

RED MOON MEDICINE SHOW PRESENTS:

# VACANT RITUAL ASSEMBLY

AN OSR ZINE - ISSUE #4 - FALL 2015



# INTRODUCING

Goddamn this issue was hard to wrangle. I broke my foot in August, so I've had the displeasure of dreaming up most of this stuff while immobilized and isolated from my usual milieu. It's been six weeks worth of getting fat, broke, and depressed. Fortunately, the slow insanity of cabin fever, pain narcotics, and sleep deprivation fit well with the theme of the issue, which is meant to be drug-fueled trip through a terrifying cosmos of adventure-gaming psychedelia. Anyway, I hope you enjoy this, hard-birthered as it was. *The Lotus Eater* is the only piece that has already appeared in my campaign, so I'm pleased to commit the rest to paper for my own future use.

## CONTENTS

The **Evangelism** section (pg 2) returns with new inspirations.

The **Abstract** (pg 3-4) describes a sketchy tavern/drug den/occult library intended as a hangout or source of contacts for your PCs. It's based on a weird cafe/bookstore (also called "The Abstract") that used to exist down the street from my house but closed a while back.

The **Lotus Eater** (pgs 5-10) is a one-night adventure that I ran in my campaign, inspired by Rafael Chandler's *Narcosa* project. The *Narcosa* PDF is PWYW and can be found at both Lulu and Drivethrurpg.

**The Oolai Cloth-Skins and Dragon Blackhide Bastards** (pgs 11-14) I asked Anxious P to do a piece in the spirit of David McGrogan's *Yoon-Suin* and this is what he came up with. It's wonderfully weird and I've gotta figure out how to get his bastard dragons into my campaign stat.

**Furious Gods** (pgs 15-18) This piece was inspired by an article in issue 223 of *Dragon Magazine*, the old video game *Primal Rage*, and this summer's *Jurassic World*-related dino hype. It started much smaller, but ended up expanding into a full-on regional hexcrawl.

**David McGrogan's Opium Dream** (pgs 19-22) I lazily email-interviewed *Yoon-Suin* creator David McGrogan over the course of several months. The results left me inspired and excited for David's future project

## CREDITS

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## CAMPAIGN UPDATE

My primary group finished with *The Worthy Bones* (my as-of-yet unpublished *LotFP* module) and returned to the Dretcher's Bay region (see VRA#2). Eventually, a *Summon* spell gone awry sucked them into another dimension (*The Islands of Purple-Haunted Putrescence* by Venger Satanis) and the party (at least those who were present) was TPK'd by pirates. After that, the surviving members of the party returned to the mainland and traveled cross country back to their hometown of Pembooktonshire. There they accepted a mission from Vespero the Antiquarian that sent them into the Lost Forest region, looking for the magical sword Thorandrus (see VRA issue #3). They ended up killing a giant corrupt tree spirit and that's pretty much where we left off.

Meanwhile, my all-tour-guide group has gone on hiatus for a bit. We were playing outdoors and the summer swelter got too intense. Hopefully we'll get the game rolling again soon.

## LEGAL CRAP

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# EVANGELISM

## FILM

*Black Rock* - The best survival thriller I've seen in ages. Really good dialogue, brutal violence, and a fairly plausible scenario combine to make this a great inspiration for horror gaming.

## PODCASTS

*Anything Ghost* by Lex Wahl - I've been listening to AG for four years now and I highly recommend it if you're interested in ghost stories. Most of the stories are kinda middle-of-the-road, but every now and then Lex stikes absolute gold.

*Lore* by Aaron Mahnke - A short, well-produced show about creepy folklore. Although many of the subjects are old hat to dark folklore enthusiasts there are also a few gems. I particularly enjoyed the story of the tragedy-laden Hoosac Tunnel in Massachusetts.

*The Ozarks Explored* by Curtis Harrington - Another folklore-based podcast, this time focusing on strange tales from the Ozarks. Fascinating stuff.

## RPG STUFF

*Wizardzine #1*, *The Complete Vivimancer*, and *From the Vats* by Gavin Norman - I picked these up on a whim and all three turned out to be tremendously useful and well put together. Gavin is easily one of the better writers in the OSR.

# THE ABSTRACT

You'll know it by the impish murals that adorn its edifice, The Abstract, domain of dope fiends and opium wanderers, of dishonored scholars and pock-marked saints. On any given evening its patrons can be found holding court on matters occult and esoteric amidst clouds of yellow incense, leaving wakes of thought as they dream through the mysteries of the world. Sit among these hazy cushions and witness. . .

## ALBERTUS CROWE

Crowe is the charismatic leader of the Severn Circle, a fraternal order of occultists and mages who lurk throughout the realm. Crowe is the author of an influential grimoire entitled *The Last, Most Glorious Fuck*, a controversial sex-magic autobiography wherein he describes his first death and subsequent judgement by of the lords of Hell. Crowe is well known for his carnal appetites and taste for rare varieties of opium from far away coasts.

## GRETCHEN STILT

The "Whore of Sable Priory" gained her reputation as a Synod priestess. She made a fortune selling her flesh to lectors and abbots, exposed them all in a public trial, then fled to the city to live out her days in excess. She is credited as a major influence on Albertus Crowe's grand grimoire.

## "THE EMPEROR"

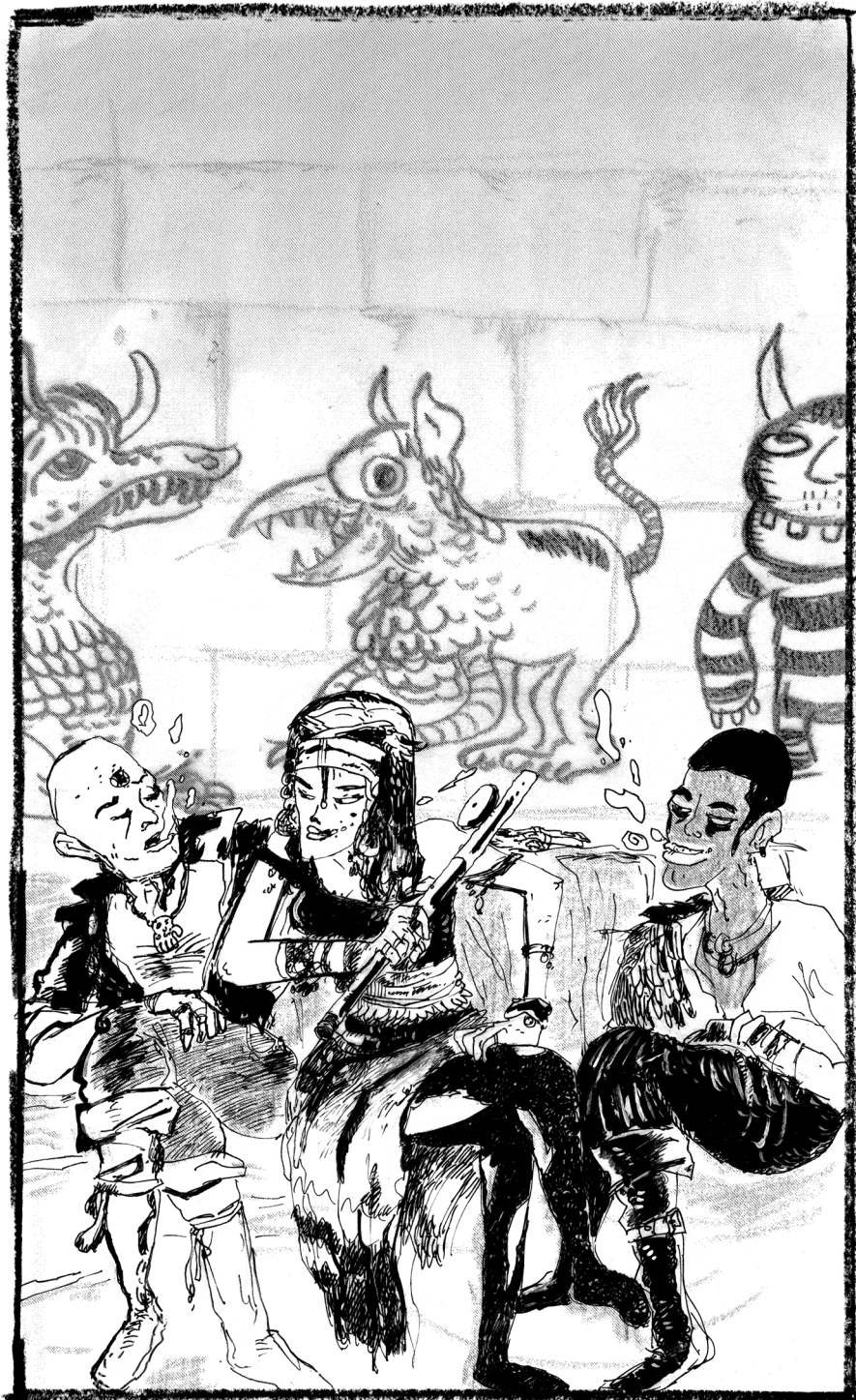
Here is a man who spends the majority of his time within the lotus dream of Narcosa, having established himself emperor of a great realm there. Here he sits, perpetually slumped and drooling, waking only to relate the current state of Narcosan politics and to request more wine.

## VOLE

A stammering dope fiend, idiot servant of the court of The Abstract. For a palmful of silver he stumbles between booksellers and curio shoppes, fetching the materials requested by his fugue lords, spending his profits at the brothels and the opium dens. If ever a man was easily bought and easier fooled, it is he.

## TOPIC OF DISCUSSION

- 1: The sublime ecstasy of death.
- 2: The intoxicating properties of the Elvish cunt.
- 3: The invisible second moon.
- 4: Insomnia and the hole in the universe.
- 5: A suicide/ressurrection pact.
- 6: The Hashgrim Prophecies.
- 7: The aftermath of a ritual orgy.
- 8: The city at the center of the multiverse.



Sam Poffe

# THE LOTUS EATER

I ran this adventure on November 5th, 2014 for a group of four PCs. It was directly inspired by various entries in Rafael Chandler's crowdsourced *Narcosa* project. More specifically, Godhead Citadel was inspired by *The Head of the Fallen God* by John Wilson. The Pale Villagers were inspired by the Ghya-Ma-Hau from *The City Within The Song* by Erik Jensen. The Pleasure Slimes came from Cédric Plante's contribution.

## BACKGROUND

Francolo Pennington is a young and privileged dilettante, born of wealth and splendor, but lacking interest in his family's mercantile empire. Feeling a disappointment to his father and a perpetual child to his overbearing mother, Francolo developed a keen interest in escapism. He manifested this interest by acquiring a supply of Amber Lotus, a rare drug rumored to serve as a sort of inner gateway to the astral realms. As he grew accustomed to the drug his narcotic visions gained an unusual persistence. He could visit the strange world of his lotus dream and make changes, changes that would persist until his next visit. This initiated a spiraling obsession with the substance. Before long, Francolo had carved out a realm for himself inside the dreamlike

realm of Narcosa. In this realm, he established himself as the great and cruel czar of a remote smokescape. Soon, he identified more with the Czar than with his mortal self and before long the Czar had entirely forgotten about the outside world, trapping the lad's spirit in a realm of his own cruel design. One night, Francolo's mother found his still breathing, but comatose body. She summoned a sage who spoke to her of Narcosa and explained that the only way to reunite her son's spirit with his body would be to venture into Narcosa and either kill the young man's avatar there or somehow remind him of his existence on earth. With this, Francolo's mother began a search for someone who could undertake this delicate operation.

## IN MY CAMPAIGN

I used the handout on the facing page to introduce the mission to my PCs. These were my special Narcosa rules:

Narcosa can be reached by eating Lotus Amber. The drug wears off whenever the session needs to end in real life. In other words, there's a time limit.

You appear in Narcosa naked except for an aetheric, silver umbilical cord that hovers from your navel 2-3' in the air before it fades, like a weird, frontal tail.

If you die in Narcosa, you wake up and permanently lose 1d6 Wisdom.

## VALUED ASSOCIATES,

PLEASE FORGIVE MY SILENCE.

SINCE MY LAST VISIT TO THE GHOUL MARKET IT SEEMS THAT I HAVE BEEN PLACED UNDER A BOTHERSOME SPELL AND CURRENTLY FIND MYSELF UNABLE TO SPEAK. NOT TO WORRY, OUR BUSINESS CAN PROCEED AS USUAL.

I WAS RECENTLY CONTACTED BY ONE LORD CHRISTOPH PENNINGTON. HIS DILETTANTE SON FRANCOLO HAS APPARENTLY DEVELOPED AN ACUTE TASTE FOR AMBER LOTUS, A POWERFUL HALLUCINOGEN. ACCORDING TO LORD PENNINGTON, HIS SON HAS FALLEN INTO A DEEP TRANCE, AND A SAGE CONSULTED BY THE FAMILY BELIEVES THAT HIS MIND IS TRAPPED IN THE FABLED REALM OF NARCOSA, A HIDDEN DIMENSION WHICH CAN ONLY BE REACHED BY EATING THE AMBER LOTUS. THE SAGE BELIEVES FRANCOLO IS NOT WILLING TO LEAVE NARCOSA AND IS THUS PERPETUALLY TRAPPED THERE.

PENNINGTON WANTS SOMEONE TO EAT THE LOTUS, ENTER NARCOSA AND RETRIEVE FRANCOLO EITHER BY CONVINCING HIM TO RETURN TO HIS BODY OR BY SLAYING HIS NARCOSAN COUNTERPART.

PENNINGTON AND I CAME TO A PROFITABLE ARRANGEMENT AND I CAN THEREFORE OFFER 1000 SILVER PIECES TO EACH OF YOU IF FRANCOLO IS SUCCESSFULLY RETRIEVED.

AMBER LOTUS IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO COME BY. I'VE MANAGED TO PROCURE ONE PETAL FOR EACH OF YOU. DO NOT EAT THE PETALS UNTIL YOU ARE READY TO UNDERTAKE THE OPERATION. ONCE THE LOTUS WEARS OFF YOU WILL RETURN TO YOUR PHYSICAL BODY, SO YOU MUST MAKE HASTE ONCE YOU ARRIVE IN NARCOSA.

I KNOW UNFORTUNATELY LITTLE ABOUT THE POTENTIAL DANGERS OF THIS TASK. I ASSUME YOUR CHARACTERISTIC RESOURCEFULNESS WILL SERVE YOU WELL.

VESPERO

# THE DOMAIN OF A CRUEL LOTUS CZAR

PCs APPEAR  
HERE

STRANGE  
VILLAGE

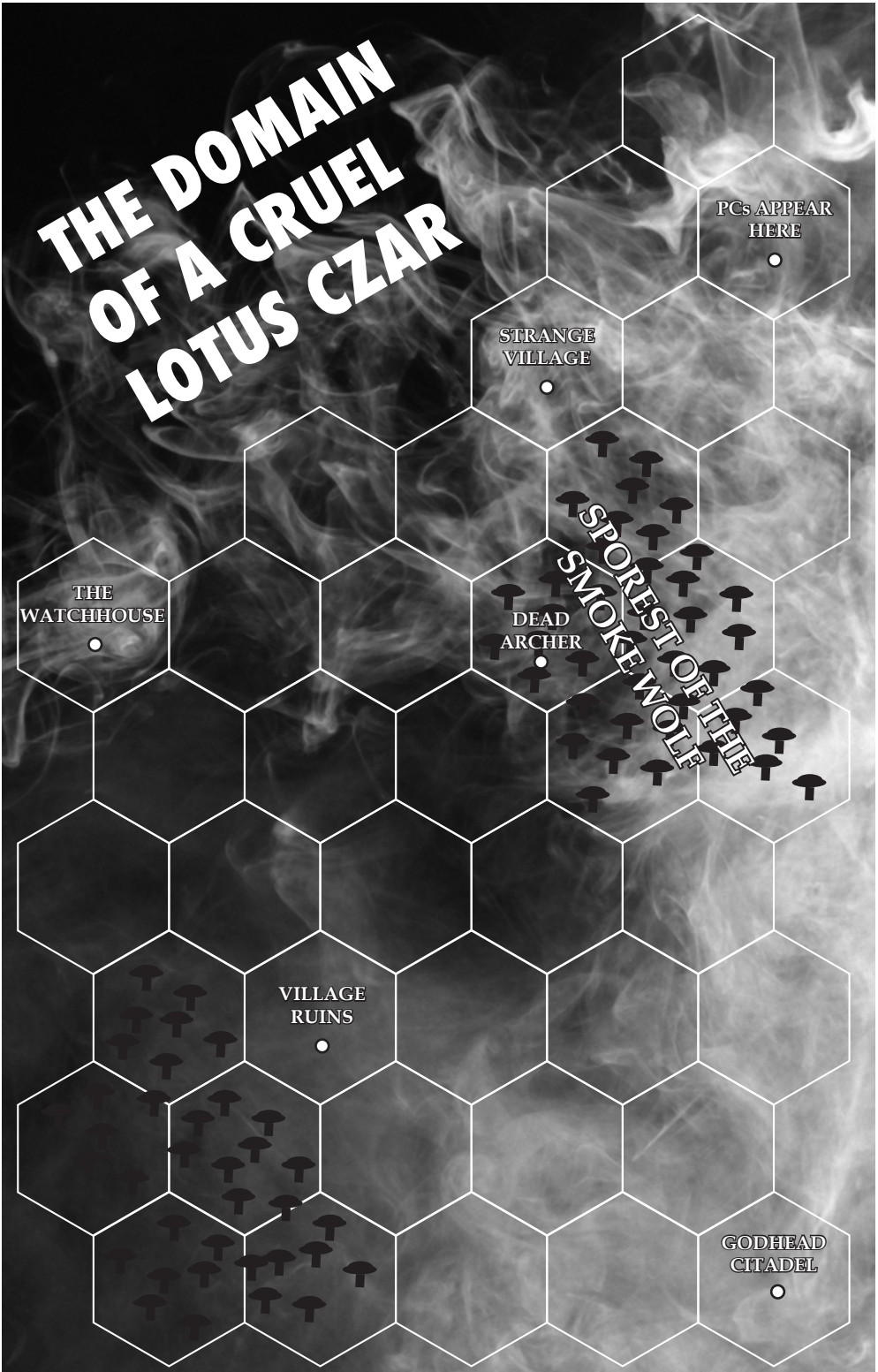
THE  
WATCHHOUSE

DEAD  
ARCHER

SPOREST OF THE  
SMOKE WOLF

VILLAGE  
RUINS

GODHEAD  
CITADEL





## HEX MAP KEY

Roll a d6 for each hex travelled. An encounter occurs on a roll of 1.

### Encounters (1d6)\*

1-4: 1d6 Violet Archers on patrol

5-6 2d6 Pale Villager refugees

\*If the PCs are in the Sporest of the Smoke Wolf any encounter will be with the Smoke Wolf unless it has been slain.

### Strange Village

Here is a gathering of huts and structures made from mushroom meat. It's inhabited by pale, toddler-sized humanoids created to be subjects of the cruel Czar. They are downtrodden, fearful, and pathetic. With some doing, it might be possible to convince them to participate in the overthrow of the Czar, but it won't be easy. They might also provide the PCs with the following information:

- The Violet Archers are the Czar's four-armed, purple-skinned soldiers. [T]
- The village to the south was destroyed when they tried to rise against the Czar. [T]
- Someone saw a dead Archer in the Sporest. It was killed by the Smoke Wolf. [T]
- The Watchhouse is haunted by evil spirits. [F]
- The Smoke Wolf cannot be killed, even by the Czar. [F]

### Sporest of the Smoke Wolf

A forest of giant mushrooms haunted by an extradimensional Smoke Wolf.

### Dead Archer

The corpse of a Violet Archer. A *Citadel Key* hangs around its neck.

### The Watchhouse

From the outside, this place looks like a surrealist painting of a mansion. Inside, ghost-like entities roam the halls. These are subconscious projections of Franco's family who are watching over him in his bedroom. His mother is the most common entity, his father appears only occasionally. A thorough search of the house reveals a *Citadel Key*.

### Village Ruins

A razed mushroom village.

### Godhead Citadel

A massive stone head rising out of the ground. Plumes of purple smoke rise from its eyes. This is the Czar's castle (see pgs 9-10).

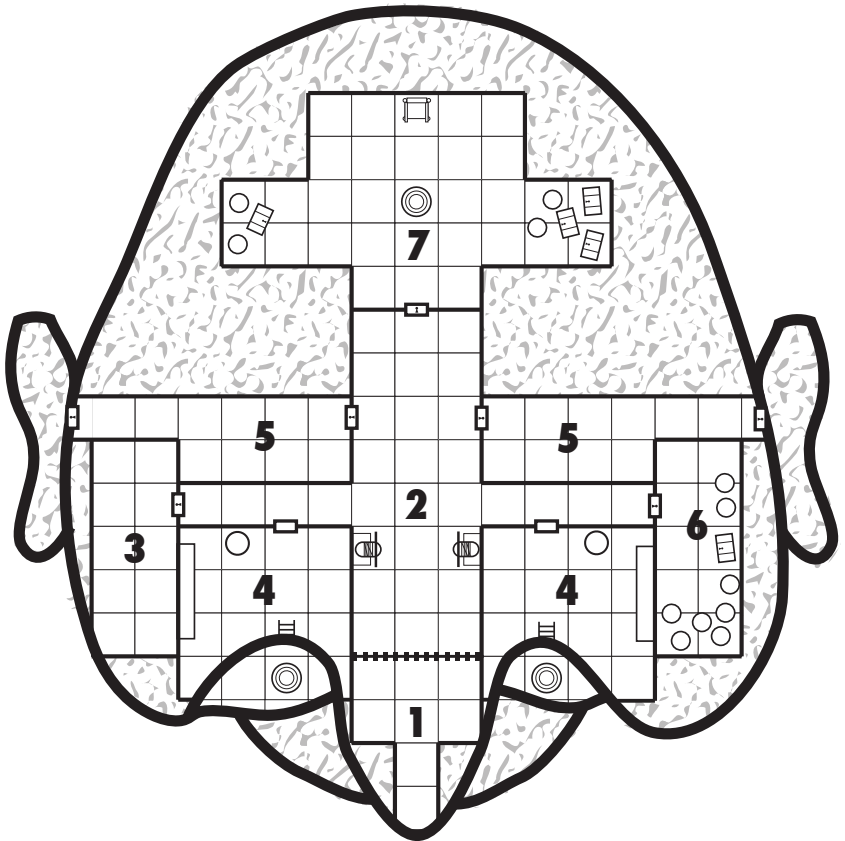
**PALE VILLAGER** Armor 12, Move 120', HD 1, HP 4, Fist 1d2 damage, Morale 4

**VIOLET ARCHER** Armor 16, Move 120', HD 2, HP 12, 2x short bow 1d6/1d6 damage, Morale 10

**THE SMOKEWOLF** Armor 16, Move 240', HD 5, HP 35, 50% miss chance due to incorporeality, 2x Claw 1d6 damage, 1x Bite 1d8 damage, Morale 10



# GODHEAD CITADEL



## CITADEL KEY

**Gaining Entry:** There are five possible entrances to the citadel: **The mouth** will open upon approach but there's a portcullis blocking the way inside. **The ears** are 50' off the ground and contain locked iron doors, which can be opened with a *Citadel Key*. **The eyes** are 50' off the ground and open directly into the interior.

### 1. Mouth Chamber

The mouth of the citadel slowly opens when any creature comes within ten feet. The portcullis inside is extremely heavy and can only be lifted using the winches in area 2.

### 2. Central Corridor

The two large winches here can be used to open the portcullis that separates area 1 from area 2. This corridor is guarded by two **Violet Archers**. One of the archers is carrying a *Citadel Key*.

**VIOLET ARCHER** Armor 16, Move 120', HD 2, HP 12, 2x short bow 1d6/1d6 damage, Morale 10

### 3. Holding Cell

This chamber is secured by a locked iron door, which can be opened by a *Citadel Key*. Inside there are three half-mad prisoners: **Waldrek**, a sentient humanoid carrot, a pale villager named **Shamly**, and a wise-cracking brain in a jar called **Mr. Paris**. The prisoners are 1HD each with no weapons or equipment.

### 4. Violet Armory

This room contains a weapon rack stocked with six short bows and six spears. There's a barrel in the corner containing 100 arrows. A ladder leads 45' to a guard perch in the eye socket of the citadel. In the center of the perch is a brazier billowing with fragrant purple incense smoke.

### 5. Ear Corridor

This chamber is secured by a locked iron door, which can be opened by the *Citadel Key*. A **Violet Archer** stands guard here.

### 6. Treasury

This chamber is secured by a locked iron door, which can be opened by the *Citadel Key*. There are 8 jars of pleasure slime stored here. A locked chest in the center of the room contains a mirror, which displays Franco's room in the physical world.

### 7. Throne Room

This chamber is secured by a locked iron door, which can be opened by a *Citadel Key*. Inside, the Czar sits upon his throne gazing into his Shewstone, which allows him to scry upon his domain. The Czar will immediately attack intruders. If he is confronted by some reminder of his real world self (such as his name), he must make a save vs. magic or be forced to re-enter his physical body.

**THE CZAR** Armor 16, Move 120', HD 7, HP 36, Flail of Purest Ennui 1d10+3 damage, Morale 10

# The Oolai Cloth-Skins and Dragon Blackhide Bastards

A guest joint by Anxious P

This land holds an uncounted number of mystically nuanced practices. Some of these are shared and performed amongst thousands of individuals, perhaps spanning great distances. Others may only be known to a select few, buried away from the gaze of mistrustful eyes.

As to how these practices might be manifested, it is difficult to say. Commonalities frequently exist between communities but there is really nothing all that commonplace about the region. Things (objects, ideas, symbolic orders) are benevolently disparate and, at times, do not carry any noticeable reference or heritage from one thing to its other. If hostility does occur, in what appears to be a discriminatory or prejudicial act, it is done so in a highly constructed manner. A display of identity rather than an attempt at dominance. Social hierarchy is also performed in this same functional manner. And it is peaceful even when bloody and unjust.

The land's societies are traditionalists in conduct, if not at times restrictive. But the cultural influences drift like spores across every inch of this rather enormous region, thus changes occur silently, transparently over decades or centuries.

And it is within this flux of symbols and civilians that I would like to introduce just one (technically two belonging to a single origin) of these traditions.

Belonging to the Oolai People, this social ritual is characterized by two practices called Cloth-Skinning and Black-Hiding.

For families, the birthright practice of Cloth-Skinning is deeply considered to bestow certain transcendent privileges/gifts upon its recipient. Only children born beneath the crescent moon may undergo this rite. This is regardless of prestige or class status.

Though, if more than one child, from different mothers, is birthed during the same moon cycle then it is required that their fathers must engage one another in mortal combat. The child belonging to any defeated father is always sent to live with a congregation of alligator-priests, The Bastard Dragons of Temple Blackhide, who make residence in large ruined temples and fanes, which have been submerged in the southland swamps for centuries.

Multiple births during the aforementioned monthly period are not too terribly uncommon, as one might think, for couples will attempt to conceive a child whose birth will fall during the crescent moon and usually under one of the more ideal constellations. Fathers who commit to this process of conception will train in martial combat for the entirety of their wives' pregnancy.

## CLOTH-SKINNING

Within one week of birth, the chosen infant is delivered to the home of the eldest Oolai weaver. From a selection of six mystic cloths, this weaver will choose the appropriate material for the child after familiarizing and communing with its former lives.

Each specific cloth-type carries its own unique and often mystical characteristics.

To quickly elucidate the physical process entailed in Cloth-Skinning, the weaver tightly sews multiple strips of the chosen textile directly onto the flesh of the child. This material will cover everything but the head and hands, with a loose loincloth/skirt allowing ready access to clean urination, defecation and reproduction. Some strips of fabric sag to varying degrees while others are rendered extremely taut, it is determined by the weaver's hand. The material will adjust to the child's physical development without restriction throughout its life.

## THE SIX CLOTH TYPES

### 1. Copper Bombazine

*Twilled silk and worsted cotton, dyed copper.* The wearer of this material may heal to full HP by laying both hands to any stone for one hour. All attacks from copper weapons have a 50% chance of missing the wearer, as the material diverts itself much like magnetic resistance.

### 2. Scarlet Ecarlate

*Fine woolen cloth, dyed scarlet.* It is impossible for the wearer to bleed out, as a cause of death. The fabric will continue recycling the individuals blood back into them. This process heals 1d6 per every ten points of damage taken. At zero HP or death,

the cloth takes over the body itself and can perform very rudimentary tasks, as if possessing an independent will (the blood bag is furthermore under the DMs control). The wearer may choose to expel their own blood at a nearby target. Save vs blinding effects.

### 3. Pale Messaline

*Lightweight silk with a satin weave, pearl colored pigment.* The wearer may make any statement, inquiry or command as a charm spell at a consistent rate of four times per every other day. All intermittent days are commonly spent in silence as the opposite effect occurs during this time, causing most individuals to immediately distrust any word spoken by the wearer.

When exposed to the cloth-skin's manipulation(s), the target is granted a Save vs Magic to discern the truth in her intentions. Although, if said target saves and subsequently accuses the wearer of dishonesty then it will be the case that they will have to make a secondary Save versus Choking. Failure results in the swelling of the accuser's throat. This will persist to the point of suffocation. Drowning rules apply.

### 4. Ochre Shantung

*Rough silk, dyed ochre.* This material enables its owner to traverse spaces which would otherwise be far too narrow (let's say a three inch gap as a severe example) for their bodies to normally fit through. During which the cloth will exude a thick ochre mucus as the wearer pushes herself through the space. If grappling is attempted against the Cloth-Skin, the same effect occurs causing a d10 penalty to the opponent's attack roll and +2 bonus to the wearer's AC. This is a reactionary/defensive effect and is not summoned at will.

## 5. Sage Filoselle

*Coarse floss silk, dyed sage.* This material is in a constant state of motion from the moment it is sewn to flesh. As if each strip contained its own haunt, passively attempting to break free. The wearer may hover up to four feet for a duration of one hour, every other hour.

The cloth will produce bird's nests, which always include a single, recently hatched two-headed falcon. The falcon will grow and develop telepathic communication with the wearer. Unfortunately, they tend to fly off at irregular times and return with arduous bits of trivial and/or useless information. Much of it being lies anyways (the DM has full control of the birds). Though, the two-headed falcons will defend their nests if attacked, dealing d6 talon damage and granting the Cloth-Skin a bonus to AC equal to the number of birds present.

## 6. Periwinkle Khaddar

*Homespun cotton cloth, dyed periwinkle.* As the footed material of the Cloth-Skin treads the ground beneath, frail yet pretty and powdery flowers immediately emerge and mature to full blossom within a couple minutes. These flowers may undergo a simple alchemical treatment to produce a random potion or poultice. This may be performed a number of times per day equal to the wearer's level plus one.

Roll d4 for its effect:

**1- Crippling Indecision:** An opponent's emotional or intellectual conviction is confronted by its most reasonable opposition. e.g. An unwaveringly territorial aggressor is pummeled with feelings of deep empathy. Save versus Poison is required or the target is considered

paralyzed by personal conflict for d4 rounds.

**2- Mistrust of Personal Strength:** A Save versus Poison must be made or the target's highest ability score is replaced with their lowest for d4 rounds. This occurs as a result of the victim becoming fearful of that which they once prized within themselves above all other characteristics. How the target adjusts to the ability score inversion is entirely at the DM's discretion.

**3- Subconscious Self-Sabotage:** A Save versus Poison is required in order for the target to avoid incurring serious limitations to their combat performance. The effect is such that, every time the target would normally deal damage equal-to-or-more-than half the die type's total then the number is reverted to the amount just before the halfway mark (for example, the effected opponent rolls a 5 or more on a d10 damage die but may only apply 4 points worth of injury to the target's current hit points.) Something renders the self-saboteur incapable of committing to her violence. If a killing blow is inevitable, the alchemical victim will instead injure themselves or flee the conflict entirely. This lasts d4 rounds.

**4- Medical Rarity:** If a Save versus Poison is failed, the victim immediately succumbs to the delusion that they suffer from some version of an exceptional, medical disorder/condition. Roll a d6 to figure out what the delusion is. Interpret as you wish.

1. Agnosia
2. Persistent Genital Arousal Disorder
3. Exploding Head Syndrome
4. Retrograde Premature Ejaculation
5. Episodic Amnesia
6. Hyper-Photosensitivity

## BLACK-HIDING

Upon arriving at the temple of the alligator-priests, the banished child(ren) will be immediately and permanently enshrouded in a black, scaly hide from toe to neck. It is an enchanted and reptilian material, this hide, which will grow in form-fitted size along with its wearer. Individuals given to this type of existence will endure a brutal and sometimes vile form of martial and magical arts training from the moment they take their first step.

This harsh labor of physical and mental development is utilized with the unwavering goal that the orphaned child may one day effectively enact murderous retribution upon their Cloth-Skinned Other and subsequently reclaim the lost relationship to their Oolaian Mother. This is what they are told from birth, thus there is always a horrible hatred and an even more horrible need festering within each Black-Hide.

### Black Hide

An ebony skin suit composed of one, single-flayed hide previously belonging to a male, black alligator. The child is told that it is her father, this alligator, which she wears. Her patriarch is her armor. AC 16

The wearer's blood now contains a serum making them immune to infection and/or poison. In one round of successful grapple with an opponent, the Black-Hide may roll to perform a death roll at an automatic delivery of 10 points of damage per each round that the wearer's grip remains unbroken. The dinosauric tail of the black-hide suit is animated and controlled by the wearer's mental power alone.

## SHAMELESS OOLAI TAILORS

The practitioners of Cloth-Skinning have been known to uproot its generational sanctimony and will offer the transformative process to anyone who is willing to meet their demands. These offenders are usually found residing in small huts along the outskirts of swamplands or squatting in abandoned urban dwellings.

Roll d4 for the type of payment required:

1. A five pound bag of small fish bones. The bag must have been touched by a spirit.
2. A gallon of water, aged ten years.
3. Three hairs from the head of a great grandfather.
4. A vial of ash removed from the remains of a wedding feast spit.

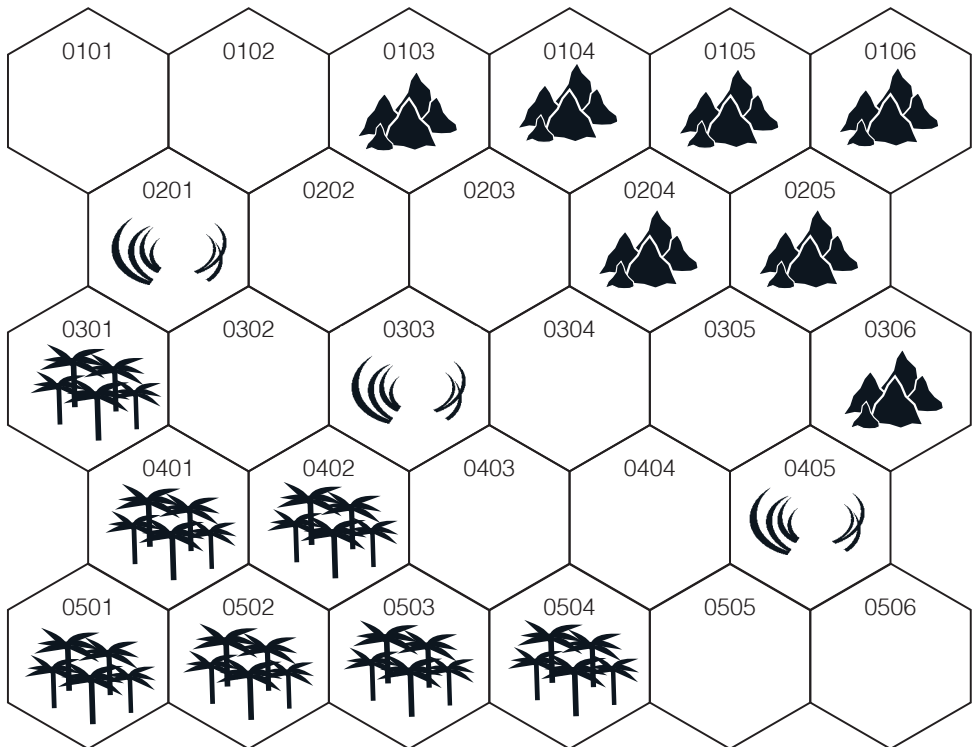


# FURIOUS GODS

In the bloodsoaked wastelands known to outsiders as “the barbarian territories,” there are three barbarian tribes: The Glacierhorde, the Skiverhorn, and the Gnashmaws. Each tribe, led by its primal godbeast, wages perpetual war against the others. It’s not a territorial war so much as a feeding frenzy, for the primary objective in the conflict is for each tribe to capture as many enemies as possible which can then be devoured by their god to satiate the beast, lest it turn its appetite onto its own followers.

The hexmap below shows the key region of conflict in the barbarian lands. The mountainous area to the north is ruled by the Glacierhorde, the wastelands in the middle are ruled by the Skiverhorn, and the southern jungle is ruled by the Gnashmaw.

Characters can travel one hex per day on foot. Two per day if mounted. Three if flying. Each day roll 1d6. On a result of 1 an encounter occurs. Roll 1d3:  
1- Encounter a war party from the tribe that dominates the area.  
2- Encounter a war party from a tribe that dominates an adjacent area.  
3- Another encounter improvised by the GM because I don’t have room for a table.





## THE GLACIERHORDE

High among the frozen cliffs and glacial valleys of the Pale Mountains there dwells a tribe of warriors known as the Glacierhorde. Clad in mammoth hides and bones, the Glacierhorde tribesfolk stalk the frigid caves and windblown passes of their homeland and launch slave raids into the wastelands to the south.

The Glacierhorde tribesfolk worship Frostbite, The Ghost Ape, who rules from the center of a glacial ice labyrinth in hex 0105.

Glacierhorde war parties are encountered in groups of 2d6 tribesmen, 1 in 6 are champions, and if 12 tribesmen are present they will be riding a massive war mammoth.

### FROSTBITE'S FAVOR

Frostbite's favor is gained by successfully navigating his vast ice labyrinth and entering the throne room at its center. Those who attempt the task have quite a challenge ahead, as Frostbite's labyrinth is stocked with all manner of deadly creatures, most of which are thought to be extinct by the outside world. Also, the labyrinth's biting cold inflicts 1d4 per turn (10 minutes) upon explorers within.

Those favored by Frostbite are rendered immune to all cold-based effects. In addition, they can wield two-handed weapons in one hand and always act first in initiative.



### FROSTBITE, THE GHOST APE

Armor 16, Move 240', HD 18, HP 144, Immune to cold effects, Fire-based attacks inflict double damage, 2x Claws 2d10 damage and 1x Bite 3d10 damage, Can fart out a *Stinking Cloud* 3x/day and cast *Wall of Ice* 1x/day, Morale 12

### GLACIERHORDE TRIBESMAN

Armor 14, Move 120', HD 2, HP 8, Bone Club 1d8 damage or Thrown Stone 1d6 damage, Morale 7

### GLACIERHORDE CHAMPION

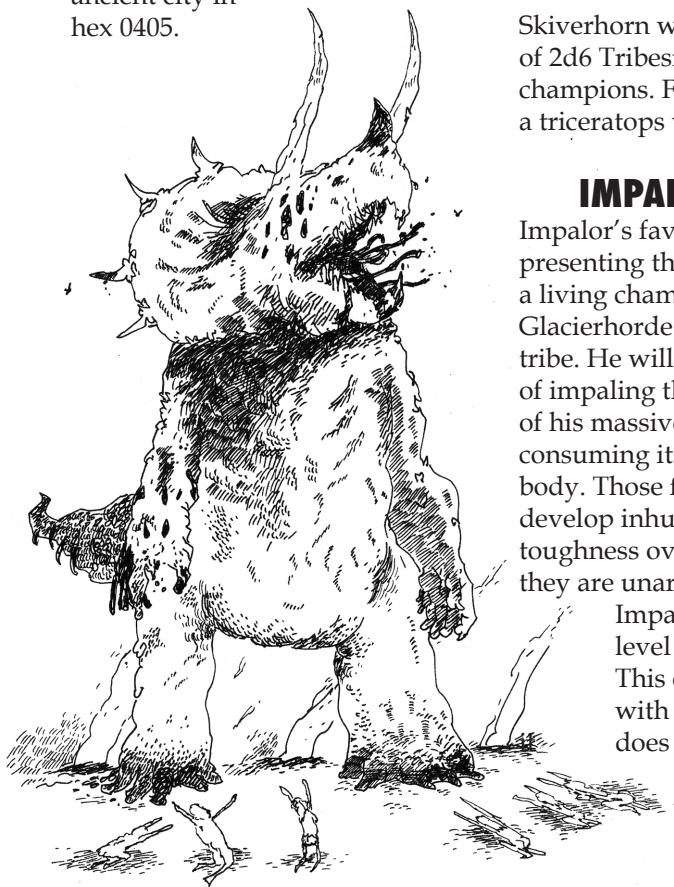
Armor 14, Move 120', HD 5, HP 20, Immune to cold effects, Great Club 1d10+3 damage or Thrown Stone 1d6 damage, Morale 10

**WAR MAMMOTH** Armor 16, Move 150', HD 13, HP 104, Tusks 2d6 damage and Stomp 2d8 damage, Morale 10

## THE SKIVERHORN

The Skiverhorn dwell in the central wastes of the barbarian territories, an arid plain strewn with ancient ruins and the bones of fallen godbeasts. Skiverhorn tribesmen are nomadic, roaming the land atop their triceratops mounts, signalling each other with great trumpets of hewn bone. The tribes protect the three godfalls (skeletal remains of godbeasts who have fallen in battle) in hexes 0201, 0303, and 0405 as sacred ground.

The Skiverhorn worship Impalor, the Armored Death, a godbeast who dwells in the ruins of an ancient city in hex 0405.



**IMPALOR, THE ARMORED DEATH** Armor 24, Move 240', HD 18, HP 144, 2x Stomp 2d10 damage and 1x Horns 3d10 damage and 1x Tail Slap 2d10 damage, Morale 12

**SKIVERHORN TRIBESMAN** Armor 14, Move 120', HD 2, HP 8, Spear 1d8 damage or Long Bow 1d8 damage, Morale 7

**SKIVERHORN CHAMPION** Armor 18, Move 120', HD 5, HP 20, Spear 1d8 damage or Longbow 1d8 damage, Morale 10

**TRICERATOPS** Armor 18, Move 120', HD 12, HP 80, Horns 2d8 damage, Morale 10

Skiverhorn war parties consist of 2d6 Tribesmen. 1 in 6 are champions. For every 6 tribesmen, a triceratops will be present.

### IMPALOR'S FAVOR

Impalor's favor is gained by presenting the godbeast with a living champion from the Glacierhorde or Gnashmaw tribe. He will make a great show of impaling the victim on one of his massive horns before consuming its still-twitching body. Those favored by Impalor develop inhuman levels of natural toughness over time. As long as they are unarmored, a favored of Impalor may add their level to their Armor Class. This effect does not stack with standard armor, but does stack with AC boosts from magic items, spells, etc . . .

## THE GNASHMAW

The Gnashmaw are a tribe of vicious berserkers who dwell deep in the jungles of the southern reaches of the Barbarian Territories. The Gnashmaw are renowned for their ferocity in battle as well as their velociraptor husbandry.

Gnashmaw war parties consist of 2d6 Tribesmen. 1 in 6 are champions. For every 3 tribesmen a tamed velociraptor will be present.

### GNASHMAW'S FAVOR

Gnashmaw's favor is gained by successfully landing a critical strike (natural 20) against him in combat. As Gnashmaw roars in agony the favored gains the ability to enter a primal rage once per combat. When entering the rage, the favored suffers 1d10 damage as their muscles tense and strain. If they survive, they gain a damage bonus on all attacks equal to the amount of damage they suffered by entering the rage. This effect lasts until combat ends.

**Playing a barbarian in my campaign:** Progress as a fighter, but without the increasing attack bonus. D10 Hit Die. Choose to be favored by one of the preceding godbeasts and apply the benefits.

### GNASHMAW, THE HUNGRY

Armor 18, Move 240', HD 18, HP 144, 2x Stomp 2d10 damage and 1x Bite 3d10 damage and 1x Tail Slap 2d10 damage, Morale 12

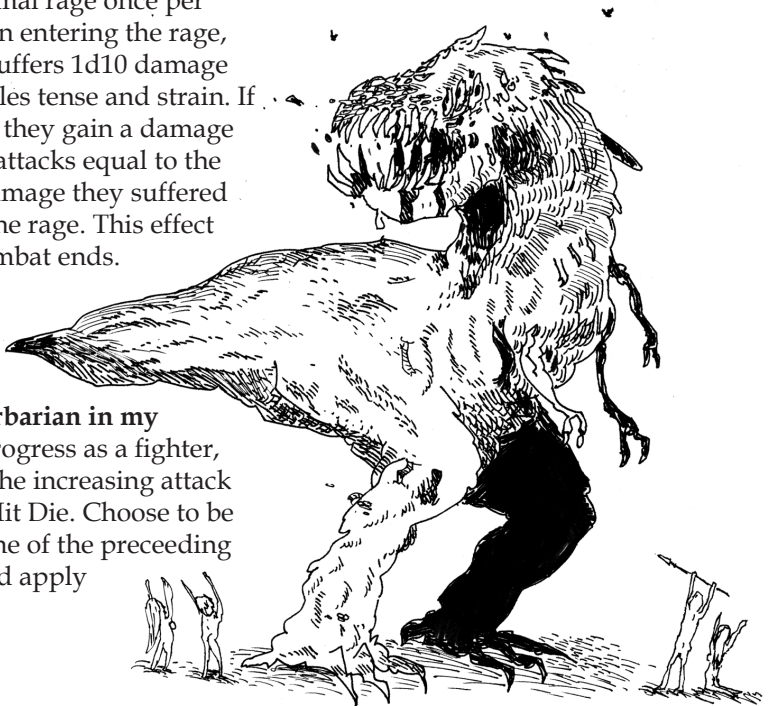
### GNASHMAW TRIBESMAN

Armor 14, Move 120', HD 2, HP 8, Greataxe 1d10 damage or Throwing Axe 1d6 damage, Morale 7

### GNASHMAW CHAMPION

Armor 14, Move 120', HD 5, HP 20, Greataxe 1d10 damage or Throwing Axe 1d6 damage, *Primal Rage* ability, Morale 10

**VELOCIRAPTOR** Armor 16, Move 240', HD 4, HP 30, 1x Bite 1d8 damage and 1x Talons 2d8 damage, Morale 10



# DAVID MCGROGAN'S OPIUM DREAM

If you're reading this, you've likely at least heard of David McGrogan's *Yoon-Suin*, a wonderful OSR setting book. I've been wanting to use *Yoon-Suin* in my campaign for a while, but haven't had good opportunity yet. In the meantime, I figured I would chat with David and get some insights into the book and its creation.

**CK:** Why is all the best OSR stuff influenced by *Viriconium*?

**DM:** The simple answer is surely that *Viriconium* is wonderfully written and evocative and strange. But I think it's probably more to do with the mindset of worldbuilding. M. John Harrison recognised that it makes a fantastical world mundane and banal to try to catalogue and detail its economics, its inhabitants, its geography, etc. in exhaustive detail. That's what *Viriconium* is partially about: a fantasy world expressing things, rather than being 'realistic'. He wrote a brilliant essay about how Tolkien's power comes from the poetry and the themes of his work, the fact that it expresses things, not the 'realism'. Nerds make a critical error in thinking worldbuilding is about things being extremely detailed and "making sense". You dilute fantasy worlds that way. I think the main OSR settings take

the *Viriconium* tack and focus on themes and expressionism rather than old fashioned cataloguing and chronicling. I'm not sure if that answers \*why\* they are all influenced by *Viriconium*... But it's the best I can do.

**CK:** Can you describe *Yoon-Suin* in a nutshell?

**DM:** When I first started blogging about *Yoon-Suin* I wrote down 25 words to describe the setting - a technique I stole, I think, from Max of the Malevolent & Benign blog (<http://mbenign.blogspot.co.uk/>). They were as follows: Tibet, yak ghosts, ogre magi, mangroves, Nepal, Arabian Nights, Sorcery!, Bengal, invertebrates, topaz, squid men, slug people, opiates, slavery, human sacrifice, dark gods, malaise, magic. That was way back in 2009 but I'm not sure a huge amount would change. Maybe I would change "dark" and "gods" to "philosophers" and "fakirs". (That's quite a good name for a yet-to-be-made retroclone: Philosophers & Fakirs.) Anyway, doing that seemed to distill the setting and sustained its focus through the years.

**CK:** What's the thing that surprised you the most about how the setting evolved?

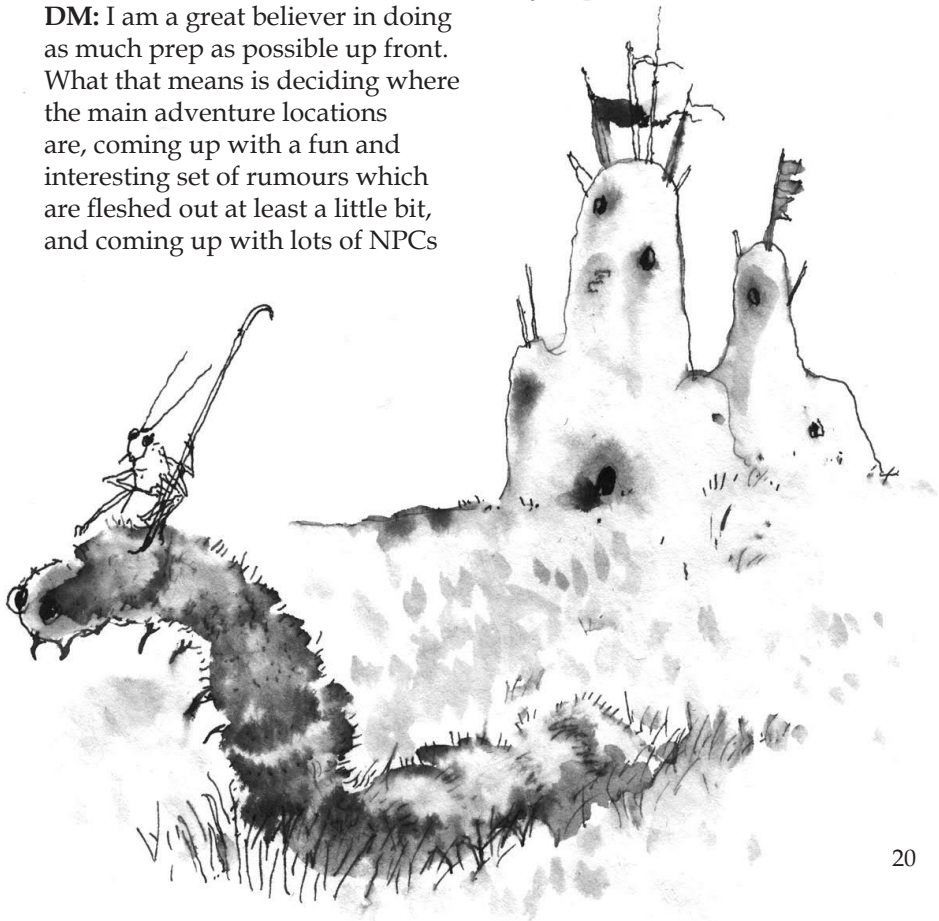
**DM:** Probably the way it turned into a procedural thing rather than a hexcrawl. I was originally planning to make it a traditional Judges' Guild-type hexmap with contents for the whole of *Yoon-*

Suin, but after a while I realised what I wanted was the toolbox approach I eventually adopted. I wasn't really planning to do that, but it just occurred to me one day that that was how I wanted the final product to take shape. I didn't want a canonical Yoon-Suin to exist - I wanted to provide people with the tools to make their own.

**CK:** The book provides a lot of fantastic tools for GMs to frontload prep at the beginning of a campaign. What kind of prep do you typically do between sessions once the campaign is off and moving?

**DM:** I am a great believer in doing as much prep as possible up front. What that means is deciding where the main adventure locations are, coming up with a fun and interesting set of rumours which are fleshed out at least a little bit, and coming up with lots of NPCs

and social groups with motivations for the PCs to interact with. Once all this is created I find that the campaign sort of preps itself as it generates its own momentum. The PCs do something and it has consequences. The consequences also have consequences. And things come back to the PCs, forcing them to react. Which in turn has consequences. And so on. A good campaign is a bit like a rolling stone. Once you've pushed it down hill you can't really stop it and it takes on a life of its own. The natural corollary of that, obviously, is that doing a lot of prep before the campaign begins is very important.



You want a solid springboard from which to launch that boulder.

So between sessions I may spend just 30 minutes to an hour looking through my notes from the previous week (I always note things down, everything almost) and think about what might happen logically. For instance, the PCs may have annoyed a certain NPC who I just rolled up on the spot and didn't really flesh out. Between sessions I may sit down and think about how that NPC fits in with the existing social networks, and what he might do to try to get revenge. That sort of thing. Then that might end up being the focus for the next session (or not, depending on how the PCs react).

**CK:** Do you have any anecdotes from your Yoon-Suin gaming that you'd hold up as being particularly indicative of the setting/milieu?

**DM:** I wrote up quite a few actual play reports on my blog, which you can find here: <http://monstersandmanuals.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/actual%20play>. But one session I didn't write up involved the PCs being hired by Nepsydaz, a sage in the oligarchy of Silaish Vo, to capture The Old King, a mad eunuch who roamed the nearby forests naked and living off dew and grass. Nepsydaz believed The Old King was actually a genuine, ancient monarch who was cursed for some reason to spend eternity

living like an animal, and thought that he must know many secrets since he had been around for so long. So the PCs went to the area, and were introduced to a local monkey demigod by the nearby peasants, who told them where The Old King could be found - after sufficient blood sacrifices were made. They proceeded to hire a group of peasants and go off into the forest, using a complicated system of nets and lassos to attempt to capture The Old King - and eventually used poison from captured scorpions to subdue him.

That sort of feels like a typical, ordinary, every-day Yoon-Suin adventure to me.

**CK:** What's a typical writing session for you? Is there a difference for you between blogging and compiling stuff for a book?

**DM:** Maybe I can answer both questions at once and say that typically, whether blogging or "book writing", the procedure is largely the same: a half-hour or hour snatched here or there, usually after coming home from work. At the weekend it will be in the morning. The only difference is that I will write a blog entry in one sitting whereas obviously a longer project is done in small chunks.

I try to write a little bit every day and mostly I achieve that - it's a habit I've developed over time as I've got more self-disciplined. When I was younger I would try to

do this and fail; now for whatever reason I have got my head around the notion that in order to create something decent you have to actually create it. It won't happen by magic but simply by starting something and carrying on until it's finished, and not allowing yourself to be sidetracked or lose "inspiration" or whatever.

I never have music on because it distracts me. I'll just type away at the kitchen table on my laptop, or writing longhand in a notebook in pencil, maybe with the TV on in the other room providing background noise. I prefer writing longhand but the problem is you then have to transcribe it all onto the PC anyway, which after layout is the most irksome task in self publishing RPG materials.

**CK:** On your blog you mentioned that you're working on a follow-up to *Yoon-Suin*. What can you say about that?

**DM:** I am actually working on several follow-ups. In fact if anything I have too many ideas; I'm going to have to pick one and focus on it exclusively, I think. They are *New Troy*, which is a setting loosely inspired by Arthurian and Norse legend and also Jack Vance's Lyonesse trilogy; *There is Therefore a Strange Land*, which I bill as *The Magician's Nephew* meets *Planescape*; *Queen Country*, which is about Chinese explorers in a mythical and weird Nara-period Japan; and *Utolso Varos*, which is a Dying Earth

setting based around the concept of a mountain which extends all the way up to the moon. All of them appeal to me in different ways. I think *New Troy* is likely to be completed first but when the others will get done is anyone's guess...

**CK:** Wow, very much looking forward to any/all of those. Thanks so much for the interview!

You can find *Yoon-Suin* on Lulu and DriveThruRpg. Also, make sure to check out David's blog, *Monsters and Manuals* at <http://monstersandmanuals.blogspot.co.uk/>

## NEXT ISSUE:

We'll close out 2015 with one more strange little rag. So far, we've got a great cover by Jeremy Duncan, Kathryn Jenkins is bringing us a new *LotFP* character class: *The Ritualist*, Judd Karlman and I are collaborating on a Halfling settlement, and I have a crazy idea to turn my whole damn campaign (and yours, maybe) into some kind of great big, metafictional, magical work. More art. More weird ideas. More fun.



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