

Forged in The OSR Pit through the power of collaboration, the first issue of The Pit Zine marks the forum's first official release.

In this zine you'll find reviews, setting materials, creative writings, and tables. Lots of tables.

On behalf of everyone that worked on making this zine possible, we hope you enjoy & would love to hear about your experiences!

# THE PIT

CO-OP  
OSR ZINE

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 **OSR PIT**  
<https://discourse.osrrpg.com>

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# Welcome!

Welcome to the first ever issue of the OSR Pit Zine!

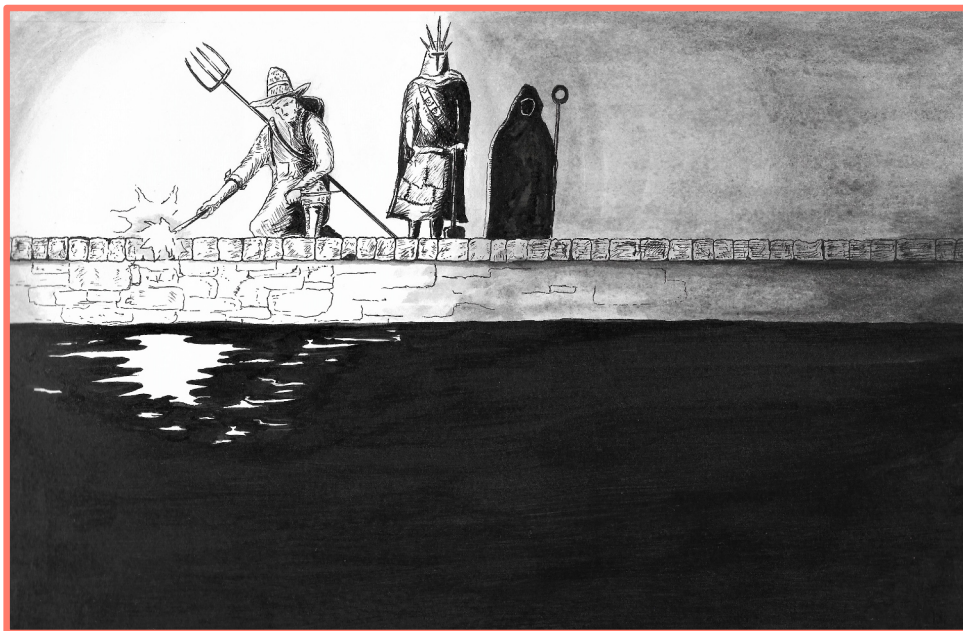
The Pit Zine has been a great collaborative effort between a ton of people who frequent our forums, all of which are really excited to publish this for public consumption. We hope the collection of articles here helps you improve your own games and provides you with some inspiration.

This work contains tables, monsters, and adventures for our own "Pit" setting, but also has a few more informational reads on other OSR topics. I want to thank everyone who helped contribute articles, ideas, and art to make this project possible. I'd especially like to recognize L. F. OSR for the amazing cover, thekernelinyellow for helping me moderate the site, and PM Schramm for editing the zine and helping the whole thing come together. To all of the above, THANK YOU for sticking with the OSR Pit since its inception!

This issue of the zine centers around a "hub" location, an enormous tunnel complex which can lead to all sorts of settings (many of which we hope to flesh out in future issues). If you wish to easily integrate the adventures here into your game, simply drop Towatuni, the central Pit hub, into your game.

If you enjoy this zine, please check out: <https://discourse.osrrpg.com> for friendly discussion about blogs, game advice, and anything else OSR related. Hopefully this is the first issue of many!

- Kingroy23



# The Ominous Pit

The town of Towatuni was once a prosperous settlement straddling the border between civilization and wilderness. Six years ago the town was swallowed whole into an enormous pit.

## d10 Why Towatuni Fell into The Pit

- 1 The ore-rich bedrock under the town was mined hollow, it finally collapsed.
- 2 Great rains caused flooding which eroded the banks of The Pit, dislodging the whole town.
- 3 An earth kraken pulled the town into The Pit with its mighty tentacles.
- 4 The town's foundations were destroyed by saboteurs with explosives.
- 5 A massive earthquake opened up the ground beneath the town, forming The Pit and plunging the city into it.
- 6 The Pit is a living thing. It allows things to grow and prosper on its rim, but every few hundred years it swallows up everything that has accumulated there.
- 7 The town was built on stilts. An embittered wizard animated the stilts and forced the town to walk itself into The Pit.
- 8 An offended god pushed the town in.
- 9 A fungus crept up from The Pit and slowly gnawed at the town's foundations of rock and wood until they crumbled to dust.
- 10 The town was built on top of an illusionary surface covering The Pit. Town sages discovered the illusion, destroying it and making the town fall through.

The inhabitants of the town found themselves inside an immense underground area with a myriad of criss-crossing tunnels. News of The Pit soon spread, along with rumors of treasure to be found in the tunnels adjacent to the now sunken city. Adventurers, knaves, and freebooters from all over flocked to The Pit in the hopes of getting rich.

## d8 Why Exploring Tunnels is a Bad Idea

- 1 Digmaids. Like mermaids, but with worm tails. They sing. They dig. They eat.
- 2 Lost Souls. Many explorers get lost while trying to explore the tunnels. The darkness, the hunger, and the tunnels themselves twist and corrupt them. Then they find new explorers...
- 3 Some tunnels are not tunnels but huge mouths. Nobody knows of what.
- 4 Vision Gas. Inside the tunnels there are areas where gasses accumulate naturally. The Vision Gas will show the victim a terrifying vision, often of their own death. Many die or are horribly scarred.
- 5 Unvision Gas. Breathe enough of this and divination magic no longer works on you. Good luck to the search parties!
- 6 Gems. They are beautiful. They shine in the darkness. You cannot stop looking at them. *Ever*.
- 7 You might encounter the Ashen. If you eat their mudcakes you'll end up serving them for hundreds of years.
- 8 All types of fungi dot the walls of the tunnels. Don't eat them, no matter how hungry you are.

# The Groups and Factions of Towatuni

The Sunken City of Towatuni didn't stay idle after it sank. Though the first year was marred with casualties, the tough residents rebuilt their town with the help of new arrivals. The town continues to slowly expand downward into the depths. Below are eight factions that play a prominent role in Towatuni's day-to-day affairs.

## 1) Ruling Council

The Council hires the town guards and writes the tax code needed to pay them. The laws of this code change as quickly as the townsfolk learn to get around them.

Originally made up of wealthy business owners and representatives of large land-owning families, the Council was in turmoil when Towatuni sank. The previous leaders gradually lost their places, and now there are just a few hereditary members left. The trade guilds want seats for their guildmasters, but so far the merchants have blocked them.

Mayor: Barlo Oxford; grandfatherly but shrewd man who constantly smokes a pipe.

## 2) Chandlers and Lampmakers Guild

The Chandlers came to prominence a relatively short time after the town originally sunk belowground. They're now the preeminent guild, which gives them a lot of influence with the other guilds and with the ruling council.

The Chandlers and Lampmakers Guild actively works to keep the power they've gained. From the start, the guild agitated for laws against glow beetles and mushrooms. These have passed from legal to illegal and back again more than once in the town's history. They've also sent armed thugs into Undertown to smash the ratpeople's candleworks. Some of the other councilmembers are beginning to resent the guild's heavy-handedness.

Guildmaster: Rened Sully; middle-aged woman with scars from a ratperson's claws on her cheek. She says little but listens intently.

## 3) Druids

The Druids' attunement to nature played a big part in the town learning to survive underground. Their numbers have grown over time, and now there's an internal split. On one side are the spiritual types who believe in ascetic living and natural connection. The other side is looking for political influence. The spirituals are advocating for a schism while the politicians want to stay a single group.

Druid chief: Pobry Chertham; black-haired man who looks a decade younger than his actual age. Has an archaeopteryx familiar.

# The Groups and Factions of Towatuni

## 4) Alchemists

The Alchemists produce several dangerous products for the townsfolk, including strong acids and black powder charges used for mining. They've been agitating for stronger control over how their wares are used.

All alchemist guildmembers remember a generation ago when several of their group got lynched after an accident. The Council and other guilds have rebuffed these as rumors, convinced it's a ploy to drive prices up.

Head alchemist: Dagmar Rindle; young woman and three-time winner of the Alchemist's out-of-the-lab-and-duck-behind-a-thick-wall race.

## 5) Sun Cult

The Sun Cult has existed almost as long as Towatuni has been underground. They believe their wicked town has been exiled to a world of stone for its sins and will be restored when they have paid for them. They run a charity hospital in the center of town and a communal garden tended by lobe-eater fungus victims who are still semi-capable of taking directions. The Cult has never been political, but there's a growing fanaticism among its younger members and talk of forced conversions and penances.

The Brightest: Yesed Wandry; conceals his nature inside a loose robe and speaks only in gestures.

## 6) The Far Settlement

Two years ago a faction of disgruntled farmers and tradesmen migrated to a large faraway cavern. As they left, they promised to have nothing more to do with Towatuni and the complacent fools running it. They still have sympathizers in town, unhappy with the way the Council treated the separatists.

Things have been difficult for them in the new area. Crops are sickly, it's hard to protect animals from stonebeast predators, and their water sources aren't reliable. Still refusing to ask the town for help, some of them have taken to sneaking back in to steal what they need.

Mayor: Gulla Briggs; loud, bearded man who issues orders while he works as a mason.

## 7) Ancients Cult

This group has been quietly raiding prehuman tombs for magical artifacts and gradually learning how to use them. Some of the cave hieroglyphics hint that the creatures who built them had a resurrection technique that works even after many centuries of death. The Ancients hope to revive an entombed creature in the hopes it will teach them more of its magic. With a weapon like that, they could even take control of Towatuni.

Leader: Tultha Steed; wealthy shopkeeper and money lender. Always smiling.

8) Two opposing **gangs** have formed in the slums of Towatuni, the dark and dangerous streets where local thugs garner more respect than the guards. Both gangs have been more active than usual, making alliances and preparing for a turf war.



**1** A **wormer** grows worms, maggots, and other insects for consumption. Their plots are fed with any organic matter the farmer can scrounge up: human refuse, dead creatures, weeds, and leaves that sometimes fall from the heavens.

**2** Foraging is a common pastime and profession. **Foragers** usually know a few good nearby spots for renewable resources like darkpops, pale curtains, and "mystery meat." Knowledge of these locations is guarded jealously and passed down from generation to generation.



**3** A **mortician** prepares a corpse for burial. The controlled putrefaction process yields a wide variety of gases and liquids including sulfur, phosphorus, calcium, and magnesium. The family receives some of these as a death gift, the rest are sold off to alchemists.

**4** **Archaeologists** dig into the ruins of Undertown, looking for artifacts or knowledge of the past. There's a rivalry between archaeologists and tunnel delvers; the two forever bicker about which is the more dangerous pursuit.

**5** The **Grovellers** believe ancient humans were exiled from the surface because their tall towers offended the bird gods. Their religion preaches crawling on the belly like a snake and considers any building taller than two floors to be heresy and a target for arson. Their pilgrimages take them deep into the tunnels; few return.

**6** **Dustlungs** suffer from a disease that slowly mummifies those infected from the inside out. It is believed their coughs carry the sickness, so they are forced to live in a separate community on the edge of town. Their gardens produce the sweetest fruit.



**7** **Ratpeople** originally came from the tunnels and settled in Undertown, which they have claimed as their own. They fight with knives, take dust baths to stay clean, and never steal from "humies." They feed on whatever they can find or catch and trade any treasure they come across with archaeologists.

**8** **Vaqueros** are herders of the holy aguabaras, large rodent creatures that graze the desolate Pit floor. The aguabaras' bodies retain large amounts of water that can be drawn from their teats. Because they preserve all their water for their offspring, their meat is extremely tough and dry and, if ingested, can shred a person's insides. To kill an aguabara is a dreadful sin; to herd them is a sacred duty.

**9** **Tunnel Delvers** are a loose bunch of scouts, adventurers, and hunters. They have no club houses nor insignia and have little in common with each other. As far as common folk are concerned, the delvers' forays contribute little and risk much, for a beast might follow them back from the tunnels.

**10** **Two-Spirits** resides in a two-story house with no roof. An eccentric individual, they note the patterns of the heavens and the paths of the bird gods to attempt to predict periods of sunlight, rain, and leaf-fall. Two-Spirits is a heavy user of psychedelics and claims to have once ridden a dragon to glimpse the surface.





Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As advances in the technical, military, and material sciences are driving forward the wheels of progress in our great era, so too is the subtle historical science of archaeology revolutionizing our understanding of the past. No longer is humankind limited to our primitive reliance on stories or aimless fumbling through the ruins of our predecessors to search for glimpses into the lives of our ancestors. Archaeology has brought the meticulous methodologies of the physical philosophers to our search for history.

Recently, great discoveries on the surface have brought to light the true antiquity of our world. Professor Frantz Bülznutz's landmark publications on the excavations at the Valley of Flowers has dispelled the myth of human origins as some recent miraculous creation by the demiurge and instead highlighted our close kinship with those other creatures whose likeness to us has been so often remarked. These revelations are truly on par with those of the ancient prophets, and yet a pernicious threat to our enlightenment remains here in our dark homeland. I am speaking, of course, of the so-called "treasure hunters."

True understanding comes not from wanton destruction in the pursuit of magic or gold, but from the careful analysis of the relationship between objects that have been methodically exhumed. Treasure hunters do not hold this belief and destroy our knowledge as they heedlessly plunder. They are like the child who plows through the priceless crystalline sculptures of the

old masters in their pursuit of a mere candy bowl.

In response to this threat, and at the request of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Underground Congress for the Advancement of Subterranean Historical Sciences, the Deep Academy of Historical Sciences has commissioned this brief pamphlet. Any sanctioned adventurer who wishes to act with the approval of the academy, and with access to the academy's great wealth and resources, should follow these suggestions.

The rest of this pamphlet will be written by my colleague. Many a gentleman has been shocked by the tenor of his writing. It is quite direct and strange; however, I assure you there is no finer field archaeologist in The Pit.

Your dedicated servant,

Professor Jan Jansonson





## STEP ONE: Permission and Research

Gather permits at academy offices. Roll 1d6 on Table 1 to decide the type and size of the site. Place the number of squares indicated on an 8x8 square grid in a configuration that makes sense. This is a partial survey to identify the site boundaries and material types at the site. The Academy will return for a full excavation if the site is deemed historically significant.

## STEP TWO: Survey

This part is a bit like *Battleship*. Give the players a blank 8x8 grid. Have players choose which squares to excavate in turns. Each square takes one hour. Roll a random encounter or wandering monster every two hours while digging and making a racket. The players can give up before the site is fully excavated, but they will only receive ¼ payment for what they've excavated. Remember, ¼ of 0 is 0.

## STEP THREE: Recovery

All recovered material needs to be collected, curated, and returned to the Academy. Standard on-site curation takes 3 days (full pay), quick curation takes 1 day (½ pay), or you can skip field curation entirely (¼ pay). You'll probably need a wagon to get the goods back.

## STEP FOUR: Assessment

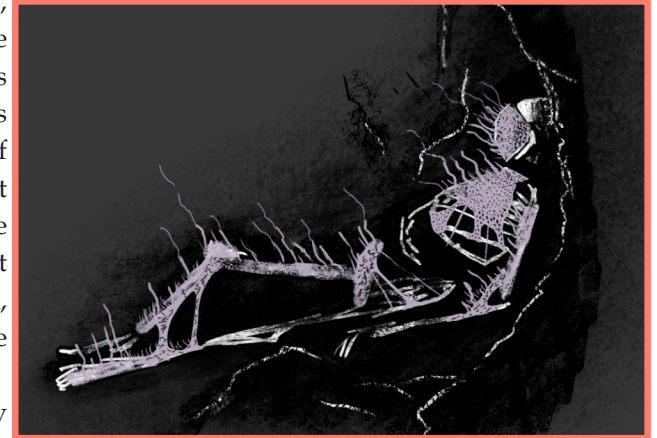
If the players are in good standing with the Academy, they will be returned half the value of the collection and granted ownership of any useful items discovered after a 2d4 week study period. The appropriate value should be determined by the referee. If players attempt to deceive the Academy and fail, they will be labeled looters, forfeit any payment due to them, and be treated as outlaws by any gentlemanly scientists.

Table 1: The Field Archaeologist's Reference as Found in Bülznutz (1856)

d6	Site Type	Size	Description
1	Homestead	4	Simple household; a cache of treasure in one of the squares
2	Cemetery	5	Urn burials; burned bones on the surface; 2-in-6 chance of haunting if burials are disturbed
3	Library	6	Wizard hermit's old library; valuable goods abound; at least 1 spellbook and 1 treasure cache
4	Fort	7	Ruined walls litter the surface; skulls and rusted armor peek through; the site has 4 intact weapons and 1 piece of armor - none magical
5	Village	8	Village of earliest Pit inhabitants; nothing on surface; no useful objects to be found; the value of the collection is the highest of any site
6	Palace	10	Huge ruins; some columns on the surface; 2 squares have a treasure cache; at least 1 spellbook, 1 magical weapon, and 1 very old bottle of wine

The first explorers of The Pit were surprised to find a thriving (and dangerous) ecosystem in the subterranean passageways and caverns. Documented below are six notable examples of the types of fungi and flora one might encounter while exploring the depths.

1) **Porous Peniophora:** faint, purple-grey, and dotted with fine holes; this mold grows on bodies left in The Pit. It is drawn towards moisture and capable of animating the corpses it covers. It will march its host bodies to the nearest source of water in an effort to consume all it can, contaminating these sources in the process.



2) **Cave-Nettle:** thin, wiry stalks with twin leaves springing off every few inches, each growing up to half a mile long. Hundreds of stalks can stem from a single source bulb that has taken root in a mineral deposit. Any metal that comes into contact with the leaves is marred by a green, rust-like corrosion as the plant feeds on its material content.

3) **Miner's Lantern:** soft, orange fungus, dotted with red "hair;" upon exposure to oxygen, its yellow interior glows with a faint pulsing light for up to ten minutes. Upon ingestion it grants weak darkvision for 24 hours as well as extreme sensitivity to light.

4) **Lobe-Eating Mycelium:** easily mistakable for miner's lantern due to its glow except with yellow "hair;" upon ingesting lobe-eating mycelium a character must make a save against poison. If failed, the character loses points of Intelligence equal to the difference between their roll and their target number, up to a maximum of 6, and take 2d4 damage as the fungus begins to eat at their brain. Fortunately, this mycelium is not well-adapted to humanoid and, if they survive the initial damage, the fungus will soon starve.

5) **Pit Truffle:** not actually a truffle; in fact, not actually a fungus at all. This round creature is about two inches wide and akin to a jellyfish that survives off the vibrations of the underground. Perfectly edible, though it has a strange kick to it. Holding one to your forehead for five minutes offers it the nourishment of your own vibrations and increases its radius by an amount equal to your Intelligence modifier, making it a much heartier meal. The pit truffle is electrically conductive and a very effective thermal insulator.

6) **Tumbling Tubers:** not nearly as funny as they sound, these small, nutritionless potatoes grow from incredibly resilient seeds that burrow their way into the solid stone of the caves - often in walls or steps that need to be climbed. Upon even the slightest shifting, e.g. a careless adventurer reaching for the next foothold without looking, they come tumbling out, often surprising the climber and making them lose their grip.



## d20 Dangers, Denizens, and Encounters

Need something to spice up your next Pit expedition? Roll 1d20.

### d20 Dangers, Denizens, and Encounters

1 **Ancient cistern** - inhabited by a group of diminutive, eyeless, and noseless humanoids squatting in the shallows. Their spindly fingers clinch writhing eels as they tear greedily at the flesh with toothy, lipless mouths. The cistern creatures angle their ears curiously towards you, but take no aggressive action unless attacked. Water trickles in through an ornate fish head carved out of the rock on the eastern wall.

2 **Beautiful crystalline cavern** - if you examine one of the large crystals closely, you see in the reflections every potential death you could have. Each character who looks must make a fear/will/etc. save to see if they are affected.

3 **Poison haze** - in the torchlight you can make out a rolling green vapor collected in a wide depression on the tunnel floor extending 150 feet. The haze doesn't seem to emanate from anywhere. Protruding from that hazy, green mist are the dead bodies of those who took a chance or were too careless to notice. The gas is flammable.

4 **Glintch** - a bony creature covered in rags and bags with 3 eyes on its thumb-shaped face. It has a penchant for trade and is often found wandering the remote regions of The Pit collecting things of interest to itself: sometimes worthless gewgaws, sometimes true treasures. Among its wares is a scroll detailing the location of a virgin tomb.

5 **Cabin facing an underground pond** - two seemingly normal people bathe in the shallow water in front of the cabin. They wave to you and will make casual conversation. Upon closer inspection, you notice the backs of their skulls are missing. Parasitic creatures have consumed their brains and settled themselves within the empty craniums. The parasites' eyes fill the empty eye sockets like a mask and they use their appendages to flap the mouths around while they speak. The rest of the host bodies are controlled by spinal integration between the host and the parasite. The husks are perfectly cordial, as long as you don't mention their condition.

6 **Silver, mercury-like trickle** - leaking out of one cave wall. If you ingest this liquid you gain darkvision immediately and permanently, which means the harsh light of your torch is painful and sunlight is agony. You can no longer comfortably see in well-lit environments without a veil or something similar to at least mute the light's intensity.

7 **Man on the ceiling** - you encounter a man walking on the ceiling. He is perplexed and honestly downright terrified that you are able to walk on the ground (which is the ceiling for him). He calls you all witches before running away into the darkness. If the party pursues it'll take a considerable amount of convincing to make him believe that walking on the ground is normal in these parts.

8 **Sign: "Inn at the Center of the Earth"** - a very mundane inn is in the next cavern and it's packed with all types of people. If you go in and drink at the bar, you dance the night away singing songs and having a blast with the rest of the inn's patrons before finally passing out. When you wake hours later, the inn is deserted and there's a note written in a beautiful calligraphic script that says, "Thanks for the blood!"

9 **Laboratory** - you find a perfectly conspicuous door in a cave wall labeled "Laboratory." If you enter, you find a wide room with 6 bathtubs lining each side and a long table in the middle. Submerged within the tubs are strange humanoids in a sort of stasis; catatonic blank stares on their faces peer upwards through the green water they soak in.

10 **Two ornate animated skeletons sitting at a dinner table** - one asks you to join their invisible feast. Both are entirely encrusted with precious stones and covered with fine silks. They want to know about current events on the surface and will ask many questions as they pantomime eating their dinner. If you please your hosts with polite conversation, they'll hand you an embroidered handkerchief and tell you to show it to Havram Mulv in Towatuni for something special.

11 **Cult ritual interrupted** - a group of robed individuals seems to be worshipping a giant, mostly exposed trilobite fossil in a great wall behind an altar. They ask if you're a member of their church. Well, are ya?

## d20 Dangers, Denizens, and Encounters

12 **Bioluminescent fungus room** - in this oblong cavern is a sight in these parts like no other: giant glowing mushrooms, wide as wagon wheels, dot the area from floor to ceiling, bathing everything in a beautiful, dull blue. If you stay too long you start taking damage from the spores in the air. If you eat any of the fungi you get sick, then have a long and terrifying hallucinatory episode.

13 **Earthquake!** - and also flooding! The ground begins to shake and twist until a violent crack fractures the tunnel walls. There's still a way through, but when the ground shifted it unleashed an underwater river that's now dumping in gallons of water by the second all around you. Make a save or be washed somewhere far away.

14 **Intelligent millipede** - you stumble into a filthy, muggy animal lair. Amid the piles of bone, discarded clothing, and other adventurer accoutrements a giant millipede is coiled and watching. If attacked, the millipede will fight to the death but, if someone attempts to speak with it first, it'll have a cagey and broken conversation until it gets bored. When it's done socializing it'll ask you to please leave its home.

15 **Living statue without legs** - hurls insults at you as you pass, crawling after you all the while, before giving up after a few dozen feet. If you actually engage with it, the statue will beg you to please reunite it with the rest of its body located somewhere down the tunnel. The statue is a total jerk and deserves its current predicament.

16 **Simple wooden chest** - poorly hidden under some refuse. Inside, it holds half a dozen small, ornate vanity mirrors, each one holding an imprisoned soul within. The trapped individuals will attempt to communicate, but no sound can permeate their glass prison. If the glass is broken, the individual trapped within is freed and must endure the number of years they were trapped in the mirror instantaneously. Some have been trapped so long they crumble to dust before your very eyes.

## d20 Dangers, Denizens, and Encounters

17 **Explorer in a hostile land** - a metal orb mounted on motorized tracks approaches you. You can see the orb is filled with a vibrant purple liquid through its portholes. The device hails you from a primitive speaker and explains that it's a liquid-based life-form that must remain in its capsule to not be condemned to an eternity soaked into the earth. It asks for directions to the nearest inn. If someone opens the container and drinks the creature, their thirst is quenched for one whole day.

18 **Half-digested messenger** - you come to a small cavern with a hole in the ceiling. On the ground is a large carnivorous plant and, lying in a clear, viscous pool within the plant, an emaciated man. He tells you he is a messenger and that on his way to deliver his message he fell down a hole and landed here 70 years ago. Paralyzed, the plant has been feeding on him slowly while keeping him barely alive as he dissolves into the goo. He only asks that you deliver his message. He won't ask you to kill him, but will welcome it if you offer.

19 **Stranded motusivore** - in an alcove is a large sentient plantlike creature known as a motusivore. Communicating telepathically, she tells you she's nearly dead and begs you to allow her to eat the emotions tied to your memories. She asks that you only think of the happiest memories you can. If you agree, she will wrap her flower-shaped head over yours and feast on your emotions until she overdoses and dies. The acquiescing character suffers trauma from the ordeal.

20 **Tiny plaque** - about 3 inches off the ground is a plaque that reads, "Years ago the dishonorable Mouslin people attacked the Volekind while they observed their most precious celebration of Fat Feast Friday. Many of our Volekind brethren are laid to rest here as a result of the insidious crimes committed on that day. This plaque honors their memory by commemorating the annihilation of the Mouslin people. Their cities have been destroyed, their religious sites have been decimated, and their culture and customs are forgotten. Long live Volekind!"



“Welcome to Ol’ Vekyl’s Oddities and Ends! Every scrap o’ stuff in here pulled up from The Pit itself! Now, what’re ya buyin?”

Who doesn’t love a good oddity table? Here you’ll find 100 tunnel oddities meant to show the potential thematic breadth of The Pit and its ever-branching tunnels. What will you find next? Where, or when, will it lead you?

This list can be used in a variety of ways. It can add flavor when looting a body, describe the junk littering a passageway, generate the contents of a scrap-seller’s market stall, or provide the MacGuffin for a quest. It’s your table now!

doo Tunnel Oddities

- 1 Gold pickaxe head; dented as if from use
- 2 10-foot coil of thick spider-silk rope
- 3 Manuscript in a dead language; ink still wet
- 4 Tin snuffbox with the initials JTL engraved

doo Tunnel Oddities

- 5 Worn cat figurine; missing one eye
- 6 Glass earring; intricate and intact
- 7 Nubs of chalk that glow in the dark
- 8 Bolt of odd cloth; cool and pebbled texture
- 9 Pouch of knucklebones; unlucky
- 10 Bloody tangle of strong razor wire
- 11 Ring of thorns that cuts deep into the finger
- 12 Chipped bone cup with eldritch pattern
- 13 Ship in a bottle; wind still in its sails
- 14 Half-empty pouch of red-gilled mushrooms
- 15 Tiny black-sand hourglass; worn on a chain
- 16 Nesting camp cookware set; rusted
- 17 Shattered amethyst crystal geode
- 18 Half-burned notebook of child’s drawings
- 19 Nearly empty bottle of *Eau No!* perfume
- 20 Oversized cutlery set; too big to use
- 21 Collection of 8 unique coins; none familiar
- 22 Silvery moss and pack of rolling papers
- 23 Creased wanted poster of an old friend
- 24 Set of 5 goblin-teeth dice
- 25 Folded military banner; sable fox on white
- 26 Pink crystals; jagged and unnaturally hard
- 27 Rolled canvas portrait; always changing
- 28 Fragile bronze compass; always points east
- 29 Sacrificial obsidian knife blade
- 30 Quill; set with several exotic feathers
- 31 Frighteningly familiar-looking stone eye
- 32 Pristine sunhat; never gets dusty
- 33 Fresh-cut flowers that turn toward light
- 34 Partial fossil of a large toothy fish
- 35 Bundle of 9 cast iron spikes
- 36 Case of tiny apothecary bottles; all empty
- 37 Windup mechanical monkey; missing key
- 38 Detailed drawings of earth kraken lifecycle
- 39 Jade manacles; still hanging from one wrist
- 40 Pyramidal white stone; glows brightly
- 41 Large logger’s axe; handle is charred black

doo Tunnel Oddities

- 42 Portable door; can be affixed anywhere
- 43 Perfectly balanced stone wheel
- 44 Barrel of deep-blue wine; quite sour
- 45 Iridescent reptile-skin pouch; tiny
- 46 Warped mining helmet missing its lamp
- 47 Braided belt made of a single long hair
- 48 Wooden bow sprouting one green leaf
- 49 Moth-eaten ornamental rug of metal fiber
- 50 Collapsible shovels of multiple lengths
- 51 Perfectly clear diamond cube; cursed
- 52 Dried mud figure of a sleeping bat
- 53 Miniature mincart pulled by a string
- 54 Horseshoe bent into a figure eight
- 55 Slime-covered sack filled with gunpowder
- 56 Shredded collar; tag says “Fluffy”
- 57 Glass sphere containing inverted rainbow
- 58 Patchwork fur cuirass; brightly-colored
- 59 Box of various poisonous herbs
- 60 Clawed digmaid hand; shrunken
- 61 Ice-cold canteen; water within frozen solid
- 62 Gauze wrappings dripping yellow ichor
- 63 Mirrored shield; warped and broken
- 64 Sealed envelope dated 47 years later
- 65 Warm bottle of Muckraker Ale
- 66 Painted bird’s skull; still sings sometimes
- 67 Polished scythe blade of demi-human bone
- 68 Jar of giant ants slowly unscrewing the lid
- 69 Crimson bridal veil; lace reaching out
- 70 Single smoldering chess piece; a rook
- 71 Photo of treasure hunters; some crossed out
- 72 Large spiky seed; carefully stored
- 73 Intricate leather hawking glove; petite
- 74 Stick and mud fetish of a 6-armed creature
- 75 Metal orb; ticking with flashing lights
- 76 Unwieldy 39.5-foot pole; collapsible
- 77 Whorled shell; sounds of thunder within
- 78 Clutch of freshly-hatched, chitinous eggs



doo Tunnel Oddities

- 79 Complex string knot; perfectly symmetrical
- 80 Pinch of ashes; the remains of a witch
- 81 Jar of ointment; labeled “For: Scale Fever”
- 82 Powdered petals of umbra flower; addictive
- 83 Trick ring with poisoned hidden needle
- 84 Sliding puzzle box; faint screaming within
- 85 Mandrake roots; bundled and gagged
- 86 Toy mole stuffed with straw; eyes like pits
- 87 Single wicked crossbow bolt; illegal
- 88 Bag of chipped marbles; perfectly silent
- 89 Threadbare saddlebag; much larger inside
- 90 Seemingly empty vial that’s warded shut
- 91 Ancient urn filled with thick, rusty sludge
- 92 Lonely sentient boot; looking for its mate
- 93 Unusually large map; X marks the spot
- 94 Fibrous whip with cruel burs at the tip
- 95 Strange lute with more pegs than strings
- 96 Lost eyepatch; too long for a human face
- 97 Farmer’s pail filled with leaden pebbles
- 98 Weighted hunter’s net; ripped to shreds
- 99 Crystal skull; elongated and buzzing
- 100 Empty scabbard that refuses all swords



Roll 1d10 when discovering resources while navigating The Pit and match the number with the resource below:

**1. Maelore** - an amorphous, liquid metal material often found in small deposits near magma or areas of extreme heat. Maelore is extremely explosive and is the cause of many cave collapses when ignited.

**2. Darkpops** - small fungi that develop in humid areas unexposed to light of any kind. Darkpops are great sources of food during foraging and are sought after by many monsters for this reason. They prove problematic to harvest as they immediately decay when exposed to any light.

**3. "Mystery Meat"** - it's not uncommon for a creature's mouth to be mistaken as a tunnel entrance; the same goes for the other end of these creatures. Their feces, often called "mystery meat," is the sole source of protein for some, and proves to be one of the more desperate options for sustenance in The Pit.

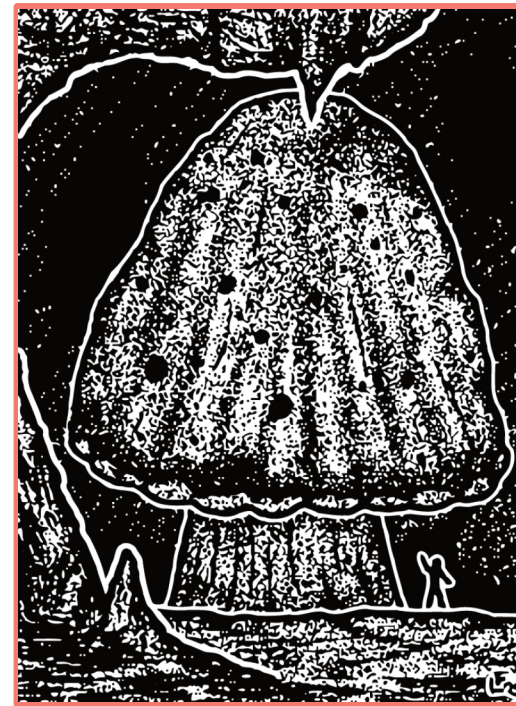
**4. Pale Curtains** - these light pink, fleshy, leathery sheets of material are most common in damp, moist, and dank tunnels. They often hang across ceilings of tunnels or are draped over large boulders. It's theorized these curtains are living and appear to collect moisture by stretching their surface area out in damp areas; however, no real proof has been presented. More importantly, their tough hides make for great armor.



**5. Dale's Dust** - an extremely fine powder found naturally, although very rarely, in The Pit. The powder is absolutely black in pigment and is often used by those wishing to remain invisible in the dark. Popularized by the infamous assassin Dale Neverlight.

**6. Sauna Oil** - an uncommon, oily substance found throughout The Pit in small quantities. This odorless oil has no taste, is nonflammable, and cannot be frozen; however, it has healing properties when heated to boil and dissipated into gas. Upon inhaling the produced vapor, feelings of bliss flood the brain and wounds begin to rapidly heal. This effect is often used in healing saunas.

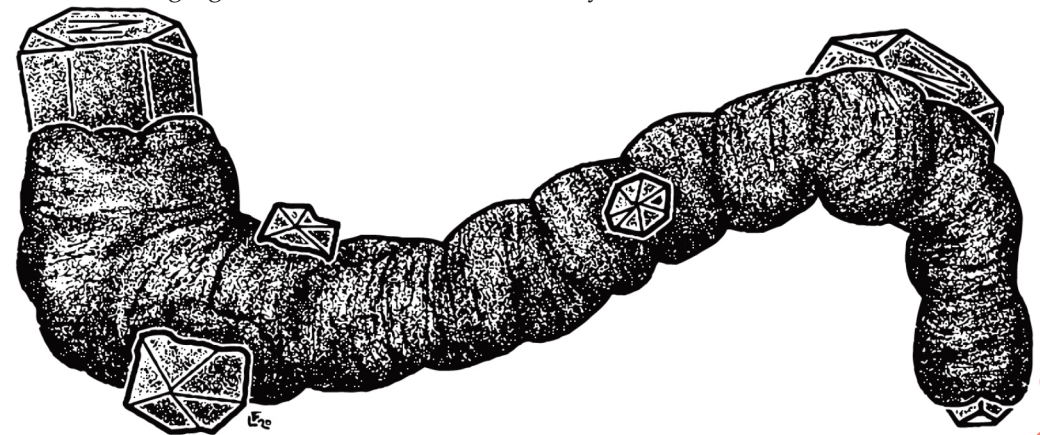
**7. Magnastone** - an extremely magnetic stone often found in deeper parts of The Pit. Used for many purposes ranging from simple traps to more complex devices; this stone's ore is sought by many from all regions.



**8. Telespores** - rare and not fully understood, these extremely large mushroom spores emit powerful frequencies that deter creatures and explorers. Upon touching a telespore, seemingly unrestricted by distance or time, the user is immediately teleported to another random telespore. Post teleportation, the user is subject to a permanent ringing in their head.

**9. Liquashoots** - hollow plants that grow more prominently closer to the surface and range greatly in size. The shoots of these plants have an open top theorized to collect organic material dropping from ceilings. They also catch any creature foolish enough to wander in. Anything organic inside of a liquashoot will undergo a yet to be understood process that converts it into a liquid state at a rapid pace, allowing clever creatures to create their own source of hydration within The Pit.

**10. Mineral Maggots** - extremely rare and the dream of many treasure hunters. These maggots are no larger than a common rat but feature outstandingly beautiful gemstones, diamonds, or other rare minerals embedded in their bodies. Upon removal, the maggot will immediately die an uneventful death; however, there have been notably large earthquakes that are seemingly connected to the slaughter of these creatures. The true source of these earthquakes is yet to be fully understood.







The Great Cavern is a large open area in The Pit. The heat and light from the sacred everlasting fire located here attracts settlements of underworld dwellers. It is silent outside the sound of flickering flames.

**1** A colossal animated skeleton lives in a chamber above. It likes peace and quiet and, if there is too much noise in the great cavern, it will stick its great skeletal hand through the hole in the ceiling and crush one of the settlements. This hasn't happened in some time and silver trees now grow from the hand.

**2** The shell-dwellers are a race of crustacean humanoids who live in the abandoned shells of a giant cavern snail. They are concerned the snail has become sick and need a giant flower from the Rose Forest to cure it.

**3** The Great Snail has become sick and will try to eat anybody who comes near it.

**4** The Salamander Village. These lizardfolk live in constant fear of the giant skeleton hand above. All loud noises are illegal and communication is conducted with sign language. The wrong sign could greatly insult a lizardperson; in this case a trial would be held and the punishment could be as serious as being thrown into the eternal fire that keeps the village warm.

**5** The ruins of the Ash Castle. A huge blue crystal in the center contains a powerful frost spell. If the crystal is broken, everything in the great cavern will become frozen and the eternal fire will die out.

**6** The eternal fire gives light and warmth to the great cavern.

**7** Color Mountain. Surrounded by a deep moat, the only way in is over an old, rickety wooden bridge. Color spray spells will be cast at the characters if they try to cross. Inside the Color Castle lives a group of ten wizard artists, each with different colored robes and personalities. There is complex drama between them; they want to know whose magical sculptures the characters think is best. Any preference at all will result in a ten-way wizard fight.

**8** The Rose Forest. A group of plant creatures lives here. In the center is a metal, dome-shaped observatory where the gardener who makes the magical creatures lives. The gardener will give the players a rose to heal the great snail; but, if they take one without asking, flower assassins will follow them and attempt to steal the flower back before they can give it to the snail.

**9** The Twin Forts. A royal family called "The Gladwells" live in these towers. They were teleported here by a wizard in a war decades ago and erected wardstones in a perimeter around their towers. To walk through these barriers one must first bow, otherwise a force barrier prevents you from proceeding. The Gladwells are building a time machine but need the blue crystal from the Ash Castle to complete it.



Nestled deep in the mountains, far from any bustling cities, the small rural village of Evensfjord can be found. For centuries it has relied on a stepwell to irrigate its crops. Fortune has granted the village stable seasons, keeping the well full and the crops healthy. But, known to only the older generation, the well keeps a malevolent creature hidden and locked away in its depths.

A drought caused the stepwell to gradually dry up, forcing the villagers to dig further down for water. So dig they did. Further and further and further down, deeper into the mountain. Soon, their hard work paid off, the well was full once more; however, in their laboring, they had dug too deep, releasing unspeakable monsters from The Pit.

The villagers managed to send the creatures back from whence they came after a long and bloody battle. All except for a fire drake. A mighty foe, the villagers were not able to drive it away, instead they managed to lure it to the bottom of the stepwell and capture it. Now it bides its time, waiting for the well to dry up so it can make its escape.

Recently, odd items from the village have begun to disappear. In addition, villagers have begun hearing sounds from the tunnels within the stepwell...

This scenario is meant to be an introductory adventure for low-level characters. It can easily be used to tie into any other dungeon of your choice.

Here are some things to keep in mind when running this dungeon:

- Start by investigating the stepwell and the upper tunnels.
  - The village elder can offer 1d100+50 gold to anyone willing to help.
- The water in the well currently sits at its **Spring** level.
- Each level has **Pit Denizens** trying to break down the dams and drain the stepwell.
  - There is a 2-in-6 chance the Pit Denizens are able to break down a dam before the party reaches the next level.
- Each time the party enters a new level, roll an **encounter check**.

## Tunnels

Each tunnel can be entered by either a doorway accessible via the water, steps leading down from the surface, or aqueduct shafts that connect to the underground water table. Each tunnel is listed in order from the doorway to the shaft. Everything before the dams is flooded, everything after is dry.

## Winter [Dry]

- an alcove with blankets, pillows, and games; looks like kids from the village use it as a clubhouse.
  - A. rations and a bullseye lantern
  - B. 1d100 copper
  - C. a wooden sword
- a **vertical aqueduct** that connects to the **Spring Tunnels**. The naturally rocky walls provide adequate handholds for climbing.

## Spring [Partially Flooded]

- a dam of peat, hay, and stone is built into one of the tunnels, preventing excess water from draining into the lower levels. 1d6 **Ember Kobolds** are working on breaking it down.
- an **alcove** with an extinguished campfire and a cache of animal bones and plucked feathers. Likely livestock stolen from the village.
  - A. an overcooked chicken leg
  - B. a ceremonial **dagger**
- a **vertical aqueduct** that connects to the **Winter** and **Autumn Tunnels**. The walls have been smoothed by years of erosion.

## Autumn [Partially Flooded]

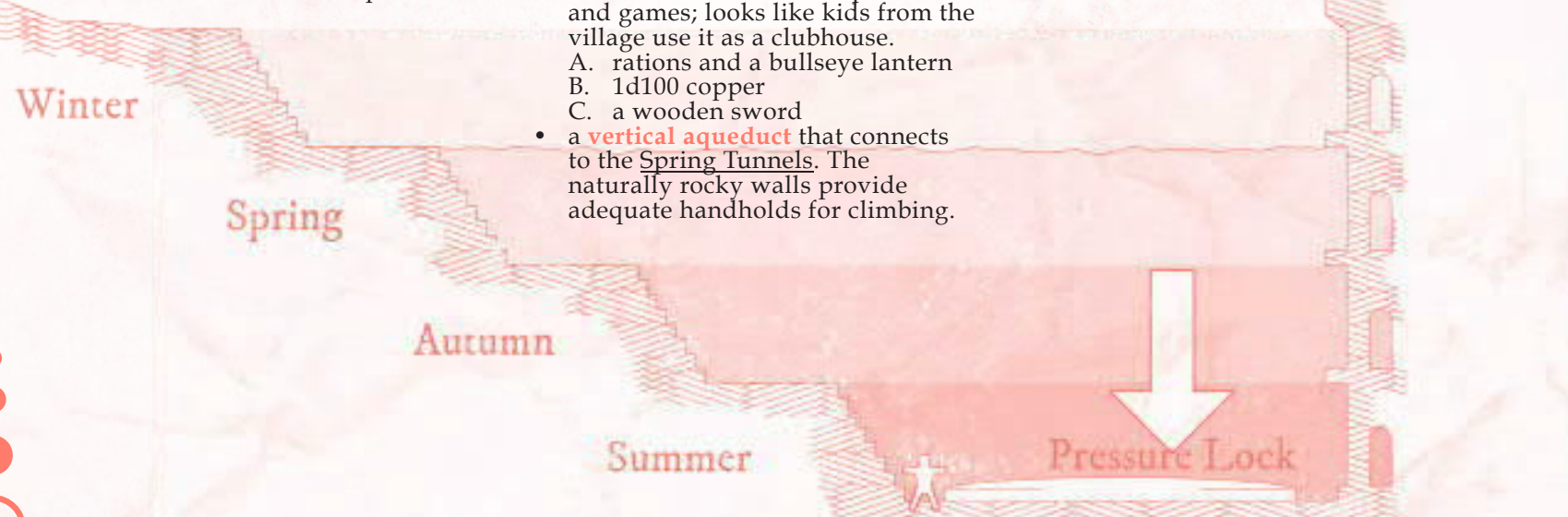
- a storeroom used during dry spells for grain and tool storage.
  - A. miscellaneous carpenter's and stonemason's tools
  - B. 100 feet of rope
- a **dam** of hemp, pitch, and timber built into one of the tunnels prevents excess water draining into the lower levels, 1d6 **Soot Goblins** are working on breaking it down.
- a [hidden] **trapdoor** of wood that drops into a study in the **Summer Tunnels**, covered with dirt and debris.
- a **vertical aqueduct** that connects to the **Spring** and **Summer Tunnels**; years of erosion have smoothed the walls over.

## Summer [Partially Flooded]

- another **dam** of timber and pitch prevents water from the stepwell from flooding further into The Pit. 1d6 **Charcoal Kobolds** are working on breaking it down.
- a **makeshift study** containing hastily drawn plans of the stepwell and the dams on each level written in Kobold. Drawing utensils and parchment are scattered about.
- a **vertical aqueduct** that connects to the **Autumn Tunnels** and the water table below.
- an alcove carved out with rudimentary tools holds a stolen **chest** stashed alongside bags of grain and root vegetables.
  - A. inside the [locked] chest is a **sword imbued with water runes**
- a series of **cavernous tunnels** descend further into the darkness of The Pit.

## Stepwell Prison [Flooded]

- belowground cage secured by water pressure from the stepwell. If water drains from all four levels the locking mechanism will unlatch, the watertight lid springs open, and the **fire drake** escapes.
  - A. the fire drake's heart is a fire ruby worth 1200 gold



## 1d6 Tunnel Encounters

- 1 1d6 Ember Kobolds
- 2 Lost child from the village
- 3 Kobold alchemist
- 4 Unconscious villager
- 5 Goblin mage
- 6 Ooze

## Introduction

This tunnelcrawl traces the path of an ancient behemoth to its grim end. It is meant as a starting framework for an adventure or campaign and should be expanded upon using tables and other content in this zine.

The following locations are separated by hours or days of travel. Any diverging tunnels are not detailed here, but could be added as side adventures or alternate routes between locations.

## Jagged Tunnel

The tunnel was formed by an earth kraken's passing a million years ago. The creature's huge tentacles plunged into the rock, splitting and cracking it. Some parts of the ancient beast have abraded the stone, sanding strange, wavy patterns into it.

Crushed stone, gravel, and sand fills most of the tunnel, leaving a low, wide passage. Lodged in a wall, there is a **fossilized tooth**. It is hook-shaped and was broken off from a giant tentacle. If moistened it grows flesh that then soon rots.

## Prehistoric Dwellings

Dwellings were dug into the walls of the tunnel uncountable years ago. There are remains of beds, tables, and containers; **wall carvings** depict a spiky, octopus-like giant beast with tiny humanoid figures for scale.

A band of **troglydte man-eaters** dwells here now. They stink of aged meat and carry lanterns housing swarms of **corpseights** which they employ to dry meat for easy transport.

**Troglydte Man-Eater:** HD 2. Armor as leather. Damage as club.

## Mudpits

Water seeps from a crack in the cavern's ceiling, dripping into a small pond of moist **mudfungus**. It looks like mud or clay, but has a powerful diuretic effect, drying out whatever touches it. The mudfungus has grown out of the pond, covering the walls and the ceiling.

**Mummified corpses** of tunnel delvers are found in the mud. There are 8 in total, but only 1d4 are visible at a glance. Items from *d100 Tunnel Oddities* table may be found on the bodies, but any fresh items will have dried up.

**Pathways** have been cleared around the rim of the lake; a trail of many footprints is impressed into the mud, leading deeper into the tunnel.

This is where the **Ashen** gather ingredients for their famous mudcakes. A pair of **Ashen gatherers** can be encountered here. They have some mudcakes prepared, but will not offer them unless requested or as self-defense.

## Mudfungus and Mudcakes

Touching mudfungus to one's bare skin or ingesting Ashen mudcakes causes mummification from the inside-out; save or turn into a frail statue over 1d4 hours. On a successful save, the fungus removes the need to drink water but makes exposure to water deadly. On a failed save, the affected area will eventually crack and crumble away.

Victims of mudfungus exposure will be offered refuge with the Ashen and treated during the most perilous stages of the illness.

## The Ashen

The Ashen are a community of **dustlung survivors** that have evolved beyond the need for water by outliving the disease. Originally human or demi-human, the rare few able to persist the infliction are infertile, naked, sooty, and bone dry - intelligent dust zombies with minds of dirt. Their breathing sounds like stone grating on stone.

The Ashen are not able to reproduce biologically. Their community grows by accepting dustlungs or desperate travelers and helping them transition to Ashen. They feed on smoke for sustenance which, to them, tastes like fresh, cold mountain air.

## Smokestack Village

The Ashen settlement is built around and above a **central vertical shaft**. A large pyre smolders at the bottom, providing a **haze of smoke** that permeates every house, coating every surface with soot.

Living in the Smokestack Village transforms a dustlung into a true Ashen, calming the turbulent illness into a stoic state of being. (*Note: Dustlungs back in Towatuni also inhale smoke to ease their symptoms.*)

Their fuel collectors are called **Jacks**. Jacks cut down mushrooms and trade with passing tunnel delvers for wood and straw.

## Stonebeast Cult

A small Ashen cult worships a huge stonebeast that lies in its dormant fossil form in a nearby cavern. It is drip-fed water to reanimate small parts of it so as to receive their worship.

**Stonebeast:** They seem like fossils until they can absorb enough water to revive. Ammonites make fun pets, raptors should be left alone.

## Stonebeast Quarry

A huge **fossilized stonebeast** is being uncovered by cultist excavations. Only a small part of the colossal creature is uncovered, the rest is buried in primordial stone. The cultists are burning ceremonial pyres and rubbing mudfungus on the beast's tentacles, keeping them dry and inactive.

Water drips down from a cow-sized **leather sack** hanging above the creature's head. The creature grows flesh where the water lands. Its limbs remain fossilized and immobile for now; its single enormous eye rolls furiously within its socket.

The sack full of water is worth 5000 gold. If handled without proper care **the sack may rupture**, drenching the earth kraken stonebeast and fully animating it for 1 hour. The monster will go on a rampage, attacking the cultists and the Smokestack Village before diving back into the stone.

### Earth Kraken

AC: as plate

HD: 10

Movement: 30'

Morale: 12

No. Attacks: 16, one per tentacle

Damage: as being hit or grazed by a freight train; tentacles pulverize stone and metal like it was glass.

Spits lava. Its molten core is vulnerable to extreme cold.





This encounter takes place within the deepest depths of The Pit. Roll 1d6 when the characters enter the room. On a result of 2-6, the party will find a summoning circle and a deep pool of clear water with a locked chest at the bottom. This is actually the Snowman in his Gender Fluid form; anyone submerged in this liquid will be changed to the opposite sex. On a roll of 1, the Snowman will be present in Snowman form equipped with the contents of the chest. The chest contains:

- journal written in Inuit titled “*Evil Spooky Shit.*” It contains Snowman lore and the following two spells:
  - Summon Snowman - caster must make a save at a -1 in order to overcome a brain freeze
  - Icicle Shot
- large carrot - consume for one week’s nourishment
- 5 lumps of coal
- top-hat; a fancy label inside depicts a snowshoe signed with the name “Nanook” - generates 1d4+1 mirror images once per combat
- scarf - magic will not work for, against, or around the wearer in a 10 foot radius; those under the effect of a spell cannot approach the wearer
- ice pick
- 3 fist-sized yellow crystals

The Snowman is cultivating genital mushrooms and will attack anyone it perceives as a threat to its harvest. If a mushroom is eaten, roll on the below table:

d20	Genital Mutation
1-2	Fingers start growing
3-4	Tentacles start growing
5-6	Genitals replaced w/ singing sea bass
7-8	Nipples grow, coupled w/ blinding light
9-10	Genitals replaced w/ hornet’s nest; hornets violently attack anyone who plays music or whistles
11-12	Antlers start growing
13-14	Genital mushrooms start growing
15-16	Genitals speak in a Cockney accent
17-20	Nothing happens

Once combat begins, have two of the characters standing next to each other look up to see a mistletoe. They must spend the round kissing, then save or end up frozen to each other’s faces.

**Snowman**

AC: as chainmail; fire reduces AC to base  
 HD: 5  
 Movement: 30’  
 Morale: 8

No. Attacks: 2 x Tree-Branch Arms, 1 x Icicle Shot or 1 x Snowball

Damage: Icicle Shot - 1d6+2; Snowball - targets in a 10’ radius take 1d8 damage, save negates; Tree-Branch Arms - 1d6

The Snowman is immune to mental attacks as well as slashing/piercing damage. It can change to its Gender Fluid form at will. Physical attacks do not affect the Snowman in this state.

Frostbite - melee attackers frozen for 1 round, save negates.

Written for Zine Quest 2 by Shane Walshe, creator of *Woodfall - a Mini Hexcrawl Setting*, *Willow* delivers “grim” in spades, providing an easy to run setting that can be dropped into, or used to kick off, any OSR campaign. The zine is written for the *Swords & Wizardry* system but, with a bit of conversion, the material contained within should be able to be used with any similar ruleset. While the world of *Willow* isn’t as doomed as the one in, for example, *MÖRK BORG*, without the intervention of your players, everyone within will end up just as dead.

## Look, Feel, and Space Utilization

Before diving into the content, let’s examine the booklet itself. This 32-page zine is an 8.5”x5.5” print, so it’s a little taller and a little less wide than a standard A5 book. The printing, done by Mixam, has a light card stock cover with a matte finish that does unfortunately pick up fingerprints. The interior is printed on glossy, high-quality paper. The overall construction and build caliber is good. The text doesn’t smear and the printing will hold up to some wear and tear. The zine has a nice feel in one’s hand.

The cover of the zine does pop upwards, which makes it impossible to just have it lie closed on your table without it encroaching upon the space above it, therefore the booklet should reside in either a bookshelf or in a stack of books when not in use. While this isn’t ideal, it does have the effect of allowing the booklet to lie open in your hand or on your table while you read it.

## Content

Aside from the front cover, every square inch of *Willow* is packed with content, so you’re getting a good value for your CA \$14 shipped for a print copy (CA \$7 for a PDF version). The setting is fantastic and wildly imaginative. It’s reminiscent of something evil and wild; hidden, lurking deep within the forest. A small town sits in the middle of it all on a lake, slowly being corrupted by the outside influence pressing inward. Appropriate artwork is included in all but one spread, which helps build the setting and pull the reader into the world of *Willow*. The standout drawing is of the interior of the wizard tower, which is extremely detailed and intricate.

There are six total locations keyed in the zine, along with a sixteen room dungeon, some NPCs, a rumor table, monster stat blocks, and other tools that will help a referee run the setting. Retainers were notably absent, which is an odd stylistic choice for an OSR setting; however, some town members can be recruited if certain conditions are met.

Several tables are also included in the booklet that are particularly good and could be used in other games as well, such as weather descriptors and a magical item generator. In addition, there is a cause and effect table which shows what can happen if the players take a certain action. This table, coupled with the timeline table at the rear of the zine, make *Willow* particularly easy to work with as a referee.

## Usability

The rear of the zine and inside covers all contain usable information that you might want to access quickly, for example a hex map and a shop’s inventory. The back cover spread was the most useful, as it showed both a 3-tier random treasure table along with a timeline of possible events. *Willow* would have benefitted from this design for use on the front cover spread as well. The referee is given a section on how to use the booklet on the opposite page instead, which isn’t digestible at a glance. It would have been better to include the faction relations there, which also helped break down what the pertinent locations on the hex map were. Rather than being located next to the map, this useful diagram is instead located on page 13.

*Willow* is staple bound and could have leveraged the space in the center of the zine for a large two-page map, table, or art piece to maximize the utilization of the middle spread. Instead, we have the start of the keys to the dungeon that is shown on the two pages before it. Not ideal, but not necessarily the worst usage of the space either, as the zine automatically falls open to the dungeon’s room descriptions.

There are a few other usability issues with *Willow*. The hex map on the inside cover is a little plain and could have benefitted from the inclusion of page numbers for the major locations it represents and a distance measure to give the referee an idea of scale. This appears to be a recurring issue, as the isometric map of the town, while beautiful, also has this same problem. There are missing or misplaced statblocks, even for the NPCs

that are expected to join the PCs if certain events transpire. For instance, the NPCs Sania and Sir Oliver are listed without statblocks in the NPC section of the booklet; however, if you examine the cause and effect table it does indicate their level. This requires the referee to flip between two sections of the booklet to gather pertinent information. There are some concepts in the zine that are introduced before they’re explained in detail, and there’s also a relationship map that is overly complex and difficult to decipher. Finally, the dungeon key could have made better use of bolding to highlight pertinent parts of the dungeon. As it stands, some monsters are bolded, some are not, and some are only partially bolded.

## Conclusion

Overall, *Willow* is a great setting booklet and, at under 40 pages, flipping through the zine to find things is no big deal. Anything not included or difficult to find is easy enough for a referee to improvise on the spot. The stylized artwork helps as well, as paging through it numerous times was a joy in and of itself. While there were a few typos and grammatical errors and a few usability improvements that would benefit this zine, *Willow* is a worthy addition to any OSR fan’s collection, especially if they enjoy grim settings.



A band of brave young men and women slog through the swamp, knee deep in mud; rations run low and morale runs lower still. In the distance they see twin cones of light sweeping across the land like lighthouses warning sailors away from the rocks. These lights warn of a different danger, one that lurks and waits with a hungry maw.

Long lived, our band of adventurers wisely circles back 'round behind the lights to creep up and catch the light's owner unaware. They inch their way forward to see a **toad** as large as a horse; a threat all on its own, and the source of the light.

As luck would have it, our brave band is about to be treated to dinner and a show - another weary traveler stumbles through the swamp, making their way toward the light they hope will be their salvation.

Thirty feet from the toad the traveler stops. This is the pivotal moment when the coin flip of life or death is made. Will the traveler resist the pull of the eldritch beams? Or will they succumb to the warm embrace of the void beyond the light?

A show it is! The traveler is transfixed and walks forward, eyes unseeing, jaw slack, drool running freely from their mouth. Each step the traveler takes pulls them higher into the air. Though your mortal eyes may not see the staircase, the traveler walks it all the same. The **doorway** at the apex is illuminated by the cones of light shining from the toad's eyes. The door is

older than the age of men, the wood is missing many pieces and held together more by the creeping ivy that clings to it than by screw or nail.

But they never make it to the doorway; the show turns into a nightmare.

The traveler is just scant feet from the door when the ground erupts with a deafening roar. Swamp water and mud is thrown upwards in all directions. A **colossal toad** has burst up from the muck and shot out a **tongue** thick as the body of a horse and three lances long. It is hollow and filled with teeth like the mouth of a lamprey. The toad swallows the traveler whole. A mercy? Who can say if it is better to be chewed up by a mouth of razor sharp teeth, each the size of a grown man's fist, or to be swallowed directly into the stomach acids by the lamprey tongue?

Satisfied and satiated, the toad settles back into the muck and begins a throaty vibration that sends a beautiful **pattern of ripples** throughout the surrounding water. If this moment could be frozen in time and the pattern saved for later transcription it would prove to be a very welcome addition to the spellbook of any sufficiently advanced wizard.

In its after-feeding haze, the creature is docile, approachable, and readily able to be studied.

A closer examination will show the **Angler Toad** to be dramatically tear-shaped, the top of his head is covered in fist sized lumps arranged in a peculiar pattern that resembles a crown of sorts; he is, after all, the King in the Muck.

His Majesty's front legs are overflowing with muscle and turned inward like a bulldog. The hind legs are also highly muscled but long, thin, and lean - good for an explosive leap from beneath the muck, but sadly naught else. The toad is an **ambush predator** who rarely strays far from his nesting ground; the hind legs don't let him roam freely, but in the soft swamp grounds he is a fearsome burrower, moving faster than a shark in the water.

His front and back both have dangerous appendages of their own. At the back, a thick tail that ends in a ball of spiked cartilage. The tip of the tail weighs twenty to thirty pounds on its own, and the swing is strong enough to knock an armored horse off its feet with spikes sharp enough to pierce plate armor. The front is no less dangerous. Powerful forearms, the colossal maw, and the signature lure: a slimy tentacle jutting from under its chin and extending some fifteen feet in front of the toad where it acts as the umbilical cord of a smaller toad known as the **Lighthouse Keeper**. If this lure is severed from the main toad, this smaller toad will grow into a full size Angler and eventually grow a lure of its own unless both the larger and smaller specimen are disposed of in a precise and complex ritual.

## Angler Toad and Lighthouse Keeper

AC: as leather

HD: 2 + 1 per party member

Save Bonus: +HD

Movement: 15', 50' Burrowing

Morale: 10

No. Attacks: 1 x Claw, 1 x Bite or Deadlights; Tail may be substituted for Claw or Bite if the target is behind the Angler Toad.

Damage: Bite - 1d12+HD; Claw - 2d4+HD; Tail - 1d10+HD, save or be thrown 30' and knocked prone.

Deadlights - Lighthouse Keeper shines his eldritch beams at the target, then either auto-hits with Lamprey Tongue or attempts Opening the Door to Death; save negates and is easy/medium/hard at ranges  $\geq 30' / 15' / 5'$ .

Lamprey Tongue - 1d8+HD, save or grappled/restrained.

Opening the Door to Death - target traverses the veil between the living and the dead and heads into the light, dying instantly; save negates.

Swallow - target must be grappled by Lamprey Tongue; automatic 1d4+HD damage/round; save to escape and do damage; Angler may still Claw and Bite as normal after swallowing a target.



## Background

To have a wizard tower is to have a wizard - an iconic duo to be sure! This particular wizard was old and lonely and he quite liked it that way. Of course, things can't stay golden forever, and the old and lonely wizard eventually became an aged old and lonely wizard. Along with those many aged the wizard found himself a tad feeble-minded. His hubris, however, saw no such weathering.

With the competition between his hubris and senility in full effect, the wizard decided his best course of action would be to call forth an **eldritch horror** to end the world. All things being good and bad, this weighed on the rather bad side, heavily enough so to sway the wizard's decision at the last moment. The wizard cut off the portal and, in the process, sliced the horror's fingertip off as well. It took every bit of life force the wizard and the tower held combined to close the portal. Both fell in the process, the tower tumbled to its side, laid out amongst the land; the wizard's flesh crumbled to dust.

Both became skeletons to be sheltered in. The remaining bit of the eldritch horror took up residence inside the wizard's skull, while the **Gorbin**, a small scoundrelly people, eventually claimed the tower as both their place of employ and residence.

## Wild Magic

Albeit only briefly opened, the portal allowed a flood of **wild magic** to pour through. The tower as a whole is imbued with it, but the magic is more heavily concentrated toward the northern end of the tower, near the **Wizard's Den**. It is mostly unseen, but has no problem making itself known through its effects.

If characters are spending lengths of time in the northern end of the tower, roll 1d4 against the table below for the wild magic's effect:

d4	Wild Magic Effect
1	Temporarily lose a limb
2	Gain a menial obsession
3	Receive a wound that will not heal without the help of a witch
4	Find yourself with two left feet

## Inhabitants & Locations

The first thing travelers are greeted by in the fallen tower is the lush **bazaar**. Beyond that lay the city where the people live, and further yet is the wild magic area where the **Wild Filaments** live. This last group is a band of misfits and outcasts, a roaming cult with tendrils outstretched amongst the land, leeching off the wild magic of the tower while unknowingly being husked by the remaining bit of the horror further down, locked in the Wizard's Den.

## The Bazaar

The heart, soul, and saccharine lifeblood of the tower. Travelers of every sort find themselves at this bazaar, whether accidentally or not. Full of cheerful wonders and questionable dread, anything a buyer could ever want can be found here; the real question is whether the price is worth paying.

## Phoenixflies

A roiling cloud of wild magic-infected butterflies. They swarm above the lavish bazaar where every night they burn and litter the ground with their ashes, then every morning they are reborn. **Morellum**, one of the hawkers on the grounds, spends his time retrieving all the fallen ashes so that he may use them in his tinctures and healing products. Just don't try to test him in picking up the ashes! He will not respond kindly, though there may be a small pile here or there that he has missed.



## NPCs Met in the Bazaar

**Tungus:** Bombards people with both his charm and his wares. It's not often his hands aren't outstretched in welcome (and to show off his wares).

Rumor: "The tower toppled its own self. It had had enough of the wizard!"

**Morellum:** Reserved with his techniques but bursting with city knowledge, especially when it comes to phoenixflies. Most, if not all, of his wares involve their ashes in some form.

Rumor: "Phoenixflies used to work for the wizard, now they're paying for what he's done every night."

**Pharn:** More seedy than the other sellers, he believes himself to be above the law while simultaneously fearing it.

Rumor: "The wizard was long gone from these parts before the tower fell."

**Ghortheen:** Her prices are set at a standard and fair rate. You will never haggle a cent off her wares, nor will you be charged extra. A no-nonsense seller.

Rumor: "There's tomes in the wizard's den, every word written in gold ink!"

**Peerkas:** A misfit who takes up residence towards the northern end of the bazaar. Her eyes appear disheveled, almost as though the wild magic she craves has distorted her person. Has lots of info on what lies past the northern slums and deeper inside the tower. Most is rather damning, the rest is guesswork.

Rumor: "It's not that the wizard never let anyone return from his den, it's that his guests never want to leave."

## Adventuring Rooms

If players decide to enter the pitch-black tunnel past where the Wild Filament's live towards where the wizard is locked, they will cross their way through four rooms of wanton deceit and madness!

### Medusa Mirrors

The first room leading to the Wizard's Den is full to the brim with oddly placed and angled mirrors. To look into one and catch your own gaze is an act of purpose, there is no way to see yourself accidentally. However, if you do decide to look into a mirror you will let loose a doppelgänger that exists on the other side of the mirror. They will do their best to shake the mirrors loose while skipping from one mirror to the next in the hopes of shattering one on the ground so they may be set free. To stop a doppelgänger from fully breaking loose you must pick up the mirror they are currently in before they can jump to the next one and shatter it yourself.

### Maze Maw

The second room is a maze of pink and maroon, hill-shaped walls. It's a rather easy maze as there are no dead ends, but the path feels far longer than the room's space should allow. When you begin to reach the end you notice there are two exits in sight. The first is what appears to be the next room, but you also see that the maze continues on a bit further and there is an odd and alluring spectral hue at the end of it. If you continue on past the first exit you will be in danger of falling into a pink and maroon beast's mouth - the twisting walls you have been walking along this whole time are its body. You will not be able to survive entry of its mighty jaws.

## Sprouting Orifices

The third room has a smattering of glass cases, each holding a single flower. The displays are set in both obvious and discreet places throughout the room. The flowers seem to sing, tempting you to open their cases. If you attempt to remove a flower from its capsule, touching it causes you to collapse to the ground and begin furiously expelling flowers, vines, and shrubs from every orifice of your body until there is nothing left of you besides a garden. If you remove a flower from its case with a cloth, they fetch a very pretty penny from interested buyers in the bazaar.

## Many Doors

The fourth room opens into a small area with 3 doors. Above each door is a letter. The first door is labeled "T," the second is labeled "N," and the third is labeled "P." This room is a puzzle: walking through the correct door leads you to an identical room with another 3 doors; walking through an incorrect door leads you back to where you started.

The solution to the puzzle is to walk through the doors spelling "TOWER." Walking through the "T" door leads you to the letters "V," "O," and "X;" walking through the "O" door leads you to "W," "D," and "F;" walking through "W" leads to "E," "B," and "R;" walking through "E" leads to "C," "F," and "R." After walking through the last door the players gain entry to the Wizard's Den.

## Wizard's Den

What was once a leisure laboratory is now covered in a poisonous mixture of black sludge and mold. A dangling candelabra emits a horrific hum that slowly drives those that listen insane.

On the floor are the remnants of the wizard's incantation. The spellbook used is torn in half right at the procedures page. Symbols and script are chiseled into the floor. The scene implies the spell is waiting to be completed. Nearby lies the skeletal remains of the wizard.

If the players interact with the setup, the portal will automatically open once again and the wizard's skull will rise and begin to stagger towards it. Wearing this grim visage like a snail might is the remaining fingertip of the eldritch horror. It has been biding its time and planning its dominance - now is its chance!

The horror is invulnerable and will taunt the party into attacking it. During the combat the chandelier's hum overhead becomes a deafening roar. This is all a diversion; the horror's real goal is simply to delay the party long enough for the rest of its corporeal form to enter this realm through the portal.

The spellbook on the floor has the incantations for both calling forth and closing the portal. The horror is unable to attack, so simply picking it up and throwing it through the portal is a relatively simple task. Closing the portal behind the horror ends its bid for hellish destruction while also stopping the hum of the chandelier. It also causes the muck covering the library to melt away, allowing the players to reap the rewards contained within the laboratory, including many books on the eldritch and arcane.



Traveler, welcome to my court. I am the one you seek.

**Queen Flesh**, this is how those that came before you called me. What gift are you bringing me? An exotic creature? A strong slave? One of your limbs? Traveler, I most certainly like your soft meat and smooth skin.

Is that your gift?

No need to point at it, I can sense your wound. Is that why you came? To be mended by my gentle touch?

Traveler, wouldn't you prefer to join my court? Melt into walls of flesh? Serve my feet as part of this skin floor? Breathe, sweat, and slither as this whole cave does?

**Flesh Flowers**, as you can see, they are all around us. I could make you sprout from one of those as my servant...if I wanted. Traveler, look at my children, aren't they beautiful?

**Larvae**, they are eight and are the dearest and most fragile of all. They serve me with mindless and total dedication. I love them the most as they need my constant attention.

**Eremites**, they are two and as sturdy as rock. They quietly wander around the court and take care of it all. Thanks to them the cave breathes, sweats, and moves as it should.



**Silver Knights**, they are two and are my strongest warriors. At my signal they can jump at you from any distance and reduce your body to a bleeding pulp. Tempting, but unnecessary. Don't you agree?

**Hierophant**, he is my most faithful servant. I do not need protection, but he's always by my side and his presence comforts me. Do not be fooled by his immobility, with a single motion he can crush all your bones.

Traveler, I noticed you keep looking behind me. Know only that no one is allowed beyond this skin drape. I'm ashamed to say it, but even I do not understand certain things. All that cold metal and those two gaunt bodies...their shape is somehow familiar. One reminds me of my hierophant, and the other looks different but in a pleasing way. A shape I cannot mold...but that I would love to see in its original form.

Traveler, is it too much to ask for your attention? Stop looking at your wound. Stand up and look at me!

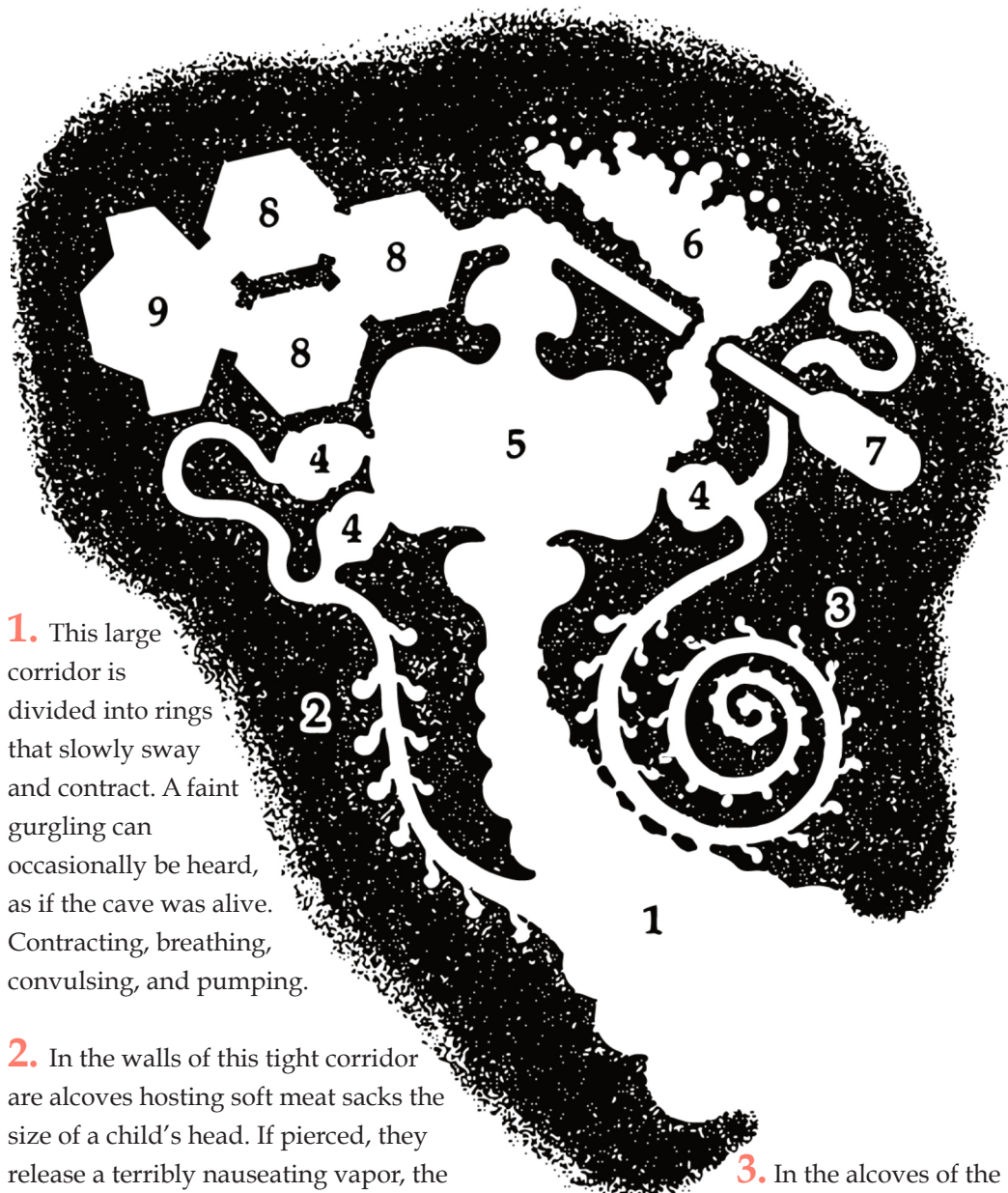
**Queen Flesh** is talking to you!

You came here hoping to be healed by my gentle touch, but my fingers are sharp as razors.

Maybe it's time you learn a lesson!

```
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lifeform[unknown]:proximity_anomaly=confirmed//ED1
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```





**1.** This large corridor is divided into rings that slowly sway and contract. A faint gurgling can occasionally be heard, as if the cave was alive. Contracting, breathing, convulsing, and pumping.

**2.** In the walls of this tight corridor are alcoves hosting soft meat sacks the size of a child's head. If pierced, they release a terribly nauseating vapor, the scent of which is very strong and absolutely indescribable. Roll on the *Effects of Meat Sack Vapors* table if inhaled or ingested.

**3.** In the alcoves of the spiral the meat sacks are smaller and hardened. They can easily be removed without the risk of releasing vapor. At the end of the spiral is a larger sack that is dry and open. Within this sack is a black powder that, when mixed with blood, has incredible healing properties.

**4.** These spherical rooms are filled with translucent goo that sticks to clothes and starts burning when exposed to sunlight.

**5.** A giant meat flower blossoms in this large hall. In its center rests **Queen Flesh**, surrounded by her children.

**6.** Dark clumps of meat protrude from the ground and walls. This room grows over a metal surface, irregularly, like a rotting cancer. The floor is littered with personal items collected from adventurers that entered the court but never left.

**7.** At the end of a long corridor covered by a viscous substance is a large, metal, cylindrical room. Two horrifying skeletal bodies are lying on the floor here in fetal positions. One resembles the **hierophant** that protects the **Queen**, the other has a remarkably similar bone structure but otherwise looks quite different.

**8.** The floor, walls, and ceiling here are made entirely of smooth metal that's been perfectly flattened. Square panels made of black glass blink with strange and persistent lights from underneath the dust that envelops every surface. Writings or runes occasionally appear, but they make little or no sense at all. One could drive themselves mad trying to comprehend these odd lights and hieroglyphics.

**9.** Similar to the adjacent rooms, this one is also made completely out of metal. However, one of the walls here is covered by levers and buttons. At its center, a series of large, concentric gears are slowly rotating and humming.

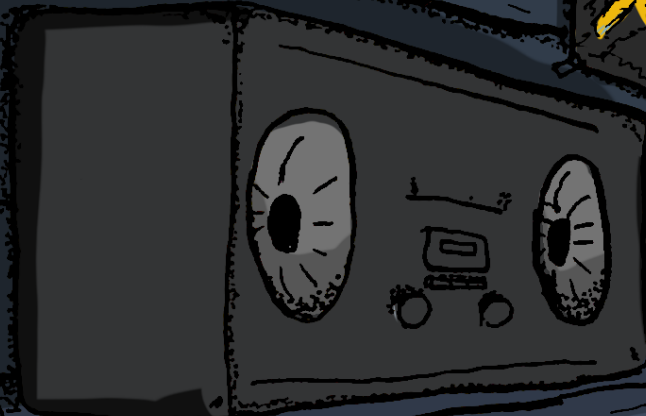
## 2d6 Queen Flesh's Mood

- 2 Hostile
- 3 Malevolent
- 4 Disgusted
- 5 Annoyed
- 6 Unresponsive
- 7 Passive / Neutral
- 8 Confused
- 9 Interested
- 10 Intrigued
- 11 Benevolent
- 12 Friendly

## 2d6 Effects of Meat Sack Vapors

- 2 Blindness
- 3 Insatiable hunger
- 4 Uncontrollable lust
- 5 Swallowed tongue
- 6 Deafness and light sensitivity
- 7 Nausea and migraine
- 8 Whispers in head begging for help
- 9 Short-term memory loss
- 10 Completely lost in bliss
- 11 Vision of the Court's past
- 12 Desire to serve Queen Flesh





# Credits

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*10 Types of People You'll Meet in Towatuni (pp.6-7): Sunken Planets*

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