

THE CLEFT OF FIVE WORLDS

AN ADVENTURE REGION BY MICHAEL PRESCOTT

THE SITUATION

The Cleft is a massive sinkhole, reaching from mountainous heights into the lower world.

Here, the **Seree** built one of their most ambitious engineering projects, a **Lycaeum** that drew aspirants from the entire empire.

Only the Seree knew its location in the overworld, but as a powerful ley nexus, the Cleft has a way of being found along many strange pathways.

Before the Seree were scoured from the world by the gods, the Cleft was the meeting place of five cultures—not all of them allies.

Now, the wizards are gone, but the Cleft rumbles on in the shadow of their works.

REACHING THE CLEFT

A portal in a wizard's tower may lead to the **Tomb of the Disgraced**.

A long journey through the underworld may end behind the **Teeth of the Jorn**.

Careless magic used at a ley node may transport to the roof of the **White Tower**.

Certain drugs are rumored to carry sleepers to **Pale Yugra**.

Strange currents could bring lost boaters to the foggy waters of the **Blessed Shoals**.

HISTORY OF THE CLEFT

-1200: The **Jorn** arrive from the lightless realm beyond the Teeth. At bloodstained altars, they learned how to placate the horrors of the **Maw** with prayer and frozen moonlight.

-800: The **Jorn** realm erupts in a civil war. Many Cleft-dwellers return to the homelands to fight, bearing demon gifts as weapons.

-700: **Tcheth** slaves escape the ruins of the **Jorn** realm and flee into the Cleft. They are ter-

rorized by **Maw** horrors, and most die.

-670: The **Tcheth** bargain with the **Maw**-demon **Guguluin**, who takes their night eyes in exchange for safe passage.

nets to catch fish among the **Blessed Shoals**.

-600: A late-empire **Seree** expedition reaches the Cleft. Recognizing its potential, they found **Sar Vistu** as a staging area

due its horrors.

-510: Using a company of **Varnan** mercenaries and many hired **Jorn**, the **Seree** seize the island from the **Murks** and found **Sar Dural** as the site to build the **White Tower**.

-480: The **White Tower** lifts off from **Sar Dural**, flying directly into the ley nexus at the center of the Cleft.

-463: Rival wizards battle for control of the Cleft. **Sar Vistu** burns.

-400: **Seree** imperial decree grants the Cleft to the **Trigonic Order**, a communal hermetic order devoted to studying magic peacefully (at least with respect to other **Seree**).

-380: Construction of the **Lycaeum** begins.

-370: Construction of the **Tomb of the Disgraced** begins.

-350: **Unclideon** resorts to lichey, and is ritually dismembered by the Order and sealed in the **Tomb**.

-300: The **Lycaeum** is completed. The order rapidly begins accumulating the ritual lore of aspirants who come to learn here. A period of relative peace begins.

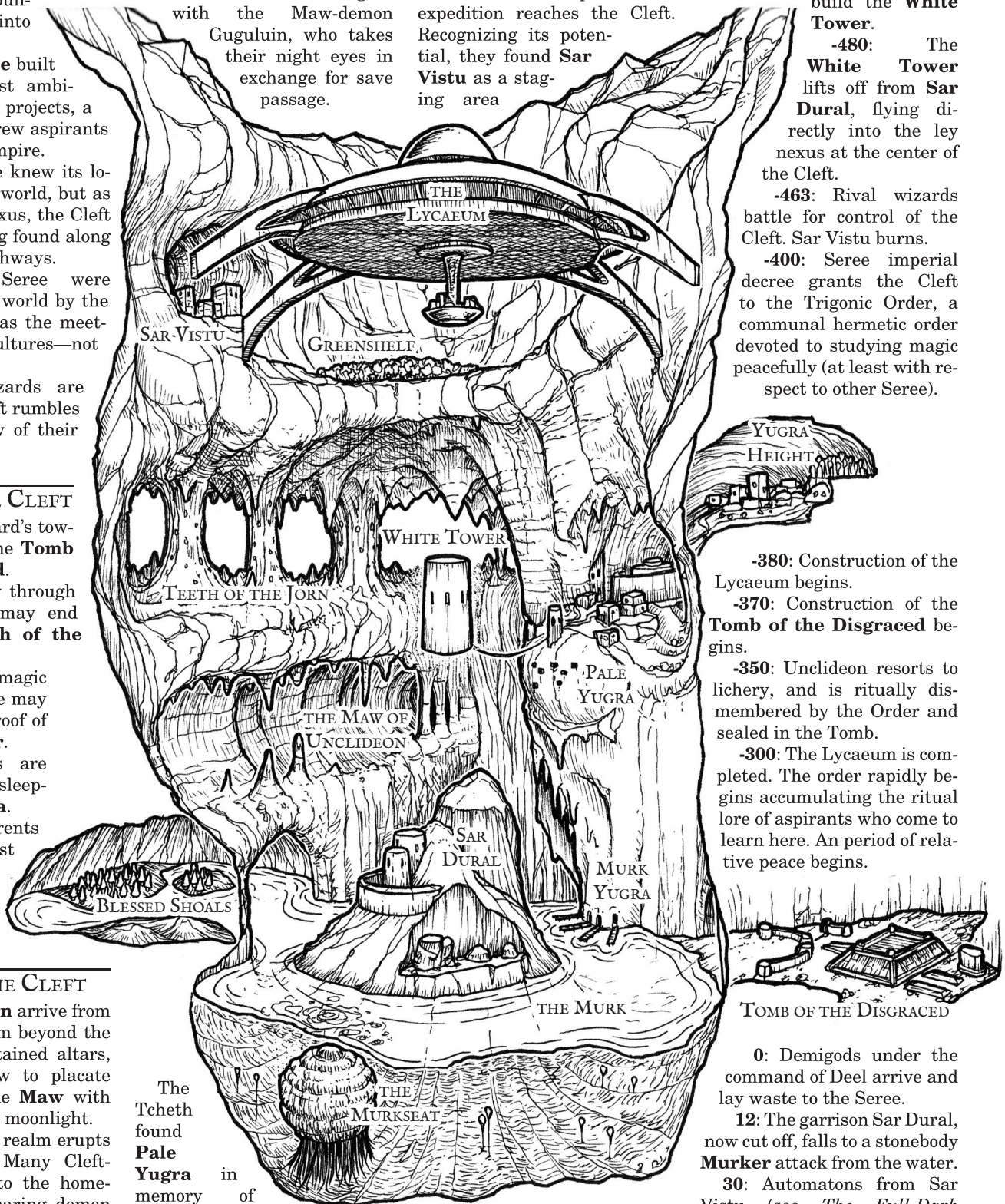
0: Demigods under the command of **Deel** arrive and lay waste to the **Seree**.

12: The garrison **Sar Dural**, now cut off, falls to a stonebody **Murker** attack from the water.

30: Automaton from **Sar Vistu** (see *The Full-Dark Stone*) complete "repairs" of the abandoned **Lycaeum**.

32: **Seree** records end.

580: Present Day



The **Tcheth** found **Pale Yugra** in memory of their ancestral home.

They discover the **Murk Stars**, and learn to weave

for further research and exploration.

-550: The wizard **Unclideon** descends into the **Maw** to sub-

THE CLEFT

The Cleft is inset in a steep, rocky land, utterly barren of life. No overland routes to the Cleft are known.

Being nearly a thousand paces tall, the Cleft is large enough to have its own climate.

d6	Cleft Weather
1-2	Pale, flickering sky for d3 days
3-4	Night falls, lasts d3 days
5	Cold rain for d8 hours
6	Muddy, scalding rain for d4 hours
7	Dense, white fog forms at the level of (d6) 1-2: the Murk, 3-4: Pale Yugra, 5-6: the Lycaeum
8	The Lycaeum eclipses a strange moon

IMPRESSIONS

- A shower of droplets falling from the Lycaeum
- Flocks of starlings circling
- The Lycaeum's shadow creeps along the Cleft walls
- Burnt parchment blows in the wind like dead leaves
- Distant, mewling animal cries from Greenshelf forest
- Tcheth rowing songs echoing up from the Murk

GETTING AROUND

The Cleft's walls are mostly vertical, treacherous to climb.

There are several prepared paths in various states of repair that wind around at various altitudes, especially between **Pale Yugra** and the **Teeth**.

d6	Wall Route Section
1	Hewn ledge
2	A narrow 'path' of rusted iron stakes
3	A harrowing free climb across a crumbled bit
4	Guide chains
5	Enters cave for d10x10'
6	Crude hand- and foot-holds

A guarded tunnel descends from Greenshelf to **Pale Yugra**, and down to the docks.

THE JORN

Descended from giants (so they say), the Jorn are tall and immensely wide.

Almost entirely blind, the long gray bristles on their faces and backs are so sensitive that they navigate freely in the dark.

TEETH OF THE JORN

Hewn by Jorn masons into three dark and mighty palaces, the Teeth are all but abandoned now.

A warlord and her band of hunters rules the smallest, but the other two have fallen to moonlight hoarders, blood priests, and things of the dark.

The Cleft's Jorn are a moribund society, too proud to forge the trade links with Yugra they need to flourish.

THE TCHETH

These Cleft-dwellers are human-sized, but long-limbed, lightly furred and with long, narrow skulls. Their flexible bones allow them to squeeze through gaps as small as a hand.

They are excellent climbers, but see poorly in the dark.

YUGRA

Trade and immigration from Seree lands grew this cliff-side refuge into a true city.

Despite centuries of isolation, Yugra is cultured and diverse, with Tcheth and humans (mostly ethnic Seree, Varnans, and Noripurans) living alongside a sprinkling of Jorn and clay-bodied **Murkers**.

Yugra's perfumers and herbalists have turned the staples of fish and shelfgrass into a legendary assortment of dishes.

The oldest niche-dwellings must be squeezed into (to keep out the demons of old), but the surface structures are a splendid mix of Jorn and Varnan architecture.

The walled quarter, Yugra Height, is said to house a number of sages who have much to teach, and who will pay dearly for new lore from the Lycaeum.

By day, small fishing vessels scull from Yugra Murk to the **Blessed Shoals** and back.

THE WHITE TOWER

A cylinder of shimmering white marble, the white tower slowly rises and falls between Sar Dural and the lower gantry of the Lycaeum, never quite touching either, following the invisible tides of the ley nexus.

A magical bridge (the enchanted skin of a Maw-serpent) extends from the tower to Pale Yugra when it is near, but the Yugrans prevent its use, out of fear of incurring the wrath of the demigods.

THE MURKERS

The shallows of the Murk are home to *murk stars*, long-armed starfish that glow a luminous orange. They exude a paralytic mucus they use to catch fish and other prey.

Murk stars have a limited telekinesis that lets them fashion protective bodies from found materials, and come ashore.

Siltbody murkers are slow-moving ambush hunters. Stronger stars fashion bodies of stone for use in war, and are immensely tough.

A rare few master both the wit and subtlety needed to shape fine humanoid bodies of clay. Many of these *claybodied* murkers live in Yugra.

Their fifth arm resides in the 'mouth', curled up like a long, glowing tongue.

They wear clothes, and participate in society fully. They are mute, but communicate using a set of hand-signs, known to most Yugrans.

THE MURKSEAT

The greatest of the stars holds hundreds of others in thrall, and using their combined power has wrought a massive, spherical stonebody as a palace. It moves about the murk, catching fish that stray too close with its long, gravelly tendrils.

CAVE STITCHERS

A few horrors of the Maw still survive in the Cleft. The spider-like spawn of the demon Guguluin practice a gruesome form of sorcery, "stitching" victims' bodies into new shapes

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by severing and reattaching limbs. The final form determines the spell they cast.

Some victims die during the "ritual", while others survive to live on as puppets of the stitcher, ever available to produce the desired magical effect with a jerk of their silken tether.

SAR DURAL

Once a walled fortress, Sar Dural was overrun by Murkers. Tcheth give it a wide berth, thinking it home to stonebodies and stitchers.

THE MAW

A foul-smelling cavern descends for miles into the deepest parts of the earth. Unclideon is said to have sealed its depths, but none have verified his claim.

SAR VISTU

A defensive wall encloses a dozen structures. It is thick with violent, skull-headed automations, which still forage as far as the weird forest of Greenshelf (to the dismay of Yugran gatherers).

Smoke can sometimes be seen coming from its forges.

THE LYCAEUM

The Trigonon Order forbade its members from burying their magics in grandiose tombs.

Instead, every discovery, bauble and scrap of lore passed to the Lycaeum to glorify its great libraries and workshops.

What it still contains is unknown, for only vaunted Seree and their guests ever saw its interior.

The massive disc of bronze patchwork suffered greatly at the hands of the demigods, but the automata from Sar Vistu seem to have repaired it.

TOMB OF THE DISGRACED

Though bare of relics, this fortified mausoleum is prison to the ghosts of many aspirants and the secrets they died with.

Unclideon, divided though he may be, still rattles the nine urns into which he was placed.