

THRESHOLD

The Mystara Magazine

DUNGEONS



The thirty-third issue of Mystara's premier magazine focuses on that staple environment of dungeons!

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ISSUE #33

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THRESHOLD

THE MYSTARA MAGAZINE

OUR AIMS:

To provide a venue for community members to present material to promote the Vaults of Pandius and the material there to increase the exposure of existing and new articles to encourage authors to revisit and revitalise existing articles to motivate interest in Mystara in general.

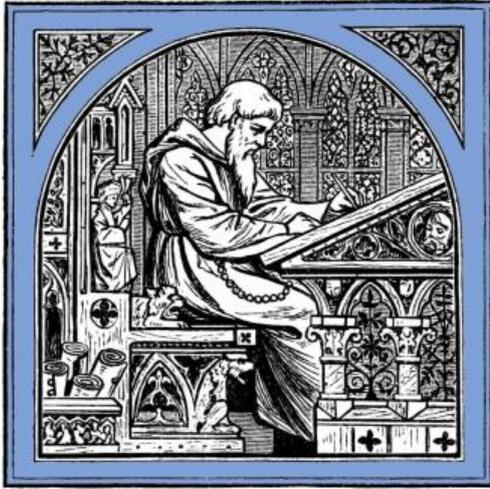
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All issues of THRESHOLD are available for FREE download from the Vaults of Pandius website.

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THE DUNGEON

The dungeon is obviously a fundamental part of the D&D game, and we celebrate it in this issue with some particular dungeon settings for the world of Mystara. This year, 2023, is also the 40th since the birth of our favorite D&D edition, the Basic, Expert, Companion, Master and Immortal boxed sets by Frank Mentzer which started their publication history back in 1983. Our editor and layout master Allan Palmer celebrates this important anniversary in the first article of the issue, **The Birth of BECMI**.

Then we start the articles dedicated to this issue's theme with a new contributor, Andreas, and his **Remembrance Day**, a very interesting holiday adventure which makes great use of the Blackmoor and 2300 BC material developed over the years by many Mystara fans. This article and almost all the others in the issue are also beautifully illustrated with some drawings by **Jeffrey Kosh** and **Senarch**, who indeed have provided so many great illustrations that we had to keep some for next issues.

The following article is mine and describes **Ancient Dungeons**, using as blueprint my megadungeon of Koskatep, which was published in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #1 to #15. Dungeons indeed are supposed to be lost and old locations and in the article I try to provide some guidelines on how to use the rich history of Mystara to make them more interesting. King Everast then leads us to the exploration of the **Islands of Death**, a second installment after the previous article in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #30. Islands indeed can be versatile dungeon settings as proven by their glorious history on Mystara starting from module X1: *"The Isle of Dread"*. The next

dungeon of the issue by Not A Decepticon; **Against the Wizards: Moving Mountain Menagerie of Morkhulan Minister** is quite original as well as it's set in a flying mountain over Sind and can be connected to another dungeon by the same author published in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #31, set under the sea.

The next three articles are not dungeons but certainly contain some interesting material to populate them with challenges: first **Terrors in the Mists: Monsters of Mystaran Ravenloft** by Doc Necrotic, continuing his crossover articles from issue #29, then our prolific Cab who returns with two more articles, **In Cold Blood – Reptilian Races of Mystara** and **Fists of the Five Elements – Revised Mystic Class**. Finally we have another Mystara Mapper's showcase by Thorf in **Mappers of Mystara: Eric Anondson**, and Irving Galvez who closes the issue with **Legends of the Known World Volume II**, with some more scary creatures to meet in the wilds or, obviously, in dungeons.

Soon we'll begin working on issue #34, dedicated to **Future and Alternate Mystaras**, a theme I am really looking forward to and which on The Piazza Mystara forum prompted many interesting conversations, so I hope it will give us several very interesting articles too. The other issue of 2024 will be dedicated to **Glantri and Magic**, so start thinking about it! Certainly Micky, Aoz, Robin and others already created a lot of material about it on The Piazza Mystara forum¹ so it could also be a popular theme for contributors.

¹ Check the ["Glantri and Beyond" thread](#) on The Piazza



To join the next issues as authors or illustrators please send your proposal to the *THRESHOLD* mail (check Submission guidelines and mail on the last page of the issue) or write in the Call for Contributors thread for issues #34 which will soon appear in The Piazza forum.

Even though we usually have no shortage of articles, we always need help for proofreading and editing the submissions. So anyone willing to help the *THRESHOLD* Editorial Team please come forward and let us know through the mail or in the Call

for Contributors for issue #34 thread at The Piazza Forums. Helping *THRESHOLD Magazine* certainly needs some time commitment but is creative and rewarding work.

The *THRESHOLD* Editorial Team and the authors hope you will enjoy reading this new issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together, and stay tuned for the next issue!

Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)
Editor, *THRESHOLD* Issue #31

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Andreas Michaelides feels he has finally aged enough to proudly wear the badge of grognard. He first ventured into the Dales in 1997 and was then claimed by the siren call of Ravenloft and Planescape. The further he became disgruntled with new editions, the further back in D&D's history he sought what it once had, that now felt irretrievably lost: the true wanderer's wonderment, the unlikely hero's journey, the place where story remained an unchallenged king. Much like the proverbial dwarves, he dug too deep and ended up in Blackmoor by way of Mystara. Both were old and weathered indeed, but far, far from forgotten, with a vibrant community still toiling away, not merely at the story, but at the world's very architecture. It felt like home. Long-standing companions were called upon, and a new campaign began in D&D's far past that was Blackmoor's future. Andreas is 40% of the newly minted 2.5 Trolls.

Cab Davidson is a mad inventor living in Cambridge, United Kingdom, and is very sorry for having accidentally dyed a whole cryogenic lab blue. This Christmas he is celebrating the 40th birthday of his Dungeons and Dragons basic set, with the players who have been in his campaign for over 20 of the 40 years it has been running.

Doctor Necrotic (Brian Rubinfeld) is a freelance and hobbyist writer. He has been a fan of Dungeons & Dragons since early youth. The earthiness of Mystara and its pulpy lore have long since been a draw for him as well. Within *Threshold*, his major projects have been *Returned Blackmoor* as well as a look into Ravenloft through *Mystaran* eyes.

Hervé Musseau, a former editor of the *Mystaran Almanac*, is now helping shape *THRESHOLD Magazine*.



Irving Galvez (a.k.a. Oleck): Mexican player since the early 80s, amateur Mystara writer since 1996. The time passes and when the days of fantasy have flown away with age and you reach the stage of responsibilities, work, family and everyday problems, you look back and take those dusty books of D&D, and escape a moment to your childhood. Keep on playing!!!

Jeffrey Kosh is the pen name of a writer and graphic artist specialized in book covers and movie posters. He collaborates with various publishing companies and authors. His covers range from dark horror to space opera, from thrillers to fantasy. Inspired by great fantasy artists, such as Clyde Caldwell, Larry Elmore, Keith Parkinson, and more, Kosh likes vibrant colors and heavy use of light and a dark contrast. His graphic tends to be moody and evocative. He also likes to work on 'era-specific' movie posters and book covers, trying to recreate the style used in those years, from the 1920s to the 1990s. As a writer he has been published various times.

(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykosh-graphics/home>)

King Everast hails from his dwarven kingdom of South Africa. A fanatical fan of everything dwarven, he is mainly based in Mystara viewing all that happens from beneath his mountain. His many other interests include reading every *Dragonlance* novel he can lay his hands on, playing all the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks existing, and thinking up new and devious ways to destroy the players of his next D&D adventure.

Not a Decepticon has been in love with RPGs since seeing an advert for D&D in a comic book at the age of six. But an opportunity to DM and play regularly only revealed itself recently, with the exception of a brief attempt in college. Now he combines a love for classic campaign settings and the latest edition of the game.

Sebastien Martineau (Senarch) started playing D&D again in early 2022, and dusted off his prized GAZ1, promptly falling in love with Mystara again. He combines Daz, Ai and digital painting in his artworks, and has started drawing again. Some of his work can be found here:

<https://www.deviantart.com/senarch/gallery>

and he can be contacted here:

senarchpublishing@gmail.com

Even though **Sturm (a.k.a. Francesco Deferrari)** loves any alternate world, he believes Mystara is incomparably the best for its vibrant community endlessly delving into ethnography, linguistics and history just to make a little sense of it. Something like the real world, but with dragons.

Thorfinn Tait hails from the Orkney Islands in northern Scotland, though he has lived in Japan for many years now. Growing up with BECM and the Known World, he learnt to type by compiling a database of Mystara's timeline. He joined the Mystara online community in 1997, but his true contributions began with the Atlas of Mystara project starting in 2005. Recently he has made the jump to become a published fantasy cartographer, working on Bruce Heard's Calidar series. You can



follow his work on his cartography site (www.thorfmads.com) and the Atlas site (mystara.thorfmads.com).

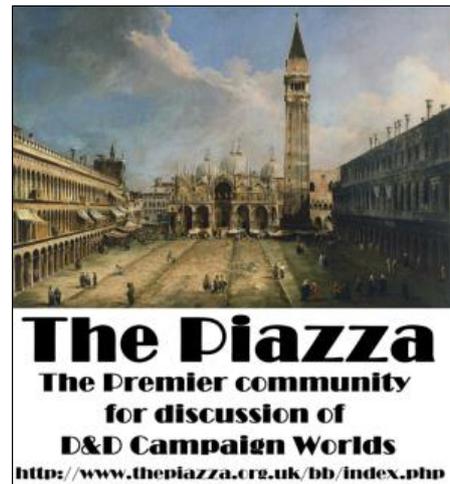
Allan Palmer (a.k.a. AllanP) was first introduced to D&D a long time ago (but not quite in a galaxy far away) by a work colleague who set up a gaming group using the last version of the “blue book” rules.

While dabbling with RuneQuest and Traveller along the way, he developed a liking for what would become the world of Mystara as the BECMI box sets were released. He has always been fascinated by maps. He is an IT professional and when not indulging in hobbies of panelology, retro tv watching and family history research, uses his various PC skills to consolidate the writings of others into

FROM the
MYSTARA
FORUMS at

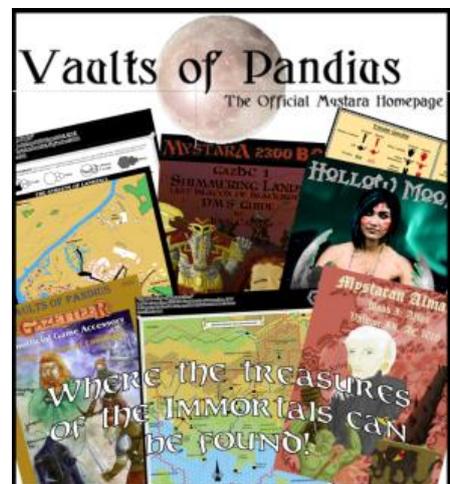


Some features in issues of *THRESHOLD* carry a “From the Mystara Forum at The Piazza” tagline. These Discussion Boards are an active and dynamic home of creativity for the Mystara community and many other game worlds. We hope you will enjoy the articles from The Piazza website: <https://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/index.php>



FROM
The Vaults
of Pandius

Some features in issues of *THRESHOLD* carry a “From the Vaults of Pandius” tagline. As one of our stated aims is “to promote the Vaults of Pandius and the material there”, we hope you will enjoy these revised or extended treasures from the Vaults of Pandius website: <http://pandius.com>



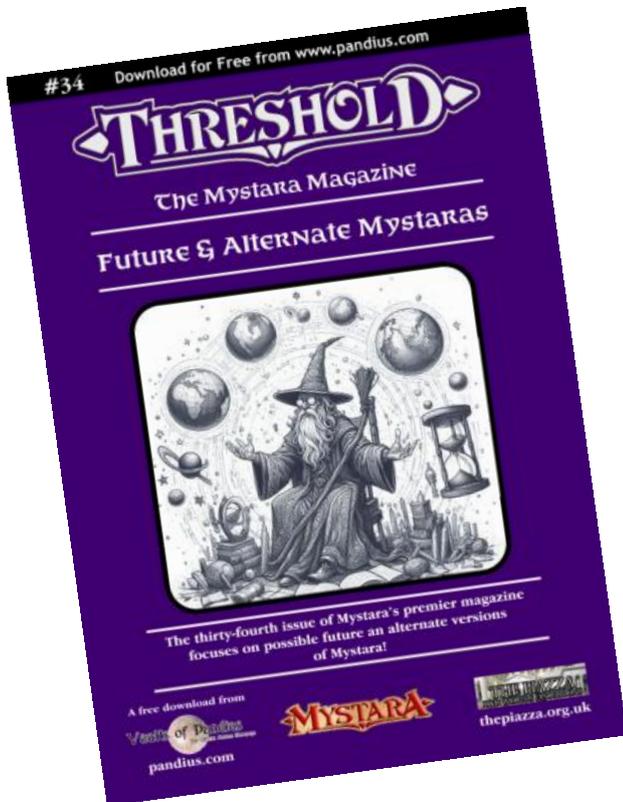
A **MYSTARA** GLOSSARY

The Editors present a list of common abbreviations that authors may use to refer to various Mystara-related game products and events:

- AC#** - Accessory series product (rules supplements, campaign sources, etc)
- BECMI** - Basic, Expert, Companion, Master, Immortals rules (by Frank Mezter, 1983-6)
- BX** - Basic/Expert rules (by Tom Moldvay/David Cook, 1981)
- B#, X#, CM#, M#, IM#** - Basic, Expert, Companion, Immortal level adventure modules
- CoM** - "Champions of Mystara" boxed set
- DA#** - Blackmoor setting adventure modules
- DDA#** - Challenger series adventure modules
- DMR#** - Challenger series rules supplements
- DMSK** - "Dungeon Master's Survival Kit"
- DotE** - "Dawn of the Emperors" campaign boxed set
- GAZ#** - Gazetteer series campaign sources
- GAZF#** - Fan-produced campaign sources
- GRoF** - the Great Rain of Fire, a cataclysmic event in Mystara's past that destroyed the ancient Blackmoor civilization
- G:KoM** - "Glantri: Kingdom of Magic" campaign boxed set
- HW** - the Hollow World campaign setting
- HWA#, HWO#** - Hollow World adventure modules
- HWR#** - Hollow World rules supplements
- JA** - "Joshuan's Almanac & Book of Facts" campaign source
- KW** - the Known World campaign setting
- K:KoA** - "Karamaikos: Kingdom of Adventure" campaign boxed set
- MA** - Mystaran Almanac (fan-produced)
- MCMA** - "Monstrous Compendium, Mystara Appendix" rules supplement
- PC#** - Creature Catalog campaign sources
- PWA** - "Poor Wizard's Almanac & Book of Facts" I, II & III (AC1010, AC1011 & AC1012)
- PSK** - "Player's Survival Kit" campaign source
- RC** - "Rules Cyclopedia"
- RS** - Red Steel campaign setting
- SC** - Savage Coast campaign setting
- TM#** - Trail Maps
- VotPA** - "Voyage of the Princess Ark"
- VoP or Vaults** - The Vaults of Pandius website
- WotI** - "Wrath of the Immortals" campaign boxed set

Readers may also find Dave Keyser's *"An Index to Mystara Products"* and Andrew Theisens's *"Mystara acronyms"* (both available at the Vaults of Pandius website) of assistance

NEXT ISSUE



Cover not final illustration

The first issue of 2024 will focus on different Mystaras, changed in the past or in the future.

Future and Alternate Mystaras

Anticipated contents include:

- Mystara Mirrors of Past and Future
- More Returned Blackmoor
- Against the Wizards part III
- Guns for Classic D&D

...and much much more!

Your Opinions?

The Editorial Team welcomes your feedback on this issue of THRESHOLD. Please post your comments either by posting in [The Piazza Forums](#)

Or by email to the Editorial address: Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com

Please begin the subject line with the tag "[LETTER]"

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The *THRESHOLD* editorial team invites all fans of the Mystara setting to submit contributions to the magazine's next issue. We are especially looking for contributions fitting the following themes:

Issue #34—Future & Alternate Mystaras

The first issue of 2024 will focus on other versions of your favorite campaign world!

Proposal Deadline: February 15th, 2024

Manuscript Deadline: May 1st, 2024

Issue Published: June 2024

Articles about other topics are still welcome and the editorial team will evaluate their publication for any upcoming issue, taking into account available space and the issue's theme.

Call for proposals for main themes of forthcoming issues:

Issue #35—Glantri and Magic

The second issue of 2024 will focus on the most magical nation of the Known World.

Proposal Deadline: August 15th, 2024

Manuscript Deadline: November 1st, 2024

Issue Published: December 2024

THRESHOLD accepts and invites submissions of extended or revised versions of works having appeared on The Piazza or Vaults of Pandius.

Contributions may include, but are not limited to: Articles: short stories, short adventure modules, NPCs, historical treatises and timelines, geographical entries, new monsters and monster ecologies, etc.; and Illustrations: portraits, maps, heraldry, illustrations, etc.

Please refer to our Submission Guidelines elsewhere in this issue.

The *THRESHOLD* editorial team strives for edition neutrality, but edition specific articles (e.g., conversions) are also accepted. Statistics for new monsters and NPCs may be included in articles (e.g., adventure modules, new monsters or NPCs) in any version of Dungeons & Dragons. The editorial team also offers help in providing conversions to some specific rules set, including BECM/RC, 2nd Edition, 3rd edition/Pathfinder. However, this material should be limited to a minimum. For most NPCs, it is sufficient to mention class, level, and alignment. For important NPCs, a one or two line stat block may be included.

THRESHOLD

The Mystara Magazine

PDF editions and print-ready files are available for free download from the Vaults of Pandius website:
<http://www.pandius.com/>



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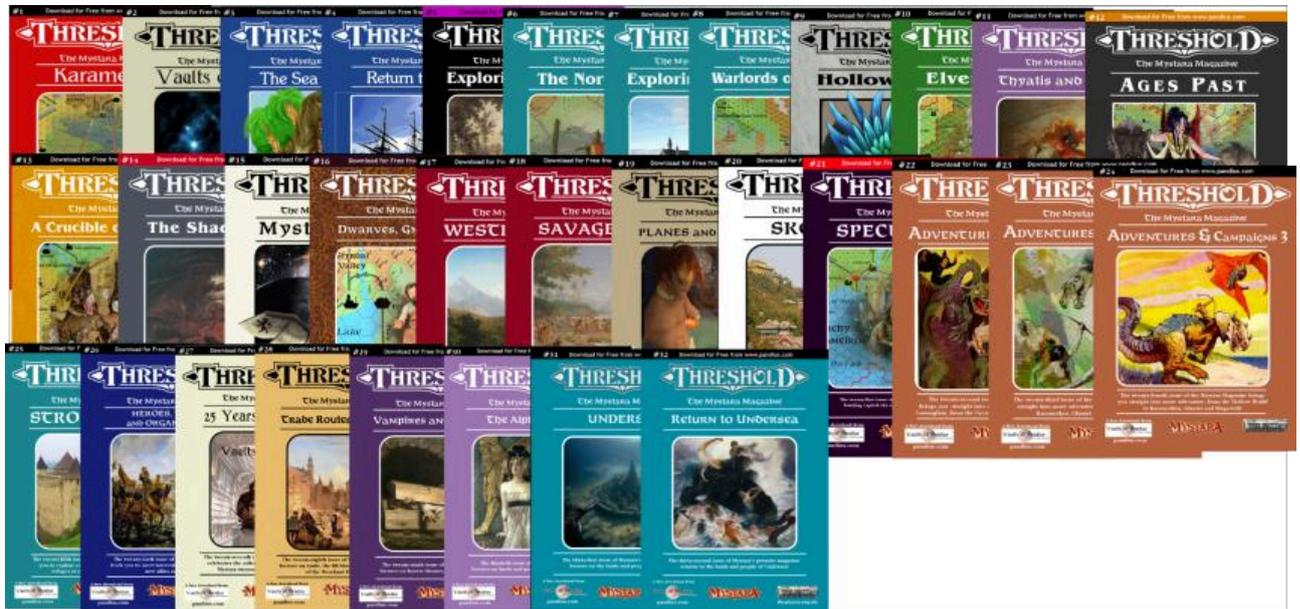
Over time, the *THRESHOLD Magazine* Editorial Team received enquiries about obtaining print versions of its issues. Following continued interest, in 2022 an initial trial using issue #28 created print-ready files of cover and interior page that could be submitted to a print-on-demand service (such as www.lulu.com) by individuals to produce a professionally printed version for their personal use. The trial garnered a positive response and work continued through 2022 to generate print-ready files for all previous issues (as well as incorporating the process in the production of new issues).

The print-ready files are an option provided in addition to the “normal” PDF document version of each issue. Individuals may freely download the two print-ready files (cover and interior) and submit them to a print service for professional printing at their own risk. Any associated financial transaction is between the individual and their chosen print service. Neither the *THRESHOLD Magazine* Editorial Team nor the Vaults of Pandius receive monies in respect of the provision of these print-ready files or from the printing of them.

The print-ready interior and cover files have been formatted to produce an A4-page sized paperback book; no other page size/format is available; the print service will offer users choices of colour quality, paper stock, cover finish, etc. The print-ready files have been successfully used at www.lulu.com to produce a printed book; the Editorial Team cannot guarantee the use of these files with other print services.

The print-ready version of *THRESHOLD Magazine* is provided for personal use only. *THRESHOLD Magazine* in either its PDF or print version cannot be sold in any online or physical store.

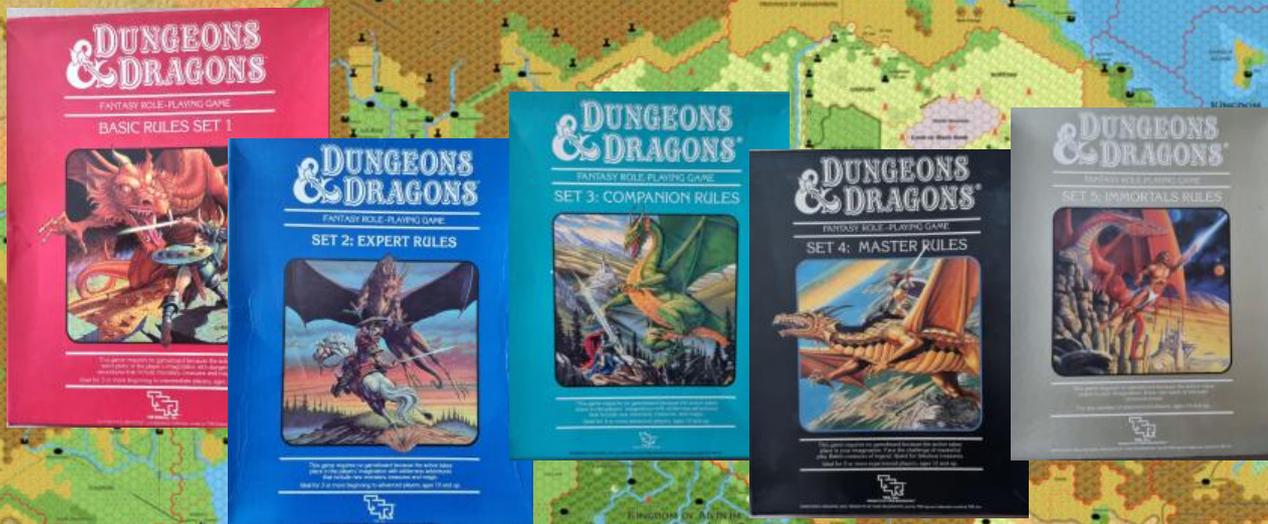
FREE DOWNLOADS OF PREVIOUS ISSUES



Previous issues of **THRESHOLD** - the Mystara Magazine, both in digital and print-ready format are available for download from the Vaults of Pandius website (www.pandius.com)

Also available at the same location are higher resolution versions of the maps that were included in the issue's PDF, allowing greater detail to be viewed.

- | | |
|--|---|
| #1 (Oct 2013) "Karamikos" | #21 (Oct 2018) "Specularum" |
| #2 (Jan 2014) "Vaults of Pandius" | #22 (Mar 2019) "Adventures & Campaigns" |
| #3 (Mar 2014) "The Sea of Dread" | #23 (Aug 2019) "Adventures & Campaigns 2" |
| #4 (Jun 2014) "Return to Dread" | #24 (Nov 2019) "Adventures & Campaigns 3" |
| #5 (Oct 2014) "Exploring Davania" | #25 (May 2020) "Strongholds" |
| #6 (Dec 2014) "The Northlands" | #26 (Dec 2020) "Heroes, Villains & Organizations" |
| #7 (Apr 2015) "Exploring Norwold" | #27 (Jul 2021) "25th Anniversary of the Vaults" |
| #8 (Jul 2015) "Warlords of Norwold" | #28 (Jan 2022) "Trade Routes and Darokin" |
| #9 (Sep 2015) "Hollow World" | #29 (Jul 2022) "Vampires and the Undead" |
| #10 (Jan 2016) "Elven Realms" | #30 (Dec 2022) "The Alpathian Sea" |
| #11 (Apr 2016) "Thyatis & Alphatia" | #31 (Jun 2023) "Undersea" |
| #12 (Jul 2016) "Ages Past" | #32 (Sep 2023) "Return to Undersea" |
| #13 (Oct 2016) "A Crucible of Creatures" | |
| #14 (Jan 2017) "The Shadowdeep" | |
| #15 (Apr 2017) "MystaraSpace" | |
| #16 (Jul 2017) "Dwarves, Gnomes & Hobbies" | |
| #17 (Oct 2017) "Western Brun" | |
| #18 (Jan 2018) "Savage Coast" | |
| #19 (May 2018) "Planes and Immortals" | |
| #20 (Jul 2018) "Skothar" | |



40 YEARS OF B E C M I

**Looking back at the beginnings
as we reach the 40th anniversary of
“Red Box” Basic D&D (and “Blue Box” Expert, and...)**

by Allan J Palmer

Back in the first issue of *THRESHOLD* in 2013, Håvard wrote a piece celebrating the 30th anniversary of the “Red Box” D&D set. More than thirty issues later and ten years on, it seems appropriate to look back after 40 years to the beginnings of the BECMI (Basic, Expert, Companion, Master, and Immortals) rules system.

I went searching to see how *DRAGON Magazine* covered the launch of the “Red Box” in 1983. It has to be said that coverage

of D&D by TSR was relatively minimal. Check the references to the D&D revised rules at the DragonDex website (<https://www.aeolia.net/dragondex/>) which provides a complete listing of the contents of DRAGON.

The first 1983 reference to the “new” Basic and Expert sets was the article “A new game with a familiar name” by Frank Mentzer in the September issue of *DRAGON* (#77). In the article Mentzer briefly describes the



UK “Red Box” set advertisement (1984)

Cowie writes a positive review extolling the improvements in the design and style of the revised package:

“At long last, the producers of a role-playing game have really thought about what it is like to be a new player, someone without the first idea of what an RPG is like or, still less, how to play one.”

“The major differences between the new Basic and previous editions are all in the explanatory material and they are all without exception improvements. The actual game system is hardly changed at all so if you did not like the old rules (as opposed to the way they were presented) you will not like these.”

The following year *DRAGON* issue #84 (April 1984) contains a review of both the Red and Blue Box sets by Kan Rolston.

Like the review in the issue of *IMAGINE*, Rolston is also impressed by the format and presentation used for Mentzer’s revision of the 1981 box sets:

“The new D&D® Basic and D&D Expert Rules Sets are first-class revisions, improved in every way over their predecessors. With a more modest ambition than C&S, the revised D&D game succeeds better in achieving its well-focused goals, with substantial improvements in game design and presentation. The new Basic Rules set contains a Player’s Manual, a Dungeon Master’s Rulebook, polyhedral dice, and a dice marker. The new Expert Rules set contains the Expert Rulebook, an Expert module (The Isle of Dread), dice, and a marker.”

“Improvements in the presentation of these new editions stand out immediately, particularly those in layout and illustration. Dramatic and skilfully executed artwork (a far cry from earlier illustrations) embellishes the material. And as soon as you begin reading, other improvements are evident.”



US “Red & Blue Box” reviews (1984)



US Companion Rules set Preview part 1 (1984)

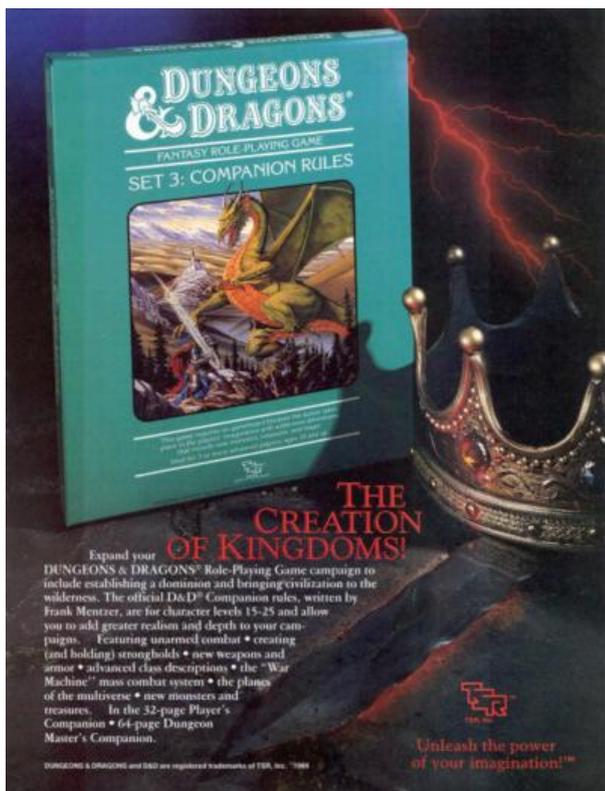
That April 1984 issue of *DRAGON* also contains another article by Frank Mentzer entitled “And then there were three” which contains a preview of Book 1 (“Players’ Companion”) of the D&D Companion Rules Set, noting that “Book 2 will be previewed separately in a later issue of this magazine.”

In the UK in 1984, *IMAGINE* Magazine continued to promote the Basic rules with a new full-page advertisement in at least two issues and a review by Chris Hunter of the revised Expert set in issue #16 (July 1984). This continues the promotion of the approach to the products’ content:

“All in all, then, the Revised Expert Set both looks and reads a lot better than the original, and if you own and regularly play Basic, sooner or later you’ll want this. So far, there have been three different Basic and two different Expert sets. Since both are currently in their best form, let’s hope there are no more revisions for a while.”



Expert Rules set review, UK advertisement and Companion Rules preview part 2 (1984)



The sole advertisement for the Companion Rules set (1984)

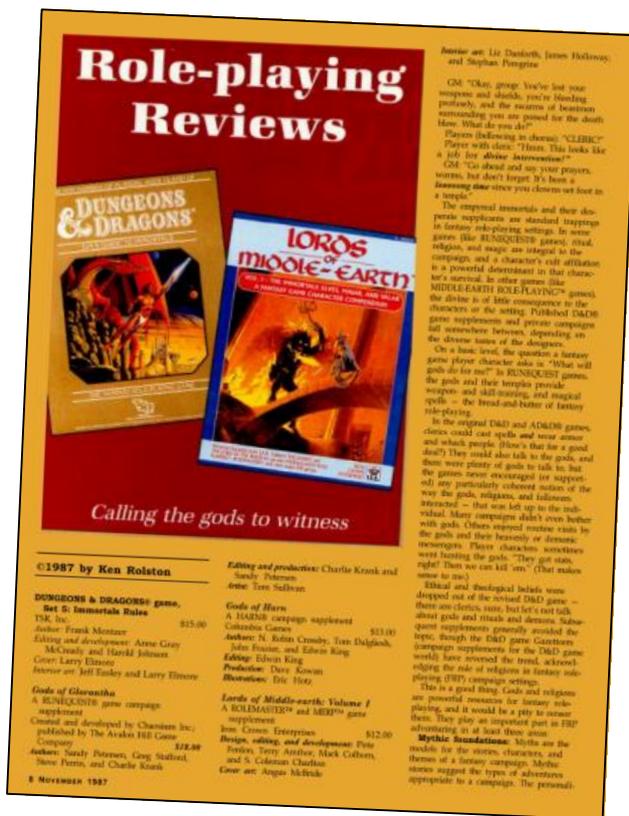
The following issue (#17) included the preview (Part 1) of the Companion Set by Frank Mentzer that had previously appeared in *DRAGON* #84. Part 2 of Mentzer's Companion Set preview, describing the content of the Dungeon Master's book, was published in *IMAGINE* #18. Surprisingly, I find no trace of that second instalment appearing in *DRAGON*. The Companion Rules set (which had a first printing date of April 1984) did get a full-page colour advertisement in *DRAGON* #90 (October 1984).

As promised in Mentzer's 1983 article, the Master Rules Set was published in 1985. However, there does not appear to have been any mention of this in *DRAGON*. And with *IMAGINE* Magazine being cancelled later in 1985, there was no opportunity to learn about the fourth box set there.

Just Imagine...

Amongst *IMAGINE*'s contributors during its short publication life was Neil Gaiman who wrote some film reviews and opened a couple of short stories. I'm sure you will be familiar with Gaiman's work on projects like *The Sandman*, *Good Omens*, etc. Can we imagine Neil Gaiman writing a Mystara adventure?

What was to become known as the BECMI rules system got its final core component with the publication of the Immortals box set in June 1986. A review by Ken Rolston of this product appeared late the following year in *DRAGON* #127's Role-playing Reviews column.



The Immortals Rules set gets a review (1987)

In his review, Rolston observes:

“Ethical and theological beliefs were dropped out of the revised D&D game. There are clerics, sure, but let’s not talk about gods and rituals and demons. Subsequent supplements generally avoided the topic, though the D&D game Gazetteers (campaign supplements for the D&D game world) have reversed the trend, acknowledging the role of religions in fantasy roleplaying (FRP) campaign settings.”

The Immortals rule system is praised for being “...clever, complex, abstract, and powerful. It is also pretty demanding intellectually, with lots of neat metaphysical thought-puzzles.”

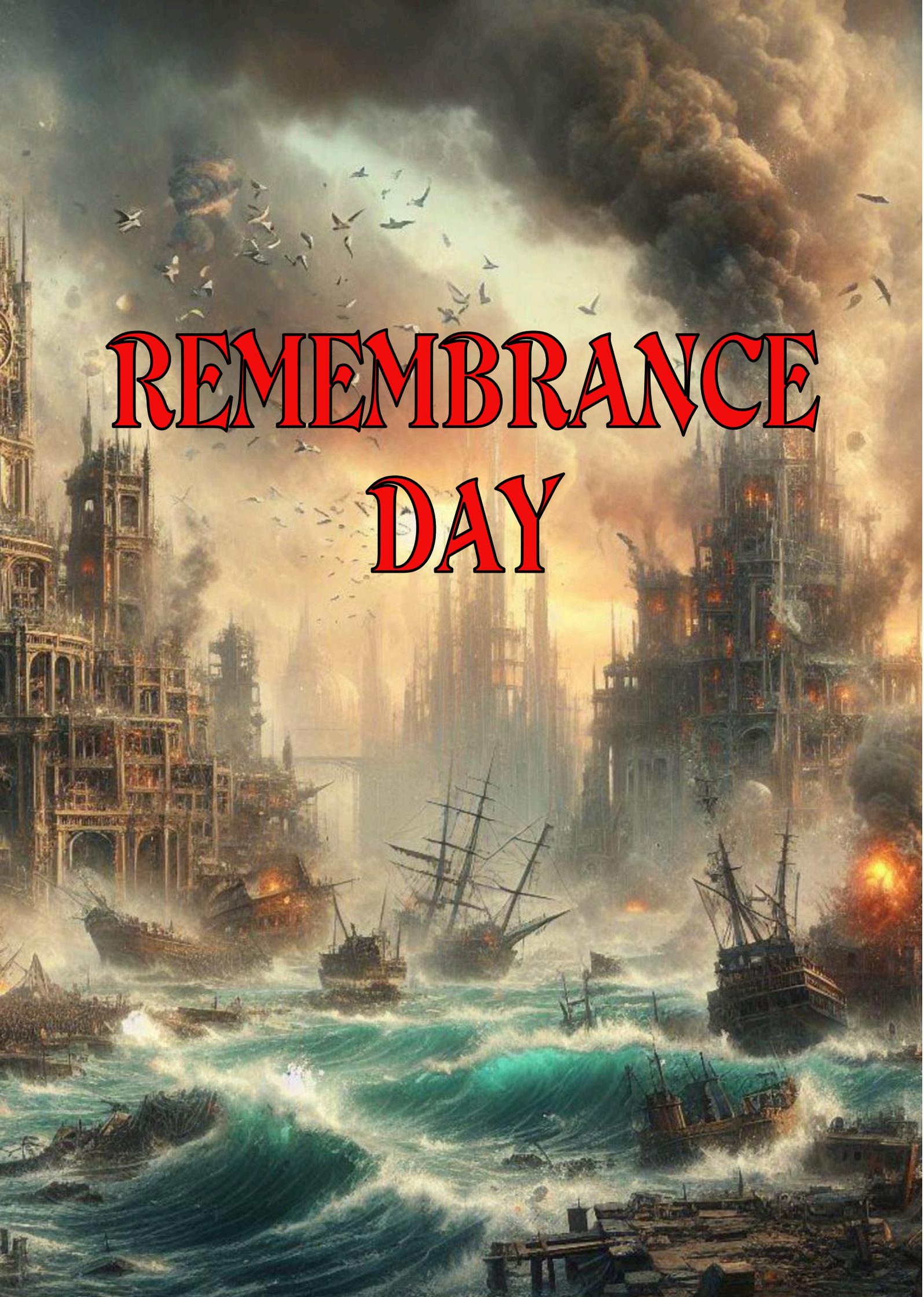
However, in summarising the product, Rolston finds himself split between admiration for the cleverness of the rules and questions on the actual usability of this extension within a campaign:

“The D&D Immortals Set is really useful only for a very small audience. Few folk want to play gods, and fewer want to DM them. The Immortals Set is of doubtful

value to campaigns at subdivine levels because it gives little guidance on the ways in which Immortals interact with mortals, particularly in terms of religions and the cleric class. On one hand, it is admirable for providing original concepts and mechanics worthy of Immortal PCs. On the other hand, it is disappointing in its failure to develop the already-established mechanics and traditions of gods and religions in fantasy campaigns.”

The reference to the Gazetteer supplements in Rolston’s review does reflect the significant impact of these Known World supplements to the BECMI system. Whatever quirks some of the Gazetteers might have had, with their debut in 1987 they added greatly to many players’ enjoyment. They were a popular adjunct to the BECMI system, even though they seemed to get little promotion in the pages of DRAGON. While TSR seems not to have shone a spotlight on BECMI during the early years of its inception, but 40 years after the first part of the consolidated ruleset was published, the system is endorsed and enjoyed by many as witnessed by the many associated discussion topics on the system and its setting in the Piazza Forums.



A dramatic, apocalyptic illustration of a city in flames and a sea of fire with ships. The scene is filled with intense orange and red light from fires and explosions. In the foreground, a turbulent sea of fire and smoke is filled with several large, dark sailing ships, some of which appear to be sinking or heavily damaged. The background shows a city with tall, ornate buildings, many of which are engulfed in flames and smoke. The sky is dark and filled with thick, billowing smoke and numerous birds flying in various directions. The overall atmosphere is one of chaos and destruction.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

A holiday adventure for three to five 3rd-level characters
and an introduction to the Underfolk Enclave,
set underneath Blackmoor, BC 2300

by Andreas Michaelides

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

[Read boxed text to the Players]:

Some seven hundred years ago, the Skyfire annihilated the surface world, destroying its civilizations and turning to ash any creature that walked, swam or flew in the so-called “Overland.” The stories faithfully told from one generation to the next claim that the disaster was caused by the elves, who committed hubris with their experiments on the nature of magic, while the remnants of your people were saved by the dwarves, who, guided by prophecy, led the survivors deep inside the earth—to the Enclave where you now live. Sometimes the narrative is reversed, assigning the role of destroyer to the dwarves and that of savior to the elves. When the question arises—rarely anymore—as to what the truth is, your Elders shake their heads woefully, then embark on yet another long-winded lamentation about the tragedy of lost knowledge... For there are none who still remember what dwarves or elves even looked like.

However, there is no disputing your survival to this day and so, since centuries passed and over the course of them, the Elders have maintained the tradition of Remembrance, a holiday week at the peak of the Cold Semi-cycle, when the Preservers regale you with the greatest tales of your people, the food stores fill communal tables, and mushroom wine flows in copious amounts. But the most important day is the one that gives the holiday its name: Remembrance Day, when your ancestors first set foot inside the Enclave, making it into a new home in the depths of the World Below by the sweat of their brows. On the day of celebration, all the creatures of the Enclave exchange gifts, but they also receive gifts from the artisans of Cinder Clacks, an ancient fire troll who is also a part of the Enclave’s community (in a manner of speaking).

Each year, however, a single person receives the greatest gift in the whole Enclave—something unique and precious, made by Cinder Clacks’ own hands and fiery magic. And this is where our tale begins...

(Previous page) Great Rain of Fire



THE UNDERFOLK ENCLAVE

The Enclave is an underground community of some 400 people with small fluctuations in population, consisting of beastmen, gnomes, goblins, goliaths, halflings, humans and lizardfolk. There are also a very small number of ogres, half-ogres and trolls. Collectively, the Enclave's people call themselves the Underfolk.

As the various beastmen have started to evolve into separate species, the Enclave's Preservers have begun categorizing them morphologically, which also gives you the option to treat them as other standard races, statistics-wise: arkoi (bear beastmen) can be treated as bugbears, cynocephali (canine beastmen) as kobolds, kaproi (boar beastmen) as orcs, simians (ape beastmen)

as hobgoblins, and striphokeroi (ram beastmen) as satyrs. Striphokeroi, however, are not fey; they are more heavysset, and their horns deal damage equal to $2d6 + \text{Strength}$ modifier.

Although stories of dwarves and elves abound, no one knows exactly what they were or what they looked like, but it is commonly accepted that the Great Gate (which is beyond the scope of this adventure), at the Enclave's westernmost cavern and sealed since the founding of the Enclave (according to the Preservers), leads into some ancient dwarven stronghold. To this day, the two races remain part of the tales and legends from before the Great Rain of Fire, which the Underfolk call "Skyfire."



The Enclave's community is divided into four Callings, each representing a need or facet of the Underfolk's particular way of life, headed by an Elder who holds a seat at the Enclave Council. The title of Elder does not require one to actually be old, merely an adult member of the community. The people of the Enclave pass briefly through all Callings in their youth, so they know what each entails when they are called upon to choose, during their coming of age. Each Calling has its own subtleties, but those are covered in the individual entries.

Growers: This Calling is further divided into two groups, the Boendr (Farmers) and the Møður (Mothers). The Farmers are responsible for growing edible mushrooms, lizard breeding, and fishing in Aurora Pool, providing for the vast majority of the Enclave's needs in food. The Mothers, true to their name, are women from the various races of the Enclave, who offer their bodies to perpetuate the community and raise its young members (as well as the rare foundling brought back into the Enclave from the Tunnels Beyond); most children remain as

members of the Growers until about the equivalent of 8-9 human years old, when they begin their probationary period in the other Callings. No woman may be forced to serve as a Mother (Móðir), except in times of critical population decline. In the 700 years of the Enclave's existence, this has happened only twice, and the decision must be made by majority vote in the Enclave's Moot, where all the Underfolk have a say, not just the Council of Elders.

The Elder of the Growers is Aldinn Móðir (Great Mother) Bylgja, in fact an elderly half-ogre, whose title is no mere honorary sobriquet: she has indeed birthed and raised dozens if not hundreds of the Enclave's members. She is wise, loud, sometimes coarse, and loves to make jokes. She is respected by all, or at the very least feared, owing to her terrifying battle prowess.

Preservers: By and large the most enviable Calling, it includes all the healers, the wise women and apothecaries (in both an archaic and pharmaceutical sense) who manage the Enclave's resources, see to the health of its members and study the artefacts of the World Before. They are also the keepers of knowledge and history handed down to the people of the Enclave by their ancestors, or discovered in the intervening centuries to this day. As there is no written language in the Enclave, and the few remaining records have been salvaged from the World Before, Preservers have excellent memories and are very skilled storytellers, in order to perpetuate their hard-won lore by sharing it with the next generations. That makes them particularly popular during the Week of Remembrance, when they take a rare break from their studies to compete against each other and shine as tellers of tales.

The Elder of the Preservers is Aini, a female goliath who took on the mantle recently from the previous Elder, an aging striphokeros beastman named Ludik Beet-Hoof (due to the deep red color of his hooves and the fur of his legs). Ludik ceded his position when he finally suffered a complete loss of his hearing. As is often the case with Enclave goliaths, who look like living statues, it is almost impossible to get two people to agree on Aini's age. Aini claims she is as old as the Enclave but not as old as its memories. It is not clear whether she is avoiding the question or if this is merely part of her race's strange outlook on existence. Enclave goliaths do not reproduce in the usual manner and are instead "born" by breaking away from their mother stone, fully formed like a humanoid in its prime. It is still unclear what brings about their formations and breakaway. Perhaps the Tenders' Lapidarii (see below)—and especially Olnir—have their own ways of gauging goliath age...

Seekers: Seekers are the foremost warriors of the Enclave, as well as those most experienced in expeditions "beyond the walls," so to speak. In earlier times they were among the most respected Callings, more respected even than the Preservers, as it fell to them to go on dangerous expeditions, seeking artefacts of the past, establishing contact with other creature enclaves and recovering other survivors of the Skyfire or their descendants, all in order to bolster the Enclave's population and knowledge.

After centuries of earthquakes, rock-falls and other shifts in the subterranean landscape, which have cut off many avenues of communication and exploration, the Seekers have been slowly turning into food gatherers or food gatherer escorts, merely helping to round out the Enclave's provi-

sions, with foodstuffs that the Boendr of the Growers cannot produce, through expeditions a few dozen miles away from Aurora Pool. Furthermore, the Seekers have unofficially become the "Last Chance Calling," where anyone too maladjusted or incompetent to do anything else ends up, in the hopes that military discipline will sort them out, or they meet their demise outside the Enclave. However, in the twelve days preceding Remembrance Day they regain a measure of their lost prestige, as they accompany the Wish-bearers to the abode of Cinder Clacks, usually returning with great stories (real or imagined) to tell over the Week of Remembrance.

The Elder of the Seekers is Ashmiller, a halfling descended from the Docrae of Booh and the most ill-suited to his title, as he is the youngest in the Council of Elders. He took up the mantle some ten years ago, when his grandmother—his last living relative and former Elder of the Seekers—was killed in the Seekers' last noteworthy expedition, when they returned with the so-called "Svartalf." That is what Ludik Beet-Hoof called it after consulting the few salvaged books from the World Before. The child, now ten years old (at least estimated so, as it was a baby when they found it), has dark, charcoal-gray skin, arms pitch-black up to its elbows, and fingers ending in sharp, hard nails. Its hair is white, but strangest of all are its eyes, the color of amber and peppered with tiny red spots, sporting no iris or pupil. Ashmiller has not stopped mourning his family and nurses a silent, controlled hatred for the Svartalf growing in the relative ease of the Mothers' care.

Ashmiller's face always sports two vertical stripes of ash, from forehead to cheekbone and passing through his eyes, as a sign of

perpetual mourning for his family. He is a halfling of few words, coarse and extremely capable, always putting his duty and the Enclave's well-being first. When not on duty, he drowns his sorrow in mushroom wine, drinking to the point of unconsciousness. In case of emergencies, he has asked the Preservers to concoct him an "Amethyst Powder," which he can inhale to forcefully come out of inebriation and become alert within moments. Using this powder, he can withstand incredible hardship for two days straight, not even requiring food or drink, although at the end of the second day he risks complete collapse.

Tenders: True to their name, those following this Calling tend to all the manufacturing needs of the Enclave, from tanning and sewing to stonemasonry and metalworking. They also largely tend to the cooking and supervision of communal meals in the Enclave, although this duty sometimes falls to the Preservers. Among the Tenders, those held in highest regard are the Stonecutters (Lapidarii), who mine gemstones and infuse them with useful magical qualities, chief among them the ability to radiate light.

The Elder of the Tenders is Lapidarius Olnir, a deep gnome of indeterminate age; sober, practical and effective. He is a very patient man, though not infinitely so and never at the expense of the Enclave. If an apprentice in the Calling does not exhibit the proper seriousness in their duties or does not demonstrate the required progress in their skill, Olnir summarily sends them to try their hand at a different Calling.

Myceleans: Being a Mycelean is not a Calling in the usual sense, but rather a prestigious duty usually assigned to adult Enclave members originating in any of the Callings, although some children have been



Myconid by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffrevkosh.wixsite.com/jeffrevkosh#art/photos/home>)

chosen as Myceleans before ending their probationary period and choosing their own Calling. Myceleans serve under, and are instructed by, the myconids of the colony dwelling in the Enclave and co-existing with its people. Though the myconids have mastered the various spoken languages of the Enclave (in fact, they knew the pure mother languages from the World Before, so their current, degraded form was nothing hard to master), their use of them is slow and ponderous, and they tend to go on tangents instead of staying on topic. Furthermore, despite the myconids' co-existence with the creatures of the Enclave, the fungal folk have not quite rid themselves of their wariness regarding what they call "the frantic creatures." Thus the Myceleans are

trained to act as intermediaries to facilitate communication.

Myceleans are instructed by the myconids in the various properties and cultivation of different fungi; they are responsible for harvesting dead myconid matter for use by the Enclave, as well as offering the Enclave's dead for the colony's nourishment or for use as spore servants, essentially maintaining the two populations' symbiotic relationship. Myceleans will also convey the Preservers' questions on various subjects to the myconids, as their fungal memory stretches back to the World Before.

Myceleans have no Elder per se, although the myconids choose someone to act as their Spore Speaker, also granted a seat at the Council of Elders. The current Spore Speaker is a large, elderly lizard man named Visshok. If the people of the Enclave knew the difference, Visshok more closely resembles a dinosaur or a saurian, specifically a Pachycephalosaurus, with a domed, bone-crowned head and bony knobs dotting his face, neck, and back. Visshok has long been one of the most successful Spore Speakers, as he himself is a ponderous creature, yet who up until recently could empathize with what the myconids call "franticness" of the non-fungal races. Lately, however, it seems Visshok is becoming more and more lost in the dream-like memories communicated through the myconid spores, and has started talking about the Carnifex, the Empire of the Lizard Kings¹, and having dreams about Ka the Preserver. He has even picked up a smattering of the Carnifex tongue. It feels like the elderly lizard man will soon need to be replaced, though the myconids are certainly in no hurry.

¹ John Calvin, *Mystara 2300 BC Campaign Setting*

The IMMORTALS AND Magic in the ENCLAVE

No Immortals are worshipped within the Enclave. In fact, Immortals are mostly unknown to the Enclave's people, except maybe to the Preservers, and that in a strictly academic sense, based on what little they have managed to glean from salvaged chronicles of the past. The only thing that resembles religion in the Enclave is a sort of totemic ancestor-worship, which is expressed in four archetypal figures, each embodying a Calling's virtues: the Artisan, the Scholar, the Hunter, and the Mother. As a result, there is no clerical magic in the Enclave, and only Myceleans count a small number of Druids of the Rot and Bloom (effectively Circle of Spores Druids) among them, thanks to the myconids' strange teachings. Furthermore, any other magic is almost non-existent within the Enclave, with the exception of some hard-earned knowledge by the Preservers' bards, whose stories and songs seem to unlock their strange powers. The gem infusion technique of the Lapidarii works similarly to the 1st and 2nd level abilities of the 5E Artificer class, Magical Tinkering and Infuse Item, without granting any other spellcasting abilities. Finally, sorcerers are merely an exceptionally rare, aberrant occurrence.

Location of the ENCLAVE AND the Passage of TIME

The Underfolk Enclave is located deep under the western part of the Stormkiller Mountains, near what was once the heart of the Blackmoor Empire. This is something the player characters cannot know, except through a few cryptic hints from the

myconids about “the old empire of men,” “the civilization before the Skyfire,” etc.

As the Great Rain of Fire shifted the whole planet so that Blackmoor and northern Skothar are now buried under a perpetual, arctic winter, one would expect the Enclave to be freezing cold. However, this is not the case, as the Enclave is being artificially warmed through an ancient Blackmoorian device that is still working by absorbing the ambient radiance on the surface. Again, this is something unknown to the Enclave’s inhabitants. As a result, the two arctic seasons on the surface have little (yet discernible) effect on the Enclave’s microclimate, so the year, known as “cycle,” is simply divided into a Warm and Cold Semi-cycle. Remembrance Day is celebrated roughly in the middle of the Cold Semi-cycle. It bears noting that, outside the Enclave, the temperature drop in the surrounding tunnel systems is noticeable.

A Note on Characters

As you might have inferred from the descriptions so far, this was conceived as a Christmas holiday adventure, “translated” into BC 2300 Mystaran lore. As a nod to that, in organized events I had all the pre-made player characters be gnomes, but you need not adhere to that. See the beginning of the **Underfolk Enclave** section for available races and how to approach beastmen characters.

As far as classes go, refer to the section about magic. Beyond that, the Enclave’s population leans towards Barbarians and Rangers for fighting classes, Rogues for scouts and jack-of-all-trades, and Bards for

lorekeepers. Clerics, Warlocks and Wizards (as well as any subclasses reliant on those classes’ spell lists, like Arcane Trickster, Eldritch Knight, etc.) are non-existent. The rare Sorcerer has origins in Draconic Bloodline, Shadow Magic or Wild Magic. As a rule of thumb, there is no systematic teaching of magic within the Enclave, so use that as your guide.

Instead of backgrounds, characters belong to one of the four Callings or the Myceleans. For information on the features granted by each Calling, refer to the adventure’s Appendix.

A Note on Editions

As you might have noticed, the descriptions above reference D&D 5th Edition classes and subclasses, and further on the mechanics and creature stat blocks also reference that edition. However, excepting the stat blocks, the reference to mechanics has been kept to a minimum and the scenes rely on descriptions, so it is easy to adapt the adventure to most previous editions. Even the monsters have been overwhelmingly adapted from previous editions, and their sources are listed at the end of the adventure.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

INTRODUCTION: TO CINDER'S HOME WE GO!

[Read to the Players]: There are no longer many who have seen Cinder Clacks with their own eyes, as he left the Enclave proper over half a century ago. However, the Remembrance celebrations and the gifts that the Enclave's inhabitants receive each cycle—and especially the unique one received by one lucky person, made by Cinder Clacks' own hands—are “proof” enough to silence even the rare, obstinate doubter.

Three weeks before Remembrance Day, lots are cast in order to select three to seven Wish-bearers and send them to Cinder Clacks' home, in order to convey to him what gift each person hopes for. Seeing as your society has no written language, it is important that the Wish-bearers have excellent memories, or that they take along one of the Preservers. That is not always possible, however. In any case, so far everyone agrees that Cinder Clacks always knows what each person wants, but is the one to decide what they will get. In some cases, it is what they truly need, even if they do not know it themselves.

The lots have been drawn and for this cycle, you were the ones selected!

The way to Cinder Clacks' home is known to the Seekers. It usually requires four to six days to get there and back, and under normal circumstances, the journey is not particularly treacherous. However, that bears the question why none have attempted to visit Cinder Clacks except at the appointed time...

[DM's Notes]: In rare cases where the group of Wish-bearers fails to be formed in the traditional way, this honored duty is assigned to the Seekers, and a group of Wish-bearers always includes *at least* one seasoned Seeker. In reality, as the players will discover, Cinder Clacks has a whole workshop of Tenders who reached his home with former Wish-bearer expeditions and chose to remain there. On Remembrance Day, the gifts mysteriously appear at the opening of a secret tunnel known only to Lapidarius Olnir and his First Apprentice. However, the passage has also been discovered by Ludik Beet-Hoof.

In truth, Cinder Clacks does not require the Wish-bearers to convey to him the desires of the people of the Enclave. Their thoughts are received by a psionist Karlheig dwarf², with whom the fire troll has formed a strange friendship. The reason for the deception requiring Wish-bearers with strong memories is part ritual and part necessity, as Cinder Clacks does not want to expose the people of the Enclave to the truths, wonders and horrors of the World Before, which might lead them to attempt a sojourn to the surface and their almost certain demise. That is also the reason why no Seeker who knows the way to his home will attempt to go or guide anyone there outside of the appointed time. The Karlheig dwarf has implanted in their minds a powerful suggestion and mental block that precludes it.

In fact, any non-Seeker who has taken part in a Wish-bearing expedition remembers nothing of the actual journey nor the location of Cinder Clacks' home, past their being guests of a nearby goblin tribe. Everything else is rearranged and/or false

² John Calvin, *GazBC 1 – Shimmering Lands DM's Guide*, pg. 13.

memories implanted by the Karlheig psionist. That is why the amazing stories the Seekers tell of these expeditions during the Week of Remembrance rarely align with each other. However, no one saw any reason to properly compare them and draw conclusions—except Ludik Beet-Hoof...

Day 1: This Tunnel Has Teeth

On the day of departure, almost the entirety of the Enclave has gathered on the shores of Aurora Pool or the rock outcropping surrounding it, to see the Wish-bearers (that is to say, you) off to Cinder's home in a festive manner, many shouting outlandish wishes to convey to him.

You board an ancient launch that connects the southwest to the northeast shore of the pool, using a system of pulleys. Essentially, all you have to do is tug on a rope, taking care not to get it tangled in the pulley, but in this case your vessel is also propelled forward by a group of Enclave lizardfolk swimming in the pool.

On the far side, your journey begins...

Following the Tenders' secret tunnel, Ludik Beet-Hoof ends up on a side passage from where he sees the player characters pass him by as they move along the main tunnel, sometime in the middle of the first day. If anyone states that they are constantly on alert, have them roll some Perception checks (DC 18, but do not tell them that). If they succeed in one of those checks, they feel that someone is watching them as they pass Beet-Hoof's side tunnel. Beyond that point, all of Beet-Hoof's Stealth checks and any checks relying on hearing are rolled

with disadvantage, as he is deaf. If the players attempt to locate him, he will do anything he can to avoid it at this stage and will keep following them. However, if he feels they are in *mortal* danger, he will rush in to assist them.

Ludik has long studied the inconsistencies in the Wish-bearers' tales, and somehow managed to lift the Karlheig psionist's mental block of his own expeditions to Cinder Clacks' home, before he became Elder of the Preservers. In fact, he remembered that he had once found a passage to the Overland, where he discovered Cinder Clacks encased in a strange crystal, freed him, and brought him back to the Enclave, almost a century ago. He remembered they had been friends, and wanted to ask him why he left the Enclave and attempted to erase their friendship from his mind. But more than anything, as he feels his life coming to an end, he wants to see the Outside one last time. For all his efforts, though, he has not managed to recall the way to Cinder's home, and so he decided to secretly follow the Wish-bearers.

For Ludik's stats refer to the adventure's Appendix.

Following an ostensibly familiar route, the Seekers among you soon realize that the recent, increasing frequency of earthquakes has not left Aurora Passage unscathed. All along the normally flat, unimpeded tunnel, you come across fresh cracks on its floor and walls, while the effects of rock-falls and landslides are readily evident. Under normal circumstances, this tunnel can fit seven of you abreast; in its current condition, four is a tight fit.

This tunnel has become difficult terrain. If they ask questions about the area, have them make a DC 12 Survival check to realize they don't see or hear any signs of the usual fauna, such as giant insects or the occasional wandering beastman or goblin. Towards the end of the first day, and provided they inspect the area around them, have them roll a DC 17 Survival check to notice very small concentrations of a strange, semi-transparent mucus. If they think to experiment on it, the mucus is fireproof and can also put out fires the size of a torch. If they succeed on a DC 20 Nature check, they know the mucus comes from a tunnelmouth dweller.

TUNNELMOUTH DWELLER

Huge monstrosity, neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 95 (10d12 + 30)

Speed 15 ft., swim 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +3

Damage Resistances fire

Senses tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Ambusher. The tunnelmouth has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.

Partial Fire Immunity. Frontal fire attacks against the tunnelmouth or when swallowed by it have no effect, as its mucus is fireproof and extinguishes all flames, both magical and mundane.

ACTIONS

Swallow Whole. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 15 ft., up to 4 targets (up to Huge size), 5 ft. apart side by side, 15 ft. deep. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 4) piercing damage. If the attack hits, each creature takes damage from the tunnelmouth's long teeth and must make a DC 19 Strength or Dexterity saving throw, or be swallowed. While swallowed, the creature is blinded, poisoned and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the tunnelmouth and it takes 7 (2d6) acid damage at the start of each of the tunnelmouth's turns.

Reaching the end of your first day of travel, you see that the tunnel, already shrinking as it is connected to a narrower tunnel system, now barely fits two people abreast due to the landslides. You just hope the damage isn't more extensive further on. It is time for you to rest before the next leg of your journey, where you hope to enjoy the hospitality of a nearby tribe of goblins.

Although the tunnel has indeed suffered some small damage, its apparent further shrinking is due to the fact that a tunnelmouth dweller has placed itself there with its jaws wide open, while standing completely still. Detecting the creature's presence requires a DC 16 Perception check. Coming within 15 ft. of the creature lowers DC to 14, while a DC 15 Survival check in the wider area will reveal greater concentrations of the same mucus. Regarding these rolls, remember that complete darkness

reigns in the tunnel, so without darkvision or some sort of light source, the characters will never see the attack coming. In any event, if more than one character comes within 15 ft. of the tunnelmouth dweller, it attacks immediately. It is slow and not particularly bright, so it simply waits until there are 2 or more potential victims near it.

The seemingly narrow tunnel starts dripping on you, and by the time you raise your head, you realize that two massive jaws are clamping down on you, their circumference lined with razor-sharp teeth the size of swords.

Read to those not attacked by the monster: You watch in horror as a huge, frog-like thing jumps forward from the tunnel and attempts to gobble up your companions in a single wet bite.

Day 2: Goblin Terror!

On the second day of travel, after the horror of the tunnelmouth dweller, you find yourselves more alert [roll some d12s and maybe consult a table to keep them on edge, but nothing actually happens]. However, it seems this time you have been favored by the Mother, and you come across no danger on your way. Halfway through the second day, the Seekers among you recognize you are approaching the territory of a small goblin tribe, the Monomatai. The name means “one-eyed ones,” and true enough, all the members of the tribe share the same deformity, having only one large, central eye in the middle of their faces. On the other hand, it is rumored that this deformity is sometimes accompanied by some sort of oracular ability.

The creature’s mucus is very useful as a fire-extinguishing agent (a vial can put out a bonfire almost instantly), as well as an alchemical component.

If Beet-Hoof needs to intervene to save the characters, he is then added to the party as an NPC. Though he will do all he can to help them in the face of mortal danger, he will *not* sacrifice himself for them. What he set out to do before he dies is more important.



These goblins have been mutated by the radiance left behind from the Great Rain of Fire. It is a very mild version of the Wasting, owed to their freshwater source that connects to the surface. Indeed, most members of the tribe have trivial oracular abilities, more akin to a mentalist's tricks, such as perceiving strong surface desires, receiving vague mental images, etc. In a few members of the tribe, this takes the form of the Alert Feat. Even fewer members, among which the tribe's venerable chief, develop true oracular abilities that can reach those of a 7th-level Diviner Wizard (but having access *exclusively* to spells of the School of Divination).

Your acute vision discerns the entrance to the cave of the Monomatai, where two obviously bored members of the tribe stand guard, their backs leaning against the tunnel wall.

Give the players the description of this first impression when the characters are at a distance equal to the longest darkvision range in the party. When they get closer, have them make a DC 15 Perception check. If they shout to announce their presence, this DC drops to 13. Again, remember that unless they have a source of light with them, these rolls are made at a disadvantage.

If the check is successful, read the following:

The guards are standing too still; unnaturally still even.

If they simply approach the guards without any other interaction and without becoming aware of their stillness, the moment they get close enough they suffer a surprise attack by two Skotharian chokers. The only way a character can avoid this surprise

attack is if they have a Passive Perception of at least 15, in which case the chokers roll Stealth against it.

If the PCs notice the guards' stillness or if they shout a greeting and see that they receive no answer they are likely to approach the corpses cautiously. In this case, the chokers wait for an opportune moment to attack, usually when the characters are examining the guards' corpses or are about to enter the goblins' cave.

If the PCs examine the guards' corpses, read the following:

The two guards are obviously dead, and judging from the lack of putrid smell, they must have died recently. With a DC 10 Intelligence check: it is obvious someone placed them this way so they might seem alive from a distance in the underground gloom. With a DC 13 Medicine check: They have a multitude of small, nearly round bite marks on their bodies where the flesh has been completely torn away and the tissue is still wet, but what killed them are their broken necks. DC Medicine check 15+: The fact that their bodies are not completely cold or in full rigor shows that they have died within the last six hours at most.

If the characters have ended up approaching the corpses guardedly, have them roll Perception checks opposed by the chokers' Stealth. Any who fail the check are subject to surprise attacks by the two chokers. Any who succeed in the checks roll normally for initiative.

CHOKER, SKOTHARIAN

Small aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d6 + 6)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 15 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Athletics +5, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Deep Speech

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Aberrant Quickness (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The choker can take an extra action on its turn.

Ambusher. The choker has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.

Boneless. The choker can move through and occupy a space as narrow as 4 inches wide without squeezing.

Spider Climb. The choker can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The choker makes two attacks.

Choking Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the Choker can't use this tentacle on another target. The choker has two tentacles. As long as the victim is grappled and the Choker constricts its neck, it takes 4 (1d8) points of bludgeoning damage at the beginning of each of its turns, cannot speak and cannot cast spells that require speech.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Two, horrid, seemingly boneless creatures, part worm and part malformed infant, ambush you, wrapping cold, snakelike limbs of stinking flesh around your throats, at the same time trying to slash you with wicked claws like flensing knives.

One choker attacks from the ceiling, while the other comes out of a crack in the tunnel wall, a few feet above the dead guards' heads, with a horrible, wet and simultaneously hollow rattling sound. Any characters who see that and are *not* surprised must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or retreat from the nightmarish sight (frightened for 1 minute, reroll at the end of each of their turns).

It must be noted here that the chokers have no interest in drawn out battles, merely in securing food. If they have not killed their fresh "prey" in 2d4 rounds, they simply try to make their escape and do not bother further with the PCs. Regarding Beet-Hoof's possible involvement, see the previous encounter.

Entering the Monomatai's cave, you are met with a silence that sends shivers up your spine. The signs of habitation are evident around you, in stark, terrible contrast with the lack of any sign of actual life, and the obvious remains of a hasty retreat. Fallen torches,

upturned carts and chores left unfinished, such as burnt food over open fires, show that whatever happened here was very, very recent. The truly horrible sight, however, are the goblins, frozen in their rigor mortis and posed like macabre dolls, in parody of whatever activity they were pursuing before they died.

Depending on the strength and/or skill of the party, there are another 2-4 Skotharian chokers inside the cave. There are at least four dead goblins per choker, posed in a similar way as the guards outside. Though the chokers are not particularly clever, they are cunning enough to place them this way as bait. Emphasize the nightmarish picture, describing how apparent everyday activities constitute a sort of tableau made of corpses (e.g. a goblin woman holding her baby as if to rock it asleep, but on closer inspection one of her eyes and part of her face have been eaten, while the baby is a skeleton freshly stripped of flesh; a goblin male leaning over a cooking cauldron with drops of his blood slowly falling on a nearly congealed mass at the bottom). The survivors of the goblin tribe have locked themselves inside their food storage building, a hollowed-out mineral pillar that extends from the cavern's floor to its ceiling. One or two of the remaining chokers are slithering across the cylindrical surface, looking for cracks through which to squeeze inside. The rest (if any), try to ambush the players at different locations of the Monomatai cavern, dropping down from the ceiling, emerging from one of the corpses or the cavern floor itself.

If the players kill or drive away the chokers, rescuing the rest of the tribe, they are welcomed as heroes and do indeed enjoy the Monomatai's hospitality, despite the goblins' grief. They replenish the party's supplies and offer them two bloodspears, magical artefacts of the World Before. If the players refuse, considering it is more important for the Monomatai to keep the weapons for their own defense, award an inspiration point to each. Furthermore, if they suggest the tribe move to the Enclave where it is safer for them (knowing that the way they came from is clear of threats for now), again award them an inspiration point. In this particular scene, it is possible to acquire both points.

Bloodspear

Originally known as hepatizons or biting spears, bloodspears count as magical weapons for the purpose of overcoming resistances or immunities. On a hit, the target must roll a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or suffer 2 points of bleeding damage, and thereafter at the beginning of each of their turns, unless they take the time to dress the wound with a DC 13 Medicine check, use a healing kit, or any healing magic.



Cinder Clacks' abode

Day 3: Bitter Friends

Halfway along a mercifully uneventful day, you feel the temperature starting to rise noticeably, a sign you are approaching Cinder Clacks' abode. The wariness instilled by your recent mishaps is cast away like a wet garment, as you hear the familiar voices of your brethren welcoming you in cheerful spirits.

Armed and armored in bright metal like heroes from the Preservers' tales, the guards take you down a spiral path carved out of the sides of a huge pit, with streams of lava emptying out into its bottom. Soon the heat becomes oppressive, which your brethren hasten to counteract with surprisingly cool beverages from their flasks. Among their numbers, you see all the Enclave's races represented, except for the lizard men who would be hard-pressed to remain in such a scorching environment. Still, you cannot fathom how the rest of them can bear this heat...

At the bottom of the well is a pool of lava with seven stepstones, leading to a small, rocky islet at the center. Both stepstones and islet are made of basalt, and a great table of molten stone seems to have been carved or molded out of the islet's rock. Standing at the fiery shore for a few moments, just as the heat starts to become agonizing, a large figure begins surfacing from the lava pool, revealing the mighty form of Cinder Clacks. Long-limbed and wide-chested, his skin is fiery red, his hair silvery white, and pieces of coal dangle from his belt and braids, rattling as he moves; hence the name.

He looks at you over his prodigious nose, and his tusks draw apart as his mouth forms a smile. Without a word, he takes pieces of coal from his belt, presses them between his mighty palms until they glow white hot, and then opens them to reveal identical brass rings, each adorned with a small red diamond, equal in number to the members of your expedition.

Then he extends his open palm with the rings toward you.

The rings grant immunity to natural extremes of heat and resistance to fire damage. Furthermore, they are instantly attuned to the first person to touch them (apart from their creator), and can never be stolen so long as their owners wear them and remain alive (short of cutting their finger off and even then, the potential thief must wait for the finger to rot naturally and the ring to fall off).

As soon as the characters wear the rings, the oppressive heat of the lava pit vanishes, pleasantries are exchanged, and then the party is invited to cross over to the islet.

You stand on one side of the basalt table, with Cinder Clacks standing across from you, and a series of ritual questions follow, to which the answers are fairly obvious:

“Have you journeyed here from the Underfolk Enclave?”

“We have.”

“Were you chosen in accordance with custom and ritual?”

“We were.”

“Bear you the wishes of your brethren within your minds?”

“We do.”

“Well met then and well come to my abode. Bring your brethren’s wishes to the fore of your thoughts, that they may be plucked from the ether and made solid in the material world.”

This is a rehearsed ritual and short of the PCs wanting to botch it and anger Cinder Clacks with their selfishness, it is almost impossible to go wrong.

At the fire troll’s final utterance, he makes a gesture, and from a ledge a couple of levels up the pit, a cowed, stout form approaches, its garments hiding its features completely. The figure comes to stand across you next to Cinder Clacks, placing its hands on the table, and compelling you to do the same. A web of fiery rivulets appears across the table’s surface, connecting your fingers with each other’s, as well as the figure’s, and then you feel your brethren’s wishes flow from your mind outward. It is somewhat uncomfortable, yet painless.

The Karlheig psionist essentially removes the list of wishes from their minds, at the same time making the “mental arrangements” that will alter their memories once they reach the Monomatai’s cave on the journey back. If any player inquires about the process, a DC 20 Arcana check will reveal that they feel their thoughts sort of being rearranged, and if a druid makes the roll successfully, they will find the feeling similar to, yet markedly different, more forceful than the dream sequences shared by the myconids.

In any event, they can ask whatever questions they want and will get more or less truthful answers, including what the figure is, who will go so far as to lower back his cowl, revealing the face of an extremely aged, scarred dwarf, with sparse tufts of yellowish hair and beard, pitch-black eyes, and a glowing third eye in the middle of his forehead. Cinder Clacks will introduce him as Ogmedd of Clan Karlheig and will explain to them that after they have feasted they will be given a choice whether to return to the Enclave or remain with Cinder Clacks as so many have before them. At least one must return and any who choose to do so will have their memories altered to keep

the Enclave safe from its own curiosity. Depending on how many will remain, the rest will either “remember” that they died on the journey or remained with Cinder Clacks to help him prepare the gifts.

The fire troll will further explain that the dangers of the World Before still lie in wait at the surface, and the Enclave risks disruption and annihilation should it be faced with them. Ogmedd’s scars and deformities serve as an example to drive the point home.

There is no way for the PCs to forcefully avoid this. The combined might and powers of Cinder Clacks, Ogmedd, and the rest of the artisans make it impossible. Good role-play and good Persuasion rolls might result in their being allowed to retain a bit more of what they have learned, perhaps even a strange artefact to be taken back to the Preservers for study.

At this point, they are interrupted by Ludik Beet-Hoof.

As you are about to conclude your negotiations with Cinder Clacks and move on to the feast, a commotion turns your attention back to the spiral path from whence you descended. A bleating voice, drawing its vowels, echoes inside the lava pit:

“Do not hasten to make any deals with this sycophant. He will tell you what you want to hear and then send you back, none the wiser, to desperately grasp in dreams at truths you know you earned, and yet remain ever elusive...!”

It is Beet-Hoof, being equally cheerfully if a bit confusedly led to the bottom of the pit by the guards. Cinder Clacks scowls at the sight of him, while Ogmedd raises his

sparse eyebrows, giving him a surprised, yet appreciative look.

“Stubborn, selfish old goat!” calls Cinder Clacks, his fatherly demeanor and ritualistic decorum evaporating.

“Hello, old friend,” calls Beet-Hoof in a more amicable tone. “Now, at the end of my life, having made my way to your abode once more, in spite of your machinations, can you really deny my request for Remembrance Day?”

Cinder Clacks snorts searing, metallic steam, never taking his eyes from Beet-Hoof. “I could, as nothing compels me.” A long pause, and then, “But I will not. Much as it grieves and aggravates me, you have earned your gift from me.”

He turns to you. “Wish-bearers, what did Ludik Beet-Hoof, former Elder of the Preservers wish for as a gift for Remembrance Day?”

Unbidden, the strange, incomprehensible request rises to the forefront of your minds and you all intone it, word-perfect: “Dear Cinder Clacks, this cycle, on Remembrance Day, I would like you to bring me a green robot from your prison.”

“You know, of course, or rather you have somehow remembered that I cannot bring such a thing to you on Remembrance Day, or any other day. That is beyond even my power. What is within my power, is to remind you of the way, and ask the Wish-bearers to risk life and limb in order to accompany you.”

“But they do not need to—”

“Silence,” says the fire troll with finality. “Rules are not mere rituals and they need to be observed for reasons beyond your ken.” He turns to you once more. “You have borne his strange wish to me. Will you now aid me in granting it?”

The PCs can refuse with no consequence. They will join the feast in their honor and those who choose to return will be sent back on their merry way, the memories altered as described before. Those who remain will be welcomed into the lava pit’s community, eventually learning many lost truths and skills. However, none will ever learn the truth about Ludik Beet-Hoof’s request or his relationship to Cinder Clacks.

If they agree to accompany him, both the party and Ludik join the feast, and the tale is regaled how the once young beastman journeyed far beyond any of his brethren, finding a way to the Outside, and Cinder Clacks encased in a strange crystal from where he freed him. That happened almost a century ago, and though none seem to remember it, around the time when Cinder Clacks left the Enclave, a schism was threatening to form and tear its society apart, as some feared discoveries from the World Before while others had worked up the courage to mount massive expeditions. Before leaving the Enclave, Cinder Clacks worked slowly and meticulously to quell the desires of those who advocated for the expeditions. Though he does not go into detail about how he achieved it, it is implied that Ogmedd and possibly other dwarves of the Karlheig clan had a hand in it.

Once the feast has ended and the characters have rested, Ogmedd restores Ludik’s memory and Cinder Clacks points them to one of the many tunnel openings in the lava

pit walls, saying that is where their journey must begin. After a bit of awkwardness, the fire troll and the beastman embrace and cordially bid farewell to each other, as Ludik desires to die with the sky of the Outside above his head, and not endless layers of stone.

“Go then, Wish-bearers,” says Cinder Clacks. “At the end of your journey, you will have earned the right to decide whether you want to brave the remnants of the World Before, or to return here or even back to the Enclave proper. May the ancestors guide you.”



Cavern of the Drakon'katha

The Serpent People

As you make your way from Cinder Clacks' abode, the heat gradually decreases, giving way to a growing cold. Moving through the cold, silent dark, a stark contrast to the bright, if at times uncomfortable warmth and good cheer of the day before, you feel as if you are moving through the petrified bowels of a long dead, colossal beast.

Ludik moves with purpose, exchanging few words, as the overwhelming darkness makes it difficult for him to read lips. After innumerable twists and turns, the tunnel starts shrinking, forcing you to move in single file, your only comfort touching the garments of the person in front of you.

Then, after rounding a sharp corner, a sudden shaft of light makes you pause. It is not too bright, but the contrast briefly hurts your eyes. The path ends in a solid

basalt wall, with a jagged vertical crack through which Ludik can barely fit.

Squeezing through the opening, it's as if you find yourself in a different world. Before you lies a vast, crystalline cavern, with pillars of glowing minerals jutting from floor, ceiling and wall in every direction. Shafts of iridescent blue and violet light crisscross the gigantic space, and various sources of luminescence seem to pulsate lightly in a steady rhythm.

As you find an irregular path among the glowing crystal formations, you feel you are not alone. There is the notion of movement, even though the only sounds are the crystalline tinkling and your own steps. At one point, the most alert—or paranoid—among you are certain of another presence, and suddenly wheel in its direction, brandishing your weapons.

You come face to face with a huge, hybrid reptilian form, part humanoid and part snake, with four arms and twin tails, bran-

dishing intricate weaponry. You let out gasps of surprise or even tiny screams as you ready for combat! In your haste, one of you even manages to attack first... only to be met with the tinkling sound of your weapon against the crystal surface.

This creature seems to have been long encased in crystal, remaining in stasis through the ages. Then you realize many of the crystal formations around you house similar creatures, of varied size and form, but almost all larger than you.

If they ask Ludik what these creatures are, he shares what little he knows. They were called the Serpent Kings or Drakon'katha³, one of the greatest threats faced by the old overland empire of men. He cites the empire as "Melanelos," the word for Blackmoor found in a salvaged elven chronicle carved on an unknown material, though he himself does not know it was of elven origin, nor the actual timeline of these events. He also cryptically says that the Drakon'katha were not imprisoned there, but sealed themselves inside the crystals in order to survive.

³ Blackmoor MMRPG, Season 4, Episode 91: Rolling Thunder. See [Harvard's Blackmoor Blog](#) for more information.



Serpent Kings

GHOSTLY HORDE

Medium undead, any alignment

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances psychic

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, incapacitated, invisible, petrified, poisoned, unconscious

Senses passive Perception 7

Languages The spectral soldiers understand the languages they knew in life, but only one ever speaks by rote, giving the command to charge, while the rest raise battle cries.

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Fearful Charge. When a creature steps into the battlefield or locale haunted by the ghostly horde, the horde immediately appears, and a command to charge is issued in the tongue the soldiers spoke in life, possibly revealing some tidbit about the battle where they died. Any creatures in the same area, who have not encountered the horde before, need to roll a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful save, the ghostly horde fades as it charges, passing harmlessly through any creature it manages to reach. Thereafter, such creatures will never see that particular horde again. On a failed save, the ghostly horde appears and sounds as solid as it did in life, though anyone with a keen nose notices they have no smell. Furthermore, any creature who failed the save ignores completely the fact that the horde appeared out of nowhere, and is convinced it is in immediate peril. They also ignore anyone telling them the horde isn't real. Different ghostly hordes may have different-sized fronts, but on average assume a line of 60 to 80 feet. Anyone having failed the save and caught in the horde's path is affected by the charge.

All as One. The horde's soldiers may number in the or thousands, but except for the initial charge, the creatures only fight one ghostly warrior at a time. It has the horde's total hit points, so killing the horde time is basically impossible. Attacking the horde with effect spells such as *fireball* or *lightning bolt*, affects total hit points, while individual warriors seem to die appropriate deaths. This cannot dispel the horde if attacks can (see **Fear Overwhelming** below), unless points are spent in such a manner, which makes it

Fear Overwhelming. Anyone struck by the horde's any of its ghostly soldiers must make a DC 15 Wisd throw. On a successful save, they believe they take damage, as does anyone else who believes the hor even seeing the wounds on the victim's body. On a the victim believes it has been slain and falls uncon creature rendered unconscious by the ghostly horc 1d4 rounds, finding it has sustained only half dama form of bleeding from its eyes and ears. A creature one of the ghostly warriors (each warrior has the h hit points) feels the warrior is solid and deals norm When a creature "slays" a ghostly warrior, it can re 15 wisdom saving throw with advantage. If it succe horde fades as described in the **Fearful Charge**, th whole damage the creature has sustained remains bleeding from the eyes and ears, while the spectra vanish. On a failed save, a creature keeps believing horde's existence, and keeps fighting for its life, ur another ghostly warrior grants another save - and so forth.

Single-Minded Death. The Ghostly Horde is immun effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Spectral Charge. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 15 (3d8 + 2) psychic damage. *See Fearful Charge, ai*

Spectral Melee. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) psychic damage.

As you ask the elderly beastman what the Drakon'katha were trying to save themselves from, the ground abruptly falls away, forming a small crystalline cliff that leads to the ground below and what seems like an exit on the far end, some 150 feet away, leading to the tunnels beyond.

This is where a ghostly horde of Drakon'katha has made its haunt. As soon

as anyone steps on the ground below, they find themselves surrounded by the huge, serpentine forms, who notice them despite their best efforts to hide.

Refer to the ghostly horde stat block for more information on how to run this encounter. It can be a very strange roleplaying opportunity, especially if only some of the PCs fail their saves and seem to be



Blackball

making battle with thin air, as their companions are looking on helplessly. Forcing an embattled character to abandon the area through the tunnel means they are safe from the horde, though they are entirely convinced of its existence and wonder why the Drakon'katha do not give pursuit.

As you continue along the path indicated by Beet-Hoof, and as the day draws near its end, you come across a new strangeness. The tunnel leads into a much smaller cavern than that of the Drakon'katha, where your path is blocked by a huge sphere, seemingly made of intricately carved stone, floating a few feet above the ground and chained to the floor. The sphere seems to emit a low hum and move slightly, making the chains clink.

You realize you can in fact go around or under the sphere, but the way forward is blocked by yet another collapse, which seems to have closed off the exit tunnel

completely. Beet-Hoof studies the scene in front of him and declares it is time to rest.

If the characters take turns standing guard, Ludik insists on taking the last shift alone, as his age and restlessness will not allow him much sleep.

When next you awake, the sound of clinking chains is much louder, and you find Beet-Hoof having already unlocked two of the four from their anchors on the floor, and now working on the third.

If confronted, he explains that this is what the Drakon'katha tried to save themselves from, a device made by the ancient people of Melanelos, that was drawn to and devoured magic. The Drakon'katha were an inherently magical race, and so the device sought out and devoured them. Their only solution was to encase themselves in magic-dampening crystals, which drain their magic and turn it into the great cavern's luminescence.

If they try to stop him, first he reasons with them (if a bit impatiently) that this is the only way forward, asking them to trust him. If that doesn't work, he employs any and all tricks at his disposal to strike the locks with his metallic walking staff, actually a technological artefact that discharges force energy. The locks require a DC 16 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open; alternatively, they break after receiving 35 points of damage, and their AC is 17.

In any event, there is no other way forward.

If all four chains are either broken or unlocked from their anchors, read the following: The carved pieces of the sphere start falling away and crashing to the floor. You realize that what you had been looking at up to this point was merely the casing of the actual device, so to speak: a sphere blacker than the darkest, sunless void, featureless and silent. As soon as it is released from its casing, it draws briefly near you, and you are certain the foolish beastman has spelled your doom. Then the sphere changes direction, towards the collapsed tunnel and upward, disintegrating anything that stands in its path.

If asked, Beet-Hoof explains that the remnants of the Skyfire over the vast expanse of the Overland constitute still more powerful magic than anything they are carrying, so the device headed straight for the surface. Unbeknownst to the elderly Preserver, there is a second reason, as in recent years the Moadreg have started opening the Gate of Light⁴ from the Shimmering Lands to Blackmoor, around the time when the Enclave celebrates its Remembrance. There is also a

⁴ John Calvin, GazBC 1 – Shimmering Lands DM's Guide.

reason for this coincidence, but as neither party is privy to the other's existence, that is a mystery left for another day. The device is obviously a modified blackball and it was definitely not created by Blackmoorian mages, but it is indeed drawn to the highest concentration of magic in the area.

The Outside

After leaving the device to carve its path of silent destruction, Beet-Hoof begins ascending the newly formed tunnel in silence, almost solemnly. Quite a bit of time passes, days even—you have lost count inside the smooth, featureless passageway—and you are thankful for the hefty provisions Cinder Clacks provided you with. Perhaps he knew exactly how long the journey would take. To you, it seems as though it will never end. If Ludik is frustrated, he makes no show of it, although it is evident he is gradually growing more tired, occasionally stumbling, leaning more heavily on his metallic staff, his breath becoming a bit more labored.

Just as you are about to accept that this road will never end and that it is some sort of punishment for Beet-Hoof, wondering why you should be punished alongside him, the dark sphere's tunnel intersects with another one above it. The new tunnel is far older, but a DC 13 Investigation check reveals it was likely dug by workers of a past age. More importantly, at the far end of it, you see light.

As you approach the light, so small and yet so remarkably bright that it hurts your eyes, you are filled with awe and dread in equal measure. Meanwhile, Beet-Hoof advances speedily towards it, his vigor

seemingly renewed. And then, after the briefest of pauses, he is Outside.

Characters who want to follow Beet-Hoof must succeed in a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened to step outside. They can repeat the roll after each minute that passes, gaining advantage if one of them has already gone outside. Druids roll at a disadvantage due to their myconid connection.

Your first impression of the outside is a brightness so painful that it brings to mind the tales of the Skyfire, and a blue vastness over your head that nearly causes you to have an agoraphobic reaction. In places, the light has a milder, greenish hue.

When your eyes get somewhat used to the brightness, at first you notice two things. You are standing on a ledge inside a pit so colossal, that vegetation growing out of its sides creates a green canopy in places and at various levels. Secondly, towering above you, seemingly suspended in the middle of the pit by the vegetation, is a huge, vaguely humanoid construct made of metal, wood, and other materials. Multitudes of flying creatures unknown to you perch upon its shoulders and head, showing no fear towards this unnatural monstrosity. Moss and vines cover much of its surface, at the same time eating through and supporting its colossal frame. Likely, this is the “robot” Beet-Hoof mentioned in his wish, whatever the word means.

After you manage to tear your eyes away from the construct, you notice that further up a slight incline of the ledge, Beet-Hoof has sat with his back to the earthen pit wall, next to a large, shattered and half-melted crystal, not unlike the

ones where the Drakon’katha were encased. As you approach, you notice his expression is serene and when you find yourselves next to him, you realize he has been looking straight at the blinding ball of fire in the sky, and is now blind.

He points at the huge construct: “There is the green robot I saw in my youth.” He pats the ruined crystal next to him: “Here is the prison where I first found Cinder Clacks.” He raises his arms at the sky: “At the very dusk of my life, as the ancients used to say, for I now know what a ‘dusk’ is, I find myself under the sky of our ancestors. I am content.” He turns to you: “And I thank you. Though you might not yet understand them, you now have choices to make. Be bold or be meek, but in any case be knowing.”

And with those words, he dies, his blind gaze firmly fixed on that ball of fire in the sky, his features lit in a way you have never seen before.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

You can end the adventure right here, on a bittersweet note full of wonder, with the characters having a million unanswered questions and faced with the prospect of the Outside. However, if you feel this ending is a tad melodramatic, there is a final encounter available. As mentioned before, the Moadreg of the Shimmering Lands have opened the Gate of Light, and an SSP (Scout and Scavenging Party) has

been dispatched to the so-called Blighted Lands. Two of the party have detected the colossal pit near Blackmoor (in fact closer to Newgate) and have come to investigate. When they become aware of the PCs and at least one beastman (though Beet-Hoof is dead), they immediately attack as they consider them vermin and mean to exterminate them. The PCs have the option to fight or flee, and in the second case, the Moadreg Blightseekers will not be interested enough to give chase.

MOADREG BLIGHTSEEKER

Medium humanoid (dwarf), neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +5, Intimidation +3, Perception +5

Damage Resistances acid, fire, necrotic

Damage Immunities cold, poison

Condition Immunities frightened, poisoned, prone

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Beastman, Common (Blackmoorish), Dwarvish (Moadreg), Giant

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Aura of Sickness. Any living creature within 5 feet of a Blightseeker must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, or suffer radiance sickness for 1 minute. Radiance sickness is similar to the poisoned condition, except it also inflicts a level of exhaustion, which persists even when the condition is removed. The exhaustion level requires separate treatment or normal rest in order to be removed. On a successful save, the target is immune to the Blightseeker's aura of sickness for 24 hours. This immunity also applies once the effect ends. However, different Blightseekers incur separate saves and the exhaustion effects are cumulative.

Moadreg Exoskeleton. Moadreg Blightseekers are the result of the Himmem radiomancer experiments, built for survival and exploration in the ancestral Blighted Lands. As such, they are practically fused to their exoskeletons, blurring the line between dwarf and machine. The exoskeleton's pneumatics allow them to swing their greataxes one-handed, and they cannot be disarmed short of breaking the axe-head off. The other appendage houses the Dragon Belcher. The exoskeleton also sports a limited modular defense, by reforming to block attacks (*see below*) and always keeping the Blightseeker upright. The exoskeleton's weapons can also be shifted to allow for the deployment of more dexterous mechanical digits, for the the gathering or samples or other delicate work. The price the Blightseekers pay is that none survive past a month after the fusion to their exoskeleton is completed.

Radiance Immunity. Blightseekers are immune to radiance damage (such as from their own weapons) and any detrimental effects produced by the radiance (such as an **Aura of Sickness**).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Blightseeker makes two attacks.

Pneumatic Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage, plus 7 (2d6) radiance damage.

Dragon Belcher (Recharge 5-6). The Blightseeker shoots radiance-generated fire from its exoskeleton's left appendage in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 10 (3d6) fire damage, plus 10 (3d6) radiance damage and becomes poisoned until the end of its next turn. A successful save halves the damage and prevents the poisoned condition.

Shield Module (Reaction). The Blightseeker adds 2 to its AC against one non-spell attack (either melee or ranged) that would hit it, as its exoskeleton shifts to form a shield against the attack. It can do this twice in each round of combat.

You hear metallic sounds and the thud of heavy footsteps. Shielding your eyes, you notice two strange contraptions on a ledge overhead the one where you are standing. They have a stout, vaguely humanoid shape and are made of metal the color of rust. The head is helmeted and hidden behind some sort of darkened glass. One arm ends in a large, wicked, jagged axe, and the other in a device you have never seen before. Soon, the device is pointed at you, spewing fire!

For more on the Moadreg and what the characters may discover through combat and if they defeat them, refer to John Calvin's work on Mystara 2300 BC.

APPENDIX

Characters starting out as members of the Enclave do not have access to the usual selection of backgrounds, accompanying skills, traits, etc. Instead, each character starts out as a member of a Calling or the Myceleans, and that defines their skills and traits. All of the people of the Enclave share a Common language that is derivative of ancient Blackmoorian. Lizardfolk also have their own tongue, and goliaths speak Primordial (Terran, in older editions). There is no written language in the Enclave, and most of its inhabitants cannot read. Preservers and some Myceleans are the two exceptions. The first have gained some skill in reading records or carvings from the World Before through study, while the latter have been imparted the skill through the myconids' spore memory.

Note that there is no use for money in the Enclave or likely any of the underground communities beneath Blackmoor. It is a strictly bartering economy. Coins from the World Before are mere curiosities and precious metals are only regarded as such for their use in alchemy or resistance to corrosion. Copper, tin, bronze, iron and steel are the only truly valued metals (or better yet, items made of them) for purely practical reasons. Most people in the Enclave have the means to put together a dungeoneer's or explorer's pack and only writing materials are truly sparse, as there is mostly no need for them. Any character proficient in tools from the selections listed below automatically gets a set of said tools.

The people of the Enclave mostly fashion simple weapons made of brittle or salvaged materials, or martial weapons made of bronze. Sophisticated or steel weapons are

almost always relics from the World Before, and might often be magical to some degree, which has protected them from the vagaries of time. The best such weapons are given to the Seekers. Anything beyond light armor is considered a mixed blessing, as it hampers movement and makes noise most underground-dwelling creatures can detect.

Growers

Skill Proficiencies: Animal Handling, Insight, and choose one from Deception, Nature, or Performance

Tool Proficiencies: One type of artisan's tools

Feature (choose one):

Hearth Wisdom: Sharing in the Mothers' tales and the Boendr's work songs, you have gathered pieces of lore, superstition and folk wisdom that sometimes yield unexpectedly useful information. When faced with one of the many unknowns or dangers of the Shadowdeep or the World Before, your DM may give you a cryptic hint of information that will help you navigate the situation before you (such as an old fey greeting that might make such creatures more friendly, or a folk remedy against the effects of some unknown poison).

Underfolk Solidarity: Having grown among the most welcoming and diverse of the Enclave's groups, you know how to secure help (in the form of medical aid, temporary lodgings, food, or basic equipment, including simple weapons) both from the people of the Enclave and the various non-hostile groups dotting the underground landscape, regardless if you even speak their language; you have learned to communicate your needs in other ways.

Preservers

Skill Proficiencies: History, and choose one from Medicine, Nature, or Persuasion

Tool Proficiencies: Choose one from alchemist's supplies, smith's tools, or tinker's tools

Languages: One of your choice, or two of your choice if you forfeit one of your skill proficiencies

Feature (choose one):

Discovery: Your studies of the World Before have given you access to a unique and powerful discovery. The exact nature of this revelation should be discussed with your DM. It might be a great truth about the Overland, a hint about the Immortals and the workings of clerical magic, or the nature of the radiance besides the Wasting. It could be a site that no one else has ever seen or heard of. You might have uncovered a fact that has long been forgotten, or unearthed some relic of the past that could rewrite history.

Researcher: When you attempt to learn or recall a piece of lore, if you do not know that information, you often know where and from whom you can obtain it. Usually, this information comes from another Preserver or some salvaged document from the World Before. Your DM might rule that the knowledge you seek is secreted away in an almost inaccessible place (such as behind the Great Gate), or that it simply cannot be found without expanding your horizons beyond the Enclave.

Seekers

Skill Proficiencies: Stealth, Survival.

Choosing one of these proficiencies a second time, from a different source, grants expertise in it

Equipment: One martial weapon, light armor and shield, or two martial weapons and light armor, or one medium armor

Feature (choose one):

At Home in the Wild: In the wilderness, your home, you can find a place to hide, rest, or recuperate that is secure enough to conceal you from most natural threats, but not all supernatural, magical, or threats that actively seek you out. Also, this feature doesn't shield or conceal you from scrying, mental probing, nor from threats that don't need the five senses to find you.

Wanderer: You have an excellent memory for maps and geography, and you can always recall the general layout of terrain, settlements, and other features around you. In addition, you can find food and fresh water for yourself and up to five other people each day, provided that the land offers edible plants or fungi, small game, water, and so forth.

Tenders

Skill Proficiencies: Investigation and choose one from Deception or Persuasion

Tool Proficiencies: Two types of artisan's tools

Feature (choose one):

Guerilla: You've come to know the surrounding area's natural features in which you can take refuge—or set up ambushes. You can quickly survey your environment for advantageous features. Additionally, you can scavenge around your natural sur-

roundings to cobble together simple supplies (such as improvised torches, rope, patches of fabric, etc.) that are consumed after use.

Leverage: You can exert leverage over one or more below you in the Calling's hierarchy and demand their help as needs warrant. For example, deliver a message, arrange a ride, or clean up a bloody mess. As your status in the Calling improves, you gain influence over more people of higher station. The DM decides if the demands are reasonable and if subordinates are available.

Myceleans

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, and choose one from Arcana, History, or Insight

Tool Proficiencies: Herbalist kit

Languages: One of your choice, or two of your choice if you forfeit one of your skill proficiencies

Feature (choose one):

Shadowdeep Experience: You are no casual visitor to the Shadowdeep, but have spent considerable time there learning its ways. You are familiar with the various races, monsters, and travel routes of the Shadowdeep beyond the Enclave. You make rolls to recall Shadowdeep lore with advantage, unless the DM rules that the lore is unknown.

Spirit Medium: A fateful experience made you believe you are aligned with spirits and can serve as a conduit for their insights and goals. You have advantage on Arcana and Religion checks to remember or research information about spirits and the afterlife. You have and can use a conduit (a constantly dripping, perfectly spherical moss stone) to commune with otherworldly forces.

LUDIK BEET-HOOF

Medium humanoid (beastman, striphokeros), chaotic good

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 31 (9d8 - 9)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Cha +5

Skills Arcana +6, History +6, Insight +4, Perception +4, Performance +5, Persuasion +5, Stealth +5, Survival +4

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Countercharm. As an action, Ludik can start a performance that lasts until the end of his next turn. During that time, he and any friendly creatures within 30 feet of him have advantage on saving throws against being frightened or charmed. A creature must be able to hear him to gain this benefit. The performance ends early if you he is incapacitated or silenced or if he voluntarily ends it (no action required).

Deaf. Ludik is completely deaf has disadvantage on all rolls that rely on hearing.

Keen Smell. Ludik has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pushback Mode (2/day). Ludik can use a bonus action to activate his staff's pushback mode. For 1 minute, all melee attacks he makes with it deal an additional 1d6 force damage and on a successful hit, a target must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed 10 ft. away from him.

Spellcasting. Ludik is a 9th-level bard. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Ludik has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights, message, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, dissonant whispers, earth tremor, identify*

2nd level (3 slots): *calm emotions, shatter, suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *slow, speak with dead, tongues*

4th level (3 slots): *charm monster, dimension door, freedom of movement*

5th level (1 slot): *animate objects*

Spirited Bleating (3/day). Ludik can use a bonus action to grant a creature within 60 ft. of him, who can hear him, a 1d8 bonus to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes within the next 10 minutes.

Alternatively, Ludik can use his reaction to impose a 1d8 penalty to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw of a creature he can see within 60 ft. of him.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ludik makes two attacks.

Blackmoorian Riot Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Electric Pulse (Recharge 5-6). By twisting and then releasing the head of his relic staff, Ludik can discharge a lightning cone, up to 100 ft. away and 15 ft. wide at its end. Creatures in the cone's path must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 24 (7d6) points of lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

RESOURCES

Dave Arneson et al., *Dave Arneson's Blackmoor*, Zeitgeist Games, 2004

John Calvin, [Mystara 2300 BC Campaign Setting](#) at the Vaults of Pandius

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Various, *Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix* (Choker, Ghostly Horde), TSR, 1994

Havard's Blackmoor Blog (<http://blackmoormystara.blogspot.com/2019/06/>)

"A Blackmoor Timeline" at Hidden in Shadows website:

(<http://boggswood.blogspot.com/2019/10/a-blackmoor-timeline.html>)

All monsters have been adapted by the author for the 5th edition of D&D, based on the aforementioned sources.

THRESHOLD





ANCIENT DUNGEONS

Using the Koskatep MEGADUNGEON as a blueprint
FOR RUINS all over the world!

by Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)

INTRODUCTION

The Megadungeon of Koskatep, created by me using a lot of canon and fan material and ideas, was published in *THRESHOLD Magazine* from issue #1 to #15. It is an extensive ruins of 13 levels dug inside a hill in the northwestern wild territory of Karameikos, on the upper course of the Achelos river¹. Basically I worked on Koskatep for the first four years of *THRESHOLD Magazine*, and now it's more than six years since I've finished it. So in this issue dedicated to Dungeons!, prompted by Allan's suggestion, it makes sense to return a bit to Koskatep. However, as I think Koskatep is complete as it is, in this article I'll rather use its levels as blueprints and inspiration for other dungeons of the world of Mystara. The main characteristic of Koskatep in fact is that it is a bit like the real world ruins of Troy, i.e. a series of levels which correspond to different centuries of occupation, and different people who inhabited the ancient temple city. So in this article I'll start from the bottom of Koskatep to illustrate how its levels could be used to populate other ruins of the same eras.

¹ The location can be seen on the map ['Kingdom of Karameikos - Traladara 1020 AC, 3.2 miles per hex'](#) drawn by the author and available at the Vaults of Pandius, while the series of Koskatep articles was in [THRESHOLD Magazine issues #1 to #15](#) also available in the Vaults

RUINS OF ANCIENT TIMES (5,000+ YEARS OLD)

The deepest level of Koskatep, Ixashira, the Dream of Fire, is an ancient temple of Ixion that predates time itself, inhabited by sollux, hutaakans and other different people who were able to reach it over the centuries, to guard an incredibly old and powerful secret of the sun-god church. As inspiration I basically used the biblical garden of Paradise and for the map the temple of Karnak in Egypt, as the place was supposed to be a pre-Azcan temple later modified by Azcans and Nithians. Dungeons so old yet not discovered or only partially explored should be protected by ancient magic and located in very remote areas. Probably some strong magical protection should also be present to explain why the place has not yet been discovered after some millenia. PCs should probably know nothing of these times apart from vague legends, so any discovery of such ancient civilizations should come as a big surprise for them. Government and local powers would have strong reasons to try to get hold of any ancient treasure or magic found.

(Previous page)

Temple of Moloch, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffrevkosh.wixsite.com/jeffrevkoshgraphics/home>).

From the Vaults and other inspirations

The [History section](#) in the Vaults of Pandius has several articles dealing with those prehistoric times of Mystaran history before the canon era, mostly outlined in the Gazetteers and in the *Hollow World* boxed set. I wrote several myself, such as *99,9999985% Mystara history*² and notably in several articles for *THRESHOLD Magazine*³, dealing the ancient histories of Davania (#5), Thyatis and Alpha-tia (#11), the Known World (#12), Western Brun (#17), and Skothar (#20). The ruins of ancient times could well be inhabited by all kinds of equally ancient creatures, now lost and maybe forgotten on the surface of Mystara. The glaurants, which appear in GAZ8: *“The Five Shires”*, could be a good example of such creatures. *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #14, which was dedicated to the Shadowdeep, the underworld of Mystara, contains several other examples of ancient creatures which could populate remote dungeons and temples. Lhommar and Y’hog⁴ by Geoff Gander are the most famous ancient civilizations of prehistoric times created by a fan, but in canon Mystaran products other races are implied to have had civilizations predating the known history, such as fairies, giants, dragons, beastmen and brutemen, chameleon men, turtles, lupins, rakasta, and more. Sci-fi and fantasy fiction have infinite examples of Lost Worlds, ancient forgotten races, and similar tropes⁵.

² [‘99,9999985% Mystara history’](#) in the Vaults of Pandius

³ Refer to the [THRESHOLD Magazine section](#) of the Vaults of Pandius

⁴ Refer to [‘Y’hog – The Blackest Port in the West’](#) by Geoff Gander from *THRESHOLD Magazine* #5 and [‘Erkalion – The Dusk of an Empire’](#) from issue #12 of *THRESHOLD Magazine* and previous articles in the Vaults of Pandius

⁵ See for example the [‘Lost World’](#) and [‘Dying Race’](#) articles at the TV Tropes website

Maps

Any very old real world ruin could fit with this timeline, for example the sites of ancient Egypt, Turkey, Middle East in general, and megalithic structures of Europe.

BLACKMOORIAN RUINS (BC 4,000—3,000)

Koskatap level 12 in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #14 is dedicated to Koskatapetl, The Wasted City. It was the Azcan city destroyed by its own priests when the Azcan Emperor of the time tried to get hold of the forbidden Dream of Fire, the secret of Ixion described in level 13. The whole of level 12 is contaminated by the Wasting, or Radiance poisoning, a side effect of the failure of Blackmoorian technomagic devices which were common before the Great Rain of Fire. The above level 11, Kalasah the Black Heart, is instead inhabited by beastmen hidden here by Hel, trying to get access to level 13. Both levels have inhabitants and objects dating back to Blackmoorian times. This means technomagic devices and strange machines, living statues and all kinds of dinosaurs or ancient mammals could be present in ruins of this time. I used the real world site of Teotihuacan as the basis for the ruins of Koskatapetl and real world caves for the beastmen level. The existence of Blackmoor could, in modern Mystara, just be an ancient story, as the stories of the Deluge in the real world. However it is quite probable that governments and several powerful individuals (such as Prince Jaggar in GAZ3: *“The Principalities of Glantri”*) do know more about Blackmoor and will be very interested in acquiring any technomagic device found. Most Immortals do not view favorably the idea that ancient Blackmoorian secrets are

re-discovered, so they could intervene, through agents or even directly in extreme cases, to prevent the spreading of such knowledge.

From the Vaults and other inspirations

Blackmoor was created around BC 4,000 on the continent of Skothar⁶ and soon freed itself from the Empire of Thonia, discovered the remains of the Beagle spaceship, and defeated the Afridhi invaders, all events described in the DA series⁷ of adventures. In the following millennia Blackmoor became more and more powerful, expanding across all the world and developing powerful technomagic devices, which later will be the origin of the Radiance in Glantri and the Chamber of the Stars in the City of the Stars of the Shadow Elves. A mysterious cataclysm later named The Great Rain of Fire destroyed Blackmoor and its technomagic, and plunged the world into a dark age for several centuries. The Vaults of Pandius has a whole section dedicated to Blackmoorian times and several articles in *THRESHOLD Magazine* described it in even more detail⁸.



Azcan pyramid, produced from Bing AI Image Creator prompted by author.

Maps

Some real world ruins and sites could be used for the main cultures of Mystara at the time of Blackmoor. Mesoamerican and South American sites are perfect for the Oltecs and the Azcans, which at the time dominated a vast area of southern Brun and parts of Davania. Middle Eastern sites could be used for the regions of Alphatia, Bellisaria, Esterhold, and nearby lands at the time not yet colonized by the Alphatians. African historical sites could be used for the Tanagoro of southern Skothar. Megalithic sites could instead be appropriate for the Neathar humans of central and northern Brun and probably also for giants and fairies. For the elven and halfling cities of Davania good examples could probably be found in many old and current D&D products. For Blackmoorian cities and sites instead, given they had advanced technomagic, modern sites maps could work best.

⁶ According to the *Hollow World* boxed set, but the DA series and several Gazetteers seem instead to imply it was where the Known World is now. I addressed this contradiction in "[New Blackmoor, 3050 BC: The Known World before the Great Rain of Fire](#)" in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #2.

⁷ Starting with module DA1: "Adventures in Blackmoor", available from [DriveThruRPG](#)

⁸ See the [Blackmoor section](#) of the Vaults of Pandius, including the 'Returned Blackmoor' series by Doc Necrotic in *THRESHOLD* and many more articles.

DARK AGES RUINS (BC 2,900—1,700)

The levels of Koskatep from 10 to 7 were inspired by the work of Chimpman about *2300 BC Mystara*⁹ and several ideas by RobJN from *Thorn's Chronicle*¹⁰. Chimpman imagined a Known World dominated by Taymora (whose ruins now under the waves canonically appear in PC3: "*The Sea People*"), Mogreth (a nation of lizardmen where is now Ylaruam before Nithia), The Shimmering Lands (home of the dwarves who will become the Modrigswerg of the Northern Reaches), Grondheim (a nation of fairies and giants occupying most of the central Known World), and Intua (ancestors of the Atruaghin), and I used his ideas extensively in Koskatep, as the place after the beastmen's defeat was occupied first by Intua and then by Grondheim, Mogreth, and finally Taymora. Some years before the Second Cataclysm of BC 1700, which canonically created the Broken Lands and sunk Taymora, due to the explosion of another Blackmoorian device, Koskatep was destroyed by the priests of Nyx themselves to prevent the place from falling into the hands of Thanatos. These levels are Koskatep level 10: Intitepetl, Gem of the Sun; Level 9: Krystallac, Crystal Heart; Level 8: Mokrath, Serpent Eye; Level 7: Signs of the Universe. Those levels are mostly inhabited by undead, many of them intelligent, who go back to those times, but obviously similar ruins around the Known World could also

⁹ A historical setting described in the [Known World](#), [Adhuza](#), [Antalia](#), [Frontierlands](#), [Grondheim](#), [Intua](#), [Mogreth](#), [Nithia](#), [Realm of Othrong](#), [Shimmering Lands](#), [Taymora](#), [Urzud](#) sections of the Vaults of Pandius and developed in the [2300 BC sub-forum](#) of The Piazza

¹⁰ See the list of works by [Robert Nuttman, Jr.](#) under his entry in the Vaults of Pandius

contain any kind of monster who managed to find the ruins and use them as its lair. Ruins so ancient are also likely to contain powerful magical secrets, and therefore intelligent and powerful monsters such as dragons and beholders could have good reasons to search and inhabit them. It's likely PCs know almost nothing of these times or have only some imprecise stories.

From the Vaults and other inspirations

The Vaults and The Piazza offer plenty of material written by Chimpman about this time, as indicated in the links of Note 8. There are many other articles on Taymoran ruins in the Vaults¹¹ and I wrote one myself in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #3¹². Issues #5, 11,12, 17, 20 and 30 have many articles about the past of Davania, Thyatis and Alphatia, the Known World, Western Brun, Skothar and Bellissaria also dealing with these times. Even if the Second Cataclysm was exclusive to the Known World, the great humanoid migration which started in Brun before BC 1,700 eventually invaded other continents too, even if the farthest regions were reached only centuries later.

Maps

For these levels I used maps of the ancient sites of the Middle East, Egypt, and Crete. Archaeology sites fortunately have plenty of them and it's not difficult to find one suitable for the ruins of these Mystaran centuries.

¹¹ See the [Taymora section](#) in the Vaults of Pandius

¹² "*The Darkness Beneath: Ancient buried secrets in the Sea of Dread*" in [issue #3 of THRESHOLD Magazine](#)



DUNGEON DENIZENS © Jeffrey Kosh 2022

Dungeon Denizens, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

CLASSICAL RUINS (BC 1,600–1)

I'd call 'Classical' the time of Nithia and Milenia, which also saw the arrival of the Alphatians and the spreading of humanoid races. In Koskatep this time corresponds to Levels 6 to 3, which are Shadows of Kundrak; Dark secrets of Ieronyx; Karrast, Dwarven Gold; and Ranesh, a City of Four Peoples; when the ruins were occupied first by dark fairies, then by followers of Nyx, hutaakans, red orcs, dwarves, gnolls, and ogres. The region, like the whole Known World, was rather unstable at the time, with new people replacing the previous occupants of an area in relatively short times. PCs however should know a bit more about these times at least as cultural or national legends, such as the Song of Halav in Karameikos, which dates back to 2,000 years before the canon present time. That's not strange at all if you look at the real world's history. Now we are used to a society which evolves fast and everything around us is very different from just 30 years ago, but it was not so in previous times. For example in medieval culture the Roman Empire was still considered the recent past and indeed European dynasties like the Habsburg presented themselves as its heirs up to the First World War.



Milenian ruins, produced from Bing AI Image Creator prompted by author.

From the Vaults and other inspirations

Beside Koskatep, *THRESHOLD Magazine* featured another idea for a possible megadungeon in the Five Shires: Loktal's Vault¹³, a reference to to the Glittering Realm of Loktal Ironshield, the dwarven king who ruled briefly over his lands and fell in BC 912, mentioned in GAZ8: "*The Five Shires*", and could also be connected to the solo canon adventure XS2: "*Thunderdelve Mountain*"¹⁴. As the history of the

¹³ In *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues [#16](#) and [#17](#) and also in the [Adventures and Campaign Ideas section](#) of the Vaults

¹⁴ See the "*The Dwarves of Thunderdelve*" article in *THRESHOLD Magazine* [issue #2](#) and some ideas by Chimpman "[Thoughts about Loktal's megadungeon](#)" and Agathokles "[Structure of Loktal's megadungeon](#)" at the Vaults of Pandius

times is quite confused and left vague in canon products, it is always possible to place sites of ancient dwarven, elven, humanoid, or any other race's cities almost everywhere. Nithians at the time spread across a vast area from Bellissaria to the Savage Coast and left outposts and temples which will be quite mysterious for the PCs as the true origin of such places couldn't be easily understood due to the Spell of Oblivion with which the Immortals cursed that civilization when it became corrupt and dangerous. Other examples of cities dating back to this time or even earlier are Oenkmar in GAZ10: *"The Orcs of Tbar"* and Tuma which appears in the module B8: *"Journey to the Rock"*¹⁵ but there are many others¹⁶. So Mystara fans could have lots of possibilities to create more megadungeons for our favorite campaign world.

Maps

As Nithia is clearly inspired by ancient Egypt and Milenia by ancient Greece I mostly used plans of Egyptian and Grecian cities for these levels of Koskatep. As both civilizations have an impressive number of locations there are plenty of city and temple maps from which to choose.

THE 'MODERN' ERA (AC 0—1,000)

Levels 1 and 2 of Koskatep, the Upper Ruins and Kotesch, city of the Ogre King, were described in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #2 to #4. The ruins at the time were actually occupied by Traladaran soldiers and priests of Ixion, until they were defeated by a powerful vampire and follower of Thanatos, The Last One, who destroyed them. After this and in the last 7+ centuries the ruins have remained officially abandoned and empty, but actually the powerful vampire still rules them, trying to get access to the lower levels to reach the ancient secrets left by the churches of Nyx and Ixion. In the megadungeon these are actually the only levels with a living ecology, as lower levels are typically not inhabited by creatures coming from the surface, but only by undead and some other special creatures. PCs could have a vague knowledge of the region and its history, even if now the location of Koskatep should be in the middle of a territory inhabited by orcs and ogres¹⁷.

From the Vaults and other inspirations

Taking a good look at the Gazetteers of any other canon or fan source about a specific area it's always a good idea to develop consistent dungeons inspired by the history of a region. In Karameikos there are many examples in modules and adventures, which often use Hutaakan or Traldar ruins¹⁸. In the Five Shires, as we have seen above, orcish and dwarven ruins could fit

¹⁵ More about Tuma in the Vaults: ["Detail of the Threshold Region"](#) by Simone Neri, ["Tuma"](#) by Matthew Levy, and ["Journey to the Rock and Labyrinth of Madness"](#) by Ripvanwormer

¹⁶ Check the ["Huge Dungeons in Mystara"](#) topic on The Piazza for a rather extensive list

¹⁷ See also ["Lords of the Cruth Lowlands"](#) by Agathokles, available in the Vaults

¹⁸ Check for example ["Campaigning in Karameikos"](#) by the author from *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #22



The Misadventures of Valcinius the Uncanny, original digital drawing by Senarch

very well, but also elven ones from the times of the Gentle Folk elves. In Thyatis the best resource to build ‘historical’ dungeons is likely the work done by Giulio Caroletti in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #11 to #13¹⁹. For Alphatia and colonies there is the huge work done by Bruce Heard in his blog²⁰ and also two issues of *THRESHOLD*²¹. Ylaruam already has plenty of dungeon material in its Gazetteer (Barimoor and the remnants of Nithia) plus one of the best Mystaran dungeons (B4: “*The Lost City*”). Historical dungeons in Darokin could be related to the time of the Darokinian kings, which was developed with great detail by

fans in the Vaults, but also just under the nation lie the tunnels of humanoids and shadow elves²². The same applies for Alfheim, the Broken Lands, and Glantri. Alfheim was a grassland before the elves grew their forest, so it may be harder to find old ruins there, if not maybe ancient half-buried mounds built by centaurs, humanoids, or humans. The Broken Lands and southern Glantri could contain ruins of Blackmoor (or a colony of²³) and of the original Aengmor, destroyed in the BC 1,700 cataclysm. Wendar, Denagoth and beyond are covered by the GazF series²⁴ which contains a lot of info about the history of the area. In the Northern Reaches and Heldann, ruins could belong to the old Antalians,

¹⁹ Check “[The Judicates of Carytion](#)”, “[Hesperia, Land of the Setting Sun](#)” and “[Hesperia - the Dungeon master’s Guide](#)” by Giulio Caroletti from *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #11–13

²⁰ At his blog: <https://bruce-heard.blogspot.com/> and now also [compiled in a huge pdf](#) by Michael Monagle and available at the Vaults

²¹ *THRESHOLD Magazine* issues #11: “[Thyatis and Alphatia](#)” and #30: “[The Alphatian Sea](#)”

²² Check the [Darokin section](#) at the Vaults of Pandius and *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #14: “[The Shadowdeep](#)”

²³ Check “[New Blackmoor 3050 BC](#)” by the author from *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #2

²⁴ A great work by [JTR](#) listed in their entry in Vaults

giants, or the Modrigswerg dwarves. For Norwold there are three issues of *THRESHOLD Magazine*, including a very detailed history by Simone Neri²⁵. Going west, from the Atruaghin lands to the Savage Coast, Oltec and Azcan ruins will always be appropriate, but the best histories of all the lands beyond the Known World can probably be found in the Gazetteers by Omnibus²⁶. Most of them are in Italian only, but probably with an online translator English speakers can manage to read them. Omnibus did a great work for many regions of Mystara, integrating existing canon and fan material with his own ideas into detailed histories of each region.

Maps

For these levels of Koskatep I used some rough plans of ancient Mediterranean ruins, but for the more 'recent' ruins medieval cities and temples could be more appropriate, or just 'classical' dungeons as the ones which appear in the B series of modules.

²⁵ See issues [#6: "The Northlands"](#), [#7: "Exploring Norwold"](#), and [# 8: "Warlords of Norwold"](#)

²⁶ Check the entry for [Omnibus](#) at the Vaults



Ancient dungeon, photo by Mario La Pergola on Unsplash

The Islands of Death

by King Everast



Welcome to the second instalment of “*Islands of Death*”. In the first instalment²⁷ we had the introduction and backstory as well as part 1: “*The Peaceful Island of Home*”. In this article we shall continue the tale in parts 2 and 3. Part 2: “*The Archipelago of Horrors*” will give a brief

overview of the archipelago as well as the various ocean encounters. Part 3: “*The Primitive Land of Topaxi*” will describe Topaxi Island in detail and the various encounters on it.

Enjoy – King Everast

²⁷ Published in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #30](#)

PART 2: THE ARCHIPELAGO OF HORRORS

The Goal of Part 2

Part 2 is an overview of the entire archipelago so in that sense there isn't an ordinary goal and mission. Try to make the players explore Topaxi before they explore any other islands as the larger plot and story will be revealed there.

1. HOME

Home is a small rocky island a few hundred feet across and is dominated by the Thyatians' trading castle. Situated in the southernmost point of the archipelago, it has now been conquered by Althores and is filled with undead. Home is described in more detail in Part 1: The Peaceful Island of "Home" released in issue #30.

2. Topaxi

Topaxi is a beautiful island covered in forest and plains. Grassy hills rise up in the centre of this large island and its two rivers flow from here. It is situated roughly north-east of Home. It used to be inhabited by primitive natives who dwelt in their village, Topax, high in the hills, near an enormous cave filled with topazes, which they occasionally mined to trade with Thyatian traders from Home. Recently though, untold horrors have been emerging from the cave and the Topaxians have fled their home and are now camping in the plains on the western edge. Meanwhile, Althores has sent some ships with some squadrons of his army and they are now conquering the eastern forests and

will soon find the refugees. Topaxi will be described in more detail in Part 3: The Primitive Land of Topaxi.

3. The Island of Fire

The Island of Fire is a large island covered in scalding deserts. The main inhabitants are the sis'thik (from the *Creature Catalog*) and giant scorpions. In the centre of the island is the Temple of Ostegos. Ostegos is a death demon and one of the four guardians of Althores's staff. (Which will be described in a later article.) The temple must be visited if the PCs wish to defeat Althores.

4. The Island of Water

The Island of Water is a curious place: It is a large ring of mountains with an enormous lake in the centre. The island has almost no inhabitants but in the middle of the lake is a large temple and there dwells Aquath, the second of the four guardians.

5. The Island of Earth

All creatures of this jungle island live in fear of Shazra, the dark elf, who dwells together with her hordes of magically constructed warriors within the terrifying stone temple. Shazra is the third guardian of the staff. Other than those who dwell within the temple the island is inhabited mostly by carnivorous plants and mutant animals.

6. The Island of Air

This mountainous island, with a peak that soars above the clouds, is home to the fourth and final guardian of the staff.

Takrisa is a master wyrd who dwells high up in the mountains with his elite undead legions.

The undead have long since killed off all the other residents of this island and now not even plants or animals dwell here.

7. Pirate Island

The largest of the islands in the Topaxi archipelago, this island used to be entirely devoid of human life. Recently, however, a large pirate fleet made an outpost on the northerly peninsula. The rest of the island is home to many unusual and rare creatures, animals and humanoids.

8. Demihuman Island

This is a beautiful island full of rolling hills, lush forests and towering mountains. Its only inhabitants are halflings, elves, and dwarves. It is from here that the PCs will eventually be able to muster an army to take down Althores.

9. Isle of Lechaun

This tiny yet heavily forested island is almost entirely empty. However, in the centre in a glade of beautiful trees is a tiny village full of the most mischievous creatures ever to walk on the face of Mystara: leprechauns. The untold irritation and possible great rewards arising from meeting these strange creatures, will be covered in another article.

10. Island of Gyer

A small grassy island, this small place is home to the timid Gyerians. With a population of around 40, they are by no means numerous, but they can provide some very useful information.

11. Island of Illusion

This mysterious little island seems to be a beautiful paradise, but all is not as it seems for the entire isle is wreathed in illusion. What appears to be a beautiful villa with stunning gardens holds some far darker secrets.

12. Swamp Island

This manky, smelly island is little more than a mangrove swamp, jutting out of the ocean. Filled with swamp denizens, the forbidding island even has rumours about a terrifying hydra!

13. Isle of Dermion

This is a small hilly island with a vast city in the centre of it. The elephant men or pachydermions live here. These creatures may look odd, but they are actually some of the cleverest creatures in Mystara.

14. Island of Doom

This Island is dominated by an enormous volcano that continuously sends smoke high into the air. The island is inhabited by... Well, I wouldn't want to spoil the surprise.

ISLANDS OF DEATH - PORC THE HORSE



Islands of Death, map drawn by Porg the Horse



Sea giant on killer whale, composition by Senarch (<https://www.deviantart.com/senarch/gallery>)

OCEAN ENCOUNTERS

1. Sea Giant Maelstrom

At this point in the ocean there are 7 sea giants stirring up the water and making it seem as if there is a huge whirlpool. The moment the boat comes within 300 yards, the giants attack.

Sea Giants: AC 0; HD 12; hp 60; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 weapon or special; D 4–40 or wave attack; Save F12; ML 10; Int 12; AL C; XP 2,125

They have no treasure.

2. Abode of the Storm Giant

There is a fierce thunderstorm with a 500 yard radius around this site, and should the characters sail into the storm, they come to a site of a large underwater battle. The sea giants who serve Althores have been sent to destroy the resident storm giant. Realising what was happening, the storm giant summoned some good ocean creatures to assist, and they are currently in battle. The storm giant has 10 giant crabs, 1 sperm whale which he rides, 4 narwhals, and 12 dolphins. Opposing him are 15 sea giants each riding a killer whale.

Storm Giant: AC 2; HD 15; hp 70; MV 150' (50'); #AT 1 + special; D 8–48 + storm; Save F15; ML 10; Int 18; AL L; XP 3,250

10 Giant Crabs: AC 2; HD 3; hp 14; MV 60' (20'); #AT 2 Pincers; D 2–12; Save F2; ML 7; Int 2; AL N; XP 35

Sperm Whale: AC 6; HD 36; hp 180; MV 180' (60); #AT 1 bite; D 3–60; Save F15; ML 7; Int 2; AL N; XP 12,000

4 Narwhals: AC 7; HD 12; hp 60; MV 180' (60'); #AT 1 horn; D 2–12; Save F12; ML 8; Int 4; AL L; XP 1,100

12 Dolphins: AC 5; HD 3; hp 15; MV 180' (60'); #AT 1 butt; D 2–8; Save D6; ML 10; Int 15; AL L; XP 50

15 Sea Giants: AC 0; HD 12; hp 60; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 weapon or special; D 4–40 or wave attack; Save F12; ML 10; Int 12; AL C; XP 2,125

15 Killer Whales: AC 6; HD 6; hp 30; MV 240' (80'); #AT 1 bite; D 2–20; Save F3; ML 10; Int 2; AL N; XP 275

The battle will be victorious for the sea giants if the players do not help, and if ever the players come here again then they will be attacked by the remaining 11 giants and 13 killer whales. If the players do help, then they will get the friendship and alliance of the storm giant (who knows the true name of the Island of Doom – see appendix). The storm giant will also give them 5 potions of water breathing.

PART 3: THE PRIMITIVE LAND OF TOPAXI

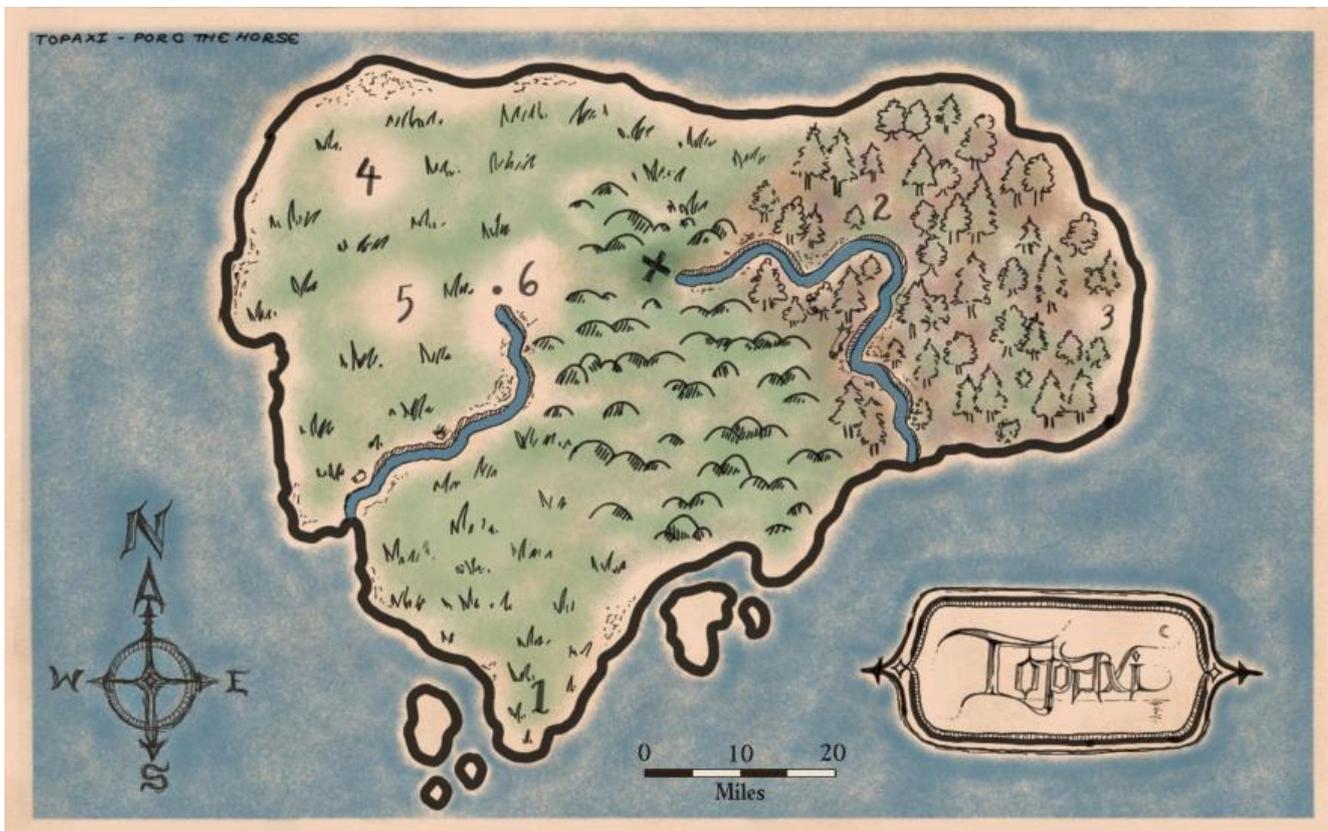
The Goal of Part 3

Visiting Topaxi is a vital part of the overall adventure, following directly on from the players' visit to Home, with only the ocean encounters with the sea giant and storm giant sensibly coming between the two.

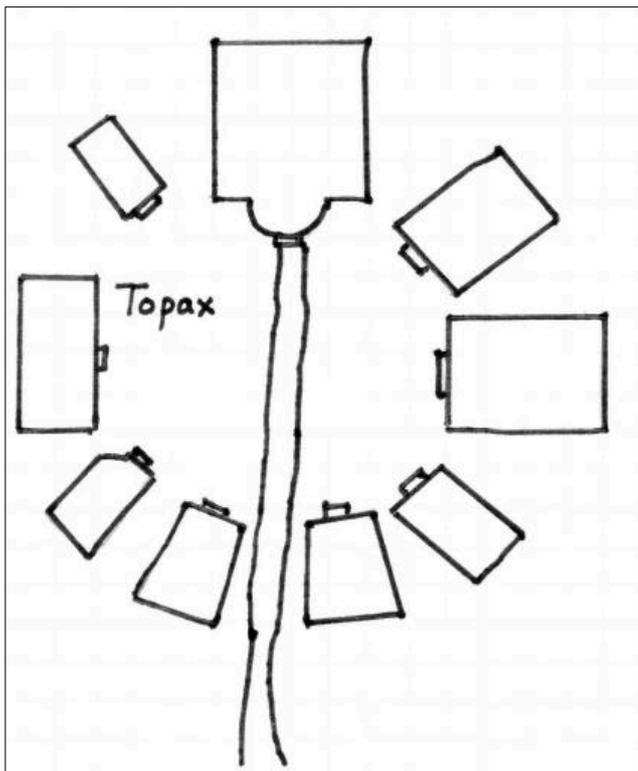
Topaxi is currently under attack by Althores's armies. Hundreds of his humanoids are waging war against the various natives. His goblins, orcs, gnolls, bugbears, and kobolds must be defeated to save the natives, who in return will tell of an unspoken horror that has infiltrated their topaz mines from the deep dark depths. The heroes must then penetrate the expansive cave system to defeat the creatures that lie within and find an ancient artefact of incredible power: the Topaz Sphere. This is necessary to lead them to the City of the Mermen and eventually The Isle of Doom, where Althores is building up his armies.

Overview of Topaxi

Topaxi is a fair-sized island consisting of rolling hills and deep forests. The vast forests on the eastern side of Topaxi have many small villages dotted around, though most are now abandoned due to the army of orcs. At the eastern tip of Topaxi is a large army camp consisting of many hundreds of humanoids. The western half of Topaxi is mostly grassy hills at the coast with tall mountains at the centre. The village of Topax, located near the entrance to the topaz mines, is based around the source of a river. Many refugees from the east have

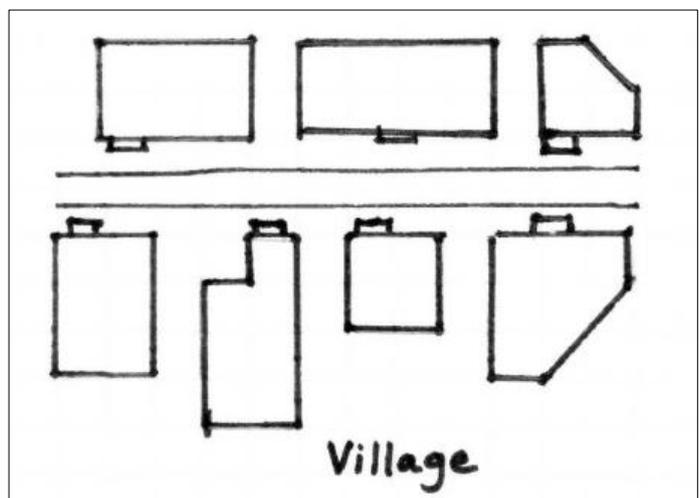


(Above) Map of the Island of Topaxi drawn by Porg the Horse



(Left) Map of the town of Topax by the author

(Below) Map of a standard village on Topaxi by the author





fled to Topax and the other villages in the hills. For wandering monsters use the Expert set charts.

Location Areas

In this section of the adventure the party will wander around the island of Topaxi, hopefully save the natives from Scretonas's armies, and eventually make their way to the topaz mines where the climax of this part occurs.

1. Ant Infestation

At this point in the southern tip of Topaxi there is a small village of 7 huts. The area is burnt and the huts are ruined as the area was targeted by one of the first raids by Althores's armies. Many skeletons lie sprawled around the area. The moment the players enter the village they are attacked by giant ants. There are 2 per player.

Giant Ants: AC 3; HD 4; hp 20 each; MV 180' (60'); #AT 1 bite; D 2-12; Save F2; ML 12; Int 2; AL N; XP 125

The rest of the village is deserted except for one hut where another 5 giant ants dwell guarding their treasure.

Giant Ants: AC 3; HD 4; hp 30 each; MV 180' (60'); #AT 1 bite; D 2-12; Save F2; ML 12; Int 2; AL N; XP 125; Treasure: 700 cp, 500 sp, 100 gp, 3 golden nuggets worth 50 gp each.



Giant black widow, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

2. Arachnophobia

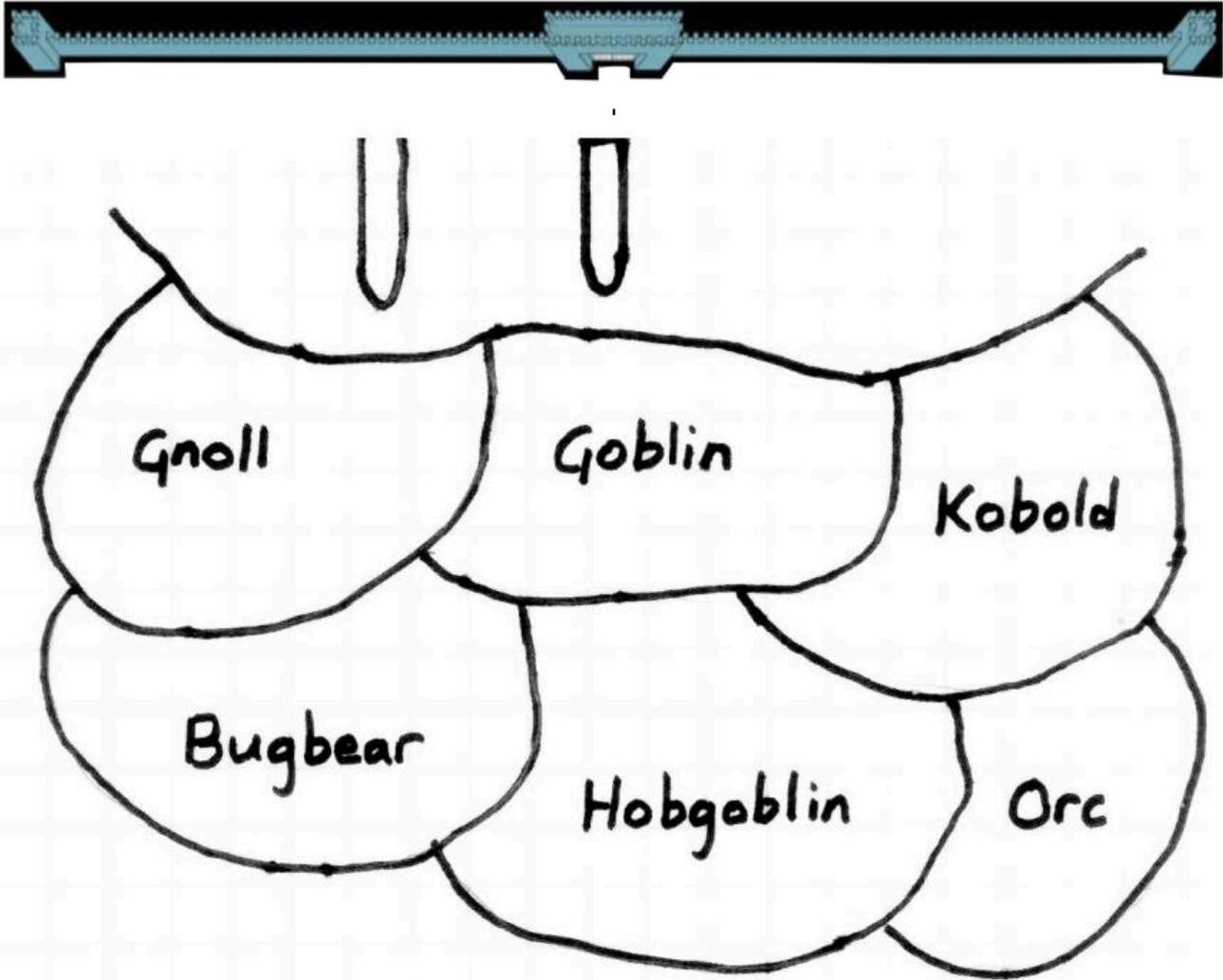
This village is very similar to Encounter No. 1, and is also burnt out and ruined. There are only bones of the primitive peoples who used to dwell here left behind. The village is inhabited by 11 giant black widow spiders. They have not been here long and so there are very few webs.

Giant Black Widows: AC 6; HD 3; hp 13 each; MV 60' (20'); #AT 1 bite; D 2-12 + poison; Save F2; ML 8; Int 2; AL N; XP 50; Treasure: 4 topazes worth 60 gp each.

3. The Humanoid Army

At the eastern tip of Topaxi there is a vast humanoid army entrenched. They have made a large camp on the peninsula. There is a harbour and then there are a large number of crude huts and tents.





Evil camp map showing war galleys at anchor and campsites (by author)

The enormous number of goblins, orcs and the like in the area make this a very difficult encounter to survive if the players just charge in waving weapons. They will certainly have to flee; otherwise they are likely to die.

There are two enormous war galleys moored in the harbour and 6 separate campsites with multiple huts and tents at each. The six campsites break up the different races and are designated to goblins, orcs, kobolds, gnolls, bugbears, and hobgoblins. Each group has a couple of hundred able-bodied soldiers and some servants and cooks.

The goblin campsite is inhabited by 410 soldiers and 34 servants and cooks.

The orc campsite has 394 warriors and 29 slaves and cooks.

The kobold campsite has 529 soldiers and 42 slaves and cooks.

The hobgoblin campsite has some 320 soldiers and 22 slaves and cooks.

The gnoll camp has 213 warriors and 25 servants and cooks.

The bugbear camp has just 153 warriors but 51 human slaves and 10 cooks.



Island orc, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

Usually forces such as these would fight between themselves, but instead they are very loyal to their commander. Even so, there is still a high possibility of fights breaking out due to racial differences, and if one starts it will be hard to get under control.

The commanders of each force are just ordinary humanoid chiefs.

The supreme commander, however, is none other than Skretonas, who is being given a chance to redeem himself.

The day the party lands on the island, the army will begin to march west, and on the fourth day will catch up with the Topaxi natives at encounter 5.

A token force of an additional 20 orcs will remain behind to guard the ships.

War Machine Statistics are as follows:

BFR: 88

Class: Good

20 % of the force is mounted: all goblins ride dire wolves.

20% of the force can use missile fire: all the kobolds are armed with slings and an assortment of other races use bows and crossbows.

1% or more of the force is equipped with magical abilities: a selection of creatures have weak magical weapons.

The force has an average movement rate of 100' per turn.

BR: 123

The force has a total of 2,020 soldiers, and 213 servants, slaves, and cooks.

For treasure, just roll for each race's appropriate lair and individual's treasure.

The party would be foolish to attack this place until the army has vacated as it would be suicidal. After the army has left there will only be 21 orcs in the camp. All the treasure except the orcs' personal loot will have been taken. The chief's scores are in brackets.

Orcs: AC 6 (4); HD 1; hp 7 each (8); MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 sword or 1 short bow(1 sword + 1); D 1-8 or 1-6 (2-9); Save F1; ML 8; Int 7; AL C; XP 10; Treasure: 20 cp each (24 gp).

4. Abandoned Village

This village is abandoned and empty, and its inhabitants long since gone. All have fled since the army landed on the island. Its layout is the same as 1 and 2.

5. The Last Defense

At this point of the island the remaining villagers have gathered in a stockaded encampment in a valley. The place is steep-sided and the mountains either side soar up to 3,000 feet.

Some 7,000 villagers reside in this small stockade in close-packed tents and huts. Of them, only 2,700 of the men can fight and only 800 have decent training. The rest are women and children.

This is the location that the army from Encounter 3 is heading to, and if the PCs are not here by the fourth day, or have not weakened or destroyed the army in some way, the villagers will be slaughtered. If the players do arrive, run the battle with war machine.

War machine statistics are as follows:

BFR: 48

Class: Below Average

20% or more of the force can use missile fire.

1% or more of the force is equipped with magical abilities.

The force has an average movement rate of 100' per turn.

BR: 62

One of the largest goals of this section of the adventure is to save these villagers, and if the players manage to do so then be sure to give them a substantial XP boost!

6. The Ruined Village of Topax

This village is another abandoned village but, unlike the previous ones, it used to have stone buildings. However, these lovely stone buildings are now burnt to the ground with some stones melted and others cracked and smashed.

There is not a living thing in the vicinity, but the party will find many scorched bodies. The entire place has been picked clean and now there are only a few copper pieces.

The entrance to the topaz caves is found one mile from the village.

Dungeon Encounters

The dungeon is actually a series of caves. The first area of caves is the "Topaz Mine". The mines used to have walls covered in the gleaming gems, but now the ones near the entrance have been stripped. The only ones left are the ones at the far end of the cave system. The miners were mining a section of wall and then the people broke open a dangerous new cave system.

Traps

A series of traps occur at various points throughout the dungeon and for simplicity's sake I will have just one description of each. Thus at any point marked A on the map refer to trap A described below.

All traps were created by the goblins in Encounter 5.

A At this point in the passage, the ceiling of the cave is incredibly weak and the loud

footfalls of the characters trigger a roof collapse, which falls down on the first few characters, dealing 2–20 points of damage per character. This trap can be prevented if the characters are trying to be extra quiet and not talking loudly to each other, or if a dwarf is near the front they will notice it immediately. If the trap is triggered the passageway becomes impassable.

B Here there is a pit 20-feet deep filling the passage. It is not covered and if the party has lights they will automatically notice it. Otherwise the front character must make a dexterity check at -5 to avoid falling down. If the front character has infravision they must still make a dexterity check, but with no minus. The pit is 10-feet across and the party must decide how to cross. Falling down the pit will make the player take 2–12 points of damage. When the party arrive at the pit, roll 1 dice. On a roll of 1–4 the pit is ordinary, but if you roll 5 or 6 the pit is spiked, causing a falling player to take 2–24 points of damage.

C This is another pit, but this time concealed in the floor of the tunnel. The front two characters will automatically fall down into the pit and the pit is identical to B. Only a dwarf may be able to identify this pit, and only if they are one of the front two characters.

D This is a typical crossbow trap. Two crossbows concealed in the wall will trigger on the party touching the tripwire. The lead character must save vs. wands or activate them, causing 2–12 points of damage.

E At the dead end here there is a lever and if the party pulls it iron bars drop from the ceiling, trapping them. The lever will not lift the bars and is then useless. The only way

to escape is to push them up using a combined character strength of 60.

F This trap is by far the most devious of all. The section of tunnel this is located in is covered in greenery on either side. The moment the first member walks into this section they step on a pressure plate concealed in the rocky floor. The moment they do so, spears slide out from underneath the greenery and fill the narrow tunnel, skewering them. The player will be allowed a dexterity check at -4 and if they succeed they avoid the worst of it, only taking 5d10 points of damage. Otherwise the player dies no matter what happens. The spears then slide back into the wall and leave the body on the ground. The spears can be activated multiple times so the players must remember to not step on the pressure plate each time they pass this way.

1. Topaz Mines

“You step into the entrance of the passage and look around. Ahead is a natural cave around 7' tall and 10' wide. Multiple passageways branch off in both directions. On the rocky uneven floor you see a couple of skeletons lying on the ground. They are long dead and clothed in rags and hold picks. Ahead there is a large pile of rubble on the floor and more broken picks. The walls are uneven and here and there are small gleams of yellow: the remains of the once large numbers of topazes.”

These expansive tunnels are filled with rubble and broken picks. The walls have mostly been cleared of topazes but there are still small gems here and there. Nearer the end there are far more topazes and some quite large ones. The area is devoid of

life and seems to be abandoned. As the dungeon master you should do your best to make it seem spooky and wrongly silent.

2. Break Through

“At some point the roof of this passage collapsed and was obviously cleared away. The collapse must have opened up a new passage from which a horrid stench emanates and the dark entrance emits an air of foreboding.”

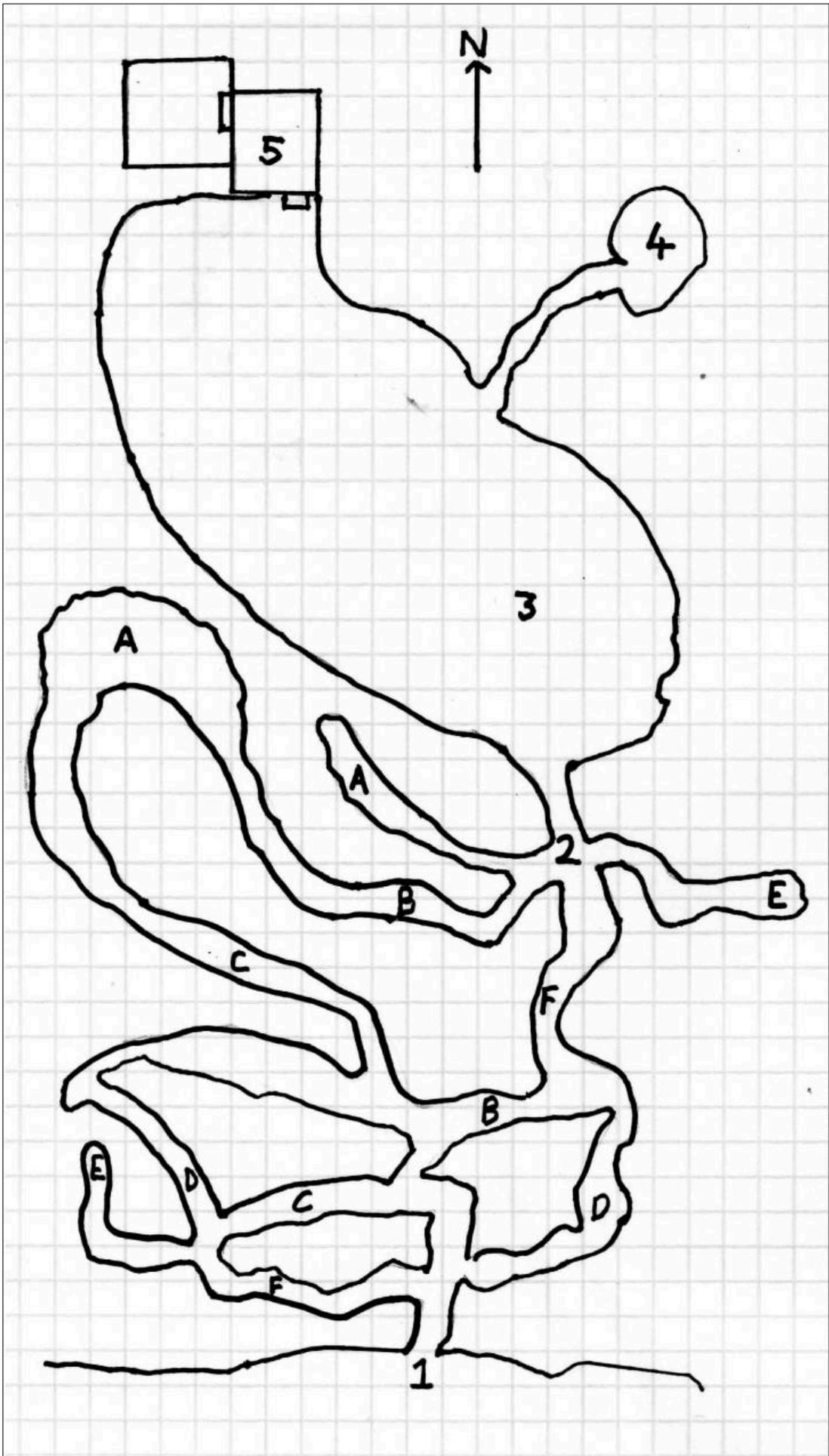
At this point in the passage the roof has collapsed and then has been cleared away to some extent, and there is a way through to dark caves where, seemingly, there are no topazes. This is the start of the evil caves, where danger came through and destroyed the village of Topax.

3. The Cavern of Death

“The passage widens and grows in height. The cavern you enter is huge, at least 50' high, and wide too. Many bones litter the floor among large stalactites. A couple of bodies even look fairly fresh. You lean forward to look closer when suddenly an eye flicks open on one of the stalactites. It suddenly shoots a large tentacle towards you and opens a mouth revealing long rows of jagged teeth.”

This is a large cavern about 60 feet high and filled with jagged stalactites and stalagmites. Carefully concealed among the stalactites are 4 ropers. These dreaded creatures have skin that looks like rock and with their tall pointed shapes they look just like the rocks at first glance.

Ropers: AC 0; HD 12; hp 53, 64, 71 and 82; MV 30' (10'); #AT 1 bite/6 strands; D 5-30/



Map of the topaz mines at a scale of 10 ft per square (by author)

weakness; Save F10; ML 10; Int 4; AL C; XP 3,875; Treasure: If the characters open up the stomachs for treasure they will find 20 gems worth 200 gp each.

A roper is a long (or tall) blob-like creature that has one eye, with a mouth beneath it, and six long tentacles along the body. Ropers usually live in rocky caverns where they can take the shape of tall rocks or stalagmites, but they may occasionally be found in woods, imitating trees. Ropers eat anything that moves, but they prefer humans and humanoids. Each tentacle can shoot out 60 feet to grab prey. The touch of a roper's strand causes weakness, reducing the victim's strength by half for 3 turns (no saving throw). The strand wraps tightly around the prey, pulling the victim toward its mouth, but only the bite causes damage. Characters can cut a strand only if a single blow from an edged, magical weapon inflicts 5 or more points of damage. Such a blow makes that strand useless, but the damage does not count against the monster's hit points. Damaged strands grow back in 24 hours. Ropers are immune to all first, second, and third level spells. They take no damage from cold or lightning, and are unaffected by normal and silver weapons. Characters may occasionally find treasure in ropers' stomachs.

At the back of the cavern lies a large chest. This chest is actually a polymar.

Polymar: AC 9; HD 10; hp 55; MV 60' (20'); #AT 3 blows; D 1-6; Save F5; ML 10; Int 5; AL C; XP 1,750

The polymar is an intelligent creature that can change its shape. It can look like any creature with 10 hit dice or less, or any object no larger than 100 cubic feet

(10'x10'x1', for example). The polymar gains no special abilities when it changes. This change ability is physical, not magical. Thus a detect magic spell will not detect the polymar. The change, however, is not perfect. Characters, including NPCs, have the same chance to detect the polymar as they do to find secret doors. Thus elves are more likely to notice polymars than other character classes. If the polymar is not detected before it attacks, it will attack with surprise.

Behind the polymar there lies a very narrow tunnel just 3' tall and 5' wide. The characters will have to crawl or shimmy if they want to reach the other side.

There is one other exit near the north wall of the cavern.

4. Room of Topaz

When the players enter this room they feel a great sense of peace fall over them. The walls of the room are covered in gleaming gems, all of them topazes, and on a pedestal in the centre is a gleaming crystal ball entirely made of topaz. The smooth circular object glows with an eerie light.

This gem is a magical crystal ball of seeing but it has special powers, see appendix.

The only other thing in this room are the topazes. There are vast numbers of gemstones here and the player characters may chip some from the walls; each is worth 1,000 gp. However the sound of the player characters chipping gemstones will attract the goblins from 5. When a PC starts chipping their 6th gemstone off the wall, the goblins will hear and creep into the cavern. If the goblins are not killed one of them will blast their horn of earthquakes and bring

down the roof. If that happens any PCs still in the room will have to make a Dexterity check at minus 3 or be crushed to death; if they succeed, then they escape before the cavern collapses. If they have already killed the goblins, make up some other way to stop them from getting as many topazes as they want.

5. Goblins of Magic

This room is a bare stone room with torches lighting up the walls. In one corner there is a door leading off to a sleeping chamber, and in the centre of this room there is a table around which sit four goblins. These 4 goblins have long considered themselves rulers of Topaxi and each has worked hard on their own respective fields. However, they are not at all pleased with Althores, who wishes to take over their island, and so they drove out the villagers from Topax, and during the distraction on both sides, stole the item key to locating the hidden island where Althores makes his home. Someday they plan to conquer it. However, they hate humans more than Althores and on no account would they agree to deal with them, nor would they even give out information. The goblins are called Grygash, Goltrar, Greegree, and Gadro.

They have no treasure as the topaz room counts as their treasure, and they guard it vigorously along with the ropers, who dislike goblin meat so do not attack them (in return the goblins give them any prisoners they come across), and the polymar, an ally. The side rooms just contain a basic bedroom.

Following pages:

Grygash, Goltrar, Greegree, and Gadro,
original drawings by Jeffrey Kosh

(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

Grygash – Goblin Fighter

AC 1; Lvl 15; hp 67; MV 60' (20'); #AT 1
Sword+3 + fire damage; D 4–11 + 1–4;
Save F15; ML 11; Int 8; AL C; XP 2,700

He wears plate armour and has a shield +1.
He wields a normal sword +3 which flames
on command.

Goltrar – Goblin Wicca

AC 6; Lvl 15; hp 24; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1
dagger/spell; D 2–5/special; Save MU15; ML
11; Int 17; AL C; XP 9,000

He carries a dagger +1 and a ring of protec-
tion +3. He also uses his spells. 1st: 5, 2nd:
4, 3rd: 4, 4th: 4, 5th: 3, 6th: 2, 7th: 1.

Spellbook

1st: *Sleep, darkness, magic missile,
ventriloquism, bold portal*

2nd: *Web, levitate, invisibility,
detect invisible*

3rd: *Fireball x2, haste, dispel magic*

4th: *Curse, wall of fire, confusion,
polymorph others*

5th: *Animate dead, cloudkill,
conjure elemental*

6th: *Flesh to stone, disintegrate*

7th: *Reverse gravity*

Grygash



THRESHOLD



Goltrar



THRESHOLD



Greegree



THRESHOLD



Gadro



THRESHOLD



Greegree – Goblin Shaman

AC 2; Lvl 15; hp 38; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1 staff; D 2–12; Save C15; ML 10; Int 13; AL C; XP 9,000

He wields a staff of striking with 30 charges and wears chain armour +3. He also has spells. 1st: 6, 2nd: 5, 3rd: 5, 4th: 3, 5th: 3, 6th: 3.

Spells

1st: *Cure light wounds* x3,
cause light wounds x2, *fear*

2nd: *Bless, blight, hold person* x2,
snake charm

3rd: *Continual darkness, cause disease,*
curse x2, *remove curse*

4th: *Animate dead, cure serious wounds* x2

5th: *Cure critical wounds, raise dead,*
finger of death

6th: *Cure all* x2, *barrier*

Gadro – Goblin Thief

AC 3; Lvl 15; hp 42; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 sword +1; D 2–9; Save T15; ML 9; Int 11; AL C; XP 2,700

He has a sword +1 and leather armour +4 and a horn of earthquakes with five charges.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The ideal end to the adventure would be for the army to be defeated and the Topaz Ball to be found. It is possible to complete this stage by just finding the Topaz Ball, but if that happens and the villagers are butchered the party will have lost valuable allies and Althores will be stronger when they do meet him. Part 3 should come out hopefully in the next 6 months to a year. Hope you enjoyed!

King Everast

Appendix: The Magic of Topaxi

The Topaz Ball

This mysterious item has the full functionality of an ordinary magical crystal ball, but additionally it can be used to break the illusion around the Island of Doom. It has a special power that upon finding the true name of a person or place – a name which only the Immortals know – it will shoot out a beam of light in the direction of the person or place; when you are close enough it breaks any and all enchantments around them. It is not to be used lightly as it is very difficult to find a true name and the Immortals will not give them out freely. However, there are a few people in this archipelago who do know the true name of the island. The party will just have to find one and convince them to part with the knowledge. The search should not be easy.

The Horn of Earthquakes

When blown, this horn recreates the effect of the cleric *earthquake* spell. Each use drains one charge.

Against the Wizards:

Moving Mountain Menagerie of Morkhulan Minister

Amer fort entrance, Rajasthan, India, possible inspiration for Sindhi architecture

**A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 5e
ADVENTURE FOR 4 11th Level
Characters**

by Not A Decepticon

Ever since Alphatian occupation started, the Moving Mountain patrols the mountains of Sind. Powered by machines merging magic and technology, it is a prison, a menagerie of unique creatures, a stronghold, and a chapel of worship. But there are many more sinister things going on in secret, things that would horrify even ruthless Alphatians

SYNOPSIS

The adventure is set in the alternate timeline described in “*War on All Sides*”¹ and the “*Known World 1030 AC*” *Timeline* by Glen Welch², and acts as a prequel to “*Against the Wizards: Undersea Laboratory of Aquan Archmage*” published in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #31. It can be played as a standalone, but it may require some adjustments if moved to a different timeline or location, as it assumes to take place on Alphatia-occupied Sind.

¹ Available as a [PDF download](#) from the Vaults of Pandius

² Refer to Glen Welch’s YouTube channel, specifically to his “*Welcome to Mystara*” playlist, in particular to the video “[Welcome to Mystara: The Known World 1030 AC Part 7](#)” and its part concerning Sind, as well as to “[Welcome to Mystara: The Known World 1030 AC Part 6](#)”

The adventure is balanced for a party of 4 11th level characters, who should advance to level 12 upon completing it. The adventure assumes the PCs are accomplished heroes, whose deeds are known in the region. Characters sympathetic to people of Sind or harboring anti-Alphatian sentiments would be especially well-fitting for this adventure.

The Three Main Themes of the Adventure Are:

1. **Dehumanization:** Through the adventure the player characters will constantly see how intelligent beings are being treated no better than wild beasts, and the lines between prison and zoo will become blurred.
2. **Industrial Nightmare:** The area evokes images of industrialist hellscares, where everything operates in a rigid way, that makes it feel like the crew itself is more pieces of a machine, rather than individuals, with only the strongest personalities still retaining individual will.
3. **Eating the humble pie:** The party at this high level is capable of dishing a lot of damage and taking an equal amount of punishment. As such, I made the adventure full of enemies above their weight. It is very possible the PCs are capable of punching them anyway, but if not, they may need to start thinking strategically and recruit more allies.

BACKGROUND AND SETUP

The adventure is set in a timeline in which Sind has been first conquered by Hosadus, the Master of Hule, to serve as a launching point of his invasion of Darokin. Only to be later “liberated” by the Alphatian fleet and promptly used as a launching point on its own attack on Glantri. After the War on All Sides ended, the sudden death of Empress Eriadna plunged Alphatia into a civil war. On the one side was newly-crowned Emperor Zandor, on the other Prince Haldemar, acting as the will of the late empress’s true heir. As Zandor grew desperate, he began moving more troops from Sind back to mainland Alphatia, giving an opportunity for many freedom fighters and resistance groups to rise and overthrow their oppressors. Among them was the legendary hero of the people, Raahinya.

It was Raahinya who discovered that Zandor had ordered a search for the three keys to the Legendary Vault, where the last Rahja of free Sind hid his vast fortune. In a daring act worth a hundred songs, Raahinya stole the first of the keys—the Silver Key. While he was captured, he managed to hide the key somewhere. Without it, the gates of the Vault shall never be opened. As his mind resisted all attempts at being read, he was placed in a new kind of prison—an impregnable fortress known as Moving Mountain Menagerie.

This fortress patrols the Kadesh and Gunjab regions of Sind, using its immense size to outright ride over other mountains, leaving a trail of destruction in its passing. It will soon return to the southern borders of Gunjab region. At its command stands Minister Bardan Baozrak, a war hero and arch-priest from the Alphatian Kingdom of

Stoutfellow³, legendary defender of fortress Bal-Balakh from the schemes of mysterious shadow dwarves. He was personally promoted to help in subjugation of Sind by Emperor Zandor after a devastating blow dealt to the shadow dwarves, taking their fortress Kurum-Bardak (it was since then recaptured).

What no one realizes is that Bardan died leading the assault, but was replaced by a shadow dwarven agent from the underground kingdom of Morkhula. This agent is a servant of the Outer Beings, who seeks to use this opportunity to twist the whole nation of Sind, and then the Known World itself, into the image of his sinister masters.

At some point during their travels through Sind, the PCs will receive an invitation to a banquet held in their honor in a hidden location within the city of Mahasahad. Upon arrival they will be greeted warmly, although it will be very clear the people are not the kind that can afford to throw lavish parties for passing heroes—a keen eye can easily spot a lot of elbow grease being applied to appear far more glamorous than they really are. The leader of the group is a beautiful woman named Indrepal Emerald-Eyed, due to the characteristic color of her eyes. DC 10 Intelligence (History) Check will tell the players both the name and looks fit the description of the lover and frequent ally of Raahinya in his—now legendary—war of liberation against the Master and then Alphatians. If confronted with the fact she is throwing PCs a party that her people clearly could not afford, she will humbly admit it and apologize. She has heard of the party heroics (she will name

up to three heroic acts that PCs have done in or close to Sind, with merely a slight exaggeration), and felt she needed to at least try to muster a welcome deserving their fame. If asked about it, she will confirm she is the same Indrepal from the stories and tells the PCs of the fate that has befallen her lover. She knows all the information in previous paragraphs except that concerning Bardan Baozrak, of whom she only knows he is a dwarf in charge of the Moving Mountain.

Indrepal will beg the PCs to save Raahinya, trying to appeal to their compassion and pride. When pressed about the payments, she will admit she and her people follow the same ascetic doctrines as Raahinya and do not have much. However, she knows that her lover's goal was never to gain the treasures of the Legendary Vault for himself—he merely could not stand the thought of what belongs to people of Sind be squandered in Alphatians' petty internal squabbles. She knows if they swear to keep it safe from Zandor's men, Raahinya will hand them over the Silver Key. And even if they fail to find the other two keys, the Silver Key alone is worth a small fortune when sold to other treasure seekers.

Indrepal can inform the PCs there is a way to enter the Moving Mountain. As her spies managed to discover, the soul of General Gashunk, once leader of Hulean forces slain by Bardan Baozrak during Alphatia's "liberation" of Sind, has been bound to always be within a day's travel from the Moving Mountain. If presented with a blessing from the Magister, he is to lead anyone inside in a way that bypasses all the issues with teleportation. She believes her people have forged perfect, or at least as good as it is humanly possible, notes of such blessing.

³ All information about Alphatian dwarves is taken from Bruce Heard's work on his blog at <https://bruce-heard.blogspot.com/>, in particular the blog post "[Denwarf-Hurgon, Pillar of Alphatia](#)"

The adventure assumes the PCs will accept the quest. If they refuse, you can always keep it in reserve, if the party ever comes in possession of the other two keys. In such a case, some adjustment of encounters to match the PCs' new level may be required. Alternatively, the Horse Clan encounter described in the "Getting to the Mountain" part may serve as an alternate plot hook, with some adjustments.

MONSTER ADJUSTMENT

To not bloat this text with tons of stat blocks, the book will use a lot of substitution of existing monsters or fan conversions. Books used include *Monster Manual*, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, *Guildmaster's Guide to Ravnica* and *Primeval Thule Campaign Setting*. For those who do not have access to the books outside of *Monster Manual*, relevant monster's Challenge Rating will be provided for easier substitution.



Shadow Dwarves: Whenever the text references stat blocks of derro or duegar, treat them instead as shadow dwarves, and flavor their spellcasting as either divine or technological in nature. All of them also gain the Magic Resistance trait, meaning they have

advantages on saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities.

Inform the PCs they can still use *counterspell* or *dispel magic* against shadow dwarven "technology," but it should be similarly flavored. For example, if a shadow dwarven conjurer's casting of *fog cloud* is flavored as throwing a smoke grenade, *counterspelling* it becomes disintegrating the grenade mid-air.

Hivebrood: I tried to stay away from using monsters in 3rd party books, as I know the WotC material is what a majority of the game masters will have. That being said, I must note that the hivebrood could as well use statistics of Tosculi from Kobold Press's *Tome of Beasts I*. Creatures in Area 18 of lower level could use statistics of Tosculi Elite Bow-Riders and those in Area 24 of Tosculi Drone and Tosculi Hive-Queen, with removal of the ability to fly from all creatures. I am convinced both species crawled out of the very same insect hell realm anyway.

Mystaran Rakshasa: Whenever the text references statistics of a rakshasa, they are man-made (or rather, dwarf-made) hybrids of rakasta, weretiger, and adapter, and thus require the following adjustments to statistics from *Monster Manual*:

- Change the type from fiend to monstrosity
- They gain weretiger's Shapechanger, Keen Hearing and Smell and Pounce traits as well as adapter's Alter Appearance and Adaptation abilities.

Their Challenge Rating remains unchanged because rakshasa following Rules as Written is weak for its CR.

GETTING TO THE MOUNTAIN

The entirety of Moving Mountain is protected against teleportation, in part due to security reasons, but also because of a high risk of teleporting inside the stone structure of the mountain. It is no trouble for Alphatians, who simply fly towards the fortress on their ships. However, this effect extends outwards, making all magic teleport the caster only as close as approximately a day's walking from the Mountain's current location (adjusting for its own movement). PCs may easily discern this fact with a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) Check, as a kind of countermeasure obvious in the case of such a structure.

On their way the party will likely find it odd that there are no notable random encounters; in fact all creatures flee from the Mountain, as they would be crushed otherwise. If the PCs spot any monsters or bandits or wild animals, they will be fleeing in disarray, the biggest danger being presented to whatever unlucky creatures may be trampled on their way.

The Horse People

The only encounter will occur once the PCs are less than a week ahead from the Moving Mountain, but three days before they have entered the mountains of Sind. You may need to adjust this encounter to the PCs' preferred way of travel.

Begin this encounter by asking a PC with the highest of two skills to roll three DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) or Wisdom (Survival) checks, each successful one decreasing the DC of the following ones by 5. They represent the three days during which the PCs can spot the approaching riders of the Horse

Clan. During the first day the successful check allows them to find tracks of dozens of horses that have been extremely well covered, almost unrecognizable for a less keen eye. On the second day the PCs can hear the rumbling of horses in the distance, always keeping far away so as to not be noticed and even moving far more stealthily than an average cavalry unit. On the third day the PCs can notice very subtle signs that they are being led into a meeting with the mysterious riders. Fallen trees and recent landslides block other roads, a stampede of animals fleeing from the Moving Mountain has been redirected to the canyon PCs intended to go through. Things that for an unwatchful eye would appear as coincidences, but for the PCs will be obviously leading them to a specific location.

At any point the players may decide to avoid the raiders and they likely have means to do so. Allow it. If they choose to confront their mysterious stalkers, following the subtly laid path will take the PCs to an open plain, where they will see a large cloud of dust in the distance and hear the rumble of dozens of hooves. Soon they will recognize these raiders as the Atruaghin Horse Clan. Or, as they are known to people of the Nagpuri region of Sind, Godan, the Horse people. Moreover, they are accompanied by a single pachydermion, who appears to be flying and carrying an elderly Atruaghin woman on his back. The riders, a total of twenty four, will surround the party, but stop at respectable distance, without attacking. Their leader will ride towards the PCs, accompanied by the elderly woman and the pachydermion. They will introduce themselves as Canowicakte, Azayamankawin, and Pragnay, respectively, and request to talk with the PCs.



They will explain briefly that six of the Horse Clan's youth have been captured by Alphatians during an attempted raid on Red Orcs as their rite of passage, and kept in the Moving Mountain as prisoners. As the Horse Clan found out, Red Orcs, their hated enemy, have pledged themselves to Bardan Baozrak in exchange for protection, making Alphatians enemies of the Horse Clan. Canowicakte personally led an attack to retrieve the youths, but his forces were overwhelmed and forced to retreat by "monstrosities of steel and dark magic." If the PCs pry on this description, he is willing to try to describe the creatures as best as he can, but it is not an expertise of his or his two companions'. His descriptions are good enough to give advantage on a single Knowledge check per player to identify monsters awaiting in the Moving Mountain.

Since his attack has been rebuked, Canowicakte and his men have been unleashing their anger on Alphatian troops and amassed enough in stolen riches to follow

Pragnay's advice and enlist, as the pachydermion put it, "professional subcontractors." Pragnay is also the one who foresaw the coming of the PCs and learned of their exploits, as he claims, through prayer to the Immortals. The group offers the PCs 2,000 gp in coin and jewelry taken from slain Alphatians, plus an additional 1,000 gp per child saved, and another 2,000 gp if they manage to bring back all six of them. Moreover, they also offer a way of passage they themselves used in their first assault on the Moving Mountain : through the Spirit World.

If the PCs refuse the quest, the Horse Clan leaves, but will spread the word of their cold indifference everywhere they go, likely hurting the PCs' reputation in the region.

If the PCs accept the quest, they will be given two bracelets. One to snap once they want to be pulled out from the Moving Mountain—when destroyed it will open the portal to the Spirit World. Second one they

can use in case of a desperate situation, to call Horse Clan warriors for aid. When snapped, it works as Horn of Valhalla but instead of ghosts, it allows living Horse Clan warriors to appear through the Spirit World (see their statistics described below). When snapped the player can choose it to work as Brass Horn in which case the warriors appear on foot, or as silver one, in which case each warrior brings their horse with them. These warriors will be pulled back to the Spirit World after an hour.

Azayamankawin will then perform a ritual as a Spirit Shaman, communing with the friendly Spirit Lord that followed the Horse Clan here from their home plateau. This Spirit Lord has a form of a whole Mountain; as such he can simply “Overlap” with Moving Mountain and carefully move the PCs from within his own caverns into area 1 on Moving Mountain Upper Level map.

If the PCs want to attack the Horse Clan, use the following statistics:

- Each of the twenty four Horse Clan riders is using statistics of a **Berserker** but armed with a longbow, two axes instead of a greataxe, has a Mounted Combatant feat and can make an additional attack with their secondary ax.
- Canowicakte is using statistics of **Warlord** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*) but instead of wearing plate armor he adds his Constitution modifier to his AC, setting it at 17. He is armed as his companions and can make one additional attack with his offhand ax.
- The horses are all using statistics of a **Warhorse** and move right after their riders in initiative.

- Azayamankawin uses statistics of a **Druid**.
- Pragnay is using statistics of a **Priest**, but his STR is 18, he has damage resistance against nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage, and can cast *fly* at will.

The Horse Clan fights to subdue but if more than five of their members are slain, they retreat and begin to harass the PCs with hit-and-run tactics.

The PCs may wonder what the Horse Clan is doing here. The full explanation is provided in the full 1030 timeline, but the short version is as follow: After War on All Sides, Horse Clan was sick of being trapped on the Atruaghin Plateau and travelled through underground tunnels, finding themselves in territories north of Sind's Nagpuri region, becoming known as Godan by Sindi natives. They trade with Sindi people and raid Red Orcs in the west, but are slowly becoming an uneasy neighbor, due to their militaristic ambitions.

Swordmaster of the Goblin Horde

If PCs reach within the day of the Moving Mountain, but have not used Horse Clan's help, they will need to seek General Gashunk. As Indrepal informs them, to find him they need to continue travelling towards the Moving Mountain even after the sunset. If they do, they will be besieged by the **Ghostly Horde**⁴ of goblinoids who have been slaughtered by Magister Bardan Baozrak. After the initial encounter, the horde will not disappear, but step back,

⁴ See the [“Ghostly Horde”](#) description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius



allowing General Gashunk—ghostly apparition of a hobgoblin in a gambeson and left eye covered by an eyepatch, wielding two longswords attached to his wrists by chains and shackles—to step in. The PCs may present him the forgeries, but he will recognize them for what they are immediately. However, he has no love for the “mad dwarf” who bound his soul and his soldiers’ to act as his undead slaves. He will propose the PCs a different deal.

Gashunk was bound by a curse that forces him to serve until he can die a glorious, honorable death. If the PCs can best him in combat, he will open for them the path inside Moving Mountain, before moving on. He uses statistics of a **Death Knight** with the following changes:

- He uses two longswords and cannot be disarmed, as they’re shackled to his wrists, allowing him to also cast spells without losing the weapons. As such he can make an additional attack on each turn.
- He benefits from the Shackles of Freedom (see below).
- He has resistance against bludgeoning, piercing or slashing damage made by non-magical weapons.
- As long as his ghostly horde sees him and he sees them, whenever he misses on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can add +5 to the result. He can use this ability up to six times.

If reduced to 0 Hit Points Gashunk will open the portal, leading to Area 1 on Moving Mountain Lower Level Map. Before leaving, he will grant the PC who dealt him the final blow the Shackles of Freedom, then bid the PCs farewell and marshal his troops west, before vanishing.

Shackles of Freedom: Wondrous Item, Rare, requires attunement, you can choose to attune to one or both shackles using a single attunement slot.

Benefits:

- Any: You cannot be disarmed, as whatever you hold becomes shackled to the wrist. Even if you drop it, it hangs near your hand, interfering with you using other objects with that hand. *Remove curse* or *lesser restoration* breaks this effect but it returns whenever you hold a new object.
- Left Shackle: You can *teleport* to any location you can see up to 20 ft as a bonus action.
- Right Shackle: Whenever you *teleport* as a bonus action, you can make a single weapon attack after you teleport.
- Both: You gain benefits of individual shackles, a Dual Wielder feat, and are always considered under the effects of *freedom of movement* spell.



ADVENTURE LOCATION

Moving Mountain is exactly what it says on the tin—a whole mountain that has been, through gnomish and dwarven technology and Alphatian magic, turned into a gigantic fortress that crushes everything in its path and rides on other mountains like a tank on a rocky terrain, while being impenetrable for all possible manners of assault. It rolls on a giant platform of adamantine, steel and stone, inside which is the Lower Level of the complex, moved by a series of continuous tracks hidden beneath. The Mountain itself holds the Upper Level.

Features of the Area

Door: All doors are made of adamantine and are locked, unless specified otherwise. Each dwarven member of the security is equipped with keys to areas adjacent to the one they are encountered in. Unless specified otherwise, opening each of the locked doors requires a DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check. The doors are always of sufficient size to let through creatures in the room behind it, even if the map would indicate otherwise.

Elevation: As the fortress is built inside the mountain, not everything is on a similar level. For convenience it is recommended to assume the numbering of rooms corresponds to how high within the mountain they are. Lowest room of Upper Level is still above the highest room of Lower Level.

Light: Unless stated otherwise, each wall is equipped with a torch with ever-burning flame, spread from each other just tight enough to nearly eliminate any shadows,

making all Stealth checks to be done at disadvantage.

Walls: All walls are adamantine and reach thirty feet high, unless the room hosts creatures or objects of larger size, in which case the wall height is adjusted accordingly. If the wall is adjacent to a room of a menagerie (that is, a room hosting unusual creatures) its walls are covered in dwarven runes that, when read out loud, make the wall transparent, allowing one to observe the behavior of those creatures. It is a one-sided effect, and the creatures do not know they are being observed. Walls of Areas 18 and 24 on Lower Level and 3, 5, and 8 on Upper Level lack such runes.

Stairs: Stairs left to Area 5 on Lower Level connect to stairs next to Area 9 on Upper Level, while stairs below Area 9 on Lower Level lead to stairs below Area 1 on Upper Level.

Alarm: In any fight against shadow dwarves and other members of the staff, there is a 50% chance each turn that the enemy with lowest Hit Points will flee to raise an alarm. If allowed to flee, they will return in 1d3 rounds with 1d4+1 shadow dwarves of random type, and an alarm will go off. Alarm takes the form of a high, puncturing noise reverberating through the whole level, which magically carries the image of the intruders into the minds of all shadow dwarves, as well as the general location in which they are spotted. Every round after that, on initiative count of 20, shadow dwarves from nearby areas, starting from the closest, will appear and join the combat. This only stops once the PCs leave the area in which they were reported to be, but alarm does continue and doubles chance for a random encounter while exploring this level. If, after an hour of real life time

since the alarm went off, the PCs aren't yet captured or killed, one of the named NPC shadow dwarves will venture into areas 7 and 8 of Lower Level and activate the iron gargoyles inside, setting them to hunt the PCs down. They will move through the rooms of each level until they find the PCs, at which point they'll attack, focusing on singular creatures each, retreating if reduced below half of their hit points to commence repairs, and then attack again.

Random Shadow Dwarves: If an area description asks you to roll to determine the presence of a number of shadow dwarves in it, for each dwarf present roll 1d4 to determine which statistics it is using: 1- **Duergar Mind Master** 2- **Duergar Soulblade** 3- **Duergar Stone Guard** 4- **Duergar Xarrorn** (all four from *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2 each except Soulblade, which is CR 1). If the number of dwarves is above seven, use a single roll per four shadow dwarves. Shadow dwarves have been whipped into an obedient workforce and are demoralized to the point of lacking will to rebel against given orders and no desires beyond mere brief moments of rest among grueling work shifts.

Horse Clan Youths: They are to be found in areas 3, 10, 22, and 24 on Lower Level, and 2 and 26 on Upper Level. Each one tells a similar story of being suddenly attacked by a shadow dwarven patrol during their rite of passage. Each of them knows the location of one of their peers, determined randomly by roll of d6, removing those already found by the party from the list. They feel obligated to fight to save their friends, but have been beaten and exhausted, so an easy DC 10 check will convince them to stay put in an area of PCs' choice, though they may need to be escorted there. They use the statistics of **Scout** but have no weapons.



RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

For every real-time hour that the PCs spend in the Moving Mountain, roll a d12. On a result of 1, roll 1d8 on the appropriate table on the following pages for either Lower or Upper Level.

A separate table for the effect of a Curse of Madness is included for when that option is rolled on the Lower Level.

LOWER LEVEL

1 Emergency Exit

Doors to this room are locked by the *arcane lock* spell. Members of security and inquisition know the password unlocking them.

This area is empty, except for large runes on the walls in Dwarvish, enchanted to always shine slightly. The runes tell of a secret password to be spoken in case of evacuation, signaling Gashunk to open a portal leading creatures in this area into safety, away from the Moving Mountain. If the PCs have slain Gashunk already, this magic no longer works.

2 Bathroom

There is a single toilet, a single sink and a single shower installed in this room. The door can be locked from the inside. Water in the pipes is circulated and kept clean by a **Hydrax**⁵ that lives in these pipes. The Hydrax cannot be detected by magic, but will not attack until anyone damages the pipes or any object in the room.

A DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) will reveal a secret door on the other side of the room and a corridor leading to Area 19.

3 Shooting Range

Two cages are hanging from the ceiling at the west end of this room. One of them is holding Clara Espada (Human, woman, from Ispa, NG **Apprentice Wizard**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR ¼) and the other Delema, one of the Horse Clan youths (human woman from Horse Clan, LN), two individu-

⁵ See the "[Elemental, Hydrax](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

ally captured prisoners of the shadow dwarves. Their feet are shackled in a way that cuts their movement speed in half. The shackles can be opened with a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or broken with a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check.

On the far right stand Sergeant Bruto Ratgin (**Duergar Warlord**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 6) and three members of Weapon Development Division (**Duergar Xarron**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2), all four armed with two muskets each. Shadow dwarves are conducting a "weapon test" of some muskets acquired through smugglers from the Savage Coast. The two teenage girls were chosen as moving targets. If not interrupted, on his command both cages will open, dropping the two girls to the floor and starting combat initiative. The girls have been told the first one to reach him will live, so on their turn they will try to dash towards him. On their turn the shadow dwarves will fire their muskets at the girls, the next turn switching to a second musket instead of reloading.

If the PCs interrupt, the shadow dwarves attempt to kill them with their muskets, but if it fails, they fight using more traditional means. If Bruto is reduced below 25% of his hit points, he will attempt to parlay, begging for his life in exchange for giving the PCs the name of the smuggler who provided him with firearms. His contact is a man named Huan Hernandez, a criminal from Slagovich. A DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check will make Bruto reveal the password to the secret door in this room, leading to Area 17, promising the PCs can take everything here as their own if they let him live. Bruto is not above begging for his life. If allowed to let go, he will flee to raise an alarm.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS: LOWER LEVEL

Result	Encounter
1	Captain Kryk “the Killer” Kringle (Duergar Despot , <i>Mordekainen’s Tome of Foes</i> , CR 12, see Area 4 of Lower Level), accompanied by his two bodyguards (Duergar Stone Guard , <i>Mordekainen’s Tome of Foes</i> , CR 2), doing regular patrols and keeping an open eye, giving him an advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to find intruders and Wisdom (Insight) checks against any Deception or Persuasion checks made against him.
2	6d6 red Orcs on a patrol, attack unless convinced the PCs are part of the staff. Since they’re new hires and do not know the whole crew yet, Deception checks against them have advantage. If any of the orcs are questioned, there’s a 10% chance they know the location of one of the Horse Clan youths
3	Patrol of Red orc elite force composed of one each: Orc Blade of Ilneval (CR 4), Orc Red Fang of Shargaas (CR 3), Orc Hand of Yurtrus (CR 2), Orc Nurtured One of Yurtrus (CR ½), Orc Claw of Luthic (CR 2) (all from <i>Volo’s Guide to Monsters</i>), and Orc Eye of Grummsh . While monster stat blocks are associated with worshippers of Forgotten Realms gods, this can simply be ignored and their abilities flavored as just unique skills or shamanistic magic.
4	Janus Janus, Alphatian Safety Inspector (LN, male Mage), an elderly safety inspector who will confuse the PCs with staff and demand they immediately deliver his list of complaints and safety violations to Minister, directing them the shortest way to the stairs leading to Upper Level.
5	2d12 Geonids ^a have dug in a small tunnel into the mountain and burst through the wall right as the PCs approach. They are hostile only if they confuse the PCs with shadow dwarves, whom they consider “blasphemers.”
6	3d6 Garl ^b . Having escaped imprisonment from one of the menagerie cells, the garl now stalk the corridors hunting shadow dwarves. Red orcs were hired in part to hunt them down.
7	A glyph containing a Curse of Madness has been placed on the floor to activate if more than three creatures who are not shadow dwarves, Alphatians or red orcs cross it one after another. Each creature within 15 feet of the glyph must make a DC 20 Charisma saving throw or roll on the Curse of Madness table (next page). Effects lasts until <i>remove curse</i> or similar spell are cast on the PCs.
8	2d4 Damaged Magen ^c patrol. Roll 1d4 to determine the type: 1 - Caldron Magen 2 - Demos Magen 3 - Galvan Magen 4 - Hypnos Magen. They have been abandoned due to various faults that make them attempt extremely harmful things with living beings, and now roam the lower level.

Notes:

- a: See the [“Geonid”](#) description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius
- b: See the [“Garl”](#) description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius
- c: See the [“Magen”](#) descriptions (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

Curse of Madness Table

Result	Effect
1	Gorilla: Every time you try to tell, read, listen or watch any form of narrative, 1d6 Apes appear in the nearest free space and attack you and everyone else in the room, fighting until they either die or kill every other creature in the room.
2	Cold: You lose all empathy towards other creatures.
3	Egghead: You take 1 point of radiant damage every minute your head is exposed to any light. If you spend more than 24 hours with your head not exposed to light, you are immediately killed, as a Giant Spider bursts through your skull.
4	Unstrung: Once every 24 hours you hear the voice of an Unseelie fey trying to convince you to do horrible, violent things “like a real man.” If you do not follow their commands, you must make a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw, or are frightened for 1 minute, during which you believe you’re made out of wood.
5	Itching: You begin to itch all over your body. Every time you are dealt damage that would cause you to bleed, a Swarm of Insects appears, seemingly bursting through your wound, and attacks you. It is invisible to other creatures and whenever you tell anyone about it, they have to make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or they do not believe you.
6	Delusional: Whenever you meet a healthy person, you must make a DC 25 Intelligence saving throw, or become convinced they are horribly ill and need to immediately receive an extremely dangerous way of help or quest they have to undertake, and have advantage on convincing other creatures your delusions are right. If you do convince the creature to go along with your plan, you then proceed to come up with increasingly worse ways of helping, until they die. You can obsess like that only about a single creature at a time.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS: Upper Level

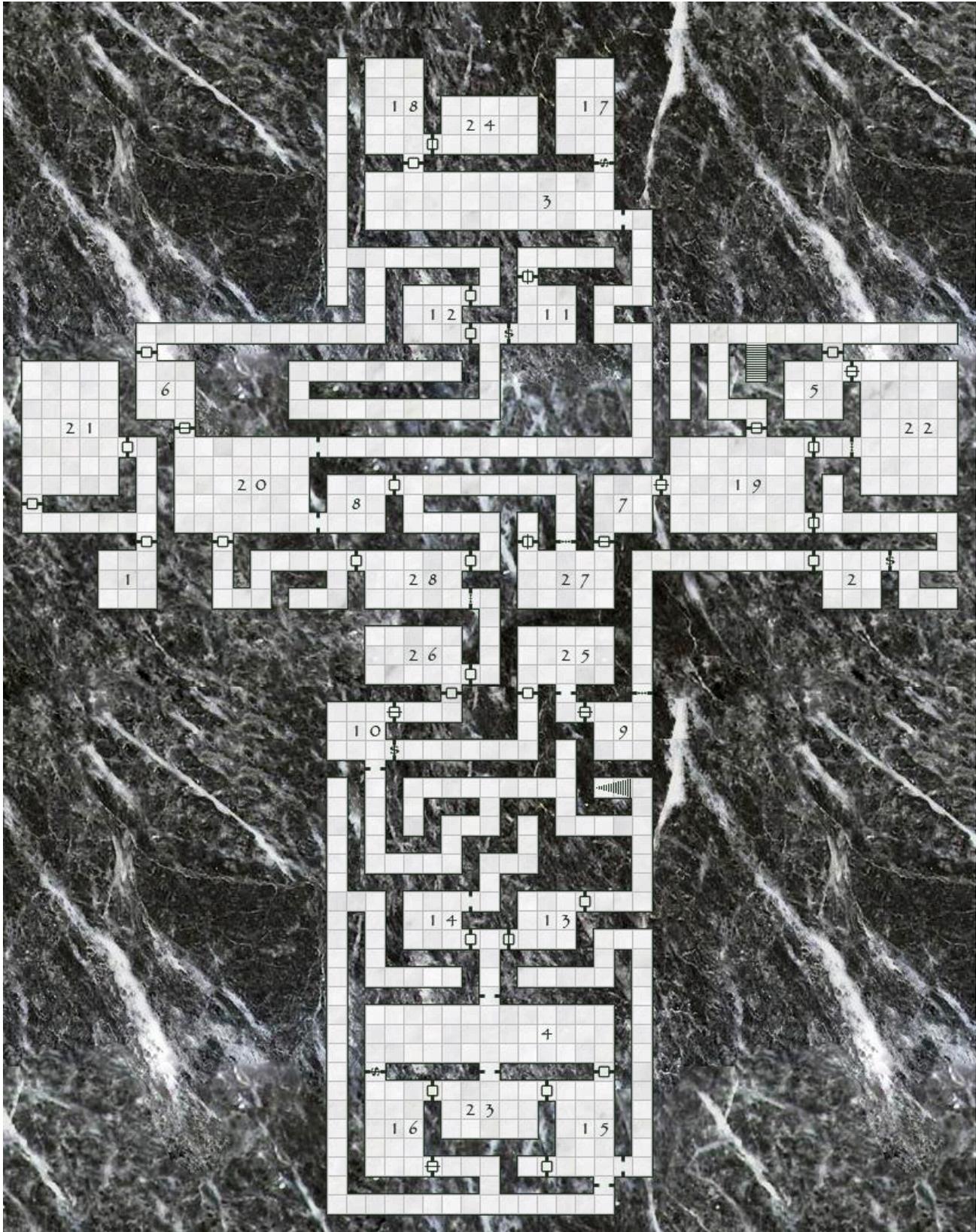
Result	Encounter
1	2d8 Magen ^a patrol. Roll 1d4 to determine the type: 1 - Caldron Magen 2 - Demos Magen 3 - Galvan Magen 4 - Hypnos Magen; they fight to capture intruders and deliver them to Area 33.
2	Devang Son of the Jungle (CG Berserker with his attacks flavored as Unarmed Strike and instead of wearing armor he adds his Constitution Modifier to his AC) and his two Tigers . A wild man who ventured into the mountain upon hearing a great hero is kept prisoner here. He will attack the party, mistaking them for enemies, but can be talked down. He will protect his two tigers, whom he believes are reincarnations of his dead sons.
3	Snort, Goblin Bard (<i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i> , CR 2), with Nimble Escape feature. Naive young Goblin mistakenly believes that it is a great honor to be locked in one of the cells of the menagerie, and will initially surrender, confusing the PCs with the guards. He can be convinced to do pretty much anything, as long as it gets him his desired position in a cell. Will compose songs about the PCs if treated well, will compose a song about Gashunk if told about him.
4	1d6+1 Garl ; separated from garl on lower level, they're confused and utterly lost and thus have disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened.
5	Agatha, a Green Hag pulling a cart of junk with Mertle, a Goblin , sitting on it, with a sign saying "Agatha's Mobile Store of Wonders" on a side. Players can buy potions as per usual price, with 5% discount if they're nice to Agatha and her goblin. In addition, they can pay to pull a gift from the cart, rolling on a random magic table determined by how much they paid: 1,000 gp - Table B, 2,000 gp - C, 4,000 gp - D. Agatha, her cart and goblin vanish at the first sign of hostility. Nobody knows how Agatha gets in and out of the Moving Mountain; the shadow dwarves have given up on trying to capture her a long time ago.
6	Selenshay Morningray (NG female Elf Archer , <i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i> , CR 3) and Zardak (NG male Gnoll Hunter , <i>Volo's Guide to Monsters</i> , CR ½), all that remains from a team that was sent to the menagerie from Graakhalia, the underground kingdom of elves and gnolls. Their mission was to free and recruit any creatures that have been captured here to fight against "the enemy" threatening their kingdom. They will try to recruit the party into helping them, promising 1,000 gp for each ally the party helps them gain. They are honest, but the party will have to venture to Graakhalia to collect the reward.
7	Golbozoron the Beholder and his prisoner, Zelel (male Githyanki Knight), sole survivor of a group of gith that entered Mystalarspace fleeing stronger enemies, and died in the void surrounding the planet; he wants nothing but to return home. He is under the influence of <i>dominate monster</i> , cast by the beholder, who hopes to sell him to the shadow dwarves for a good price. Golbozoron will use Zelel to protect himself in combat.
8	2d6+2 Shadow Dwarf Correctors (Duergar Screamer , <i>Mordekainen's Tome of Foes</i> , CR 2).

Notes:

a: See the ["Magen"](#) descriptions (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

MOVING MOUNTAIN ROOM BY ROOM

Lower Level



Clara will tell the PCs how she and her mentor, Donna Carmen Carmilla Garcia, were trying to bust an illegal Ispan firearms smuggling operation, when they were captured by shadow dwarves. Clara, blaming herself for their capture, will desperately want to go to save her mentor, who is kept somewhere in the Upper Level. Even if the PCs promise to save her, Clara will require a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check to be convinced to stand down and not accompany the PCs. If they do not make such promises, DC is 30 and, if failed, she will run off to find her mentor. If Delema is asked to help convince her, she will happily knock her out with traditional Horse Clan martial arts and carry her out.

4 Control Room

This room's walls are lined with machinery, some of which include giant magical panels providing images from the front sensors, informing the operating crew of any possible threats up ahead. The crew at all times consists of 4 shadow dwarves, two using statistics of **Duegar Xarron** and two of **Duegar Mind Master** (*Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR2 both). Unless he was encountered somewhere else already, there is 75% chance that Captain Kryk "the Killer" Kringle (**Duegar Despot**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 12, equipped with ring of regeneration), accompanied by his two bodyguards (**Duegar Stone Guard**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) is in this room.

The control panels of the Moving Mountain are magically sealed through divinely infused runes that are activated through blood. In order to grant a person access, a vial of that person's blood must be poured onto the runes alongside blood of Captain

Kryk and Minister Bardan Baozrak⁶. Four people are necessary to gain full control of the Moving Mountain. However, both Captain Kryk and Minister Bardan can at any point use their action to deal the person granted the access 3d8 lightning damage and they can do it as many times as they want, even eventually electrocuting the person to death. A DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals this information.

5 Slave Pen

1d6+1 commoner slaves are kept here when not used for experiments in Area 22. They are shackled together. Breaking the shackles requires a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check and opening the locks a DC 13 Dexterity check with Thieves' Tools. Whenever the PCs are in this room, there is a 25% chance one of the guards will enter to unlock the shackles of one of the slaves with a key, then drag them to perform experiments in Area 22. If the PCs leave without freeing the slaves, the next time they enter they find one less slave in this room.

6 Technicians' Dressing Room

This is a room that the shadow dwarves of the Engineering and Maintenance Division use to change at the beginning of their shifts. There are 1d4-1 medium-sized fire-proof outfits that grant the wearer total immunity to fire damage. The dwarves use them to work on the cylinders in Areas 19 and 20. The outfits are vulnerable to slashing damage and a single hit from a blade can render them useless.

Whenever the PCs enter this room there is a 50% chance 1d4 Engineers (**Duegar Xarron**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2)

⁶ Since he is an undead, he uses magic to recreate his blood beforehand

are in this room, half of them in fireproof clothes over their armor.

7 & 8 Emergency Room

Each of these rooms holds an **Iron Gargoyle**⁷. If an unauthorized creature attempts to enter adjacent Areas 19 or 20 through the door in this room, without showing it proper clearance, the gargoyle will immediately attack them. If there is a leak in adjacent Areas 19 or 20, the gargoyle will enter it and begin to fix the issue, being immune to hot lava. If an alarm goes on, any named shadow dwarf can reach these rooms and provide the creatures with a detailed description of the PCs, releasing them to hunt them down across the complex. Construction of the gargoyles has been altered with magic to grant them minor spatial distortion that allows them to travel through doors, corridors and rooms otherwise too small for them.



Gargoyle, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh (<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>).

9 Break Room

A large table is placed in the middle of the room, enough to seat a total of six medium creatures at once. This is where the shadow dwarves go to take their break, each one being allowed three meals during their twelve-hour shifts. There is a 25% chance it is occupied by 1d6 shadow dwarves on their break when the PCs enter the room.

⁷ See the "[Gargoyle, Iron](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

10 Kitchen

Two shadow dwarven cooks (Shadow Dwarven **Commoner**) are working in the kitchen at all time, with a slave being forced to run from this area to Area 9 to deliver each dwarf on a break their daily rations of meals, and beaten mercilessly if they spill or drop anything or are too slow. Currently one of the Horse Clan youths, Zikana, is being forced to serve this function. She can



be found running the tray between areas 9 and 10 and is suffering from two levels of exhaustion.

11 Upper Security Offices

Area 11 is the private quarters of stationed shadow dwarven Security Guards; there are always 4 of them (**Duergar Stone Guard**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) and one Captain (**Duergar Warlord**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 6) asleep in this area before their next shift. If a fight breaks out in Area 12, they will wake up and join the battle in 1d3 rounds.

12 Upper Security Checkup

In each corner of this room stands a shadow Dwarven Security Guard (**Duergar Stone Guard**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2). In the middle is a desk at which sits their Captain (**Duergar Warlord**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 6). A lot of creatures moving between areas north and south of this room have to pass through it, especially those who cannot use the portal network. This allows the shadow dwarves to create a small chokepoint in which they can question creatures and find which ones should or should not be here. They can be lied to and tricked, intimidated, or even bribed to stay silent and let the PCs pass, otherwise they attack and fight to subdue.

13 Lower Security Offices

This area and creatures in it mirror Area 11.

14 Lower Security Checkup

This area and creatures in it mirror Area 12.

15 Failed Experiments

This is where Hard Fisher keeps her twelve failed experiments with cloning. Six use statistics of **Rutterkin** (*Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) and six of **Nupperibo** (*Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR ½) but their creature type is undead, their abilities affecting creatures who aren't demons or devils are changed to affect creatures that aren't undead, and they all look like twisted, grotesque mockeries of late Empress Eriadna the Wise.

16 Crystal Coffin

A crystal coffin is placed in the middle of this chamber, with numerous tubes and wires attached to it, emanating strong magical energy. Inside the coffin lies a clone of Empress Eriadna the Wise, although visibly younger. It is guarded by five dwarven **Ghasts** and two dwarven **Agarats**⁸, that will not allow anyone except Hard Fisher to approach the coffin.

From research notes next to machines tracing all functions of the clone, the player characters can infer the reason for its existence. Hard Fisher was ordered to create this clone by Emperor Zandor as a last ditch effort to stay in power, in case everything else fails. The clone has all memories of the late Empress and access to some, but not all, of her magical power (if awakened she uses the statistics of an **Archmage**). Moreover, her memories and personality have been modified in such a way that she would love, admire and obey in all things her son. Zandor's plan would be to simply have her walk into the palace, sit at her throne claiming to have faked her own death, and proclaim Haldemar and all his

⁸ See the "[Agarat](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius



supporters traitors to the crown. This would allow Zandor rule from the shadows, the puppetmaster pulling his mother's strings. The PCs should realize that this would be catastrophic for Sind, and so is any scenario where this new Eriadna returns to the throne—unified Alphatia could crush all resistance in Sind in a matter of days. Manipulating the machinery could allow them to either kill or wipe out the memories of the clone, resetting her statistics to that of a **Commoner** and making her politically useless, as without any knowledge of her past life, she would quickly be deemed an imposter and unfit to rule.

If anyone has any questions about potential Oedypian tendencies of Zandor being implied by this plan...yes.

17 Bruto's Secret Stash

The entrance to this room can be discovered with a DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check. The secret entrance opens by saying the phrase "Not my circus, not my monkeys" in Dwarvish. It can be forced open with a DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check.

The room contains a crate with a total of twelve muskets from Ispa, each with ten bullets, and a treasure chest with a lid in the shape of a smiling gargoyle. The chest is trapped with a double trap. First, any creature other than Bruto who finds itself within 10 feet of the chest must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be convinced that whoever will open this "Chest of Demons" will unleash thirteen demons into the world and be tasked with capturing them⁹. Second, the eyes of the lid are actu-

⁹ If anyone falls for this, read this information in Vincent Price's voice (see this [YouTube clip](#) of Price's "Thriller" rap if you are unfamiliar for a sample)

ally magically preserved basilisk eyes and have effects of Basilisk's Petrifying Gaze trait. Speaking codeword "Meredith" will make the eyes close, allowing for opening of the box, but Bruto will not reveal this password without at least a DC 30 Charisma (Intimidation) check, as it's the name of his late wife. Both traps can be spotted with Perception, Investigation, Arcana, or Nature checks. The first trap can be suppressed for an hour with a *dispel magic* spell, while the second can be forced to permanently shut its eyes with a DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

The chest contains 7,000 gold in coins, jewelry, and assorted gems, twenty pounds of zsonga weed, and 1d4+1 random Uncommon Magic Items.

A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check will make the player notice that the western wall of this room is obviously weakened and a few solid punches or a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check can break through it. Upon doing so, the characters find themselves in Area 24, staring right at the Hivebrood Queen.

18 DON'T OPEN, ANTS INSIDE

The door to this Area has been welded shut, barred and locked with an *arcane lock* spell, with giant letters saying DON'T OPEN, ANTS INSIDE painted on them. This room has been infested by the sudden, unexplained appearance of a hivebrood. It contains one hivebrood controller (**Mind Flayer**), two hivebrood laurietants (**Umbur Hulk**) and 10 hivebrood soldiers (**Thri-Kreen**) that fight until killed, and will try to infect all creatures they encounter with their larva at all costs. In addition to the abilities of stat blocks they are using, these

creatures should be treated as one species for all beneficial effects.

Investigation of this room reveals that the hivebrood managed to dig a tunnel leaning upwards, to Area 28 of Upper Level. A second tunnel leads deeper in parts of the mountain not yet built into. A horrifying implication may dawn on the PCs : when the mountain has been transformed into Moving Mountain, it has taken with it a formerly dormant hivebrood colony hidden somewhere within it, which poses an outright existential threat for the entirety of Sind. But that is beyond the scope of this adventure.

19 & 20 Magma Containers

These are colossal cylinders of magically enforced (thus doubling its hardness and hit points) adamantine, each one filled with hot lava, with a myriad of tubes connecting them to the floor and roof. The walking floor in these areas is on wall-adjacent squares, 30 feet above the bottom of the room, with ladders for maintenance operators to walk down or up the cylinders built into them.

If leak does occur and isn't stopped, there is enough hot magma in each cylinder to flood this room and 1d6 nearby rooms, starting with the closest one. Each magma container is necessary to provide additional energy for the mechanism coordinating proper movement of either left or right tank tracks. The leak will make it break, and the Moving Mountain itself will stop.

21 Customs

This room contains a large portal, with an operating console nearby. Sergeant Dradad (**Duergar Warlord**, *Mordekainen's Tome of*

Foes, CR 6) and assistant officer Ari (**Duergar Mind Master**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2), alongside 6 guards (**Duergar Stone Guard**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) and two hammer operators (**Duergar Hammerer**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) are stationed here as a security measure. Dradad and Ari will question the PCs about reasons for their appearance and will meticulously poke holes in their possible cover stories. Due to having years of experience with this kind of job, the party can only deceive them if they do come up with an especially convincing lie, and even then the Charisma (Deception) check DC is 25. If anything is wrong, the dwarves attack, fighting to subdue. If both Dradad and Ari are killed, one of the guards will run through the portal to raise the alarm, the rest will fight to the death.

The portal can be manually set to connect with any of the portals in dead end corridors on the map of lower or upper level, though getting the idea how it operates requires three successful DC 20 checks in Intelligence (Arcana, History and Nature, of each). Control of the portal allows you to travel from this room to any dead end on either of the two maps. First use should be for random corridor, then the PCs can use it to go to any dead end they have seen while exploring the compound. They can also use dead ends to travel back to this room, but it requires someone to stay in this room to operate the portal and be in contact with the PCs.

22 Hamster Wheels

In the middle of the room there is a smaller copy of the tank tracks that allow Moving Mountain to move. However, individual wheels are constructed in a manner similar to hamster wheels, each one outfitted for a

different creature. Currently they are occupied by an **Ogre**, a **Lupin**¹⁰ named Jean-Luc from Renardy, his **Dire Wolf** companion, and a human boy from Horse Clan, named Sintemaza. Each one is being forced to run due to magical collars attached to their necks. Each of the collars has a different member of the Mortal Resources Division (**Duergar Mind Master**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) holding a rod controlling it. When pressed, the rod signals the collar to deliver 1d8 lighting damage to whoever is wearing it. Each member of Mortal Resources Division is accompanied by a bodyguard (**Duergar Soublade**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2), who will fetch one of the slaves in Area 5 if any of the currently tested creatures dies from exhaustion. There is a 25% chance whenever the PCs enter the room that Father Gilbert Grimm (see Area 9 of Upper Level) will be here to meditate on the suffering of "the unclean."

23 Laboratory

This laboratory is filled with a variety of chemical, alchemical and magical instruments. One thing that is very noticeable is the large metal cylinder in the middle of the room. This lab is operated by a pair of shadow dwarves, whose magic will be flavored as use of science. Hard Fisher (LE **Necromancer**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*) is a mad scientist working on developing new kinds of weapons in the form of combat gas, but it is not the only project on her plate. She will do anything in her power to stop the party from going into Area 16, even fighting them alongside her partner, Karl Kurze (NE **Conjurer**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 6) if needed. In combat they both wear gas masks that protect them from

¹⁰ See the "[Lupin](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius



effects of their own and each other's area of effect spells, and will attack the party with spells that could be flavored as use of combat gas : *cloudkill*, *stinking cloud*, *circle of death*, *blight*, *blindness/deafness*, *bestow curse*, *ray of enfeeblement*. They will also call for help from creatures from Area 15, which will begin arriving in groups of 1d4 each round.

24 Insect Hell

This is where the hivebrood Broodmotheb (**Skittering Horror**, *Guildmaster's Guide to Ravnica*, CR 15) resides, guarded by 5 hivebrood soldiers (**Thri-Kreen**), who are freshly turned from surviving slaves that the shadow dwarves have sent to try and contain the hivebrood problem. The last survivor of that group is Tacanipiluta, one of Horse Clan youths, who is currently stuck to the wall and has not yet been infected.

25, 26, 27 and 28 Engine Rooms

These four rooms are 90 feet high, filled with large parts of the Mountain's engine, blending technology and magic. The walking floor in these areas is on wall-adjacent squares, 30 feet above the bottom of the room, with ladders for maintenance operators to walk down or up the parts of the engine built into them. Corridors connecting the rooms are the same as the floor in them. The walls between these rooms have been hollowed, reducing them to columns necessary to keep the mountain from coming down on the engine.

Each room consists of different colors and has a different mechanical function, adjacent to a different element and a different guardian. They are, in order:

- 25: Blue Room: Camshaft. This room's engine works in synchronization with Pistons in White Room, opening and closing the valves of the lobes. Due to immense friction between involved elements, **Elemental Undine**¹¹ has been tasked with ensuring the mechanism doesn't overheat or is damaged by the friction. However, the creature is bored of this task and seeks an excuse to leave. If told about any liberated individuals, like Horse Clan youths, it can be convinced with a DC 15 Persuasion (Charisma) check to carry them out of the Mountain and into safety, after which it will not return.
- 26: Red Room: Engine Block & Cylinders. This is where the main part of the combustion engine takes place.

¹¹ See the "[Elemental, Undine](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

An **Elemental Helion**¹² is inside of this mechanism, ensuring it doesn't explode or overheat, and coming out to defend it. It has never seen the rest of the mountain and can be convinced to abandon its position with a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, if presented with a proof that the shadow dwarves are engaging in cruel treatment of other creatures.

- 27: White Room: Pistons & Crankshaft. Pistons push against portions of the Crankshaft in a movement that fuels essential parts of the combustion process. There is a lot of air being pushed in and out and an **Elemental Anemo**¹³ is overseeing the process and ensures it does not go wrong. The anemo can be reasoned with and, in fact, will attempt to talk to the PCs before engaging in combat. It has grown suspicious of the shadow dwarves and their activities in the mountain, but has stayed working on the engine due to a sense of obligation—not to them, but to three other elementals maintaining parts of the engine. It offers to leave the mountain if the party can convince all other three to leave. If the party attacks any of the elementals in the other three engine rooms, the anemo will rush in to defend them, fighting the PCs even at the cost of its own life.
- 28: Brown Room: Flywheel. This part of the engine serves to store energy and reduce vibration and is main-

¹² See the "[Elemental, Helion](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

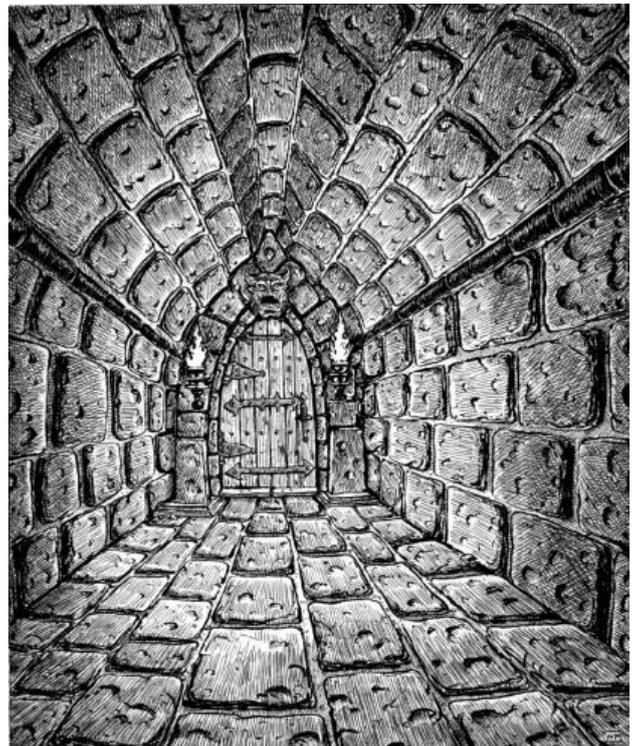
¹³ See the "[Elemental, Anemo](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

tained by an **Elemental Kryst**¹⁴. The kryst can be convinced to leave this area only if presented with evidence that the shadow dwarves are hosting the Horde within the Moving Mountain, in which case it will immediately move in to kill any remaining members of it and leave, considering their contract nullified.

In corners of each of the four rooms are placed iron statues resembling dwarves, showing magical tablets that display information about the specific part of the engine. The tablets can be used to gain information on how to manipulate the engine in order to make it stop working or explode. However, each statue is an **Iron Living Statue**¹⁵ that will attack whenever anyone but authorized personnel is messing with the engine. Authorization requires showing security clearance signed by Captain Kryk Kringle.

If the elementals are gone, it is possible to use the tablets to stop the engine or to overload it and make it explode by redirecting output of Blue and Red Rooms and White and Brown Rooms towards one another. An explosion will completely vaporize all four engine rooms as well as areas 7 to 10 on Lower Level and 5, 8, 12, 26 and 28 of Upper Level, as well as destroying all the corridors connecting them. All creatures without fire damage immunity will be vaporized instantly and the surviving ones crushed to death by the mountain coming down on them. Such massive destruction will cause the mountain to collapse within 1d100 minutes, prompting all shadow dwarves and Alphatians to flee,

leaving other creatures to die here. Moreover, if the altar in Area 12 of Upper Level wasn't destroyed earlier, its destruction now will create a massive vortex that will suck the entire mountain from the inside into the Nightmare Dimension within 1d6 minutes. What happens after this point is beyond the scope of this adventure.



¹⁴ See the [“Elemental Kryst”](#) description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁵ See the [“Living Statue, Steel”](#) description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

Upper Level

1 Kitchen

Five shadow dwarven **Commoners** operate the kitchen, equipped with all kinds of masterwork cooking equipment (total value of which adds up to 1,000 gp) and regularly refilled pantries of all kinds of foods. Unlike dwarves on the lower level, upper level personnel are served quality food. The personnel in this area are occupied with their work so much that Stealth checks to sneak past them are made with advantage.

2 Deep, Dark Room

The single guard (**Duergar Stone Guard**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) watches these door. If questioned, he says he just closed it, after sending in "a meal" so there is still a chance to save them.

This room has been stylized to look like a large cave, with a small pool. The room is completely dark, as it is hosting three **Deep Glaurants**¹⁶, in order to "observe their natural behavior."

Chumani, a Horse Clan youth, has been sent here and, upon realizing what is kept inside, a knowledge she learned from a befriended pachidermion who survived a run-in with deep glaurants, proceeded to drop on the ground and play dead. The creatures let her live for now, in the hope that she will lure more victims, but if no creature enters the room soon after the PCs find it the monsters will grow bored and eviscerate the girl.

¹⁶ See the "[Deep Glaurant](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

3 Beauty and a Tree

This area is occupied by Old Bark, a deranged **Gakarak**¹⁷, that has agreed to protect the teleportation platform in the middle of this room, that allows moving gargantuan or smaller creatures and objects between this area, the skyship dock built on top of the moving mountain, and a large forest maintained on the slopes of Moving Mountain. Old Bark's reward was "his dryad," which is actually Donna Carmen Carmilla Garcia (**Faedorne**¹⁸). She is forced to wear a necklace that puts her under total control of whoever holds a golden ring, currently on one of Old Bark's branches. She is using her illusions to make herself look like a dryad and will obey all of Old Bark's commands, which he can give as a free action on his turn. Old Bark has no idea what to actually do with a dryad, he just wanted to have one. His reasoning for one is also so nonsensical that anyone listening to his explanation will take 1 point of psychic damage.

If challenged to combat, Old Bark can force all creatures in the room, including himself and Donna Garcia, to be teleported to the forest, where he will immediately use his Animate Trees action and order her to use her Summon Silver Warriors action. He fights to the death and will actually try to shield "his dryad" from any harm, treating her more like a pet or precious toy than a person. If he is killed or either the ring or necklace are destroyed, Donna Garcia is immediately freed and gets rid of whichever of the two items remain.

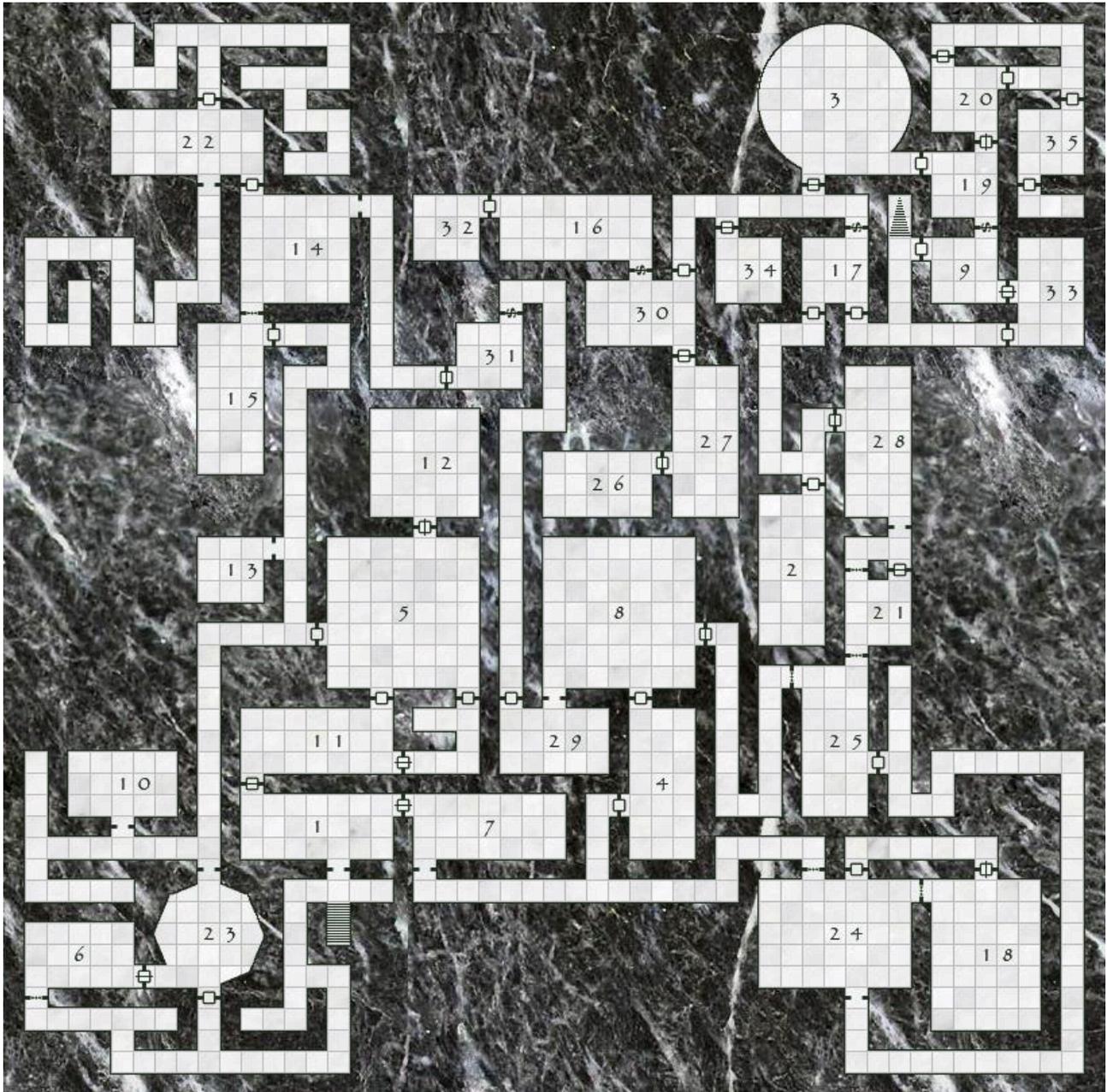
¹⁷ See the "[Gakarak](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

¹⁸ See the "[Faedorne](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius



MOVING MOUNTAIN ROOM BY ROOM

UPPER Level



Donna Carmen Carmilla Garcia is a fae-dorne who fell in love with Ispan culture and came to live among the Ispans, adopting their habits and even the name. Once freed from mind control she is a feisty, strong-willed and confident woman. She will request the PCs to seek her apprentice, Clara Espada. As she explains, the two of them were captured when Donna Garcia took a mission to bust a weapon-smuggling chain selling firearms outside of the Savage Coast. She will help the PCs operate the teleportation platform, allowing them to move freely between the three locations it is connecting, but will herself move to the skyship dock, sick of other two locations. The experience left her with severe trauma and claustrophobia and she cannot force herself to return inside the Moving Mountain, though she may lend the PCs any remaining silver warriors, if convinced with a DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

If reunited with her apprentice, Donna Garcia will leave with her immediately, but promises to contact the PCs within a week. In such time they will receive rewards in the form of connections: invitations to the Fairy Court of King Oberon and Queen Titania, an invitation to one of the Ispan noble houses and also a letter from the Inheritors—the people who asked Donna Garcia to deal with the weapon smuggling operation in the first place. All three of these can provide the PCs with rewards and benefits at the DM's discretion, as well as future plot hooks and quests. Any of the three may also ask the PCs to investigate suspicions that it was Donna Garcia's older sister, Sky Queen Maladie, who has set her up to be captured by the shadow dwarves.

4 Library

The walls of this room are lined with bookshelves full of books in all known languages, on all kinds of topics. Each PC can search this room for one topic and find a book that gives them advantage on all skill checks related to said topic. A DC 20 (History) check will also reveal a collection of 5 rare titles by legendary Sindi poets and philosophers, each worth between five hundred and a thousand gp to the right buyer, depending on how well the party can haggle. The collection can also be returned to any public figure in Sind, greatly increasing the party's fame and granting them connections among scholars of the region.

5 Beetle Testing Facility

An **Earthquake Beetle**¹⁹ is held within this facility, kept calm by a collar that keeps it dominated and docile. Control rod of the collar is being held by Minister Bardan Baozrak. The beetle is attached to multiple magical and technological devices in order to study its ability to dig underground and cause earthquakes. If freed, the creature will go on a rampage, digging through the Moving Mountain and likely destroying it within a short amount of time. It is at all times studied by a team of two shadow dwarven **War Priests** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 9) and four shadow dwarven **Druids**, with two hammer operators (**Duergar Hammerer**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) serving as security.

¹⁹ See the "[Earthquake Beetle](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

6 Stone Room

An **Erdeen**²⁰ and two **Rock Men**²¹ have been captured and are kept in this room by being tricked into a philosophical conversation. The creatures have been engaged in a very slow, complex debate over the nature of the universe, taking long pauses to ponder each new argument. They have reached an impasse and are incapable of finding a way to agree anymore. If the PCs enter the room, they will try to seize upon them and demand their participation, surrendering only if reduced to below 50% hit points each. Clever players may participate in a debate to convince the creatures their situation is unacceptable and they should help them overthrow the shadow dwarves. In such a case, they will accompany the PCs and fight on their side.

7 Cafeteria

This room contains multiple tables and chairs for the dwarves to eat food delivered from Area 1. There's a 25% chance any of the named NPCs will be there on a lunch break, unless they were already encountered somewhere else. There is also 25% chance 1d6 shadow dwarves will be here on a lunch break as well.

8 Elephant Testing Facility

A **Bodendrucker**²² is held here, kept docile by a collar around its neck that makes it dominated. The control rod to the collar is in the hands of Minister Bardan Baozrak. The creature is being experimented on to

²⁰ See the "[Elemental Erdeen](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

²¹ See the "[Rock Man](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

²² See the "[Bodendrucker. \(Leveller\)](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

both try to copy its ability to snuff out purple worms and to teach it to hunt other underground creatures. In case the earthquake beetle from Area 5 breaks free, the bodendrucker has been taught how to hunt it down and will be used to kill it before it destroys the Moving Mountain. However, the creature itself is bound to go on a rampage in case of being free of the collar. Both monsters being set loose at once spells an imminent end of the Moving Mountain. The creature is at all times supervised by Sellan Algazello, shadow dwarven **Archdruid** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 12), who has been corrupted and driven to madness, but remains loyal to the Minister. If attacked he can command the bodendrucker as if he were the Minister himself, as long as his orders aren't directly contradicted by Bardan Baozrak.

Sellan Algazello carries around his neck You Are What You Eat (wondrous item, rare, collar. Can be attuned to by a druid. When attuned, a druid can consume a piece of a creature that isn't a beast and be immediately able to one time use its Wild Shape to transform into that creature as if it were a Beast).

9 Tall Dwarf

These are the simple quarters of Grand Inquisitor Father Gilbert Grimm (CE), a shadow dwarf who has infiltrated the Inquisition, an organization of spellcasters created as an attempt to get Alphatian magic users in line by Empress Eriadna not long before her death. The Inquisition does not know he is a shadow dwarf; they consider him merely a religious zealot, and therefore useful. He is called "the Tall Dwarf" due to being eerily slender not just for dwarven, but even for human standards, reaching seven feet tall. He has no idea why



he is this tall and gets enraged when asked. He is clean shaven, and when not working he spends his time between sleep and self-flagellation. There is a 25% chance he will be here whenever the PCs enter the room. If encountered somewhere else and not killed, he will pursue the PCs across the whole complex, not resting until he hunts them down, but he will stay behind and attack only when they are already fighting other enemies.

Father Gilbert Grimm uses the statistics of a **War Priest** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 9) with the following changes:

- His Dexterity is 18.
- He wears no armor but adds Wisdom to his AC.
- He is proficient in Perception, Stealth, and Survival.
- He has an advantage on saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities.
- His maul attacks are flavored as unarmed strike attacks, benefitting from his magic item (see below), while dealing the same damage.
- If he casts a spell as an action, he can on the same turn take Attack action as a bonus action.
- His speed is 60 feet and he has climbing speed equal his movement speed.
- He can take Dash, Disengage, or Dodge actions as a bonus action.
- He has returning throwing axe +3.

- On each of his turns he regains 10 hit points unless he was dealt acid or fire damage between the end of his last turn and the beginning of this turn. He dies only if he is reduced to -10 hit points and doesn't regain hit points.
- He wears a Collar of the Whip (wondrous item, rare, range of your unarmed attacks is extended by five feet and you can deal additional 1d4 slashing damage with them. A humanoid hit by your unarmed strike must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or drop to 0 hit points. The DC equals 10 + the number of previous times you have hit that creature in this combat.)
- His Challenge Rating is 11.

Treasure: Hidden in the floor of this room is a secret compartment, that can be spotted with a DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check and opened with a DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Inside is a stack of documents, including incriminating evidence on a member of the Alphatian Mage Council, which can be leveraged against him for either one favor of any kind or 25,000 gp. Moreover, it also contains a list of agents of the Alphatian Inquisition that have been compromised and converted to the worship of the Outer Beings, which can be used as a bargaining chip in any negotiations with the Inquisition. It also contains the journal of Gilbert Grimm, which documents his studies and can grant advantage on any checks made to identify artifacts and symbols of the Outer Beings, as well as identifying potential agents of the Outer Beings among the Alphatians.



10 The Showers

This is a shower room with three shower stalls, one sink, and one toilet stall. The water is operated and kept clean by three **hydraxes** living in the pipes. They do not attack except in case a creature destroys or damages any equipment in this area.

11 Cat Cafe

This area has been turned into an unholy combination of a petting zoo and a maid cafe. Twelve **Rakasta**²³, six male and six female, have been forced to wear maid and butler uniforms and entertain the dwarves during their off hours, acting either as charming conversation partners, obedient servants, or cats to pet, depending on the dwarven wishes. Dwarves are allowed to do anything they want with them, except any sexual activities beyond flirtation, as the Minister considers that to be “zoophilia.” Three male and three female rakasta are forced to work here for twelve hours, after which the other six take their place.

The eastern and western walls are lined by Correctors (**Duergar Screamer**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2), who understand all languages the rakasta speak in addition to Dwarvish, Shadow Dwarvish, and Alphatian. If they notice any of the rakasta acting out or speaking of rebellion, they move in to kill it, making a violent show of it as warning to others. In addition, there are always 1d6+1 shadow dwarves spending their leisure time here.

If the shadow dwarves in this area have been killed, the rakasta will offer to join the PCs to fight their way out of this place. They have no weapons. The rakasta have been

²³ See the [“Rakasta”](#) description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius



kidnapped from members of a diplomatic mission from Myoshima and if even one of them survives and makes it to the moon, it will cause a huge diplomatic incident between Myoshima and Alphatia (which, to be fair, had no idea dwarves dared to do such a thing and will be appalled if this ever gets out).

Treasure: next to the wall is a glass cabinet with a collection of expensive, beautiful shoes from various nations of the Known World. It consists of fourteen pairs, each worth 50 gp to the right collector, twice if sold together. The fifteenth pair, put in the center, appears to be magical and all uses of spells like *identify* will say these are the shoes of mighty Ylari warrior, Kazem the Fast, and a person attuned to them will gain an ability to cast *haste* on themselves once per day.

In reality the shoes are cursed and surrounded by powerful illusion magic, making them appear beautiful, when they're actually worn down and hideous. Wearing them is so unpleasant the creature doing so must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw whenever they make an Ability check or attack roll or suffer disadvantage. *Remove curse* breaks the attunement, but

not the other effect of the shoes : any attempt at throwing them away or leaving them behind will inevitably make them return to the owner (in this case whoever picked them up first or attuned to them), each time with increasingly negative consequences. The only way to permanently get rid of them is to appeal to local authority in front of a public gathering, place them on the floor, list every single negative thing they have caused to you and publicly denounce them. The next creature to touch them becomes their new owner.

A DC 20 Intelligence (History) check will reveal that Kazem the Fast was not a warrior, but a merchant, who neglected proper care of his shoes due to stinginess and overwork. Their effect first manifested when he tried to throw them away.

12 Secret Chapel

The doors to this room are protected by an *arcane lock* and only Minister Bardan Baozrak can open them. Inside is a small chapel dedicated to the worship of the Outer Beings, covered in blasphemous symbols. The chapel is a Desecrated Ground that extends its benefits to all shadow dwarves and aberrations fighting in this area. Every creature with an intelligence score 8 or higher who is not a worshiper of the Outer Beings must succeed a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or is frightened. It can repeat its saving throw at the end of each of its turns but only after leaving the area.

If Minister Bardan Baozrak is slain here, his blood will spill on the altar, at which point the magic of the Outer Beings will transform him into a monstrous abomination (**Star Spawn Larva Mage**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 16) and open a portal

from which a second monster (**Star Spawn Hulk**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 10) will emerge. If the altar is destroyed, it will turn into a vortex of dark energy that will suck in both creatures, if they're still alive.

Note: If the PCs kill the Minister too fast and too easily during this battle (eg. within a single round or in a single hit), you can instead have his body transform into **Uvuudaum**²⁴ to give them a challenge such an overpowered group clearly deserves.

Treasure: On the altar of the chapel lie 25,000 gp worth of gold, gems, and jewelry, all of which is cursed to open anyone who takes it to the influence of Outer Beings, slowly driving them to madness. *Remove curse* or *greater restoration* remove this effect. It can also be removed by undoing the desecration of this area before taking the gold. There is a hidden locker in the altar that may be discovered with a DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check and opened by a key held by the Minister or by a DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. The lock is protected with a magical trap, casting *power word kill* on any creature other than the Minister that attempts to open it. It can be suppressed for 10 minutes with the casting of *dispel magic*. Inside is Minister Bardan Baozrak's heart and one Rare Magic item per party member, of DM's choice. I advise choosing something the PCs will like because, let's be honest, if they got here they earned it. If the heart is not destroyed, the Minister will reform next to it within 24 hours after being killed. If the Altar is destroyed, the Heart is sucked into the vortex.

²⁴ This [statblock](#) by YouTuber Dungeon Dad can be used for the creature

13 Cat Room



There are six beds in this room. When not working at Area 11, six rakasta sleep here. The room is guarded by a single hammer operator (**Duergar Hammerer**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2) at all times. The rakasta in this area refuse to help the PCs until their peers in Area 11 are freed, at which point they will gladly join the fight alongside their brethren.

14 Sloth Cage

A **Vulcanian Sloth**²⁵ has been captured and is kept here against its will, put into a cage at the center of the room. The creature has been abused and experimented on, filling it with hatred for the shadow dwarves. Its purpose in this room is to serve as "intimidation" tactic, as any shadow dwarf passing through this room must walk past it. While the beast cannot reach them from inside the cage, so the passage is safe, they are all reminded, by signs plastered around the

²⁵ See the "[Sloth, Vulcanian](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

walls, that the failure in their duties is punishable by being fed alive to the sloth. If freed, the creature will proceed to hunt down and eat shadow dwarves, tearing the tunnels into new, bigger ones if needed to pass through.

15 Medical Wing

Three shadow dwarven **Priests** are stationed here alongside ten medium-sized beds, half of which is occupied by shadow dwarves too wounded to fight. There is a 25% chance Grand Inquisitor Dumas Camus is here, convincing one of the dwarves that it is in his best interest to return to work as soon as possible by implying refusal will be "fixed" by performing surgery without anesthesia on him, to "get rid of that pesky fear."

This area contains 3 healer's kits, one herbalist kit, an assortment of random herbs of healing attributes, 1d4-1 potions of superior healing, 2d4-1 potions of greater healing, and 2d8 potions of healing.

16 Cat Improvement Facility

This room contains two tables, on which lie the dead bodies of a **Weretiger** and an **Adapter**²⁶, that are currently being open, with a shadow dwarven surgeon (**Necromancer**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 9) removing the organs from the corpses and placing them in containers attached to a large, partially transparent humanoid-sized cylinder, with a terrified and screaming rakasta trapped inside. The surgeon in combat will cast *animate dead*, flavored as him injecting chemical compounds animating the corpses of the two creatures (use their statistics for convenience). The sur-

²⁶ See the "[Adapter](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

geon's spells should be flavored as throwing various chemicals at the PCs.

Around the cylinder, sitting in a circle, are four shadow dwarven priests of the Outer Beings (**Warlock of Great Old One**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 6) performing a ritual and so deeply in trance that they can only be pulled out from it by dealing them more than half of their hit point maximum of damage. A **Rock Golem**²⁷ is placed at the entrance to the room to prevent anyone from interfering, its large form effectively giving all creatures in the room three quarters cover. The golem will fight until destroyed.

Once the PCs enter the room, they should see the rakasta inside the cylinder drowned in strange ooze as the three dwarves on the floor begin chanting. From that point on the PCs have three rounds to stop the ritual. After this time the cylinder opens, all ooze instantly evaporating, and reveals the rakasta inside, now transformed into a Mystaran **rakshasa** that will join the fight against the PCs alongside its new masters. The ritual will complete if even one of the priests continues it for three rounds. However, if one priest has been interrupted or killed, the rakshasa is not under their control and will attack all living creatures indiscriminately, but can be persuaded to join the PCs against the dwarves, if a compelling reward is offered. If two priests have been interrupted or killed, it also is unstable and will melt into a puddle of blood within 1d6-1 hours (result of 0 means it will happen within 1d6 rounds instead).

²⁷ See these "[Golem](#)" descriptions (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

17 Grand Inquisitor's Office

This is a simple, minimalist office of Grand Inquisitor Camus Dumas (Mystaran **Rakshasa**), who takes the form of an athletic, sharp-dressed, blonde-haired, green-eyed human male. He is a manipulative and ambitious individual, who is nonetheless unaware that he's been created in this very facility and raised to serve as perfect puppet and double agent within the Inquisition. He is not allowed access to Area 16 and suspects it has something to do with his past, as he comes to realize his memories are not adding up in subtle ways. When encountering the PCs, he will reveal he has gathered some incriminating information on Minister Bardan Baozrak and is willing to share them with the PCs, not to mention keeping an eye closed on their exploits as long as possible, if they will find a way to get inside Area 16 and discover why he was barred from entry. If presented with documents from that area, he will first produce the promised evidence then, upon reading them, fly into rage and leave the Moving Mountain entirely. If attacked, he will retreat through the opposite way to which the PCs came from and try to lure them into a fight with creatures in either Area 3, 28, 30, or 33, joining the fight only if he considers it advantageous for him.

The documents can be sold to any Alphatian in position of authority and would result in an immediate order of arrest and execution of Bardan Baozrak and all his allies and followers, if any are still alive. How fast will it happen and how much can the PCs get for this depends on the position of said authority figure; the higher the better.

18 Redcap Exhibition

Thirteen **Redcaps** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 3), each riding on a **Giant Wolf Spider**, have been placed in this room. They have been given a crystal ball of scrying allowing them to spy on the fey in Area 24 and raise an alarm if they spot said fey trying anything suspicious. Whenever they raise an alarm, the door separating the two rooms opens and the redcaps are allowed to attack them, with the ensuing battle usually dealing heavy losses to both sides. If the fey sit idly, the redcaps are provided human slaves to wash their hats in blood. As a plate before the entrance to the door will inform the PCs, this is an experiment to see if redcaps can be taught moderation in their habits.

19 Actaeon Cell

An **Actaeon**²⁸ has been imprisoned here, chained to a chair, muzzled and handcuffed. A human **Enchanter** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 5) is working on trying to break the creature's mind to make it serve the shadow dwarves and take care of the forest that covers a large part of the Moving Mountain's outside structure. A collar around the Actaeon's neck is connected to a wand held by the enchanter, allowing him to once a day cast *dominate monster* on him without having to worry about concentration or saving throws. If attacked, the enchanter will do exactly that and cast spells at the PCs while hiding behind his unwilling servant. Entrance to this room is guarded by two shadow dwarven hammer operators (**Duergar Hammerer**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2).

²⁸ See the "[Actaeon](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

20 Security Strike Team Sigma Six

Chef of Security Mardora (shadow dwarven **Blackguard**, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, CR 8) and four elite guards (**Duergar Warlord**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 6) are stationed here, serving as private security of Minister Bardan Baozrakn and will fight to kill any creature that attempted to reach Area 35 through this room. Any matters to the Minister are to be relied on, at which point one of the guards will inform the minister and return telling whether the creature is allowed to pass or not. If yes, Mardora will personally escort the creature into and out of Area 35 and then return to her post.

Mardora wears Ring of Slave Driver (wondrous item, uncommon, when attuned to it you can as a bonus action extend range of your weapon by 5 feet and every creature hit by it has disadvantage on Wisdom and Charisma saving throws until end of your next turn).

21 Double Room

Entering this room through any of the doors leads to an empty, sterile room with a few chairs, a table, and a stack of books. This room serves as a break room. It's so boring and utilitarian it sucks even at that. Some overworked dwarves come here to scream or cry in private.

A DC 30 Perception check reveals there are hidden doors in the northwest wall that can be opened with a password known only by Minister Bardan Baozrakn or DC 30 a Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 30 Strength (Athletics) check. The door opens from either side. When opened from inside the room, it leads to a much different corridor; when opened from the outside it leads to a giant horrifying forge. The door

acts as a portal to the fortress of the rot dwarves deep inside their stronghold in the Northern Reaches. Baozrak is using this portal to spy on the rot dwarves, trying to learn their secrets. The rot dwarves rarely use this room themselves. The PCs should be able to rest there, but they can explore the area beyond this room at their own risk. Of course the long-term implications of seizing the portal connecting Sind with the Northern Reaches should not escape the players, but its control lies entirely in whoever controls the Moving Mountain. It cannot be removed from this one secret passage.

22 Sleeping Quarters

This room is filled to the brim with triple-level beds, allowing the shadow dwarves to sleep in a small, condensed area. At maximum level this area can contain 64 shadow dwarves and usually one fourth of the beds are filled with sleeping dwarves at any given time and each hour there is always a 20% chance 1d4 arrive to either join or wake up and take the place of some already present. Use rules for shadow dwarves described in Features of the Area to determine their type. Moving through this area requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check to not wake them up, repeated every thirty minutes spent here. Rummaging through the dwarves' private possessions can yield 5d10 hundreds gp in coins and gems and trinkets per hour.

23 Parliament of Drakes

Locked in magically enforced cages hanging from the roof, this area contains one each of: **Coldrake**²⁹, **Mandrake** and **Wood-**

²⁹ See the "[Coldrake](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

drake³⁰, and **Elemental Drakes** of Air, Earth, Fire, and Water³¹. The floor of this room is covered in runes affecting anyone who enters, except for shadow dwarves, increasing their irritability and argumentativeness. A DC 20 Wisdom saving throw when a creature enters the room protects against the effect for an hour; both affected and unaffected creatures repeat the saving throw every hour spent there or whenever they enter the room. It takes a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice the runes at all and a DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check to understand their nature.

The drakes are affected and argue endlessly among each other about what course of action to take, and have been for a long time, rendering them too deeply entrenched in their personal conflicts to actually do something. They need to first be carried out of the room and even then for an hour their arguments will impose disadvantage on all Stealth checks made in their company. Only after they're all freed of the effects of the magic can they be convinced to help against the shadow dwarves.

24 Tiny Resistance

This room is locked with an *arcane lock* spell. The area inside has been turned into a small forest. It is currently occupied by a group of fey consisting of four **Brownies**³², four **Leprechauns**³³ and four **Pookas**³⁴ with

³⁰ See the "[Mandrake & Woodrake](#)" descriptions (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

³¹ See the "[Drake, Elemental](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

³² See the "[Brownie](#)" descriptions (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

³³ See the "[Leprechaun](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

³⁴ See the "[Pooka](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius



eight **Dire Corgis**³⁵, who have been kept as part of the menagerie but managed to break free and take over this room. But the magic barrier put on the room prevents them from leaving. Moreover, this room is adjacent to Area 18 and whenever the fey here try anything suspicious, the doors dividing the room are opened, unleashing redcaps on them. This resistance has suffered terrible losses and their morale is horribly low. Even if the redcaps have been killed, the spirit of those fey may be too crushed to make them join the PCs in their fight. However, if a PC is a fey or sylvan race themselves, or has a blessing of one, or if the party has freed Donna Garcia from Area 3 and can prove it or is accompanied by the Actaeon from Area 20, they can reignite the spirit of the fey, gaining their assistance.

If the party mingles with the fey too much, the redcaps in Area 18 realize this is not some sort of checkup by the shadow dwarves, raise the alarm, and attack immediately.

³⁵ See the "[Corgi, Dire](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

If asked about the back door, the fey say it leads to something much, much worse than the redcaps. Not a single one of them dares to venture that corridor anywhere close to Area 25 or even talk about what lies inside. Even the redcaps from Area 18, if captured, will have the same reaction.

25 KEEP THE LIGHTS ON

Each door to this room has words **KEEP THE LIGHTS ON** written on it. There is no more information, and trying to write down anything about the room or creatures inside results in the whole page becoming unreadable within three days. The dwarves refuse to talk about this room.

Inside is a single table, a pair of chairs on opposite ends, and multiple torches of ever-burning flame on the wall. Casting *dispel magic* on one of the torches with a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check will suspend all flames for an hour. Once the flames are suspended. If a creature then sits on a chair, a **Rexxen**³⁶ will appear on the other chair. She will offer the creature on the chair a deal : anything they wish for in exchange for their soul. The Rexxen is willing to do anything the PCs request, but she will be collecting their souls upon their deaths, and her way of accomplishing the wish will ALWAYS be that of highest body count. If asked how she got here, she will explain that the table and chair have been stolen from her usual clients and she may tell them the location of a treasure deep in the Northern Reaches if they return it. She knows of a secret door in Area 21 and the place it leads to is exactly where she wants to be delivered.

³⁶ The [Rexxen](#) is an original creature by Glen Welch (PDF document available at the Vaults of Pandius)



26 The Horde

A single **Horde**³⁷ has been trapped and chained inside this room, the runes on chains stopping it from splitting into tiny creatures. One of the Horse Clan youths, Chaytan, has been sent to deliver its food. When the PCs first find the door to this area, they should witness the boy being showed inside with a large slab of meat by one of the guards, (**Duergar Stone Guard**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2, wearing a ring of immunity to cold) who quickly closes the door behind him. This is followed by a monstrous roar and the sound of cracking metal, making the guard panic and sound for the alarm. If the PCs enter the room, they find that the sight of a living creature made the horde break the chains, nullifying their magic. If the PCs do not intervene, the horde will kill the boy, break into tiny creatures to reform outside the door, and go on a rampage.

27 Cold Reception

This place is occupied by three **Hallaleski**³⁸, as an experiment to see if these beings can satisfy their mutual crippling loneliness. So far the experiment has yielded mixed results, as instead three fey compete over attention and affection of anyone who enters, but are also much more prone to act scorned and enraged by any sign of rejection or favoring another one. They learned to ignore the guard stationed to watch the door to Area 26, due to his immunity to cold.

In case the horde from Area 26 breaks out, the hallaleski are acting as the first line of

³⁷ See the "[Horde](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius

³⁸ See the "[Hallaleski](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius



defense—the shadow dwarves hope that they will confuse and damage the monster enough that it will be manageable by the time the security team arrives.

28 Disease Room

Three **Bargda**³⁹ are trapped in this room and will rush and try to bite any creature that enters it. If freed, they will spread through the complex, biting and infecting everything on sight.

If the party engages in combat with the bargda or lets them leave the room without having killed the hivebrood from Areas 18 and 24 of Lower Level, the ground in this

³⁹ See the "[Bargda](#)" description (by Glen Welch) on the Vaults of Pandius



room collapses 1d3 rounds later and the hivebrood emerges, engaging the PCs and bargda in a three-way fight.

29 Pool of Blood

All traces of blood lead to this room. A pool sixty feet deep lies in this area, filled with blood, the walls covered in blasphemous runes. This is a place of one of blasphemous rituals composed by cultists of the Outer Beings. When the PCs enter the room an ooze rises to kill them. The ooze uses stat blocks depending on the number of creatures they have killed while inside Moving Mountain except for constructs, elementals and undead.

Below 5 – nothing happens

5 or more – **Adult Oblex** (*Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 5)

10 or more – **Elder Oblex** (*Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 10)

15 or more – **Shoggoth** (*Primeval Thule Campaign Setting*, CR 17)

20 or more – **Jubilex** (*Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 21)

The monster will pursue the PCs and try to hunt them down until slain or they either leave the mountain or die. The exception is the final form, which is actually intelligent. It will not rise up but instead communicate with the PC with lowest Wisdom score using telepathy. It will offer them any reward if they bring here a number of intelligent creatures, other than constructs, elemental, or undead, equal to the combined hit dice for each party member. If the party member refuses or the PCs are hostile to it,

the ooze will rise and attack, but renew the offer upon establishing its superior power.

Whenever the PCs manage to bring here a number of creatures equal to the hit dice of one party member, it can bestow on that party member a single +2 bonus to any Ability score. This can raise an Ability above 20, but the same PC can only be chosen once for this boon, unless the task was accomplished by a single PC in secret from others. However, even then each time a PC gets this boon, it applies to different Ability scores.

At DM's decision, this entity may instead talk to one of the NPCs accompanying the party. If an NPC successfully brings them enough creatures to make for a PC's hit die, they also gain a level of Great Old One, Fathomless, or the Fiend Warlock.

If the PCs accomplish this task, they will find themselves teleported outside the mountain with all companions and loot they gathered during their exploration of it. However, the mountain in front of them will melt into a pile of blood, that will then sink into the earth. The newly created ooze monster will take the name Jubilex and go straight to the Hollow World, on the way managing to petition an audience with Thanatos and receive its first task to the path of Immortality : annihilation of all life in the Hollow World. But that is a story for another time.

30 Security Strike Team Theta Thirteen

These are the headquarters of Security Strike Team Theta Thirteen a.k.a. Screaming Hammers. It consists of six correctors (**Duergar Screamer**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 2), six hammer operators (**Duergar Hammerer**, *Mordekainen's Tome*

of *Foes*, CR 2) and Security Officer Orna Dorna (**Duergar Warlord**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 6). They are stationed here to intervene in case of outbreak from Areas 16, 26, or 27. As the situation has been peaceful for now, they are mostly relaxed and drink a newly discovered drink that started gaining popularity in Sind in the years following the Master's invasion : coffee. Due to their natural resilience, they find it "tasty but weak."

Orna Dorna wears a Ring of Continuous Pain (wondrous item, rare; every time you hit a creature with an attack, they're dealt 1d4 psychic damage at the beginning of each of its turns for the next minute. Effects from multiple hits stack with one another).

31 Honored Guest's Quarters

A **Dao** named Phibnea the Hunter resides here in a small but luxurious room. She is a "honored guest" of Minister Bardan Baozrak, who has helped capture many of the creatures in the menagerie. Moreover, she also has a way to open a portal to the Elemental Plane of Earth, allowing the dwarves to trade with the dao for fresh supplies of food, slaves, and exotic creatures, all of course paid by Alphatian money. She's ruthless but professional, seeing no reason to fight the PCs unless in self-defense or when Baozrak declares a bounty on their heads, at which point she will hunt them down mercilessly. She can be easily convinced to talk about any of the creatures she captured and may drop cryptic hints about what the party will find in any area they have not explored yet. She will only refuse to talk about Area 25 and, if pressed, will offer the party 2,000 gp in gems each if they go and kill the creature living there. She has very bad feelings about it and doesn't want to be anywhere on this plane if it gets out.

32 Minister's Private Quarters

This is the private room of Minister Bardan Baozrak, small but glamorous, with only him possessing keys to it. There is a 25% chance he will be here when the PCs enter, enjoying sounds of the inhuman experiments in Area 16.

Minister Bardan Baozrak uses the statistics of **Mummy Lord** with the following changes:

- He has a mace of striking that also functions as a staff of power, except it can be only attuned to by clerics or paladins.
- He has rods that give him control of the earthquake beetle in Area 5 and the bodendrucker in Area 8. He can also use them as an action to teleport to each of those locations from anywhere within the complex.
- Whenever he takes psychic damage from a creature, he deals damage equal to half of it to that creature.

If challenged to combat, he will teleport to Area 8 to make his final stand riding on the back of the bodendrucker. If it has been slain or freed from his control, he will instead teleport to Area 5 to do it from the back of the earthquake beetle (riding on it extends to him its immunity to earthquakes caused by it). If both creatures have been freed or slain, he retreats to Area 12 and makes his final stand there.

Treasure: The minister's desk contains three secret compartments; each one can be found with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check and unlocked with a DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Each

compartment is covered in runes that, when touched, force creatures touching them to make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or they believe they are a gorilla escaping its imprisonment and violently attack anyone on their way to the exit, fighting with their bare hands.

The first compartment contains a methodical journal of Bardan Baozrak, including details of replacing the real Baozrak, his slow filling of the crew of this very location with shadow dwarves, detail of his transformation in a mummy lord and feelings of still undergoing changes, as his body begins to become something more, as well as info about hidden Area 12. Any high authority of Alphatia would be willing to pay up to 50,000 gp for this information; the exact amount depends on the party's ability to negotiate. The second compartment contains 125,000 gp worth of rare gems and unfinished notes concerning the process of replacing the eyes of another creature with gems to make them servants of the Outer Gods. The final compartment contains the Belt of the Brightest Star (see right).

33 Interrogation Room

This room has been turned into a place of grotesque torture, with various tools and devices, magical or otherwise, filling the area. Currently it is occupied by a single prisoner, Raahinya. At all times a team of twelve little apprentices, young shadow dwarves in service of Father Gilbert Grimm, occupy this area. Four scribes (**Derro Savant**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 3) devise new ways of torture, which are then implemented by eight terminators (**Derro**, *Mordekainen's Tome of Foes*, CR 1/4). There's a 25% chance Father Gilbert Grimm will be here when the PCs enter, unless he has

Belt of the Brightest Star

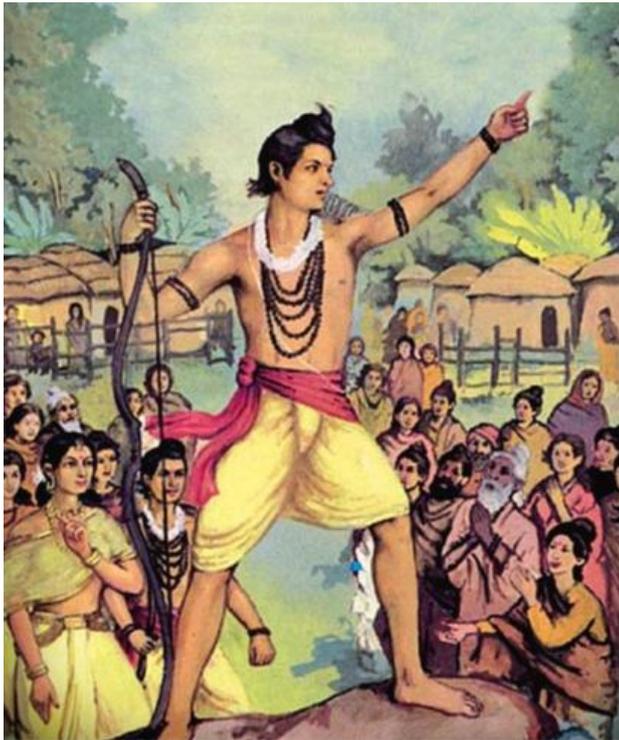
(wondrous item, very rare)

The belt belonged to a famous pair of Alphatian performers, actress Selene Garisiana and her musician brother, Flavio. Both of them shocked the Empire with their astonishing performances, being able to match the greatest actors at the young age of sixteen. It was only after both of them passed three years later that the Alphatian authorities felt it suspicious enough to investigate, discovering the siblings' talent was actually coming from this belt, that they would pass between each other, and which was granted by their father, as a ploy to get their family into noble position. It is believed he came onto it by killing a Glantrian spy and stealing this item from them.

Effects: This belt contains 12 charges, that can be spent on casting the following spells: *disguise self* – 1 charge, *Nystul's magic aura* – 2, *catnap* – 3, *glibness* – 8.

Once the number of charges reaches zero, it regains 2d4+2 charges but the creature wearing it must make half as many DC 20 Constitution Saving Throws or suffer two levels of exhaustion each.

already been encountered somewhere else. If not, when attacked one of the terminators will run to get him from Area 9. The scribes have the four keys necessary to unlock Raahinya's shackles, but they will guard them with their lives. All of the twelve little apprentices fear Father Grimm far more than any PCs and, as long as he lives, cannot be persuaded to let their prisoner go.



Raahinya

Raahinya uses the statistics of a **Warlord** with following changes

- His Dexterity Score is 18.
- He wears no armor but instead adds his Constitution to his AC.
- His greatsword attacks are flavored as Unarmed Strikes.
- He can make Dash, Disengage, Dodge, or a single attack as bonus actions.
- If armed with a bow, he doubles the number of attacks he makes in a single Attack action.
- He can suppress his Survivor feature for an hour to remove a level of exhaustion from himself.

Once the PCs free him, he has been reduced to 1 hit point and suffers 1d6-1 (minimum of 1) levels of exhaustion. If healed he will desire to take revenge on the Alphas and dwarves alike and cannot be talked down from his desire to murder Minister Bardan Baozrak. If the PCs swear to help him, he will accompany them and aid them in combat. Once the Minister is killed, Raahinya will give the PCs the Silver Key, which will magically emerge from his chest, where it was hidden through the blessing of Sindi Immortals. If Raahinya is killed, the key emerges on its own.

34 Slave Pen

1d8 **Commoner** slaves are chained to the walls of this room; they are malnourished, scared, and in no condition to fight. When questioned about the Horse Clan youths, they say one was just taken from here by a guard to “room behind cold room” (Area 26).

35 Minister’s Office

Here Minister Bardan Baozrak deals with all administrative matters. There's a 25% chance he will be encountered here, working. The room is lavish with luxuries and the total of furniture here is worth around 3,500 gp. If attacked here, the Minister teleports away as described in Area 32, but not before calling a team from Area 30 to come and deal with the intruders.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs return with Raahinya, he and Indrepal will celebrate their heroism and bravery in a grand feast. They will also give the PCs a reward in the form of a “recently vacated” mansion built by one of the Alphatian occupiers, whose former owner was unfortunately eaten by a tiger in mysterious circumstances. The mansion can be repurposed as the PCs’ base. It can also be sold for 10,000 gp, or five times as much if work and money are first invested into making it look less like an eyesore of invading culture, sticking out among Sindi buildings like a sore thumb. Individual rooms can be rented, earning the PCs 100 gp a month per occupied room. At the end of each month there is a 50% chance of 1d4 new rooms being rented and 20% chance of 1d3 rooms being vacated. Lowering the rent, underselling the mansion, or donating it to the people will make the PCs’ reputation in the region soar greatly, while doing the opposite will decrease it.

Returning Horse Clan youths to the Horse Clan will have the PCs’ declared friends of the Horse people, always to be welcomed by the clan. In addition to the gold, they receive a second bracelet, identical to the first one, allowing them to summon Horse Clan warriors for aid.

If the Moving Mountain still remains operational, the PCs may want to take control of it. Any of their allies may be convinced to help manning and operating it. Horse Clan in particular may be interested in acquiring it to move through the mountains.

If you wish to connect the adventure to Undersea Laboratory of Aquan Archmage⁴⁰ Raahinya may tell the PCs that, before his capture, he heard Shivangi Adhira, his protégée leading her own resistance cell in Kandaputra, on the coast down south, is in need of help. He may also mention hearing she may possess another of the keys to the legendary vault.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank Glen Welch, whose monster statistics I have used multiple times in the writing of this module, as well as youtuber Dungeon Dad for additional monster statistics I referred to.

Maps were created using donjon: <https://donjon.bin.sh/fantasy/dungeon/>, which is also responsible for the random numbering of rooms.

⁴⁰ See “Against the Wizards: Undersea Laboratory of Aquan Archmage” in [issue #31 of THRESHOLD Magazine](#)

Terrors in the Mists: Monsters of Mystaran Ravenloft

by Doc Necrotic

various monster stats provided by Cab

We return to Mystara's impact upon the Lands of the Mists in an ongoing setting crossover. This time around, prior setting creatures get makeovers alongside brand new creatures to use in either setting. Like with the Returned Blackmoor article, this one will focus on BECMI as a priority. The entries on the monsters themselves reflect both their Mystaran and Ravenloft variations. But, enough of that, time to journey beyond misty borders once more....

Within the Known World and beyond, there exist all sorts of strange monstrosities; those cursed by the immortals, those weaved through mortal tampering, the result of accidents and cataclysms, the list stretches onwards. But, many of these pale in strength and terror compared to those at home within the Dimension of Dread. These creatures seem all the more emboldened by the mysterious Dark Powers that act as the sinister caretakers of this realm. Many of these terrors were once Mystaran in their own right, before the Mists changed them. Likewise, some were built in the image of this homeworld but made to reflect the Lands of the Mists as well.

Dread Possibility: Other Mystarans in the Mists

Beyond the new domains created through previous *THRESHOLD* articles, it's quite possible that various other Mystaran creatures have found themselves within this dimensional space too. Were they brought here, recreated or something else entirely? Here is a list of Mystaran monsters that might appear within previously existing and new domains of dread:

Beastmen

Darkheath, Darkon

(See Below)

Chevall

Arak (formerly), Darkon, Nova Vaasa, Tepest, Shadow Rift

Mysterious beings with dominion over horses. This strange shapeshifter can jump between a centaur and warhorse form, while seeking to protect all things equine. While Nova Vaasa does not have roots in Karameikos, they were first spotted within the mists there. However, their demiplane counterparts are more fanatical in their protection of horses and less trusting of all else. Their reactions towards humans and demi-humans are more prone to aggression here.

Devil Swine

Borca, Dementlieu, Richemulot, Darkon

A relative of the werebeast, but tainted with something far more sinister. Many seek positions of power, while indulging themselves in ludicrous amounts of food. Many devil swine in their human forms become dreadfully overweight. While they have established themselves within Borca, Dementlieu and Darkon without much issue, many have

run into problems when gaining too much favor in Richemulot.

Dusanu

Borca, Richemulot, Nosos

Fungal blights resembling the undead. Areas of heavy poison and disease seem to gain favor with these spore horrors. It should be no surprise that blight-heavy wards of Richemulot and Borca, as well as much of Nosos, have begun to see the dusanu as a problem. The former two have had much better luck containing the threat, while outer reaches of Nosos have seen outbreaks.

Grey Philosopher

Darkheath, Darkon, Dementlieu, Hazlan, Jaibul, Mordent, Nova Vaasa, Tyoraam

Mad thinkers who died pondering something incredible and dreadful. Their remnants ponder evil spirits called "malices." Many were once wicked mages or priests in their own right, before death attempted to take them. Regardless, unanswerable questions tormented them, and now they manifest as new beings to torment. Destroying them is no easy feat and is fraught with consequence, as one may learn the horrid answer that they sought out in life.

Magen

Darkon, Nebligtode

Artificial humanoid constructs. Their origins in this dimension lie within Meredoth's creations and experiments. Most magen were created prior to him leaving for Norwold. The magen became his caretakers, advisors and assistants as he grew colder towards humanity. Within the islands that make up the domain, the vast majority are around Meredoth's lair of Todstein. Both the Fra-



Grey Philosopher, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)



Dusanu, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

ternity of Shadows and the Kargatane have attempted to infiltrate Meredoth's lair, with spies having lifted information on the mages. The Wizard-King Azalin Rex has employed some of these constructs to his service in the time since he deployed agents.⁴¹

Mujina, Mystara

Tyoraam, Jaibul, Sri Raji, Pharazia

Faceless shapeshifters, fueled by malice. They seek to brutalize and torment mundane denizens of the domains, and often do so through their ability to trade their smooth faceless appearance for another humanoid's face. This can be employed to beguile and shock victims, or lull them into a false sense of security. The end result is robbery in the best scenario or murder in the most likely. These creatures are asexual, usually coming about through Immortal intervention. It is possible that the Dark Powers carry on this conjuration. Any cooperation between mujina in the Mists is short-lived, as they will part ways to continue their own reigns of terror elsewhere. Still, many of these fell beings have been seen collaborating for a time. Their true nature can even be hidden from magical detection and psychic powers with a great ease.

Neh-Thalggu

Bluetspur, Hazlan, The Nightmare Lands

The brain collectors, the things of nightmares. To many, they are counterparts to the illithid. But, they will claim that is far from true. Some have maintained a hidden base on the edge of Hazlan, from the days when it bordered Bluetspur. Being severed

from that land of dreaded rivals is something of a boon for the brain collectors. But, those stuck within that other domain remain in peril. Others have since fled and found themselves in a realm not dissimilar from the Dimension of Nightmares.

Nosferatu, Mystaran⁴²

Barovia, Borca, Dagan (formerly), Gundarak (formerly), Invidia, Sanguinia, Tyoraam, Vorostokov

The living dead, a variation of the vampire once blessed but now tainted by the mists. Mystaran nosferatu share some of the banes and boons of Ravenloft nosferatu. Like the Mystaran version, they retain class levels and experience. They also drain blood, thus targeting the Constitution stat. Nosferatu cannot engage with the sun, except powerful-enough elders who usually suffer deep discomfort. While those of sufficient power are immune, the sunlight still causes most to fall into torpor. Furthermore, failure to obtain at least 3 Constitution points of blood per night has dire consequences. Upon several nights of starvation, the nosferatu risks bestial rage. Sustenance is possible from animal blood, but to a lesser degree (usually 1 less point of overall Constitution).

⁴¹ This refers to [issue# 31 of THRESHOLD Magazine](#), as well as the "[Nocturnal Sea Gazetteer](#)". In both, both factions attempt to infiltrate Meredoth's domain.

⁴² In Mystaran domains, these replace Ravenloft versions, but keep some of the Ravenloft variant abilities.



Nosferatu, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)



Draugr, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>)

Other MONSTERS in the Demiplane of Dread⁴³

- Ancient Dead (Mummies): Ylar
- Animal Ghost: Scarred Crag
- Bowlyn: Darkheath
- Corpse Candle: Vasfar
- Dread Treant: Scarred Crag
- Feathered Serpent: Scarred Crag
- Ghoul Lord: Tyoraam, Ylar
- Leech, Ravenloft: Scarred Crag
- Lycanthrope, Werefox (Mystaran)⁴⁴: Darkon, Nova Vaasa, Nebligtode, Rokushima Táiyoo, Vasfar, Verbrek
- Lycanthrope, Werejaguar: Scarred Crag
- Lycanthrope, Weretiger: Jaibul
- Quevari: Jaibul, Vasfar
- Snow Golem: Nebligtode, Vasfar
- Vampire Elf: Tyoraam
- Wraith, War⁴⁵: Darkheath, Scarred Crag

⁴³ The majority of these monsters can be found within the *Ravenloft Monstrous Compendium Appendices*.

⁴⁴ Mystaran werefoxes do not take an elven form and are not restricted to women. See below for more.

⁴⁵ The "[Book of Souls netbook](#)" contains this monster entry, this netbook can be found at The Kargatane archive.

NEW MONSTERS AMONG THE MISTS

Ancient Dead

A category of undead within the Demiplane of Dread. The older these undead are, the more powerful they become. At least that was a theory. The undead hunter, Rudolph Van Richten, has other ideas. Power in life or in death creates various tiers of rank. Weaker ones can be dispatched without fear of revival, while stronger ones can create more of their own or wield powerful magic. They share many traits with mummies currently existing within either Mystara or the wider Demiplane of Dread. Some of these undead display properties completely unique to themselves.

Draugr*

AC:	3
HD:	6***
Move:	120' (40')
Attacks:	2 claws/1 bite
Damage:	1d3/1d3/1d4 (all + poison)
No. Appearing:	1 (1)
Save As:	F6
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	E
Intelligence:	11
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	800

These are the battlefield dead brought about by blood and ice. While not always the victims of war, they almost always lack a proper burial. It is said that a corpse not buried in a horizontal manner can become a draugr. Sometimes the trauma of war can be enough, dragging these angered souls back to torment the lands of the living. The draugr upon the prime world of Mystara have been seen roving around the Northern

Reaches, often just beyond civilized places, but never beyond sites of great violence and strife. Their stench of rot and entropy is perhaps the easier way to identify them from afar. Exposure to the vile smell within 30 ft. requires a save vs. poison, lest the victim take -5 penalty on all rolls for upwards to 1d8 hours. The draugr rarely serve any greater agenda, beyond the suffering that created them. It is said that they can inspire great dread and even madness by their presence; those engaged in combat against them may be forced to make Morale checks upon being attacked by the draugr, at the DM's discretion. It is possible one might not even see a draugr, due to their supernatural ability to call forth darkness. The clouding aura can shroud the undead horror. Enough in an area can shroud a location in a fake blanket of night until defeated. A draugr can, in effect, create an area of black fog 20' in diameter, once per round, blocking all normal vision, infravision, and only being penetrable with a *truesight* spell.

The foul undead can be stopped beyond traditional combat. Binding the body upon defeat, lining them with straw and a shroud, can prevent them from reviving. Raising the body in three directions symbolic of scissors can prove effective. Finally, a funeral can commence. If the body is inside of a building, a new entryway to act as a corpse door must be created, with the body passing through it. None of these methods are certain to work on their own, but a combination is sure to forever silence these aggressive dead. One may have to go beyond that by destroying the body and consecrating its original grave soon after. Just because one is defeated doesn't mean one is safe. If not careful during the process, a draugr can curse a victim to suffer dearly. This can range from bad luck to poor health to even becoming another draugr upon death. Only

by consulting a priest or wise woman (or by a *remove curse* cast at 9th level or above) does one have hope to undo this curse. Even then, one may have to undergo the same ritual used to defeat a draugr.

Draugr are immune to normal and silver weapons and can only be hit by magical weapons. They can be turned as spectres, but are immune to the D effect of turning, only being turned if a cleric would automatically destroy them. However, very high level clerics able to inflict D+ on them may destroy them this way.

Draugr, Greater*

AC:	-3
HD:	18****
Move:	120' (40')
Attacks:	2 claws/1 bite
Damage:	1d4/1d4/2d4 (all + oison)
No. Appearing:	1 (1)
Save As:	F18
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	I, O, V
Intelligence:	13
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	7,525

A mixture of growing malice and age can empower a draugr, eventually allowing them to become greater draugr. In this form, they become spirits (see *DM's Companion*, page 37, or the *D&D Rules Cyclopedia* page 207) with all of the shared abilities (immunity to spells below 4th level, weapons of less than +2 enchantment, save vs. D effect on turning, poisonous touch and presence, clerical spells, animate dead) and in addition can create an area of black fog as a normal draugr.

They function much the same as their lesser equivalents, but prove far more dangerous.

Their abilities are magnified alongside their hatred of the living. Greater draugr have the ability to disguise themselves as sickly and deathly looking beasts such as horses and cats, their souls possessing the decaying bodies thereof. While in the bodies of such animals, they cannot be mistaken for living examples, being unmistakably undead, including the usual stench. Spotting one often means you are being spied upon by draugr. Likewise, these variants contain new mental talents devoted to tormenting the living. Draugr can cast *ESP* once per turn, and primarily use this while potential victims are sleeping. These draugr can peer into dreams. Given time, they can seed maddening knowledge into their victims' minds, who must make a saving throw vs. spells once per night or suffer a -2 to Intelligence and Wisdom until they are allowed a full week's rest. Some are capable of prophetic insight, seeing some vague vision. While rarely helpful in combat, it can help in throwing off an opponent who might fear for the future.

Dragon of the Scarred Crags

AC:	0
HD:	15***
Movement (ground):	150' (50')
Movement (flying):	240' (80')
Attacks:	2 claws/1 horn or special
Damage:	1d10+2/1d10+2/2d8+4
No. Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F15
Morale:	9
Treasure Type:	G
Intelligence:	8
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	4,800

A strange beast born from an unfathomable curse upon the lost Darokinian settlers in the Scarred Crags. It is said to watch over

the forbidden woods spread through much of the domain. It lurks as a grim guardian, but prefers to avoid conflict. Those it can't deflect will be hunted as prey. Its motivations are unknown, but it seems to prefer privacy away from prying eyes. Ironically, its gaze pierces into the souls of those who have the misfortune to look upon it. They must make a save vs. spells or flee in fear for 7-12 (1d6+6) rounds. Those who look upon its eyes while within its forbidden forest domain take an additional -3 penalty. It can also emit a piercing shriek capable of immobilizing foes. Any creature that can hear it within 30 ft. must succeed a save vs. paralysis or lose all mobility while covering their ears in any way possible. Likewise, those who fail suffer 2d6 damage. The dragon may trample foes in a flyby sweep (treat as a dragon's crush attack, inflicting damage as per its horn attack). Alternatively, if it has 30' to charge, it can use its horns to ram or gore an opponent akin to a Charge attack. Should the beast need an escape, it can teleport as if casting *dimension door* up to 3 times per day.

Rumors tell of a Darokinian settler family who reached out to dark spirits in exchange for a child of their own. Anomalous activity came to haunt their settlement soon after: violent weather, clammy mists, visions of strange creatures just beyond clear sight. Nearby farmsteads were in uproar over the happenings, thrust into high alert. A rogue bolt of lightning struck the settler cottage before an unholy ritual took place. Grim spirits accosted the household wife before a demonic force grew from within her. In a violent explosion of the flesh, a monstrosity was unearthed. The vile thing, a combination of man, beast and dark spirit had emerged from the corpse of its mother, immediately lunging at and feasting upon the father. With a horrid screech, it leapt



Dragon of the Scarred Crag, original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>).

into the foggy night to haunt the lands for all time. Other homes fell prey to the beast's rampage. While many were capable of harming the thing to a minor degree, it laid waste to the emerging colony. From then on, the remaining buildings and grounds remained a decaying derelict and suffered a grim curse.

Giants of the Mists



Seldom has knowledge of giants passed on into the Dimension of Dread, let alone from Mystara. These massive and lonesome entities are seen as alien horrors, titans of calamity of destruction, divine omens and more. They rarely have a place in this realm, but are most often a source of tales of horror. Proof in the appearance of a giant should be a legendary event for most domains, even ones with proper mythology surrounding them. While outlanders have been noted, the most

common form otherwise found within the lands of the mists is the "Dread Giant."⁴⁶

Giant, Dread

AC:	2
HD:	18***
Movement:	150' (50')
Attacks:	1 weapon or 1 grapple
Damage:	6d6 or special
No. Appearing:	1d2 (1d4)
Save As:	F15
Morale:	11
Treasure Type:	E+5,000gp
Intelligence:	15
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	6,175

The dread giant is a grim misty cousin to the giant of the Prime Material, including the various giants of Mystara. In this case, they are sinister parodies of the very ice giant who doomed the first darklord of Vasfar. Instead of moving normally, they can travel from within a storm or blizzard, seemingly disappearing in the process. Their speed is greatly enhanced, traveling within the weather itself. They may return to a corporeal state by exiting the weather effect. In effect this allows them to *dimension* every three rounds during a storm, and to *teleport* (with no chance of error) in a storm once per turn. Anything they grab or take with them is likewise taken into the storm, and this is one of their favored modes of attack—to grab a target (requiring a normal wrestling check) and to *dimension door* holding them, said victim being taken into the tempest along with the giant if they fail a save vs. paralysis. There, a lone target will be destroyed before the giants decide whether to return. While more than capable of

⁴⁶ [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #29](#) first references "Dread Giant." In that "context," it is the Black Rajah's understanding of Ravenloft giants.



holding their own in combat, most dread giants prefer to finish their dark deeds and return to their lairs. The mortal folk are figuratively and literally beneath them.

Like all giants, a dread giant may opt to hurl boulders, but this is rare, and only occurs if the weather suddenly turns against them (typically at the behest of an enemy spellcaster). If they do choose to hurl boulders they do so with a range of 60/130/200 for 3d6 damage.

This entry only covers the Dread Giant as it is found in Vasfar. It is quite likely that other variations exist in other domains of dread. For example, sand giants might travel through sandstorms in Ylar and fire giants might be attracted to the Mountains of Misery in Darkon. As dread giants are variants, one could twist existing forms of giants with similar abilities, such as transportation through active weather. Their seemingly distant and alien presence sets them well apart from their counterparts upon the Prime, with most tending to linger just beyond normal vision. Despite their towering heights, they are always blurred against extreme natural phenomena.

Giant Head*

AC:	4
HD:	5**
Movement (flying):	150' (50')
Attacks:	1 bite
Damage:	1d8+energy drain
No. Appearing:	1 (1d4)
Save As:	F8
Morale:	12
Treasure Type:	E
Intelligence:	7
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	325

A massive undead head with wings. This creature is born of a vile hex placed upon a particularly wicked spirit. They exist to swoop, mob and hunt the living, ripping apart all who fail to evade them. While they show only a figment of their former intelligence, these dark spirit beings are still canny hunters and gain many boons from their accursed flight. They retain some intelligence, but lose any sense of their former selves. Heavily territorial, they are known to create some rudimentary traps and plot ambushes against foes. Their ghastly visage is sometimes combined with a terrifying scream to signal their coming from a distance. Their mane of hair covers much of it, acting like a rough armor that protects against typical weapons (they can only be struck by silver or magical weapons, with silver weapons only inflicting half damage). At times, the wretched things can spawn talons to capture or rake their targets. Whichever form of attack they choose, they inflict 1d8 damage plus one level of energy drain. However, many are content with flying around without these present.

Within the Scarred Crag, they often soar around the cliff faces that overlook the villages below. Their primary time of hunting is deep in the dead of night. Those who dare stir at these late hours find themselves to be potential prey for the malignant spirits. According to the wise elders, the Opossum Tribe was banished from their original lands by these foul spirit beings. Before fleeing, they attempted to defend themselves against the endless swarms and failed, with many warriors being consumed. The ghoulish things hover to remind the people of their follies and failures, sometimes even their own. These flying heads carry an ancient curse that grants them a painful weakness, as burning coals and flames prove useful in banishing them



quicker. It is said that they take massive damage from these sources, possibly killing them within seconds. They make all save vs. fire attacks with a -2 penalty to the roll, and take double damage (saving for normal damage) therefrom.

Lycanthropes, Beasts of the Night

The various shapeshifter beasts are infected in the soul and enslaved by the moon's eerie light. Many variations and phenotypes exist, each with their own banes. The Mists offer their own menagerie of the shifting beasts, but only a few are given here.

Lycanthrope, Werejackal*

AC:	6 (9)
HD:	4+2**
Movement:	180' (60')
Attacks:	1 bite or weapon
Damage:	1d8 or by weapon
No. Appearing:	1d6 (2d6)
Save As:	F4
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	C
Intelligence:	10
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	225

Crafty, suspicious and often cowardly, the werejackal is a loathsome shifting beast. Many congregate among their packs, devising foul conspiracies and means of tearing down foes. Ylar hosts its own pack, which is predominantly the Kalzafred Clan. Their goal is to usurp the City of Misted Eyes from Thief King Ahmed. It is unknown if the clan was actually infected upon making their way to this land. It is possible that their plague has afflicted them since their time in the world of Laterre.



Regardless, what has been called the Mystaran werejackal is somewhat different from the creature of Har'Akir. Unlike that version, this werebeast has three forms: its base racial form, a slightly larger jackal, and a man-beast form that in other lycanthropes can only be attained by the most powerful individuals, in which they have the advantages both of their human and animal forms (they can use their bite attack, can only be struck by silver or magical weapons, *etc.*). The last two forms often have fur ranging from a light and tawny coat to a much darker coat. Like other Ravenloft werejackals, victims of a progenitor's curse are mentally enslaved and must perform commands given to them. When faced with overwhelming odds, their morale typically shatters. If there is call for a morale role, werejackals always suffer a penalty. Even in failure, the monster will often plot some elaborate means of revenge.

If one is incorporating the player rules from PC4: *Night Howlers*, treat the werejackal stats like the Mystaran version of the werefox.

Lycanthrope, Werepossum

AC:	6 (9)
HD:	3**
Movement (ground):	120'(40')
Movement (climbing):	90' (30')
Movement (swimming):	90' (30')
Attacks:	1 bite or weapon
Damage:	1d6 or by weapon
No. Appearing:	1d2 (1d3)
Save As:	F3
Morale:	7
Treasure Type:	C
Intelligence:	8
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	45

Miserable, lonely, and beady-eyed things. Even in human form, they look haggard, ragged and frantic. Rarely do other werebeasts of this phenotype interact, save for courtship and producing children. Relationships are typically fleeting and this phenotype prefers isolation, reflecting the behavior of the opossum. When werepossums are unable to use their enhanced climbing and swimming to avoid a situation, their powerful torpor abilities do well to protect them. Healing is accelerated at incredible rates as they appear to fall unconscious, allowing them to recover 1d6hp per turn. Torpor usually happens up to 1 hour after being put in danger. While in torpor, the werepossum is immobilized, but mostly immune to damage that isn't caused by a +4 or greater magic weapon. The werepossum is not a passive creature, though. Many of this werebeast phenotype are petty, vindictive and will find ways to get what they want

in the moment. While they rarely desire any luxuries, they are inclined to steal basic necessities especially if it can harm those who need them as well. They have contributed to the squalor faced within the Scarred Crag, at least when they care to leave their accursed grounds.

Despite being malicious werebeasts, they are not quick to embrace new victims. Their preference is towards privacy and often show disdain towards the newly created. It is far more likely that the cursed grounds in the Scarred Crag are responsible for the creation of new werepossums. This does not guarantee them respect either, as new spawns are treated with suspicion and ire. Those that prove untrustworthy or could expose them to the Jaguar Tribe warriors are often slain. However, this does not stop werepossums from secretly infiltrating spaces to spy upon or corrupt them. Due to the majority being of the Possum Tribe, they prefer to sneak into these ancestral villages. Some seek to intentionally agitate aggression and rebellion against the Jaguar Tribe overseers, in hopes of returning to a miserable and quiet existence.

Defeating or warding off this werebeast is not entirely different from contending with other phenotypes. Like with many of these creatures in the Mists, silver is not overly effective. Curiously, the best way to damage or frighten the werepossum is by dousing a weapon of choice in vinegar. The pungent smell is often enough to scare a werepossum away. However, this soaked weapon proves as effective as silver upon a werewolf. While it cannot hurt them, strong smells of peppermint often act as a repellent too. Either can prove useful for exposing a werepossum infiltrator. If exposed and suffering sufficient damage, the werepossum will try to escape before sliding into torpor

in hiding. Likewise, any healing in torpor is up to 10x faster than regular healing associated with lycanthropes.

Mist Ferryman*

AC:	3
HD:	4**
Movement:	120' (40')
Attacks:	2 claws/1 bite
Damage:	1d6/1d6/1d8 + special
No. Appearing:	0 (1)
Save As:	F4
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	C
Intelligence:	10
Alignment:	Chaotic
XP Value:	125

Resembling the ferrymen of the underworld or possibly Limbo, these skeletal-like figures seem always shrouded in mist. While they can offer safe passage in the waters beyond, they are not to be trusted. Within the Mystara-touched domains, they have been reported in Nebligtode and Darkheath. They are more often associated with Mordent, while rarely seen in the aforementioned domains. They are rarely to be trusted, as they're swift to attack the living. They carry a dread curse that can turn others into another ferrying mist spirit if not stopped. Each hit causes the loss of 1 point of Constitution, which is recovered at the rate of 1 per hour. Any victim falling to 0 Constitution dies, returning as a mist ferryman at the third moonrise following their death. This Ferryman's Rot can be treated through supernatural means, lost constitution being immediately restored by use of a *cure disease* spell. However, should one best them in physical combat or trick them, one can coerce them into taking you to another domain. But take heed, they can always summon more to their aid, calling

out with an horrific cry that summons all other mist ferrymen within range, who somehow find a rapid route traveling through the mists to assist their dark kin, 1d8+1 arriving in 5 rounds. Their interest in the wartorn Darkheath is unknown, likewise the isolated frozen wastes of the hermit wizard. In the case of the former, perhaps the growing violence has enticed them to seek the desperate. In the case of the latter, perhaps the nefarious Ice Wizard has found ways to bind them to his will.

Mist ferrymen seem to be able to communicate verbally with all sentient living creatures, this being necessary to demand payment for their dubious services. Like other undead they are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells. They can be turned as wraiths.

Zombie Fog

An uneasy mist with supernatural dread properties. While it seems like it is devoid of intelligence, this is far from true. These malignant clouds of dark power hover near places of mass death. This can range from cemeteries to battlefields. While they often deal little in damage, save for variants, they can actively suppress and mentally choke living victims until their bodies give out, drained of their will to live.. As per its name, its other ability is reanimating the dead through its mists. The so-called mist cadavers act as zombies. However, should the body be slain in proximity to a zombie fog, the mist cadaver will revive and do its master's bidding. If the zombie fog does not kill and animate as many creatures as its hit dice in over a week's time, it can temporarily lose hit dice until it dissipates into nothingness. The more common version, mostly seen within Mordent, has joined by a much newer and deadlier creation.



	Zombie Fog*	Alchemical Variant*	Corpse
AC:	-3	8	-1
HD:	9**	13***	2*
Movement:	60' (20')	60' (20')	60' (20')
Attacks:	Special	Special	1 claw
Damage:	Special	Special	1d6
No. Appearing:	0 (1)	0 (4d10)	0 (1)
Save As:	C18	C20	F1
Morale:	10	10	12
Treasure Type:	Nil	Nil	Nil
Intelligence:	4	9	1
Alignment:	Chaotic	Chaotic	Chaotic
XP Value:	2,300	4,200	24



Within Darkheath, a special zombie fog clings to haunted battlefields, ruined villages and bombed-out wastelands. The infected and chemical coated corpses aimlessly shamle in a facsimile of their old lives. The zombified minions, when non hostile, are devoid of any awareness that their old dwellings are destroyed. When either the fog or the minions become aware of a potential victim, all undead controlled by the misty puppet master will be alerted. They will then pursue the victim by any means, in an effort to recruit them into a grim army. This version originated within weapons factories serving Blackmoorian colonies. Successful runs against Blackmoor's foes only resulted in the creation of more for a time. However, the effects of this accidentally manifested into something new.

Prolonged use of these weapons against enemy vessels and encroaching beastmen has resulted in its toxic smog gaining a gradual self-awareness. The grim magics already used to help forge these weapons led to new properties. The fog should have ended at death, but has gained the ability to reanimate its victims as corpse puppets. To the horror of the zombie fog's victims, they learned that these faux undead are twisted into doing the malignant cloud's bidding. Those promptly slain by the weaponized fog are also soon possessed and reanimated as its undead servants. All of this occurred before The Mists took and transformed it.

The fog itself is huge, covering an area around 200' across. Within its mist can be seen those slain and reanimated by it, sham-



bling aimlessly within. It can control one animated cadaver per hit point it currently possesses and can increase its total number of hit points to a maximum permitted of its 9HD, up to 72, if it can find and control sufficient corpses. The fog cannot attack physically, but 3 times per day it can *cause despair*. When it does so, all those within the fog must make a saving throw vs. spells or feel hopeless and become unable to attack or defend themselves until struck by a foe. The initial attack against a despairing victim is made at +4 to hit, and subsequent attacks are made at +2 to hit, while the victim's own attacks are made with a -2 penalty. The despair effect lasts until the fog is destroyed, or for 3d6 turns after leaving the area of the fog.

Mystara's zombie fog, much like the variation in the Demiplane of Dread, is not undead in origin, instead being a malign combination of technomancy and pollution. It is frequently mistaken for undead, but it is in fact closer in nature to a construct. Thus, it cannot be turned, but can be held at bay with a *protection from evil* effect. The fog is immune to normal and silver weapons, and can only be struck by magical weapons.

The alchemical variant has the ability to inflict a poisonous attack to all who breathe in the toxic fumes. The target must make a save against poison or lose 1d4 points of Constitution. Any creature that reaches 0 Constitution becomes a mist cadaver automatically. Victims of this blight need medical treatment and can still lose Constitution if not treated. Otherwise, resting in a safe area with medical aid can result in regaining 1 point of Constitution per day, if not healed through use of magic (a *neutralize poison* spell can restore lost Constitution if cast within 10 rounds of exposure,

otherwise a *cure disease* spell will restore the damage).

Cadavers within the fog are very like zombies, but not undead. They always lose initiative, and act last in any round. They attack with claws or any objects they have to hand for 1d6 damage. They cannot be turned, having no essence of their own to turn, but can be slain by reducing them to 0hp. However, if still within the mist of the zombie fog they will be reanimated in 1d4 rounds, again with 2HD. Likewise, any newly slain foes will rise as cadavers in 1d4 rounds. Reanimation of a cadaver restores 1hp of damage to the mist, or increases the total number of hit points an undamaged mist has up to a maximum of 72. To permanently 'kill' the cadaver the body must be substantially destroyed, with damage sufficient to reduce them to -18hp being required.

AD&D 2ND EDITION ADDENDUM: BEASTMAN

Within Mystara, beastmen were a progenitor race of the humanoid. Created roughly Mystaran-Calendar-BC 4500, as Hel reincarnated wicked souls as a personal army of monsters. This in turn sparked the Beastman Crusades of Blackmoorian legend. The Great Rain of Fire ultimately purged much of the population, save for those eventually taken to the Hollow World. Over time, beastmen mutated into the several humanoid races seen in the world today. The Hollow World beastmen have given up on evil plots, often preferring to keep to themselves and surviving in their new home.

Within Ravenloft, these are indeed souls of the damned, but from far more tragic circumstances. Rather than Immortal magic, they are spawned by a Darklord's curse. Those who die in loyalty to the Darklord are reincarnated as a beastman, according to the domain's False History. It's also possible that the memories of these dead souls are grafted onto newly created beastmen made by The Dark Powers. These new beastmen will retain muddled and confused thoughts and memories of a past life, which risks insanity if pondered too deeply. These beastmen, driven to madness by Darkheath's curse, are often used as sacrificial body shields during raids against the colony of Darkheath. Curiously, those who have wandered off into the mists have found themselves in other domains. A shocking number have unintentionally migrated to Darkon.

The following refers to general beastmen, usable in either setting. Beastmen in Darkheath tend to suffer the effects of Madness as elaborated in the Ravenloft Campaign Setting.⁴⁷ This can be ignored, should a DM want to run beastmen in a 2E version of Mystara instead. The stats below adapt existing BECMi stats to better fit the 2E game.

Beastman

Climate/Terrain:	War-torn Wastelands
Frequency:	Uncommon (Darkheath), Very Rare (Elsewhere in Ravenloft), Rare (The Hollow World)
Organization:	Tribal
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Omnivore, with preference for meat
Intelligence:	Below Average – Average
Treasure:	L
Hit Dice:	2
HP:	8
AC:	8
Movement:	12
THACO:	19
No. of Att.:	1
Damage:	by weapon
Size:	M
Morale:	13
Alignment:	N or NE
XP:	25



Beastman, original drawing by I. Calvin from THRESHOLD Magazine issue #2

⁴⁷ Page 36 of the "Realm of Terror" book in the Ravenloft Setting Box details suffering from Madness, either at the hands of a failed check or gradual insanity. Saving throws against madness function like save vs. paralysis. Should the examples in the book not be sufficient, the DM is encouraged to seek other ways to depict mentally ill beastmen.

AD&D 2ND EDITION ADDENDUM: Mystaran Werefox

Within the demiplane of dread, most werefoxes are actually separate cursed creatures called the fox woman. These creatures are afflicted elven and human women who suffer a condition similar to lycanthropy. With more doomed souls arriving from Mystara, they've met a new rival in the true werefox. The Mystaran werefox likely originated within the domain of Vasfar, before making its way to the core through Nebligtode and Nova Vaasa. Those who have fled the wrath of the Church of the Lawgiver have attempted to make homes within Verbrek and Darkon.

This variant differs from other worlds', mostly within their abilities, core appearance, and gender restriction. While the Mystaran version lacks many magical powers, it makes up for that in less limited potential. Likewise, the Mystaran race does not take an elven form for their human/demihuman appearance. Finally, werefoxes from Mystara can be male or female. Statistics-wise, they are also different in that they do not have to have an elven base form, do not gain 1d4 levels worth of Wizard spells, cannot Pass without Trace continuously and their Charm ability is used 3 times per day while targeting one creature per use. For more detail, see the stat block and reference Creature Crucible 4: *Night Howlers* for more.

These children of darkness prowl the misty spaces between the world of Mystara and the Dimension of Dread. Many other terrible things persist in these dark corners, far beyond the scope of our imaginations and fears. Someone foolish or brave might unearth them, but at what cost?



Lycanthrope, Werefox (Mystara)

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Rare (Mystaran domains), Very Rare (Elsewhere in Ravenloft)
Organization:	Solitary or Groups (Too hedonistic and self-centered to stay for long)
Activity Cycle:	Nocturnal
Diet:	Carnivore
Intelligence:	Average – Exceptional
Treasure:	E, Q (x5), S
Hit Dice:	8+1
HP:	
AC:	4
Movement:	12
THACO:	13
No. of Att.:	1 (weapon or bite)
Spec. Att.:	Charms
Spec. Def.:	Silver or +1 weapon to hit
Damage:	by weapon or 1d6/1d6+4
Size:	M
Morale:	13
Alignment:	N or NE
XP:	800

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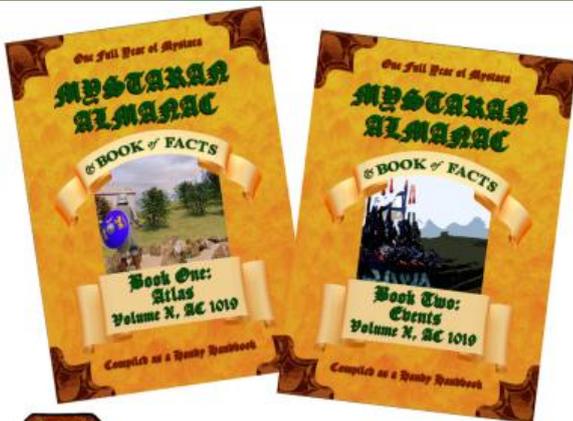


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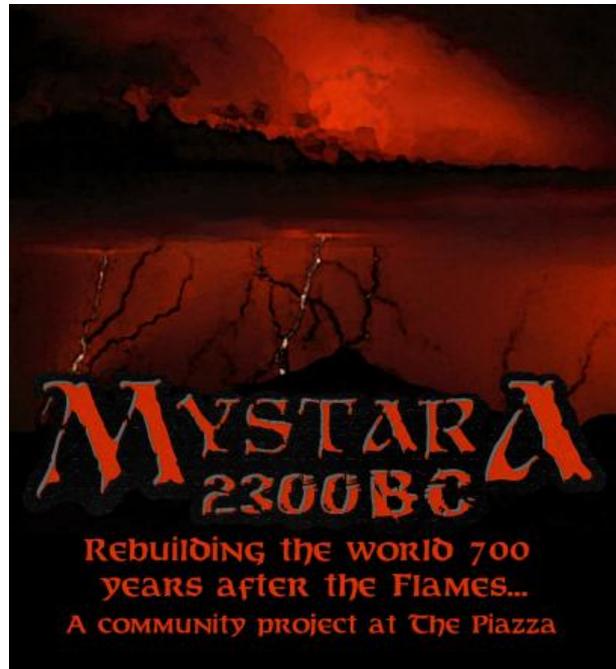
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Carnifex Gator Man Chameleon Man Lizard Man Sis'thik Troglodyte Cayman

In Cold Blood Reptilian Races of Mystara

by Cab Davidson

This article builds on “*Voyage of the Princes Ark*”, parts 32 and 33 (*DRAGON Magazine* issue #186 and #187, “*Red Steel*” in issue #315), “*Tortles of the Purple Sage*” in *DUNGEON Magazine* issues #6 and #7, and from supplement *DMR2: “Creature Catalog*” and the “*Savage Coast Monster Compendium*”.

(Top) Lizardfolk of Mystara,
original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh

<https://jeffrevkosh.wixsite.com/jeffrevkoshgraphics/home>

LECTURE NOTES FROM ZOOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY 102, PROFESSOR DANE OSSIFY, TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF DUNADALE

“I am delighted to see so many of you back for the second of our units on Zoological Anthropology, and I note in the back row some fresh, shiny new faces. From your unblinking, expressionless visage I can tell why you’ve come!

“It was once postulated that the oldest intelligences on Mystara were reptilian. Modern scholars have moved on considerably since then, and we now know that there were older, stranger forms of intel-

lect before the first great reptilian empires emerged. The precise identity of the early reptilians who followed is more in the remit of theologians than scientists, but we believe the various species thereof to have been known as carnifex. We can only speculate as to their precise nature, because the surprising diversity of modern reptilian folk makes it impossible to deduce anything about the earlier forms. So in this lecture series, I shall restrict myself to the extant, that is still current, intelligent reptilian species. By the end of this course, I hope you will be as enthralled with their incredible abilities as I am”

REPTILIAN PCs

This article presents a number of reptilian races for a Mystara (or any other) campaign, designed using classic *D&D* conventions (but conversion to any other version of the game should be straightforward). Each species has unique benefits and flaws, as outlined in each entry (and interspersed with more of Professor Ossify's notes), although certain similarities in brain structure of reptiles means that they have certain limitations in common (see “Intelligence and Wisdom of Reptiles” table below). For convenience, the key figures allowing immediate comparison of each species are also summarised in Table 1: Summary of Reptilian Character Types later in this article. Note that the table also describes which saving throws to use for each character species (where ‘human’ is stated, that character saves as a human of the same chosen character class). Cay man and chameleon man characters can choose the medicine man character class, detailed in the issue #32 of *THRESHOLD Magazine*.

CROCODILIANS

LECTURE NOTES FROM ZOOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY 102, PROFESSOR DANE OSSIFY

“For convenience we can divide the reptilian races into four broad classes. The first we shall consider are the crocodilians, in which there are two species known to us. These creatures are descended from an ancient lineage of reptiles, but it appears that they have risen to sentience only very recently, under the control of (as yet) unknown wizards in and around their homelands. The gator man is a truly enormous creature, slow-witted but capable of immense force, whereas the cay man is an almost comically small creature with more animal cunning but which presents almost no physical threat. It is however the latter that has started to form the rudiments of its own civilisation, aspiring to iron age technology within a few short years of founding a nascent culture. Physiologically the crocodilian races remain very like their forefathers, being well adapted to semi-aquatic environs where we may well expect them to spread in coming years.”

Cay Man

A species of diminutive (no larger than 1'4") lizard kin, with long pointed snouts and tiny hands on bodies that appear as little more than those of tiny crocodiles. Their culture is centred in and around the city of Tu'eth in their kingdom of Cay, which is slowly recovering from Herathian oppression and years of gator man raiding. They are slowly embracing metallic technology



Cay Man Medicine Man,
original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffrevkosh.wixsite.com/jeffrevkoshgraphics/home>)

and may be reaching a bronze age. Their lands are littered with many examples of excellent steel and bronze weapons, crafted for them by their former Herathian masters.

Their lifestyle is simple, existing in mud burrows in and around larger settlements where they dig pools and shallow lagoons

where birds, smaller reptiles, fish and other crabs make their homes. This terrain is difficult for any larger invaders to cross, with mire and quicksand that can envelop whole armies, and it provides all the prey that the cay men need to sustain themselves.

Advancement and Physical Attributes: Characters require the same number of experience points per level of experience as a human. When generated, they have the following modifiers to their ability rolls: Str: -2 Int: -3 Wis: -3 Dex: +2 Con: +2 Cha: 0.

Special Abilities: From first level, cay man characters can swim in any direction at a speed of 90' (30'). They can hold their breath with no discomfort for up to 2 minutes. The natural bite ability of a cay man inflicts 1d4 damage. A cay man choosing to remain motionless in a swamp is difficult to spot; there is a 30%

chance of remaining unseen by any creature more than 10' away if the chameleon man remains motionless.

From level 3, a cay man can hold their breath for up to 4 minutes. And from this level their bite attack can hit creatures that are immune to normal weapons and can only be struck by silver.

From 7th level onwards a cay man inflicts 2d4 damage with their bite attack.

From 14th level a cay man can hold their breath for up to 10 minutes.

From 21st level a cay man's bite inflicts 3d4 damage, and can strike foes that can otherwise only be hit with magical weapons.

Character Class: Cay man fighters and thieves are common, but (to date) there are no cay man clerics or magic users. There are, however, cay man medicine man characters¹.

Hit Dice: Cay man characters gain hit dice as do human characters, using the standard dice for the class to determine hit points.

Movement and Encumbrance: Cay men are small but agile, and move at 120' (40'). They are not capable of carrying heavy loads, and have a maximum encumbrance of 400cn.

Languages: The tongue of cay men is curiously like that of gator men. It is made up of a series of yips and growls, often going into too high a frequency for humans to understand. If a cay man speaks slowly and clearly, and the gator man shows patience, they can understand each other. Gator men are not, however, known for patience.

They have also developed a written form of their language, thus far only known from impressions of grass and reed made in clay tablets.

Weapons and Armour: In principle a cay man can use any weapon or armour permitted to their class, but in practice cay man armour does not exist, and any weapon used must be small (see rules for tiny weapons in PC1: *Tall Tales of the Wee Folk*).

¹See "Medicine Man Character Class", in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #32](#)

Gator Man

Gator men stand 7–8 feet tall and have alligator heads on top of their scaly humanoid bodies. Originally the result of Herathian wizards' experiments, gator men escaped and fled into the swamps. During the following centuries their numbers have grown, and many of their primitive villages can now be found in the deep dank swamps of their homeland of Ator. They are coldly carnivorous, welcoming outsiders to their lands only as meals. They are brutish and direct, not only instinctively but culturally, most admiring such traits among their own kind and outsiders. Their settlements, such as they are, consist of contested pools, swamps and lakes with multiple individual lairs on their banks. They are strictly and voraciously carnivorous, and few distinguish between sentient and non-sentient prey.

Advancement and Physical attributes: Gator men require 40% more experience points per level of experience than a human character. When generated, they have the following modifiers to their ability rolls: Str: +3 Int: -4 Wis: -5 Dex: 0 Con: +2 Cha: -2.

Special Abilities: Gator men have a natural movement rate in water of 90' (30') and can hold their breath for up to 3 minutes. If they choose to hide in a swamp or another body of water, they are hard to distinguish from logs or other floating detritus (30% chance) to any creatures further than 10' away. A first level gator man can attack by biting, with a successful hit inflicting 2d6 damage.

From 3rd level a gator man can hold their breath for up to 10 minutes.



Gator Man,
original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
(<https://jeffrevkosh.wixsite.com/jeffrevkoshgraphics/home>)

From 7th level a gator man's bite attack inflicts 2d8 damage, and they can bite targets that can otherwise only be hit with silver weapons.

From 14th level a gator man can hold their breath for up to 20 minutes

From 21st level a gator man's bite inflicts 3d8 damage, and can strike creatures

immune to normal and non-magical weapons, being able to strike creatures needing silver or +1 weapons to hit.

Character Class: Perhaps at some point in the future gator men may branch out into other professions, but so far the only known adventuring gator men are fighters.

Hit Dice: Gator men use two higher hit dice for hit points. So, for example, a gator man fighter rolls 1d12 rather than 1d8 for hit points. They also obtain 3HD at first level.

Movement and Encumbrance: Gator men can move at 120' (40') if unencumbered and can carry twice the load of human characters (up to 4,800cn).

Language: Their own tongue is similar to that of

the cay men, but tends to be spoken more slowly, and in much lower tone, including ultrasound grumbles inaudible to most other humanoids. Cay men yammer away at a speed that few gator men can follow, leading to a certain amount of animosity and, frequently, the cay man getting eaten. The very concept of a written language is beyond most gator men.

Weapons and Armour: A gator man can use any weapon permitted to their class, but most rely on natural armaments. Initial weapon mastery slots must be in primitive

weapons (clubs, slings, spears, etc.). Gator men move very like alligators, with a lateral motion that prohibits wearing armour. They can, and do, employ shields.

Serpentes

Lecture Notes from Zoological Anthropology 102, Professor Dane Ossify



*Snake kin, produced from Midjourney
by Senarch's prompting*

“The second group we will consider is the serpentes, or snake kin. While we may postulate that the global success of the snake makes it quite likely that there should be intelligent races across Mystara, thus far we only have definitive proof of two species. The first we shall consider is the mamushi, which appears to be derived from the common pit viper, found among the fabulous fauna of Zyx1. The mamushi seem to be a peaceable folk, with tremendous powers of perception and a venom that they use to defend themselves. Professor Pollo will hopefully be leading another expedition to the island next year, and I hope that the best of you may apply for a scholarship to accompany him, and that you return alive

or, at least, sentiently mobile, and with more knowledge of the mamushi.

“The other species we have information about is the cindezele, a race of constrictor folk, aptly enough found on the Serpent Peninsula. They are largely arboreal, preying on monkeys, birds, peccary and other small animals, and this may give an impression of savageness. They strive to maintain a reputation for savagery, but it is our considered position that the cindezele are a cultured, civilised people. The presence of an albino specimen in our collection has created some confusion, but our studies show this to be part of the normal variation found among the species. Whether this has any implication for social interactions among members of the species will be the subject of further study.”

Cindezele

The misunderstood constrictor folk of the Serpent Peninsula, the cindezele (in the Ulimwengu language, “those who squeeze”) are snakes with small forearms, standing around 6' when they choose, with a total length of 12' to 15'. Having two short but powerful arms, with three-fingered hands, they can grasp and use tools with some proficiency. They are typically creamish-green to grey-green in colour with reddish brown ‘saddles’ becoming more pronounced towards their tails.

They hunt small prey, typically peccaries, small monkeys, sloths and other creatures both in the trees and on the jungle floor, capturing them and killing by constriction (wrapping their bodies around their prey and squeezing until it is dead). They choose

not to prey on sentient creatures, having sufficient empathy towards both the Karimari and Nobubele they share territory with to not wish to cause them harm, and generally relations with them are good. They understand that snakes are often feared by outsiders and are happy to use that reputation to keep their territories free of invaders.

Cindezele can use tools and they make and use a wide range thereof. While maintaining an essentially hunter gatherer lifestyle they do trade with other intelligent folk for items of interest – particularly metal and other worked items they struggle to produce.

They rarely, if ever, speak of those of their kind who have turned from light and into the darkness of caves below. A strain of albino cindezele, the okumhlophe, can be found there, angry at being made susceptible to the sun and at the world itself. They have also turned their backs on the teachings of Ka, and now adhere to the twisted teachings of Atzanteotl.

Advancement and Physical Attributes: Cindezele requires 30% more experience points per level of experience than equivalent



Cindezele,
original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh

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ent human characters. They are generated with the following modifiers to their attributes: Str: +3 Int: -1 Wis: +1 Dex: 0 Con: 0 Cha: -3.

Special Abilities: They can move rapidly through trees at full normal movement rate and are not in any way impeded by undergrowth or vegetation. They are also strong swimmers, able to swim at $\frac{3}{4}$ of their normal speed.

In combat, they can attack by biting foes, for 1d6 damage, but the attack they are best known for is constriction. A successful bite attack against any creature of ogre size or smaller allows a cindezele to attempt to constrict a foe. The victim must make a saving throw vs. death ray or be coiled up, with the cindezele wrapped around them. The cindezele can inflict 1d4+strength bonus damage to their victim per round, who cannot attack or cast spells, but can make another saving throw vs. death ray each round to escape. Cindezele rarely use this attack on individuals in groups of enemies, as they themselves become unable to move or attack other foes while constricting an enemy.

From 3rd level a cindezele can cause fear once per day as a cleric of their own level.

From 7th level they learn to spring at enemies up to 20' away. This action involves coiling before rapidly leaping towards a foe, allowing the cindezele to attack with +3 to hit and damage, and potentially allowing them to constrict around that target. Note that this is only possible if the target is between 10' and 20' away.

From 14th level all cindezele inflict 2d6 damage with their bite attack, and 2d4 damage per round when constricting. They can also strike targets only normally vulnerable to silver weapons with their bite and constriction.

From 21st level cindezele inflict 3d6 damage with their bite attack, and 3d4 damage per round when constricting. They can also strike targets normally only vulnerable to magical weapons.

Character Class: They can be of any character class, and cindezele magic users, clerics (usually of Ka), thieves and fighters are known. In principle they could learn to be mystics, but none are known.

Hit Dice: Cindezele use the next higher hit dice for determining hit points. For example, a cindezele cleric rolls 1d8 for hit points, and a magic user rolls 1d6.

Movement and Encumbrance: Cindezele can move at 120' (40') and can carry rather more weight than humans and demi-humans, having a maximum carrying capacity of 3,600cn.

Language: Surprisingly they have a complex written language, involving both inks made from galls of trees found in the jungle and pheromones secreted from their own glands, most often written on pages made of their own shed skins. The combination of scent and visible writing means that no creatures other than cindezele can read these texts without the use of *read languages* or similar.

Weapons and Armour: While quite large creatures, the cindezele have short arms and cannot effectively wield two-handed weapons, including missile fire devices. They can use any single-handed weapons, and use a shield. They cannot wear any 'stiff' armour, but it is possible to make chainmail armour to fit a cindezele.

Mamushi



Mamushi, produced from Midjourney by Senarch's prompting

The isles of Zyxl are populated by many strange sentient species, of which the mamushi may be the most peculiar. They are a small folk, being snakes of a length of around 9', able to stand no more than 4' high, with a pair of muscular arms with which they are adept, capable tool users. Their body pattern is reddish brown to yellow, with irregular, pale outlined darker blotches. Their eyes are deep set behind dark brows. Between their eyes and nostrils they have a peculiar organ with which they sense heat, giving them the unique ability to use infravision to a distance of 90' even in full daylight (allowing them to perfectly determine a heat map of everything in front of them).

Mamushi are a peaceful people, usually unwilling to engage in combat or warfare, preferring to sustain their villages (kotan in their tongue) by farming goats, sheep and pigs, and by hunting, preferring to live in the deep river valleys of the mountains they call home. Their buildings are rectangular, single-storied buildings made from dried, bundled grasses, and while they may appear flimsy they are surprisingly robust. Their lives are typically formal, being very much

constrained by traditions governing most things, including the selection of spouses, eating, drinking, and of course worship. They see nature spirits (kamuy) in all living things, and revere Terra (Kotan-kar-kamuy), Patura (Kamuy-huki), and Protius (Repun-humuy). Adventurous mamushi are known, and a high premium is paid by noble gorira to capable mamushi bodyguards. The choice to become an adventurer is often frowned upon by other mamushi, but those who return with treasures or great stories are quickly accepted among their own again – if they again practice the traditional ways of the village.

Advancement and Physical Attributes: Mamushi require 25% more experience points than human characters per level of experience. When generated, their starting statistics are modified as follows: Str: 0 Int: -1 Wis: 0 Dex: +2 Con: +1 Cha: -2.

Special Abilities: From first level all mamushi can attack with their poisonous bite. This bite inflicts only 1d3 damage, and the poison is mild (save vs. poison or be stunned as per weapon mastery rules). The amount of venom stored is limited, and a mamushi can only make a venomous bite attack once every 6 rounds.

At third level, mamushi bite attacks inflict 1d6 damage, and the victim must make a saving throw vs. poison or be paralysed for 3 turns. While more potent, the volume of venom produced is no greater, only one victim can be poisoned every 6 rounds.

From 7th level a mamushi bite attack can be used once every 3 rounds.

From 14th level their bite attack inflicts 1d8 damage, and such a mamushi has greater control over their use of venom. Each

round 1 dose of venom is produced, and the mamushi can use up to 6 doses in a single bite. One dose can stun, three can cause paralysis (both effects as described above), and if 6 doses are used the victim must make a saving throw vs. poison or die).

From 21st level a mamushi can use 6 doses of venom in a bite attack for a *charm person* or *charm monster* effect. The victim must make a saving throw vs. poison with a -3 penalty to the roll to avoid the effect. This charm effect is treated identically to any other.

Character Class: Mamushi can theoretically be of any class, but only clerics, fighters and magic users are known. They consider thievery, even in a good cause, dishonourable. They can use any weapon permitted by their class, but armour must be flexible (such as chain mail) and must be especially made for them.

Hit Dice: Mamushi use the same hit dice as equivalent human characters.

Movement and Encumbrance: Mamushi are small but robust, and can carry the same encumbrance as human and demi-human characters.

Language: While their own spoken tongue (Mamusho) is difficult for other species to master, the written form of their language, a pictographic system consisting of over 3,000 characters (kanji) has been widely adopted by other species across Zyx1. The result is that the grammar and syntax of other languages in the island nation follow the rules of Mamusho, making for considerable confusion when visitors more familiar with the written form of other languages in Zyx1 try to communicate with the locals.

Weapons and Armour: Only small weapons can be used by mamushi, and they can only wear flexible armour such as chain mail (class permitting). They may also use shields.

Okumhlophe

While the civilised peoples of the Serpent Peninsula live quite secretive lives in the deep jungles above, the okumhlophe live even more secret lives in deep caves beneath them. Their pale skins (they are all albino) leave them vulnerable to sunlight, and they struggle (facing a -2 penalty to hit and damage) when forced to operate outdoors in daytime, but they have superb (90') infravision. Their need for heat means that they have sought hot, volcanic caves deep underground, where they have made their own nation guided by the feathered serpent, Atzanteotl, who they refer to as Inkanyamba (the 'snake in the sky').

Far from being a degenerate breed, they have a complex culture in which females, which are larger than males, are dominant. They hunt a wide range of subterranean prey and send hunting parties to the surface at night for more fresh meat.

Okumhlophe are hostile to any intelligent creatures not of their own kind, and they plot the demise of all other sentient races. They understand that they are not alone in this quest, and they know that many other followers of entropic Immortals share this goal. They see their role in this as being the information gatherers for the coming apocalypse – they gather data on every other intelligent race, having long networks of caverns stretching between sources of geothermal heat that they use to contact, inter-



Okumhlophe,
original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh
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rogate, and kill other sentient creatures, taking all of the information they gain on any and all of the intelligent peoples of Mystara that they can gain from their victims back to a central library. There, targets for death are collated, graded and compared. The okumhlophe do not know how or where the apocalypse will start, but they plan to be ready to act rapidly when it does.

They gain abilities as they increase in level as their close relatives, the cindezele, and the same stats can be used. They may be clerics (exclusively of Atzanteotl), fighters, or magic users, and they excel as thieves.

Squamata

Lecture Notes from Zoological Anthropology 102, Professor Dane Ossify

“Our third group is the lizard kin, or squamata. There are three species of lizard folk, namely lizard men, sis’thik, and chameleon men. The sis’thik are found in various places on Brun, including Sind and Ylaruam. They are a desert people, with water-resistant hides and closable seals on their nostrils, allowing them to survive in the most arid environments. As they are an aggressive, territorial people we have been unable to study the anatomy of live specimens, thus much of what we know about them comes from observations in the field and from dissections. We can say that the females (which appear dominant) are larger than the males, and they have a tremendous capacity to retain water.

“Next we come to the common lizard man. We are all familiar with this species, indeed I note four or five of them in the

back row today. They are found across Davania, Skothar and Brun, from the tundra to the equatorial marshes, in a multitude of colour forms. They are roughly equivalent to mankind in most abilities, and one must wonder whether it is only the fact that man is marginally more adaptable that has led to their dominance over lizard men in most lands, or whether it is chance alone that led mankind to its position.

“The third species of lizard kin is the chameleon man, most commonly found in the land of Wallara. A truly astonishing people, with a natural ability to change colour to blend in with their surroundings or to communicate emotion with each other, the chameleon men are also perhaps the most spiritual of all reptilian races.”

Chameleon Man

Chameleon men usually live in deep caverns or in dense forests far from civilization, with their own homeland, Wallara, being located to the west of the Savage Coast. They are typically around 7' tall and quite thin, with spindly arms and legs. They move with a gangling, awkward stride. Their hides have multi-coloured skin with tiger-like stripes of red, blue, green, yellow, brown, orange, black and white. Disconcertingly, their eyes are held high on their heads and can independently point in different directions or converge on a single point for excellent binocular vision.

Advancement and Physical Attributes: Chameleon men require 30% more experience points than human characters per level to advance. When generated, they

have the following modifiers to their ability rolls: Str: -1 Int: +1 Wis: +1 Dex: +1 Con: 0 Cha: 0.

Special Abilities: The chameleon man can effectively turn invisible, similarly to the magic user spell *Allohim's Invisibility*. Although the chameleon man can use this ability at will any number of times in a day, he must remain absolutely quiet and motionless when doing so (he cannot cast spells, talk, attack, dodge, move, vanish etc.). Chameleon men have perfected the ability to remain motionless for extended periods of time (up to an hour per experience level). Mimicry only fools other races; chameleon men can always see one another.

The positioning of eyes on top of their head means chameleon men can only be surprised on a 1 on 1d6.

With a successful strength check (rolling equal to or under their strength score on 1d20) a chameleon man can grip walls or ceilings sufficiently well to walk thereon.

At third level, they can vanish three times per day, which is roughly equivalent to the



Chameleon Man Medicine Man,
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dimension door spell but with a limited range (20'). Also, because it is a racial ability, chameleon men never accidentally materialise into solid objects. This ability

counts as a full action and requires an Intelligence check every time it is used.

At 7th level, a chameleon man can dream. Once this ability has been used, it cannot be used again for seven days. The dream allows the chameleon man to tap into mystical knowledge of Wallaran spirits. At the character's option, the dream can imitate the effects of one of the following clerical spells: *Speak with animals*, *Speak with the dead*, *Speak with plants*, *Commune*, or *Speak with monsters*. Dreaming requires the chameleon man to meditate for 1d6 rounds, plus the time spent communicating. The meditation requires live embers (from a small campfire for example). Dreams cannot be used against hostile creatures unless such creatures are restrained in some manner.

From 14th level a chameleon man has gained sufficient mastery of their colour changing to pose as members of other species of roughly the same size – they may appear human, elven, orcish, etc., but cannot emulate dwarves, ogres, or other creatures of very different size. Taking on such a form takes 1 round, and the visage is always the same – there is a 'human' version of each chameleon man, and an 'elven' one, for example.

From 21st level a chameleon man can use their dream ability once per day.

From 28th level a chameleon man can use their vanish ability while moving. To vanish in this way takes a full round. This is not quite as effective as true invisibility but they can only be seen on a roll of 1 on 1d6. Attacking or taking any offensive action makes the chameleon man visible again.

Character Class: Chameleon men are known to be able to pursue fighter, thief, and medicine man character classes but none are known to have shown aptitude for arcane casting – there are no known wicca, magic user, or merchant class chameleon men. Chameleon man mystics and acrobats are possible, but thus far unknown.

Hit Dice: Standard hit dice for the chosen class are used.

Movement and Encumbrance: Chameleon men move at 120' (40') and can carry the same weight as humans and demi-humans. Chameleon men are poor swimmers, requiring a skill in swimming to be able to even stay afloat.

Language: The extraordinary capacity for chameleon men to change their skin colour, coupled with exceptionally acute colour vision, means that colour is of huge importance in how they communicate. Their spoken language has no concept of tense or gender, such concepts being conveyed by the colour patterns shown on the face of the speaker. Likewise, their written language (appearing as simplistic pictograms to most) conveys hugely complex information with very simple glyphs by employing a vast range of colours. In principle other species may understand, in broad terms, what a chameleon man is saying or has written, but the conveyance of nuance or even such fundamental concepts as whether events referred to are in the past or the future is not something anyone outside their species can glean.

Weapons and Armour: Standard weapons appropriate to their class can be used, but only primitive weapons (boomerang, spear, club, javelin, etc.) can be chosen as starting weapon mastery options. A chameleon man

character learning basic mastery in javelin gains a skill in atl-atl (spear thrower) for free. Chameleon men cannot wear armour, indeed they consider clothing of any sort to be strange, but if their chosen class permits they may use a shield.

Lizard Man



Lizard man, produced from Midjourney by Senarch's prompting

A common species of reptilian humanoid, roughly similar to humans in proportion except for larger (and of course reptilian) heads. Most are green, with some tribes being beige, brown or rust-coloured depending on region, and in some regions tribes of pale grey and white lizard men are known. They are capable swimmers, frequently inhabiting swamplands and rivers, but outside of the Malpheggi tribelands in the Hollow World have no acknowledged homeland of their own.

Advancement and Physical Attributes: Lizard men require 5% more XP per level of experience than human characters. When generated they have the following modifiers

to their ability rolls: Str: +1 Int: -4 Wis: -3 Dex: 0 Con: +1 Cha: 0.

Special Abilities: Lizard men have limited infravision, to a distance of 30', can hold their breath for up to 1 minute, and have a swimming movement speed of 120' (40').

Character Class: Lizard men can pursue any character class, but spellcasters are rare. To become magic users or clerics, lizard men must possess intelligence and wisdom scores of 13 or above.

Hit Dice: Standard hit dice for the chosen class are used, but a lizard man begins play rolling 2HD, rather than 1, for starting hit points.

Movement and Encumbrance: Lizard men move at 120' (40') and can carry the same weight load as human and demi-human characters.

Language: The spoken and written forms of lizard man language are surprisingly complex, reflecting a long, continuous culture with perhaps a wider available vocabulary than any one human tongue. This extraordinary cultural depth is, however, rarely reflected in how they converse, with individual tribes and subcultures often choosing different words from the same wider lexicon for the same things.

Weapons and Armour: They can use any weapon allowed by their class, and may be fighters, thieves, or mystics, and may (although it is rare) become magic users or clerics. There are no restrictions on beginning weapon mastery choices of lizard man, but few favour complex weapons, and most prefer pikes, spears, clubs, and axes.

Sis'thik

Up to 9' tall, thick-limbed and muscular, the sis'thik is a desert species with incredible resistance to heat. They have a thick, sealable membrane over their nostrils and an extra membrane over their eyes, as well as thick, resilient skin. This acts to protect them both from the relentless sun and heat of the desert, and against physical attacks.



Sis'thik, produced from Midjourney by Senarch's prompting

Culturally, it is typically the largest and most aggressive in each group that leads. They consider the deserts not just their home but their property, and usually demand tribute from other intelligent creatures that pass. Few seek adventure, to gain treasure or renown, most often it is to demonstrate to members of other races that the sis'thik are superior and that members of other races are all weak.

From 1st level, sis'thik are more capable of surviving with limited water than other humanoids. When determining the effect of dehydration (*Rules Cyclopedia* page 150), a sis'thik loses only a single hit point per day without water. A first level sis'thik can attack with their two claws, once each per round, for 1d3 damage each.

From 3rd level, a sis'thik can smell any water supply (a well, oasis, river, pond, even a large pool) from 1 mile away per level of experi-

ence and can accurately find a route to the nearest such source without risk of getting lost. A third level sis'thik can also attack with their bite, once per round, for 1d3 damage, in addition to their two claw attacks.

From 7th level a sis'thik can discern mirage from reality more effectively than most other creatures. If outdoors, they gain a +2 bonus to saving throws or ability checks to determine whether they are observing an illusion. If fighting a creature created by *phantasmal force* or similar magic, they may make a saving throw vs. spells each round to determine whether their enemy is illusionary. From this level the claw attacks of a sis'thik inflict 1d6 damage each.

From 14th level they may choose to enter a state of resilient courage when in a fight. This means that they are immune to the effects of fear, whether natural or magical, but they are unable to withdraw from the fight until either they or their enemy is dead or incapacitated.

A 21st or higher level sis'thik can choose to ride out danger by forming a thick skin and burying themselves in an almost entirely inert state. This process takes 6 hours, and can only work in soil, sand, or another friable surface. The sis'thik, once protected, gains an armour class -7, and uses water and food incredibly slowly, losing 2hp each year thus buried. Typically a sis'thik recovers as soon as it rains, the process of reabsorbing the hard skin formed around the sis'thik taking an hour. While thus encased a sis'thik takes only a quarter damage from fire, cold, or electrical damage, and is essentially immune to most changes in the environment around them. They can choose to re-emerge from their state of near torpor at any time and may do so if after an extended period conditions do not seem to have improved.

Testudinata

Lecture Notes from Zoological Anthropology 102, Professor Dane Ossify

“The final group we will turn our attention to is the testudinata, that would be races resembling or derived from turtles, tortoises, and terrapins. Here we are aware of two species, the land-dwelling turtle (of which some identify multiple strains) and the marine snapper. They are both shelled reptiles, largely travelling on land on their back legs and able to manipulate objects with their hands.

“Snappers are hostile. To other species and, when it isn't time to breed, to each other. There is little snapper culture, and it is a wonder that such a creature ascended to (albeit limited) sentience at all. They are mostly found in the warm ocean waters anywhere between the Arm of the

Immortals and the Isle of Dawn, and the only times they have been observed to have associated with each other has been to gather to breed. We know little of their beliefs and habits – they are not keen to share – but from dissections we can see that they relate closely to some of the older species of seagoing turtles of the Sea of Dread, with archelon probably being the species from which they derive.

“The turtle could hardly be more different in temperament. They are derived from larger land tortoises, for the most part friendly and practical folk, forming small villages and basing their lives on farming and trade. They are slower than other intelligent species, less quarrelsome than most, and many would assume them to be rather a pushover. One would be wrong. The turtle is one of the most robust of species we have studied, able to survive incredible odds. They are found across Brun and Davania, with isolated pockets plying various trades wherever the routes of great merchant caravans travel to.”

Snapper

An essentially aquatic creature. While no taller than humans, rarely standing taller than 6', they are almost as wide as they are tall, and weigh in at around 1,000lb. Their heavy, tough shells and great bulk makes them clumsy and slow on land, and while aggressive they usually try to avoid melee combat on the land, recognising that their lack of mobility can be a handicap.

There is no snapper society as such, but when two meet in the open water (where they are most at home) they usually spend a day or two in each other's company, sharing news and information as to the state of the

world, and typically lamenting the failings of their own younger generations.

The only time snappers congregate is when it is mating season, in early spring. They gather on select beaches in remote places, some atolls, and other secluded islands, to mate and lay eggs in great communally constructed sand banks. They guard the eggs until hatching several weeks later, after which they seem to show no regard to the health or welfare of their young. How they maintain any cultural continuity is unknown.

Advancement and Physical Attributes: Snappers require 30% extra experience points per level of experience. When generated, their initial statistics are modified thus: Str: +3 Int: -3 Wis: +2 Dex: -3 Con: +3 Cha: -2

Special Abilities: Snappers can hold their breath for extended periods. A first level snapper can hold their breath for 10 turns, plus one extra turn per 3 levels of experience. They are cumbersome on land but nimble in the water, having a swimming speed of 180' (60'). Their shell gives them a natural armour class of 4.

From 1st level all snappers can attack with two sharp front claws and a bite, for 1d4 damage each.

From 3rd level snappers' bite attack damage increases to 2d4.

From 7th level snappers' claw damage increases to 1d6, and from this level they gain +2 to hit and damage against any opponent in the water.

From 14th level snappers gain the ability to retract their heads and arms when facing any area of effect damage (fireball, dragon

breath, lightning bolt, etc.). This means that they automatically take half damage from such effects and take a quarter damage if they successfully make an appropriate saving throw.

A 21st or higher level snapper can, once per day, attack with a roar. This attack works under water or above, and all creatures in the area of the roar (a cone 30' long and 20' wide at the end) must make a saving throw vs. dragon breath or take the snapper's current hit point total in damage, or half of that damage if the saving throw was successful. Victims who failed their saving throw are also deafened for 2d4 rounds.

Character Class: In theory snappers could be of any class, but only fighters and clerics (devoted to Ka) have been observed.

Hit Dice: Snappers use the next largest dice for determining hit points, e.g. a fighter rolls 1d10 hp, and a cleric rolls 1d8. At first level snappers gain two hit dice, rather than one.

Movement and Encumbrance: On land snappers are cumbersome and slow, and can only move at 30' (10'). In the water they are powerful swimmers being able to move at up to 180' (60'). They are able to carry twice the load of humans (up to 4,800cn).

Language: Their own language is rarely spoken by outsiders, who consider snappers to have little of worth to say. Some learn the languages of other aquatic races, but few have the intelligence to do so.

Weapons and Armour: They may use any weapon allowed for their class, and favour missile device weapons such as crossbows. Snappers do not wear armour, but can, if their chosen class permits, use a shield.

Tortle

Being humanoid tortoises standing around 6' tall the tortle is generally a friendly dweller of the open lands, semi-arid zones, and deserts of Brun and Skothar. They are semi-solitary, tending to their own affairs in loose groupings of other tortles over wide areas confusingly referring to this spread out living arrangement as a 'village' They are usually happy to welcome humans and demi-humans, and frequently maintain good relationships with other lawful and good races.

Some tortles choose to travel further, enjoying mercantile trade and even sometimes adventure While most would prefer not to fight, at a push they prefer missile weapons to melee (preferring not to get bogged down, knowing they're slower than most of their foes).

Culturally, they are an outgoing and open race, and most enjoy entertaining others and sharing stories. Their humour has been compared with that of retired jesters who could do with learning new material, and they laugh endlessly at the same (to others, tired) old jokes.



*Tortle Medicine Man,
original drawing by Jeffrey Kosh*

<https://jeffreykosh.wixsite.com/jeffreykoshgraphics/home>

Advancement and Physical Attributes: Tortles require 15% more experience points per level of experience than human characters. When generated, their attributes are

modified thus: Str: +2 Int: 0 Wis: 0 Dex: -2
Con +1 Cha: +2

Special Abilities: Tortles cannot swim, but they do float, and can hold their breath for up to 10 turns. Their thick shells and tough, scaly skin gives them a natural armour class of 3.

From first level, a tortle can attack with their two front claws and beak attack, each for 1d4 damage.

From 3rd level their beak attack increases to 1d6 damage. The rough and tumble of the adventuring life leaves its mark on the shell of the tortle, and from this level their natural armour class falls to 2.

From 7th level, tortles' shell is so tough that they can take 1d4 damage from all incoming melee and missile attacks that would otherwise hit them (taking a minimum of 1 point of damage per successful hit), and their natural armour class falls to 1.

From 14th level, tortles can reduce all incoming melee and missile damage by 1d6, with each attack inflicting a minimum of 1 point of damage. Their natural armour class falls to 0. They also gain the ability to retract their heads and arms when facing any area of effect damage (fireball, dragon breath, lightning bolt, etc.). This means that they automatically take half damage from such effects and take a quarter damage if they successfully make an appropriate saving throw.

From 21st level tortles can reduce all incoming melee and missile damage by 1d8, and their natural armour class is -2.

Character Class: They can become fighters, clerics (usually of Ralon, Ka, Mâtin, or

Calitha) and thieves, but to date none have shown propensity for arcane magic. Mystic tortles are rumoured to exist.

Hit Dice: Tortles use the same hit dice as human characters of the same class, but start at level 1 by rolling 2HD, rather than 1.

Movement and Encumbrance: Tortles are slow, having a movement rate of 45' (15'). They can carry the same weight as humans and demi-humans (2,400cn).

Language: The language of tortles is a curious mix of grunts and clicks made with their beaks. Other species can learn it, but few do. Tortles also typically know the language of either the dominant local human or demi-human culture.

Weapons and Armour: Tortles cannot wear armour, but if their class allows they may use a shield. They can use any weapon allowable to their class.

Intelligence and Wisdom of Reptilians

While reptilian species have some incredible abilities, they are not known for their mental prowess. Most suffer penalties to both intelligence and wisdom when young, but on the other hand their malleable minds allow them to grow intellectually and become more clever (or, at least, less stupid) as they progress. Each time a reptilian character gains a level of experience, they may make either an intelligence or wisdom check. A failed check means they gain a single point to that stat (whichever was chosen), up to the maximum permitted for their species.

Table 1: Summary of Reptilian Character Types

Race	Str	Int	Wis	Dex	Con	Cha	Max Int/Wis
Cay Man	-2	-3	-3	+2	+2	0	13
Chameleon Man	-1	-1	+1	+1	0	0	16
Cindezele	+3	-1	+1	0	0	-3	17
Gator Man	+3	-4	-5	0	+2	-2	10
Lizard Man	+1	-4	-3	0	+1	0	12
Mamushi	0	-1	0	+2	+1	-2	16
Okumhlophe	+2	-1	0	-1	0	-4	16
Sis'thik	+3	-2	-2	0	+1	-3	14
Turtle	+2	0	0	-2	+1	+2	15
Snapper	+3	-2	+2	-3	+3	-2	12

Race	Base AC	Infravision	XP Mod	HD	Starting HD	Save As
Cay Man	7	60'	0	0	1	Halfling
Chameleon Man	7	0	+30%	0	1	Human
Cindezele	7	30'	+30%	+1	1	Dwarf
Gator Man	7	60'	+40%	+2	3	Human
Lizard Man	7	30'	+5%	0	2	Human
Mamushi	7	90'*	+25%	0	1	Human
Okumhlophe	7	90'	+30%	+1	1	Dwarf
Sis'thik	5	0	+30%	+1	2	Dwarf
Turtle	3	0	+15%	0	2	Dwarf
Snapper	4	30'	+30%	+1	2	Dwarf

* ability to use infravision to a distance of 90' even in full daylight (allowing them to perfectly determine a heat map of everything in front of them)

REPTILIAN SKILLS

While most general skills are common to all intelligent species, there are some that are peculiar to the reptilians, often requiring the unique physiology shared by certain reptiles to use.

Animal Crafting (Int): Tribal peoples make use of every part of the animals they hunt, including the blood, organs, skin, flesh, bones, horns, hooves, antlers, and intestines. Animal crafting is the complex skill of using simple tools to turn such creatures into products that the tribespeople need, everything from bone and antler tools to sinew bow strings, furs

for warmth and shelter, blood and manure based daub, etc. While there is a general form of this skill, allowing a character to make good use of components of most creatures, there are also specific forms known to several tribes allowing them to make more remarkable and idiosyncratic items from individual animals, for example Mammoth Crafting, Triceratops Crafting, Auroch Crafting, Pilot Whale Crafting, etc.

Atl-atl (Dex): A skill common in primitive societies, an atl-atl is a spear thrower that acts as a lever, or an extension of the arm. A successful check will allow a javelin to inflict extra damage at short or medium range (+1d4) and adds the stun ability to a javelin (as for a spear) from skilled mastery

upwards. To load an atl-atl requires two hands, and the user cannot use a shield.

Envenom Weapon (Con): Only useable by creatures possessing a natural venom. The skill of applying one's own venom to a weapon. A successful skill check allows a single dose of venom to be applied to one piercing or cutting weapon (a sword, spear point, an arrow, etc.). The venom remains active for up to 6 rounds, or until a successful hit is achieved. Any saving throw is made as if the poison was delivered directly from the source.

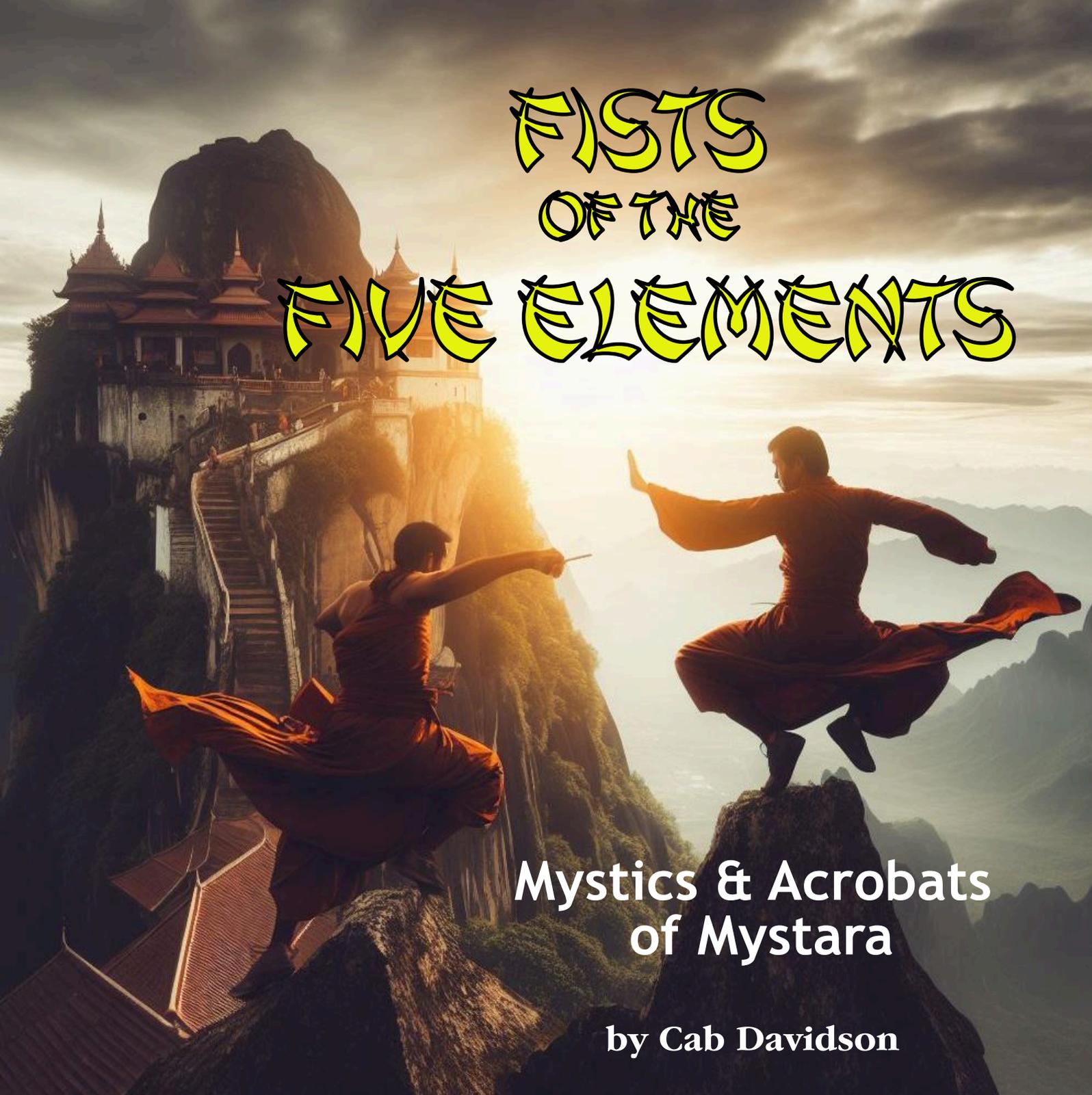
Lockjaw (Str): Any reptilian may learn this skill. When hitting with a bite attack, the character may make a skill check to effectively lock their jaw in place. While no further damage is inflicted, the victim is effectively grabbed. If roughly the same size as the attacker or smaller, they suffer a -4 penalty to armour class and a -3 penalty to wrestling rating while thus locked on to. While obviously unable to attack with a bite while locked to a victim, the attacker may choose to attack with claws (if they have such an attack) or alternatively with any small melee weapon.

Shell Slam (Str): Only useable by testudinata. A form of unarmed attack used by both turtles and snappers. If the character makes a successful skill check they can in place of any other attacks made in a combat

round attempt to force a foe to the ground, (see 'trip' special effect, as per weapon mastery). Physical damage inflicted thus is minimal (1d4 plus strength bonus) when using a shell as a weapon, but this may leave an enemy prone and vulnerable.

Snake Wrestling (Dex): Only useable by snake kin. A character possessing this skill has learned how to effectively use their body form when wrestling. A successful skill check means a taken down or pinned character suffers no negative effects due to being grabbed, taken down or pinned. While the attacker may still inflict damage on a pinned snake, the snake kin character may choose to make ordinary wrestling rolls or unarmed attacks (including bites) while pinned.

Taste the Air (Wis): Only useable by snake kin and lizard kin. Many reptiles sense their surroundings by flicking their tongue out, collecting samples of scents in the air, and returning their tongue to an organ in the roof of their mouth to transfer the scent. This gives them an excellent sense of smell, but some learn to use this ability to an extraordinary degree. By means of a successful skill check, a reptilian may compose a complete olfactory picture of creatures in front of them, within 10', including invisible or hidden creatures. Use of this skill can also give a +3 bonus to the tracking skill.



FISTS OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS

Mystics & Acrobats of Mystara

by Cab Davidson

Monks first appeared as a character class in *Dungeons & Dragons* in 1975, in the original *Blackmoor* supplement. But unlike many of the other stalwarts of the game they didn't make it through to Classic (BX or BECMI) in any form until the mystic was introduced in the *Masters Rules* in 1985. They were not brought to us as a finished, ready-to-play character class, and in his

typical "DMs should take this and make it their own" style, Frank Mentzer presented it as a mostly-ready character class with more details you'd probably need to add. It was in fact one of two part-finished classes that a DM might use for PCs or NPCs, the other being the headsman or thug, a take on the assassin trope.

By the time of the “*Rules Cyclopedia*”, Aaron Allston had the difficult job of squeezing an increasingly complex game into a limited page count, and the extra details we might have got to finish off the Mystic never appeared. We did get optional rules that took them to 36th level, but without really adding any interest over those levels.

An optional form of the mystic was the mystic acrobat but, again, the skillset of that subclass was poorly defined.

Thus the two character types were presented as playable, but as shadows of what they might have been. Many of us who had DM'd with the original *Masters* set came up with our own versions that expanded on what was presented, but few have chosen to share them over the years. What I present here is an updated version of my own take on the Mystic, lending heavily on the original *Masters Set*, and influenced by Andrew Thiesen's excellent version that can be found at the Vaults of Pandius¹, along with my version of the acrobat² subclass which is inspired by the original AD&D “*Unearthed Arcana*”, which can be tacked on to any other character class to create a unique, playable experience.

(Previous page) *Mystics*, produced from Bing AI Image Creator by author's prompting

¹ [“Revised Mystic Class”](#) by Andrew Theisen

² [“Acrobat variant for character classes. \(RC/BECMI\)”](#) by Cab Davidson

THE MYSTIC CLASS

Mystics are monastic characters who follow a distinct and strict code of conduct and discipline based on meditation, seclusion and understanding their relationship with the profound forces and balances of the multiverse. They typically reside in cloisters or monasteries but may also have brotherhoods in other settings such as catacombs, city slums or secluded woodlands. Their spiritual growth allows them to access special abilities and powers, including the capacity to cause immense damage in combat, and the desire to gain knowledge and insight to access such power drives many mystics to leave their monasteries for adventure.

Each order of mystics is associated with a specific sphere of power, either positive (Matter, Energy, Thought or Time) or negative (Entropy), although larger orders with adherents of multiple philosophies are known. Adherents of positive spheres must always be true to their word and can gain no experience from treasures gained adventuring unless they are donated to their orders or to the needy. Such a mystic who breaks their word or fails to help innocent people in need will be cast out of their order. Members of Entropic orders are under no such compulsion, adventuring to gain both treasure and power at the expense of others. Entropic mystics are almost universally shunned in civilised lands.

Prime Requisite: Strength

Hit Dice: 1d8 per level, plus constitution bonus, until level 9. +2HP per level thereafter.

Attacks, combat options, saving throws: As fighter. A mystic may set a spear vs. charge, use the lance attack manoeuvre, and from Name level may perform disarm,

smash and parry manoeuvres, and they gain multiple attacks at the same levels as fighters. Mystics make saving throws as if fighters of the same level.

Mystics are all specialists in a single fighting style or weapon. Whether they choose unarmed combat or a weapon, they learn to hit targets with it as if using a silver or magical weapons. This does not confer any bonus to hit or damage, but it does allow them to strike opponents usually immune to normal weapons. A mystic can pick a weapon as their primary fighting style, and mystics who are specialists with swords, staves, daggers, etc., are possible. A mystic starts with the same number of weapon mastery slots as a fighter, and gains weapon mastery slots at the same rate.

Unlike a fighter, a mystic cannot have a higher level of weapon mastery than the level of their primary weapon. While a mystic begins with chosen weapons/style at basic mastery, they cannot subsequently be as good with other styles as with their primary weapon, i.e. their first extra weapon mastery slot gained in their adventuring career must be used to improve their primary mastery style to skilled, and subsequently their primary style must always be at least 1 level of mastery above any other.

A mystic can learn multiple unarmed combat styles, and it is common for mystics in good standing in their own positive sphere to learn the styles of other spheres. These styles may also be taught to non-mystics, but only a mystic may combine styles. For example an unarmed mystic whose primary style is Energy and who is expert therein but is skilled in Matter may attack and cause damage using Energy while also gaining the armour class bonus from



Fighting mystic, produced by Gencraft from Sturm's prompts

Matter. An Entropic mystic can in theory learn the styles of other schools of mysticism, but no positive sphere mystic cloisters will teach them, and Entropic mystics do not teach their style to outsiders. Indeed, any mystic of a positive sphere is likely to be suspicious of and may even attack any character fighting using the Entropic style.

Mystics get to add extra damage in their primary fighting style, whether unarmed or using their designated weapon, as determined by their level. This is only added when fighting with the mystic's primary weapon or style, and no extra damage is inflicted using any other style or weapon.

Table 1: Mystic class experience levels

Level	XP	Level Title	AC	Damage Bonus	Attacks	Movement	Magic Equivalent	Abilities
1	0	Novice	9	+1d3	1	120'	-	Thief Abilities
2	2,000	Initiate	8	+1d4	1	130'	Silver	Awareness
3	4,000	Brother	7	+1d5	1	140'		
4	8,000	Disciple	6		1	150'		Falling (1)
5	16,000	Immaculate	5	+1d6	1	150'	+1 weapon	Heal Self
6	32,000	Master	4		1	160'		
7	64,000	Superior	3	+1d8	1	170'		
8	120,000	Master of the Elements (or Master of the Void)	2		1	180'		Speak with animals
9	240,000	Master of the Spheres (or Master of Entropy)	1	+2d4	1	190'		
10	360,000		0		1	200'	+2 weapon	
11	480,000		-1	+1d10	1	210'		Feign Death
12	600,000		-2		2	220'		Falling (2), Second attack
13	720,000		-3		2	230'		
14	840,000		-3	+1d12	2	240'		Speak With Anyone
15	960,000		-4		2	250'	+3 weapon	
16	1,080,000		-4		2	260'		
17	1,200,000		-4	+2d6	2	260'		Resistance
18	1,320,000		-5		2	270'		

Table 1: Mystic class experience levels continued

Level	XP	Level Title	AC	Damage Bonus	Attac ks	Movement	Magic Equivalent	Abilities
19	1,440,000		-5		2	270'		
20	1,560,000		-5	+2d8	2	280'	+4 weapon	Mind Block, Falling (3)
21	1,680,000		-5		2	280'		
22	1,800,000		-6		2	290'		
23	1,920,000		-6	+2d10	2	290'		Blankout
24	2,040,000		-6		3	300'		Third Attack
25	2,160,000		-6		3	300'		
26	2,280,000		-6	+2d12	3	310'	+5 weapon	Willpower
27	2,400,000		-7		3	310'		
28	2,520,000		-7		3	320'		Falling (4)
29	2,640,000		-7	+3d8	3	320'		
30	2,760,000		-7		3	330'		Gentle Touch
31	2,880,000		-7		3	330'		
32	3,000,000		-7	+3d10	3	340'		
33	3,120,000		-8		3	340'		
34	3,240,000		-8		3	350'		
35	3,360,000		-8	+3d12	3	350'		
36	3,480,000		-9		4	360'		Falling (5), Fourth Attack

Notes on Abilities

Thief Abilities: A mystic can find traps, remove traps, hide in shadows, move silently, and climb walls as a thief of the same level.

Awareness: The mystic is only surprised on a 1 on 1d6.

Falling: Mystics can ignore a certain amount of damage due to falling if within an appropriate distance of a wall, tree, or other solid surface to slow down.

Table 2: Mystic Falling ability table

Falling Resistance Level	Damage resisted /distance to wall
1	First 20' within 2' of a wall
2	First 30' within 3' of a wall
3	First 40' within 5' of a wall
4	First 50' within 6' of a wall
5	All falling damage within 8' of a wall

Heal Self: Once per day the mystic may, by concentration, heal themselves of 1 point of damage per level of experience. This process takes one round.

Speak with Animals: The mystic may, at will, speak with any normal or giant-sized animal, and will understand their

responses. The animals are not compelled to be friendly or to communicate.

Feign Death: This allows the mystic to induce a state of catalepsy in which they appear dead, even to magical forms of detection. This ability lasts for one turn per level of the mystic.

Speak with Anyone: The mystic may speak with and be understood by any living creature that has a language, as often as desired. The creature being spoken to does not have to respond.

Resistance: The mystic takes only half damage from all spells and breath weapons, or if a successful saving throw is made, a quarter damage. Any damage-causing attack will cause at least 1 point of damage, even if rounding reduces this to 0.

Blankout: By concentrating for 1 round the mystic causes their presence to “disappear”. No living or undead creature can see the mystic, by any means, and the effect lasts for up to 1 round per level of the mystic. The effect is dispelled if the mystic makes any form of attack. This ability may be used once per day.

Mind Block: The mystic is immune to *ESP*, *slow*, and *hold* spells, magical *charms*, *quests* and *geas* spells.

Willpower: This ability is similar to the 9th-level magic-user spell *survival*. It allows the mystic to, through sheer force of will, ignore any damage due to natural environmental conditions around them. It lasts for one round per level of experience.

Gentle Touch: Once per day the mystic may use the Gentle Touch ability. This may require a hit roll. No saving throw is

allowed, but any creature of a higher level or with more hit dice than the mystic's level is immune. The mystic must declare the Gentle Touch before rolling to hit, and which effect is chosen, but if the attack misses the mystic may make another attempt at another time. The touch can have any one of the following effects: *charm*, *cureall*, *death* (as per *death* spell), *quest*, or *paralysis*. All effects, except for death, last 24 hours, but can be dispelled as if cast by a spellcaster of the mystic's level.

Special Restrictions

Mystics may not wear armour or use shields or any other protective magical devices (such as rings, cloaks, bracers, etc.).

When fighting using their speciality style, they may not use a magical weapon.

All the material goods (money, magical items, etc.) won, purchased, or acquired as treasure by the mystic are actually owned by the cloister, and not the mystic themselves. Should the cloister have need of something "owned" by the mystic, the head of the cloister need only ask for it.

Higher Experience Levels

A mystic of Name (9th) level is addressed as Master (if male) or Mistress (if female) of the Spheres, or a Master (or Mistress) of Entropy.

From each sphere, there are many mystics of 1st to 29th level, but only twelve each of 30th–32nd level, six each of 33rd–35th level, and one of 36th level.

When a mystic gains enough experience to reach 30th level, they must find and challenge one of the six 30th level mystics of their sphere; they will fight bare-handed (or with their designated weapon style). If the character loses, they stay at 29th level, losing enough experience points such that they are 1 experience point short of 30th level. Once they have regained 30th level, they may try again, but cannot issue another challenge until three months have passed since their first challenge. (Note: If a DM's campaign is particularly large, they might declare that there are twelve 30th level mystics and so forth per continent in their world.)

At Name level, the mystic may desire to build a stronghold, or cloister. If their Grand Abbot (i.e., the mystic in charge of their current cloister) agrees that they are fit to manage one, the cloister will pay for construction of the new cloister. The new cloister remains a branch of the old one until the PC achieves 13th level, at which time the PC can declare their independence. At that point, they may wish to teach their mystics-in-training in techniques and philosophies different from those of the other cloister. That is, they may wish to establish their own "school" of the discipline.

Revised Mystic Class



Table 3: Mystic Fighting style mastery

Style	Level	Damage	Defence	Special
Matter	BS	1	A: -1AC/1	Delay
P=M	SK	1d2	A: -3AC/2	Delay (Save-1), Deflect (1)
	EX	P: 1d4 S: 1d3	A: -4AC/3	Delay (Save-2), Deflect (2)
	MS	P: 1d4+1 S: 1d3+1	A: -6AC/4	Delay (Save-2), Deflect (3)
	GM	P: 1d4+2 S: 1d3+2	A: -8AC/5	Delay (Save-3), Deflect (4)
Thought	BS	1d2	H: -1AC/1	Disarm
P=H	SK	1d4	H: -2AC/1	Disarm (Save-1), Hook
	EX	P: 1d6 S: 1d5	H: -3AC/2	Disarm (Save-2), Hook (Save-1)
	MS	P: 1d8+3 S: 1d6+3	H: -4AC/3	Disarm (Save-3), Hook (Save-2)
	GM	P: 1d10+3 S: 1d8+3	H: -4AC/4	Disarm (Save-4), Hook (Save-3)
Time	BS	1d2	M: -1AC/1	Individual Initiative +1
P=M	SK	1d3	M: -2AC/1	Individual Initiative +1, No Offhand Penalty
	EX	P: 1d5+1 S: 1d4+1	M: -3AC/2	Individual Initiative +2, No Offhand Penalty
	MS	P: 1d6+3 S: 1d5+1	M: -4AC/3	Individual Initiative +3, No Offhand Penalty
	GM	P: 1d6+6 S: 1d5+3	M: -4AC/4	Individual Initiative +4, No Offhand Penalty



Table 3: Mystic Fighting style mastery continued

Style	Level	Damage	Defence	Special
Energy	BS	1d3	H:-1AC/1	Stun
P=H	SK	1d5	H:-1AC/1	Stun (save-1), Double Damage (20)
	EX	1d8+2	P:1d8+2 S:1d6+2	Stun (save-1), Double Damage (19-20)
	MS	P:1d10+2 S:1d8+2	H: 2AC/3	Stun (save-3), Double Damage (17-20)
	GM	P:1d10+4 S: 1d8+4	H:-3AC/3	Stun (Save-4) Double Damage (16-20)
Entropy	BS	1d2	A:-1AC/1	KO
P=A	SK	1d5	A:-2AC/2	KO (save-1), -1 Strength
	EX	P:1d8 S:1d6	A:-2AC/2	KO (save-2), -2 Strength (save-1)
	MS	P:1d10 S:1d8	A:-3AC/3	KO (save-3), -3 Strength (save-2)
	GM	P:1d12 S:1d10	A:-4AC/4	KO (save-4), -4 Strength (save-3)



*Klantyre mystics,
produced from
Bing AI Image Creator
by author's prompts*

Fighting Styles

While mystics are the most renowned specialists in unarmed combat, any character can train in any of the listed styles if they can persuade a mystic brotherhood to train them. Only chaotic and evil characters will ever be offered training in the Entropic style, and the order offering said training will charge a high price.

In different regions, the same style may have different names, and in a larger campaign setting there may be a bewildering range of names for essentially similar combat styles. What may be referred to as Traldaran Kickboxing in one nation and Ylari Sand Dancing in another may be the same fighting sphere, for example.

While any character may learn the unarmed fighting styles using normal weapon mastery rules, only mystics can combine known fighting styles while fighting, and only mystics can attack as if using silvered or magical weapons or add level-based damage.

Special effects are explained in the Weapon Mastery section of the *Rules Cyclopedia*, except for Individual Initiative Bonus, which applies only to the combatant, and Strength -1, 2, 3, or 4, whereby any opponent struck must make a saving throw vs. wands or suffer a temporary (1–4 turns) penalty to their Strength score. Any victim reduced to 0 strength by this will fall unconscious until at least 1 strength point has been recovered.

Acrobat



Acrobat, produced from Bing AI Image Creator by author's prompts

The Acrobat is not a character class, but a variant of any character class, most commonly mystic or thief, although magic-user, cleric, merchant, or fighter acrobats are possible. The decision to be an acrobat variant of any character class is made at character generation. Acrobats must possess both dexterity and strength scores of at least 13, and they attack, save and earn abilities, hit points, skills, and weapon mastery slots according to their prime character class. Level advancement is simultaneous in both the primary and acrobat classes, and the required experience for each level is increased by 20%.

An acrobat trains in physical conditioning to perform a range of feats such as tight-rope walking, high jumping, long jumping, pole vaulting, tumbling, etc. Through rapid motion and athletic prowess acrobats learn to perform superhuman physical feats that are well beyond the capabilities of other characters.

Table 4: Acrobat class levels

Level	Title	Tightrope Walking (%)	Pole Vault	High Jump	Long Jump Standing Running		Tumbling (%)	Falling /Damage reduction
1	Balancer	50	10'	5'	5'	10'	30	1d6
2	Tumbler	55	11'	5'	5'	11'	32	
3	Equilibrist	60	12'	5'	6'	12'	34	
4	Funambulist	63	13'	6'	6'	13'	36	2d6
5	Athlete	66	14'	6'	7'	14'	38	
6	Trapezist	69	15'	6'	7'	15'	40	
7	Aerialist	72	16'	7'	8'	16'	42	
8	Stuntman	75	17'	7'	8'	17'	44	3d6
9	Gymnast	78	18'	7'	9'	18'	46	
10		81	19'	7'	9'	19'	48	
11		84	20'	8'	10'	20'	50	
12		87	20'	8'	10'	21'	52	4d6
13		90	21'	8'	11'	22'	54	
14		93	21'	8'	11'	23'	56	
15		96	22'	8'	12'	24'	58	
16		99	22'	9'	12'	25'	60	5d6
17		102	23'	9'	13'	26'	62	
18		105	23'	9'	13'	27'	64	
19		108	24'	9'	14'	28'	66	
20		111	24'	9'	14'	29'	68	6d6
21		114	25'	10'	15'	30'	70	
22		117	25'	10'	15'	31'	72	
23		120	26'	10'	16'	32'	74	
24		123	26'	10'	16'	33'	76	7d6
25		126	27'	10'	17'	34'	78	
26		129	27'	11'	17'	35'	80	
27		132	28'	11'	18'	36'	82	
28		135	28'	11'	18'	37'	84	8d6
29		138	28'	11'	19'	38'	86	
30		141	29'	11'	19'	39'	88	
31		144	29'	12'	20'	40'	90	
32		147	29'	12'	20'	41'	92	9d6
33		150	30'	12'	21'	42'	94	
34		153	30'	12'	21'	43'	96	
35		156	30'	12'	22'	44'	98	
36		159	30'	13'	22'	45'	100	10d6

Acrobatics can only be carried out by lightly-armoured (scale mail or lighter) and lightly-encumbered (under 500cn) characters. An acrobat can wear whatever armour and use equipment as dictated by their prime character class, but it is not possible to perform acrobatics while wearing heavier armour.

Acrobats have a number of advantages. Firstly, they gain the general skill Acrobatics, without having to use a general skill slot. Secondly, they can perform a range of feats according to their level, as described below

Level Title: An acrobat may add their acrobatic level title to their primary class level title. For example, an eighth level magic-user acrobat is a necromancer stuntman, a fifth level mystic acrobat may call themselves an immaculate athlete, etc.

Tightrope Walking: Tightrope walking refers to balancing on ledges, ropes, beams, etc., that the character can use to cross from one place to another. The skill allows ascent or descent of a rope or beam of about a 45° angle. Use of this skill further assumes that the character will be travelling no more than half of their movement rate (or half of their encounter speed if they also wish to make an attack in the same round). If distance is greater than 60' then additional checks must be made. Moderate wind decreases the chance of success by 10%, strong wind by 20%. In strong, gusty wind conditions there is always a 5% chance of failure. In non-windy conditions, a balance pole increases the chance of success by 10%. Failure to perform successfully means that the character falls to the area below, taking damage accordingly. Characters who are not acrobats can walk a tightrope if they possess the acrobatics skill, but must make a check every 30' and can, at most, move at a quarter of their normal speed.

Pole vaulting: This includes jumping which employs a pole to assist the individual in gaining height from momentum. This allows the acrobat to get on top of or over obstacles or, at higher level, leap so far over an opponent that they cannot be attacked. A successful pole vault requires at least a 30' running start and a pole of at least 2' greater height than the vaulter. The pole is usually dropped when the vault occurs, but the vaulter may hold on to it if they make a successful dexterity check. The vaulter can land on his or her feet atop a surface of ½ or less than the maximum height of the pole vault if so desired, assuming such a surface exists. Otherwise, the vaulter lands, rolls, and is prone for the rest of the round. Non-acrobats cannot usually effectively pole vault. No character can pole vault and either attack, cast a spell, or activate a magical item during a single round.

Jumping: This includes unassisted leaps – high jumping and long jumps (both from a standing and a running start) being included. All jumps occur in the movement phase of a round, and if the acrobat has moved less than their combat speed (including running to make a jump but not the distance of the jump) they may still attack as normal in the same round.

High jumping: This requires at least a 20' running start. The high jumper clears the obstacle in a near horizontal position but lands on his or her feet. The jumper can opt to land atop a higher surface. This surface must be no more than 4' above the level from which the jump is made, or 2' under the maximum height for normal high jumping, whichever is the greater. The acrobat's movement phase ends when they land.

Long Jumping: A standing long jump is one where no long run-up is possible. A running long jump normally requires a run of at least 20'. In running or standing long jumps (where the acrobat wishes to land on their feet), the acrobat can leap forward up to the maximum distance shown. 2' of additional distance can be gained, but the character will then land prone and remain prone for the rest of the round. A 3' extension can be attempted, but this has a 25% chance of failure and no further actions will be possible that round; a 4' extension has a 50% chance of failure, an extension of 5' has a 75% chance of failure. Non-acrobats can perform a standing long jump of up to 4' in distance and a running long jump of up to 8'. The character's movement phase ends when they land.

Tumbling: This includes leaps, somersaults, cartwheels, leaps from ropes, etc. This has multiple practical uses. Firstly, a tumbling acrobat can, upon making a check, cross rough or complex terrain (an empty bar littered with tables and chairs, a rocky mountainside, etc.) at either running or combat speed with no penalty to movement rate. Secondly, while moving at combat speed an acrobat may use this skill to roll through an enemy's legs, leap over opponents to attack from behind, etc. The chance to complete this manoeuvre during combat is modified according to the level or HD of the acrobat and any enemies present. Per level or HD that the acrobat is above their foe, add a 5%, and per level below subtract 5%, with each subsequent foe within 5' of the manoeuvre also penalising the attempt by 30%. A successful attempt will (if there is room) allow the acrobat to disengage a foe with no penalty or risk of attack, or allow an acrobat to manoeuvre between locations within a melee without provoking an attack. In a round in which an acrobat tumbles to

attempt to completely disengage foes they may make no attack, but gain a bonus to armour class of 1 per 5% they have made their disengage check. For example, an acrobat who has a 70% chance to tumble who rolls 20% gains a -10 bonus to armour class in that round, but cannot make any attacks, regardless of whether they have successfully tumbled out of the fight that round.

When subject to an area of effect damage spell (such as for example *fireball* or *lightning bolt*) or other effect (such as dragon breath) an acrobat who has yet to act in a round may choose to evade instead of taking any offensive action. To do so, they leap or tumble to the edge of the area where damage is suffered, and a successful check will reduce damage by half (or a quarter if an applicable saving throw is made). Note that while this can be an effective means of reducing damage taken it is not without risk. For example, an acrobat on a ledge might leap out of the area of a dragon's breath but may still have to deal with falling from the ledge.

Falling/Damage Reduction: Acrobats are able to reduce the damage incurred due to falling; this ability improves with experience. Whenever an acrobat takes falling damage, roll the number of d6 indicated by their level, and remove that amount from the damage taken. It is possible to reduce the amount of damage suffered in a fall to zero using this ability. Note that a mystic acrobat may use this in addition to the mystic ability to reduce falling damage.

MYSTICAL MONASTERIES OF MYSTARA

Few monasteries are listed in official Mystaran products. Largely this is because mystics sit outside of power structures and political interactions that define dominions and cultures, and historically most who catalogue Mystaran locations overlook these institutions. Indeed, it can be hard to define what such a monastery is – there is no uniform ground plan or even organisational structure. What follows is a short list of some of the more interesting mystical orders of Mystara, and I encourage brave explorers who find more to add to this list.

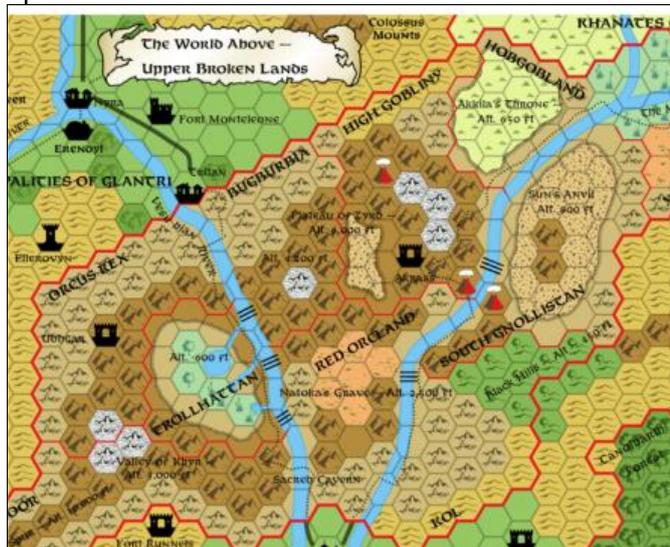
Barleycorn Monastery

- Location:** Broken Lands
- Style:** Entropy
- Members:** 80 (mostly hobgoblins and goblins)
- Master:** Heretic Zam Zammara (Hobgoblin Mystic 16)

Located high on an isolated plateau in the Broken Lands, the Barleycorn was founded by Ethengarian mystics seeking to reform the lost souls of their own errant ancestors reincarnated as humanoids. It is unknown precisely when or how the original Barleycorn Brotherhood fell, but it was replaced by a new entropic order of goblin and hobgoblin mystics who in typical humanoid fashion formed a grotesque parody of the original group. Ranging far and wide across the broken lands and beyond, members hire themselves out as mercenaries to whichever humanoid warlord will pay them most. The most worthy applicants (being those who survive whatever new, brutal tests are dreamed up by the Grand Abbott) are inducted into the order during a dark ceremony on the night of the new moon.

See: HWA1: "Nightwail"

(Right) Extract from Thorf's Replica Map of the Broken Lands



Blackrock

Location: Blackrock Island, Minrothad
Style: Time
Members: 12
Master: Darrin Posman (Mystic 12)

Possibly the smallest known order; Darrin Posman (a former port-master in Aasla whose perspective on wealth changed over many years of exposure to other philosophies) established the order some 20 years ago. Primarily teaching asceticism (austerity, self-discipline, and abstinence), it is only after mastering this discipline that members can leave, but even then they spend half of their time in meditation on the island. Thus of the 12 members, 6 will be found in quiet contemplation and prayerful dedication on the island at any time, assisted by a small clerical order that tends to the needs of the monastery.

See: GAZ9: *"The Minrothad Guilds"*

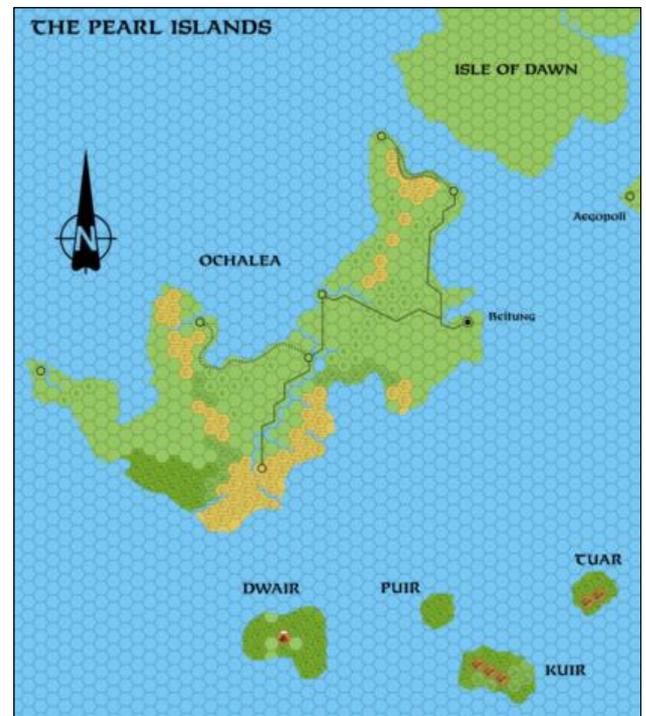


Extract from Thorf's Replica Map of the Minrothad Guilds

Chi

Location: Village of Chi, Ochalea
Style: Energy
Members: 70
Master: Mistress Yeoh (Mystic 16)

Resting among peaceful farmlands in the southwest of Ochalea, Chi is the most important of the Energy orders on the island. Mistress Yeoh has long since retired from adventuring to run her order, which is very much in the style of a mystic-training academy. Members travel across both the Thyatian and Alphatian empires seeking knowledge and righting wrongs, bringing not inconsiderable wealth back to the order, which is spent on maintaining irrigation systems and other improvements for agriculture across the grasslands in the region, leading to high productivity and a loyal peasantry.



Extract from Thorf's Replica Map of Ochalea

DRACON

Location: Draco, Alphatia
Style: Energy, Matter, Time, and Thought
Members: 1,250
Master: Mistress Eradne of the Four Elements (Mystic 30)

It's hard to know exactly where the Dracon are located, except in that the name of the order is spoken of in hushed tones in all of the dark places of the city of Draco (perhaps the most populous city in Mystara, if not the most salubrious). In fact members of the order (believed to be the most numerous in the world, although spread across a vast area) will, if pushed, refer to the Dracon as an idea rather than a place. Drawing most of its members from the back streets of Draco, but also reaching out to the other great cities of the Alphatian empire to find the most talented individuals to join them, its members are found from Thothia to Esterhold, from Alpha to Spearpoint. Upholding the rights of the the common people of the Empire, and being willing to stand up to the potent enemies including even the most powerful wizards in doing so, the Dracon form the last, best and only hope of justice for the downtrodden peasantry of Mystara's most powerful empire.

Eradne has led the order for the last 30 years and is among the wisest and most powerful mystics known. She is calm, playful even, in selecting new recruits for the order and sending members on missions to the furthest reaches of the world. But in her key missions of opposing organised crime in Draco (largely fronted by the Dopplegangster crime families) and holding back the tide of the Order of the Screaming Fist, she is resolute.

Five Monasteries of Furious Flying Fists

Location: Five mountain tops of Tangor
Styles: One each of Energy, Entropy, Matter, Time, and Thought
Members: Unknown (theorised to be up to 100 per monastery). Taer (in the Monastery of Death) and changyi³ (the other 4).
Masters: Unknown

The five monasteries are set in the heart of the mountains of Tangor, surrounded by deep, jungle-covered valleys, and remain somewhat enigmatic in the eyes of those from western nations (from Tangor, nearly everywhere is to the west). Little is known of their governance, and even their precise locations are unknown. What is known is that there are five, one devoted to studying the style of each of the five spheres. The Monastery of Death is devoted to the Sphere of Entropy and is populated entirely by taer (a variety of baboon detailed in *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #32), and adherents thereof seek to dominate the lands below for some unknown dark purpose. They are opposed by the other four monasteries, which in turn are populated entirely by changyi (sentient golden-cheeked gibbons). It is known that those monasteries are referred to by their brethren as "The Eternal Rock" (Matter), "The Sacred Flame" (Energy), "Imponderable" (Thought), and "To Go Forward" (Time). A few members of each monastery are known to travel far and wide in search of spiritual enlightenment, and sages as far afield as Sind, Oceansend and the Vulture Peninsula have reported meeting them.

³ See "Primate Races of Mystara" by author in [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #32](#)



Monkeyfolk mystics, produced from Bing AI Image Creator by author's prompting

The exact nature of the ascendance to sentience of both changyi and taer seems to be in some way linked to the presence of the monasteries, and whether their ascent could happen without them is a question yet to be resolved. Until explorers reach those locations and discover who built them and why, the fundamental nature of the locations will remain unknown.

See: *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #32, "Primates of Mystara"

Jashpurdhana Monastery

Location: Sind, Kadesh Mountains
Members: 1,000
Style: Energy, Matter, Thought, and Time
Master: The Radiant Yogi (Mystic 30)

While well known to the natives of Sind, where members of the monastery wander seeking to maintain balance and bring justice to those who need it where others fear to tread, this otherwise peaceful order is little known to people further afield. Maintaining a large estate around a monastery complex carved into the living rock of the mountain, the order is led by a rarely encountered figure known only as the Radiant Yogi, who guides the organisation with a soft hand and a hard philosophy of work, dedication, and abstinence. Some members have been known to wander the Known World region, where they become involved in quests to right great wrongs and to oppose the most dangerous of evils.

See: "*Champions of Mystara*"

(Below) Sindhi monastery



Kaikiang

Location: Kaikiang Li, Ochalea
Style: Matter
Members: 200
Master: Luóbínhàn (Mystic 25)

The largest individual order on Ochalea, Kaikiang is also the most politically difficult. Master Luóbínhàn is almost the ultimate pragmatist in his desire to see the poor of Ochalea and indeed the whole Thyatian empire well fed and taken care of. As many thieves are associated with the order as there are mystics, and they travel far and wide to promote their wider goal of wealth redistribution. This can lead to rich and powerful vested interests taking offence, but with excellent ties to the other major orders of Ochalea few are foolish enough to try to change the ways of the Kaikiang mystics. It is better to stay out of their way.



Lhamsa

Location: Glantri
Style: Energy
Members: 150 (human and lycanthrope)
Master: Henri G'Ascoyne Matzini
 (Were-rat, Mystic 20)

At a location high in the Glantrian alps, the village of Lhamsa would be utterly unknown were it not for the presence of a renowned monastery, teaching a local style known as the Radiant Art. While most 'alternative' philosophies are not tolerated in Glantri, Lhamsa is both isolated enough and their practice sufficiently useful that an exception is made, and their members are welcome in most principalities and other dominions across Glantri. While originally established by Ethengarian immigrants, the monastery now welcomes both Glantrian and Ethengarian members, but in recent years under the influence of Henri G'Ascoyne Matzini more Glantrian members have joined.

Henri himself, an illegitimate son of a noble family, has been welcoming many outcast lycanthropes (like himself) to the order, and when this becomes known his estranged family may be nervously looking over their shoulders. Whether or not this is necessary, *qui vivra verra*⁴.

See: GAZ3: *"The Principalities of Glantri"*

⁴ In Glantrian Averoignese (French) "who'll live, will see".

Screaming Fist

Location: Shraek, Alphatia
Style: Entropy
Members: 190
Master: Volodymyr the Dark
 (Vampire, Mystic 19)

Few choose to travel to or trade with Blackheart. Fewer still willingly visit the twisted City of Screams, the capital, Shraek. It is not a place where an underclass can thrive; indeed few even survive without the patronage or protection of a wizardly master. And the Order of the Screaming Fist, located in dank, cramped conditions in catacombs beneath the city, does not stand against this darkness. Indeed it is key to their philosophy that only those who have faced most despair can become members, and their abbot is a perfect example of this.

The mystics of the Screaming Fist seem to be working to no particular plan or ideal, and seek only to inflict pain and harm for their own entertainment. Indeed in the truest sense their philosophy can be described as nihilism, and it is fair to say that they consider their own lives to be only trivially less meaningless than those of those who they torture and kill for their own sadistic entertainment.

Screaming Fist mystics are to be found across Alphatia, joining groups of terrorists or evil adventurers out of a desire to further their own skills, rather than for any greater ethical purpose. They are hated by the Dracon order. That feeling is mutual.

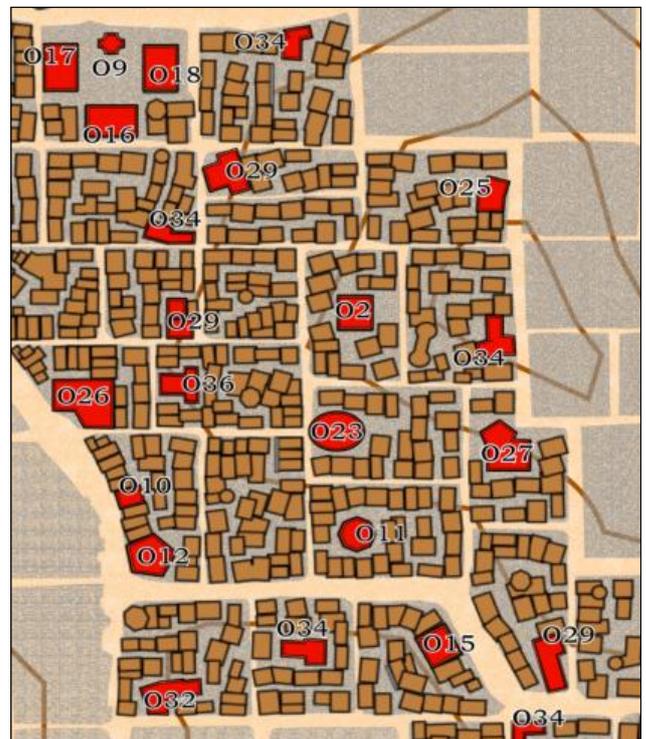
(Right) Extract from the Speculum map (see [THRESHOLD Magazine issue #21](#)) showing the location (O2) of St. Kruskiev's Monastery in the Old Quarter district of the city

St. Kruskiev

Location: Karameikos, Specularum
Members: 75
Style: Matter
Master: Abbot Jodri (Mystic 15)

An institution of great age but little renown within Specularum, few are aware that the great church of St. Kruskiev is also home to a sect of mystics. While small, the order plays an important role within the church of Karameikos, in protecting and guarding the clerics of Specularum and watching the rulers of the city. They have, subtly, affected the selection of officials within the clergy, the city watch, and even of lesser nobles within Karameikos. In Thyatis, those interested in the philosophy of politics ask "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" (who watches the watchmen), in Karameikos Abbot Jodri has been known to respond "Agitimus" (we do).

See: "Dark Knight of Karameikos" novel



TONDERA

Location: Norwold, close to Regent Pass
Members: 150 (mostly humans, some metamorphs)
Style: Time and Energy
Master: Abbot Gustaf ap Gustaf (Mystic 18)

Styled as the Monastery of Fire and Water, the Tondera order is an ancient and respected institution that has weathered the storms of raiding dragons from the Wyrms-teeth mountains, frost giants from Frosthaven, and invading forces from both great empires. It welcomes those who come to seek enlightenment amongst the cold stones of its isolated mountain top location, but the trial of reaching the mountain top alone keeps most would-be members away. Members of its order are found in adventuring parties across Norwold and further afield, and their pledge to seek justice for the most vulnerable is respected among those who know them. While most of the order are human, this is the chosen location that the few metamorphs from the island of Metinsulae come to when they choose to become mystics.

The location of the monastery, close to the strategically vital Regent Pass that is the only safe over-land route to the capital city of Alpha, has meant that the kings of both Norwold and Oceansend know better than to mistreat the order's brethren. Just because the order has never meddled in Norwold politics, that does not mean that it never could.

Wu

Location: Wu Li, Ochalea
Members: 50
Style: Time
Master: Gram Heidelberg (Gnome, Mystic 20)

Open to the most enlightened members from across the world, the Wu monastery is found nestled between the hills and dense forests of northern Ochalea, commanding an impressive view over the main east-west road to Beitung. Headed by a wise old gnome of unknown origin (although rumoured to have originated in Snarta), they are a peaceful brotherhood seeking to bring enlightenment to those coming to learn from their master.



Wutang

Location: Wutang Dong Ha, Ochalea
Members: 60
Style: Thought
Master: Sìhng Lùhng (Mystic 30)

In the far northeast corner of Ochalea lies the small settlement of Wutang Dong Ha, which serves as a small Thyatian naval outpost and trading settlement, with some legitimate traders making the trip around the Isle of Dawn stopping for water, and far more less legitimate traders stopping there to sell goods landed at Ne'er-do-well. This is overseen by the brotherhood of Wutang, who weed out the less desirable, dangerous

goods, and supervise the return of many more useful products back into Ochalea, making Wutang a vital part of the island's economy. Master Sìhng Lùhng also sends members of the brotherhood along with ships heading in all directions to keep an eye on pirate activity in the waters, and organises retributive strikes on dangerous pirate groups and rescue missions for hostages where necessary.

Ochalean monastery





<https://mystara.thorfmmaps.com/>

OldDawg Presents: GazF

A collage of several 'GazF' Gazetteer covers from the 'Vaults of Pandius' series, featuring various fantasy-themed illustrations and maps.

CONTINUING the Gazetteer Tradition BEYOND the KNOWN WORLD

A small logo for 'Vaults of Pandius' featuring a stylized 'V' and 'P' in a red and gold square.

...at the Vaults of Pandius
<http://www.pandius.com>

<http://pandius.com/gazfmyst.html>

[GAZF sub-forum at The Piazza](#)

THORN'S CHRONICLE
Daughter of the Ashen Empires
Rise of the Winter King ♦ Wake of the White Witch's Wrath ♦ Masks of the Dreaming Night ♦♦

An illustration of a hooded figure in a green cloak and brown tunic, holding a wooden staff, standing in a dark, gnarled forest.

<http://thornschronicle.blogspot.com>

<https://thornschronicle.blogspot.com/>

HOLLOW MOON

An illustration of a woman with grey hair and red face paint, wearing a yellow and black outfit, standing inside a large, glowing crescent moon against a dark background.

<http://www.pandius.com>

A small logo for 'Vaults of Pandius' featuring a stylized 'V' and 'P' in a red and gold square.

<http://pandius.com/hllwmoon.html>



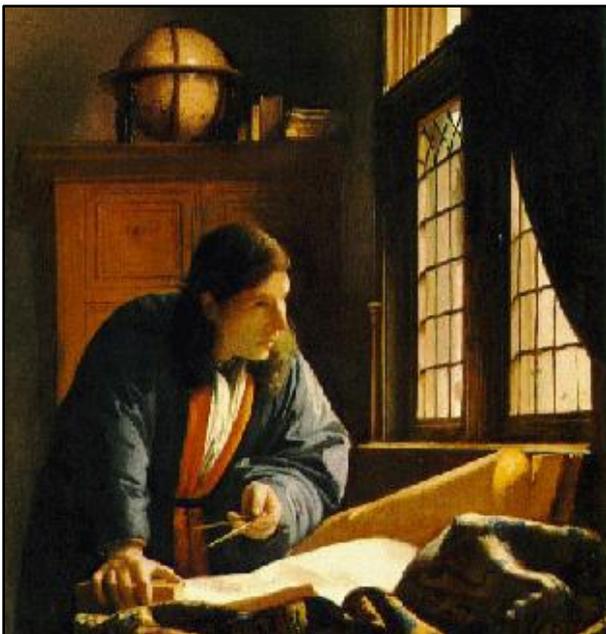
Mappers of Mystara, a series by Thorfinn Tait

In this series, both on his blog [Atlas of Mystara](#) and here in *THRESHOLD Magazine*, Thorfinn will highlight the fans who have mapped Mystara over the years.

ERIC ANONÐSON

One of the first to rearrange the Known World

Ever wanted to change the Known World to a configuration that makes more geographical and political sense? Eric Anondson has done just that.



Profile

Nickname: Anondson, AdmundfortGeographer ([Vaults author page](#), [Piazza profile](#), [DeviantArt profile](#))

Location: Twin Cities, Minnesota, USA

Maps Posted: 2014

Areas of Interest: [Known World](#)

Scales: [8 miles per hex](#)

First Posted Map: Known World Rearranged (May 2014)

Software: Hexographer, Worldographer, Affinity Designer

Mapping Style: Hexographer palette and hex art (refined palette close to published maps, but with darker greens and a more diverse icon set)

Fonts: None

OVERVIEW

We are all familiar with the usual complaints about the Known World's geography: how can a hot desert be right next to a cold and wet northern realm? The steppes are far too small! And so on. But how many of us have taken these ideas and used them to rework the layout of the region?

Eric Anonðson was one of the first — perhaps even the very first — to do this, and share his resulting map. It's a wonderful glimpse into a parallel Mystara, where things are the same but different.

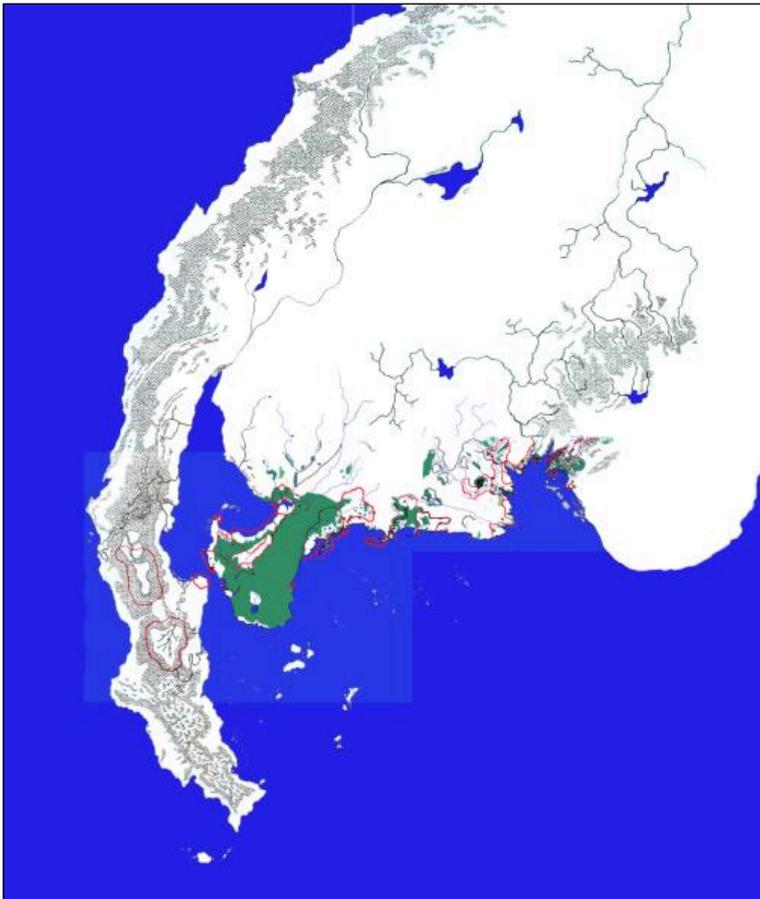
IT'S THE KNOWN WORLD, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

Eric's solutions to the typical criticisms of the Known World are rather good. He used the hex format to his advantage, allowing some regions to be flipped and others to be rotated. For example, Darokin, Alfheim, Karameikos and the Five Shires are all flipped east-west, while Ylaruam has been rotated and shifted to the eastern edge of the Great Waste, and Ethengar moved up onto the Adri Varma Plateau.

All of Eric's changes are well thought out, with the overall aim being for things to make a little more sense than the originally rather random selection of nations did.

Eric started out drawing paper maps, one of which survives in scanned form today (see below). More recently he has been working on the computer. His Known World project dates back to 2010, although he didn't post it online until 2014.

Since Eric shared his work, quite a few others have been inspired to post their own remakes of the Known World, and as a result the community has enjoyed a number of alternate takes of our favourite region.



Eric's "rearranged" Western Brun map assembled by Thorf



Eric's Known World South map (Deviant Art)

INTERVIEW

Eric graciously agreed to answer some questions for this article.

How did you first get interested in Mystara? What draws you to the setting?

I got first interested in Mystara with the *Basic*, *Expert*, and *Companion* boxes and with the module B4. I was young when I got those and I swiftly moved onto *AD&D* and *Greyhawk*. But I was and still am tremendously promiscuous with setting worlds because I love grabbing ideas that I can use to put into my own home-brew where I ran a majority of my campaigns. I drifted away from BECMI for *AD&D*/2nd ed. and those abundant setting worlds. Years later I had just come back from GenCon in Milwaukee where I got to watch

Tim Beach DM for a demonstration table of *Red Steel* and I went into my FLGS looking for another setting and I saw that new TSR setting box, *Red Steel*, on the shelf. I grabbed it, dove in and saw it explicitly was in the same world as the setting of the BECMI line. When I get hooked into a setting I am a completist and want everything, and *Red Steel* hooked me on the entire wider world of Mystara. So if I am more honest, I would credit *Red Steel* as when I really got interested. What continues to draw me to the setting is that the entire planet is mapped in general, mass planetary migrations are documented, there is a cosmology very different than other *D&D* settings, and only a small corner is deeply detailed.

Did you have a favourite official map?

My favorite Mystara map is the continent of Brun¹ in the *Companion* box. I'm a fan of pencil/ink hand-drawn maps (such as of the style of Dyson Logos) and the sparse continent of Brun inspired me, with the clear call towards Late Jurassic Earth, with so much potential to add my own details from exploration.

When did you start mapping Mystara?

Hmm, back when I was first taken in with *Red Steel* I wanted a complete western Brun in the amount of detail of the poster maps from the *Red Steel* box. I nearly completed that hand drawn map in the mid 90s. I have long since lost those maps but not before I wisely scanned them. It seemed to be an early reflection of my rearranging the Known World in that I took liberties with the Savage Coast. I was never content that civilization was so crammed on the coast so in those early maps I pushed the plains back just a bit and gave the nations on the coast more room and stretched them a bit.

When and where did you post your first map online?

The re-arranged Known World are the only Mystara maps I've posted online, but a few years prior to my Mystara maps I posted my re-creations of different regions of the Flanaess of Greyhawk. The Flanaess regional maps were first posted on Canonfire! and hosted on my MobileMe storage. I took that down a few years later and started [a Deviant Art page](#) for those maps then a few years after that I added my rearranged Known World to my Deviant Art page.

¹ See [Companion Set Brun](#) map at Thorf's "Atlas of Mystara" website

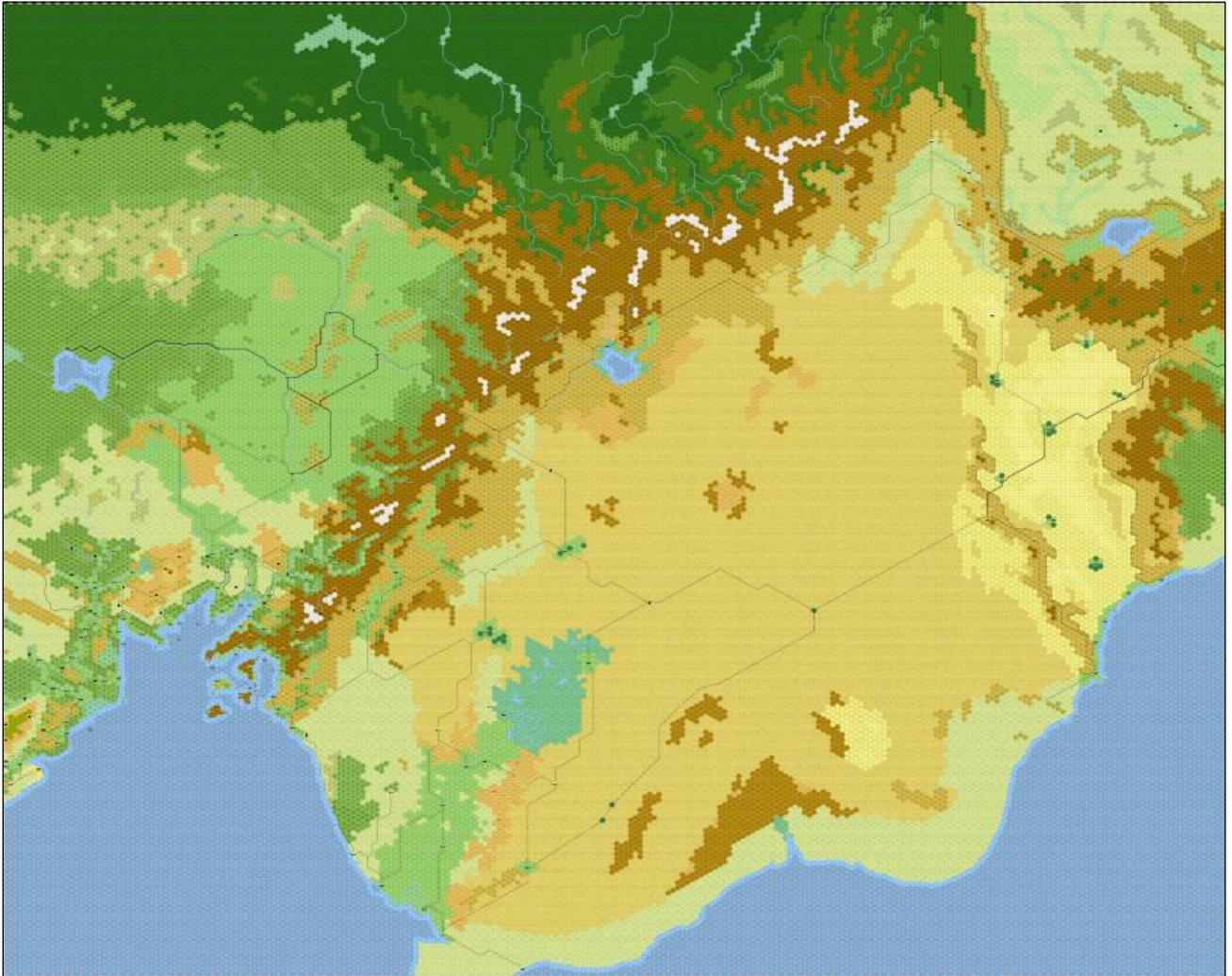
What software do you use? Or do you draw your maps by hand?

My regional maps of the Flanaess started as poster sized pencil maps which I scanned then took into Photoshop on my Mac. At the time I was helping run the *Living Greyhawk* region of The Shield Lands and wanted re-usable maps I could put in the modules we created. I colorized those pencil maps with Photoshop and slowly began mapping more of the continent. When I got around to wanting to re-map the Known World I felt Photoshop would not do. At the time I saw that Hexographer was a tool that would let me create something in the style closest to the *Gazetteer* maps.

What are the limitations or peculiarities of that software? What challenges did you face during your mapping projects?

I was trying to draw a Known World map as large as the entire Western Countries Trail Map², all in 8 miles per hex. Once again ambition exceeded the ability of my tools. Having completed the hex work and coasts, I began adding names and roads, saving regularly. I returned the next day and the files refused to reopen. I recall an error that the file was too large. Luckily my Mac's Time Machine recorded a version I could revert back to. Though I lost that day's work, I was able to split the map in two. A north and a south of the Known World. Yet again, as I added more details of icons, and road, the files eventually grew in size and the south map again failed to re-open one day as it had grown too large. I reverted the files again to a version I could open, exported .jpgs and published those on my Deviant Art page. I set those files aside as my attention drifted away, as it does, and in

² See [TM1 The Western Countries, 8 miles per hex](#) map at Thorf's "Atlas of Mystara" website



Eric's Great Waste Region map (Deviant Art)

my belief that Hexographer would never be able to re-open those files I purged the originals! You have no idea how much I regret that, but I was in a rare mood that day...

Please describe your process in brief.

I have a passion and college education in Geography. I am one of the many who have stared at the Known World and looking at the charming hodgepodge of nations tried to grapple how they could fit in harmony and what possible believable history these would have emerged from. To create my rearranged version of the Known World there were a lot of personal assumptions and personal wishes that were informed in some

parts by my Geography background. I had at least one guideline I set that what was in the Known World region now was not relocated outside the Known World. Placing Ylaruam where I did gave cause for me to extend my project to the Great Waste so I could find a suitable location for Sind (on the west coast of the Great Waste). One significant region I did not have a place in mind was the Atruaghin Clans. I pulled that region out completely with the expectation I would locate it somewhere else. I haven't come up with a location but I was leaning towards a place such as near Yalu Bay or in the Hollow World. I have not put a lot of thought towards it yet.

What was your favourite area to work on?

Western Brun—which to me is everything west of the Black Mountains. This is partly because *Red Steel/Savage Coast* was my gateway into Mystara. But mostly because I find the wider undescribed detail about what exists in this part of the continent more promising from a DM-creator angle. Beyond the Savage Coast and Orc's Head Peninsula we do not know much in comparison. Even Hule, the Sylvan Realm and the Arm of the Immortals is thin in detail, my imagination about what I could fit starts racing! But there is a third reason that is simply my personality... I prefer running campaigns that are off the well-trod adventuring grounds, I do this in every published campaign setting I run in. That is, pick a corner that is clearly not going to be the center of attention.

Do you have any future plans for your maps of Mystara?

I want to re-draw everything in a better tool. I have gotten access to a vector drawing tool (Affinity Designer) that seems to accept importing your Illustrator files quite well. Now I need to master it. I've tinkered with it a little but have run into road-blocks trying to get grids to align perfectly as I expand regions. I'm sure there is some simple novice-level trick I'm missing. Once I got that down I'll be up and running (when I have free time back!)

What are you doing these days?

In the realm of gaming and fantasy mapping, I'm DMing my son, brothers, and nephews in a long running 5e campaign that has reached 16th level in a home-brew setting that has massively borrowed elements from Mystara, especially the *Savage*

Coast and Princess Ark. I'm hoping one of my crew will step up and DM our next campaign, but odds are I'll be strong-armed to running the next campaign too, so I'm beginning preparation on campaign by hunting for ideas.

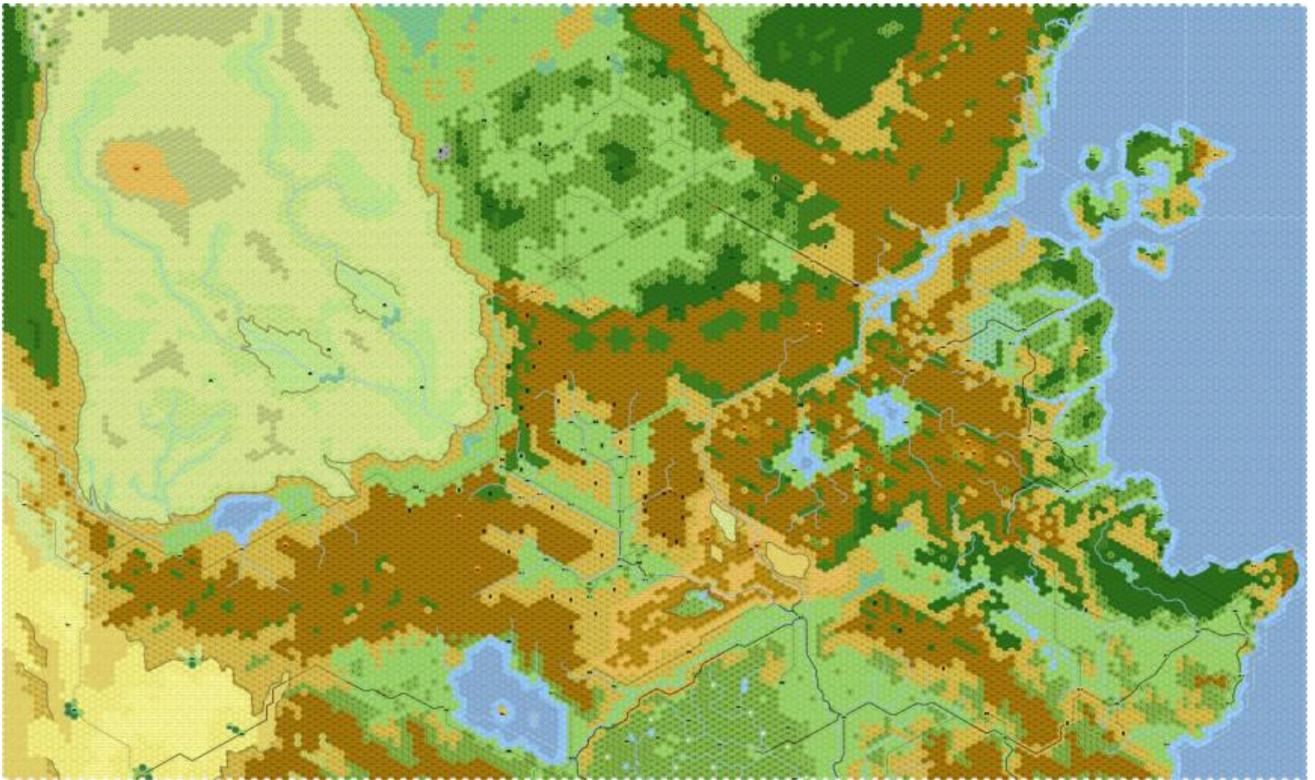
You can find my previously uploaded maps from my Greyhawk mapping project and the Re-arranged Known World at <https://www.deviantart.com/admundfortgeographer>.

I'd love to hear an overview of your project.

This whole thing started off as a mental experiment on what to do with Ylaruam. The placement of Ylaruam always felt like a needle scratching a record, especially with it a short jaunt from Scandinavian-inspired nations among many things that made my brain wrestle with it. Once I started moving Ylaruam around, the rest started falling into place.

Initially I simply removed Sind and swapped Ylaruam in its place. But as I scoured the source material I grew to appreciate Sind more and wanted it somewhere and not far. I settled on the west coast of the Great Waste, south of Graakhalia. With a slight horizontal flip and slight rotation it fit in well. I liked that it gives another reason for traders to want to cross the desert.

To fill in Ylaruam's absence I grabbed pieces of Thyatis. I took Hattias and dropped it on the north side of the Altan Tepes. I relocated the County of Lucinius to the island Hattias vacated. I wanted the Duchy of Thyatis to be more prominent so I expanded its territory to include the area Lucinius vacated. North of Hattias' new position I placed the entirety of the



Eric's Known World North map (Deviant Art)

Heldann Freeholds between Hattias and the Northern Reaches, with a little bit of unclaimed dense forest.

As I lined up Hattias, Heldann Freeholds, and the now rotated Northern Reaches along this eastern coast of the Known World, I needed a better place for Rockhome. I settled on giving Rockhome a new home right on top of where Ethengar was and moving Ethengar to the western side of Glantri. Having Rockhome closer to Glantri felt satisfying to me, giving the tension Glantri's wizards have towards the Known World's dwarves. For a nomadic people, Ethengar had long felt cramped in its space. Having Ethengar on the Adri Varma plateau felt like a suitable location, like replicating the Huns settling in Central Europe. The Adri Varma plateau was also much less confining than their original placement. Things felt like they were working out!

On the southern coast I could have left things alone, but I still had some things that bugged me here. For instance Karameikos was supposed to have a feeling of a remote, detached Thyatian province. But it's basically right next door to a multi-continent colonizing expansionistic empire. A bit more distance would suit me. I was also less satisfied with the large watershed that drained into Malpheggi Swamp. So I horizontally flipped Alfheim, Malpheggi Swamp, Karameikos, Five Shires, and part of Darokin (leaving Lake Amsorak in place). Placing Malpheggi Swamp as the separation between Thyatis and Five Shires gave me a more satisfying geographic barrier between Thyatis and the coast to the west than a small river. Moving the river and swamp to be the geographic barrier to Thyatis and the west meant flipping Alfheim around too.

This horizontal flip now gave me a more distant shore to drop Karameikos that was

close enough yet geographically separate to not just be a casual march of legions over to settle down the rebellious natives. Flipping the central area like this gave me a much more pleasing rearrangement of river and overland trade routes. Plus it enlarged the core of Darokin and, in my opinion, a wider river network to traverse and build an economy around. I even imagine an expansive canal network throughout.

I didn't need to horizontally flip Ierendi and Minrothad and I'm not holding strongly to it, but it also felt right to move Minrothad a bit further from Thyatis to position those islands in a nice position along the sea trade routes to the west. Having the island nations positioned across from the land nations in the normal Known World felt right.

I had a few extra areas to come up with something. For instance, by removing Atruaghin, I still had space west of Karameikos between it and Ylaruam. I'm leaning toward having it inhabited by different animal-headed races like gnolls or lupin, who live a more tribal, hunter-gatherer state. Then there was still a thin gap between Rockhome, Broken Lands, and Heldann. So I added a bit more Broken Lands to the eastern side of the Broken Lands. But I've always been dissatisfied with how compact the Broken Lands were, so in my head, the gap between Rockhome and the Dwarfgate Mountains is inhabited by more Broken Lands humanoids. In fact, it is littered with battlefields where the dwarves of Rockhome and Broken Lands humanoids have fought over the centuries. As I was unable to complete drawing the roads in Rockhome, I was going to be connecting a trail between Corunglain and Karrak Castle through this gap region.

I also had one more thin gap. North west of Rockhome and Northern Reaches I had a space to fill between those nations and Wendar/Denagoth. I took inspiration from the fjords of the Northern Reaches and decided to extend a very long fjord. I meant to get back to this region and add the outlet of the Naga River through the mountains as Geoff Gander's map has. But by bringing this longer fjord this deep it also allows me to route a river watershed of Wendar to the sea to the east. It would like to have a port so I added one at the mouth of whatever river I was going to draw. I think I intended this river to not be a settlement of Wendar's but rather of the disunited "barbaric" Antalian people along the coast from here all the way north into Norwold.

Thank you, Eric!

SOURCES

In researching this article, I searched out all the references I could find, and consulted with everyone I could track down. I have made every effort to ensure that the information is accurate, but in some cases I may have slipped up—especially when dealing with maps that are years or even decades old. I take full responsibility for any mistakes; please don't hesitate to point these out if you find them! Following is a summary of my sources for your reference.

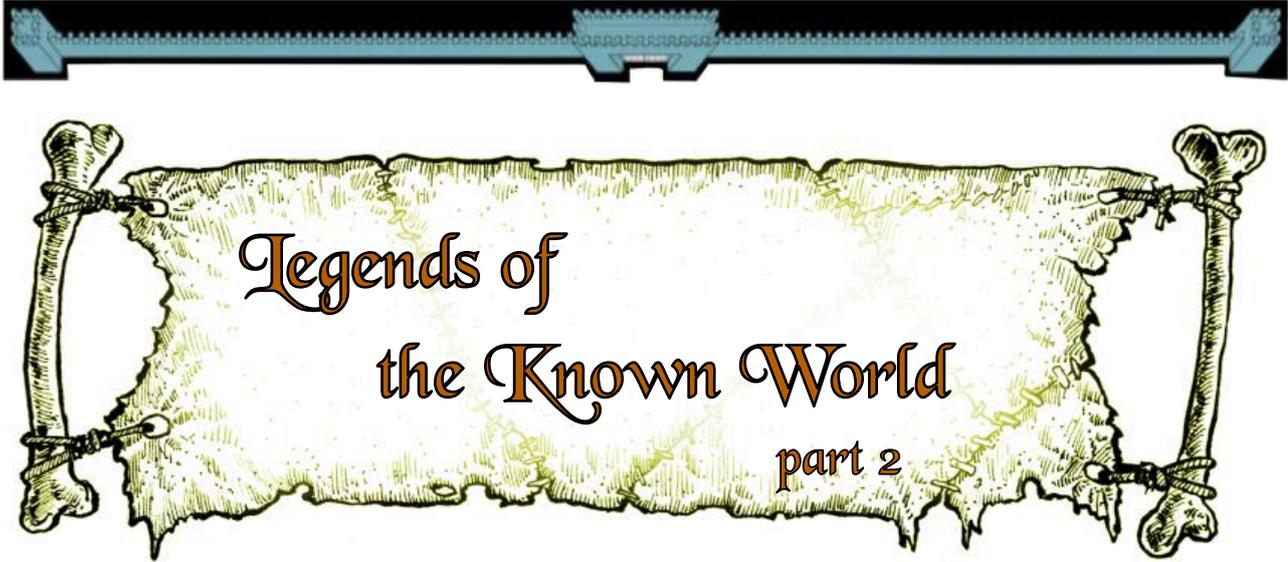
- Direct messaging with Eric
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ERIC'S MAPS

Name	Date	Date Source	Scale	Notes
Western Brun	mid-90s	Interview	-	Assembled by Thorf
Great Waste Region	2010/8/29	File	8	First version
Known World North	2013/2/8	File	8	First version
Known World South	2013/3/3	File	8	First version
Great Waste Region *	2014/5/17	DeviantArt †	8	Revised version
Known World North *	2014/5/17	DeviantArt †	8	Revised version
Known World South *	2014/5/17	DeviantArt †	8	Revised version
Great Waste Region	2022/4/22	DeviantArt †	8	High resolution version
Known World North	2022/4/22	DeviantArt †	8	High resolution version
Known World South	2022/4/22	DeviantArt †	8	High resolution

* See "Anondson's Rearranged Known World" at the Vaults: <http://pandius.com/earearkw.html>

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by Irving Galvez

THE NASNAS



Nasnas in a Ylari book

In the heart of the Ylari desert, where endless dunes painted the horizon, there dwelled a sorcerer with an insatiable thirst for knowledge: Khaldun the Enigmatic. Khaldun's obsession lay in the intricate dance of life within the unforgiving desert, where humans and desert creatures coexisted, sometimes in harmony, often in strife.

With ancient parchments and rituals veiled in the dust of ages, Khaldun embarked on an arcane odyssey unlike any other. He believed that by weaving the essence of humans and the spirits of desert creatures, he could unlock the enigmatic secrets woven into the arid tapestry. And so, on a fateful night, bathed in mystic energies, Khaldun performed an unparalleled ritual, birthing forth the Nasnas, a creature divided in both essence and form.

Emerging from the throes of magic, the Nasnas stood before Khaldun as a testament to the very duality he sought to comprehend. One half was graced with the lithe form of a human, while the other bore the

Nasnas, Desert Trickster**Type:** Monstrous Humanoid**Armor Class:** 5 (due to its elusive nature)**Hit Dice:** 3+1 (for a total of 4 HD)**Attack:** 1 bite (1d6) and 1 claw (1d4)**Special Abilities****Illusion Mastery:** The Nasnas can cast the *minor illusion* cantrip at will, using Intelligence as its spellcasting ability.**Shape-shifting:** The Nasnas can briefly alter its appearance to blend in with its surroundings or take on a more humanoid form. This allows it to gain advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when hiding in desert terrain or crowded areas.**Laughter of Deceit:** Once per short rest, the Nasnas can unleash an enchanting laughter. All creatures within 30 feet that can hear this laughter must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC 13) or be charmed until the end of their next turn.**Actions****Multi-attack:** The Nasnas makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claw.**Bite:** Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6) piercing damage.**Claw:** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4) slashing damage.

agile physique of a desert dweller, an embodiment of the desert's paradoxical existence.

For epochs, the Nasnas commanded reverence, seen as custodians of profound wisdom. Desert tribes revered them as living bridges between the realms of humans and animals. These enigmatic beings assumed the mantle of protectors, warding over hidden oases, guarding the slumbering secrets within ancient tombs, and bearing the clandestine knowledge concealed beneath the dunes.

As Ylaruam's civilizations burgeoned, so did the Nasnas' repute as enigmatic tricksters and defenders of the desert's enigmas. The subterranean labyrinths near Ylaruam City

bore testament to their playful nature, enticing and perplexing adventurers who dared tread upon their concealed treasures.

In the contemporary era, the Nasnas persists as a living enigma, neither entirely friend nor foe to adventurers. Their presence continues to beckon, teasing with tantalizing riddles that ensnare the imagination. Ylaruam's culture remains steeped in mystery, for the secrets guarded by the Nasnas may forever elude complete unraveling.

Hence, the Nasnas perseveres, etching its presence into the annals of Ylaruam's history. It stands as a living emblem of the eternal mysteries that pervade the desert, an enduring tribute to the legacy of

Khaldun the Enigmatic, the sorcerer who dared to explore the profound duality etched into the arid sands.

ENCOUNTERS

Adventurers seeking treasures rumored to be hidden in the dungeons near Ylaruam City might find themselves confronted by a Nasnas. These encounters often involve a series of riddles, illusions, and challenges set by the Nasnas to test the wit and resolve of intruders. While Nasnas are not inherently malevolent, they are driven by a desire to amuse themselves, making it unclear whether they will aid or hinder adventurers in their quest for riches.

AELIUS THE MINOTAUR

In the heart of the Imperial City of Thyatis, where marble palaces and grand bazaars thrived, a shadowy tale was whispered among the citizens. It was a story of ancient curses, hubris, and a creature condemned to eternal torment.

Centuries ago, when Thyatis was still young and the empire's ambitions knew no bounds, there was a wealthy and influential family named the Galians. The Galians were known for their insatiable appetite for power and wealth. They sought to extend their influence to the farthest corners of Mystara. In their pursuit of dominion, the Galians committed a grave offense against the Immortals.



Minotaur, produced from Gencraft by author's prompting

One fateful night, in a fit of arrogance, the head of the Galian family declared that they were above the divine laws and refused to offer sacrifices. Among the deities they spurned, it was an unknown and enigmatic Immortal who took the greatest offense. In their wrath, this mysterious Immortal cursed the Galians and their descendants for all eternity.

As a manifestation of this divine retribution, the Galians family's firstborn son, Aelius, was born with a monstrous form. Aelius possessed the body of a man but was cursed with the head of a bull, a grotesque and unnatural fusion. This abomination, a living

Aelius the Minotaur**Type:** Monstrous Humanoid**Hit Dice:** 6+2 (for a total of 8 HD)**Armor Class:** 5 (due to his tough hide)**Attack:** 2 claws (1d6 each) and 1 bite (2d6)**Special Attacks:** Aelius can use his immense strength to charge at opponents, making a gore attack with his horns (2d8 damage) if he moves at least 10 feet in a straight line before attacking.**Special Abilities****Labyrinthine Knowledge:** Aelius possesses an intimate knowledge of the labyrinth beneath his mansion. He never gets lost in it and can navigate it effortlessly.**Curse of Humility:** Aelius's presence carries a curse that affects those who defy the gods or act with arrogance in his presence. Any creature who engages in such behavior within 60 feet of Aelius must make a saving throw or suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls for the next 24 hours.**Weakness:** Aelius is vulnerable to enchantments and spells that target his mind. He has a -2 penalty to saving throws against such effects.**Alignment:** Chaotic**Treasure:** Aelius guards a hoard of treasures that adventurers of past generations have brought into his labyrinth, seeking to appease or outwit him. This hoard may include valuable gems, magical items, and ancient artifacts.

symbol of the family's arrogance, became known as Aelius the Minotaur.

Terrified and ashamed, the Galians ordered the construction of a vast labyrinth beneath their opulent mansion, believing it to be the only way to contain Aelius's insatiable hunger for human flesh. The labyrinth, an intricate web of twisting passages and dark chambers, was designed to imprison the accursed creature.

For centuries, Aelius has prowled the labyrinth's depths, a tormented and relentless guardian. His existence serves as a stark reminder of the Galians' prideful past and the consequences of defying the unknown Immortal's divine will.

Adventurers who seek to unravel the secrets of Thyatis may find themselves drawn into the depths of the labyrinth, where Aelius waits. These encounters are fraught with peril, as Aelius uses his intimate knowledge of the labyrinth to stalk and confront intruders.

Aelius is more than a mere monster; he is a living embodiment of the family's ancient curse, a symbol of humility and divine justice. The labyrinth beneath the Galian mansion remains a place of dread and mystery, where the sins of the past continue to echo in the present.

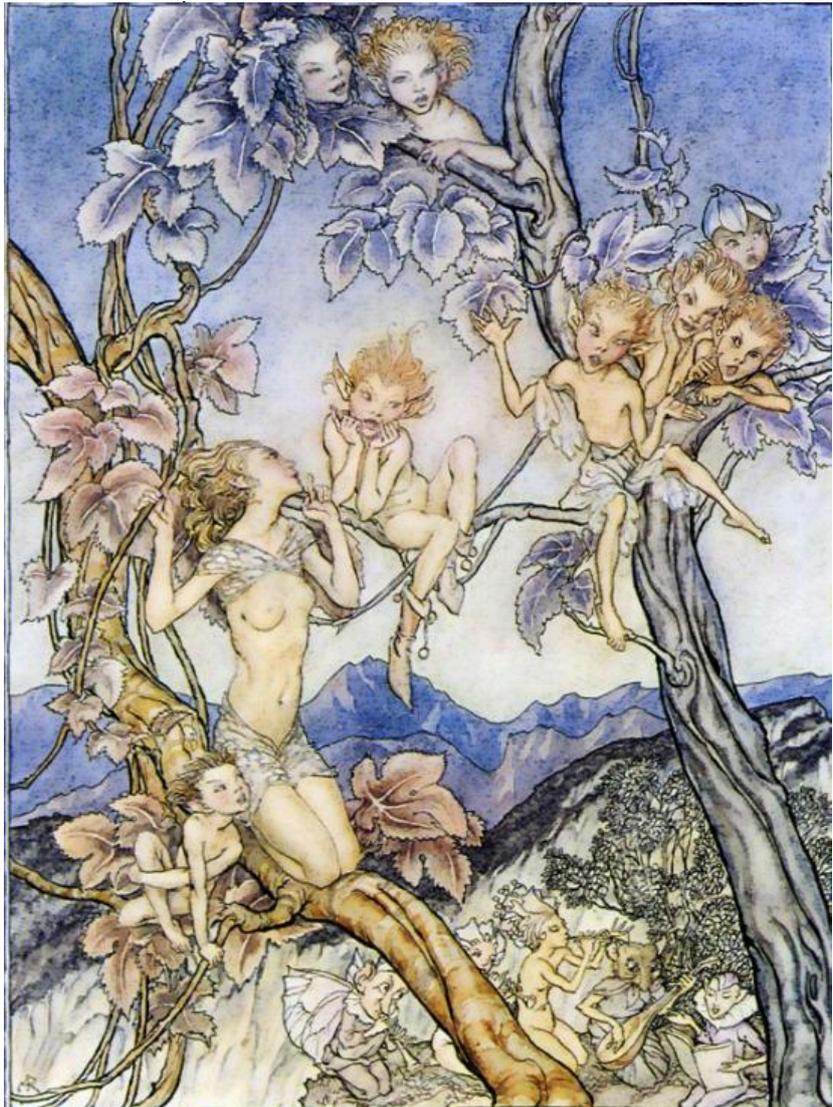
THE TROW

In the heart of picturesque Five Shires, nestled among rolling hills and lush meadows, there lived a bard named Brynna Songweaver. Brynna was renowned for her enchanting songs and timeless tales, but her heart was forever captivated by the age-old legends of the Trows—the mischievous fairies said to dwell in hidden hillocks known as “Trowie Knowes.”

These Trows, with their peculiar appearance, stood short in stature, their visages bearing a curious blend of features. Their round faces, adorned with sallow complexions, framed long, dark, and bedraggled hair that danced like midnight shadows. But despite their unusual looks, they possessed eyes that sparkled with an enchanting love for music, a passion that resonated deeply with Brynna.

Brynna’s obsession lay in unraveling the mysteries of these elusive creatures. Armed with her trusty lute, Brynna embarked on a quest like no other. She believed that by harmonizing her melodies with the Trows’ own whimsical tunes, she could uncover the secrets of their hidden realm.

One starry evening, as the moon cast a silvery glow upon the tranquil Five Shires, Brynna performed a haunting melody beneath an ancient oak tree hollow



A fairy song, illustration by Arthur Rackham

between the roots. She poured her intentions into her music, and to her amazement, the Trows answered her call—a soft, ethereal shimmer took form before her eyes, revealing a Trow, a creature divided between their whimsical nature and the age-old tales spun about them.

The Trow stood before Brynna, a living testament to the very essence of the fairies she yearned to comprehend. They possessed the distinct features that folklore spoke of—short stature, curious faces, and a love for music that mirrored Brynna’s own passion.

Trow**Type:** Fey**Hit Dice:** 1+1**Armor Class:** 6**Attack:** 1 weapon or musical instrument (1d4)**Special Attacks:**
Musical Enchantment, Mischief**Special Abilities**

Musical Enchantment: Trows possess innate musical talents. When playing a musical instrument, listeners within a 30-foot radius must make a saving throw versus spells or become captivated, unable to take any actions for 1d4 rounds. This can be used once per encounter.

Mischief Mastery: Trows are notorious tricksters skilled in creating illusions, moving silently, and hiding in shadows. They gain a +2 bonus to Dexterity-based ability checks involving these skills.

Hillock Dwellers: Trows inhabit underground dens known as "Trowie Knowes," lavishly decorated with precious gems and fine foods. They are protective of their treasures and can be hostile to intruders.

Alignment: Chaotic**No. Appearing:** 1d4 (1d6)**Save As:** Halfling: F1**Morale:** 8**Treasure Type:** V (in Trowie Knowes)

For generations, the Trows became revered companions of the Five Shires, celebrated for their peculiar charm. Halflings viewed them as guardians of artistry, protecting hidden glens filled with treasures of gold, silver, and gems. They shared feasts of the finest Shires' fare with those they favored, inviting fortunate souls into their concealed abodes.

As time flowed on, the Trows' reputation as mischievous yet benevolent beings grew. Their hillocks remained places of wonder and delight, where talented musicians might find themselves in the company of these whimsical nocturnal revelers.

In the contemporary era, the Trows persist as enigmatic friends of the Five Shires, neither purely mythical nor completely tangible. Their presence continues to enchant, drawing musicians into moonlit gatherings filled with music and merriment. The culture of the Five Shires remains steeped in the mystique of the Trows, their stories weaving through the tapestry of halfling traditions like timeless ballads.



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- Page 177: **[Image: Monkeyfolk monks]**
Done by Bing AI Image Creator at author's prompting
- Page 177: **[Image: Sindhi Monastery]**
Thikse Monastery, Ladakh, India. Author Aksveer from Wikimedia commons
<File:Thikse Monastery .jpg - Wikimedia Commons>
- Page 178: **[Image: Fighting Mystic]**
Done by Gencraft at Sturm's prompting
- Page 179: **[Map: Specularum Old Quarter]**
Extract from map by Allan Palmer,
originally presented on *THRESHOLD Magazine* issue #21
- Page 180: **[Image: Fighting Mystic]**
Done by Gencraft at Sturm's prompting
- Page 181: **[Ochalean Monastery]**
Taoist monastery at the top of Wudang Mountain.
Author Seth Kramer from Wikimedia commons
<File:Wudangshan pic 2.jpg - Wikimedia Commons>

Artwork Sources/Credits

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- Page 183: **[Image: Cartographer]**
from Eric Anondson's Deviant Art site: <https://www.deviantart.com/admundfortgeographer>
- Pages 184 to 189: **[Maps: various]**
Original work by Eric Anondson - all accessible on the Atlas of Mystara website at <https://mystara.thorfmads.com/appendix-m/eric-anondson/>
- Page 192: **[Image: Nasnas]**
Author Zakariya al-Qazwini. Scribe Muhammad ibn Muhammad Shakir Ruzmah-'i Nathani (fl. 1717). A Camel and Three Strange Single-handed and Single-legged Creatures from Wikimedia commons
[File:Muhammad ibn Muhammad Shakir Ruzmah-'i Nathani - A Camel and Three Strange Single-handed and Single-legged Creatures - Walters W659143A - Full Page.jpg - Wikimedia Commons](#)
- Page 194: **[Image: Minotaur]**
Done by Gencraft at author's prompting
- Page 196: **[Image: Fairy song]**
A fairy song, illustration by Arthur Rackham for A Midsummer Night's Dream, Heinemann, 1908 from Wikimedia commons
[File:Fairy song.jpg - Wikimedia Commons](#)
- Back cover **[Image: Back Cover of issue #33]**
Back Cover of issue #33 using original digital drawing by Senarch
<https://www.deviantart.com/senarch/gallery>



Submission Guidelines

Proposals

All proposal submissions can be sent by mail to the editors at the following address: Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com, and must be received by the proposal deadline†. The *THRESHOLD* editorial team will contact you within 7 days of the proposal deadline regarding the status of your proposal.

Submission proposals should be sent inline in the mail, using the following subject format:

[ISSUE#][Proposal]<title of your article>

The mail content should include the following:

- Proposed article title
- The type of article being proposed (short story, adventure, geographical location, organization, etc...)
- A one paragraph description of what the article is about
- An estimated word count of the article (articles should range anywhere from 1000 to 7000 words, depending on the type of article submitted)

Manuscripts

Manuscripts should only be submitted after you proposal has been accepted by the *THRESHOLD* editorial staff, and must be received by the manuscript deadline†. When submitting a manuscript file, please use the following naming convention:

threshold_#_your_title.<extension>

(extension: see below for recommended file formats) and the following subject format:

[ISSUE#][Manuscript]<title of your article>

The mail content should include the following:

- The article title.
- An attached document containing the article contents.
- The final word count of the article.

Other types of contributions: the editorial team will consider on a case by case basis other types of contributions. Please contact us to inquire if and how we can accommodate unusual contribution formats.

The following guidelines apply to different types of submissions:

Illustrations: Please submit art and maps in lossless format (e.g., PNG).

Articles: Manuscript submissions can be sent by mail as plain text, doc(x) or odt, or shared as Google Doc. The issue editor will create a shared document (for each article) to allow the author and editorial team to work on it. Articles can be as short as a single page, or as long as 6 pages, depending on the specific content. The editorial team will do its best to accommodate the contributions, but especially long works may be split over several issues.

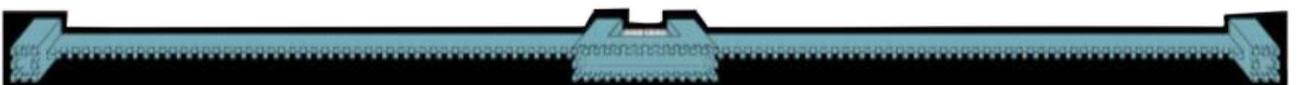
Tables: Tables should be numbered (Table X: Name of Table), and any references in the article should refer to that table number (and not to “the table below,” for example).

Author Bios: Please include a short blurb (one or two sentences) biography/blurb about yourself for our “contributing authors” section. It can be serious or silly, but don't get too carried away with it, please.

Other types of contributions: The editorial team will consider on a case by case basis other types of contributions. Please contact us to inquire if and how we can accommodate unusual contribution formats.

†Refer to “*Call for Contributions*” (page 9) for next issue deadline dates.

#Insert relevant issue number in place of ‘#’



THRESHOLD

THE MYSTARA MAGAZINE



DUNGEONS

In this new issue of *THRESHOLD* Magazine we face the dangers and mysteries of dungeons, a cornerstone of Classic D&D, of which we also celebrate the 40th anniversary with an article by Allan. Dungeons under post-cataclysm Mystara, in the past, on islands, and above the clouds, in the first four articles of this issue, then some creatures to populate your own dungeons in the other articles, and another installment of the Mappers of Mystara by Thorf. Wonderful illustrator Jeffrey Kosh provided again some great images for this issue, starting from the cover, and some more great ones were made by Senarch, as the one you can see just above!

All this can be found only in this latest issue of our favorite magazine!

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