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CRAWL
CLASSICS**

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Mutant Crawl Classics Role Playing game.

THE BANE OF THE ANCIENTS

A 0 or 1st-LEVEL ADVENTURE
BY MARTIN BUINICKI



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THE BANE OF THE ANCIENTS

The Bane of the Ancients is a Mutant Crawl Classics-compatible module for 12-15 0-level player characters or for 4-6 1st-level characters. To get the most out of the adventure, every party should have at least some pure-strain humans and plantients.

When the people of Solace learn that a murderous zombie-like horde is laying waste to surrounding villages, a bold party agrees to venture deep into the Slouismo Fen, where legend has it an ancient temple holds a powerful relic known only as the “Bane of the Ancients.” What they don’t know is that they were not the first to search for this forgotten weapon. In fact, another tribe’s search party reached the temple—actually an ancient agro-chemical laboratory—only to set loose the very plague now savaging the land.

The sands of time have played tricks with history. The “Bane of the Ancients” is not a weapon to wield against the mad marauders, but a virulent plant-born infection that turns people into the same soulless monsters the villagers hope to defeat. Will the players learn the truth and find a real cure before Solace is destroyed?

ENCOUNTER TABLE

AREA	TYPE	ENCOUNTER
1.A Into the Fen	C	Fungal Slayers (2)
1.B Natural Hazards	C	No See ‘Ems
1.B Natural Hazards	T	Misled by Will o’ Wisps
1.B Natural Hazards	C	Carniverous Aropidopdus (2)
1.B Natural Hazards	T	Savaging Quicksand
1.B Natural Hazards	C	Fen Gator
1.C Outskirts of Ancient Temple	T	Herbicides (for plantients)
II.A Those Who Came Before	C	Tillandsic Wolves (3)
II.B Searching the Labyrinth	T	Malfunctioning Charging Pad
II.D The Burial Chamber	T	No One Cleaned the Fridge
II.D The Burial Chamber	T	To Catch a Yogurt Thief
II.D The Burial Chamber	T	Can’t Eat Just One Snack Cake
III.B The Room of the Dead	C	Decontamination Bot
III.C The Lethal Garden	C	Perilous Pitcher Plant
III.D The Impossible Vine	T	Doom Drosera
III.D The Impossible Vine	C	Fungal Slayers (4)
III.E The Ancient Bane	T	Infected Spores
Conclusion I: A Fateful Flight	C	Battling the Horde

[C=Combat T=Trap]



INTRODUCTION: THE SURVIVORS FIND SOLACE

Your village, Solace, has always had to fight for its peace. Living in one of the few settlements on the edge of the Slouismo Fen, you have not only battled the elements, but also bands of nomads seeking easy plunder. These occasional bandits don't stay long, and you have come to see them akin to natural disasters—devastating, but a suffering to be borne like all of the other hardships of life.

But this morning, as traders and foragers put out their wares, a ragged, tired group of refugees stumbles into the village. A few carry the weight of sleeping children. All seem dazed, overcome by fear and exhaustion. You know that this time something is different.

A middle-aged human woman with tangled brown hair, her round face streaked with tears and blood, grabs the arm of the nearest villager. Her voice shakes with intensity. "Flee! Flee for your lives! They're coming!"

When players question the woman and the other survivors, they will learn the refugees come from a village just over a day's worth of hard travel away. In the middle of the night, they were awakened by screams of horror as doors were smashed and homes invaded. These were no ordinary raiders, however, but mindless killers—men, women, and even children, falling on anyone in sight, ripping apart their victims' flesh. As these innocents suffered, the injured rose up and joined the ranks of their attackers. No defense was possible against the quickly swelling horde. Those who could escape fled into the night. These few stragglers found each other in the darkness and set off toward the flickering dawn. They have been walking ever since, almost 24 hours.

Now they have come to Solace for aid and to share their warning.

PCs will learn little else that is useful. The woman's name is Marta Hencare. Her husband fought hard to defend her, only to turn and attack her moments after he was injured. She breaks down in grief telling her story.

If the PCs ask for more detail about the attackers, some survivors volunteer that their assailants were of all races and ages, but many seemed to be plantients. They carried no weapons, but they were unnaturally strong, able to rend flesh with ease. No one knows for sure, but the refugees think there may have been as many as sixty attackers, vastly outnumbering their small village. They note ominously that their

ranks will now have grown with the addition of their own friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

After the players have had a chance to ask a few questions, read the following:

The survivors' story spreads like wildfire through Solace, and soon the entire village has gathered, voices raised in worry and fear. The refugees are certain the horde is coming behind them. Suddenly Old Twiglegs, a female Plantient whose arms and legs taper into thin reeds, who has lived in Solace as long as anyone can remember, pipes up in a shrill voice. "Listen, everyone! This happened once before, long ago!" A hush falls over the crowd. "My old granny told me! She said that people were infected with madness, cutting down all in their path, until a few brave souls ventured deep into the fen to bring back... the Bane of the Ancients."

Other old timers begin nodding their heads vigorously. "That's right! I remember the stories! The Bane! That's what we need! Someone must go and find it before it's too late!" Experienced Seekers laugh at the idea, but other worried villagers look to and fro before their eyes rest on you, who were preparing to undergo your Rite of Passage journey in the Taboo Lands.

Note: if PCs are first level, then you can replace this last line with "Worried villagers look to and fro before all eyes rest on you, the newest Seekers in Solace."

Old Twiglegs is delighted to be the center of attention, and she relishes telling her grandmother's story. She doesn't know how her ancestors learned where the Bane was hidden, but she is adamant that it was discovered and used to turn back a similar invasion. When asked where it might be found, she will respond:

"It's deep in the fen! I heard it was inside an ancient pyramid standing in the middle of a dead lake. Just follow the sun to where it disappears and you'll come to the lake! But you have to hurry!"

Old Seekers from the village know that no one has ever travelled more than a couple of hours into the fen in that direction for fear of getting hopelessly lost—or worse. To journey so far and return is unheard of. Many scoff at running off in pursuit of a legend, and the adults are determined to stay in Solace and fight off the horde should it come. But the chorus will swell until many echo the old-timers: a party must make an attempt to find and secure the Bane and return before it is too late, while the strongest tribespeople must stay behind to defend Solace.

Some of Solace's elders will offer prized possessions to aid the party—a rare honor. The Judge may modify this list at their discretion, but items could include the following: one force baton with 3 charges (**MCC Core Rulebook** p. 174), one zapper glove with 2 charges (p. 175), and one bubble helmet (p. 175).

Note to Judges: Be sure players are familiar with the MCC Artifact Check rules and the consequences for doing poorly! This becomes extremely important near the end of the adventure. For 1st-level adventurers, consider skipping the awarding of artifacts since Seekers will likely already possess artifacts or abilities to help them in the early going.

I. INTO THE FEN

Part rainforest, part swamp, the Fen stretches for hundreds of miles into the Taboo lands, its dense vegetation home to a bizarre menagerie of creatures. Villages like Solace dot its borders, harvesting resources, but no one has ever been known to cross it and live to tell the tale. PCs will need both skill and luck to survive their journey.

Assuming the villagers leave during daylight hours, their travels should be fairly simple for the first hour or so. After all, the land within a couple of miles of Solace is familiar to those who hunt and gather there. Still, for many of the party, this may be their first trip into the depths of the fen.

It isn't long before the thick canopy blocks much of the morning sunlight, adding to the sense of foreboding already hanging over your desperate mission. The massive trees are full of sounds—bird calls, the rustling of leaves and creaking of branches, and a strangely loud clicking noise you assume comes from unseen insects. The air is thick and moist, and the rich, damp smell of vegetation and sodden earth fills your nostrils. For a time, some of you walk with confident, practiced steps, but all too soon the familiar tracks and sights fall away as you enter the unknown depths of the Fen.

A. CARRIERS

See encounter cards on page 23.

This encounter with unfortunate refugees will be the PCs' first direct contact with the fungal infection. One of the clues here is that the infection is not always immediate, so PCs who take damage and fail their save by less than 5 may suspect they are carriers. Rather than informing a PC they have "made" or "failed" on a save, simply note the result to yourself and say something like "nothing happens."

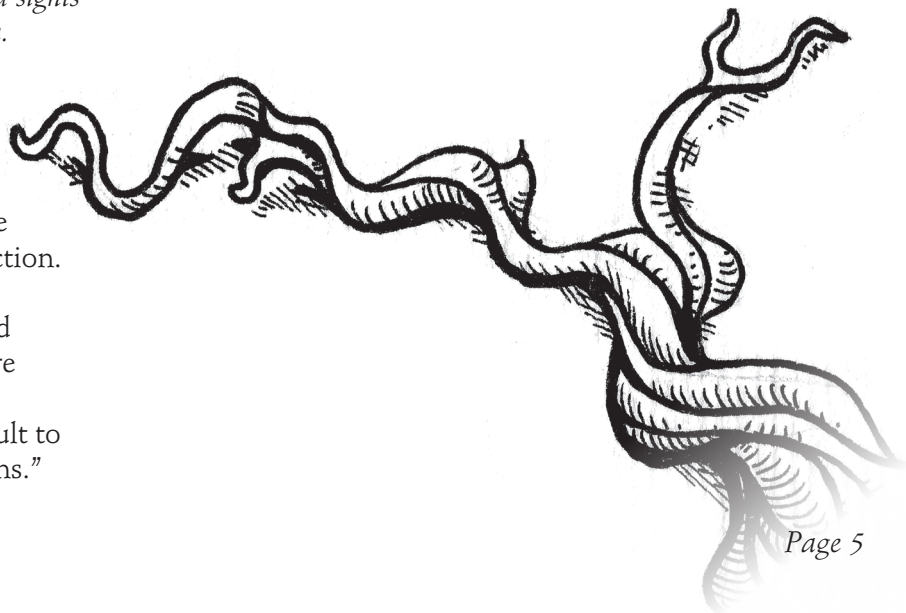
After almost three hours of pushing your way through the dense foliage, you are startled by voices crying, "Wait! Help us!" You spot a human and a Manimal with the head of a jaguar stumbling towards you through the leaves and vines. "We got lost! We've been walking for hours!" As they reach you, you see thick blood oozing from wounds in their arms and legs.

The PCs may decide to try to help these survivors. They were wounded during the attack of the horde and fled the other village, but got separated from the band of refugees. They will not have long to talk before they succumb to the infection.

Suddenly both begin choking and coughing. They drop to their hands and knees, vomiting up some kind of thick yellow mucus that clings to their shaking bodies. Less than a minute later, they stumble to their feet and rush toward you, their grasping fingers curling into claws, their necks and chests covered with dense yellow fungus.

FUNGAL SLAYERS (2): Init +2; Atk slam +0 melee (1d4) **and** +1 bite (chance of infection); AC 12; HD 1d12; 11 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP bite infection **DC 12 Fortitude**. Players missing save by **5 or more** will immediately turn murderous as per "The Throne Room" on page 15. Track those PCs who **fail by less than 5**: they will transform during the Grim Coda (page 22) SV Fort +3; Reflex +2; Will -1.

Note to Judge: If running this adventure for a party of 1st-level characters, use this encounter to gauge the relative strength of PCs so you may adjust later encounters accordingly. Since these victims are newly infected, it is fine if they seem a bit weaker than those slayers the PCs face later. If the encounter is insufficiently challenging, consider boosting to-hit modifiers and damage rolls for other foes.



B. NATURAL HAZARDS

See encounter cards on page 23.

The further you go into the Fen, the stranger the landscape becomes. The air itself seems laden with danger.

There are a number of natural hazards the PCs must survive to reach the ancient temple; full descriptions are found below the following table. The Judge should plan on making 3 checks before the party reaches its destination: 4 if the party follows the Will o' Wisps. One player makes the roll for the entire party; however, for each hunter in the group with Intelligence of 12 or higher, add a +1 for a maximum total of +3. Each result can only happen once: move to the next highest item on table if necessary.

- 1-4* Attacked by No-See-Ems
- 5-7 Miled by Will o' Wisps; additional hazard roll at -3.
- 8-11 Carnivorous Arabidopsis Thaliana
- 12-14 Savaging Quicksand
- 15-16 Pouring Rain: -3 on next hazard roll or possible additional hazard roll
- 17 Pleasant Conditions
- 18 Discover a game track; +1 next roll
- 19-20 Overrun camp; roll for items and possible attack by Fen Gator

* Or a roll of 1 no matter the bonus.

ATTACKED BY NO-SEE-EMS

See encounter cards on page 23.

The Fen is crowded with insects—crawling, flying, clinging to leaves and branches. Most are harmless, but of those that fall into the other category, the worst of the worst are the No-See-Ems. These winged insects feed on flesh, and, as their name implies, are literally invisible. Some believe they may not fully inhabit this plane, while others believe they simply have incredibly effective camouflage. Whatever the reason, their invisibility makes them one of the deadliest hazards of the fen.

With no warning, the air is filled with tiny insects. They swarm around you, getting under your clothing and crawling into your nose, ears, and other orifices. And they bite—hard!

No-See-Ems (Swarm): Init +3; Atk bite +3 melee (1 hp); AC 11; HD 2d6; 8 hp; MV 35' flying; Act 1d20 SP 50% miss chance for any attack that does not have an area of effect; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0. They will follow their prey for 60' if the party runs.

MILED BY WILL O' WISPS

Like many swamps, the Fen is home to strange apparitions that appear to float through the trees, beckoning travelers to follow them. Are they tricks the eyes play due to the strain of peering through the gloom, or something more malevolent? For those unfortunates encountering these phantoms in the Fen, it's the latter.

Floating in the branches, luminous, translucent beings beckon to you, offering to lead you safely on your way. Their call is strangely soothing and compelling. Who wouldn't follow these blissful beings wherever they lead?

The Will o' Wisps are manifestations of the centuries of mutation and corruption that helped give birth to the Fen, and they exist only to lead travellers to their inevitable doom. **To resist their allure, all PCs must make DC 10 Will saves.** Those who fail will begin following the wisps, convinced it is the only way to get through the Fen safely. They will try to persuade the others to join them, but they will insist on going, even alone, unless restrained. The effect will wear off after an hour, but during that time affected PCs will work tirelessly to follow the wisps.

If the party wanders into the Fen following the wisps, be sure to **add** a roll on the Natural Hazards table with a -3 on the result. If a single PC or small group of PCs follows the wisps, they will be led directly into a swarm of No-See-Ems. To minimize splitting the party, this could happen within shouting range of the main group.

CARNIVOROUS ARABIDOPSIS THALIANA

See encounter cards on page 23.

These flowering plants grow close to the ground and seem like common groundcover. However, unhappy travellers who step into a patch of these short plants soon discover the terrifying truth: the bulk of the plant lies coiled just underground. The stems and stalks spring into motion like snakes, hooking and entangling their prey and dragging explorers to the ground where the flower buds reveal multiple rows of small, needle-like teeth that sink into flesh and begin to suck blood and moisture from their victims.

After the first four PCs enter the plants, the vines will attack and attempt to trip them.

The plants beneath your feet suddenly spring to life, writhing around your ankles like snakes. To your horror, you see the small white flowers have mouths filled with rows of small, needle-like teeth.

CARNIVEROUS ARABIDOPSIS THALIANA (2):

Init +1; Atk vines +3 melee (1d4 and automatic trip attempt). AC 10; HD 1d8; 6 hp; MV 0; Act 1d20; SP successful vine attacks lead to automatic trip attempts, **DC 10 Reflex** save or PC falls prone. Only tripped PCs are vulnerable to bite attacks. If tripped, bite +2 melee (1d4); SV Fort +1; Reflex +0; Will +0.

SAVAGING QUICKSAND

See encounter cards on page 23.

Average quicksand represents a passive hazard, a combination of just the right proportion of fine sand or soil and moisture, forming what appears to be solid earth but what is in fact a trap that will collapse beneath a person's feet, sucking the unfortunate traveller below.

Nothing is passive in the Fen, however, and savaging quicksand is not content to sit and wait. Pulsing with the corrupted forces at the root of the Fen, this sand will erupt from the ground and attempt to swallow anyone who passes within 5' feet of its territory.

The earth itself surges ten feet into the air, seeming to take on a life of its own as it comes crashing down upon you.

SAVAGING QUICKSAND: DC 18 Intelligence check to spot the quicksand. DC 12 Reflex save to avoid the sand's attack (1d3 Slam damage); **DC 12 Strength** check to resist being engulfed and pulled under. PCs who fail to break free take 1d3 damage per round. **DC 12 Strength** check to pull the PC free.

POURING RAIN

When it rains in the Fen, it pours.

Suddenly unseen storm clouds unleash their fury! The water falls in sheets, pummeling the leaves and falling to earth with the force of stones.

The rain immediately reduces visibility, and the party will take a -3 on their next hazard check roll. The rain lasts an hour; if the PCs wait out the rain, then **add** an additional hazard check.

PLEASANT CONDITIONS

Even the Fen has occasional stretches of nice weather, and this is one of them.

Sunlight filters through the tree branches, lighting your way, and a breeze keeps the insects from pestering you. For an hour, there are no dangers.

DISCOVER A GAME TRACK

Over many years, countless creatures have made their way through the undergrowth of the Fen. Some of these took the same routes time and time again, wearing a trail in the rich soil. The party stumbles upon one of these tracks, and, while it may meander, it also steers clear of many of the worst dangers. Because the party is able to follow this trail, the PCs gain a +1 on their next hazard role.

The hunters in your party spot a small track in the undergrowth, signs of the regular safe passage of unknown animals. For a while, at least, your travel eases.

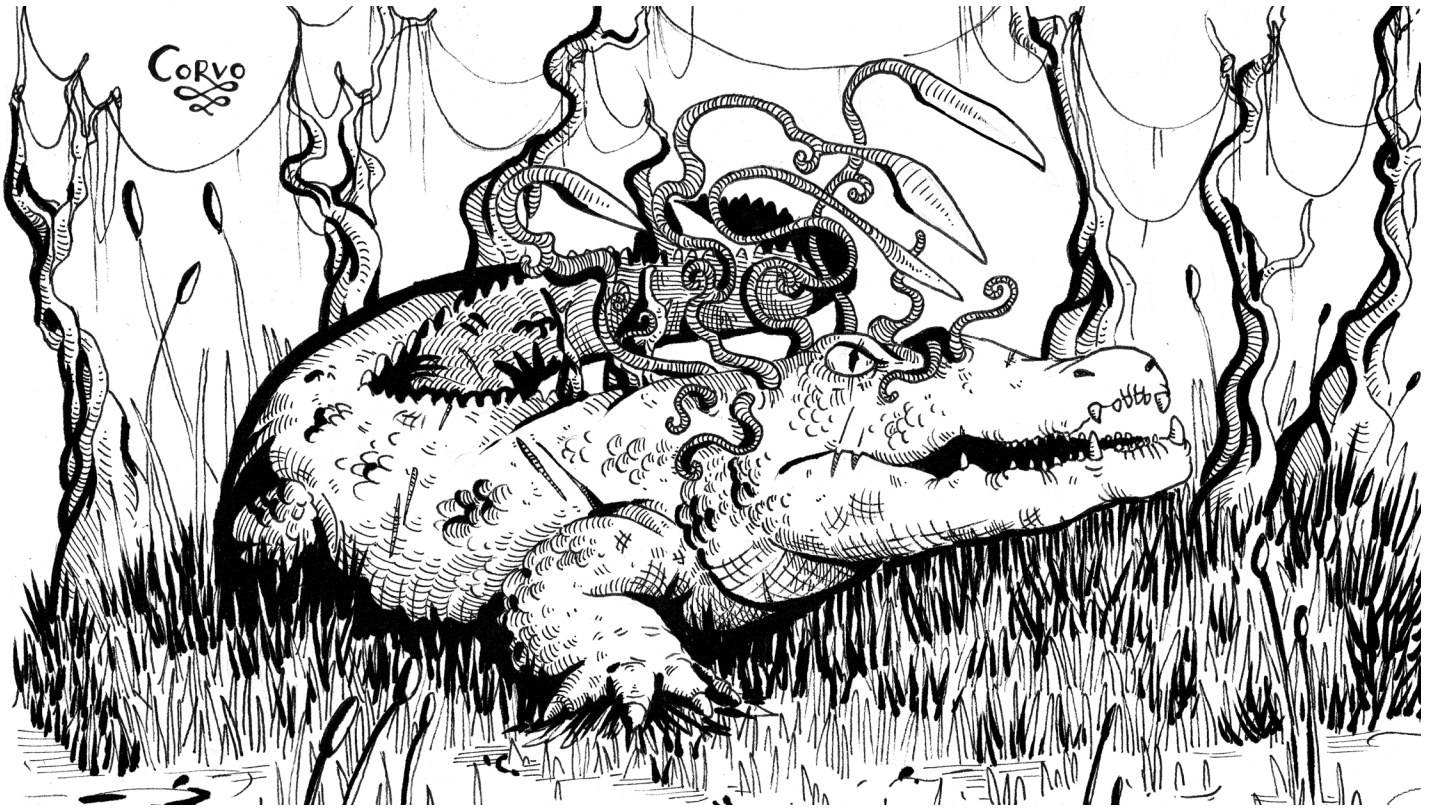
OVERRUN CAMP

The PCs suddenly find a campsite. It appears as if the former occupants were quickly overrun and carried away, as there are obvious signs of struggle and many of their supplies left behind.

You are amazed to discover you are not the first to penetrate this far into the Fen. Before you are the remains of a large campsite. No one seems to be about, but the slashed tents and scattered belongings suggest the former occupants did not enjoy a pleasant stay.

There are 1d4 flint daggers, 2 leather sacks, 50' of hemp rope and 6 torches. Additionally, have players roll a d6 to determine the following items (**each player rolls once** for all of their characters). Items will not repeat. Artifact checks apply unless the PCs gained one of these devices from Solace:

- 1 A single C-cell battery. (See **MCC Core** rulebook p. 182.) Apparently its previous owner did not know its true use, as it has a cord tied around it as if worn as a necklace.
- 2 A thin, steel dagger with serrated edge, fashioned by the Ancient Ones. 1d6 melee.
- 3 A flexible sheet of metal adorned with a holy symbol of the Ancient Ones—a large orange triangle. Its previous owner affixed leather straps to it, allowing it to be worn as an uncomfortable breastplate, granting +1 to AC.



- 4 A zapper glove. (See **MCC Core** rulebook p. 175.) It has 2 remaining charges (unknown to players).
- 5 A cureshot. (See **MCC Core** rulebook p. 177) This can be used to cure the fungal slayer infection as per the artifact description.
- 6 A dazer pistol with 3 charges (unknown to players). (See **MCC Core** rulebook p. 172.)

There is a 50% chance that the Fen Gator that slayed the campers is still in the area, either because it lives nearby or frequently hunts this territory. Make this roll in secret: on a 50% or higher, it attacks immediately after the players have made their search rolls.

Note that this means PCs will need to make Artifact checks in combat.

The Fen Gator will automatically attack should the PCs spend 30 minutes trying to learn how to use the artifacts.

FEN GATOR

See encounter cards on page 23.

An enormous alligator, twelve feet long, comes crashing out of the tangled vegetation of the Fen. Its weathered, green hide looks like armor, and several tendrils sprout from its head, their ends coming to sharp points. These tendrils float above the gator's head like poised spears.

FEN GATOR Init +2; Atk Tendrils (2) +2 melee (1d4); bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 2d10; 16 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1; Reflex +0; Will +0.

C. THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ANCIENT TEMPLE OF MONSA_TO

As the PCs approach the ancient agro-chemical plant, they will notice the signs of the centuries-old corruption. Read the following description. If players choose to investigate the plants closely, note that the roots of the trees and other foliage bear ugly yellow striations.

The further you penetrate into the Fen, the more dense and malignant the vegetation grows. The plantients among you note something fundamentally strange about the flora here, some kind of unnatural corruption pervading the greenery. Pushing your way through the foliage, you hear a strange fluttering sound coming from somewhere nearby, like a flock of birds.

As the players near the source of the noise, they will find the mutated results of a genetic experiment:

In the clearing before you stands a cluster of what look like overgrown tomato plants, nearly six feet high. Their bright red fruit are as large as human heads. The source of the flapping sound is readily apparent: the tomatoes have flippers, tails, and gills that open and close as they lash about on their vines.

The tomatoes are harmless and will serve as an excellent food source if killed and eaten.

Once the players have traveled most of a day (8-10 hours) and made 3-4 checks, they will be near their destination.

As dusk approaches, you spy a break in the trees. Soon you see it is not so much a clearing in the vegetation as it is a complete vanishing. Above you the dim rays of the setting sun provide a pink contrast to the ever-present white bands in the sky, now clearly visible in the absence of tree cover. Before you stands what looks like a lake of smooth grey stone, its surface marked with strange painted lines that could only come from the Ancient Ones. It is as if all life has been extinguished here. In the distance, roughly 700 feet to the north, however, you see what appears to be a line of thick vegetation leading from the Fen and stretching 500 feet straight across the lake to four beams leaning in on one another, meeting at the top to form a pyramid shape in the center.

The scientists working here developed herbicides so effective that not only did weeds never grow in the parking lots, nothing ever could or would. However, as the PCs have already begun to learn, some experimental hybrids thrived and escaped. As countless centuries went by, the

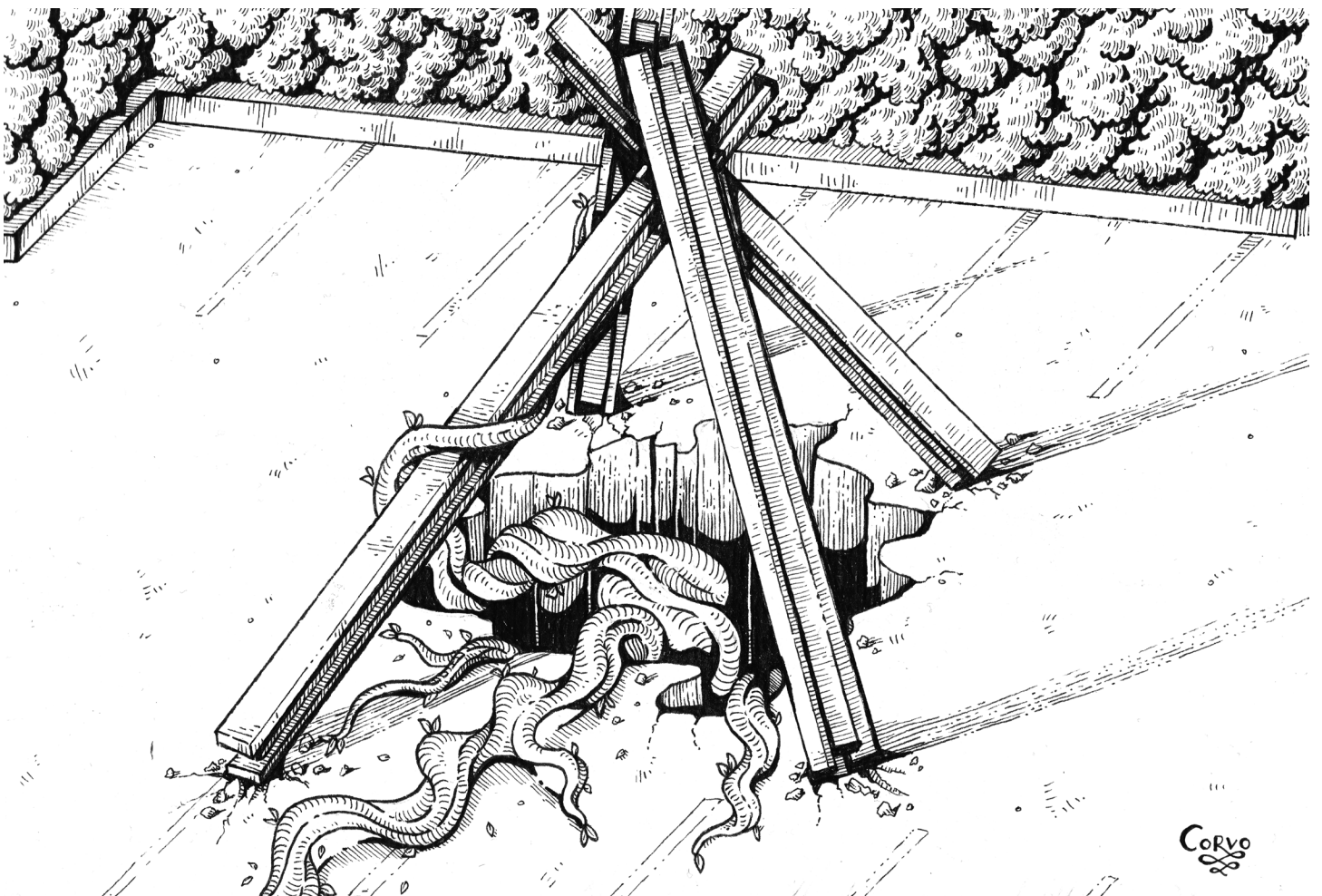
Fen grew from the plants that breached the compound. But the true danger lurks within.

If players venture directly across the parking lot, **plantient characters** will need to make two Fortitude saves of escalating difficulty before reaching the overgrown entrance to the facility; The first is a **Fortitude DC 12**. Plantients failing this save lose 1d3 hitpoints and permanently lose one point of Constitution. The second save is **Fortitude DC 15**. Plantients who failed the first save and fail this save as well lose 1d8 hit points. If this is the first save they fail, they lose 1d4 hit points. If the PCs travel along the green route, plantients will not need to make these saves.

D. THE GREEN WAY

The Green Way is the only safe avenue for plantients to cross the toxic parking lot.

A ten-foot wide, five-foot tall braid of vines and branches erupts from the soil and runs from the Fen to the pyramid at the center of the lake, where the vines plunge downward. An assortment of ferns and other plants and trees have taken root in the tangle, creating a strange elevated avenue of thick vegetation.



Players can climb onto the thick strand of vines with relative ease. Movement will be difficult, however, and their speed will be cut in half as they climb under and over obstacles.

Attempts to ease their passage by force yield the following results: if PCs chop or hack their way through the tangle, they feel a noticeable tremor beneath them. More violent measures, particularly using fire or an Ancient weapon, bring more violent responses. The entire leafy expanse suddenly twists violently. PCs must make a **DC 10 Reflex** save to avoid being thrown from the greenway and taking **1d3 falling damage**. Players who miss this save by 5 or more take an additional **1d3** points of damage as they are crushed beneath and between limbs of trees.

E. THE GREEN DESCENT

In the center of the stone lake stand four metal pillars roughly 20-feet apart in a square pattern and leaning inward to meet in an apex a full eighty feet above you. As you approach, you can see that the vines disappear down into a deep, dark shaft in the center of the square. The air near the temple is damp and rank.

An elevator shaft descends 35 feet below ground before further movement downward is blocked. There are ample handholds for climbing, and players need only make a single **DC 5 Strength** check. If they are carrying torches or anything else that might impede them from using both hands, this check may increase to a **DC 8**. Use of a rope can reduce this check. As outlined above, if PCs inflict damage upon the plants, say by driving spikes into the vines, they will need to make a **DC 12 Reflex** save as the vines shake. Players who fail either the Strength check or Reflex save take 2d6 falling damage.



II. THE LABYRINTH

The elevator shaft leads to a large cubicle farm, now completely overrun by plant-life. Still, there is a multitude of treasures from the Ancient Ones to be found; unfortunately, danger lurks here as well.

As you descend into the moist darkness, the vines become tougher—ropey and bare. After about thirty-five feet, you suddenly emerge into a large, low-ceilinged cavern. The vines continue downward, but below you they expand and completely fill the shaft in the cavern floor, blocking any further movement down the shaft. The cave itself is like nothing you've ever seen: it appears to be filled by an enormous maze of pale green moss, lichen, and yellowish nettles. You can see over the thin green walls that stand no more than five feet high, and you spot several identical openings in the maze. The ceiling is surprisingly smooth and regular, and a dim glow comes from some mysterious source in the cavern's corners. This was clearly some strange underground dwelling place of the Ancient Ones.

A. THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE

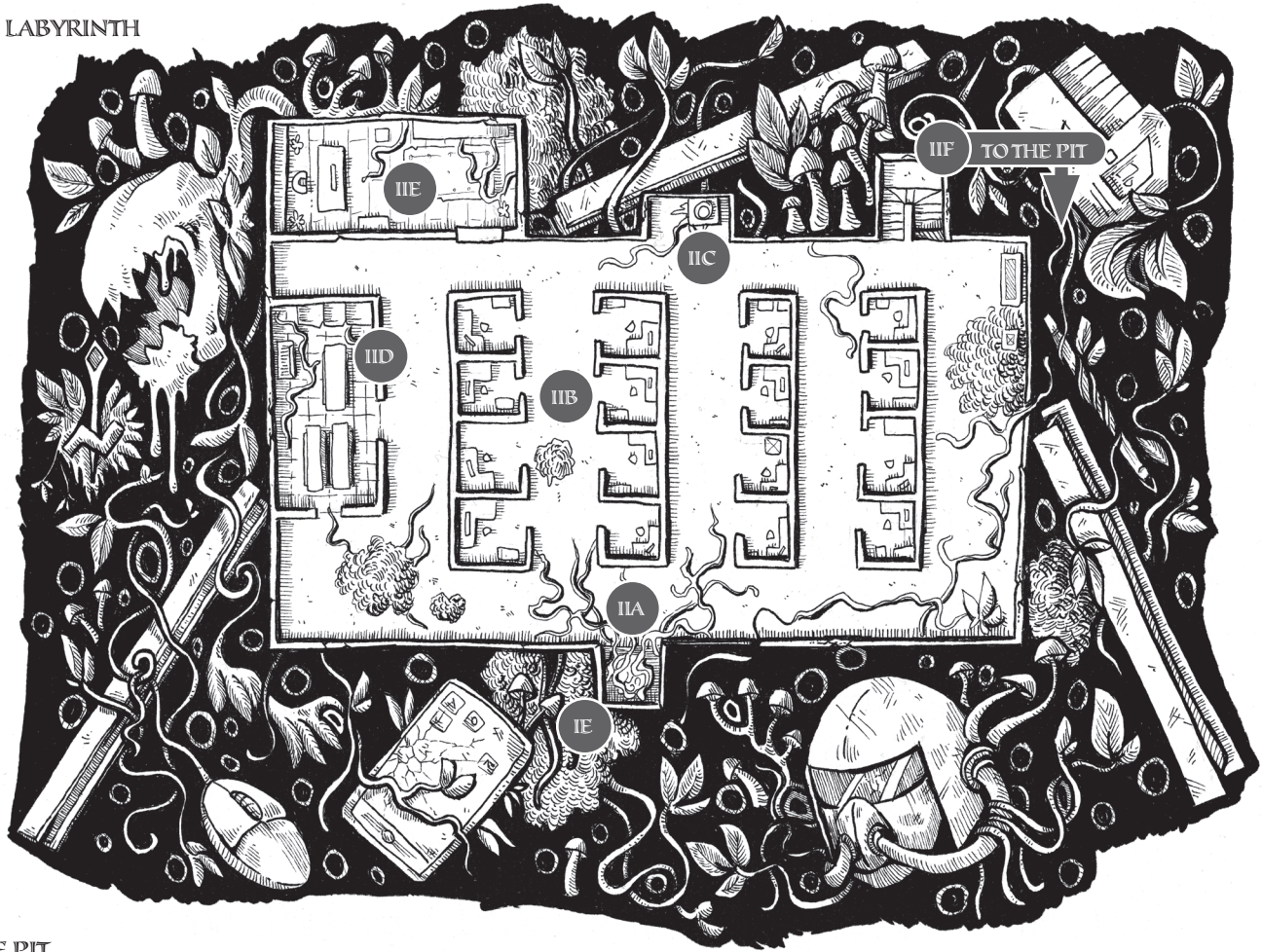
See encounter cards on page 23.

As you enter the labyrinth, you see three desiccated bodies lying on the floor. Moss and grotesque brown mushrooms have begun to cover their remains. You can see broken spears and clubs lying beside them, and the cruel tears in their flesh make it clear their deaths were violent ones.

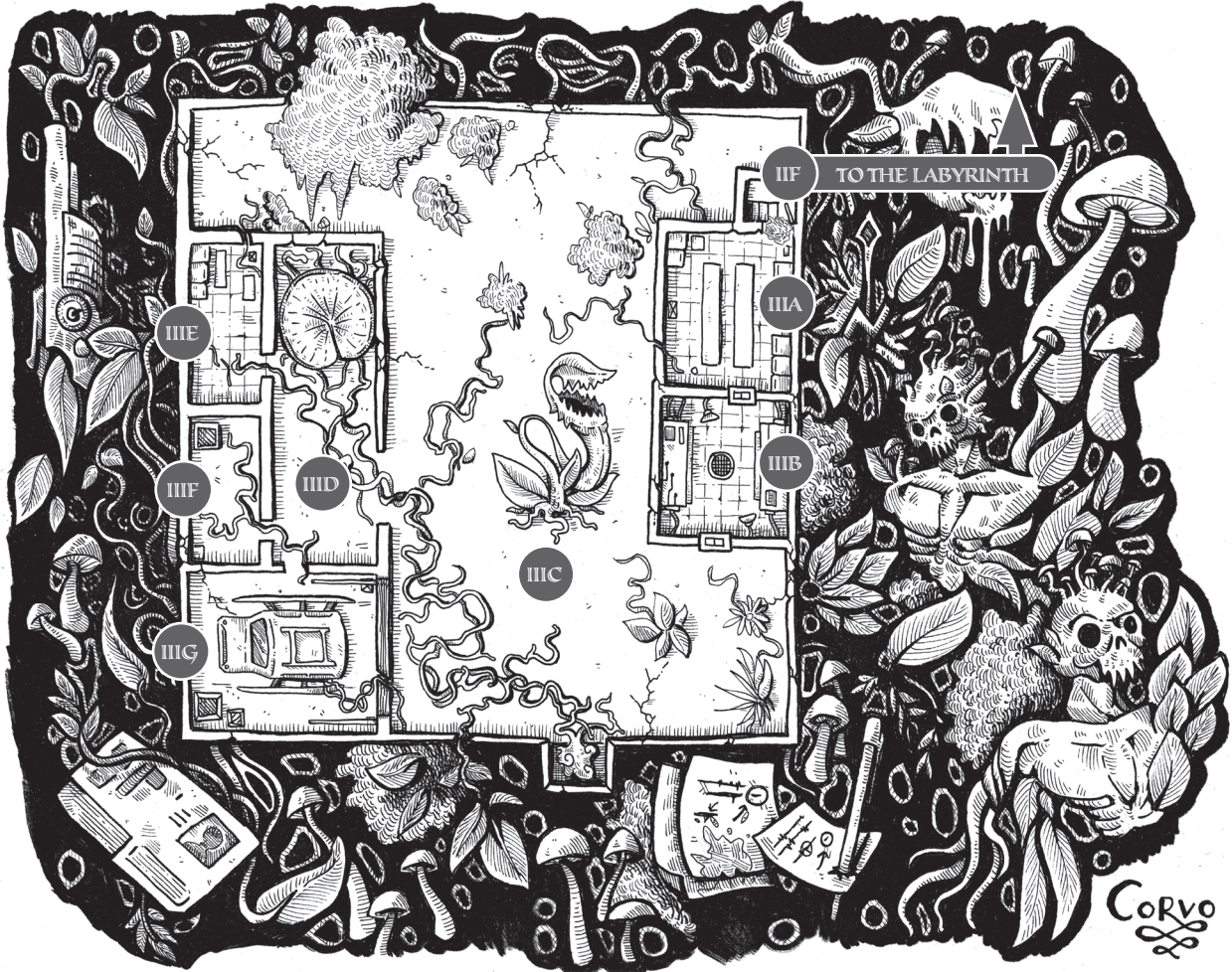
Old Twiglegs is not the only one who remembered the legends of the Bane of the Ancients. When an unfortunate party of Seekers became infected by the spores and returned to their own village as murderous zombies, their elders also sent a group to the temple to find the Bane and bring it back to the village. The three bodies lying here were part of that expedition; unfortunately, those who survived succeeded only in bringing back an even more virulent form of the infection. Their village was quickly overrun, and the victims of the infected then attacked their neighbors. Those who could, fled to Solace.

These poor souls ran into a different hazard. Over the course of centuries, the genetically engineered pollen and seeds that led to the mutated plant life outside of the facility also affected the potted plants kept in the cubicles. In particular, the descendants of three air plants that the receptionist kept on her desk have grown to the size of wolves and become mobile. Their long, barbed tendrils now propel them across the floor, allowing them to move with astonishing speed. While they do not have mouths or eyes, hair-like

II. THE LABYRINTH



III. THE PIT



CORVO

filaments allow them to detect movement, and they will fasten themselves to any living creatures, sucking the moisture from their bodies. They will attack the PCs within three rounds of entering the Labyrinth. DC 12 Intelligence check to hear them approaching and prepare; otherwise, the wolves get a surprise attack.

With a faint whispering sound, three plants roughly the size of wolves come running around the corner with incredible speed. Their bodies seem to be nothing more than masses of barbed tendrils sprouting from central rootballs. Some tendrils propel them across the ground, while others swing around, as if sniffing the air. They charge right at you.

TILLANDSIC WOLVES (3): Init +4; Atk slam (1) +1 melee (1d3+grapple); AC 12; HD 2d8; 12 hp; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP Wolves get +3 on grapple check rolls, and grappled PCs will suffer 1d3 Constitution damage per round as the air plant sucks the moisture from their body. SV Fort +1; Reflex +2; Will +0.

There are 1d4 usable stone daggers available on the corpses.

B. SEARCHING THE LABYRINTH

The labyrinth is comprised not of random turns and dead ends, but instead a series of small chambers on the left and right of long corridors that run the length of the cavern. Each small room is roughly ten foot square, and each has a hulking metal table almost overgrown with yellowish lichen.

Use the table below if the PCs choose to search the cubicles. Because of the ravages of time and plant growth, make sure players understand that searching is time consuming—about ten minutes per cubicle. One player rolls once for each cubicle entered, a maximum of eight times. If you choose, you can select the next nearest result to avoid duplications on a roll.

If players choose to search all eight times, placing their greed above the urgency of their mission, then they will fail to reach Solace in time. Even if they find and operate the hover car, read Conclusion II (page 22).

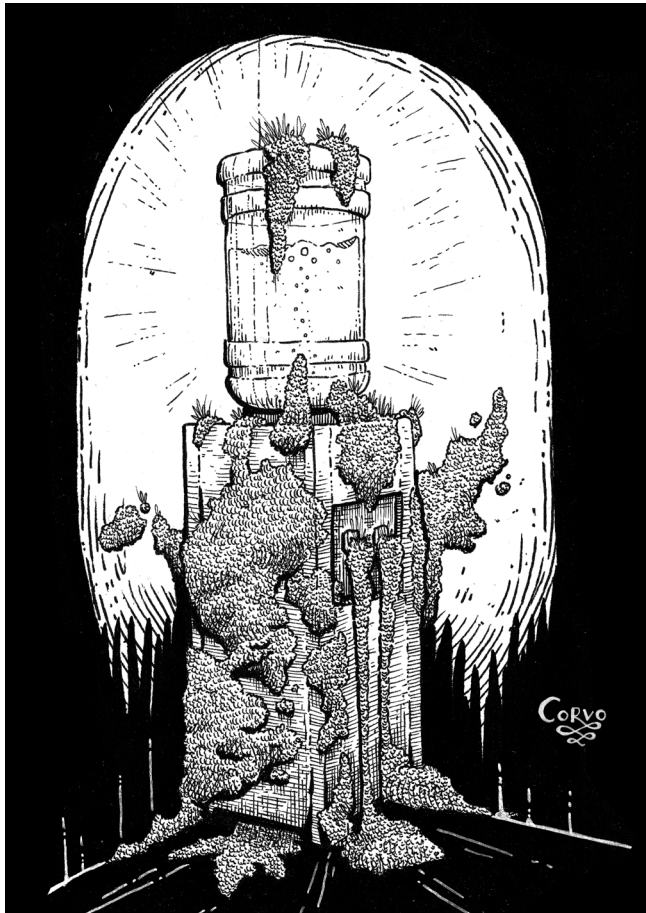
STEALING OFFICE SUPPLIES

- 1 A small electrified rectangle [Malfunctioning charging pad.] **DC 12 Reflex** save or d4 shocking damage.
- 2-4 A small humanoid doll with an oversized head that bobbles on its neck.
- 5-6 A small hard cube that when touched suddenly emits a voice: "Hey, Marc, we've been having some problems with your reports, so we're really gonna need you to come in this weekend. Sorry about that!"
- 7-9 A small red device about 5 inches long, folded over with a hinge in the middle. Two small sharp metal points protrude from one half. When the two halves are squeezed together, the metal points are folded and expelled. [Stapler]
- 10-11 A hard clear box with several small pieces of fine metal bent into overlapping oval loops. [Paper clips]
- 12-13 A cup containing twelve hard six-inch reeds. Each contains a black liquid that seeps from its pointed end, staining any surface where it is applied. [Pens]
- 13-14 A small orange orb made of some kind of spongy material. [Stress ball]
- 15-16 Two small pods containing brown powder. +1 Agility for one turn (ten minutes) if consumed. [Coffee pods]
- 17-18 A tapered metal pail roughly 16 inches tall. If PCs attach a cord of some sort so that it may be worn on the head, it provides a +1 to AC. [Waste basket]
- 19-20 Small metal can containing strange-smelling liquid; +1 agility for one hour. [Energy drink]



C. THE WATER SHRINE

Standing against the wall in this room of the labyrinth is some type of Ancient shrine. On top of a three-foot-tall moss-covered pedestal is a transparent vessel filled with an almost neon-green liquid. There appears to be some type of stubby open tube with a small handle attached to it protruding slightly from the pedestal. One can almost imagine the Ancients gathering before this altar to perform rituals or share sacred stories.



The once-purified water in this ancient water cooler now bears little resemblance to its original form. However, over the years it has gained incredible properties, as those who dare to drink it will discover. There is enough water for each player to roll at least once (so each choosing a single one of their PCs to take a drink), but depending on the number of PCs, the Judge may modify this to allow each willing PC a drink. After the first effect, the body adapts and further consumption has no effect. If you choose, you can select the next nearest result to avoid duplications on a roll. Have all PCs who consume the liquid roll a **d12** on the following table:

AQUOVEENA TABLE

- 1 Your body violently rejects the water and you begin convulsing. DC 12 Fortitude save or lose 1 hit point.
- 2–3 Strange three-inch long antennae sprout from forehead, but no other effect.
- 4 PC's eyes turn yellow and begin glowing; gain +1 on checks to spot things.
- 5 PC grows vestigial wings; PC may avoid up to 5 points of falling damage.
- 6 PC instantly grows an extra limb. Roll a d6: on a 1-5, it is an extra leg, giving the PC a -10' on movement for one day until PC learns to adapt. After that day, +10' movement. On a six, the extra limb is a small extra arm: while it is too weak to add an attack, it can hold and carry light objects.
- 7 PC's ears quadruple in size: +1 on any listening checks.
- 8 PC's mouth elongates three inches. PC gains a d3 bite attack.
- 9 PC feels wave of energy wash over them and skin turns neon green. Regain 2 hitpoints or gain 2 temporary hitpoints.
- 10 Third-eye sprouts on forehead. +1 Intelligence.
- 11 Your skin cracks and grows scaly: +1 AC.
- 12 Your head changes shape, gaining a number of sharp geometric angles and edges: +2 Luck.

Note: PCs affected by the liquid do not change genotype in terms of game mechanics, but their altered appearance may lead to complications and misunderstandings in the future.

D. THE BURIAL CHAMBER

On the edge of the labyrinth, you spot a doorway leading to a large room. It contains several long, flat tables with attached benches, and standing perfectly upright against the walls are four metal boxes. Three boxes are arranged side by side on the north wall and seem precisely the right height and width to hold a human body; however, each also appears to have two doors—a smaller door above a larger one. Each door has a handle. Across the room is another metal box, but this one is slightly shorter and wider. It does not have a handle, and though it is also largely covered with moss, even from here you can see that its front is transparent. There is a faint lingering odor in the air that reminds you of burnt corn or cooking fish.

CORVO



The employee break-room contains three traps: two are potentially lethal, and the more dangerous one waits within the refrigerator on the far left.

Far-Left Refrigerator: NO ONE CLEANED THE FRIDGE TRAP: **DC 10 Reflex** Failure: 1d3 hp damage; DC 10 Fortitude or -1 on all rolls for one turn. [BOLD DC 10 Reflex and DC 10 Fortitude]

Over the centuries, the food rotting within has produced an explosive amount of toxic gasses. If a PC manages to break the seal of mold (**DC 8 Strength** check) the door flies open violently, sending foul splinters of glass and plastic food containers shooting into the room: all PCs in a five-foot radius of the door must make a **DC 10 Reflex** save or take 1d3 points of damage. Additionally, all PCs in the room must make a **DC 10 Fortitude** save or the sickening effect of the gas causes them a -1 on all rolls for one turn (ten minutes).

Center Refrigerator: The refrigerator in the center contains a few sealed glass containers, but their contents have decomposed to little more than a noxious smelling sludge. However, there is one white container with a distinctive bright pink lid. If it is touched in any way, it suddenly glows red and a loud woman's voice is heard coming from the container:

"STOP TAKING MY YOGURT, FRANK! I KNOW IT'S YOU! IF YOU DO IT AGAIN I AM GOING TO HR!"

If a PC attempts to open the container, have them make a **DC 20 Intelligence** check to see if they can find the trap mechanism. If they succeed, they find nothing but a disgusting purple goop. If they fail the Intelligence check, read the following:

As you pull up the lid of the container, a burst of red ink suddenly squirts you in the face and you hear the loud voice again. "GOT YOU, FRANK! THAT INK IS PERMANENT! NOW WE'LL SEE WHO'S LAUGHING AT THE OFFICE PARTY!"

Right Refrigerator: The refrigerator on the right contains a grim discovery. First, on the floor in front of it, beneath a layer of moss, are the glass shelves that were once inside the fridge (**DC 8 Intelligence** check to spot; otherwise, PCs are likely to step on them. There is no effect other than to break them.).

Inside the refrigerator, they will find the decaying body of a human being; it appears the person made a hopeless attempt to hide from the outbreak. It wears an ID badge around its neck. The badge can be used to open The Throne Room (the corner office).

A desiccated corpse is curled up inside the box. It wears a fine chain necklace with a rectangular medal pendant.

The Vending Machine: The vending machine appears more benign, as most of its contents have rotted away to dust. However, if players look inside, they see the following:

Inside the metal box you can see a number of rods from which hang strange small packages. On one rod in particular, the packages seem to contain bright yellow cylindrical cakes.

The taste of the artificially flavored and preserved snack cakes is like nothing the PCs have ever imagined. There are approximately 10 packages in the machine.

DC 10 Will save, or the PC who tries one will feel compelled to ravenously consume the rest. They will battle any PC who attempts to stop them, striking with potentially lethal force, and, if allowed to devour them all, take a -2 to their Agility for the next 1d10 turns.

CAN'T EAT JUST ONE SNACK CAKE TRAP:

DC 10 Will save. Failure: Devour all cakes and fight any who try to stop them; -2 Agility for 1d10 turns.

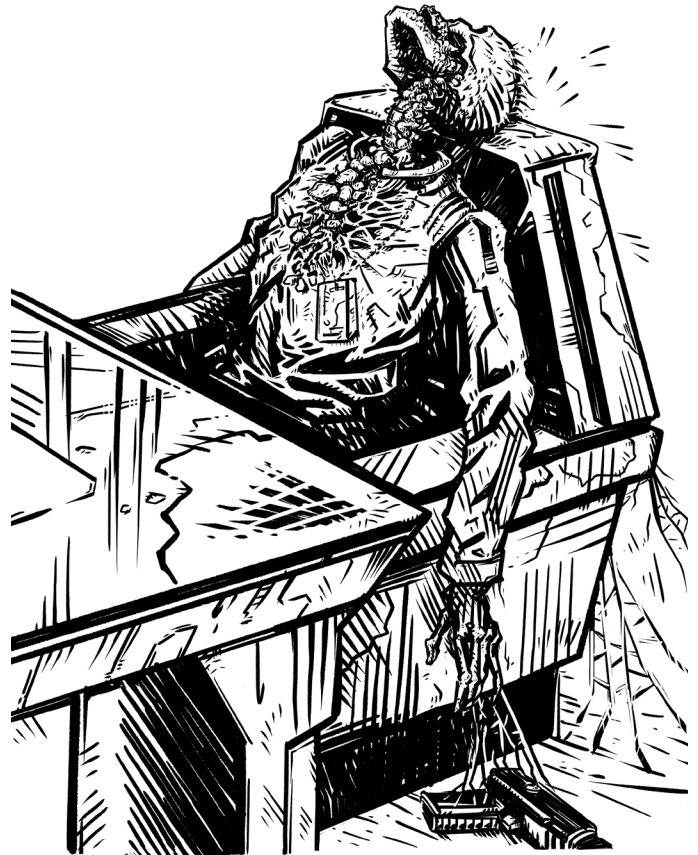
E. THE THRONE ROOM

In the corner of the cavern, outside of the labyrinth, stands a set of steel double doors. A small rectangular panel glows with a blue light on the wall beside them.

The doors to the corner office are barricaded from inside. It will take a **DC 10 Strength** check to force the doors open even after using the ID card. Attempting to open the doors without the card raises the Strength check to **DC 18**. If PCs use anything but an ID card on the panel, the blue light turns red but there is no other effect.

Forcing the doors open, you feel a whoosh of stale air escaping and find a heavy metal box with drawers had been jammed against them. The room is large, almost thirty-feet square, with some kind of large altar at the far end. Seated on a small throne just behind it is a skeletal form, its skull tilted backward on its neck at a grotesque angle. A bright yellow fungus has spread from its mouth to its chest. The corpse is wearing a fine chain necklace with a rectangular pendant.

Closer scrutiny will reveal a laser pistol lying on the floor next to the body, its battery dead. PCs investigating the body will see a hole in the back of the skull: this, along with the pistol, should be enough evidence for the PCs to put together the fact that the manager killed himself after barricading himself in the office. Around his neck the manager is wearing a lanyard with a metal passcard. This will grant access to all areas of the plant, most importantly the labs below and the hangar where PCs can find the crop-duster necessary to eradicate the horde approaching Solace.



Removing the card is extremely hazardous, however. If disturbed, the fungus emits toxic spores in a five-foot radius. **DC 12 Reflex** save to lift the chain carefully off of the body. Failure will send a cloud of spores into the air. **DC 12 Fortitude** save to resist the psychotic effects: these spores were produced in the lab centuries ago as part of an advanced agro-bioweapons project, and they turn those who are infected into bloodthirsty monsters. Their accidental release led to the ancient bloodbath here, and the discovery of this facility by Seekers a few weeks ago unleashed the “zombie” attack now threatening the village of Solace. Players who succeed on the Fortitude save are now immune to the spores’ effects.

PCs who fail the Fortitude save by 5 or more will become Fungal Slayers, turning on any uninfected sentient being within one minute, trying to bite or claw them to pieces. Those who fail by less than 5 are now carriers, and will transform sometime in the next 24 hours. Be sure to make a note of these PCs, but do not let them know they have failed.

At the last moment, just as the virus consumes their minds, the PCs may make a final DC 15 Will save. If they succeed, they may choose to end their own lives rather than turn into ravenous monsters. This was the choice made by the unfortunate manager here in the office.

Anyone bitten by an infected PC must make a **DC 12 Fortitude** save or become infected as above.

Note: If the PCs decide to search the office, you can use the Stealing Office Supplies table as appropriate, or feel free to improvise. Replace the voicemail on the result of a 5-6 with the following: *"Jim, can you talk with Marc? He just doesn't seem like a team player, and we need him on board. Things are really heating up in the lab this week, and we can't sit around waiting on his reports. This quarter is going to be yuuge! [laughter]"*

F. THE HOPELESS STAIR

In the northeast corner of the cavern is a pile of metal tables and sets of shelves stacked on one another, now forming a vague green mass under a coating of moss and fungus. They appear to have been pushed against a door at one time, although you can see a small space has been cleared more recently. Just to the left of the door, you see a glowing panel on the wall.

When it became clear that the outbreak in the lab below was causing people to turn on each other, the entire facility went on lockdown. The sole elevator rose to the top floor, barring exit from the building. Frantic employees barricaded the door leading to the stairway, not imagining that the danger could ascend the elevator shaft. The badge from the manager's office will unlock the door, or a **DC 12 Door Artifact check** or a **DC 15 Strength** check will force it open.

As the door swings open, the thick, cloying smell of rot and decay assaults your nostrils. You can see a lichen-covered staircase descending into darkness, but the steps immediately in front of you are clogged with some kind of debris. As you look more closely, you see several rectangular bits of metal on chains, just visible in a mound of some kind of rotting organic matter.

Should the players wish to investigate, they will find 1d8 ID cards identical to the one worn by the manager. (These work to open doors in the lab, but not the hangar.) On a **DC 12 Intelligence** check, PCs will be able to see evidence that others have passed this way in the not too distant past.

Darkness and the damp moss will make the stairs unpleasant to navigate, but, unless the PCs choose to run for some reason, they should be able to descend without difficulty (**DC 5 Reflex**). Those who fail fall prone and slide to the bottom of the steps, breaking one random piece of equipment.

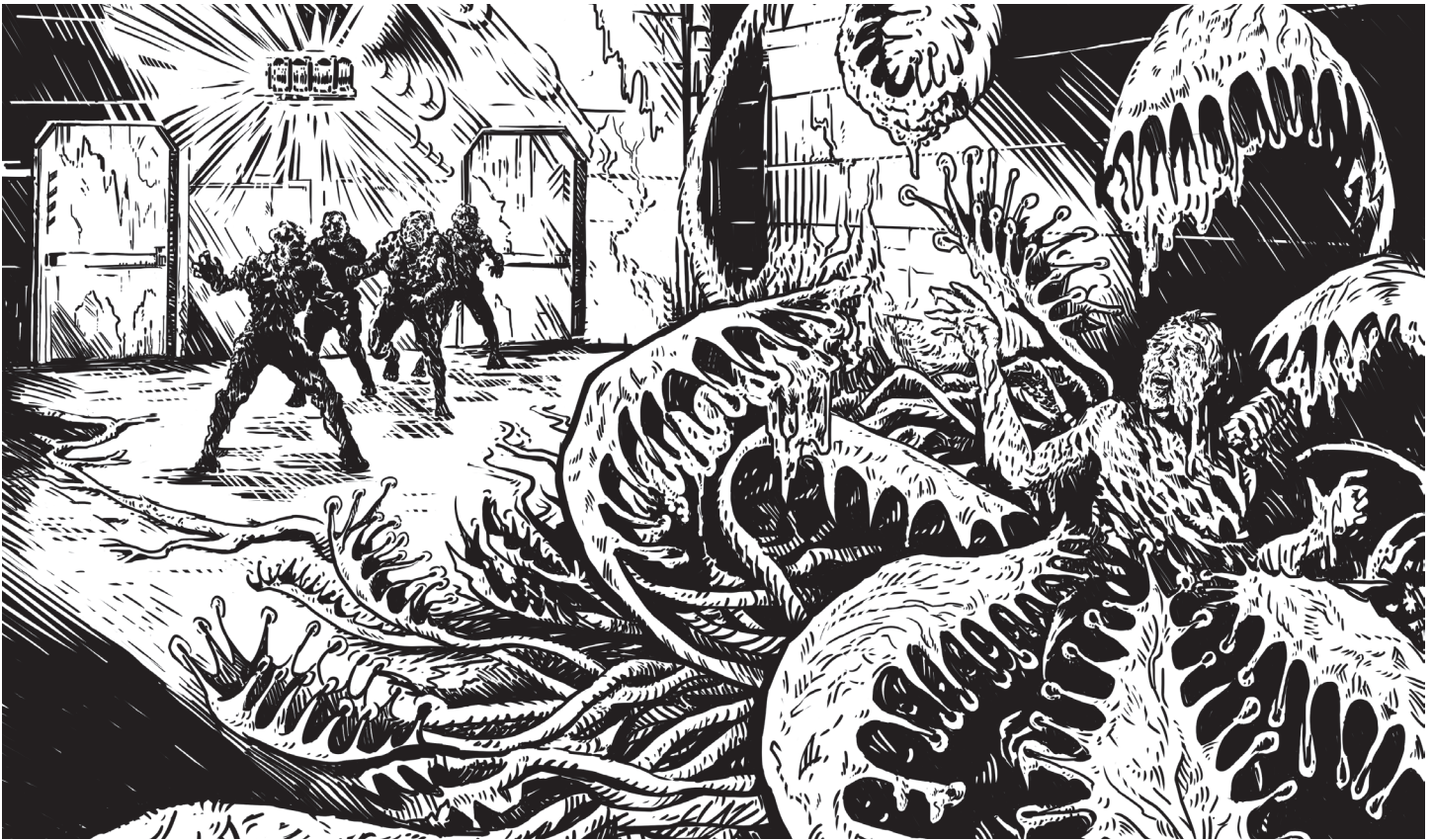
III. THE PIT

A. THE ANTECHAMBER

At the bottom of the stairs, the door is stuck open, blocked by another organic mass, also littered with small rectangular pieces of metal on chains. Through the doorway is a small narrow room with another door on the opposite side. The walls are lined with tall, narrow boxes.

All employees on this level had to pass through a decontamination chamber (the next room) before changing into street clothes. Because few people took the stairs during a normal workday, this locker room was not used as often. PCs will find little of value should they choose to search. However, as with any Ancient ruins, there is always a chance. Have each player roll a d6 and use the following table to determine what is found. If you choose, you can select the next nearest result to avoid duplications on a roll:

- 1 All lockers searched are empty.
- 2 Moldering clothing but a pair of serviceable shoes. These can grant the human wearer an additional 5' of movement.
- 3 A sturdy backpack
- 4 Another sturdy backpack, and, inside the pack, a small flat black rectangle with several buttons on its face. At the top are three black squares, and below them is a narrow pale green glass rectangle. [A solar-powered pocket calculator. While not functioning now, it will work when the cells recharge.]
- 5 A small metal container, approximately 8" tall, with a top that screws off and forms a cup. [A thermos]
- 6 A sturdy backpack containing two C batteries.



B. THE ROOM OF THE DEAD

This room is startlingly free of plant-life of any kind. There are small holes in the walls and ceiling. The floor is littered with dust and metal rectangles on chains like you've seen before. The door on the far end once had a window, shattered long ago. A strangely bright glow emanates from the chamber beyond.

After the spores were released, a terrible failsafe protocol was executed, and this decontamination chamber sprayed powerful toxins intended to kill any living thing attempting to exit the lab. While many infected lab workers died, the sheer number of people overwhelmed the system, allowing infected victims, quickly becoming murderous monsters, to escape up the staircase.

Note to Judge: If running this adventure for 1st-level PCs, consider adding the following AI encounter:

At the far end of the room sits a squat metallic figure. As you enter it lurches to life, rising slightly off the ground and pointing a long tube in your direction.

DECONTAMINATION-BOT (MODIFIED SECURITY-BOT): Init. +5; Atk Herbicide Sprayer +6 missile fire (2d10 vs. Plantients) (EMPTY); neural net +6 missile fire (DC 12 Fortitude save or entangle up to four targets for 4d6 rounds.); AC 18; HD 6d6; 32 hp; MV 30' hovering; Act 2d20; SP Immune to mind control, force shield (12 hp); SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; AI recog 18 (Security).

If PCs manage to subdue or take over the Decontamination Bot, they may refill its tank with a backpack in the Herbicide Chamber. This will effectively give them another PC's worth of sprayer attacks if the players battle the horde on the ground. (See "CONCLUSION I: A Fateful Flight" on page 20).

If the bot succeeds in delaying the party too long, the Judge may consider this as increasing the chances of the players returning to Solace too late to save it.

C. THE LETHAL GARDEN

See encounter cards on page 23.

As you enter this immense cavern, the light makes you squint. Clumps of strange mushrooms clinging to the ceiling emit a luminescence brighter than torches. The cave itself is an impossible riot of plantlife. Some look vaguely familiar, but twisted and pale. Others are completely alien, unnatural tangles of leaves and spines. The air is damp and humid, and you can just hear a low hum coming from somewhere deep in the caves.

Over the centuries, as plants in the lab mutated and spread, they adapted to their surroundings and, in some cases, incorporated the growing technology that provided the artificial light used to sustain them. The humming sound comes from the biofueled generator, still operative but now doing little more than powering the hangar, the door panels, some emergency lights, and the herbicide and plant vaults.

As the PCs continue into the lab area, they will attract the attention of the carnivorous plant lurking here. On a **DC 10 Intelligence** check, PCs will spot the signs of the previous expedition: hacked and blasted branches leading towards the bioweapons lab where the original outbreak occurred.

Moving further into the cavern, you see an enormous plant standing fifteen feet tall. It has several long vine-like tendrils, and its large, leathery petals come together like a pitcher. But this strange pitcher has a gaping maw full of sharp teeth and bile. Bits of half-digested flesh still rot in its jaws. Looking more closely, you see it is mottled with scorch marks. Suddenly the pitcher twists towards you.

SP Successful tendril attack means plant grapples PC and attempts to lift it into its jaws. **DC 12 Strength** to escape. PCs who fail are placed into the pitcher's maw where the pitcher will attempt to bite it. The pitcher has paralyzing venom, **DC 12 Fortitude** save or PC is paralyzed 1d6 rounds and will take automatic bite damage each round.

Perilous Pitcher Plant: Init +2; Atk Tendrils (2) +2 melee (1d4 and automatic grapple); bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 15; HD 3d8; 20 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1; Reflex +2; Will +0. SP Successful tendril attack means plant grapples PC and attempts to lift it into its jaws. **DC 12 Strength** to escape. PCs who fail are placed into the pitcher's maw where the pitcher will attempt to bite it. The pitcher has paralyzing venom, **DC 12 Fortitude** save or PC is paralyzed 1d6 rounds and will take automatic bite damage each round.

D. THE IMPOSSIBLE VINE AND THE DOOM DROSERA

See encounter cards on page 23.

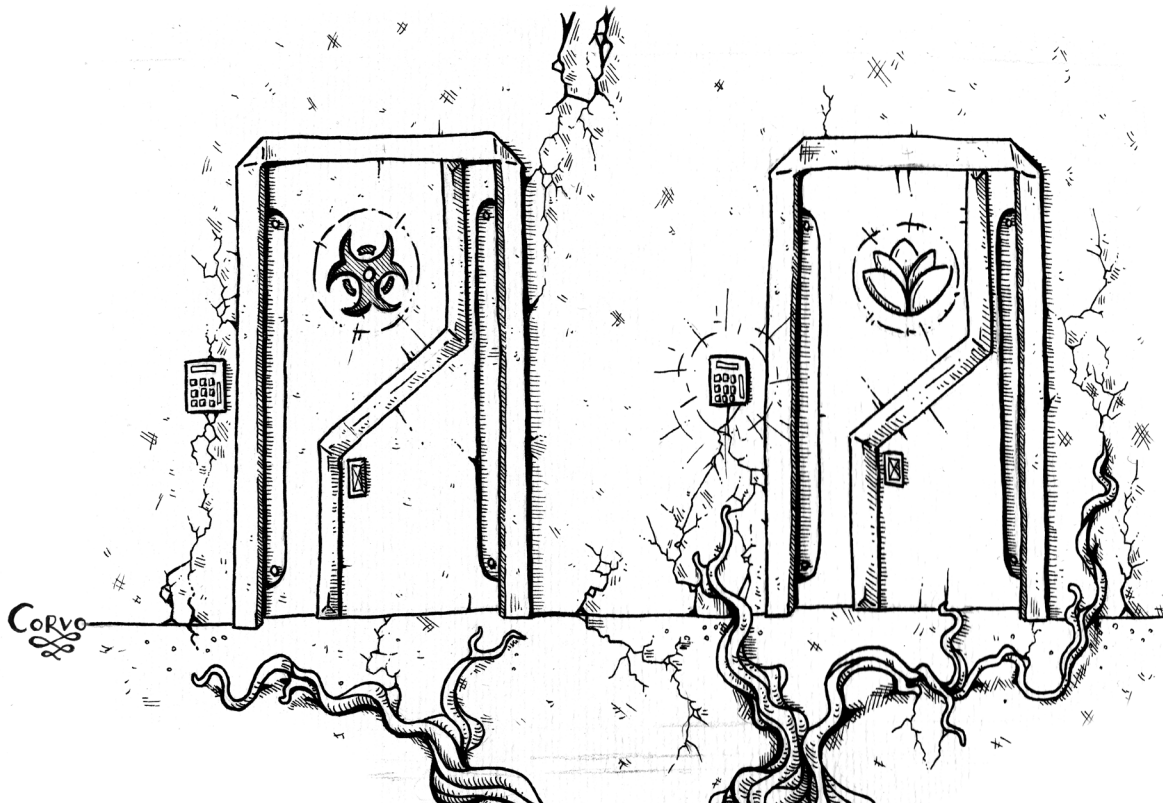
A thick braid of vines emerges from a passageway off to your left. You can see that it has grown into the shaft you used to enter the cavern. While that way is impassable, a narrow path runs along the length of the vine towards its source, and an impossibly sweet, inviting smell wafts from the passage. You feel strangely drawn to it.

The PCs used the vines near the surface to descend into the facility. They are now nearing ground-zero of the outbreak, and they are approaching both the source of the contamination and the cure. The psychotic monsters lurking in the room ahead are Seekers who preceded the PCs, on their own quest to discover the Ancient Bane. While some of their comrades escaped to bring the infection back to their village, these unfortunates succumbed here, unable to leave the seductive draw of the Drosera, even though they instinctively avoid its acidic trap. They are now frantic with unnatural hunger and rage.

Doom Drosera: DC 12 Will save or **non-plantient** PCs will run straight to the lily-pad like body of the Drosera (Sun-Dew). **Plantients are immune.** Those who enter the Drosera immediately take 1 point of acid damage, and then are stuck. **DC 20 Strength** to escape or be pulled free. If the PCs are not rescued, they will slowly be consumed. (1 point of damage per day.) The Fungal Slayers will not enter the Drosera to attack, but they will charge the moment any non-compelled PCs enter the room.

As you follow the path of the vine, the tantalizing odor grows stronger. The tunnel opens into a large chamber where strange red lights are flashing. A large, lily-pad like plant fills the far end of the room: it is the source of both the fragrance and the vine, which sprouts from the plant's center. The humming is loud here, but it is suddenly overwhelmed by the terrifying shrieking of four figures, their flesh covered with a grotesque yellow fungus, racing towards you.

FUNGAL SLAYERS (4): Init +2; Atk slam +0 melee (1d4) and +1 bite (chance of infection); AC 12; HD 1d12; 11 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP bite infection DC 12 Fortitude. Players missing save by 5 or more will immediately turn murderous as per "The Throne Room" on page 15. Track those PCs who fail by less than 5: they will transform during the Grim Coda (page 22) SV Fort +3; Reflex 0; Will -1.



Read the following after the battle:

As you stand panting for breath, you hear a small, weak voice calling to you. It is coming from the center of the plant. "Don't..." In the center of the pad lies the body of a man. He appears to be melting into the thick, viscous fluid. "Don't...open..." His pained eyes turn toward two doorways just to the left of the enormous plant, but you can't tell which he is looking at. "The...Bane..." Then he gives a long, shuddering sigh before lapsing into unconsciousness.

This unfortunate soul is named Kragor, the scout for the party of villagers who came here looking for the undead Bane. He was caught in the Drosera's sticky trap as he investigated its delicious smell. While he was able to warn the other Seekers away from the Drosera, he was unable to break free, and he could only watch in horror as they entered the lab and were exposed to the toxic spores. Those able to fight off initial exposure ran as the rest of the party fell on one another. Poor Kragor could do nothing. He has been dying slowly ever since. Anyone attempting to rescue him risks suffering a similar fate: **DC 20 Strength** check to avoid getting stuck in the Drosera. Death is a long time coming, however. His body has been consumed for several days, and he will die instantly if pried free.

The two doors seem identical; however, one has a symbol that looks something like a blooming flower, while the other has three circles overlapping a fourth. On the far end of the chamber is what appears to be a third large door that opens vertically. Next to each door is a small glowing panel.

Only the manager's key card or a **DC 20 Artifact Door** check can open these doors. The lab door with the blooming flower (e.) is where the biotoxic spores wait. The door with the biohazard sign (f.) is where the herbicide that will kill the spores can be found, loaded in two aerosol canisters that can be attached to the hover-car waiting in the hangar, along with several backpack units. The players will likely want to make an Intelligence check in an effort to identify which door they should choose, but the Judge should resist allowing them to use a simple dice roll.

E. THE ANCIENT BANE

As the door slides open, the air is filled with fine yellow dust, like pollen. Through the haze you can just make out what appears to be flowering vines cascading from tall cylinders, their glass walls shattered. Each blossom jettisons a mist of powder in your direction. Behind you comes a faint voice. "Oh no...no..."

If the players open this door, their odds of survival are slim, although it is possible if they are merely infected that they can give themselves a fighting chance by obtaining the pesticide behind the next door. Those who manage to fight off the initial infection without being treated may live long enough to track the contagion back to Solace. First, all PCs within a 30-foot radius must make a **DC 15 Fortitude** save. Those who fail by more than 5 will begin turning into Fungal Slayers within one minute. Those who fail by less than 5 are still infected, but symptoms will not manifest for 24 hours. These hearty souls are carriers, and they can

bring the infection back with them. **Be sure to track these carriers for the Grim Coda (page 22).**

As was the case with the spores in The Throne Room, PCs who begin transforming immediately will have one last chance to make a **DC 15 Will** save to choose suicide rather than murder their comrades. Otherwise, they immediately begin to attack the party after transforming. Anyone who is bitten by an infected PC must make a **DC 12 Fortitude** save or be infected as above.

Destroying the plants in the lab takes considerable firepower, as the roots are protected by what remains of the growth cylinders. However, a large area of effect attack, like setting fire to oil, would do the trick. If they open the Herbicide Chamber (f.) first, they can use the backpack sprayers to kill these plants.

F. THE HERBICIDE CHAMBER

After the riot of plant life almost everywhere else in the caverns, the sterile appearance of this room shocks you. At the far end are several large tanks attached to pipes running into metal boxes in the wall. On a set of shelves you see a number of backpack-like containers with tubes connected to thin two-foot-long rods [roll 1d12], and lying on the floor are two large canisters, roughly five feet long, with nozzles on one end. Each canister and backpack bears the same Ancient symbol of the four circles.

The large tanks once contained a modified version of herbicide used for sterilization in the decontamination chambers. They are empty now, as the lab workers drained them in a last-ditch effort to stop those who were infected from escaping. The smaller sprayers each contain enough herbicide to disinfect 1d10 infected creatures. (The herbicide is fatal to plantients.) The two canisters contain the herbicide as an aerosol, and they are designed for application from the crop duster in the hangar (g).

G. THE HANGAR

As the large door slides upward, a gust of air nearly knocks you backward, and a loud rumbling noise fills the room. A moment later, you catch a glimpse of the sky far above you. The door has revealed a long tunnel leading upward, and before you sits a strange sort of covered wagon with no wheels; instead, it stands on three legs. It has a door on one side, with a familiar glowing panel, and through several windows you see a number of chairs. On either side, near the bottom, there are also brackets set about five feet apart, marked with four overlapping circles.

This hover car was designed to deliver experimental herbicides and monitor their effects. (This vehicle is a “Bubble Car” variant, designed for low-level “crop dusting.” See **MCC Core** rulebook p. 183.) Players attempting to attach the aerosol canisters will find they fit easily. The keycard that opened the hangar will also open the hover car door and start it.

At the front of the strange carriage is a series of colored and glass squares on a panel arranged in front of two padded chairs. Suspended from the ceiling is an odd-looking headband.

Hover-Car Crop Duster: Tech Level 5

Complexity Modifier: 6

Speed: Up to 300 mph

Special: On-board inertial dampeners

Power: Q-Pack (U)

The Q-Pack in the crop duster still holds enough charge to reach the fungal horde approaching Solace and deliver the herbicide. The PC operating the car will need to make an appropriate Artifact check as described on p. 168 in the **MCC Core** rulebook. Humans receive an automatic +1 on the check, plantients receive a -3, and all others receive no additional bonus or penalty.

Regardless of the PCs’ maximum Tech Level, any human can attempt a check. However, as per the rules, PCs will only have one attempt to activate the hover car successfully. Should they fail, there will be no way to get the herbicide back to Solace in time to save the village. (See Conclusion II: The Devastation of Solace.)

CONCLUSION I: A FATEFUL FLIGHT

Should the PCs make a sufficient role on their Artifact Check, the piloting AI will interface with the driver through the headband and race to Solace.

As you stare out the window, you can see that you are flying over the Fen at a terrific rate of speed even though, impossibly, it feels as if you are not even moving. Soon the trees grow thin, and you recognize familiar landmarks. In a few short minutes, you have returned to Solace! The strange Ancient conveyance skims quickly past your village, where you can see stunned neighbors staring upward and pointing. In a moment you have left Solace behind as the carriage races onward.

All too soon you spot a mass of figures stumbling towards your village, mindlessly ignoring the spears and even the occasional blast of an Ancient weapon from the warriors fighting to hold the horde back. As you get closer, you see the horrifically

misshapen features of people—like those you fought in the temple—locked in combat with your friends and neighbors.

In response to some unknown command, the Ancient vehicle flies low over the battle, and suddenly a long stick emerges from a panel in front of you. On the end is a handgrip and a trigger like you have seen on Ancient weapons.

There are **100** infected creatures in the horde, and the crop-duster has enough aerosol to make three passes: each pass will effectively hit **1d100 creatures**. Players may attempt to “target” only the zombies, but this will be difficult in the chaotic battle below. Here is the process:

First, the pilot needs to make a **DC 15 ranged attack roll** at the start of the pass.

If successful, then roll **1d100 to determine how many creatures are hit. 20% are plantient casualties from Solace**, (plantients), half from Solace and half from the horde.

If the pilot misses the attack roll, then roll **1d100 and take 30% of the total casualties of the pass** to determine the number of plantients from Solace killed, half from Solace and half from the horde.

The Judge should let the players realize the potential for killing villagers on their own. If they show **no** concern for innocent plantients, then let them make three passes with **no attack roll. The plantient casualty rate will automatically be 30% on each pass.**

I.A. IF THE PC PULLS THE TRIGGER:

A loud hissing noise fills the air, and you see a fine vapor fall upon the boiling mass of murderous rage below you, followed by screams of agony so loud you hear them even in the comfort of the vehicle. Bodies begin falling to the ground, some writhing in pain, as the Bane of the Ancients washes over them.

Players may also try to open the car door and “strafe” the battlefield with the backpack sprayers. As with **1.B** below, each backpack can kill or cure **1d10** zombies. Roll a d10 for each sprayer, and subtract from horde total. This does allow better targeting, but still, 10% of the casualties are plantients from Solace who perish instantly rather than being cured, half from Solace and half from the horde.

It is not easy to use the backpacks while hanging out of a moving vehicle. PCs must make a **DC 10 Reflex** save on each pass or fall to their death.

The hover car will not be able to travel more than 10 more miles (Judge’s discretion), so it cannot

return to the temple, nor can it reach other villages. However, should the Judge choose, the hover-car can be used to set up another adventure.

If the PCs fail to kill or disinfect all of the zombies on their crop-dusting run, they will need to land and take them on with sprayers. **See I.B. below on landing and battling zombies.**

Assuming the PCs return to Solace after defeating the horde, read the following, then **refer to the Grim Coda:**

A crowd of villagers rushes to where your strange craft lands. As you exit, a hush falls across Solace as the people stare at you in wonder. Old Twiglegs hobbles forward: “You found it! I knew the stories were true! The Ancients mercifully left the Bane to save us!” As she speaks, warriors stumble back from the battleground, helping the dazed and emaciated survivors from the horde. Some begin pointing and whispering, and soon the entire village is buzzing with the story of the devastation you unleashed—on attackers and defenders alike—from the air. The looks of amazement are soon replaced with fear, and some plantients eye you with suspicion. You have brought back a weapon that discriminates between its victims, a horrible weapon of destruction beyond what anyone ever imagined.

The Solace you once knew will never be the same.

I.B. IF THE PC CHOOSES NOT TO PULL THE TRIGGER, AND INSTEAD LANDS THE CRAFT TO JOIN THE FIGHT, OR NEEDS TO LAND TO FINISH OFF THE ZOMBIES WITH SPRAYERS AFTER DUSTING THEM WITH THE AEROSOL:

Players may attempt to fight the horde with the backpack sprayers if they retrieved them. Roll to see the number of zombies they can decontaminate (Roll a d10 for each sprayer, assuming extra sprayers were handed to villagers) and subtract these from horde total. (20% of this figure are infected plantients who die instantly rather than being cured.)

Should the backpack spray reduce the number of the horde to twelve or less, have players next roll for initiative and engage in a combat with the remaining Fungal Slayers. If the PCs win their battle and return to Solace, read the following, **then refer to the Grim Coda:**

A crowd of villagers rushes to where your strange craft lands. As you exit, a hush falls across Solace as the people stare at you in wonder. Old Twiglegs hobbles forward: "You found it! I knew the stories were true! The Ancients mercifully left the Bane to save us!" As she speaks, warriors stumble back from the battleground, helping the dazed and emaciated survivors from the horde. Soon you are surrounded by a crowd of well-wishers, amazed by your heroism and skill. You know that your lives in Solace will never be the same.

If the spray fails to reduce the horde to twelve or less (even if this occurs after the crop-dusting), then the PCs must either attempt to flee in the crop duster, in which case Solace is overrun [Each PC must make a **DC 15 Reflex** save to make it back to the vehicle] or die. Read the following if they do not escape:

Bodies drop to the ground as the Bane of the Ancients shoots from the rod you hold and washes over them. Yet all around you are the horrifying cries of your fellow villagers being bitten and slashed, and then turning on their friends and neighbors. In spite of your efforts, the horde is growing all around you. In a moment it washes over you in a foul wave of pain and agony, and then you know no more.

CONCLUSION II: THE DEVASTATION OF SOLACE

[If PCs fail to activate the car or for some other reason do not return in less than 24 hours.]

Your return journey goes much more quickly, both because you now know the way and because you fear the cost of any delay. As you get closer to home, you could swear you hear screaming, but surely it must be your imagination. A couple of hours later, however, as the sun begins setting, the smell of smoke is undeniable, growing stronger as you reach the edge of the Fen. You emerge from the trees to find Solace a smoldering ruin. Bodies litter the ground. As you stare in horror, a wavering voice catches your attention. A gravely injured Twiglegs lies pinned beneath the smoking roof of her hut. She looks up at you with glassy, unfocused eyes. "The...Bane. The Bane..." she whispers, before breathing her last. The only sound is the crackling embers of what was once your home.

The Judge and players will determine what happens next. The PCs would have no trouble tracking the horde as it continues on its path of destruction should they choose; its numbers will have doubled with the sacking of Solace, so it cuts a wide swath of destruction. (Roll a d100 and multiply by 6, with a minimum of 60, to determine the size of the horde.)

It is highly unlikely the PCs would survive a direct encounter.

Should the Judge wish to continue the saga of the Bane of the Ancients, they can incorporate another adventure to allow the PCs to successfully discover a delivery device for the herbicide. Otherwise, the horde will eventually burn itself out, although many will die in the meantime.

IN ANY CASE, regardless of the outcome, the Judge must refer to...

THE GRIM CODA

Finally, remember that all infected players will become murderous Fungal Slayers in a day's time unless they receive treatment. Pause a moment, and let the players feel the adventure has ended. Then read the following if anyone has returned to Solace with the infection:

As you stand facing each other, calculating the immense price Solace has paid, you are horrified to see your companion(s) begin transforming. Roll for initiative.

Remember that the only effective remedy is the herbicide (fatal to plantients, and **DC 10 Fortitude** save for all others). Anyone who is bitten by an infected PC must make a **DC 12 Fortitude** save or be infected themselves. Let the players play themselves as Fungal Slayers in the battle.

Finally, you manage to put down the last monster that was once a friend. And you know that your Solace is now gone forever.

Even if the PCs save Solace, they likely will feel uncomfortable there, and the wider world beckons. This band of explorers has seen wonders of the Ancients that people can only dream of: who knows what other boons—or banes—await them?

Cut out these rectangles to help keep track of combat initiative order.

Initiative Order: _____

FUNGAL SLAYERS (2): Init +2; Atk slam +0 melee (1d4) **and** +1 bite (chance of infection); **AC 12**; HD 1d12; 11 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP bite infection **DC 12 Fortitude**. Players missing save by **5 or more** will immediately turn murderous as per "The Throne Room" on page 15. Track those PCs who **fail by less than 5**: they will transform during the Grim Coda (page 22) SV Fort +3; Reflex +2; Will -1.

SLAYER 1 HP:

SLAYER 2 HP:

Initiative Order: _____

CARNIVEROUS ARABIDOPSIS

THALIANA (2): Init +1; Atk vines +3 melee (1d4 and automatic trip attempt). **AC 10**; HD 1d8; 6 hp; MV 0; Act 1d20; SP successful vine attacks lead to automatic trip attempts, **DC 10 Reflex** save or PC falls prone. Only tripped PCs are vulnerable to bite attacks. If tripped, bite +2 melee (1d4); SV Fort +1; Reflex +0; Will +0.

THALIANA HP:

Initiative Order: _____

SAVAGING QUICKSAND: DC 18

Intelligence check to spot the quicksand. DC 12 Reflex save to avoid the sand's attack (1d3 Slam damage); **DC 12 Strength** check to resist being engulfed and pulled under. PCs who fail to break free take 1d3 damage per round. **DC 12 Strength** check to pull the PC free.

Initiative Order: _____

FEN GATOR Init +2; Atk Tendrils (2) +2 melee (1d4); bite +2 melee (1d6); **AC 14**; HD 2d10; 16 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1; Reflex +0; Will +0.

GATOR HP:

Initiative Order: _____

DECONTAMINATION-BOT (MODIFIED SECURITY-BOT): Init. +5; Atk Herbicide Sprayer +6 missile fire (2d10 vs. Plantients) (EMPTY); neural net +6 missile fire (**DC 12 Fortitude** save or entangle up to four targets for 4d6 rounds.); AC 18; HD 6d6; 32 hp; MV 30' hovering; Act 2d20; SP Immune to mind control, force shield (12 hp); SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; AI recog 18 (Security).

Initiative Order: _____

Perilous Pitcher Plant: Init +2; Atk Tendrils (2) +2 melee (1d4 and automatic grapple); bite +2 melee (1d6); **AC 15**; HD 3d8; 20 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1; Reflex +2; Will +0. SP Successful tendril attack means plant grapples PC and attempts to lift it into its jaws. **DC 12 Strength** to escape. PCs who fail are placed into the pitcher's maw where the pitcher will attempt to bite it. The pitcher has paralyzing venom, **DC 12 Fortitude** save or PC is paralyzed 1d6 rounds and will take automatic bite damage each round.

PLANT HP:

Initiative Order: _____

TILLANDSIC WOLVES (3): Init +4; Atk slam (1) +1 melee (1d3+grapple); **AC 12**; HD 2d8; 12 hp; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP Wolves get +3 on grapple check rolls, and grappled PCs will suffer 1d3 Constitution damage per round as the air plant sucks the moisture from their body. SV Fort +1; Reflex +2; Will +0.

WOLF 1 HP:

WOLF 2 HP:

WOLF 3 HP:

Initiative Order: _____

FUNGAL SLAYERS (4): Init +2; Atk slam +0 melee (1d4) and +1 bite (chance of infection); **AC 12**; HD 1d12; 11 hp; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP bite infection DC 12 Fortitude. Players missing save by 5 or more will immediately turn murderous as per p. _____. Track those PCs who fail by less than 5: they will transform during the Grim Coda (p. _) SV Fort +3; Reflex 0; Will -1.

SLAYER 1 HP:

SLAYER 2 HP:

SLAYER 3 HP:

SLAYER 4 HP:

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EQUIPMENT | LOCATION | TREASURE

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 ATTACK: _____
 CRIT. RANGE: _____
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ARMOR CLASS: HIT POINTS _____
 HD/LVL _____

STR | AGI | STA | PER | INT | LUCK

ATK | DPM | DPM

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