

# The Gerth Journal

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# THE OERTH JOURNAL

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### THE WIZARD'S CHRONICLE

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Another year is about to pass us by and here I sit typing away, editing and formatting another spectacular issue of the Oerth Journal. After looking back over the issues over the years I find myself striving harder and harder to make the Oerth Journal better and better. Through these changes I have discovered it's the content that matters. All the shiny bells and whistles only go so far as to dazzle us but the content and hard work that go into every issue really mean a lot. So here's a big thanks to all our contributors and editors.

While, we're on that subject I'd like to announce a big congratulations to Brian "Cebrion" McRae who is now our Assistant Editor-in-Chief. Brian's work has made the OJ possible on more than one occasion and here's a big congrats to him!

As of this issue, we are again making more changes to the format of the Oerth Journal and there are more to come! We've also started up a new section, the Rogues' Gallery. Anyone who wishes to get their feet wet on this section may use the examples provided herein to do so.

We've also updated the Oerth Journal webpage at <http://www.oerthjournal.com> so feel free to pop by and download the files, the submission guidelines and our new article template!

Again many thanks to all!

Until the starbreak,

Rick "Duicarthan" Miller  
Editor-in-Chief

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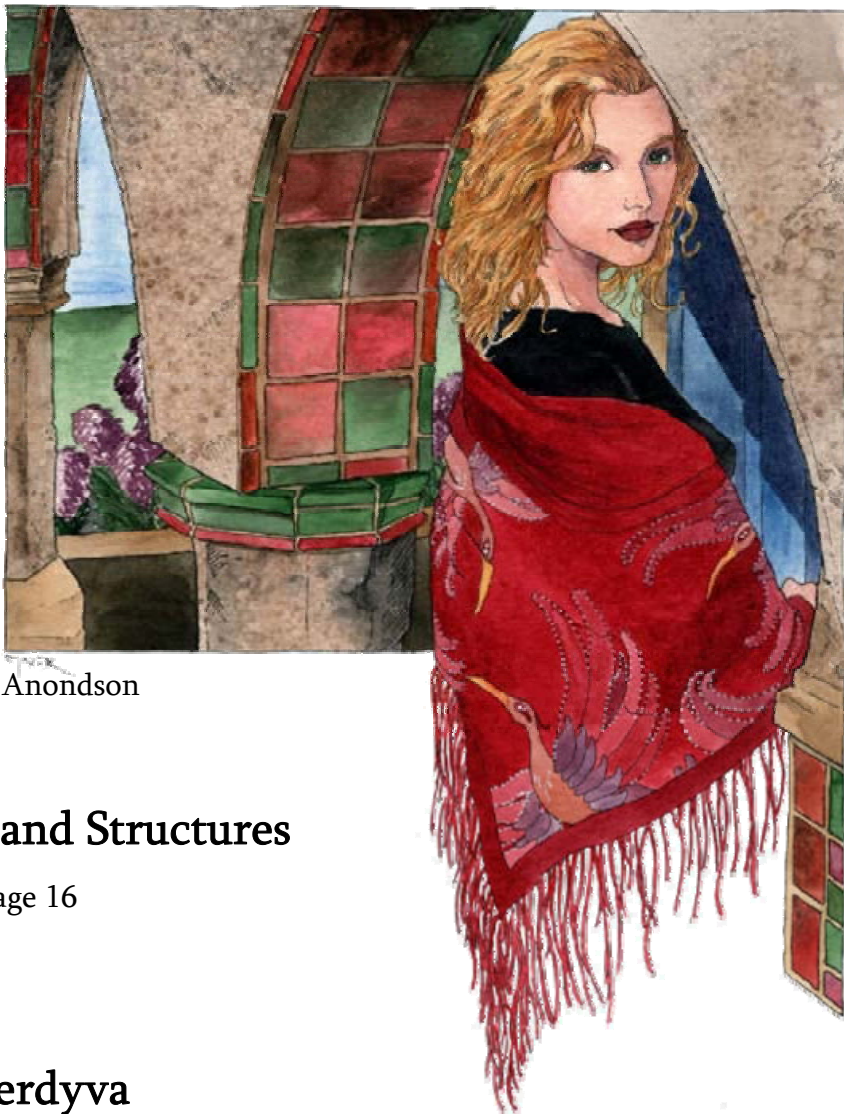
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### On the Cover

Again Jerry dazzles us with another spectacular cover from the images from his website, <http://jerantino.tripod.com/>

Jerry has been a long-time friend of mine and frequent art-contributor to the Oerth Journal. His long-time love of all things mythical and fantasy has been an inspiration to me as I grew up and even now in my D&D games.

Thanks Jer!

## Of Oerth and Altar

# The Middle Faiths

By Sam Weiss

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Even before the Migrations, the Old Faith was being supplanted by a number of organized religions. Despite the differences in form, all were obviously descended from the beliefs of the Old Faith, and many retain their influence and power to the current time.

### Thematic Perspectives

The Old Faith is based on the worship of the Oerth Mother Beory as the source of all life and female aspect of nature, and Obad-hai the Shalm as the expression of life and the male aspect of nature. Their relationship is varied depending on the story and region, sometimes husband and wife, other times mother and son, but they all follow the same theme. Beory gives birth to plants, animals, men, represented by Obad-hai, they live out their lives, die, and return to her womb of the earth to fertilize her and be reborn. If there is anything missing in the Old Faith, it is how distant it is from the everyday lives of most people. Beory has the entire Oerth to watch over, and Obad-hai is focused on the interactions of all life rather than the actions of any individual. Their Druids reflect this, having little concern for mundane issues or the small picture. Few Old Faith Druids care if a tree is cut down or a deer is hunted, or even if a forest is cleared for fields and pastures. As long as life exists in an area, Beory and Obad-hai are served. Only the large scale devastation and long term destruction of an area will rouse their anger. It is this disinterest in the day to day lives of people that led to what some now call the Middle Faiths.

### Variations on a Theme

The Middle Faiths all share certain elements with the Old Faith. Except for one, they all involve a female and male deity, with the female deity

being dominant. They all involve fertility, although one does so in a very unusual manner. Most importantly, they are all more directly involved and connected to their worshipers.

### Allitur and Berei - Flan Agriculturalists

The earliest offshoot of the Old Faith arose among the settled Flan farmers. In their faith, Allitur was the first king, a mortal incarnation of Obad-hai. He married a daughter of Beory named Berei, who taught the people how to farm the land every year allowing them to settle permanently and build villages and towns. Eventually Allitur was sacrificed, returning to the land, and ascending to provide guidance from beyond, and Berei returned to her divine realm to receive the prayers of the faithful and provide fertility to the land.

### Ehlonna and Trithereon – Flan Nomads and the Olve

Other Flan refused to give up their nomadic lifestyle, continuing to follow the herds across the prairies, and hunt in the woods. There they met the Olve who had recently migrated to the Flanaess. They developed almost identical beliefs, centering on Ehlonna, the sister and sometimes wife of Obad-hai. She is portrayed as Flan, Olve, or Half-Olve depending on who is telling the story. Trithereon was a son of Obad-hai, and likewise presented as a member of the speaker's race. They lived in the wild lands, traveling from band to band, sharing their nature lore, but never staying more than a few seasons. When they returned to their divine realms, the clerics they had trained spread their faith, honoring Ehlonna as the huntress who brought fertility to the forests and meadows where the tribes wandered

and hunted as they pleased, while celebrating their freedom through Trithereon, who also sanctioning their feuds, and was called on to lead them on the hunt.

### **Ulaa and Bleredd – Flan and the Dwur**

As the Flan expanded into the hills near the Barrier Peaks and came into contact with the Dwur, a new version of the faith developed. Ulaa was a druid of Beory, and believed to be the mother of the entire Dwur and Noniz races. Bleredd was an early Flan smith, who was searching in the foothills for surface deposits of ore. He was found by Ulaa who took him in, and taught the ways of mining, smith work, and gem crafting, so that all three peoples would be able to “harvest” the “fruits” of the earth. Ulaa also taught Bleredd how to forge weapons that her children and the Flan would be able to fight the Euroz, Jebline, and other evil humanoids that infested the earth.

### **Lydia and Phyton - Suel Agronomy**

Across the Crystalmists, the Suel had long abandoned anything resembling the Old Faith or Beory and Obad-hai. Instead they worshiped Lydia as the source of life-giving knowledge and light, with Phyton as her wayward son who too often became obsessed with the beauty of nature and had to be reminded to make the crops grow. Despite these differences in appearance and practice, there are enough similarities in the core elements that in several places, notably the Sheldomar, the clerics found much common ground with the local Flan.

### **The Sky and the Winds - Oeridian Fraternity and Patriarchy**

The most divergent practice is found among the Oeridians. There, the male figures take the lead, and are represented by the brothers Velnius and Telchur. Velnius is the primary figure, overseeing

the sky and weather during the growing season, while Telchur is the time between growing seasons. The three sisters, Atroa, Sotillion, and Wenta, each oversee one-third of the time when crops are grown, tended, and harvested. They are all married to Velnius, and he spends part of the year with each of them, until Telchur comes and imprisons them beneath the frozen ground. In some versions, the three female deities become upset with Velnius passing to the next, and allow themselves to be seduced by Telchur over the winter, until they realize their error and return to Velnius one by one. As noted, this is the most divergent cult from the Old Faith, but it shares enough elements that it was often the first point of agreement between the invading Oeridians and the Flan and Suel people they conquered.

### **Neo-Old Faithism**

A millennium after the Twin Cataclysms and the migrations that followed, the Old Faith and its variants have all but disappeared among the human populations of the Flanaess. Most people follow the faiths of their rulers, who favor more martial deities, or ones that sanction their rule directly. Lately though there has been a resurgence in rural areas, as farmers and other rural folk begin to assert their own interests as the Flanaess recovers from the Greyhawk Wars. A new syncretic religion is growing, combining the elements of all of these faiths. The mix is clumsy, combining 7 female deities and 6 male deities in a mix that embraces 3 human sub-races and all the demi-human races of the Flanaess. Its success is likely to depend on the most unexpected of supporters – urban dilettantes who seem to be embracing it as a representation of a “simpler” and “purer” time. While most dismiss their intentions, none dismiss the wealth and influence they bring, and they may be just what the “New Old Faith” needs to succeed....

## Rogues' Gallery

# Malaketh

By Rick "Duicarthan" Miller

Early in Reaping 596 CY, Malaketh emerged from the ruins of Maure Castle. Exhausted in mind and body he collapsed to the earth and thought back to how his clever mechanizations had led to this moment. His years of studying dusty tomes, forgotten scrolls, and exploring ancient ruins had finally paid off, and he had now taken his place among the archmages of old.

Malaketh came from a complex past, his mother an olive-skinned, raven-haired Aerdi enchantress of house Cranden hailing from the Domain of Greyhawk was well known throughout the Central Flanaess as a respected alchemist. His father was a pale, sandy-haired Suel mystic-cleric of Wee Jas from house Zelred hailed from the Duchy of Urnst and was an active member of the Seekers. Both had long been adventurers prior to his birth to on 560 CY.

Following his birth, the family settled in the bustling city of Seltaren. There they set up an alchemy shop in the city and through connections with their old adventuring organization they kept their family afloat. However, finances and the looming shadow of war forced the two back into adventuring for a living, just as their son was just developing a knack for the arcane arts.

By 569 CY, Malaketh had developed a unique talent with the arcane arts and with tutoring lessons from his parents was on his way to becoming an accomplished spellcaster. His opportunity came when a shadowy-figure with

gnarled hands known only as the Seer approached his family. The Seer had seen the child at the festival of Wikrhys performing tricks for the other children and was interested in having him schooled at the local Wizardholme of Urnst.

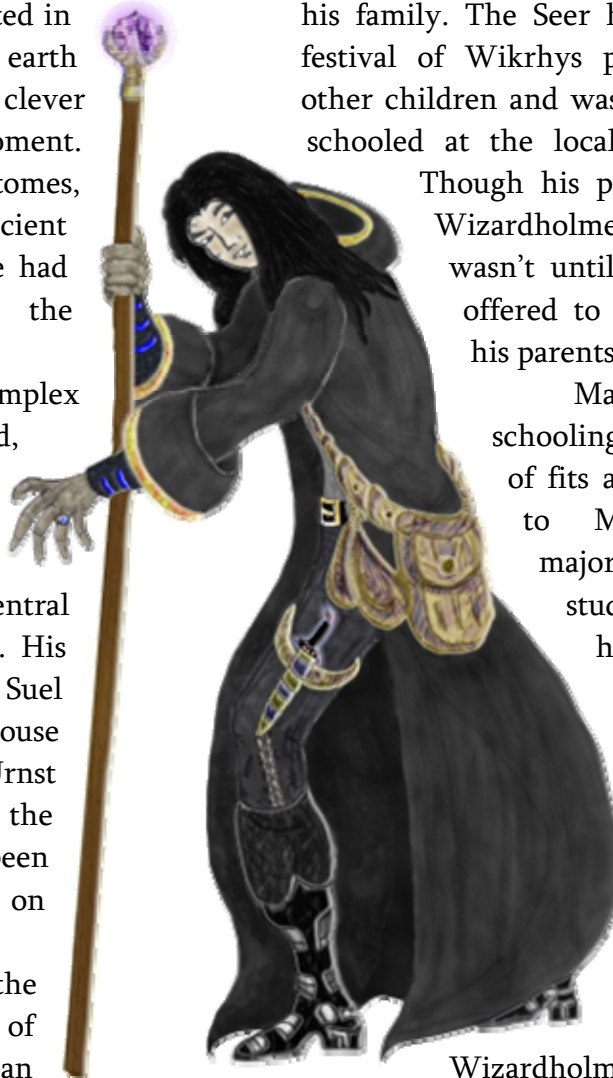
Though his parents were well off, the Wizardholme was not cheap, and it wasn't until the Seer stepped in and offered to help cover the costs that his parents agreed.

Malaketh's first year of schooling at Wizardholme was one of fits and starts, this mostly due to Malaketh spending the majority of his time in silent study perusing ancient histories, myths, and legends to the point of nearly forgetting his schoolwork.

His instructors still remark how the young man had potential, but he only lacked the proper discipline. More than one instructor at the

Wizardholme can tell the story of how the lad always had a cunning yet imaginative twist to everything he did, though this never aided in the repair of the halls he scorched with his alchemical concoctions.

As his schooling progressed, the Seer visited with less frequency, finally disappearing in early 571 CY. It was during this time that the Seer instilled a curiosity for exploration into the youth and instructed him that he should seek out Lord Octavius Marius once he graduated for some extra training in the field.



Upon his graduation from the Wizardholme in late 582 CY, Malaketh visited the Seekers compound to inquire the location of his parents from Marius. It was during this time that the Seekers had just started to recover from a hearty blow to their organization through the treachery of a renegade wizard named Eli Tomorast some years earlier. Lord Marius apologized but stated that his parents were deep undercover near the border of Iuz in Furyondy. Exasperated and a bit eager to utilize his tactical and combat skills he requested Marius to send him there. His decision couldn't have come at a worse time for Furyondy had been invaded by thousands of humanoids and the demonic hordes of Iuz.

In the early years of the Greyhawk Wars, Malaketh's parents had seen an opportunity to finally make a difference against Iuz, the Old One of the North. What they didn't expect was the brutality that they encountered and they fell at the Seige of Chendl. The news was short in coming to Malaketh who has just been assigned to the command of Tonnar Dapty of the Knights of the Hart. The rough yet understanding commander understood that the death of his parents would bother the young wizard and let him vent his full frustrations upon the humanoids they encountered. Here he learned how to survive in large scale battles, to know his enemy, to know when to hold your ground or flee, and to always keep something in reserve. These teachings proved critical at the Battle of Critwall Bridge, where Malaketh was one of the few young recruits to survive. To this day Malaketh, will not speak of the events that occurred there.

Following the wars, Malaketh returned home to Seltaren only to be greeted by Lord Marius. Marius was glad to see Malaketh return, though he still grieved the loss of his parents who were great contributors to the Seekers and to Seltaren itself. Malaketh quickly ordered his parents estate and allowed the Seekers to use the

shop, so long as the rest of the building was left for his personal use. His affairs in hand Malaketh, joined a group of adventurers and went off to explore the ruins of Castle Greyhawk.

Since then, he has traveled deep into the Yatils to discover the secrets of the ancient temples of Tharizdun, sought out ancient Suel treasures in the Sea of Dust, withstood the freezing wastes of the Land of Black Ice, and plumbed the depths of Maure Castle.

## **Factions and Allies**

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Malaketh has many allies with and without the spanse of the Flanaess. The following nations and governments consider him in good favor: The Archclericy of Veluna, the Kingdom of Furyondy, the Duchy of Urnst, the Domain of Greyhawk, the Yeomanry League and the Free City of Irongate.

Among the following organizations and locales, he has good favor: The Wizardholme of Urnst, the Seekers, the Knights of the Hart, the Gnomish Vale secluded within the Yatils, as is tolerated by the Silent Ones of Keoland.

The following individuals and organizations consider him an ally: Marius of Seltaren, the Seer of Urnst, as well as a dubious Bakluni wizard from the Land of Black Ice.

## **Nefarious Enemies**

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Malaketh is hated and reviled by the following: Iuz, the Scarlet Brotherhood, the cult of Vecna, followers of Tharizdun, Imix the Fire Lord, as well as various tribes of giants within the Crystalmists and Hellfurnaces regions. Any of these groups would go to great ends to see him fall. However, Malaketh has several safehouses throughout the Flanaess to which he can fall back on if in danger.

## Appearance and Attire

Malaketh is currently thirty-six-years-old as 596 CY, though he appears to be closer to thirty due to a magical draught. Malaketh is five-foot-nine-inches tall and weighs one-hundred-forty-five lbs. He has long black hair worn down the back, often tied up in a pony-tail when studying. His piercing grey eyes and mischievous smirk keep others at bay, concealing his true intentions when dealing with strangers.

Malaketh wears dark grey robes tied at the waist with a belt containing several pouches of spell components and alchemical items. His clothing consists of an assortment of black, silver, and blue. When adventuring he wears a pair of black leather and blue dragonscale bracers of his own design, as well a pair of black leather-silver buckled boots given to him by the Seekers. Malaketh carries a special quarterstaff created by elves centuries ago. The staff is made of reinforced darkwood and is topped with golden dragons' claw grasping an amethyst. The staff symbolizes mortals' desire for magic beyond their ken.

## Malaketh Exagryne CR 20

Male human wizard 19/ archmage 1

**AL:** N Medium Humanoid

**Init:** +11 Listen +2, Spot +2, darkvision\* 60ft., *arcane sight\**, (\* permanent spells)

**Languages:** Common, Draconic, Elven, Gnome, Infernal, Ancient Suloise.

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**AC** 36 touch 27, flatfooted 29

(+4 shield bonus when *shield* spell is cast.)

**hp** 166 (19 HD) damage reduction 10/ adamantine (*stoneskin*)

**Immunities:** mind-affecting spells (*mind blank*)

**Resistances:** fire or cold 10 (*resist energy*)

**Fort** 21, **Ref** 23, **Will** 25

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**Speed:** 30ft.

**Melee:** +15/10 +5 *darkwood quarterstaff*(1d6+6 plus vampiric touch 10d6) or

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+11/6 masterwork dagger (1d4+1)

**Space/ Reach:** 5ft.

**Base Atk:** +9 **Grapple:** +10

**Atk Options:** Mobile Spellcasting +29  
Concentration (+33 defensive)

**Special Actions:** Mastery of Shaping, Quicken Spell 3/ day\*

**Combat Gear:** +5 *darkwood quarterstaff* (*defending, spell-storing*), *ring of major spell storing* (*mind blank, protection from arrows*), *\*robe of the mad archmage* (*feather fall, resist energy, stoneskin, tongues*)

**Wizard Spells Prepared:** (4/7/7/7/6/6/6/6/4/4) - (CL 20, +16 ranged touch attack, CL +6 = 26 vs. Spell Resistance:

**9th** – *maximized chain lightning* (DC 28), *meteor swarm* (DC 31), *prismatic sphere* (DC 30), *time stop, weird* (DC 30)

**8th** – *horrid wilting* (DC 29), *maze* (DC 29), *polar ray* (DC 30), *polymorph any object* (DC 30), *greater shout* (DC 30)

**7th** – *banishment* (DC 28), *delayed blast fireball* (DC 29), *finger of death* (DC 28), *mordenkainen's sword* (+34 melee; 4d6+3 force damage, crit 19-20/ x2), *project image* (DC 28), *spell turning*

**6th** – *chain lightning* (DC 28), *contingency, disintegrate* (DC 28), *greater dispel magic* (DC 27), *maximized fireball* (DC 25), *mislead, \*mastery of shaping*

**5th** – *cloudkill* (DC 26), *cone of cold* (DC 27), *hold monster* (DC 26), *mind fog, passwall, wall of force*

**4th** – *ice storm* (DC 26), *greater invisibility, mordenkainen's force missiles, phantasmal killer* (DC 25), *rary's mnemonic enhancer, stoneskin*

**3rd** – *daylight, dispel magic* (DC 24), *fireball x2* (DC 25), *haste, lightning bolt* (DC 25), *protection from energy*

**2nd** – *false life, flaming sphere* (DC 24), *invisibility, melf's acid arrow* (DC 23), *mirror image, scorching ray* (DC 24), *web* (DC 23)



1st – *identify*, *magic missile* x4, *protection from evil*, *shield*

0 – *acid splash* (DC 21), *detect magic* x2, *ray of frost* (DC 22)

**Spell-Like Abilities** - (Caster Level 20): *disguise self* (at will)\*

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**Abilities:** STR 12, DEX 24\*, CON 21\*, INT 32\*, WIS 15, CHA 14.

**SQ:** *comprehend languages* (on touch/ at will)\*.

**Feats:** Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Mobile Spellcasting (*Complete Adventurer 111*), Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Focus (transmutation), Spell Penetration.

**Skills:** Concentration +28 (+33 defensive), Craft (alchemy) +21 (23 with tools), Decipher Script +25, Hide +12, Knowledge (Arcana) +33, Knowledge (Architecture and Engineering) +16, Knowledge (Dungeoneering) +16, Knowledge (Geography) +16, Knowledge (History) +21, Knowledge (Nature) +16, Knowledge (Religion) +16, Knowledge (The Planes) +22, Move Silently +27, Profession (Herbalist) +7, Search +16, Speak Language +1, Spellcraft +54, Tumble +15.

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**Possessions:** combat gear, plus *robe of the mad archmage*\* (See Below), *amulet of health* +6, *belt of many pockets*, *wand of identify* (CL1, Charges: 21), *cloak of deflection and resistance* +5, *bracers of armor* +9, *heward's handy haversack*, *gloves of dexterity* +6, flash pellet (2), flash powder (2), nutmeg/ pepper mix (2), sunrod (2), masterwork alchemist's tools, diamond dust (5), spellbooks (3), spell component pouch, hourglass, waterskin (full), sewing needle, sealing wax, 50 ft. silk rope, ink vials (2), inkpen (2), ; scroll case (2), flint and steel, parchment (5), belt pouch (2).

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**Spellbook:** In addition to the following, Malaketh has all the spells from the Player's Handbook (0 – 6th level) and may have others from various other books at the DM's discretion.

7th - *banishment*, *delayed blast fireball*, *drawmij's instant summons*, *energy immunity*, *finger of death*, *forcecage*, *limited wish*, *mordenkainen's sword*, *plane shift*, *project image*, *reverse gravity*, *spell turning*, *summon monster VII*, *greater teleport*, *vision*.

8th - *binding*, *charm monster*, *mass*, *clone*, *dimensional lock*, *horrid wilting*, *incendiary cloud*, *maze*, *mind blank*, *moment of prescience*, *polar ray*, *polymorph any object*, *greater shout*, *summon monster VIII*, *superior invisibility*.

9th - *dominate monster*, *foresight*, *freedom*, *meteor swarm*, *mordenkainen's disjunction*, *prismatic sphere*, *reaving dispel*, *summon monster IX*, *teleportation circle*, *time stop*, *weird*, *wish*.

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**Malaketh's Spellbooks;** Hardness 6; hp10; Weight 8lbs.; each book is specially bound and has 200 pages. (See *Complete Arcane* pgs. 140-142.)

Malaketh's spellbooks are made from black dragonhide with mithral clasps. Each book has a slipcase for easy storage on the road. The pages therein are made of vellum and are inked in a quick yet decisive hand. All of the text is written in a coded version of the Ancient Suloise language and the code word is known only to Malaketh himself. All of the books are immune to water damage.

Should anyone attempt to use a stolen book they become subject to a *maze* spell which further activates a *teleport* spell hidden on a secret page transport it back to a designated safe house.

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## ROBE OF THE MAD ARCHMAGE

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The Robe of the Mad Archmage is a plain dark grey robe trimmed in silver embroidery. The robe bears no other decoration or imagery.

**Non-legacy Game Statistics:** robe of cognitive defense +1; Cost: 2,500gp.

*Omen:* When worn, the robe imparts a sense of curiosity when dealing with arcane devices, substances, or writings. The wearer may appear distant or in many cases mad, to others who are not familiar with such deep thinkers.

## HISTORY

Long ago, Zagig Yragerne became apprenticed to a distant cousin, the famed Mage and Bard, Heward. Under the tutelage of Heward, Zagig's prodigious powers blossomed quickly. During this time, he gained a unique understanding of magic, making him one of the first wizards in the Flanaess to posit the inherently chaotic nature of magic. (**Knowledge [history] DC 15; Rites of Magic ritual; see below**).

The robe was once the possession of the Grey Seer, a mysterious figure who was reputedly both a wizard of awesome power and a cleric of Boccob. Upon his death, the robe passed to his student Zagig Yragerne, who joined up with a ragtag group of now legendary adventurers called the Company of Seven. (**Knowledge [history] DC 20; Knowledge of the Past; see below**).

Zagig Yragerne's once a powerful archmage undertook various magical theories and practices viewed extremely controversial by various rivals in the arcane spellcasting community. His theories are dubbed 'wild' magic by his opponents in the Society of the Magi. The end result is Zagig's departure from the world of socialized arcane study and a more generalized scope of magical understanding. (**Knowledge [history] DC 25; Rites of the Archmagi ritual; see below**).

Nearly a century ago, Zagig Yragerne, former ruler of the city of Greyhawk, Archmage of Castle Greyhawk, and servant of Boccob, achieves immortality. Through an arcane process, and with the assistance of many notable personages, including the deity St. Cuthbert of the Cudgel, Zagig Yragerne finally achieves the object of a century long research project. He entraps nine of the most powerful demigods on Oerth, using their combined power in an apparatus of arcane manufacture by which he cuts

a piece of the Obelisk (which controls something called the Earth Stone.) These artifacts, buried deep under the lowest dungeons of Castle Greyhawk, are a mystery even to most deities. Using the power of the Obelisk, Zagig opened a nexus between his spirit and the Planes of Power. And so, by the wishes of Boccob, Zagig transforms himself into a demigod. (**Knowledge [history] DC 30; Imprisoning the Nine ritual; see below**).

## LEGACY RITUALS

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The following three rituals are required to unlock all the abilities of the Robe of the Mad Archmage.

**Rites of Magic:** You must repair the robe using pure-silver threading and fine cloth worth 2,500gp. Afterward a mending spell must be used to mend the new materials together. To repair the robe doing so you must make a Spellcraft skill check DC 25. Failure means that the materials have not conjoined with the old and the process must be repeated again the next day. Cost: 2,500 gp. Feat Granted: Least Legacy (Robe of the Mad Archmage).

**Knowledge of the Past:** You must take up a semester of studies focusing on the Grey Sage or Zagig Yragerne at the Grey College, Society of the Magi, or Guild of Wizardry in the Free City of Greyhawk. At the end of these studies you must make a successful Knowledge (arcane) skill check DC 25. Failure means taking another semester of studies at any of the institutions and any costs incurred during such a time.

**Rites of the Archmagi:** You must take on a study in the arcane arts that is viewed as controversial or taboo. In doing so, you must continue your work despite social recalcitrance. After a week of study and making a successful Spellcraft skill check DC 30, you may cease the studies and add the results to your spellbook. Failure means

starting over from the beginning. Cost: 13,000 gp. Feat Granted: Lesser Legacy (Robe of the Mad Archmage).

**Imprisoning the Nine:** You must travel to Greyhawk Castle and study the chambers where the nine gods were imprisoned. During this time you must perform an in-depth study of the castle and its environs. Afterward you must perform an 8-hour rite to attune Robe of the Mad Archmage to magical forces still lingering in the obelisk chamber. Cost: 40,000 gp. Feat Granted: Greater Legacy (Robe of the Mad Archmage).

### **Wearer Requirements**

Wizards and Sorcerers are the most likely characters to wear the Robe of the Mad Archmage, though many have heard the calling of the arcane secrets it imparts upon its users.

### **Robe of the Mad Archmage User Requirements**

Must be an arcane spellcaster, Must be able to cast 2nd-level arcane spells.

## **LEGACY ITEM ABILITIES**

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All the following are legacy item abilities of the Robe of the Mad Archmage.

**Rites of Magic (Ex):** The Robe of the Mad Archmage's curious spirit slowly awakens as its wielder grows in power. As it does so its Armor Class bonus slowly increases. Starting at a +1 insight bonus to AC, and increasing every 5 levels, to a maximum of +5 insight bonus to AC at 20th-level.

When you attain 5th level, the robes curious spirit begins to awaken, and it becomes an intelligent item (Intelligence 13, Wisdom 10, and Charisma 13). It's Ego score begins at 3 and increases as noted on Table A-1: Robe of the Mad Archmage.

A personality conflict occurs any time the wearer attempts to remove the robe to don another magical garment. Robe of the Mad

Archmage's alignment is chaotic neutral, and it communicates via empathy. Its primary emotion is a curious longing, typically directed at magical treasure or arcane writings. The robe can hear and see to a range of 60 feet.

At 8th level, Robe of the Mad Archmage's Intelligence and Charisma scores each improve to 16. It can now communicate telepathically, and it speaks Abyssal, Celestial, Common, and Draconic. It can hear to a range of 60 feet and see to the same range using darkvision.

At 11th level, the robes sentience is fully awakened. Its Intelligence and Charisma scores each improve to 18, and it gains the ability to speak Flan and Ancient Suloise in addition to its other languages. It can hear to a range of 120 feet and see to the same range using darkvision, and it has blindsense with a range of 120 feet.

**Knowledge of the Past (Ex):** While wearing the Robe of the Mad Archmage, you gain an insight bonus on all saving throws. When you attain 6th-level, this bonus is +1, at 14th-level it improves to +3, and at 19th-level it maxes out at +5.

**Rites of the Archmagi (Ex):** The Robe of the Mad Archmage acts as a robe of blending and grants a +2 bonus to defeat a creature's spell resistance.

**Imprisoning the Nine (Ex):** Starting at 13th-level the wearer of the Robe of the Archmage may quicken any spell up to 6th-level, three times per day. At 18th-level this ability increases and the user may quicken any spell up to 9th-level, three times per day. Spell already prepared or affected by a metamagic feat may not be quickened in this fashion.

**Spell storing (Sp):** Beginning at 12th-level, you may store five levels of spell in the robe to be used at any time. At 17th-level the number of spells you may store doubles to 10. Activating these spells is considered a move action.

## Rogues Gallery

# Morginstaler, Red Dragon of the Rift

By Casey Brown with Special Thanks to Eric Anondson

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Of all the creatures in the Rift Canyon, one has risen to a position of dominance. Morginstaler (mor`gen`stel`ar), the Red Dragon of the Rift, lays claim to the Rift and its environs, save for Riftcrag (which the dragon has 'graciously' ceded to the Greater Boneheart Cranzer, for the time being).

For the most part, Morginstaler is happy dominating the various denizens who live in the eastern portions of the Rift Canyon. However, from time to time, he explores the western areas of the Rift as well as the Rift Barrens, enjoying his dreams of power as he terrorizes the puny mortals that he finds. The only thing that he fears is a larger, more powerful dragon (such as Dragotha, or perhaps the Green Dragon of Lake Aqal). The minions of Iuz certainly do not scare him, although he has a healthy respect for Cranzer's powers, and he has slain his fair share of demons that have strayed too far into his territory.

During his excursions, Morginstaler is always on the lookout for comely maidens regardless of their race. He also has a penchant for "hiring" humanoids to do various tasks for him. He might approach a group of PCs to "recruit" them into scouting Cranzer's defenses in Riftcrag, Guardian General Hok's defenses in Hallorn, the defenses in Wraithkeep, or the County's defenses in Rowyna or Blianc. Alternatively, he might simply order the PCs to enter an ancient crypt deep in the Rift, or even in the Wormcrawl Fissure itself in search of a long lost artifact. For these reasons, Morginstaler can sometimes be seen flying high above the roads connecting Riftcrag to Stoink and Wraithkeep to Sarresh. Smart merchants and adventurers travel these

roads at night, 'lest they attract the dragon's attention.

Morginstaler is not above coercing PCs into doing his bidding by threatening to destroy nearby villages or cities, or kidnapping one of their number (preferably a female) and holding them hostage until the assigned task has been completed. Failure to do as Morginstaler demands often ends with the dragon attacking.

Even towards those who agree to help him, Morginstaler is a horrible employer. He believes that humanoids should consider it an honor to work for him. Therefore, there is a distinct lack of pay involved. Paladins need not worry about losing their paladinhood if they agree to cooperate with the dragon if it is the only way to rescue a friend or save a village while avoiding a fight, if doing as the dragon commands will avoid such a fate. Morginstaler particularly enjoys making paladins and clerics of lawful gods promise to complete his mission to the best of their abilities.

As Morginstaler approaches a group of characters, he will be careful to watch them to see if they cast any spells. If he spots any magic being used he will attempt to identify it using his Spellcraft skill. If the spell is defensive in nature, he says nothing (other than to chuckle). If he fails a Spellcraft skill check or manages to detect that the spell is offensive in nature (or an offensive combat buff spell), he will give the PC one warning, shouting "I wouldn't do that if I were you!" If the character persists, he will first seek to subdue the offending PC before continuing with his business.

Morginstaler is very treacherous. He is just as likely to have some of his offspring (he mates with virtually anything that can be mated with and he enjoys watching his spawn fight other monsters and adventurers) ambush the returning PCs as he is to let the PCs go. Should the PCs survive, Morginstaler graciously allows them to leave, since he will have enjoyed their struggles immensely and feels no real strong attachment towards his offspring.

Due to his *mask of lies*, Morginstaler does not detect as evil. All of his possessions are hidden by the mask's glamor. A DC 27 (+1/10 ft. between the PC and Morginstaler) Spot check will allow a PC to see through this disguise.

Morginstaler's initial starting attitude is typically indifferent. However, he will be Unfriendly towards dragon disciples of a metallic heritage. As he is chaotic and evil, and generally a "kill first, ask questions later" kind of dragon, all Diplomacy attempts suffer a -10 Circumstance penalty unless the Diplomacy attempt specifically appeals to him as a chaotic evil dragon (think lots and lots of flattery). PCs who are female and/or speak Draconic to him receive a +2 bonus to Diplomacy. Female PCs who flirt with him receive an additional +2 bonus. PCs who provide information about the location, age, and size of other red or gold dragons that they have encountered gain a +5 bonus (if they are lying, this is opposed by Morginstaler's Sense Motive check). For every 1,000gp worth of magic items given to him, the PC receives a +1 Circumstance bonus (max +10). PCs who say that they have

never heard of Morginstaler, Red Dragon of the Rift, suffer a -10 Circumstance bonus. He will immediately attack if he is disrespected or made Hostile.

If Morginstaler converses with a female (of any race) with a Charisma of



14 or higher, he will attempt to flirt with that character. Should a female with a Charisma of 14 or higher flirt back with Morginstaler, he will invite them to go on a "Tour of the Rift Canyon and its majestic wonders" with him. Naturally, good and lawful aligned PCs should find this idea abhorrent, but a chaotic neutral and neutral PC (or several!) might just take him up on his offer. In this event, he will take the female PC(s) on a tour of the Rift Canyon, flying through the Rift and slaughtering various monsters to show off. For dinner, he will order the Men of the Rift (see Living Greyhawk Gazetteer) to prepare the PC(s) a feast (or else!). After dinner, he will take the PC(s) on a nighttime flight through the Rift Canyon, which, with a beautiful starry night and the light of the two moons, should be incredibly romantic. Morginstaler has a number of secondary lairs spread throughout the eastern Rift Canyon where he plays host in human form

with the aid of a phylactery of change. Thus, the adventurous PC(s) will never learn the true location of his lair.

The following day, Morginstaler delivers the PC(s) to a previously agreed upon area as promised (they might have to wait for their friends to arrive). The PC is fatigued but otherwise unharmed.

Despite being a being of chaos and destruction, Morginstaler is able to curb his base impulses. This is because he enjoys the fear the threat of his attacks bring as much as the actual destruction he wreaks when he does decide to decimate a town. Even though he will not admit it to himself, deep down he knows that should Cranzer become truly annoyed with him, the Boneheart could bring very powerful forces to bear against him.

### **Morginstaler, Dragon of the Rift CR 21**

Male mature adult red dragon barbarian 1/pious templar 1

CE Huge dragon (fire)

**Init** +5; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses, low-light vision; Listen +33, Spot +32

**Aura** frightful presence (210-ft. radius, HD 24 or fewer, Will DC 27 negates)

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Orc

**AC** 40, touch 12, flat-footed 39; miss chance 20% (*bracelet of minor displacement*)

**AC breakdown:** (-2 Size, +4 mage armor, +3 deflection, +1 Dex, +24 natural)

**hp** 436 (27 HD); DR 10/magic

**Immune** fire, magic sleep effects, paralysis

**Resist** mettle, True Believer; SR 23

**Fort** +31, **Ref** +19, **Will** +24

**Weakness** vulnerability to cold

**Speed** 50 ft. (10 squares), fly 150 ft. (poor)

**Melee** +43 bite (2d8+18, crit 20/ x3) and +43 claws of the ripper (2d6+11, crit 19-20/x4) or

+44/+39/+34 claw (2d6+11/19-20x4) and +43 wings (x2) (1d8+11) and +43 tail slap (2d6+24, crit 20/ x2)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (bite 15 ft.)

**Base Atk** +27; **Grp** +48

**Atk Options:** Power Attack, rage 1/day

**Special Actions:** breath weapon, crush

**Combat Gear:** divine scroll (spike growth, command plants, and discern lies), scroll of dispelling breath (CL 10), rear claw gauntlets (boots) of speed

**Pious Templar Spells Prepared** (CL 1st):

1st—*divine sacrifice*

Deity: Garyx.

**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 9th):

4th (5/day)—*blinding breath, polymorph*

3rd (7/day) - *dispel magic, protection from energy, slow* (DC 18)

2nd (7/day) - *invisibility, resist energy, scintillating scales, wraithstrike*

1st (7/day) - *alarm, charm person* (DC 16), *cure light wounds, mage armor\*, true strike*

0 (6/day) - *detect poison, detect magic, read magic, mage hand, message, arcane mark, prestidigitation, cure minor wounds*

\*Already cast

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th):

7/day - *locate object*.

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**Abilities** Str 37, Dex 12, Con 28, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 21

**SQ** fast movement

**Feats:** Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Multiattack, Improved Rapidstrike (claw), Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Breath, Rapidstrike (claw), True Believer (Garyx), Weapon Focus (claw)

**Skills:** Bluff +24, Concentration +39, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +17, Intimidate +36, Jump +51, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +10, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +33, Search +31, Sense Motive +22, Spellcraft +6, Spot +32

**Possessions:** combat gear, plus *amulet of mighty fists +5*, *claws of the ripper*, *bracelet of minor displacement* (acts as the cloak), *gemstone of light fortification*, *ioun stone pink rhomboid*, *mask of lies*, *phylactery of change*, *ring of protection +3*, *ioun stone of resistance +4*

**Breath Weapon (Su):** 50-foot cone, 14d10 fire, Reflex DC 31 half.

**Crush (Ex):** Area 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Small or smaller opponents take 2d8+24 points of bludgeoning damage, and must succeed on a DC 31 Reflex save or be pinned.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** The ability takes effect automatically whenever the dragon attacks, charges, or flies overhead. 210-ft. radius, HD 24 or fewer, Will DC 27 negates. On a failure, creatures with 4 or less HD become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with 5 or more HD become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Dragons ignore the frightful presence of other dragons.

**Tactics:** Remember, as soon as Morginstaler attacks, his frightful presence ability is automatically activated.

In combat, Morginstaler will use every method at his disposal to cause as much damage and death as possible. Once attacked, he will not accept any surrender attempts unless those he is attacking went on a tour of the Rift with him—these he will allow to live.

Morginstaler is a melee terror and prefers to fight while on the ground, although he does enjoy diving an opponent and swiping their head clean off with his *claws of the ripper*. He prefers to open combat with a blinding breath quickened breath weapon before activating his “boots” of haste, raging, and then charging into melee. Morginstaler prefers to use the Power Attack feat for 10, unless he casts wraithstrike, then he Power Attacks for 25.

If Morginstaler uses the Spellcraft skill to identify that a PC has cast the delay death spell,

he will make sure to coup d' grace any downed opponents he can reach if he has nothing better to do with his actions. He will use his True Believer feat if he successfully uses the Spellcraft skill to identify a spell that will cause him serious damage or irritation should he fail the save.

If the party poses a serious threat, he will fly away while he casts ability enhancing spells before returning to the fight. If he is dropped below 150 hit points he will flee, seeking the PCs out at a future date when he is better prepared for their defenses and tactics.

In short, Morginstaler is a CR 21 creature that few parties below an average party level of sixteen should be able to threaten. The PCs should be scared to death that at any moment he is going to change his mind and decide to eat them. If the PCs provoke him into a fight, he will use every means at his disposal to kill them. After all, he is chaotic evil.

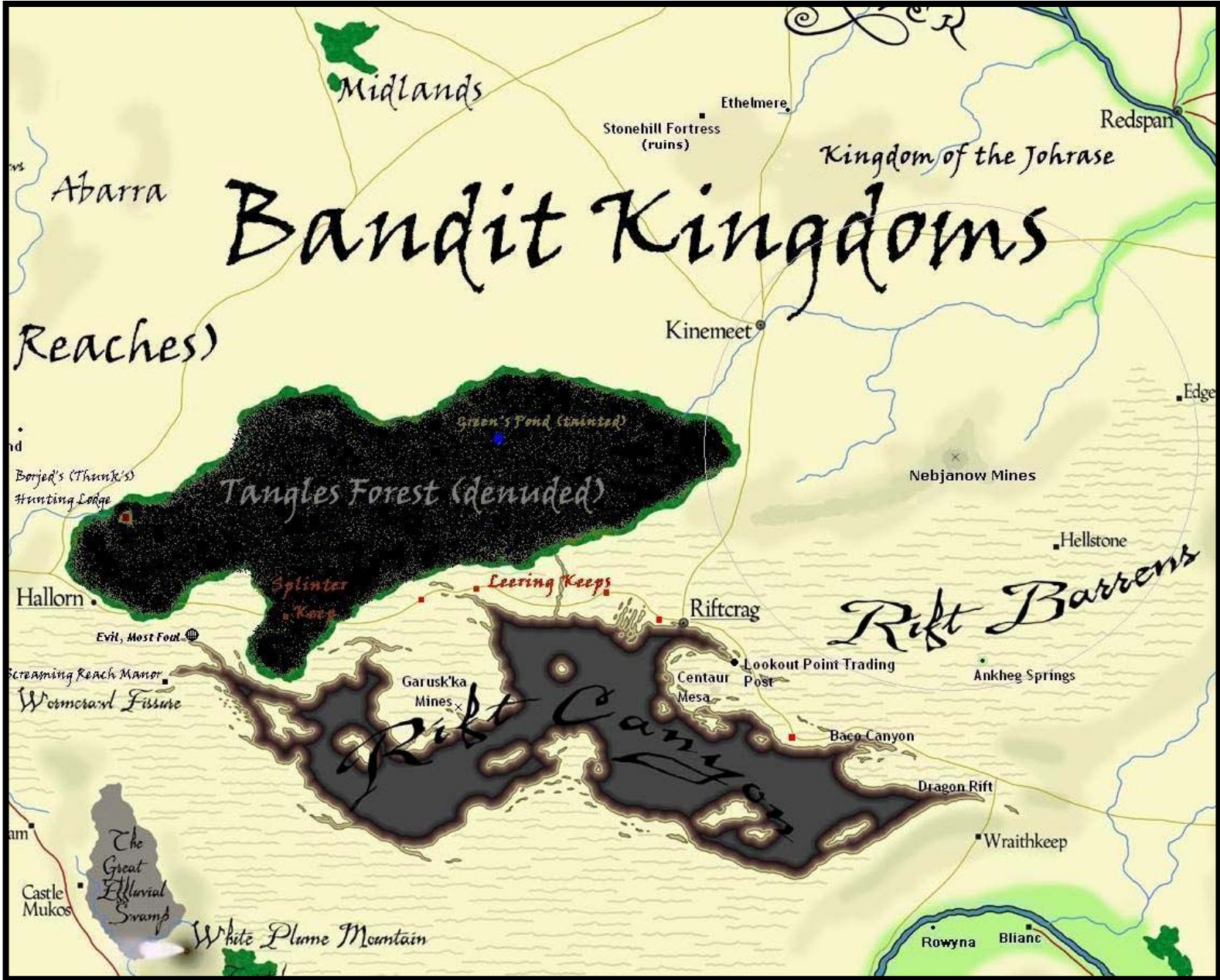
**Notes:** Overall length: 66 feet; Standing height: 14 feet; maximum wingspan: 90 feet; weight: 24,000 lbs. These values are for descriptive purposes only. In all regards, treat as a Huge-sized dragon.

Morginstaler's CR has been raised by 1 due to favorable magic item equipment possession. Many of these items were crafted especially for him by Menfri Rauveen, Sage of the Rift Canyon.

**Sources:** Iuz the Evil, Living Greyhawk Gazetteer. Original concept for Morginstaler created by Keith Symcox, author of BDK 3-03 Trouble at Baco Canyon, Special thanks to Eric Anondson, formerly of the Shield Lands Triad, for allowing us to use, and modify, the map that he created. Other examples of his work can be found at [Canonfire.com](http://Canonfire.com).

# Appendix I: Map of the Rift Canyon area - Circa 596 CY

By Eric Anondson





# Arcanology of Magical Nodes and Structures in the Flanaess

By Rick “Duicarthan” Miller

Why do wizards build towers?

This question has lingered in the minds of gamers for nearly thirty years. A wizard’s tower, while acting as his place of study and research, is in itself a focus for arcane energies. Quite often these towers are built on sites of astrological import, ley lines, or on sites of ancient ruins still bearing arcane energies.

Many wizards’ towers are warded with magical defenses. Good examples of these are the forests and Towers of High Sorcery from the Dragonlance Campaign Setting. Other examples include Rary the Traitor’s tower from the World of Greyhawk Campaign Setting, Tenser’s tower on the Lake of Unknown Depths, Spinecastle, or even Saruman’s tower of Orthanc from the Lord of the Rings books/movies.

The basic design of a tower will often be such that it serves to focus a spellcaster’s capabilities, enhancing them according to the latent power tied to the site. Regardless of what form they may actually take or what phenomenon might cause them, collections of raw latent magical power are referred to as nodes.

## Nodes

The deep magic of the world exists in the form of nodes, which once discovered come to be viewed as places of great magical import. Nodes are located at the juncture of strands of magical power known as ley lines which cover the world much like a web. Whether fueled by elemental forces, the movement of celestial bodies or the blood of the earth itself, sites built at a juncture of these strands allow great powers to be tapped by

those with the proper knowledge. One such place is Magepoint on the shores of the Nyr Dyv. Multiple ley lines converge at Magepoint, and though the arcane power of the site has been only partially harnessed it grants the local denizens metamagic capabilities far beyond their current ability.

Sites such as Magepoint act as an amplifier to spells, gathering or storing various energies. Possible sites for nodes include druid groves, arcane towers, or sacred temples. These structures themselves over time become symbols of power to common folk, but it is only the knowledgeable few that truly understand the source from which that power arises.

## Size of a Node

There are many strands of varying size in the web of magic permeating the world. The size of a particular node and the area that its power affects are summarized on the chart below.

d6 Roll	Size	Area of Effect
1	Small Node	60ft.-radius
2	Medium Node	120ft.-radius
3	Large Node	250ft.-radius
4	Huge Node	500ft.-radius
5	Massive Node	750ft.-radius
6	Junction Node	1,000ft.-radius+

## Shadow Helixes

The nature of magic has long been shrouded in mystery. What is known is that all spells draw upon one form of energy or another for their power. Divine spells utilize the power of some deity or another channeled through a faithful spellcaster, whereas arcane magic is itself born of

glimmerings of insight into the mysteries of the universe. Divine and arcane magic each have a unique pattern and as such leave a distinct wake in reality where they manifest, much like the ripples caused by a rock striking a calm pond. The ripples produced vary in size according to the power of the spell cast. Simple magics leave a small wake while powerful magics can produce tremendous waves in the currents of magic.

These currents, also called helixes, mark the passage of great magic. Over time these currents will calm, leaving only a faint reminder of their passing.

Stresses or overdraws on the raw energy from a node often results in a noticeable side effect called a shadow helix. These helixes appear much like the auroras of the north with hues of violet, deep blues and radiant pink. One such site is the Spinning Helix of the Archmage located in the Abbor-Alz hills in the World of Greyhawk. Occasionally, this erratic moving phenomenon phases into existence only to disappear just as quickly as it came.

Very rarely a shadow helix will appear over a location where powerful magic has been cast or has manifested, such as in the instance of an avatar of a Greater God gating to the Prime Material Plane. Predicting where shadow helixes will appear is only possible through the use of the most powerful of divinatory magics.

### **Exhausting a Magical Node**

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Overusing or abusing a node causes it to slowly lose its abilities. For each week that the site is overdrawn, it loses the potency of its abilities in the following week. If this occurs for several months on end, the site may reach a critical point

where it either negates all magical auras or creates wild unforeseen anomalies. (For Example, a site which grants spell storage, lesser than that is overdrawn by 5 levels would not be able to grant those 5 levels of spells the following week.)

Prolonged overuse or abuse of nodes is rumored to be the cause of wild magic and dead magic zones.

### **Tapping into the Magic Source**

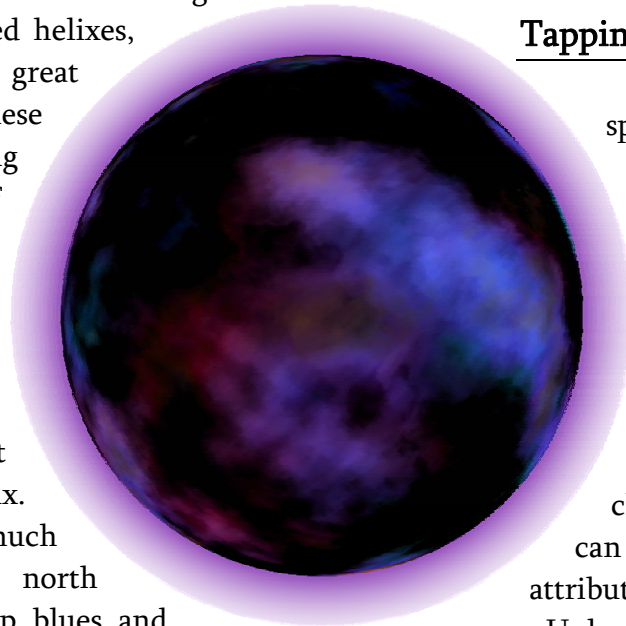
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To tap the power of a node the spellcaster must attune to it by making a successful Spellcraft skill check DC 20. Each time a caster casts a spell on a magical node he must make a successful Spellcraft check equal to 15 + the spell's level. If the Spellcraft check is failed the spell is cast but receives no bonuses. If the check is successful, the spellcaster can apply one of the bonuses below attributed to the site.

Unless otherwise stated, an untapped node produces benefits equal to that rolled on the scale below. If the site has been tapped the node provides a pre-chosen benefit rolled from the same scale. To do this a spellcaster must attune to the particular site to gain its benefits for a long period of time, otherwise all effects end after they have been used and may not be used again without another Spellcraft skill check.

#### **Attunement**

After a spellcaster has tapped a benefit from a node they must then spend one day per result on the scale below to lock this effect into place. Otherwise the node functions for any other spellcaster as the scale below. During this time, they may not perform arduous tasks, cast time consuming spells that require more than one standard action, or leave the node at any time. At the end of the allotted time the caster must make



one last Spellcraft check DC 20 to conclude the attunement. Failure to stick to these strict regimen results in the effect being lost and the process must be started anew.

The ritual of attuning oneself to a magical source varies according to the source itself. A ring of stone monoliths empowered by astrological movements would require the attunement ritual to be conducted during a new moon or similar astrological event. The spellcaster makes an attunement check at the end of the ritual.

The attunement check total designates the highest ability the caster has access to from the site. For example, an attunement total of 39 allows the caster to choose any power of 39 or lower on the chart to apply when casting a spell, using an ability, or when making a skill check.

Once a site has been attuned to either divine or arcane magic, any caster of the opposing form of magic suffers a -10 penalty on all Spellcraft checks made to tap or attune to the site. Likewise, a cleric or druid whose alignment is one step or more away from the attuned site owner's alignment suffers a -2 penalty to Spellcraft checks to tap or attune to the site for each step away from the preset alignment. For example: A Lawful Evil cleric attempting to tap into an attuned True Neutral druid circle would suffer a -4 penalty (-2 for being lawful, -2 for being evil) for attempting to tap into the site. This penalty stacks with any consecration/ desecration penalties as well, so consecrated holy/unholy sites built on a node are usually well protected from use by outsiders.

Once a site has been tapped its benefits cannot be changed unless another spellcaster first makes a Caster Level check and overcomes the other spellcaster, or a year passes. Once per year the spellcaster must renew the attunement to keep the node active; this requires a Spellcraft check (DC 20). Failure to do so means that the site loses its attunement and the attunement process must be begun anew.

### Probable Site Bonuses

Caster Level + d20	Effect
01-02	+2 insight bonus to any Craft or Profession skill checks.
03-04	+2 insight bonus to Knowledge (arcana, religion, or the planes) skill checks.
05-06	+2 insight bonus to Concentration or Spellcraft skill checks.
07-08	+2 insight bonus to Decipher Script or Use Magic Device skill checks.
09-10	Spell storage, lesser (5 levels/ week)
11-12	Recall a spell as a pearl of power, lesser (1-3) once per day.
13-14	Scry anywhere within 1,000 yards of the site. (At/ will)
15-16	Add the metamagic feats (Silent Spell, Still Spell, Heighten Spell)
17-18	+2 insight bonus on any dispel caster level checks.
19-20	Grants the Improved Counterspell feat.
20-21	+2 insight bonus to defeat a creatures' Spell Resistance.
22-23	Spell storage, improved (10 levels/ week)
25-25	Recall a spell as a pearl of power, improved (4-6)
26-27	+2 Caster Level Bonus to specific spellcasting schools.
28-29	+1 to Caster Level when creating magical items.
30-31	Eschew Materials on one spell/ day.
32-33	Lowers XP costs in item creation by 10%
34-35	Add the metamagic feats (Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Empower Spell)
36-37	+1 Caster Level Bonus to all spells cast from the site.
38-39	Recall a spell as a pearl of power, greater (7-9)
40-41	Spell storage, greater (20 levels/ week)
42-43	Lowers XP costs for spellcasting by 10%.
44-45	Grants Spell Resistance 5 + character level while inside the tower.
46-47	Grants one extra spell per level/ day.
48-49	Add the metamagic feats (Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Widen Spell).
50	Immunity to divination attempts/ scrying (while at the site.)

**Note:** Applying metamagic feats only works on spell cast at the node and is does not provide bonuses to spells prepared. Further, the spells level does not increase when applying

metamagic feats to spell cast, the exception to this rule is the Heighten Spell metamagic feat. In this instance, only the spells save DC is increased and only up to the level of spells the caster can access. For instance, a 14th level sorcerer can heighten a spell only up to 7th level and no further.

Possible bonuses granted depend on its astrological, ley-line position, or crafted enhancements. In addition, any spellcaster wishing to make use of a node must take longer to cast the spell they wish to be augmented. (See the Spellcasting Adjustment table below)

### Spellcasting Adjustment Table

Normal Casting Time	Adjusted Casting Time
1 swift action (or less)	1 standard action
1 standard action	1 round
1 round	1 minute
1 minute	10 minutes

**Note:** For spells with a casting time of multiple minutes, simply multiply the normal casting time by 10.

### Wondrous Architecture

Covered in the Stronghold Builder's Guidebook wondrous architecture may often be found within buildings. Spellcasters wishing to either boost their skills or to lighten their spell-load may often create such devices. In many cases, such devices work to aid in the caster in his day to day activities, to expedite travel, or to aid in certain arcane research projects.

Such items might include a scrying pool, a teleportation circle, a summoning circle, or even a loom of mending.

### Prepared Spell Storage

Due to their busy schedules and oft-times overtaxed spell complement spellcasters often prepare receptacles for arcane spells, much like a phylactery for a lich. These devices hold the stored spells until they are used and are used much like magical wondrous items.

During a lengthy siege or even in research these devices come in exceedingly useful saving the spellcaster hours of preparation time that they do not have.

An arcane tower can be crafted to hold a certain level of stored spells or in some cases be utilized to recall a certain amount of spells cast per day. These effects act like a pearl of power or a ring of spell storing, except that any arcane spellcaster within the tower may use the stored spells, so long as they have been taught the incantation to do so. Activating or recalling a spell acts as a standard action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

### Common Magical Wards and Traps

Many strongholds of infamous wizards are known for magical wards and insidious devices used to keep outsiders away. The most common spells used in such as dimensional lock, fire trap, glyph of warding, illusory wall, and the various symbol spells.

Below are a few of the lesser-used wards that may be employed in protecting an edifice.

**Guards and Wards:** CR 6; location trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (spell effect guards and wards, 11th-level wizard with 20 INT, see descriptions below); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

- *arcane lock, dancing lights, fog cloud, magic mouth:* none
- *confusion, silent image, suggestion:* Will DC 21
- *gust of wind, stinking cloud:* Fort DC 21
- *web:* Ref DC 21

### Transporting a Structure

The sheer force to transport a tower requires weeks of research to discover a likely position to where the towers functions may still aid the caster. In doing so, the tower no longer grants benefits from its previous position and it must be reset to its new location.

Using specific spells in order may transport their tower and all its contents to another pre-set destination. Doing so requires a

month of study, research and 50gp per mile traveled.

The method of movement chosen determines the spells required. For instance, to have the tower fly to another area one would need to cast reverse gravity and overland flight. While a caster teleporting their tower to another location would require a wish/miracle or similar spell.

One of the more memorable spellcasters' attempting to move his tower was the archmage Rary the Traitor from the World of Greyhawk Campaign Setting. Below is a spell the Archmage of Ket once used to transport his tower overnight from the skyline of Lopolla to the Brass Hills in the Bright Desert.

### Rary's Momentous Transposition

Conjuration [Teleportation]

Spellcraft DC: 36

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Target: Any touched object(s) up to colossal in size.

Duration: Instantaneous.

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

To Develop: 324,000 gp; 7 days; 12,960 XP. Seeds: transport (DC 27). Factors: +31 DC no weight limit (use size), +30 DC size (object only, + distance limitation (colossal 100 miles/ level, gargantuan 1,000 miles/ level, huge 10,000 miles/ level, etc...)

Mitigating factors: burn 1,000 XP (-10 DC), 3 extra-planar casters required (-9 DC), 3 participants contributing a 6th level spell/ spell slot (-33 DC)

This spell envelopes any structure up to colossal in size in a whirling sand devil. This huge sand devil then instantaneously travels to a designated location, as far as 100 miles away per caster level with a colossal object.

XP Cost: 1,000 XP.

### Example Node and Structure

#### Brass Hills Node

Deep within the Brass Hills rests a long forgotten node of magical power overlooked by all but the most astute analysts. The node, once a refuge for the ancient sorcerers of Sulm, reduces the rigors of exhaustive spellcasting.

Any spells requiring an XP expenditure that are cast within one thousand feet of the node cost 10% less XP; this bonus does not apply to the creation of magic items or wondrous architecture.

#### Rary's Tower



*“From his tower, Rary worked awesome magics which had been held in readiness for some time. He summoned yugoloth, elementals, and other creatures from the planes, and charged them with aiding him in transporting his tower, as well as Robilar and his army, into the Bright Desert. There, he ordered them to construct a fortress surrounding the great tower to act as his new headquarters.”—excerpt from Rary the Traitor*

## Properties of the Tower

The tower is made from a rough basalt rich with silver and lead deposits which gives the tower a regal appearance.

**Tower Features:** Unless otherwise noted, the following features are consistent throughout the tower.

**Passages/ Corridors:** All surfaces are made of green-veined white marble and decorated with exotic rugs, tapestries and finery from Ket. All ceilings are set 20ft. high. All walls are 1 ft. thick.

**Floors:** All floor levels are 10 ft. thick.

**Outer Walls/ Outer Shell of Tower:** The outer shell/ walls of the tower are 10ft. thick.

**Doors and Hinges:** All doors except the entryway doors are made of thick-banded bronzewood and typically the entryway doors are triple locked with amazing trapped-locks, chained and arcane locked.

**Lighting:** The corridors/ hallways and rooms of the tower are consistently lit by continual flame torches set in wall sconces.

**Windows:** What few windows there are in the tower are made of *walls of force*.

**Sounds:** Very little sound escapes the tower or its interior rooms. Any Listen check within the tower suffers a -2 terrain modifier.

**Spell Effects:** The halls of this tower are protected by *guards and wards* spells, while the laboratories are warded with *dimensional lock* spells.

**Wondrous Architecture:** Concealed throughout the tower are *arcane eyes*, so little transpires that escapes Rary's' notice. From his private viewing room he can see virtually any part of the castle.

Throughout the tower, intricate circular patterns are inlaid in the fine marble floor.

These act as *dimension doors* that instantly transport the user to any other such pattern. Some of these inlaid patterns are protected by passwords. These passwords are known only to Rary and Robilar.

The roof of the tower is protected by *globe of invulnerability* and *protection from arrows* spells.

Also on the roof is a strange contraption consisting of a bundle of four, one-foot thick *wands of lightning* (CL 10) mounted on wheels so that it can be moved to any location on the roof. The range of these wands is 200ft.

## Other possible sites or nodes:

- Castle Greyhawk
- Cauldron of Night
- The Causeway of Fiends and The Isle of Lost Souls
- City of the Gods
- The Court of Essence (Ivid's Court in Rauxes)
- Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun
- Irongate
- Isle of Woe
- Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth
- Magepoint and the Fortress of Unknown Depths
- Maure Castle
- Permanence
- The Sand Castle of Rinloru
- Slerotin's Tunnel
- Spinecastle
- Spinning Cloud
- Temple of Elemental Evil
- Tovag Baragu
- White Plume Mountain

Of Oerth and Altar

# The Early History of the Volverdyva & the Origin of Cuthbert

By Sam Weiss

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## The Volverdyva Before -400 CY

Prior to the Twin Cataclysms and the Migrations of the Oeridians, the lands of the Volverdyva valley were divided between five main nations.

In the north, the lands between the Crystal River and the Veng River were the home of the Fian Tarb clan of Flan. They were nomadic wanderers who followed the bison herds in the area.

Along the shores of the Nyr Dyv, and extending about halfway to the Att River, the lands were under the control of the Ur-Flan of the Isles of Woe. The Ur-Flan of Woe suffered significant losses from this passage, leaving the Ur-Flan of Tycheron as the dominant power in the region.

From the Crystal River to the Volverdyva River as far south as the Dapple Wood, the Olven Kingdom of Luna shared what was then the southern reaches of the Vesve Forest with the Flan Attla clan. Both peoples worshipped Ehlonna and Trithereon, and they were closely allied against the Ur-Flan of the Isles of Woe and Tycheron.

The plains south of the Volverdyva River to the Fals Gap and both banks of the Volverdyva below the Dapple Wood were claimed by the Ur-Flan of Tycheron, who ruled the Na Fearaigh, herdsmen who followed Rao.

The Ur-Flan of Woe and Tycheron were constantly at war with each other, and regularly raided their neighbors for slaves. The Kingdom of Luna, the Attla, and Fian Tarb were generally friendly, as neither held much interest in the lands of the other. The balance of power had been significantly disrupted with the passage of the eastern Oeridian tribes, particularly the Aerdi and

Nehron, who allied with the Attla and Fian Tarb against the Ur-Flan of Woe as they moved across the central lands, and forced their way across the Ritensa River.

## The Coming of the Voll & the Destruction of Tycheron

The Voll were the first of the western Oeridian tribes to try to escape the Thundering Horde, and the only significant one to make it through the Fals Gap before the Thundering Horde pursued them. They passed the Lorridges around -400 CY, and followed the Fals River to a place near modern day Mitrik before spreading out across the open plains. They forced the Na Fearaigh south taking the rich fields for themselves, which they called the Vales of Luna for the Olven Kingdom just over the river. Unlike the eastern Oeridians they didn't try to cross the river, believing they could follow the River to its mouth before continuing east. The Tycheronese, with their rivals from the Isle of Woe still weakened from the passage of the eastern Oeridians, were able to gather their forces, and halt the advance of the Voll near the area of modern day Devarnish. When the Thundering Horde followed, the Voll were trapped between the Horde and the Tycherones, and again subjugated by the Thundering Horde.

After subduing the Voll, the Thundering Horde continued forward, their momentum driving the Tycheronese back as far as the Iron Wood where the Tycheronese were able to hold. The leader of the Horde, Krogosh Mak, turned and crossed the Volverdyva River, bypassing most of the defenses. To aid in breaking the defenses

the Tycheronese had raised, Krogosh Mak had the forest burned, destroying thousands of square miles, and breaking their defensive lines. Unfortunately the massive destruction brought the Kingdom of Luna and their Attla allies into the war, and the advance of the Horde slowed as they fought armies to the north and the east. The delays caused Krogosh Mak to order more of the forest fired, to block the armies of Luna and the Attla. Thus allowing the Horde to obliterate the lower reaches of the Volverdyva River on their way to Tycheron. In -307, after a year long siege, the walls of Tycheron were thrown down, and the city razed, but Krogosh Mak was slain in the final battle, and the Horde began to break up.

## **The Splintered Horde & the Conquest of the Valley**

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As the Thundering Horde broke up, the various groups set out to conquer different parts of the valley.

The majority of the Hoch-Jebli went north along the Nyr Dyv, destroying the Ur-Flan of Woe. Near modern day Gorsend they split into two groups. The larger part followed the Hargrak tribe across the Crystal River where they drove out the Fian Tarbh. The smaller part followed the Gerregak tribe remained south of the Crystal River, enslaving the former subjects of the Ur-Flan of Woe, eventually crossing the Ritensa and slowly expanding towards the Artonsomay.

The majority of the Euroz continued the war against the Kingdom of Luna and the Attla. Although divided into five major tribes<sup>1</sup> they were able to remain united long enough to conquer the central regions before settling down to despoil the forest and fight each other.

The last major Euroz tribe, the Nzuergh remained by the mouth of the Volverdyva. Those lesser tribes ruled a motley assortment of minor tribes of Euroz and Jebline, including most of the Jebli, too weak to follow the others north, or too afraid of being dominated by them. Instead they

remained where they were, and spread out in the plains south of the Volverdyva to rule the remnants of the Voll and Na Fearaigh for the self-proclaimed heir of Krogosh Mak. This choice proved profitable for those lesser tribes, when a generation later the Old Faith druids of the Gnarley Forest emerged to take their vengeance on those who had despoiled the forests of the lower Volverdyva River. The majority of the leading Nzuergh tribe was slaughtered, the survivors fleeing north where they forced a passage along the Ritensa River until they found sanctuary in the Fellreev Forest. This left the minor tribes with no competition for the rich lands and human slaves except each other. None was able to rise to a position of dominance, and the lands were divided into dozens of petty tribal holdings.

## **The Death & Rebirth of Cuthbert**

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Among the slaves taken by the Thundering Horde was a young initiate of Delleb named Cuthbert. Few slaves of the Horde lasted long, but Cuthbert endured, surviving the torments of his captors through raw strength of will. He outlived the Horde, witnessing the death of Krogosh Mak and the razing of Tycheron, and saw the Horde split apart afterwards, though he remained a slave of the Euroz who claimed the place of Krogosh Mak. During the long years of his enslavement, Cuthbert found no place for the reason or learning he once embraced. Survival was the only thing that mattered. To the amusement of his captors he blamed the Flan slaves for his suffering, and not only ignored their suffering, but would add to it if it meant making his own life easier. He would turn in Flan trying to escape, and became a trusted overseer, pushing those under him to meet all the requirements of the Horde.

As he grew older and his strength faded he looked for an opportunity to strike back at those who had enslaved him and were sure to feast on



his body the moment they thought he was no longer strong enough to serve as an overseer. It was then that his redemption occurred. The Old Faith druids of the Gnarley Forest had planned their vengeance on the despoilers of the forest for many years. As their forces infiltrated the fortress of the Euroz, two people saw them – a lone Eiger guard, and the aged Cuthbert. Recognizing in the dark-skinned invaders he had spent years oppressing for the Euroz a chance at vengeance, Cuthbert engaged the Eiger alone, armed with only the stout billet of wood the Euroz allowed him to control the other slaves. The enraged Eiger made short work of the elderly Cuthbert, crushing him to the ground then turning to raise the alarm, but the delay had been enough as a savage wolf companion to one of the druids raced up and tore out the Eiger's throat. The druids swarmed through the camp, slaughtering nearly the entire tribe. The few survivors fled, finding sanctuary deep beneath the ground in the hidden caves of Blackthorn. As for Cuthbert, the druids found his broken body, his life fading as his blood soaked the earth around him. His reputation was well known, but as they were preparing to leave him, an elder druid declared he was to be returned to Beory to finish atoning for his sins. One of them stepped forward and ended Cuthbert's misery with a silver sickle as the elder intoned the ritual of reincarnation. Cuthbert would be reborn, although not immediately.

According to the stories told by his followers, Cuthbert woke up to find himself in a field far from any sign of war. Nearby, he heard two men arguing, a Flan shepherd and an Oeridian horseman. As they disputed who was to graze their herd first, the animals were wandering off, many into dangerous situations. Cuthbert leaped forward, chastising them both for their foolish arguing while the herds they were supposed to be caring for came to harm while untended. The men turned on Cuthbert, challenging him for showing concern where he

had no obvious interest, and denying there was any reason for them to care about the other. Cuthbert replied that he had a responsibility to help, whether or not he was directly affected or not, and explaining how they would both benefit from actively working together instead of simply not fighting. The two men then transformed into Rao and Delleb, and told Cuthbert that he had failed in his responsibility to his fellow men during his life, but that he was being given a second chance. They would instruct him, and then return him to Oerth to minister to both peoples, freeing them from their servitude to the Euroz and Jebline. Cuthbert spent many years with them, studying the ways of both, and learning just how much both people had in common. When he was ready, they allowed the reincarnation to carry him back to Oerth.

### **The Legend of Cuthbert**

Cuthbert was returned to Oerth sometime around -200 CY. He was shocked to discover that he had been gone for more than a lifetime, and more shocked at the state of the Voll and Na Fearaigh. Just as he had done before he died, they spent their efforts struggling to be the favored slaves rather than working together to free themselves. Cuthbert set himself to the task of instructing them in the ways of reason and commonsense.

Cuthbert traveled to a small village. There he preached to the people, telling them how by working together they could be stronger than the Euroz and Jebline that oppressed them. But the people mocked Cuthbert, questioning his words of peace while he carried a cudgel as a weapon. As they taunted him one of the Euroz overseers entered the village and threatened Cuthbert, brandishing his sword and telling him to leave or be slain. Cuthbert lifted up his cudgel and smote the Euroz telling the people, "Preach quietly, but have a large cudgel handy." And the people knew wisdom, and joined Cuthbert in throwing out their oppressors.

Cuthbert traveled to another village and again preached his message. But the people were afraid, telling him that a mighty chieftain led the Hoch-Jebli, and nothing could stop him. Cuthbert stood forth when the oppressors came, the memory of his death hanging over him. But his mission would permit no hesitation. Hefting his cudgel he approached the chieftain, commanding it to leave the village in peace. The chieftain, clad in plate from head to toe, a frightful helm on his head, mocked Cuthbert, telling him his cudgel would be useless against his defenses. The chieftain charged, and Cuthbert smote him upon the head, felling him in one blow, telling the people "Enlightenment can penetrate even the helm of iron." And the people knew wisdom, and joined Cuthbert in throwing out their oppressors.

A man now sought to advance himself at the expense of Cuthbert and the people. He went to the Euroz, telling them of Cuthbert and asking for a reward for revealing his location. The Euroz mocked him, and struck him many blows until he told them with only his life as a reward. The man then went to the Hoch-Jebline, and did the same. Where again, he was met with the same brutal treatment. Finally, he fled to Cuthbert, telling him that the Euroz and Hoch-Jebline knew of him and were coming, and demanding a reward for warning him. Cuthbert lifted up his cudgel and smote the man, telling the people "Capricious behavior brings knots to the heads of those lacking wisdom." And the people knew wisdom, and joined Cuthbert to resist the oppressors.

Cuthbert then rallied the people, but had them conceal themselves from the approaching armies. As the Euroz and Hoch-Jebline armies approached, Cuthbert stepped forth, and asked which of them were to take him. The oppressors fell to fighting amongst themselves, destroying each other as Cuthbert held the people back until both were weak enough to be defeated by his small force, telling them "Foolishness can be

beaten." And the people knew wisdom, and joined Cuthbert in defeating the oppressors.

Cuthbert traveled further, and came to a village where the people lived in fear. They refused Cuthbert's entreaties, turning them aside with clever excuses. Refusing to listen to him and resist the oppressors who never took so much as to threaten their existence. But when the oppressors came they stripped the village bare, and the people in search of Cuthbert, begging his assistance to help them survive the winter, repenting of their previous unbelief. Cuthbert lifted up his cudgel and smote their leader, telling the people "Salvation is better than smart answers." And the people knew wisdom, and joined Cuthbert to drive off the oppressors, and take back their goods.

Cuthbert then came to another village where the people had already freed themselves, and pursued a good and true path. But they were proud, and their leader spoke loudly, brandishing his staff, claiming they did not need to work with any others as their strength was so great. Cuthbert preached anyway, warning them that the oppressors were still numerous, and would overthrow any who stood alone and relied only on their strength. And their leader mocked Cuthbert, saying he would yield only to one who defeated him in battle. Cuthbert lifted up his cudgel, and smote him, telling the people "Some good folk can only understand one thing." And the people knew wisdom, and joined Cuthbert to resist the oppressors.

And so it came to pass that the people grew strong, and began to drive the oppressors out. But some had taken the words of Cuthbert so deeply they felt concern for the fate of those driven off. Some questioned whether they should go to war at all. But Cuthbert spoke to them, allaying their fears, saying "Evil which cannot be removed must be eliminated. And the people knew wisdom, and joined Cuthbert in driving the oppressors from the land.

For a half a century Cuthbert ministered to the Voll and Na Fearaigh, freeing many from their servitude. When he was an elderly man he spoke to his followers one last time, cautioning them against backsliding in his absence, and charging them to finish liberating all the lands in the name of reason. With that he walked down the road and was never seen again.

## **The Faith of Cuthbert**

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Despite his warning the people began to forget his message almost immediately. As a generation grew up that had never heard the message from Cuthbert directly and his first followers grew old, the people fell back into foolishness, and many villages were retaken by the Euroz and Jebline. Half a century after his disappearance, it seemed as though his efforts would be completely wasted. Then a faithful follower, the first among many to come, channeled divine magic in the name of Cuthbert. His followers spread quickly, rallying the people with Cuthbert's message of cooperation, and leading them to battle for their freedom. They soon split off a separate branch to minister to those who joined them when the missionaries and crusaders were away converting new villages and driving off the Euroz and Jebline unbelievers. The faith spread from the river south to the Lortmils, driving the Euroz and Jebline away. The lack of any organization above that of village slowed their growth, and also led to the formation of a third branch of the faith to ensure the doctrine remained true after the missionaries had gone forward to free others. Finally, nearly a century after the first clerics had appeared, the faithful gathered and build their first grand temple and school at Mitrik. It became a focal point for the faith in the valley, and enabled them to spread the faith further despite the continuing independence of each town and village.

With the fertile lands of the Vale of Luna secured, and with a base for the faith at Mitrik, the missionary effort spread further. To the south,

they allied with the Dwur of the Lortmils and the Noniz of the Kron Hills into whose lands the Euroz and Jebline had fled. With them they built the town of Verbobonc on the ruins of the ancient Tycheronese fortifications that had forced the Thundering Horde to cross the river. To the northeast, they allied with the Olven survivors of the Kingdom of Luna, who were quite pleased to find allies in their three hundred year war against the Euroz that had destroyed their homeland. For most of the next century, the faithful of Cuthbert fought alongside the Highfolk, driving the Euroz to the Att River.

In the last decade of the 1st century CY, the ancient wizard Keraptis disappeared from his stronghold in White Plume Mountain. With him gone the forces of the Great Kingdom, the nation founded by the eastern Oeridian tribe of Aerdi, swept across the northern shore of the Nyr Dyv, and crossed the Ritensa River. They drove the Hoch-Jebli out, forcing them onto the harsh prairies beyond the Veng River, and sent the remaining Euroz fleeing along the western shore of Whyestil Lake to the Dulsi River and Opicm River. As the new invaders spread out among the unorganized villages of the Voll and Na Fearaigh, the followers of Cuthbert advised the people to cooperate with the newcomers as they did with each other. The lands that would become Veluna were peacefully incorporated into the new Viceroyalty of Ferrond in 100 CY. In later years, attempts to impose Aerdi culture and suppress the local culture would lead to conflicts with the faith of Pholtus, and Cuthberran support for the independence of the Viceroyalty of Ferrond. he history of that is told in other books.

<sup>1</sup> - The five northern Euroz tribes are the Blighted Grove who later settled the northern Vesve, the Broken Bone who settled the Fellreev, the Kazgund (Dripping Blade) who settled the lands around the Opicm River and the northern shore of the Whyestil Lake, the Urzun (Huerghth) who settled the Howling Hills, and the Kraughth who settled the lands around the Dulsi River.

## Gateway to Adventure

# The Grinning Blue Devil

By Stephen S. Greer

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*"It mocks me with its smile and pulls my strings like a puppeteer. But the puppet has cut its strings! I have locked its grinning face in a box it cannot escape. Ha!"*

-From the diary of Absolom the Mad, last known owner of the *Sapphire Skull of Storms*

The Grinning Blue Devil is a D&D adventure for four 7<sup>th</sup>-level adventurers, although it can be adapted for 5<sup>th</sup>-level or 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>-level characters as outlined in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. The characters are duped in to retrieving a powerful magic item called the Sapphire Skull of Storms from an ancient dungeon. The dungeon is the lair of a band of ogres and other creatures that can be quite challenging. However, the biggest challenge for the adventurers is dealing with the object of their search.

Though, this adventure is set in the Gnarley Forest in the World of Greyhawk, it is easily adaptable to any campaign setting. By completing the adventure, the PCs should amass enough experience points to advance to 8<sup>th</sup>-level. Fighter and rogue characters will have many opportunities to use their skills against the monsters and traps in Deadwood Dungeon. Wizards and sorcerers have a unique opportunity to gain a great boon in a secret chamber of the dungeon.

### Adventure Background

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At the height of their power, the infamous Hierarchs of the Horned Society created numerous magic items to aid them in their obsession for diabolical power and knowledge. Of these fell creations, none were more widely whispered of and feared than the Crystal Skulls of Nerull.

Many of these near-artifact magic items have been destroyed by heroes of good since the first days of their creation. Such is the reputation of their foul power, though, that to this day brave souls still seek to destroy any that yet exist.

A worshipper of Nerull named Athikir Kelvin created one of the Crystal Skulls and dubbed it the Sapphire Skull of Storms. Athikir used it to commit many atrocities before a band of heroes slew him. However, the Sapphire Skull of Storms survived the death of its creator and even claimed the lives of several of the heroes responsible for his demise before disappearing.

Since then it has reappeared for short periods to wreak havoc among mortals before vanishing again. After its last sighting, the Sapphire Skull of Storms has been absent for so long that most believe that it was finally destroyed.

Alas, this is not true. Its last owner, Absolom the Mad, was little more than a pawn under its control, but before his death he built a box that could hold the Crystal Skull powerless inside it. It has remained confined within it in an old dungeon in the Gnarley Forest ever since.

That may soon change, though. A man named Smoke loyal to the now scattered Hierarchs discovered Absolom's diary in a recently acquired treasure hoard. In it, Absolom both curses and praises what he refers to as the "Grinning Blue Devil" and describes how he finally freed himself from its control by sealing it in a box "from which no magic may enter or exit." By using various divinations, Smoke has learned its whereabouts. However, he is hesitant to retrieve it because of the description of its powers written in the diary.

Therefore, Smoke plans to hire or lure a party of adventurers in to the dungeon to recover it for him. By scrying on them from a safe distance, he can keep tabs on them until they have obtained it. He hopes that their curiosity leads them to open the box so he can observe its effects on them. He fears that it may overpower him the way it did its former owner. By testing it on the PCs first, he can learn more about it before attempting to harness its powers.

## **Adventure Summary**

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The PCs meet Smoke who is posing as a professional transporter of exotic goods. He claims to have had an important box stolen by ogres that live in the Gnarley Forest and hires the heroes to reclaim it for him. The PCs travel to the Gnarley Forest and enter Deadwood Dungeon, which is supposedly the lair of the ogres. As they explore the dungeon they encounter some of its hazards and meet the band of ogres and their leader, the ogre mage Okutapu. It is within the lair of the ogre mage that they eventually find the box they came for.

When the PCs are ready to leave the dungeon with the box Smoke attempts to free the Sapphire Skull of Storms from it and observe the ensuing encounter from a distance. He then attempts to abscond with it before the heroes can stop him.

## **Adventure Hooks**

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The most straightforward way to get the PCs involved in the adventure is to have them meet Smoke in the town of Libernen about midway between Littleburg in Furyondy and the Free and Independent City of Dyvers. For whatever reason they happen to be in town, Smoke approaches them and strikes up a conversation starting out something like “You there. You look like the adventuring type... Ever kill any ogres?”

Smoke relates a bogus tale of transporting an exotic box to a nearby town when ogres

attacked him. He escaped with his life, but lost his wagon, the box, and other valuables in the process. The robbers then entered the nearby Gnarley Forest. The locals have told him that it sounds like a group of ogres that lair in Deadwood Dungeon. If the PCs can retrieve the box for him he promises to share his payment for delivering it to the wizard that hired him. In fact, his employer may have an extra reward for them once Smoke tells him of the PCs’ heroics.

Of course, all of this is false, but may be intriguing enough to get the PCs to agree to go after the box. If they do, he can tell them exactly how to get there.

You may also skip the meeting with Smoke at the beginning of the adventure. The PCs may hear about the gang of ogres at any tavern, fighter’s guildhall, or wanted poster in Libernen. The gang does exist and have made travel near the northern Gnarley dangerous of late. Their lair, Deadwood Dungeon, is thought to be empty now, but rumors persist of levels that have yet to be explored. Smoke appears near the entrance to the dungeon and relates his tale. Since they are going in anyway, it shouldn’t be difficult for him to convince them to aid him.

An alternative to the above is to give one of the PCs a “dream hook”. The PC has been having extremely vivid dreams lately, in which a cryptic message keeps repeating itself: an image of a puff of smoke forms, which obscures a strange object. The smoke clears to reveal a blue skull. As the dream fades, the last thing the PC remembers is a grove of dead, blackened trees. By combining the above adventure hooks with this one, the PC may feel more strongly compelled to journey to the dungeon and unravel this mystery.

## **Smoke’s Tale (EL Variable)**

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This adventure assumes that the PCs meet Smoke in Libernen, a large town just north of the Gnarley Forest midway between Littleberg and Dyvers.

Smoke calls himself Harran. He claims to be a professional transporter of exotic, precious, and sometimes dangerous goods. Undisguised, Smoke is a thin man of average height and weight with pale, pock marked skin, deep-set brown eyes, and a large hooked nose. His stringy black hair reaches just above his shoulders. He wears a wide-brimmed hat, large golden hoop earring in his left ear, and a travel worn black cloak embroidered with silver stars over a well-made explorer's outfit of dark brown leather.

As Harran, Smoke uses a *hat of disguise* to appear as a short, fat man with a muscular build and dark tan skin dressed in a dirty traveler's outfit. He is balding and appears to try to hide it with an old floppy hat with a bright feather pinned to it. His eyes are hazel and he sports a scruffy beard and his ever-present hoop earring.

After the introductions and small talk, Harran tells the PCs the following story:

"Hear me and hear me well, I beg ye. Mine is a sorrowful tale if ye'd hear it." Harren pauses to make sure he has your attention before nodding to himself and continuing.

"'Twas nigh on to 3 days past now that I was headin' to Dyvers by way o' Littleburg. I make my livin' transportin' important things for important people, if it do ye. Some of 'em can be a touch dangerous and t' others a bit on the mystical side. It happened to be t' latter I was haulin'. 'Twas a metal box about a foot to a side all covered in odd symbols and very lightweight for being all of metal. Once in Dyvers I'd have dropped 'er off to Erollis the Archmage, my employer. But I never got m' chance. A gang of nearly a dozen ogres made sure that ne'er happened. They attacked me in the night with mighty clubbing and guttural shouts. Though you'd not know it by lookin' at me now, I was a champion sprinter in m' younger days. Guess I ain't lost much of m' step since then. Before them brutes had a chance to crush m' head in, I was up n' runnin' like the old days, swift as ye like. That lot tired o' chasin' me quick enough

and I got away and made it t' town next mornin'. But now I've lost m' wagon, horses, and the box. If I don't get 'er back, m' reputation and business is done for."

Though he has nothing to pay them with, Harran offers whatever belongings of his they find in the ogre gang's treasure hoard as well as half of the 2,000 gp he would earn by delivering the box if they agree to go retrieve it for him. All he wants is to keep his good business reputation, earn his pay, and replace the necessities to continue his profession. Lies, of course.

Suspicious PCs may make a DC 19 Sense Motive check to confirm any hunch they have that he is lying. Seeing through his disguise requires a DC 29 Spot check.

Smoke cast *non-detection* on himself prior to approaching the group. Spellcasters targeting him with divination spells must succeed at a DC 24 caster level check for their spells to succeed.

If the PCs decide to help Harran, he gives them directions to Deadwood Dungeon he supposedly obtained from the locals. They must enter the Gnarley Forest and cross the Volverdyva River as they head south. A few notable landmarks on the way lead them to an area of the woods that appears to have been burned in a forest fire. At the center of these woods is the entrance to the dungeon.

## **Libernen (Large Town)**

Conventional; AL LG; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 585,000 gp; Population 3,900; Mixed (human 79%, elf 9%, halfling 5%, dwarf 3%, gnome 2%, half-elf 1%, half-orc 1%)

*Authority Figures:* Countess Kyaren Rhavelle, member of the Seven Families, ruler of Libernen (N female human Ill 4), numerous Knights of the Hart (a Furyondian order of paladins several of which are members of the Knightly Conclave, a parliamentary group).

**Smoke, Male Human Rogue 8/Wizard 9:** hp 55; Bluff +9, Disguise +11 (see *Leaving the Dungeon* for Smoke's full statistics block)

### **The Fox and the Sailor (EL Variable)**

When the PCs are ready to travel to Deadwood Dungeon, their journey is fairly uneventful. The Gnarley Forest north of the Ververdyva River is patrolled by rangers and other woodsmen. It takes 1-½ days to reach the dungeon, crossing the river in the process. When the PCs reach the river, read the following:

Judging by the sound of running water up ahead, you have reached the edge of the forest where it meets the banks of the Ververdyva River. As you leave the edge of the woods and make your way down the riverbank, you begin to hear singing accompanied by flute music.

Searching for the source of the music, the PCs spot a small barge with a little shack built atop it moored to the riverbank. A rough dressed man with curly chestnut hair and beard is playing the flute as he sits atop a barrel. A small dog on another barrel beside him notices the PCs immediately. The man continues playing for a moment oblivious to the approaching PCs, looks at the dog strangely, then follows its gaze to the adventurers. He falters in his flute playing, and then abruptly stops.

**Creatures EL 5:** The man is Owynn Cassille, a free spirited sailor who stopped here for the day. Upon closer inspection, his dog is actually a fox. The source of the lovely singing voice is nowhere to be found. In truth, the singer is the fox. This is Tallya, an awakened fox with the gift of foretelling and Owynn's good friend. Years ago, Tallya and her druid companion were attacked by a band of orcs. Tallya survived the encounter, but sadly, her friend the druid did not. Owynn found the injured fox in the woods and nursed her back to health. He was surprised to learn that she could talk and was, in fact, extremely intelligent. The situation took some

getting used to, but Owynn and Tallya soon became good friends and now spend most of their time plying the rivers of the Flanaess.

**Owynn Cassille, Expert 4:** hp 12; Profession (sailor) +8

**Tallya, Awakened Fox:** hp 6; Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 12; use all other statistics for a dog *Monster Manual* 271 except Tallya can speak Common

**Development:** This area of the river is wide and difficult to swim across. Owynn could be convinced to take the PCs across with a DC 25 Diplomacy check. If the PCs are unsuccessful, they could also find some wood in the forest to serve as floatation devices to help them swim across, though once they reach the opposite bank they are fatigued and need to rest for 8 hours. They may also find a ford a few miles from here that takes them a little out of their way.

If the PCs gain passage on Owynn's boat, during the river crossing read the following:

As the barge slowly makes its way across the river, the sailor's little fox watches you intently from atop a nearby barrel. Suddenly, the little animal begins to speak in perfect Common reciting a strange and cryptic rhyme, "*Spawn of the Lord of Lightning sleeps, imprisoned in alien stone, Smoke without fire seeks, a magical skull not of bone, spies through glass on those down below, fell powers are freed once again, strength of the soul is what he must know, the fooled ones are used to this end.*"

At the end of its recitation, the fox appears frightened. It runs to the sailor cringing behind him.

Tallya's gift of foretelling is quite beyond her control, only manifesting itself from time to time. Owynn attempts to cover the whole thing up by claiming that strange spirits inhabit this area of the lake and work mischief on travelers (+2 Bluff modifier). If their previous Diplomacy check surpassed the DC by 5 or more, Owynn tells the adventurers the story of the orc

marauders and Tallya's unique intelligence. He pleads with the PCs not to say anything about this to others.

He fears persecution by those that would not understand. Before parting company with the heroes, Owynn warns the PCs to think carefully on Tallya's words as they may have important meaning for them.

The first line of Tallya's cryptic verse refers to the Sapphire Skull of Storms and its inability to use its powers. The second line refers to the *null box*. The third and fourth lines refer to Smoke and his hopes of unearthing a Crystal Skull of Nerull. The fifth line refers to Smoke scrying on the PCs. The sixth line refers to the Crystal Skull being removed from its box. Line seven refers to Smoke's plan to observe the powers of the skull. And the last line refers to the PCs being tricked in to retrieving and freeing it.

**Ad Hoc Experience Award:** If the PCs were able to convince Owynn to ferry them across the river thereby receiving Tallya's foretelling, award the group 500 experience points.

## Deadwood Dungeon

By succeeding on a DC 15 Knowledge (local), Gather Information, or Bardic Knowledge check before leaving Libernen, the PCs learn that the name of this ancient dungeon comes from its immediate surroundings – a grove of blackened skeletal trees. You may also randomly choose additional folklore from the table below or simply reveal what you want them to know or believe.

- 01-20 Supposedly, a wizard duel once took place outside of the dungeon entrance.
- 21-40 The surrounding woods were magically diseased by powerful eldritch energy.
- 41-60 A fey spirit haunts the Deadwood waiting to slay any wizard that dares enter the area.

- 61-80 Sages have said that the dungeon was built by a cult of evil dragon worshippers and still contains many secrets and unexplored levels.
- 81-00 Deadwood dungeon was once filled with strange bug-like humanoids.

Whatever information you give the PCs, all accounts agree that Deadwood Dungeon is extremely old and abandoned by its original occupants. Throughout the years various monsters and evil humanoids have taken up residence here, but have fallen under the blades of adventuring heroes striving to make the area safe for their people.

When the PCs have reached the Deadwood read the following description:

The vibrant, living trees and undergrowth of the Gnarley abruptly meets the edge of a small grove of wilted, blackened trees that appear to have been caught in a forest fire and then petrified. At the center, a 15-ft. high obelisk of soot-covered white marble tops a large mound. A dressed stone opening in the side of the mound appears to lead to areas beneath it.

This area is eerily silent. The obelisk was once covered in symbols important to the dungeon's original occupants. They are now worn smooth from centuries of exposure to the elements.

## Dungeon Features

Deadwood Dungeon is constructed in most areas with superior masonry walls, smooth flagstones, and 10-ft. high ceilings. Newer, rough-hewn areas have been added in more recent years. With few exceptions, the doors are built of strong wood bound in iron with internal locks and nested hinges. Unless specified otherwise, there are no light sources in the dungeon.

**Typical Dungeon Door:** 2 in. thick; hp 20; Hardness 5; Open DC 25 (if locked)



**Typical Dungeon Wall:** hp 90 per 1ft. of thickness; Hardness 8; Break DC 35; Climb DC 25

**Stairs:** Steep (45-degree angle); Balance DC 10 required to run or charge; +5 to Tumble DC

**Light Sources:** None unless specified in a room's description

## Dungeon Level 1



### 1. Dangerous Descent (EL 6)

In the side of this earthen mound, a large dressed stone opening measuring approximately 10 square feet appears to be the only entrance in to the dungeon. A strong musky odor wafts up the steeply angled stairs leading down in to darkness. Thick wooden braces support the ceiling.

**Creature:** An advanced choker has found this staircase to be an excellent area to prey on creatures. It hides near the ceiling behind one of the thick support beams halfway down the stairs when it hears the PCs approaching the entrance. When the PCs pass beneath it, roll secret Spot checks (DC 21) for them to notice it.

### ADVANCED CHOKER CR 6

Monster Manual 3.5 34

CE Medium aberration

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +1, Listen +1

**Languages** - Undercommon

**AC** 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

**hp** 78 (12 HD, currently -)

**Fort** +6 **Ref** +7 **Will** +9

**Spd** 30ft., climb 20ft.

**Melee** tentacles +15/+15/+10 (1d4+5, 20/ x2)

**Space** 5ft. **Reach** 10ft.

**Base Atk** +9; **Grp** +18

**Atk Options** improved grab, power attack

**Special Atks** - constrict (1d4+5), quickness

**Abilities** Str 20, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 7

**SQ** class abilities (ex. wild empathy +6, spontaneous casting, summon familiar, trapsense)

**Feats** - Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Hide), Stealthy, Weapon Focus (tentacle)

**Skills** - Climb +18, Hide +11, Move Silently +8

**Constrict (Ex):** This advanced choker deals 1d4+5 points of damage with a successful grapple check against a Large or smaller creature. Because it seizes its victim by the neck, a creature in the choker's grasp cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, an advanced choker must hit a Large or smaller opponent with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. Chokers receive a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks, which is already included in the statistics block.

**Quickness (Su):** Although not particularly dexterous, a choker is supernaturally quick. It can take an extra standard action or move action during its turn each round.

**Tactics:** Unless spotted first, the choker attacks the last PC to pass beneath him using Power Attack (-5 from its base attack). If reduced to half hit points, the choker shoves the grappled PC down the stairs with a successful grapple check. The PC may avoid stumbling 1d4 x 5 ft. down the stairs with a successful Balance check (DC 10 + the amount by which the choker beat the PC's grapple check). Failure by 5 or more results in 1d6 points of damage per 10 ft. fallen and falling prone where the PC ended its movement. The choker then tries to escape up the stairs to hide in the woods until the PCs leave the area.

## 2. Shrine of the Dragon (EL 7)

Beyond the archway at the bottom of the stairs is a 30-ft. square room with exits in its northeast and southwest corners. Atop a marble dais at the center of the room, a large stone replica of a roaring dragon faces the staircase. Large rubies in place of eyes glint in the light.

The ruby eyes of the statue are a *permanent image* (Will save DC 19 if interacted with). The real eyes are cut glass ornamentation visually enhanced by the illusion.

**Trap:** Touching the eyes of the statue triggers a *chain lightning* spell.

**Chain Lightning Trap:** CR 7; magic device; touch trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*chain lightning*, 11<sup>th</sup>-level wizard, 11d6 electricity to target nearest center of trigger area plus 5d6 electricity to each of up to eleven secondary targets, DC 19 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

With a DC 30 Search of the dais the PCs find a thin groove where it meets the floor. Also, one of the statue's claws feels loose. When pulled, it causes the dais and everything on it to descend to area 22. When pulled again it ascends back to room 2. See the description for area 22.

*Detect magic* and similar divinations used here reveal the auras of the trap and strong

transmutation from permanent *feather fall* and *reverse gravity* effects (CL 18<sup>th</sup>) on the dais.

## 3. Ogre in the Kitchen (EL 7)

This appears to be a makeshift kitchen. A blood-covered table against the opposite wall holds slabs of raw meat and a large cleaver deeply embedded into it.

Around the corner, several slabs of ribs sizzle atop a bed of hot coals in a large brazier. The cook, a 9-ft. tall humanoid with wart-covered yellowish skin and sharp tusks protruding from its wide mouth wears a bloodstained leather apron and a chef's hat. He regards you menacingly as he moves toward the door hefting a large greataxe.

**Creature:** This is Splat, one of the ogres living in the dungeon. He enjoys cooking when not out hunting and marauding. The heroes would make a fine side dish for today's meal.

**Splat, Ogre Barbarian 4:** hp 79; +16 melee (3d6+13); *Monster Manual* 199

**Tactics:** Splat rages and attacks the nearest PC. Splat's rage lasts 9 rounds. While raging he gains 16 hit points, his AC drops to 17, he gains +2 to attack rolls (30 Str), weapon damage changes to 3d6+16, he gains a +2 bonus to his Fort & Will saves, and +2 to his Climb and Jump modifiers. In his rage he never thinks to alert the rest of his band. He fights to the death.

**Treasure:** The brazier Splat uses to cook in is covered in soot and caked-on grease. Under all of the filth is an antique brazier made of silver and gold with a celestial motif of angels & saints. It is 5 ft. in diameter and 4 ft. high supported by 4 legs ending in lion's paws. Though it weighs 200 pounds and is hard to transport, if cleaned up it could be sold for 5,000 gp.

## 4. Splitting the Spoils (EL 7)

Through the open archway at the end of this hall four ogres sit in a circle conversing in deep, guttural voices. They appear to be rifling through a pile of gear – backpacks, pouches, and sacks. Pausing long enough to drink from a cask of ale being passed around. Several other casks scattered around the room appear to have already been emptied.

**Creatures:** These 4 ogres ambushed a group of gnolls several miles from here in the woods. After returning, they drank the ale they had stolen and fell asleep. Now that they are awake, they are looking through the loot and splitting up the valuables.

**Ogres (4):** hp 29; *Monster Manual* 199

**Treasure:** The loot consists of a masterwork composite longbow (Str +4), 40 arrows, +1 *studded leather armor*, *arcane scroll of spectral hand* (CL 3<sup>rd</sup>) in a steel scroll case, 2 tindertwigs, 2 flasks of acid, a thunderstone in a leather pouch with four peridots each worth 50 gp, a decorative silver drinking mug worth 20 gp, and 200 gold coins. There are 5 backpacks, 3 cloaks, 2 sacks, and a long pole (10 ft.) topped by a banner bearing a red hyena head (the standard of the slain gnolls) if the PCs are interested in these mundane items.

## 5. The Garbage Dump (EL 5)

This room reeks of offal and other unpleasant odors. Moldering bits of broken up furniture and bones along with other less recognizable piles of slime-covered garbage fills most of the space of this room. A path wends its way through the refuse to a door in the opposite wall.

This room has been used as a garbage dump since its early days. The tradition continues.

**Creatures:** An ochre jelly in the northeast corner of the room accounts for much of the slimy look of the garbage.

**Ochre Jelly (1):** hp 69; *Monster Manual*  
202

**Treasure:** A halfling rogue once thought this would be a good place to summon a rat swarm to do his bidding using *pipes of the sewers*. It worked better than he anticipated. Several rat swarms answered his call and killed him. His remains and his pipes are buried in the refuse. The PCs may find the pipes with a DC 30 Search check. Any PCs previously wounded that search the room without obtaining healing first must make a DC 14 Fort save or contract filth fever.

## 6. Buggy Bugbears (EL 7)

Four heavysset creatures wearing leather armor occupy a large table at the far end of this long room. Each has chitinous skin sprouting tufts of wiry hair, multiple insectile eyes in its head, and 6 pairs of arms contrasting with their long sharp fangs and furry, wolf-like ears. They are playing cards at the moment, but are clearly here to guard a descending staircase behind them.

**Creatures:** These were once bugbears, but after exploring areas deeper in the dungeon, they were transformed in to insectile creatures by a construct in room 18. After a painful transformation in to their present forms, Okutapu the ogre mage forbade any of his band to descend to that level again and had the stairs leading there bricked up.

### INSECTILE BUGBEAR (4)

CR 3

Male insectile bugbear

*Monster Manual* 3.5 29, *Savage Species* pg.221

CE Medium aberration

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense, wide vision; **Spot** +3, **Listen** +4

**Languages** – Common, Goblin

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AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 18

**hp** 16 each (3 HD)

**Fort** +2 **Ref** +6 **Will** +2

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**Spd** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

**Melee** morningstar +6 melee (1d8+2, 20/ x2)

**Ranged** javelin +5 (1d6+2, 20 /x2)

**Base Atk** +2; **Grp** +4

**Abilities** Str 15, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 9

**Feats** – Alertness, Weapon Focus (morningstar)

**Skills** – Climb +3, Hide +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Spot +9

**Possessions** leather armor, light wooden shield, masterwork morningstar

**Tremorsense (Ex):** An insectile bugbear can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the ground.

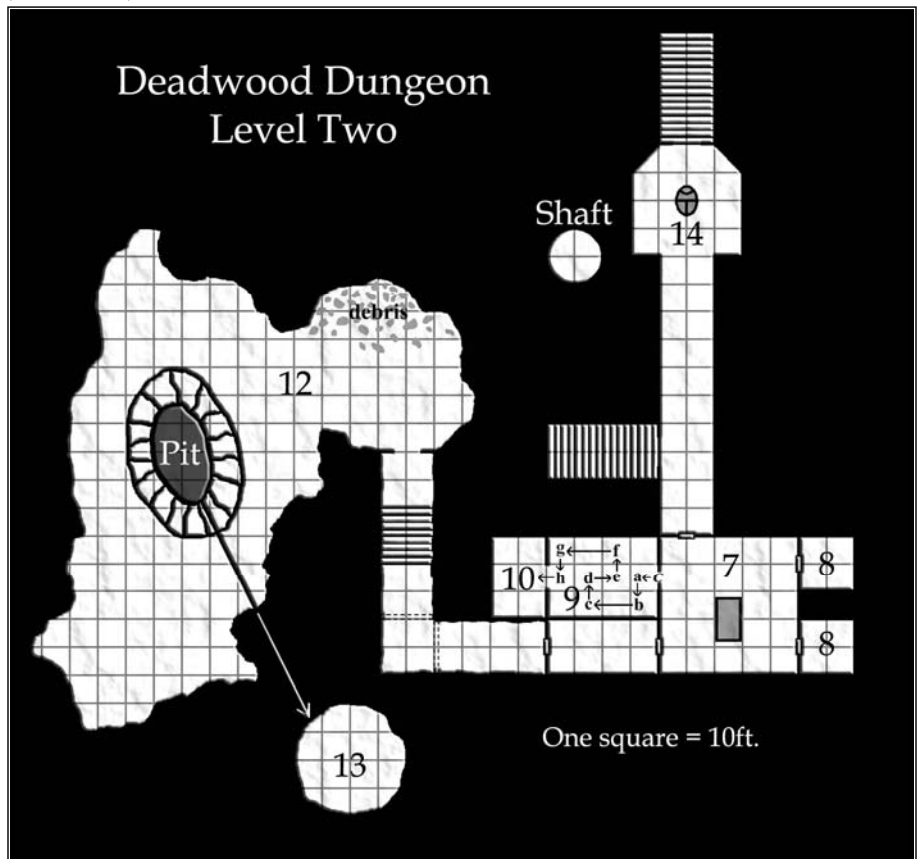
**Wide Vision (Ex):** Because of its multiple eyes and wide angle of vision, an insectile bugbear has a +4 racial bonus on Spot checks and cannot be flanked.

**Tactics** - The insectile bugbears are extremely dirty fighters. They try to trip opponents, destroy their weapons, or throw dirt in their eyes. A bugbear attempting the latter switches his weapon to one of his other four, scoops a handful of sand from a pocket, and makes a ranged touch attack. The opponent must be within 10 ft. If the attack succeeds, the target must make a Reflex save (DC = insectile bugbear's attack roll) or be blinded for 1 round.

If half or more of this group is slain, the rest flee down the stairs to alert Okutapu (room 12).

**Treasure:** The insectile bugbears have a wooden chest (unlocked) hidden under dirty cloaks & furs in the southwest corner. It contains a *potion of cure light wounds*, a masterwork dwarven warhammer, a necklace worth 10 gp, a diamond ring worth 100 gp, a gem encrusted silver helmet shaped like an octopus worth 250 gp, 1,020 gold coins, and 100 silver pieces.

## Dungeon Level 2



### 7. Torture Chamber (EL 8)

Screams of agony fill this room. A man in dirty rags is being stretched on a large wooden rack. Blood from his wrists and ankles saturates the coils of rope binding his extremities. The torture device is being operated by a giant humanoid figure wearing plate armor covered by a huge robe. A hood conceals its face in deep shadows as it turns around.

**Creatures:** The tortured man is a teamster captured during an attack on a ill-fated caravan that passed through the area weeks ago. The torturer is a troll fighter in charge of the slaves kept here.

**Bart Brown, Male Human Expert 2:** hp 7 (currently 1); Profession (teamster) +6

## GRBLECK CR 7

Male troll fighter 2

Monster Manual 3.5 247

CE Large giant

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision, scent; **Spot** +6, **Listen** +5

**Languages** - Giant

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**AC** 23, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 22

**hp** 94 (8 HD) **regeneration** 5

**Fort** +15 **Ref** +5 **Will** +3

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**Spd** 20ft.

**Melee** longsword +12/+7 (2d6+12/19-20/x2) or  
2 claws +12 (1d6+8, 19-20/x2) and  
bite +7 (1d6+4, 20/x3)

**Space** 10ft. **Reach** 10ft.

**Base Atk** +5; **Grp** +17

**Atk Options** – Combat Reflexes, Large and in Charge

**Special Atks** – rend 2d6+12

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**Abilities** Str 26, Dex 16, Con 24, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8

**Feats** – Combat Reflexes, Iron Will, Large And In Charge (*Draconomicon: The Book of Dragons* 71), Quick Draw, Track

**Skills** – Climb +6 (+12 without armor), Intimidate +4, Listen +5, Spot +6

**Possessions** full plate armor, large longsword, dirty robes

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**Rend (Ex):** If Grbleck hits with both claw attacks, he latches onto the opponent's body and tears the flesh. This attack automatically deals an additional 2d6+12 points of damage.

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**Tactics** - Grbleck stops winding the wheel of the rack, which automatically locks in place. He then draws his longsword from under his robes and attacks the closest PC. His Combat Reflexes and Large And In Charge feats make it possible for him to knock up to 4 smaller opponents trying to close with him back to where they started from taking damage in the process. If reduced to 20 hit points or less, he attempts a fighting withdrawal through the door in the northwest wall and flees to room 9 to regenerate and alert Okutapu.

**Treasure:** Grbleck's longsword is decorated with cut glass imitation gem stones. One of these is clear and spindle shaped. It is actually an ioun stone that can be removed with the point of a dagger or similar object. Grbleck has no idea it is a magical stone.

**Development:** If rescued and subsequently healed, Bart offers to aid the PCs in any way he can. Though he will not enter combat, he can carry things, cook, or perform other tasks.

**Ad Hoc Experience Awards:** Award 300 experience points for rescuing Bart Brown and returning him safely to any nearby town.

## 8. The Cells

This room is obviously used as a prison cell. Dirty straw in the corner serves as a bed. A filthy chamber pot in the opposite corner contributes to the horrible stench here.

Bart Brown (room 7) is kept in the eastern cell. The other cell holds a woman named Deliah when not suffering at the hands of Okutapu the ogre mage (room 12). Both are currently empty.

## 9. The Path of Magic (EL Varies)

The door to this room is concealed by an *illusory wall* spell heightened to 9<sup>th</sup>-level (Will save DC 23 if interacted with). A successful DC 30 Search check is required to find it. The door is made of iron and locked with an amazing internal lock.

A series of glowing runes engraved in the floor form a maze-like path around this room ending inside an archway in the opposite wall. Runes similar to those on the floor have been inscribed above the archway seemingly meant as a message.

This room was used in an initiation rite by an arcane society that once dwelt here. Non-arcane casters may enter and move about the room freely with no adverse effects. Arcane casters must either walk on or pass over the runes in front of the southern entrance. When doing this, the PC begins the initiation rite, which

either ends in destruction or a great reward (see room 10).

**Concealed Iron Door:** 2 in. thick; hp 60; Hardness 10; Break DC 28; Open DC 40

The runes above the archway are Draconic. They translate to “Once started on the Path, there is no turning back. The Kiss of the Dragon awaits you.”

At each bend in the Path of Magic, an arcane caster is required to identify the runes on the floor and cast the corresponding spell. Failure to identify the runes, cast the spell, or both results in a painful reprimand that increases in severity with each failure.

Once started, the test must be completed. Attempting to leave any part of the path triggers a *feblemind* trap.

Arcane casters involved in the test may benefit from outside assistance from allies with ranks in Spellcraft by describing the runes to them. Using the aid another action, allies may each make DC 10 Spellcraft checks to provide a cumulative +2 bonus on the PC’s check. Casting *read magic* is an automatic success in deciphering the runes. Using a scroll with the appropriate spell is a clever way to pass the spellcasting portion of the test for arcane casters that do not know the requisite spells or have them prepared.

**Feblemind Trap:** CR 10; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*feblemind* heightened to 9<sup>th</sup>-level, 17<sup>th</sup>-level wizard, DC 23 Will save with –4 penalty negates); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34

#### a) Rune of Armor (EL 2)

The arcane runes in this square describe the magical forces involved in the *mage armor* spell. A DC 21 Spellcraft check is required to decipher it. The PC must then cast the spell even if he is already under the effects of a previous casting. Successfully completing this test causes the runes to glow green for a moment. The PC may continue on the path to the next test. Failing this test triggers a *shocking grasp* spell.

**Shocking Grasp Trap:** CR 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; Atk +14 melee touch; spell effect (*shocking grasp*, 1<sup>st</sup>-level wizard, 1d6 electricity); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26

#### b) Rune of Quickness (EL 2)

These runes describe the *expeditious retreat* spell. A DC 21 Spellcraft check is required to decipher it. The PC must then cast the spell even if he is already under the effects of a previous casting. Successfully completing this test has the same results as above and the PC may continue on. Failure triggers a *burning hands* spell.

**Burning Hands Trap:** CR 2; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*burning hands*, 1<sup>st</sup>-level wizard, 1d4 fire, DC 11 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26

#### c) Rune of Fortitude (EL 3)

The runes in this square describe the magical forces involved in *bear’s endurance*. A DC 22 Spellcraft check is needed to decipher it. The PC must then cast the spell even if under its effects from a previous casting. The runes flash green for a moment and the PC may continue onward. Failing the test triggers a *magic missile* spell.

**Magic Missile Trap:** CR 3; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*magic missile*, 3<sup>rd</sup>-level wizard, 2d4+2 force damage); Search DC 27; Disable Device DC 27

#### d) Rune of Resistance (EL 3)

The runes engraved here describe the *resist energy* spell. A DC 22 Spellcraft check is required to decipher it. The PC must then cast the spell, specifying an energy type, regardless of any previous casting of the spell. Successfully completing this test has the same results as above. The PC may continue. Failure triggers an area effect *shatter* spell confined to the initiate’s square.

**Shatter Trap:** CR 3; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*shatter*, 3<sup>rd</sup>-level wizard, DC 13 Will save negates [object]); Search DC 27; Disable Device DC 27

#### e) Rune of Compulsion

The runes in this square describe the magical forces involved in the *hold person* spell. A DC 23 Spellcraft check identifies the spell, which must then be cast (the PC need not target anyone). Successfully completing this test has the same results as the previous ones. Failure causes the runes to turn an angry red for the remainder of the test. This is meant to warn the initiate of dire consequences for future failures.

#### f) Rune of Brilliance (EL 4)

This series of runes describes the *daylight* spell. A DC 23 Spellcraft check is needed to decipher the runes. The spell must then be cast. Success results in the green flash signaling for the PC to proceed. Failure triggers a *lightning bolt* confined to the initiate's square.

**Lightning Bolt Trap:** CR 4; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*lightning bolt*, 5<sup>th</sup>-level wizard, 5d6 electricity, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28

#### g) Rune of Necromancy (EL 5)

These runes describe the necromantic powers involved in the *enervation* spell. A DC 24 Spellcraft check is required to decipher them. The PC must cast the spell to successfully complete this test. Failure results in triggering a *bestow curse* spell.

**Bestow Curse Trap:** CR 5; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +14 melee touch; spell effect (*bestow curse*, 7<sup>th</sup>-level wizard, – 6 permanent decrease to Constitution score, DC 16 Will save negates); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29

#### h) Rune of Travel (EL 7)

The runes in this last square describe the magical forces involved in the spell *dimension door*. A DC 24 Spellcraft check is needed to decipher them and the spell must then be cast. Though the PC may designate his own destination, he is teleported in to room 10. Failing to succeed in this final test triggers a *disintegrate* spell.

The path of runes continues through the archway ending in room 10. A *wall of force* blocks the archway making the final spell in the initiation necessary to enter the room beyond.

**Disintegrate Trap:** CR 7; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; Atk +14 ranged touch; spell effect (*disintegrate*, 11<sup>th</sup>-level wizard, 22d6 damage, DC 19 Fort save 5d6 damage); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

**Ad Hoc Experience:** All PCs that take part in aiding an arcane caster ally in successfully (or unsuccessfully) negotiating the Path of Magic should receive experience points for the tests.

### 10. Kiss of the Dragon

The path beginning in the adjoining room ends here in the form of an arrowhead-shaped formation of arcane symbols just inside the archway.

A *wall of force* (CL 17<sup>th</sup>) bars entry in to this room. Aside from the runes on the floor, the room is bare. A DC 29 Spellcraft check made to identify the runes reveals that this is the magical formula used in the *wish* spell. If a PC has entered here by successfully negotiating the Path of the Magic, continue reading the following:

The air is heavy with magical energy that suddenly coalesces in to the shape of a man-sized glowing dragon hovering in the air before you. A voice in your head says, "Receive your reward," and the dragon breathes a glowing cloud of energy that engulfs you.

The cloud of magical energy bestows a +1 inherent bonus to the PC's Intelligence or Charisma score (whichever applies to the PC's

spellcasting ability). The PC also gains back all spells that were cast during the tests.

The dragon-shaped entity is actually an illusion as are the visual effects of it breathing on the PC, all of which quickly fade and are gone in moments. The reward, however, is real.

### 11. Recent Excavation (EL 7)

After the first 10 ft. of this hall, it is obvious that the area beyond was constructed at a different time than the rest of the dungeon. The stone is roughhewn and uneven.

Around the bend in the hallway, stairs matching the rest of the hallway descend to a roughly cut archway to a large cave. This area was excavated by the dragon cult that once resided here. The first PC to enter the squares in the bend of the hallway triggers the trap.

**Trap:** A small channel of water runs through the stones above this area. A reservoir above the ceiling contains hundreds of gallons of water from the channel. Stepping in to the squares marked on the map releases a pair of walls recessed in the ceiling that drop down and block off that 10 ft. by 10 ft. portion of hallway. After a moment, water begins to fill the now empty slots the sliding walls occupied and gushes out of grooves in the top portions of each wall.

**Water-Filled Room:** CR 7; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. room); never miss; onset delay (3 rounds); water; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 25

The sliding walls are 4 inches thick. A flat iron strip affixed to the bottom of each insures a minimum of chipping when they drop to the hallway below and may alert the PCs of the trap if they notice the iron strips in the ceiling.

**Sliding Stone Wall:** 4 in. thick; hp 60; Hardness 8; Break DC 28; Lift DC 28

### 12. Okutapu the Ogre Mage (EL 10)

A hewn-stone arch opens out in to a large natural cavern. A tall pole thrust in to the ground nearby is festooned with humanoid skulls, each holding a magical flame that illuminates this side of the cave, but leaves the area to the north in darkness. Broken wooden chests, crates, and barrels litter the floor near the far wall. A few raggedy bits of shredded clothing can be seen among the refuse. A thick, musky odor mingled with the faint scent of decay fills the air.

This cavern is the home of Okutapu the ogre mage. The debris seen piled chaotically near the southeast wall is the remains of loot stolen from caravans and other unfortunate travelers in the area. In the shadows of the northern half of the cavern the ground slopes down to a sinkhole dropping 60 ft. to a naturally formed oubliette. The cavern roof is approximately 25 ft. high in most areas and about 15 ft. high near the walls. It rises to a height of 30 ft. over the sinkhole.

Okutapu and his slave Deliah may usually be found atop a pile of furs surrounded by coffers and art objects in the northwest portion of the cavern. Deliah wears an iron collar attached to a 15-ft. chain bolted to the wall. Okutapu keeps 3 ogre henchmen nearby to deal with intruders and threats from within his own following.

**Okutapu, Ogre Mage:** hp 45; *Monster Manual* 200

**Ogre (3):** hp 29; *Monster Manual* 199

**Deliah,** Female human commoner 1: hp 4; Cha 16; Craft (leatherworking) +5

**Tactics:** Okutapu begins combat by casting *cone of cold* where he can affect as many enemies as possible. He then casts *invisibility* and positions himself on the opposite side of the sinkhole from the PCs so he may observe them unseen for a round or two while his ogre henchmen deal with them. In later rounds he attempts to *charm* a tough, fighter type and convince him to slay the other PCs “so they may split the spoils between them.” He has a +3 modifier on opposed Charisma checks. He then relies on ranged attacks when



possible and melee combat with his greatsword when it becomes necessary. The 3 ogres attempt to pulverize the PCs with their clubs or push single enemies in to the sinkhole if possible.

If Okutapu is seriously threatened he assumes *gaseous form* and descends 30 ft. in to the sinkhole where he becomes invisible. If allowed time to regenerate to full hit points, he leaves the sinkhole to continue the fight, repeating this tactic if necessary. The ogres fight to the death.

**Trap:** This sinkhole developed over years of water erosion. The floor slopes sharply downward 5 ft. from the hole and is very smooth and slippery. The hole descends 60 ft., widening near the bottom (see area 13).

**Sinkhole (CR 7):** Entering a square adjacent to this hole requires a successful DC 14 Balance check to avoid sliding in to the sinkhole. Failure by 4 or more avoids falling in, but a creature cannot move for 1 round, failing by 5 or more results in falling 60 ft. and 6d6 falling damage.

**Treasure:** The 4 furs Okutapu lounges on are filthy, but if cleaned are worth 10 gp each. Surrounding the bed of furs is the rest of his treasure hoard. Atop a small coffer is a *+1 spiked gauntlet*. A *wand of owl's wisdom* (29 charges) and a *scroll of charm person* are inside the coffer. There are 4 other coffers holding a combined 2,300 gp and 3,000 sp. A jewelry box is filled with necklaces, bracelets, and rings worth 1,590 gp. Buried under the jewelry are 2 doses of antitoxin. A breastplate engraved with a falcon motif hangs from a thick spike in the wall. Atop a small box bearing the sunburst of Pelor rests a silver dagger. The Pelorian box contains 4 flasks of holy water. A ragged backpack holds masterwork thieves' tools, a silver ewer worth 50 gp, and a silver chalice with lapis lazuli gems worth 100 gp. A tall silver candelabrum worth 30 gp is being used to hold a large well done wool tapestry worth 350 gp. And last, a pouch lying atop the bed of furs contains 5 matching carnelians worth 20 gp each.

**Development:** Deliah has been missing from her home for several months and has suffered greatly at the hands of the ogre mage. If returned to her family of woodcutters in a small thorp on the fringes of the Gnarley Forest close to Dyvers, her father rewards the heroes with a *+2 darkwood composite longbow (Str +2)*. She can warn the PCs about horrible creatures in the sinkhole. She has never seen them, but describes the feral growls and hisses she hears. Okutapu sometimes throws captives down to them. The creatures seem unable to climb out of the pit.

### 13. The Oubliette (EL 5)

This pit is 60 feet deep. Its walls have been worn very smooth and it appears to widen near the bottom. A horrible stench of decaying matter wafts up from its depths. A metal box sits crookedly in a depression in the uneven stone floor. Bones and shredded clothing surround it.

The pit begins to widen 40 ft. down and becomes circular. The bottom measures 20 ft. across. The metal box is the one Smoke seeks. The creatures trapped here are not interested in it. They value living flesh more.

**Creatures:** 2 ghosts are stuck in the pit. Okutapu keeps them around for entertainment.

**Ghast (2):** hp 29; *Monster Manual* 119

**Treasure:** This metal box is called a *null box* and continuously affects whatever is placed in it with an *anti-magic field*. It is engraved on all sides with arcane runes. A DC 26 Spellcraft check determines that they describe the magical forces involved in an *anti-magic field* spell. The *null box* contains the Sapphire Skull of Storms. Until removed from the box, the skull is inert.

See the *null box* sidebar for more details on this item. The *sapphire skull of storms* is described in full in *The Skull is Liberated*.

### New Item: Null Box

This box was crafted to contain other dangerous magic items, rendering them powerless as long as they are inside it. It is made of a lightweight metal alloy covered in runes both inside and out. Each of its sides is 1 inch thick. The box is exactly 1 cubic foot in size and weighs 5 pounds. Its lid is hinged and kept shut with a simple latch that an external lock can be affixed to.

It does not radiate its *anti-magic field* beyond the box, but because of its nullifying effect on magic it cannot be placed within magical containers or transported magically such as by *teleport*.

Moderate abjuration; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *anti-magic field*; Price 198,000 gp

### 14. Shrine of Bugs (EL 7)

This chamber is decorated with carved insects in relief on each of its walls. A stone protrusion at the center of the room is sculpted to resemble the back of a giant beetle. An archway in the east wall has been bricked up.

The walled up archway blocks access to stairs leading down to the next dungeon level.

**Masonry Wall:** 1 ft. thick; hp 90; Hardness 8; Break DC 35

**Creature:** The sculpted stone at the center of the room is a lesser stone golem. It attacks creatures attempting to destroy the wall or descend the stairs.

### STONE SCARAB, LESSER STONE GOLEM CR 7

New Monster Variant

N Medium construct

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision

**Language** -none

**AC** 25, touch 10, flat-footed 25

**hp** 65 (10 HD) damage reduction 10/adamantine

**Immunity** – construct traits, immunity to magic

**Fort** +3 **Ref** +3 **Will** +3

**Spd** 30ft.

**Melee** bite +7 (2d8+7, 20/ x3)

**Base Atk** +7; **Grp** +19

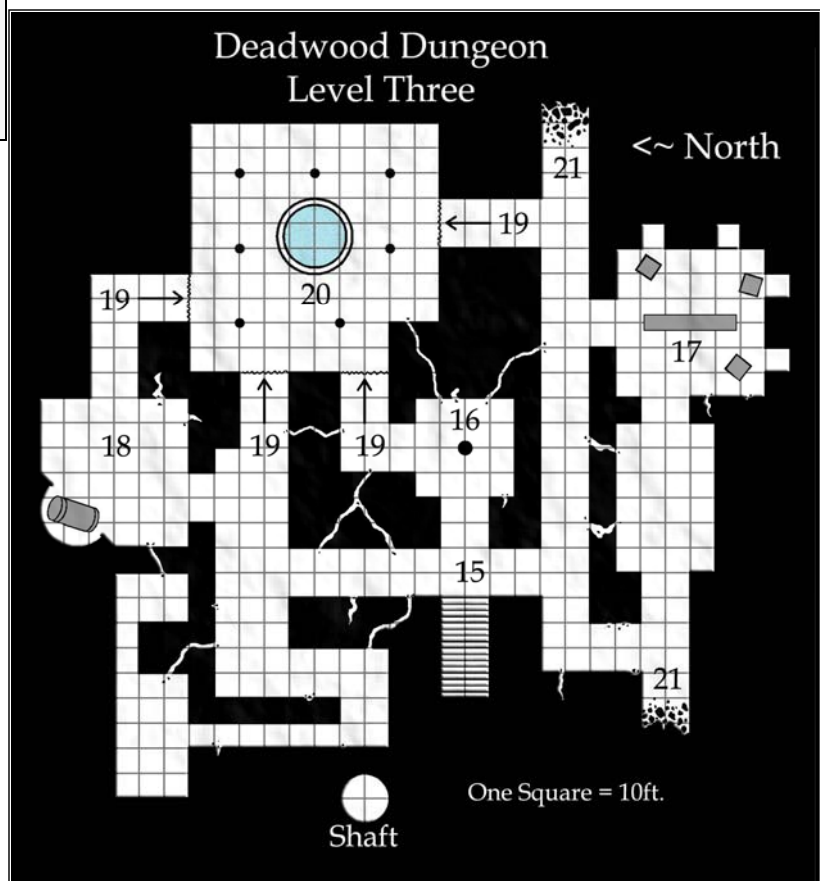
**Special Atks** – slow (CL 7th)

**Abilities** Str 21, Dex 11, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1

**Slow (Su):** A stone scarab can use a slow effect, as the spell, as a free action every 2 rounds. The effect has a range of 10 ft. and duration of 7 rounds, requiring a DC 15 Will save to negate.

**Tactics** -The stone scarab scuttles out of a small depression at the center of the room and attacks the closest person to the barred stairway. If the PCs retreat, it paces around the room for a minute and then resumes its position at the center of the room. It attacks creatures outside of the room if being attacked, but quickly returns here if such attacks cease.

### Dungeon Level 3



This level of the dungeon was the lair of an alien race of insectile beings. Though, they have been exterminated, some of the creatures they attracted still roam the halls. The bricked up

arch at the top of the stairs effectively confines them here.

### 15. Insect Wave (EL 7)

Upon reaching the bottom of the stairs, hundreds of small, black centipedes flood in to the corridor in front of you and to left and right; some even spilling from holes in the walls.

**Creatures:** These 3 insect swarms have voracious appetites and see the PCs as a fresh meal.

**Centipede Swarm (3):** hp 31; *Monster Manual* 238

**Tactics:** The centipede swarms attempt to surround prey and can easily crawl along the walls to do so. Once they come together, they appear to be one massive swarm occupying 12 contiguous squares, which include walls.

### 16. The Script Stone (EL 5)

A large, cylinder of umber colored stone approximately 8 ft. in height and nearly 5 ft. across sits at the center of this room. Small, precise characters have been engraved upon its service in perfectly straight vertical columns.

**Trap:** This script stone can be deceptively harmful to PCs with the ability to interpret the symbols engraved on its surface.

**Alien Symbols (CR 5):** These symbols embody the written ethos of the alien race that lived here. A successful DC 35 Decipher Script check or casting of *comprehend languages* to understand the characters results in 2d6 temporary Wisdom damage to the reader and he falls unconscious for 1 hour. The concepts and ideas written here are beyond the comprehension of any except the alien race that wrote them. A successful DC 20 Will save resists these effects, though the meaning of the characters is still incomprehensible and impossible to describe. After suffering the effects of the alien symbols, an effected PC is increasingly troubled by what he

read the longer he stays here on this level of the dungeon.

### 17. Chaos in a Cage (EL 7)

A long stone slab dominates the center of this room. Several steel plates measuring 5 ft. by 5 ft. lie on the ground in front of empty alcoves in the walls. One of the alcoves is sealed with a steel plate like the others except that it bears a softly glowing green symbol.

This chamber was used to examine life forms from various planes of the multiverse in order to amalgamate their best qualities and thus improve on the insectile race that lived here. The steel plate is held in place by a non-magical energy similar to an *arcane lock* spell, which also provides air for anything inside. Touching the glowing symbol on the steel plate causes it to drop away from the alcove releasing the creature. If the magic symbol is not touched, the plate may also be removed by succeeding on a DC 20 Strength check using a crowbar or similar tool.

**Steel Plate:** 1 in. thick; hp 30; Hardness 10; Break DC 20

**Creature:** A chaos beast is held within the sealed alcove. It was once the object of study by the insectile alien race living here but has been trapped ever since their extinction.

**Chaos Beast (1):** hp 44; *Monster Manual* 33

**Tactics:** This creature is extremely hostile. It emerges in the form of a skinless, muscle bound, slimy ape-like creature with tentacles ending in hooks and a huge maw filled with sharp teeth in place of a head. It attacks as many of its liberators as it can, fighting to the death.

### 18. Transmogrification Apparatus (EL 8)

The floor of this chamber is covered in a layer of corrugated iron. A large mechanical device stands in a hemispherical alcove in the north wall. It is vaguely humanoid shaped.

Its torso is a large iron barrel of glass or some other transparent substance capped in iron at both ends from which odd mechanical sockets protrude. Long flexible arms end in three finger-like clamps with orange glass lenses in each of the “palms”. The contraption stands atop four mechanical legs and is filled with a foamy orange substance.

**Creature:** This construct is called a transmogrification apparatus. The lenses in its “palms” are its eyes. The foam inside it is a chemical used to subdue and alter test subjects in contact with it.

## TRANSMOGRIFICATION APPARATUS CR 8

New Monster Variant

N Large construct

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., low-light vision

**Languages** - none

**AC** 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21

**hp** 118 (16 HD)      damage      reduction      10/  
adamantine

**Immunity** – construct traits

**Fort** +5 **Ref** +5 **Will** +5

**Spd** 30ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +15 (1d8+9, 20/ x2)

**Space** 10ft.    **Reach** 10ft.

**Base Atk** +12; **Grp** +20

**Special Atks** – encapsulate, subdue, transmogrify

**Abilities** Str 22, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 1

**Encapsulate (Ex):** If the apparatus pins an opponent at least 1 size category smaller than it during a grapple, it opens a metal iris at the top of its cylindrical torso as a free action and places the creature inside this space with a successful grapple check. The metal iris then closes, trapping the creature inside. The apparatus is not considered grappled once it has encapsulated an opponent. The trapped creature may escape by dealing 59 points of damage to it.

**Subdue (Ex):** The foamy substance inside the transmogrification apparatus acts as a strong anesthetic on any creature with a Constitution score. An encapsulated creature (see above) must succeed on a DC 18 Fort save or lose consciousness for 1 hour.

**Transmogrify (Ex):** An encapsulated creature held within the apparatus for 1 minute absorbs a form-altering chemical. The creature must succeed on a DC 18 Fort save or begin a painful transformation that lasts 5 days. The creature’s skin hardens, 4 additional arms grow from its torso, multiple eyes sprout from its head, and its senses sharpen. The transformation is painful and horrible to witness causing the creature to suffer a –6 penalty to its Strength, Dexterity, and Charisma scores until the process it completed. The creature acquires the “Insectile” template (see the *Appendix*) at the end of this transformation, which is permanent, but can be removed with a *wish* or *miracle* spell.

**Tactics** - The transmogrification apparatus animates when the PCs enter. It attempts to grapple the nearest opponent. If it encapsulates a PC it fends the others away with slam attacks while the chemicals do their work. After a PC has been encapsulated for 1 minute, the apparatus removes it and looks for another target to repeat this tactic on.

**Note:** Encapsulated PCs are not at risk of drowning in the foam within the apparatus since the chemicals within it include life-sustaining oxygen.

## 19. Cathedral Entrance

The end of this hallway slopes downward to a circular barrier made of a strange, membranous material. Its appearance is somewhat like stretched animal skin.

The material barring these passages is of alien origin and the closest thing to doors that the alien beings constructed. Holes or slashes in it made by physical attacks immediately seal up similar to the way many cephalopods do.

However, magical attacks against it deal damage that can potentially destroy them.

PCs may simply push through the membrane with a successful DC 10 Strength check. The membrane immediately seals up afterward.

**Membrane Portal:** hp 10; Hardness 2; Resistant to attacks; DC 10 Strength check to bypass

## 20. Alien Monstrosity (EL 10)

Four portals open in to a huge chamber with round pillars supporting a 30 ft. high ceiling. The stout pillars surround a large well with a 3-foot high lip. From its depths can be heard an ominous splashing sound.

At the bottom of the 30-ft. deep well a creature from an alien world rests in the shallow water.

**Creature:** This area is dedicated to a pseudonatural monstrous giant praying mantis. It has resisted all past attempts to destroy it and consumed those that tried. Unless they are extraordinarily quiet, the creature becomes aware of the PCs when they enter.

### PSEUDONATURAL MONSTROUS GIANT PRAYING MANTIS CR 10

Gender template race class level

Monster Manual 3.5 285, Reference pg

N Huge outsider

**Init** -2; **Senses** blindsight, darkvision 60ft.; **Spot** +14, **Listen** +2

**Language** - none

**AC** 17, **touch** 8, **flat-footed** 17

**hp** 102 (12 HD) **damage reduction** 10/ **magic**

**Immunity** outsider traits

**Resistances** acid and electricity 15; **spell resistance** 22

**Fort** +12 **Ref** +6 **Will** +10

**Spd** 20ft. fly 40ft. (poor)

**Melee** claws +14 (2d6+8, 19-20/x2) and bite +9 (1d8+4, 20/ x3 plus poison)

**Space** 15ft. **Reach** 10ft.

**Base Atk** +8; **Grp** +24

**Atk Options** – improved grab

**Special Atks** – alternate form, poison, true strike

**Abilities** Str 27, Dex 6, Con 19, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 11

**Skills** – **Hide** +3, **Spot** +14

**Improved Grab:** To use this ability, a monstrous giant praying mantis must hit with its claws attack. If it wins the ensuing grapple check, it establishes a hold and makes a bite attack as a primary attack (at its full +14 attack bonus).

**Poison (Ex):** Injury, Fortitude DC 20, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Str.

**True Strike (Su):** Once per day, this creature can gain a +20 insight bonus on a single attack roll. In addition, the creature suffers no miss chance against a target that has concealment or total concealment when making this attack.

**Alternate Form (Su):** As a standard action, this pseudonatural monstrous giant praying mantis can take the form of a grotesque, tentacle mass supported by long chitinous legs. Despite its alien appearance, its abilities remain unchanged. Other creatures receive a –1 moral penalty on their attack rolls against a pseudonatural creature when it is in this alternate form.

**Tactics** - The creature starts combat in its alternate form and uses its first action to wriggle up and out of the well. It moves about the room attacking PCs with tentacles tipped with hooked claws. If it gets a hold on an enemy, it deals damage to it – possibly poisoning it – then moves near enough to the well for it to drop the foe in. The water is only 5 ft. deep so a PC dropped in suffers 3d6 falling damage (see *Falling* in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* pg.303).

At some point the creature changes to its praying mantis form so it can fly over enemies to reach any hanging back or charge enemies from the air. It fights to the death.

**Treasure:** At the bottom of the well, a few valuables left over from past meals have survived

## Dungeon Level 4

the long exposure to the filthy water at the bottom. The items here include *goggles of minute seeing*, a *+1 falchion*, an *immovable rod*, a *potion of fly*, a full jar of *Keoghtom's ointment*, 2 sunrods, a masterwork copper flute (in need of cleaning), a carved ivory statuette of a monkey worth 20 gp, a moonstone worth 30 gp, 620 gp, 5 pp, and 10 sp.

**Development:** If any of the heroes find themselves at the bottom of the well, they can climb out with a successful DC 27 Climb check. The walls of the well are of hewn stone and are slick with water and the creature's slime.

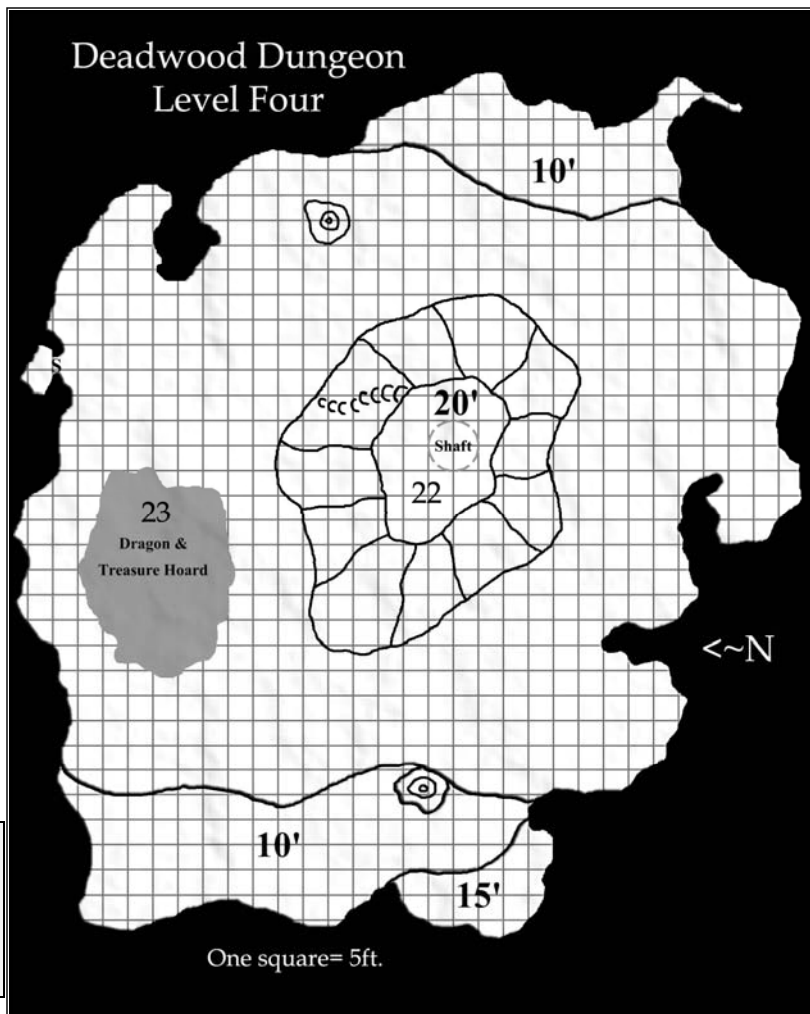
PCs dropped in to the well face a very patient predator. It can easily attack PCs attempting to climb out and knock them back in to the well or it may drop itself down in to the well to grapple prey at the bottom, possibly drowning creatures held under the water.

### 21. Collapsed Corridor (EL Variable)

This corridor appears as if it might lead to other areas of the dungeon. However, it ends abruptly where the ceiling has collapsed, completely blocking the corridor in tons of stone.

**Development:** Attempting to clear the rubble will most likely result in further collapses. If you opt to have the corridor collapse, each area is a CR 8 encounter. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide* 66 for details on cave-ins and collapses.

If you wish to expand the dungeon, these areas provide an opening, so to speak, to do so. If not, you may just as easily describe the stone rubble as being too tightly wedged to move no matter how hard the PCs try.



### 22. Hitting Bottom

Read the following description if the PCs activate the dais in room 2 and ride it down:

The dais suddenly plunges downward with you on it.

The room above is soon nothing but a rapidly shrinking ring as you plunge ever downward through a circular shaft. Seemingly hundreds of feet later, the platform suddenly slows and the shaft opens to reveal a large cavern.

The dais finally comes to rest atop a massive rocky mound sparkling with phosphorescent mineral chips.

The shaft connecting room 2 to this cavern is 80 ft. deep. Multiple castings of *disintegration* spells were used to form it. From the shaft in the

cavern roof it is another 30 ft. to a rocky protrusion that was once a massive stalagmite that had its top portion sliced off to provide a flat and even landing area for the magical lift. Roughhewn stairs were carved out of its northeast side winding down to the dead dragon and its treasure hoard.

### 23. Tomb of Aerlotazt the Green Dragon (EL 11)

Below you lay the perfectly preserved remains of a massive green dragon. Even in death it is still enough to strike fear in your hearts and send you fleeing if not for the coins, jewelry, and other treasure it is surrounded by.

Late in its long draconic life, Aerlotazt the green dragon gained a cult following of dragon worshipping arcane spellcasters. The dragon epitomized the ultimate in eldritch might. In this cave, his every need was seen to. He basked in the cultists' adoration and gifts, but ultimately his years were shortened due to this sedentary lifestyle. This did not hinder the cultists from their worship. Even dead, Aerlotazt was honored with gifts of treasure, its body preserved.

When its enemies crushed the dragon cult, the existence of this cavern was never discovered. Thus, the remains of Aerlotazt and his hoard have remained here untouched.

**Creatures:** Two dragon cultists were transformed in to mummies to guard Aerlotazt's tomb. Several coups and attempts at looting the dragon's hoard have resulted in honing their battle prowess and senses reflected in their levels in the Tomb Warden prestige class. They stand watch here in a small cave in the north wall concealed by an *illusory wall* spell (Will save DC 16 if interacted with). They have a perfect view of the area from their cave.

#### DRAGON CULTIST MUMMY (2) CR 8

Gender template race tomb warden 3\*

Monster Manual 3.5 190, Libris Mortis - The Book of Undead 57

LE Medium undead

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60ft., tomb sense; Spot +11, Listen +11

**Aura** – despair (DC 16)

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**AC** 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24

**hp** 74 each (11 HD) damage reduction 5/-

**Immunity** – turning, undead traits

**Fort** +7 **Ref** +3 **Will** +9

**Spd** 20ft.

**Melee** slam +14 melee (1d6+10, 20/ x2 plus mummy rot

**Base Atk** +7; Grp +14

**Atk Options** -

**Special Atks** –mummy rot (ex. favored enemy +2, death touch 1/day (+7 melee, 4d6 dmg), rebuke undead 4/day (+CHA, 2d6, 4th)

**Abilities** Str 25, Dex 10, Con -, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 15

**SQ** power of the dead, vulnerability to fire

**Feats** – Alertness, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Toughness

**Skills** – Hide +7, Listen +11, Move Silently +7, Spot +11

**Possessions** mithral shirt, faded green ancient ceremonial robes bearing draconic emblems

**Despair (Su):** At the mere sight of a mummy tomb warden, a viewer must succeed on a DC 16 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by a mummy tomb warden's despair ability for 24 hours.

**Mummy Rot (Su):** Supernatural disease – slam, Fortitude DC 16, incubation period 1 minute; damage 1d6 Con and 1d6 Cha. Unlike normal diseases, mummy rot persists until the victim reaches Constitution 0 (and dies) or is cured as described below.

Mummy rot is a powerful curse, not a natural disease. A character attempting to cast any conjuration (healing) spell on a creature afflicted with mummy rot must succeed on a DC

20 caster level check, or the spell has no effect on the afflicted character.

To eliminate mummy rot, the curse must first be broken with *break enchantment* or *remove curse* (requiring a DC 20 caster level check for either spell), after which a caster level check is no longer necessary to cast healing spells on the victim, and the mummy rot can be magically cured as any normal disease.

An afflicted creature that dies of mummy rot shrivels away into sand and dust that blow away into nothing at the first wind.

**Power of the Dead (Su):** While within this cavern the mummy tomb wardens can call upon the spirit of Aerlotazt to gain inspiration from him. This ability requires only a free action to activate and grants them a +2 insight bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws. The mummy tomb wardens may use this ability once per day, and its effects last for 10 minutes.

**Tomb Sense (Su):** While within this cavern the mummy tomb wardens know the precise location of all intruders within the cavern. This ability is similar to blindsense, except that it functions without regard to line of effect and its effect extends to every portion of the cavern.

**Turn Immunity (Ex):** As long as the mummy tomb wardens are within this cavern, they are immune to turning or rebuking. They can still be bolstered as normal.

**Vulnerability to Fire (Ex):** The mummy tomb wardens take half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from fire attacks.

**Tactics:** When the PCs descend from area 22, the mummy tomb wardens leave their hiding place possibly affecting the heroes with despair. They activate their power of the dead ability as they close with their enemies, targeting PCs with torches or other flaming equipment first. These, they attempt to disarm and then snuff out the flames.

**Note:** The Tomb Warden\* prestige class can be found in *Libris Mortis: The Book of Undead* 57

**Treasure:** Much of this treasure is composed of art objects and jewelry too numerous to list individually. It is worth a total of 3,000 gp. The rest of the treasure consists of loose gold, silver, copper and a few platinum coins worth a combined total of 8,000 gp.

A PC or armor smith with at least 5 ranks in Craft (armorsmithing) can make a DC 15 check using that skill and the proper tools to skin the green dragon for making a suit of armor and shield. See the rules for making armor from dragonhide in the Dungeon Master's Guide 284.

### Leaving the Dungeon (EL Variable)

If the PCs obtained the *null box*, Smoke is aware of it and enters the dungeon to wait for them in room 2, hiding behind the dragon statue.

When Smoke hears the PCs approaching, he casts *greater invisibility*. He then moves up to the PC carrying the box and tries to knock it out of his grasp. This requires him to make a Disarm attempt. Smoke gets a +14 on his attack roll. The PC makes his opposed attack roll as if using a light weapon, unaware of Smoke, and holding a non-melee weapon, which imposes a combined -10 penalty on the roll. If the PC is aware of Smoke the penalty is -8 instead.

If Smoke succeeds, the box falls to the ground opening in the process and the crystal skull rolls out (see *The Skull is Liberated*). Smoke retreats to a hiding place from which he can watch the ensuing encounter. If he is unable to accomplish this, he retreats and waits to follow them out of the dungeon. When they set camp for the night, he uses *invisibility* spells to sneak in to their camp and locate the box. He then opens it, hides in the woods, and observes.



**SMOKE CR 17**

Male human rogue 8/ wizard 9

N Medium humanoid

**Init** +10; **Senses** -; Spot +9, Listen +9**Languages**- Common, Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic, Infernal**AC** 24, touch 18, flat-footed 24 improved uncanny dodge**hp** 64 (17 HD, currently 81\*)**Fort** +8 (+10\*) **Ref** +17 **Will** +11 evasion, trap sense +2**Spd** 30 ft.**Melee** +1 *spell storing short sword* +17/+12 (1d6+3, 19-20/ x2)**Ranged** masterwork shurikens +17/+12 (1d2+2, 20/ x2)**Base Atk** +10; Grp +12**Atk Options** - Combat Expertise, Improved Feint**Special Atks** - sneak attack +4d6**Combat Gear** - *brooch of shielding* (73 hp remaining), *potion of bears endurance* (already used one, changes marked with \*) x2 (CL 10), *wand of knock* (34 charges.)**Wizard Spells Prepared** (4/5/5/4/2/1; CL 9th; +9 vs. SR; arcane spell failure 10%):5th- *dominate person* (DC 18)4th- *dimension door*, *greater invisibility*3rd- *fly*, *gaseous form*, *non-detection* (already cast), *lightning bolt* (DC 16)2nd- *fog cloud*, *invisibility* x2, *shatter* (DC 15), *spider climb*1st- *charm person* (DC 14), *detect secret doors*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (+16 ranged touch, DC 14), *shield*0- *daze*, *detect magic*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost* (+16 ranged touch)**Abilities** Str 14, Dex 23, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 8**SQ** - summon familiar, trapsense**Feats** - Combat Expertise, Craft Wondrous Item, Deceitful, Eschew Material, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shuriken), Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Finesse**Skills** - Appraise +8, Balance +13, Bluff +9, Climb +7, Concentration +1 (+3\*), Craft (calligraphy) +7, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +11, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +12, Forgery +8, Gather Information +11, Hide +11, Jump +9, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Knowledge (geography) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Listen +9, Move Silently +16, Open Lock +11, Search +8, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +14, Spot +9, Tumble +18, Use Magic Device +9 (+X adj.)**Possessions:** +2 *mithral shirt*, *ring of protection* +2, +1 *spell storing short sword* (currently stores *scorching ray*), 2 sets of masterwork shuriken, *gloves of dexterity* +4, *boots of elvenkind*, *cloak of resistance* +2, *crystal ball*, *hat of disguise*, *Heward's handy haversack*, spell tokens (see below), pouch of diamond dust for *non-detection* spell (400 gp worth), thieves' tools, 1 pp, 18 gp, trail rations (3 days), waterskin**Smoke's Spellbook:** Rather than carry around an easily identifiable tome of spells, Smoke's spells are inscribed on a collection of 23 humanoid skulls he carries in his magical haversack. In addition to his prepared spells, his "spellbook" contains all 0-level spells from the Player's Handbook plus *alarm*, *color spray*, *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *low-light vision*, *reduce person*, *unseen servant*, *cat's grace*, *darkvision*, *detect thoughts*, *locate object*, *resist energy*, *see invisibility*, *web*, *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*, *haste*, *keen edge*, *phantom steed*, *shrink item*, *charm monster*, *greater invisibility*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *locate creature*, *phantasmal killer*, *\*unluck*, *\*Leomund's hidden lodge*, *\*servant horde*, and *teleport*.\*See *Complete Arcane* for descriptions of these spells and more information on alternative spellbooks. If you do not have access to this book, simply replace the spells with ones from the Player's Handbook and replace Smoke's spell tokens with a pair of standard spellbooks.

## The Skull is Liberated (EL 8 or 11)

When the *crystal skull* is released from the *null box*, read the following:

The strange box pops open, its contents toppling out: a humanoid sized skull carved from a massive sapphire. Suddenly, the skull lifts in to the air crackling with electricity. A harsh voice speaking in common issues from the skull, "Free at last! And you mortals must be my liberators. I suppose I should thank you." The skull hovers in the air turning to regard each of you for a moment. It then speaks in a commanding voice, "One of you shall wield my power..."

When the *sapphire skull of storms* makes this declaration, it turns to face a PC it would assume to be weak willed such as a fighter. It names the PC as its chosen and invites him to claim its power. If the PC is reluctant, the skull makes a disgusted sound and chooses another PC.

Touching the skull requires a DC 25 Will save to resist being dominated by it. If the skull succeeds, it forces the dominated PC to slay the rest of its party. If the PC resists, he immediately learns the powers of the *sapphire skull of storms* and may use them. However, each day the PC keeps the skull on his person, a new Will save is required to resist domination. See *Items Against Characters* in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* 271 for rules on handling intelligent magic items.

During this encounter, the PCs may attempt to smash the skull. If they succeed, Sharterikk the dread wraith is freed.

## SAPPHIRE SKULL OF STORMS

Crystal skull

LE Tiny object

**Senses** darkvision  
60ft., hearing,  
lifesense; Spot -,  
Listen +4

**Language** -  
Common, Infernal  
(speech, telepathy)

**Hardness** 8

**hp** 90

**Ego** 25

**Abilities** Str -, Dex -, Con -, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 24

**Spell-like abilities:** (CL 7th)

(At will) - *cause fear* (DC 18), *protection from good*

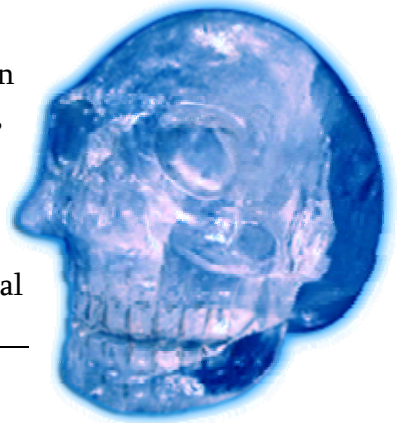
(3/day) - *levitate*, *lightning bolt* (DC 20), *shocking grasp* (DC 18)

**Personality:** Crafted by Athikir Kelvin, this item is a lesser Crystal Skull of Nerull. It is a sapphire the size of a grapefruit masterfully cut in to the shape of a grinning humanoid skull. The gemstone alone is worth 30,000 gp. It contains a dread wraith named Sharterikk whose driving ambition is to inflict pain, suffering, and death in the world of men whenever possible. However, he knows that without the help of the very creatures he loathes, he would be unable to accomplish this. When he must communicate he is condescending and curt.

Strong Conjunction; CL 15<sup>th</sup>; Craft Wondrous Item, *trap the soul*; Price 76,200 gp

**Sharterikk, Dread Wraith:** hp 104;  
*Monster Manual* 258

**Development:** Smoke watches eagerly. Once he gauges the power of the skull or sees the PCs attempting to destroy it, he swoops in to take it. In the ensuing test of wills between Smoke and the *sapphire skull of storms*, Smoke is able to dominate it. Smoke then casts *dimension door*



and *fly* to reach a *Leomund's secure lodge* he erected less than 24 hours ago. Unless the PCs have means of locating him, they will not see him again, but see *Concluding the Adventure* below.

## Concluding the Adventure

After exploring the dungeon, the PCs can return to town with their spoils and verify or disprove the folklore regarding Deadwood Dungeon. If they discovered the arcane testing room (room 10) on level 2, they may wish to return to complete it. If they do, you may want to add more ogres to the dungeon. The new group would have been out patrolling the woods when the PCs were there previously and returned after the heroes left. Finding their band slain and their treasure stolen, they would be quite angry.

A PC that gains the "Insectile" template has several days of pain and suffering ahead ending in transformation in to a new creature. This can be problematic in a social sense, but can also be very handy as the PC benefits from the new abilities gained.

If Smoke absconded with the *sapphire skull of storms*, the PCs will most likely feel cheated and wish to settle the score with him. In the coming weeks, Smoke begins using the skull's powers on small villages to appease Sharterikk as he makes his way across the Flanaess to his liege lord, one of the former Hierarchs of the Horned Society. News of the murders, destruction, and use of a blue skull that fires lightning bolts come to the attention of the heroes. This can lead to further adventures as the PCs pursue Smoke. The plot thickens as they learn of the Hierarchs plan to use the *sapphire skull of storms* to complete his collection of Crystal Skulls of Nerull. Who knows what fell powers may be unleashed if this occurs?

## Scaling the Adventure

"The Grinning Blue Devil" is designed for a group of four 7<sup>th</sup>-level characters, but can be adapted for use with lower or higher level parties. All NPC's in the adventure should have their class levels adjusted by an amount equal to the increase or decrease in average party level from 7<sup>th</sup> with the exception of Smoke. You should adjust the treasure in the adventure appropriately.

**6th-level PCs:** Change the trap in room 2 to a *lightning bolt* trap (Dungeon Master's Guide 72). In room 3 replace Splat's barbarian levels with 3 levels of fighter. Remove one ogre from room 4. Remove one insectile bugbear from room 6. Since PCs of this level do not have access to the 4<sup>th</sup>-level spells in room 9, succeeding in the Spellcraft check at *g* and *h* results in teleportation to room 10. The PC is then transported back via the same means. You may wish to leave this room as written since the DC to cast the spells from a scroll is very low.

Remove one ogre from room 12 and change the sinkhole to 50 ft. deep. Also, consider removing one ghast from area 13 if the encounter with Okutapu is too taxing. Remove one of the centipede swarms in area 15. Replace the chaos beast in room 17 with an 8 HD gibbering moulder with 14 Charisma. Change the transmutation apparatus to 12 HD. Reduce the pseudonatural monstrous giant preying mantis's HD by 2.

**8th-9th-level PCs:** Little work is needed for PCs of this level, though you will need to add one or 2 more monsters of the appropriate type to each of the encounter areas, add class levels, or advance their Hit Dice to ensure that the encounters are a challenge. The spell traps in room 2 and 9 should be heightened by one or 2 levels, which increases their challenge ratings and the DC of the saves and damage dealt.

