacuzzi patio. Young Thule didn't see so much as a bent penny of that windfall, naturally.

Determined to be too violent for the minor leagues, Bill was paired up by Marty with another group of first-time crawlers: the Dungeon Gangsters.

Thule picked a name for himself – Pecos Bill, the mythical cowboy that once roped a tornado. Orcs like a name with a bit of history, and Pecos Bill had a ring to it – if you yelled it loud enough it sounded like a threat.

During his first match, Bill nearly ripped the leg off a member of his old tribe he recognized in a dungeon; a referee fainted, and the fall accidentally activated his NonCom badge, teleporting the unconscious ref to the hospital. That headline dominated the sports news cycle for a full two days. One sports reporter called Bill “a cold-blooded slayer who takes special relish fighting his Orcish brethren”, and his rep grew from there.

The Gangsters won dungeon after lucrative dungeon during their rocky career and made a fortune in endorsements and personal appearances. Bill kept busy, not only shilling for his sponsors but also appearing in TV and magazine adverts, in Hollywood movie cameos, and narrating audio books. Kids loved the half-orc’s chesty baritone and careful ESL articulation, and he was in high demand as the voice of cartoon dragons and gruff-but-loveable sidekicks. Bill saved almost every copper he earned, and at this point he had a very large pile of copper.

Bill had blown some of his winnings, of course. On the road for ten months out of the year, he insisted on decent accommodations, comfortable travel, and designer outfits. Wearing a suit and a tie down to the hotel bar for his evening libation went so much smoother than wearing his

more comfortable clothes that it pissed him off every time.

Bill's largest expense wasn't exactly luxuries, though – the top of his expense report was always buying beer for strangers. Bill won on average three vacations a year during his eleven-year Xcrawl career, and he quickly discovered that the best way to relax and enjoy himself while traveling was to buy a round or two of drinks for the crowd at every bar, restaurant, and hotel he visited. Buy enough gawking idiots enough booze, and they stopped seeing a dangerous half-breed and started to see a person – not an equal, mind you, never an equal, but someone you could trust in the same room as themselves. The beer trick worked like a charm, but it still pissed Bill off that he had to make the gesture again and again and again.

In his darkest ruminations, Bill imagined that someday Empire Sports 1 would do a TV show about him, a biography or a career highlights special. The announcer would say *leading the league in bribing the world to treat him like an equal is the inhuman aberration known as Pecos Bill – too ashamed to use his Orcish name, Thule Aforovron, beloved across the globe as long as the booze kept coming.*

At times Bill hated the world and everything in it, himself most of all for playing its game.

Bill showered, dressed, threw on his armored jacket, then stashed his magic brass knuckles in the pocket of his armored jacket. He thought for a second and wound up grabbing his magical flail as well. He had a love-hate relationship with that flail, which caught with magical fire when you said the command phrase: "I'll be eatin' at Sub

Chieftain.” The cheesy catchphrase pissed him off every time, but there was no denying the terror factor when he spun the striking head so fast it looked like a halo of fire.

Bill walked outside by himself into the sunny desert morning. He had left the motel alone before but never during the day when local law forbade it. Once, he had climbed out through the bathroom window at six AM to meet up with his old teammates Sleeper and Captain Howdy on a run out into the wilds to convince a druid to fix a nasty corruption Sleeper had caught when she bungled a spell at the Madison Megacrawl. Poor Sleeper’s face had been on upside down for the entire three days it took the trio to find and beat the hell out of the bandits who were poisoning a local stream with the run-off from their meth lab. After the Druid made it right, Sleeper, with tears in her eyes finally running down the right way for the first time since that bungled hex, had vowed she owed Howdy and Bill a huge favor. Bill considered calling his marker in, asking for Sleeper’s help in negotiating the tricky world of Reno real estate.

The fact that he considered asking for help pissed him off. He threw the flail in the trunk of the SUV and jumped in. As he left the lot, he realized it was the first time he had ever driven it without a chaperone.

He headed downtown.

Bill walked into his favorite diner, took a booth near the window, and ordered a huge breakfast with coffee. The manager was shocked at first to see his celebrity regular by out by himself but quickly realized the significance. The effusive little man congratulated Bill on his first day

of imperial citizenship, comped his meal, then took a photo with him to add to their Wall of Fame. Bill grimaced rather than smiled for the photo, mostly because he knew that, deep down, he had wanted his pic up on the wall in this place for years.

After he ate, he left a huge tip (30 gp), nodded to the round of polite applause he received from the whole diner as he left, and headed out into the hot morning, mad that he couldn't just enjoy things, pissed off that he was pissed off.

Bill decided he needed a drink before he met the real estate agent.

Bill arrived at The Alcove, the bar connected to the local Adventurer's Guildhall, just before noon. There was only one other car in the parking lot: a black sports pickup with purple flame detail, diamond-cut chrome mag spinners, and purple neon side-runners. He knew the vehicle well; it belonged to his guild sister, Shock'N'Awe. Shock was an up-and-coming brawler, a sword-and-shield killer with a great gimmick – she would scream at an enemy and leak blood from the inside corners of her eyes, like dual lines of red tears. Wouldn't tell anybody how she did it. She got more close-ups than all the other Division III half-orcs put together and was already being called the best female from the Zura'ah'zurah in ten years. Sighing, Bill felt around inside his jacket to make sure he had his magical brass knuckles at quick reach.

The Alcove was a dark cool grotto of brass and mahogany wood paneling, smelling of beer, cigarette smoke, and stale popcorn. There were a half-dozen round tables, four times that many battered chairs, a bar with six stools, and

a chewed-up oversized dart board bristling with quarrels, knives, and throwing stars, all stuck out at odd angles. Mighty Mervin, a portly and balding retired specialist from the earliest days of The Games, was behind the bar restocking the beer cooler. He nodded at Bill and started mixing the warrior's usual without saying a word. Bill nodded back, trying to keep contempt out of his face. Bill thought retiring was for pansies if you hadn't lost a leg or an arm or something. Some DJ was going to have to kill him to make him quit Xcrawl. Or take a limb. Or two.

Mervin slid Bill's Singapore Sling over. The half-orc sipped it, thinking about dismemberment.

There was a TV mounted in the ceiling over the battered Vega\$\$ Winner\$\$ pinball machine in the corner. Empire Sports 2 was airing a segment on bare-handed fighters. The big half-orc smiled a bit to see a clip of Xian, a former teammate, kicking a medusa's ass after blindfolding herself with her ever-present green headband. He liked Xian – couldn't make sense of her strange mix of peaceful inner calm and spectacular capacity for violence, but he respected her. He sipped his drink, remembering the early days of the Gangsters.

Bill heard a flush then the quiet whir of a hand dryer. A moment later, Shock'N' Awe stepped out of the bathroom. She was wearing a flame-embossed red leather vest with matching cowboy boots and fingerless gloves. Her pinstriped blue jeans were torn in a few places, and Bill could see crisscrossed scars on her knees and thigh.

"So that's what I smelled." She cracked her knuckles with a snap like breaking pencils.

Bill rolled his eyes. "So, when did this turn into an elf bar?"

"Soon as you got here." The hefty half-orc hopped up on a stool just two down from Bill's - a little close for comfort. "Merv, pour me one of those humanish drinks that Billy here likes so much. On second thought, make it a stale beer with a hair in it, just like my last one."

"May as well serve that in a bowl on the floor," Bill called after Mervin.

Shock'N'Awe switched to the snarling consonants and bitten diphthongs of Orcish. "Get bled."

"You get bled." Bill switched to Orcish as well, and it cheered him to be speaking his native language for a change.

"Your mom can get bled!" Shouting now.

"Your unwashed goblin-sucking dad can get bled!" says Bill, now fully roaring in the quiet dark place. The Xcrawl veterans bared their teeth at one another.

"Come on, everyone, take'r easy," says Mervin, timidly approaching with a sudsy bottle of Reno Beast Genuine Draft held in both hands.

There is a word in Orcish that resists simple translation, a three-syllable threat that means both "*shut up*" and "*unwelcome outsider*." Bill and Shock shouted it at Mervin in unison. Startled, they glanced at one another then laughed uproariously. Bill tilted his head back, roaring with good humor. Marv put Shock's beer down and

walked away, shaking his head. "So, what's the world-famous recluse doing out?" asked Shock'n'awe. She took a noisy gulp of her Beast.

"Gonna go spend some gold, if you can't mind your own business."

"Oh yeah? I heard you give all your money to a one-legged stripper." Shock took another fistful of pretzels and shoved it in her mouth. The sideways look she gave Bill made it a competition, and the pair scarfed every last pretzel in less than three minutes, making ever more disturbing faces at one another as they chewed everything to a disgusting paste.

When they were out of pretzels, each chugged the remainders of their drinks. Bill resumed the conversation. "I just got my Writ of Citizenship. 'Til now I've mostly been sitting on my winnings in case I ever got deported back underground."

"What were you gonna do, bribe the Emperor to let you stay in Reno?"

"I'd sooner eat one of his dogs. No, if they ever sent me back underground, I was going to hire an army. It was my only chance of living long enough to make liars out of all my relatives. I get about a dozen death threat letters from them every match I win, and every one of those rat-eaters is dumb enough to actually try it."

Shock laughed and waved to Merv for fresh drinks and another bowl of pretzels, leaning past Bill as she pointed. Bill inhaled deeply - he could smell a dozen flavors of her,

skin and leather and steel and boozy breath. He liked it but stifled his feelings. Warriors who tried to make the Burning Bridge with other warriors pissed him off.

“So. So, how much money you got saved anyway?” She snatched her fresh beer from Merv and upended the glass over her gaping mouth to drink it in one go.

“Just shy of nine million.”

Shock coughed, hacked, spat, hiccupped, spat again, found a napkin, and then coughed into it for a while, trying to get a hold of herself. “How bleeding much?” she finally managed to get out.

After twenty minutes, two more drinks apiece, and one shouting contest that very nearly became a brawl, Shock’N’Awe invited herself along for the ride. Bill balked, but Shock wouldn’t be left behind.

“Come on, don’t be a dwarf about this. Spending money is a bitch if you have never done it before. I spend every gold piece I get on good times and expensive junk – I’m, like, an expert on financial debasement. Take me with you to watch your back, or the bastards will snatch your last penny. Just let me bleed the goblin real quick, and we’ll go.”

“Fine, whatever. But we’re taking my car. That purple thing you drive pisses me off.”

Snarling, Shock stomped into the bathroom and slammed the door behind her. Bill told Mervin to put the drinks on his tab. “Wait a sec ...” he said, and a bemused grin

revealed his savage teeth. "How much is on my tab, anyway?"

Merv blinked, caught quite off guard. Catching himself, he mumbled apologies while he fumbled under the bar, finally bringing out a three-ring binder stuffed to bursting with yellowing paper and sticky notes. He took a pair of thick-lensed glasses out of his breast pocket while he carefully flipped the pages. "Ur, says here you owe... including this from today... \*cough, cough\* sorry, m'allergies y'know... carry the seven, and... uh, looks like five hundred and eighty-nine gold." He smiled apologetically. "Heh heh. Sure has been some kinda long time, I'spose."

It filled Bill with pleasure to know that this cringing idiot was about to get his. He took a fat ball of bills out of his wallet and, stretching out the rubber band that kept it together, peeled off three thousand-gold notes. "Here - take this. Pay off my tab - pay off Shock'N'Awe's tab too. Oh, and Xian's too if she has one here. Keep the rest."

Merv brightened "Ah, hey there Bill, awfully nice of you. Are ya sure bout alladat?"

"Do I look like I'm not sure?" Bill failed pointedly at not looking terrifying. Merv thrust his hands in his apron like he could hide behind it. "Just make sure you buy something decent for that wife of yours, dog vomit." Bill threw the crinkled bills at him, suddenly in a good mood.

The sound of a running sink came from the women's room. Gill pointed at Merv "Don't you say a word about her tab, or I'll bleed you. Tell her I'm in the parking lot

smashing her neon." Bill stomped out, trying not to laugh out loud. *She is going to be so bleedin' pissed off*, he thought, imagining Merv telling Shock the news next time she came in and getting a broken nose for his trouble.

Shock came outside and found Bill looking out over the city. "So, you are going to finally spend some money. Where do we start?"

"A house."

"Rusty Cardineux, Reno Northwest Reality. It's so good to meet you!"

The real estate agent was waiting for them at a coffee shop. She was a middle-aged woman in a crisp purple-and-crimson business suit. She smiled and shook hands with the two massive half-orcs, comfortable and confident. Her easy manner took the crawlers by surprise, and for the most part they forgot to act mean.

"Do you know what my motto is? Next! That's what I say. I have a list of places that I think you might like - one that I think you'll absolutely love if you don't mind living next to a Junior High school, but I'm getting ahead of myself. If you see anything you don't like, if it isn't the house of your dreams - Next! We move on."

The orcs could respect that.

They looked at a dozen houses in a slow two-hour meander around Reno's fashionable neighborhoods. Something pissed Bill off at every place.

He didn't like the manicured lawns, the well-groomed kids in matching baseball outfits running around laughing, the oversized patch of gardenias in front of the house across the street. He made Rusty stop the car before she even got into a subdivision with a sign that read "A Swim and Tennis Community."

Shock eventually lost patience. "Aw, for the pit's sake, Bill! You're like an elf at a pretty leaf swap. Quit your trifling and pick one, you wishy-washy bee-yotch." It sounded like a death threat - could have been a death threat.

"I won't trade gold for trash! This is all so phony and dumb and... and *fancy!* I hate all of it."

"You don't like this one?" said Rusty, still not frustrated. "No problem. *GAAHCT!*" They had taught her to say "next" in Orcish, and she kept doing so with great relish. It never failed to crack the two burly humanoids up.

They stopped for coffee at a Caffeinous Rex (Bill left such a huge tip the barista openly wept) and talked about the houses they had seen. More accurately, Rusty spoke while Bill shook his head and looked at the TV.

"Let's start again," said Rusty, just the smallest bit frustrated. "Which of those properties did you hate the least?"

Bill killed his steaming white mocha in one single impressive gulp. He saw that both the real estate agent and his fellow crawler were waiting on his answer.

"Ah, rocks, I don't know. I guess I pretty much hated them

all the same.”

Both women sighed.

“I mean the buildings, the bathrooms, and the closets, and that one place with the fancy dwarvish fixtures were all fine. But...” He racked his brain to express his feelings with words while wishing he could just be himself and express them with a baseball bat and a can of gasoline.

“Corny! That’s the problem. It was all so stupid and corny. That one man in the sweater who was wiping that shiny blue pixie-mobile in his driveway down with that *sparklingly* white towel? The women walking those babies in strollers at that beige stucco near the stadium? That little girl who wanted a silver piece for a cup of that nasty lemonade... Blood! That place had a bleeding neighborhood association. *A neighborhood association!* I bet they got rules about parking on the bleeding lawn. Do you know how many prize cars I’ve won? I’ve won three cars, a motorbike, and a sixty-bleeding-foot-long RV bus, and I can’t sell even ONE of the damn things without pissing off a sponsor! Do I look like the kind of guy that’s going to take guff from some pud in a sweater from the neighborhood association with a sparklingly white bleeding towel who doesn’t want me to park my *own* bleeding cars on my *own* bleeding lawn while I buy his brat’s hose-water lemonade?” Bill realized he was both standing and shouting, and he sat down, gulping deep breaths to lower his blood pressure.

Rusty looked dismayed, then got a gleam in her eyes. “Gaahct - oh a great big gaahct! Come on, I know something downtown. It might even be perfect!” She

clapped her hands.

Twenty minutes later, they pulled up in front of 297 Fifth Street. The building itself was a duplex situated between a Chinese restaurant and a check cashing place. The trio looked in through an open gate.

The house had to be forty years old, and it sat in the center of a big parking lot surrounded by a privacy fence ringed with ancient three-row barbed wire. Three American fat-tailed touring bikes stood amid hundreds of bits of engines and hubcaps and the odd flame-emblazoned gas tank. Two men in leather biker jackets and blue jeans were sitting on the porch. Their hands and t-shirts were smudged with black engine grease. One of them stood and looked them over with the eyes of a predator.

"It's a *rental*," said Rusty with just the smallest hint of distaste. "You would live in the right side; there is a couple who live on the left. But at night you can see the lights from the casinos. That way - the strip is right there, under that bypass and about six blocks down. The right half would be yours, and you could move in right away; it's been empty for months. I believe the folks who would be your neighbors are into... motorcycles and things like that. You said you owned several cars? You would have room to park them all here. Maybe you and your neighbors could talk about engines, that sort of thing."

Bill scanned the debris strewn parking lot, the dumpster in the alley by the Chinese place covered in gang graffiti, the two outraged bikers - one of whom had picked up two baseball bats and was handing one to his friend. The place had a tall fence and small windows - that meant

defensible.

*Here, his instincts said. Now.*

"I'll take it. Yeah... I'll take it. But screw that duplex noise. I'm buying both sides right now, today."

"Ooh, well that's fantastic, but I'm sure the neighbors have a lease. We could see about some kind of lease-purchase, maybe, or ..."

"Yeah, turns out the neighbors are moving." Bill walked around to the back of his car, popped the trunk and hefted his magic flail, giving it a few warm-up swings. He smiled over the edge of the open hood at the two bikers who were now standing at the edge of the ramshackle porch, menace in their postures. Bill could see concealed fear in their eyes. "Moving today, matter of fact."

"Um, Bill? Mr. Pecos? As your real estate agent, I have to advise you that this kind of altercation could become a difficulty when we go to close on the property. I just want you to know that up front."

"Hey!" the taller biker shouted, waving his wooden bat at them. "This here's private property! Don't you even think about coming on up here, ya halfbreed freak!"

"I'll be eatin' at Sub-Chieftain!" roared Bill.

The next several hours were a blur.

Once he had reached an agreement with the former residents, and the ambulance left with the one hold-out,

Shock'N'Awe, Rusty, and Bill drove back to the real estate office to call the listing agent. The listing agent, who was also the property owner, nearly passed out when he heard that the famous Xcrawl star wanted to buy the run-down duplex for cash that very afternoon. Two hours later, the listing agent was back with a contract, two lawyers, and two witnesses. By five o'clock that evening, Bill was a homeowner (48,500 gp, plus 3,880 in agent's fees, 4,000 in bribes, and a 250 gp celebration dinner for everyone involved but the bikers who, until five hours earlier, had lived in unit B).

"A what?" said Bill.

"A party!" said Shock'N'Awe. "We have to throw a party!"

It was nearly nine o'clock, and the two half orcs, the real estate agent, and the closing lawyer were standing around in the parking lot outside of the steak house where they had had the celebration dinner. Shock'N'Awe had just returned from the bathroom and spoke at the top of her impressive lungs.

"It's early, we've hardly put a dent in your gold, and we have tons of stuff to celebrate! You just got your..." she hiccupped violently and gurgled up a bit of Champaign, which she spat in the bushes. "...American citizenship writ! You bought a house! You're still mother-stomping ugly but can't nothing be done about that. Rusty, are you in for a party?"

"Oh, don't I just wish!" The real estate agent pulled a card out of her inner pocket. She handed it to Shock. "I have a

seven AM meeting tomorrow with an extremely finicky unlanded Duke. But I really do hope you'll make it to our Saturnalia cookout. And don't forget to call me if you decide you want to sell. Bill, congratulations again. I think you are going to be very happy in your new home. Minerva watch over you."

She and the lawyer left, leaving the two half-orcs alone in the parking lot.

"Come on, I'll drop you off at your car." Bill pointed his remote key at his SUV - the lights flashed; the horn gave a beep.

"Ah you wus! You're going to drop me at my car? I'm serious about the party. Have you ever thrown a party before?"

Bill screwed his face up. "No."

"Well... are you scared of parties? Scared somebody will come by while your pansy ass is passed out drunk and paint your toenails pink? You don't have to lie to me."

"Get bled, you mangy goblin wad."

"Look - we can go right now up the Imperial Hotel. They have private--" she hiccupped again, and Bill stepped back least she spit something else up, but she didn't. "Crom, that's nasty - banquet rooms. We could rent one out, get booze and food sent up, call everybody up..."

"Who is everybody?"

“Everybody! Every half-orc in the games lives in Reno since they changed the law. I got every one of our in-town kinfolks numbers in my black book. Let’s see, we’ll invite Nero, McBrain, Backwash... uh... oh I’ll call Rockbone, Doodlebug...” Shock’N’Awe looked up at Bill’s face, took a second to focus her eyes on his. “You cheap dwarf bastard. You are going to beg off. God, you’re soft as yoghurt.”

“I just don’t see the point.”

“The point is you bleedin’ made it! The point is that our kind is born to nothing and don’t hardly never amount to nothing but grieving families and a pile of corpses. But you... you made it! It’s like...” *haaaack, sputter, hock, spit* “Sorry about that, this Champaign is making me phlegm up like a bastard... it’s like if you don’t do something to mark the occasion, you tell everyone else like you and me and all the other half orcs in this putrid city to go stick it! We got to make some *noise* about this. *You* got to make some noise about this! Do it for all of us like you who just want to make it, have something, amount to something. Pecos Bill *means* something to all of us halfies who kill and die for a livin’!”

She held his gaze for a ferocious moment, then had to spit up once more. After a few deep breaths, she said “Plus, if you don’t, you’re a cheap cave hermit. Why you gotta be a gold grubbin’ wallflower? What are you gonna do with money if you don’t spend some on your brethren – buy some pretty pink cupcakes for the orphan’s home or something?”

She stopped ranting long enough to glare at a group of

humans who were walking across the parking lot and staring. "What, you like this?" she roared at them. "Looking for some sweet lovin'? Come get a kiss!" The humans stumbled all over themselves getting back in their car and drove away.

Bill had to laugh, and then he heard himself say yes to the party. "But screw that hotel crap. We're going to have it at my new house."

Shock pumped her fists in the air and roared her victory roar.

Fifteen minutes later they were standing in the nearly empty duplex. The remaining biker was still in the yard, loading up a moving truck with the last of their engine parts. While Shock got on her spellphone and threatened, cajoled, and embarrassed every half-orc in Reno into promising they would make the party, Bill helped the man pack up the scattered remains of his bikes. He apologized again for kicking the snot out of the guy's friend and gave out a few more notes to pass on to the family (200 gp).

Shock hollered from the porch. "Okay, Bill, this thing is happening. If half of those dirt bags actually show up, we'll have enough brethren to staff the next Emperor's Cup. Doodlebug said he would stop by the liquor store and pick up two kegs of beer and some hard stuff. I told him you'd pay him back when he got here" (150 gp plus 10 gp for gas) "What are we gonna do about food?"

The Chinese place smelled good - even their dumpster smelled garlicky. Bill wandered over and went inside.

The half-orc inspected the interior of the Imperial Gold Fortune - mahogany paneling, black chairs with red vinyl cushions, and a massive aquarium with koi fish turning lazy circles. A hostess scurried up to Bill, trying hard not to look him in the eye.

“We are very sorry; we close in five minutes.”

Bill smiled. “You don’t want to do that. I just bought the place next door - I’m your new neighbor.” The young hostess blanched, eyes wide. “Anyway, I want you to cater something I have going on next door tonight.”

“Yeah, we’re closing in five minutes, so sorry.”

Bill’s instincts told him definitely not to smash the fish tank with the nearest chair, a tempting act that would unfailingly bring the cops to his new neighborhood for the second time on the first day he lived there. He scooped out a few bills, handed them over one at a time. “I need food for fifty (100 gp) - no, one hundred (200 gp). I want the works: noodles and dumplings and plates of all the fried stuff you got.”

“I am so sorry, you don’t understand, closing in—”

(+100 gp) “Also I’d like to use your ice machine for a few...  
”

“So sorry, mister, so very sorry.”

That’s all it took. Bill went red and his face screwed up into his dungeon camera scowl. “You know what, neighbor? That’s not what I want from you. That’s not what I dog-

bleeding-well need! What I need is 'Oh thank you, Pecos Bill! How generous of you to hand me all this bleeding gold, Pecos Bill! Here, have a drink while I go get the manager, PECOS BILL!"

Four minutes later, Bill stood in the restaurant's tiny office, rattling off what he wanted for the party.

"And I want plenty of drinks! Bring over a bunch of those drinks that come in half a pineapple."

The manager, smiling, dapper, eyes livid with greed, kept giving instructions to his hostess, who scribbled madly to keep up. "Get the drinks too, tell Donald to keep the bar open. Okay, no problem, very good, good deal. So, you are our new neighbor, no? Famous Xcrawler, no?"

Bill shrugged. "I kill stuff on TV for gold. Is that a problem?"

The man smiled. "No, no, yes, very famous. Ever think of being a partner in a restaurant? You know, this is just a small little restaurant, just my family, but with just very little work it could be best place in town. Could make lots of gold for an investor. And if you live right next door... well, we could put your name right on the sign! 'Pecos Bill Imperial Xcrawl Best Pan Asian Restaurant!'. Bring customers in, keep burglars out!

Bill's eyes widened. He pictured wandering next door for chow at all hours, eating whatever he wanted without paying, and never ever cooking again. He smiled hugely.

(Informal agreement for 20,000 gp, plus 1,000 for food and

beverages for the party, including a generous bribe for the staff to work all night).

When the half orc finally returned to his new duplex, he had an unofficial bill of sale for half of the newly renamed Pecos Bill's Imperial Fortune in his pocket, a massive plate of fried wantons, and a double Mai Tai in half a pineapple. A huge sports pickup, bed full of half-orcs dressed to party, was turning into the driveway. Bill thought he recognized one of them as a brawler for the Cleveland Goldaholics. One half-orc sitting on the passenger side window hurled a six pack to Shock, who caught it without taking her spellphone away from her ear.

*I'm throwing a party,* thought Bill. *I own a house and a half restaurant, and I'm throwing a party.*

An hour later, there were more than three hundred half-orcs in and around Bill's new place and the Chinese joint. Bill owned a massive surround system that he had won in Tucson the previous year, but it was in storage along with the rest of his swag, so Shock and a few others had cranked their car radios up. The entire party rocked out to the local Mexican station, commercials and all. Trash barrel fires burned merrily in the yard, and brawlers handed bottles around them and shouted, cursed, and laughed. By the time Geronimo Nick, Bill's halfling team mate, showed up in his mini town car, there had been a half dozen fist fights, a stuffing-egg-fu-young-in-the-mouth contest (declared "inconclusive" by the ad hock judges' panel), and another visit by two cops who were so obviously looking for a bribe that Bill just threw some bills over the fence without saying a word to them before turning his back and heading over to the newcomer's tiny car (200 gp).

“Nick!” he roared, opening the door for his friend. “Did Shock call you?”

The halfling got out, tiny bare arms showing his tattoos. He had a huge smile. “Actually, Shock called my boy Fist O. Rage - Fist called me. Congratulations on your citizenship, big guy.” He reached in the back of his car, drew out a fifth of bourbon with a handsome silver brushed label, red velvet ribbon tied around the neck. “Brought you a little something for the occasion,” he said, handing his teammate the bottle.

“Aw, Nick this is great! You didn’t have ta.” He started pulling the cap off.

“Happy to. Yeah, I picked that up at an auction a few years back, been saving it for a special occasion. Cost me almost three hundred...” he trailed off as Bill took a massive swig, bourbon running down his chin in thick rivulets, then handed it to the nearest random partygoer who did the same. The dismayed halfling took one deep breath, then laughed. “Anyway, congratulations. Show me around your new place?”

Inside were wall-to-wall half-orcs drinking and stuffing themselves with egg rolls and crab Rangoon. There were more Orcish speakers together in one place than Bill had ever seen above-ground - their combined chatter cheered him more than he could possibly articulate. Frustrated by the task of staying together through the throng, Bill finally picked the halfling up and set him on his shoulder so he could show him around. It was a maneuver they had done in dozens of dungeon encounters, and each was perfectly comfortable with it. Half-orcs laughed and knocked

knuckles with the elevated Geronimo.

They ended the tour on the left-side living room. Geronimo had to shout a bit to be heard as Bill set him down on the floor. "Well, it's a great house, no doubt - but a little weird, Bill. I mean, you have a house in two sections that don't connect. You are going to have to go out through the front door of one half to get into the other half."

Bill, now more than a bit tipsy, looked about, considering the logistics of his new home for the first time. "That *is* weird," he mumbled to himself.

It took almost ten minutes to organize a dozen drunk half-orcs into a battering ram team.

Shock and Bill were the anchors, holding the two rear corners of the ratty couch the bikers had left on the back porch. Four other half-orcs - Billy Backwash, Doctor Dogbody, Merv the RIPper, and some newbie with a diamond-studded gold grill that Bill didn't know - held the sofa by the rough hand holds Bill had hacked into the frame with his axe. The other six were in the room on the far side of the wall, holding back party traffic. The whole crew was tense, concentrating hard through a haze of alcohol and loud norteño.

Shock shouted in Orcish, "Kay, on one now. Get ready. Three. Two - wait for it, you worg stain - One!"

The whole crew charged but were stumbling down before they even hit the wall. The couch struck with an unsatisfying *wump* that made a dent in the drywall smaller

than a basketball. The crowd of onlookers jeered in derision.

Shock jumped to her feet, would not be defeated. "That sucked goblin so bad... okay, pick it up again, mates. And put your hearts in it! Where's your fire, you dog-bleeding crawlers?" Two tears of blood leaked from her eyes. Standing right next to her, Bill found the twin red trails intensely endearing.

"Get hot, you inhuman sons'a bitches!" Cries of rage went up from the battering ram team, cries that were picked up by the three dozen onlookers and everyone on the far side of the wall as Bill's squad hefted the battered old sofa into position.

"Get ready! On 'Go'! Go!"

The team smashed through the wall in an eruption of dry wall dust and splintered wood, continued across the now connecting room into the far wall, where it struck and made an arm-rest size hole. The entire house cheered - even Nick, who had been waiting on the far side of the breached wall snapping shots with his tiny camera, put it down and saluted the crew with a mug of beer as big as his head.

Bill staggered to his feet, looking down fondly at the prone and dust-encrusted battering ram crew, the ruined couch, and the huge, ragged hole that now connected his two living rooms. The newbie spit out a bloody tooth and laughed. They all laughed.

It was the best time Bill could ever remember having.

By dawn almost everyone had either left or passed out wherever they had finished drinking. Shock and Bill sat at the top of the stairs, sharing the last plate of sesame balls they had scored from the Chinese place before the manager had begged off and locked up. The house was a wreck of dusty dry wall debris, smashed pineapple halves, beer cans, and snoring half-orcs.

“Do you know what the funniest part is for me, Bill?” Shock’N’Awe pronounced her English in careful drunken articulation.

“What’s that?” said Bill.

Shock articulated very carefully, “You almost didn’t want to have the best party of the year! I had to talk you into it!”

Bill laughed quietly and nodded.

“Well, now you owe me, bleeder. You can throw me something for my next victory. Something with whiskey and blood and fire trucks. Heh! Okay, I’m gonna piss then get going home.” She stood up resolutely, controlling her sway as best she could.

“You’re too drunk to drive!”

“I live eight blocks from here. Gonna walk.”

“You pee more than anyone I ever met!” called Bill over his shoulder.

Shock turned around, considered Bill for a moment then jerked down the front of her jeans to display an amazing

spider's web of distended scars on her pelvis. "Only got half a bladder left. I got caught in that elf-bleedin' portcullis trap in San Diego last year - ripped me all up and healed bad before our that wussified messenger of ours got around to putting the glow to it. One beer and I feel like I'm gonna bust." She hiked her jeans back up then staggered off to the bathroom.

Bill sat looking down at his new house, as trashed and homey as you could possibly ask for. He thought about everything that had happened that day, looking for clues as to why he felt so good, so right about everything in the world. He got up to his feet, his body making a decision before his mind ever realized it.

*Go, his instincts said. Now.*

He stood outside the door to the bathroom. He heard a flush, then running water. A second later the door opened up, Shock surprised to see him. "Got to go?" she managed.

He swept her into his arms and kissed her hard enough to break a coffee mug. She froze up for a second, then two, then Shock wrapped Bill up tight in her massive arms. They kissed and butted heads, grabbed and jabbed, rubbed teeth and caressed. Tangled, they fell together to the floor in the bathroom, dragging down the towel rack off the wall and onto the floor with them.

Somewhere in the hot Reno night a police siren wailed off into the distance.

"How do you do it?" asked Bill.

Bill lay side by side with Shock'N'Awe in the square of dirty sunlight let in by the bathroom window. They had talked for nearly an hour without shouting, and it didn't seem strange at all.

"Do what?" asked Shock, half asleep.

"That thing with your eyes, the blood?"

Shock giggled. "Truth for truth - what's your orc name?"

"What does that ever matter?"

"I wanna know. I don't have an orc name; I kind of wish I did."

Bill considered this. "So, your real name is..."

"Shock'N'Awe. Shock. I was born here and called 'runt' or 'nothing' or that kind of crap growing up in the Menagerie. The trainer called me Shock'N'Awe the day after my first kill, and I kept it. It's my name, the only one I got."

"Thule."

Shock smiled a bit, nodding as if she had suspected it all along. "Good orc name. I'll call you Thule if you want me to."

"Don't really matter. Bill is my legal American name - for almost twenty-four hours now."

"How's it feel?"

Bill considered.

"It feels... regular. Normal. 'Kay, enough stalling. Out with it - how do you do the eye thing?"

Shock smiled slyly. "I don't know. It just happens. Has ever since I was a kid." She laughed as the frustrated Bill tried to hit her with his elbow. She got him in a choke hold; they grappled then kissed for a while.

"So, what now?" asked Shock.

Bill shrugged.

"Of course, you don't know. Well, I'll tell you what needs to happen," Shock said, sitting up and sifting through the mingled pile of their clothes and weapons. "You need to get out of here so I can pee. Then take me someplace that does all-you-can-eat and buy me breakfast. Then furniture shopping."

Bill snorted. "Is that what I have to do, spend more of my blood-earned gold on you?"

Shock looked down, smiling a mild smile. "It's what you have to do if you want me to help you wreck a bed tonight."

(50 gp for breakfast including unheard-of tip, 879 gp for furniture including delivery, 35 gp for clean-up crew, 18 gp on sheets and bed skirt, 10 gp for flowers)