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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2000
ISSUE #78

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Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
— William Shakespeare, *King Lear*





The storm giant Gloucester stumbles blindly into a band of heroes.

LEAR THE GIANT-KING

ADAPTED BY MICHAEL SELINKER

"The tempest in my mind doth from my senses take all feeling ..."

Special Thanks to Gwendolyn Kestrel, James Wade, Paul Culotta, and Wolf Baur
Artwork by David Koocharian
Cartography by Diesel

Mike writes of King Lear: "The best play of all time, bar none, and just about the largest in scope, which demands that it leave its mark in a big way—say, with footprints the size of a horse."

"Lear the Giant-King" is an AD&D® game adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*. Shakespeare's bleak tale forms the substance of this scenario for 4–7 PCs of levels 9–11 (up to 70 total levels). These PCs have the opportunity to steer the drama away from Shakespeare's sober final act, wherein the principals meet their end.

This module takes huge liberties with the play. King Lear and his court are now cast as storm and cloud giants. This sets the proceedings on a properly epic scale, with the PCs entering after much of consequence has occurred. The script is shaped by PC actions, with a potentially triumphant conclusion for heroes who demonstrate great valor.

Before running the adventure, the DM should read the information on Lear and the other supporting NPCs as detailed in the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar (pages 28–29).

Prologue

As the storm giant King Lear spied his final years approaching, he knew he could no longer rule his great kingdom. Although every noble giant within his domain swore fealty to him, all that fealty could not buy Lear one more day of life. He apportioned his domain in thirds of sky, sea, and land—one realm for each of his daughters. Lear called his three daughters before him and demanded that each proclaim the limits of her love for her father.

Lear listened as his eldest children, Goneril and Regan, swore they loved him more than life and fortune could offer. Pleased, Lear relinquished to them his sky castle and sea castle respectively. Lear's youngest, Cordelia, said that she loved Lear only as a daughter loves a father. Lear took insult and cursed his most cherished daughter, costing her the hand of the storm giant noble Burgundy. When Lear's vassal, the cloud giant Kent, protested that Lear's action would doom the kingdom, Lear banished him, too. Lear gave Cordelia's portion—the castle on land—to both Regan and Goneril.

Lear remained with Goneril and her cloud giant steward Albany on the sky island, keeping only a hundred hill giant knights. But Goneril considered the giants a threatening nuisance and asked Lear to dismiss his escort. Lear took this as an affront and left the clouds, descending to the sea.

On the journey Lear encountered Kent, who proved his loyalty by routing Goneril's brutish fire giant courier, Oswald. Lear forgave Kent and sent him to herald his visit to

Regan and her cloud giant steward, Cornwall. When Kent swam to the sea castle, Cornwall imprisoned him for attacking Oswald. Regan then demanded Lear send his knights away before descending to her castle. Aghast at his daughters' discourtesy, Lear marched his giants to the mountaintop castle. Fearing that Lear might live outside their control, Goneril and Regan destroyed the castle, leaving Lear to vanish into the hills and fall into madness.

Wrought by his daughters' treachery, Lear sought the palace of the storm giant Gloucester (rhymes with "foster"). Regan and Goneril wanted a pact with the house of Gloucester, but they knew Gloucester would never abandon Lear. The sisters arranged for Gloucester's bastard son, Edmund, to take his father's place. Edmund betrayed his half-brother, the legitimate heir Edgar. Edmund forged Edgar's script on a plan of patricide, then showed the forgery to his father. Gloucester imposed a death sentence on the fleeing Edgar and rewarded Edmund by granting him legitimacy. Gloucester then went to the hills to find the missing king. He discovered Lear in the company of a mad frost giant, truly Edgar in disguise. Unable to convince the mad king to come with him, Gloucester returned alone.

When Gloucester arrived home, he found Goneril, Cornwall, and Regan there and railed at their treachery. Cornwall accused Gloucester of abandoning Lear, and when Gloucester protested this presumption, he was attacked. Goneril bound his arms, Regan wounded him with a burning poison, and Cornwall gouged out his eyes. While Regan, Goneril, Cornwall, and an unrepentant Edmund watched from the palace, Gloucester rampaged into the woods in pain, his sight and reason banished.

Exiled and unable to return to the kingdom, Cordelia was set upon by her traitorous sisters. Fleeing, she seeks outside aid. This she finds in the lands of the PC heroes, lands soon to be ravaged by a thunderous storm.

Plot Synopsis

At the beginning of the adventure, Lear has been driven mad by his daughters' betrayal. Cordelia has been banished from the giant kingdom, and Goneril and Regan are scheming to increase their power. From here, the adventure can go a number of directions. The adventure begins with Cordelia seeking the PCs' aid (Act I) and the PCs searching for her father, Lear.

The PCs travel through a box canyon to Castle Gloucester (Act II), where they find the wicked fomorian Edmund and the first clues to Lear's location. The PCs' search leads them to any of three castles: the ruined mountain castle (Act II), the sea castle held by Regan (Act III), or the sky castle held by Goneril (Act

IV). By investigating these sites, they discover that Lear has trapped himself at the center of a hurricane (Act V), and the PCs must brave his wrath to restore his senses. However, the adventure is not complete until the PCs vanquish Goneril and Regan and reunite Lear and Cordelia.

Act I, Scene i: According To Her Bond

In the PCs' lands, a storm is brewing. It brews in nearby lands as well, summoned by the force of Lear the Giant-King gone mad. Read the following to your players:

The heavens have unleashed a tempest upon your lands. The strongest and darkest rains you have ever seen pound away at your homes. The omens are ill as dark clouds spill forth from the mountains. Lightning sets the darkness ablaze, and torrents of rain spell doom for the crops. No amount of magic seems to bend the storm's dark will, and divination spells reveal only that the storm originates from somewhere in the vast, mountainous realm of the giants.

After several days spent waiting for the tempest to abate, the PCs are visited by a gentle storm giant named Cordelia. She suffers under her father's curse, which causes her terrible pain if she sets foot near his lands. Spells are not powerful enough to break this curse. Left with nothing but the loyalty of her steward, France, Cordelia seeks aid from others who can restore her father's sanity and end the storm ravaging the human and giant lands.

Cordelia and France are detailed in the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar. They have fled Lear's domain and entered the human lands. Shaken from a skirmish with her sisters, Cordelia is at 31 hit points, while France has 64 hit points remaining. Cordelia has used all her curatives, yet France has a gash and lightning burns on his bare chest. Cordelia quivers from the blows of Goneril's *giant slayer* (a magical two-handed sword). When the giants arrive, the ground shakes and beckons the PCs out from their homes and small keeps. Read or paraphrase the following:

Outlined by the lightning is a massive giantess with blue-violet skin and beautiful blue-white hair. She has been terribly wounded and is breathing laboriously. Standing over her is a giant nearly as tall. The brass-haired giant has been seared by lightning and has a gash on his bare white chest. The giant's eyes glare with anger and threat.

Attacking these two isn't a wise plan, since France is more than capable of defending himself with his *maul of the titans*. If attacked, France switches to a threatening posture to deflect attention from his injured lady. The PCs might assume the half-naked and angry giant has injured the giantess. If the PCs attack France, he defends Cordelia to the death unless she calls him off. If the PCs cannot be controlled, France might use his *rod of rulership*, and Cordelia her *wand of paralysis* or a *wall of thorns* spell cast from her staff.

If the PCs are friendly, France accepts any cures, demanding that Cordelia be healed first. Given a chance, Cordelia tells of events that have transpired:

"I am cast down, but blame only my ill-considered tongue. I had the love of a dear father, the claim of a noble suitor, and the dominion over all the land. But because of my vanity, all is ruin. Your lands are in danger as well, so please take heed.

"I am Cordelia, youngest daughter of the giant-king, Lear. My father sought to give my sisters and I his lands. From us he demanded testaments of love. Goneril, my oldest sister, claimed she loved him more than life itself. Then our middle sister, Regan, swore my father was not only the single object of her love, but that she despised all else that would take her love from him.

"I could speak no such flattery, saying I loved him as a daughter loves a father, to which my father took affront. He laid a curse that I could never enter his domain without great sufferance, and he banished me from court. My suitor, Burgundy, a storm lord of the sky, abandoned his claim on my dowryless hand. And so France and I departed the land over which I hold no dominion.

"My beloved father has since fallen into madness and disappeared into the mountains, victim to his daughters' betrayal. France and I searched for him, but to no avail. We sought to rest in Castle Gloucester, home to the mightiest of my father's storm lords. On our arrival, we saw no sign of Gloucester or his highborn son, Edgar. Only Gloucester's disagreeable scion, Edmund, came to greet us. We welcomed his hospitality until we were set upon by Goneril, Regan, and her steward, Cornwall. We barely escaped. With this defeat, I cannot discern how we will set things aright in my father's kingdom.

"My father's rage is beyond measure. Only he and the gods themselves can summon storms to flatten mountains and stir the oceans to their darkest depths. These storms have passed beyond the boundaries



of our domain, and now my father's wrath threatens your kingdom as well. You must help me restore his wits. If you would do this deed, seek first the good giant Gloucester. He may know of what fate has befallen my father."

If the PCs offer to escort Cordelia back to Castle Gloucester, she explains that a curse keeps her out of her father's lands. Only with Lear's blessing can she and her steward re-enter the lands. She intends to stay on the edge of the giant lands until time heals the wounds in her father's domain.

Burgundy, a potential ally, refuses to help. A wicked and disagreeable storm giant of considerable power, Burgundy (hp 122; AL LE) lives on a cloud 200 miles away. The greedy giant hates visitors and bitterly defends his home against them. He is not interested in the internal affairs of the royal house and has no love for the royal family. Lear felt that a union between Cordelia and Burgundy might strengthen the kingdom, but Cordelia never wanted to marry Burgundy except to please her father.

If the PCs want to visit Castle Gloucester, France suggests they travel through a canyon into the mountains. If the PCs accept France's advice, proceed with Act I, Scene ii.

Cordelia's Capture

Sometime well after the PCs leave, Regan and Goneril appear in the PCs' lands, capture Cordelia and France with the help of Goneril's *horn of blasting*, and vanish. If the PCs have no contact with their lands, the PCs might not realize what has happened until they find Cordelia and France bound on Goneril's cloud island (Act IV).

However, if the PCs leave someone at home to minister to the giants, you can run this optional encounter. Whoever is left at home sees an awesome spectacle:

The ground shakes as three colossal giants appear before you. In the front with trident drawn is an blue-skinned cloud giant, and behind him are two storm giantesses, one with light violet complexion and the other with skin of the deepest purple. The largest giantess raises a massive horn to her lips.

The three giants are Cornwall, Regan, and Goneril respectively.

As Goneril blows her *horn of blasting* in an attempt to stun all present, Regan casts *spectral force*, creating false images of Cornwall, Goneril, and herself to further confound enemies. Goneril's *horn of blasting* stuns Cordelia and France, and Regan's *rod of passage* teleports all the giants to Goneril's cloud castle. If PCs are with Cordelia and France, Goneril

casts *flame strike* against those who aim to prevent Regan from employing her *rod*.

The giants do not remain to face a capable group of PCs. The DM should avoid having either Regan or Goneril captured or killed at this point, as the rest of the adventure could be disrupted.

If the PCs thwart the kidnapping, Cordelia and France are appreciative. If not, the PCs have a chance to save the giants again on the cloud island.

Act I, Scene ii: His Insolent Retinue

Passages through the mountains are few. The most obvious route is a 200-wide canyon that carves through the ice-capped peaks and leads to Gloucester's castle. PCs can climb or fly, but horses and similar mounts cannot navigate the rough terrain. Non-thieves without the Mountaineering proficiency cannot climb or rappel unless they are led by an expert mountaineer.

As the PCs navigate the canyon between the mountains, they come upon a trap. Five hill giants have set up an ambush to catch dinner. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you navigate the pass, boulders crash down upon you! Giants stand on the mountainsides, two behind an outcropping up the east mountain and three behind trees on the west side. They each stand 16 feet tall.

These five hill giants are members of Lear's former escort. The giants wear the grime-covered clothing of society courtiers, although they do not wear it well. On each tabard is the royal insignia: a shield bearing views of sky, sea, and land. The giants sport stubble, having stopped shaving a few weeks ago. They do not know Lear's present whereabouts, but they know the location of each castle, having visited all three in a dizzying few weeks. The knights want to establish a base in the mountains, and these five have been sent for food while the others argue over what to do.

The hill giants flee if two or more are killed, heading for the main camp. These five can be trailed a mile west, where the remainder of the king's former retinue have set up camp. Among colossal and crude tents, ninety-five giants argue around a glade-sized campfire. All wear the same dirty clothing adorned with the royal insignia.

A rift has formed among the one hundred giants who constitute the king's former retinue. Some argue for an attack on the human lands, while others aren't willing to risk the losses incurred by such a plan. One who holds the latter opinion is the current leader, Bogjog. The authority of Lear's knight captain has

shaken without Lear's sanction, although no other giant has challenged Bogjog's rule directly. Bogjog is as big as hill giants come, with an unsettling habit of smashing his fist to the ground to emphasize points. He is far from the brightest of giants but brooks no dissension by any giant in his command. These giants are accustomed to royalty; their manners, while impeccable for hill giants, are none too good.

If the PCs are spotted, they are attacked. They must bridge the language gulf and show astounding charisma to stand before the giants and expect to leave in one piece. Demonstrations of power might frighten a few giants, and attempts to bluff are thwarted by the giants' natural caution. Guerrilla tactics might work for a time, but the giants discover solidarity if they suffer mysterious disappearances. Claiming to be emissaries of Lear or Cordelia won't help much, since these giants know they are out of favor with all in the royal house. If a giant decides to talk to the PCs, he can tell them little except that they served Lear until abandoning him when his leadership faltered. Both Regan and Goneril objected to their lack of manners, and even though Lear stuck by them, they don't make any great claim to loyalty.

They do know of Gloucester's nearby castle—their last stop before leaving Lear for good. They're tired of castles and are now looking forward to the business of being brutish hill giants once again.

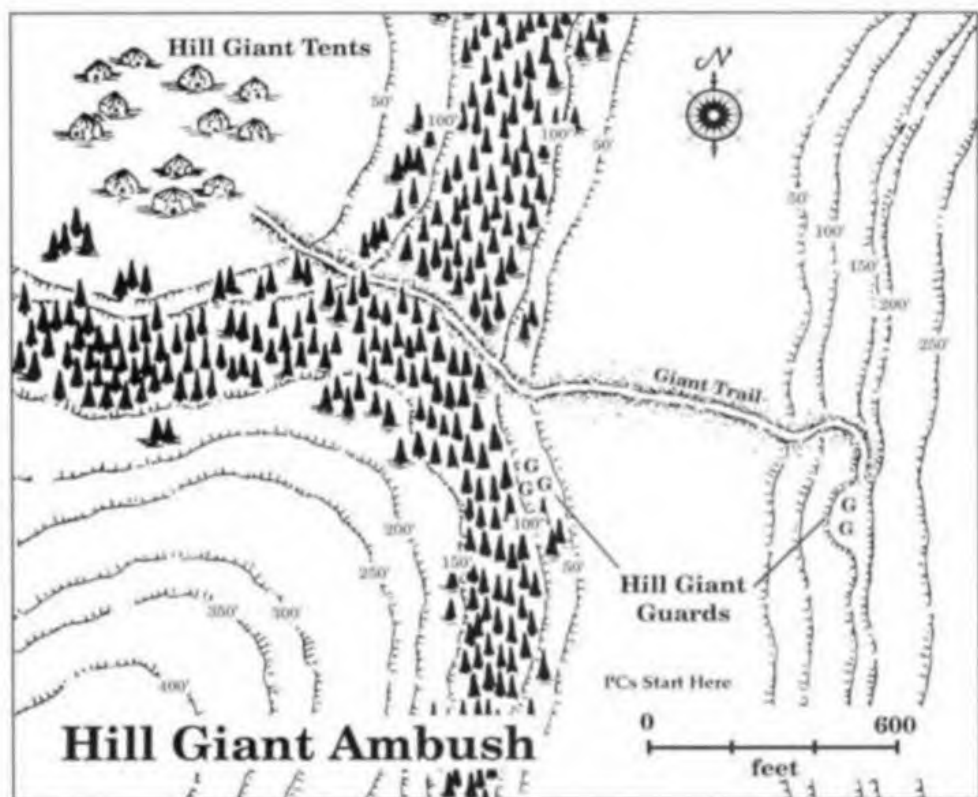
Bogjog (hill giant commander): AC 3; MV 12; HD 12+2; hp 84; THAC0 9 (6 with potion); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+7 (fist) or by weapon type +7 (+13 with potion); SA hurl rocks 200 yards for 2–16 points of damage; SD 30% chance to catch large missiles; SZ H (16' tall); ML 14; INT low (7); AL CE; XP 5,000; MM/141; two-handed sword (Dmg 4–24 base), potion of storm giant strength.

Hill giants (99): AC 3; MV 12; HD 12+2; hp 54 each; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+7 (fist) or by weapon type +7; SA hurl rocks (as above); SD 30% chance to catch large missiles; SZ H (16' tall); ML 14; INT low (5–7); AL CE; XP 3,000; MM/141; longsword (Dmg 2–16 base).

Act II, Scene i: A Father's Blindness

If the PCs continue toward Gloucester's castle, they happen upon a large lake shielded from the storm by the enclosing mountains:

You come to the south side of a large lake. Refreshed by the serenity of the unburdened sunlight on the lake, you marvel at nature's grace. A flight of birds bolts from a nearby forest, heading across the lake and away from you.



Quiet PCs hear a low thrashing and roaring from deep in the forest. PCs then hear the unmistakable sound of a tree crashing to the ground. From the air, PCs might see trees falling and being uprooted.

The blinded Gloucester demolishes trees with his wild flailing. He cannot control his actions due to the poison and injuries that wrack his body. He has 16 hp and loses 1 hp every turn from a progressive poison. He is a mile away but closes quickly. Gloucester stumbles blindly toward the lake, emerging from the forest after 3 rounds:

A 26'-tall figure erupts from the forest. He is screaming from pain, as his eyes have been viciously clawed out. His regal robes are tattered and bloodied, and his blue-black beard has been cruelly ripped. His arms seem to crackle with electricity. The giant stumbles forward as if unable to stop.

If PCs attack him, he defends with a crude sapling staff, striking at -4 to hit due to blindness. He might fire lightning bolts at PCs who attack or hinder him, although his intended targets receive a +4 bonus to their saving throws; PCs suffer no damage (instead of half damage) if their saving throws succeed without the +4 modifier.

Left unimpeded, Gloucester stumbles into the lake 2 rounds after emerging from the for-

est, suffering 1–6 points of damage. As he stumbles, he blasts a row of lakeside trees with a lightning bolt, causing four to fall into the water. Once Gloucester is at or below 0 hit points, he may be dealt with by the PCs. He dies at -10 hit points. If PCs keep him conscious and stop the progressive poison, he is pained but rational. He cannot walk, and few PCs could brace him. He can levitate but is hard-pressed to do so. If PCs wish an engineering challenge, they can rope together felled trees to create a barge; if one tree is used, it rolls with the giant's weight. Although Gloucester can breathe water, his blindness makes swimming risky.

If Gloucester stays conscious or is returned to consciousness, read or paraphrase the following text:

The giant clutches at his bloody eye sockets and gasps, "Regan ... Goneril ... and that blasted Cornwall ... my eyes ... Edmund ... betrayed me. Slay my base son Edmund ... jewels well worth a poor man's taking ... be your reward ... my castle ... down the silver stream ... jewels ..." The giant's agony seems to abate as he falls asleep.

Gloucester must rest for 1 hour before he can answer questions, no matter how much magic is poured into him. Only a *regenerate* spell restores his sight and eliminates the scar

tissue on his face. The PCs can leave Gloucester here to heal while they attend to the giant's family problems.

If they wait, the PCs hear Gloucester tell of his troubles:

The shivering giant moans and gnashes his teeth. "Thank you, friends, for your ministrations. I cannot see, but more's the better. I stumbled when I saw. Oh, such treacheries I have occasioned. I had a good son named Edgar, upon whose brow I placed a sentence of death. His foul bastard brother Edmund dazed me with trickery, making me believe that Edgar sought my life. And now, fearing my sentence of death, Edgar has fled. Might I live to see Edgar within my touch, I'd say I had eyes again."

Gloucester attempts to sit up, but pain crashes him to ground. "I must ask your help. Through your bravery you may save the faces of two old giants, myself the lesser. Somewhere in these domains you may find King Lear, whose heart knows no bound. He must be saved from his cruel daughters, as must his fair child Cordelia. I know not how to find King Lear, but my true son will. I entreat you to find my Edgar, for this cannot wait for my sight to return. I will reward you. What say you?"

Nothing the PCs can tell Gloucester helps him pinpoint Lear's location, although Gloucester can point the PCs in the direction of the sky castle and the sea castle. Lear's land castle, he knows, is ruined and occupied by a mad frost giant named Tom Turlygod. He does not realize that this frost giant is really his son Edgar, as Edgar took this guise to flee his beguiled father's hastily applied wrath. If the PCs use *crystal balls* or other such magic to search for Edgar, treat their search as "slightly informed" (see DMG).

The conversation exhausts Gloucester. He cannot be brought to a healthy enough state to join the PCs in freeing his castle from its present occupants. When the PCs leave, they may cross through light hills toward Gloucester's castle, now occupied by Edmund.

Gloucester (storm giant): AC 0; MV 15, swim 15; HD 19+7; hp 120 (currently 16); THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10+12 or by weapon type +12; SD water breathing, immune to electricity; SZ G (26' tall); ML 18; INT exceptional; AL CG; XP 15,000; MM/146; staff (Dmg 3-18 base).

Spells (cast at 15th-level): *predict weather*, *levitate* (x2), *call lightning* (3 bolts inflicting 15d8 points of damage each), *lightning bolt* (15d6 points of damage), *control winds*, *control weather* (x2), *weather summoning*.

His skin is deep purple, and his hair is black. His white and orange fur-lined robe has been torn, bloodied, and dirtied.

Act II, Scene ii: Castle Gloucester

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive at Gloucester's castle:

Ahead is a two-story stone structure 60 feet tall that rests at the base of a huge mountain that looks to have been flattened by a god. A massive hole dominates the southwestern wall of the lower floor. You can see armed bugbears on the roof battlements and three standing by the front door.

The gaping hole in the wall was made by France using his *maul of the titans*. France was trying to help Cordelia flee the castle during an attack by Regan, Goneril, and Cornwall—the same attack that led to Gloucester's capture and subsequent blindness.

Five bugbears armed with spears and halberds staff the battlements, while three bugbears guard the front door. Eight bugbears stand guard inside area 1. The bugbears are loyal to Edmund but surrender immediately if the giant is slain or captured.

The current ruler of Castle Gloucester is Edmund, the fruit of a liaison between Gloucester and a fomorian giantess. He far more resembles his mother, having both her looks and ambition. Edmund has one arm, a club foot, distorted facial features, and sporadic rat fur. He hides his physical deformities with a *rod of splendor*, but his mental deformity cannot be hidden. Courted by both Regan and Goneril, he has foolishly pledged his love to both. Neither giantess has true romantic feelings for Edmund, but they consider him a powerful ally.

Edmund's tactics depend on the PCs' actions. If the PCs attack the bugbears, an alarm sounds. Bugbears on the roof throw spears and then use their halberds. The bugbears inside the castle rush out, throwing spears and closing for melee. They are led into battle by Edmund, who imbibes his potion of *fire resistance* before entering melee.

Amid a troop of bugbears, a regal giant emerges from the castle, bedecked in fox-lined vermilion robes and dazzling jewelry. His commanding presence makes it hard to notice his twisted facial features, pronounced limp, and ratlike fur. He bears a scimitar in his only arm. As you brace for the giant's onslaught, the clouds above roll and take on the vague appearance of two angry female giantesses.

Edmund's huge *scimitar of speed* gives him first initiative and 3 attacks every 2 rounds. Edmund fights until his morale breaks. If he panics, he begs the PCs to spare him. His father's throne is not worth dying for, and he

feels betrayed that Regan and Goneril left him to fend for himself. The two sisters watch the battle unfold using their *cloudview* spells. (See "New Spell" sidebar for details.) They cannot affect the combat but are interested in what transpires.

If Edmund is killed, the effect from his *rod of splendor* ends. If Edmund is defeated, Regan and Goneril terminate their *cloudview* spells. The PCs can search the castle (see below), move on, or return to Gloucester. (See Act II, scene i above.)

Edmund (half-fomorian/half-storm giant): AC 0; MV 9; HD 17+3; hp 96; THAC0 5; #AT 1 or 3/2 (scimitar); Dmg by weapon type +9 or 2d8+9 (fist); SA -2 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls; SD never surprised, water breathing; SZ H (20' tall); ML 16; INT average (9); AL CE; XP 10,000; MM/139, 146; *rod of splendor* (37 charges), giant *scimitar of speed* +3 (Dmg 3-24 base), potion of *fire resistance*.

Bugbears (16): AC 5; MV 9; HD 3+1; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 or by weapon type +2; SA surprise; SZ L (7' tall); ML 12; INT low (6); AL CE; XP 120; MM/32; halberd, three spears.

Gloucester's Castle

1. Inner Foyer. Rich hangings decorate the walls. There are giant-sized stone chairs and candlestands, as well as furniture for human visitors. A 20'-tall coat rack sports two colossal coats, including Cornwall's sea-green jacket. The other is Edmund's fur-lined purple overcoat, in the pocket of which is a letter. Taken at face value, it suggests that Edgar wanted Edmund to help him kill their father so both could share his estate. It reads in Common:

"This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I wak'd him, you should enjoy half of his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother—Edgar."

The letter is a carefully crafted forgery designed to incriminate Edgar and make him seem like a scheming murderer determined to secure his father's holdings. *Divination* and similar spells reveal that Regan, using a practiced hand, crafted the letter and gave it to Edmund to show to his father, Gloucester. (Regan has the equivalent of the Forgery proficiency.)

2. Living Room. The furniture is plush and ornate, with oil lamps and carved bookcases stacked with giant-sized and human-sized books. A 1'-diameter magnifying glass with a silver handle (worth 2,000 gp intact) rests on

one bookcase. Tapestries cover the walls. A 15'-tall portrait of an attractive storm giantess (Gloucester's late wife, Magda—the mother of Edgar) hangs on the east wall, but Edmund has cut a terrible gash across her face. (A *mirroring* spell restores the painting.) Against the west wall, near the sunken wall, is a drawing table with inkwells, roc feathers, and several 3'-tall sheets of parchment. Crumpled in the corner is a page with a dozen attempts at forging Edgar's signature.

3. Edmund's Chamber. The *rod of splendor's* silk pavilion has been invoked, but the room is too small to fit the tent without crumpling. Thus, the room is packed with palatial furniture for giants, including Edmund's real bed smashed against the southeast corner.

Under Edmund's bed is a 2' x 3' x 3' double-chained and padlocked ironwood war chest. In the chest are a bag of twenty-five small gems worth 700 gp total, a human-sized pearl necklace worth 7,000 gp (actually seven pearls of the *sirines*), and a giant-sized scroll detailing two spells (*know alignment* and *detect invisibility*, cast at 10th level).

After a day without a charge from Edmund's *rod of splendor*, the pavilion disappears, although the chest, gems, necklace, and scroll remain.

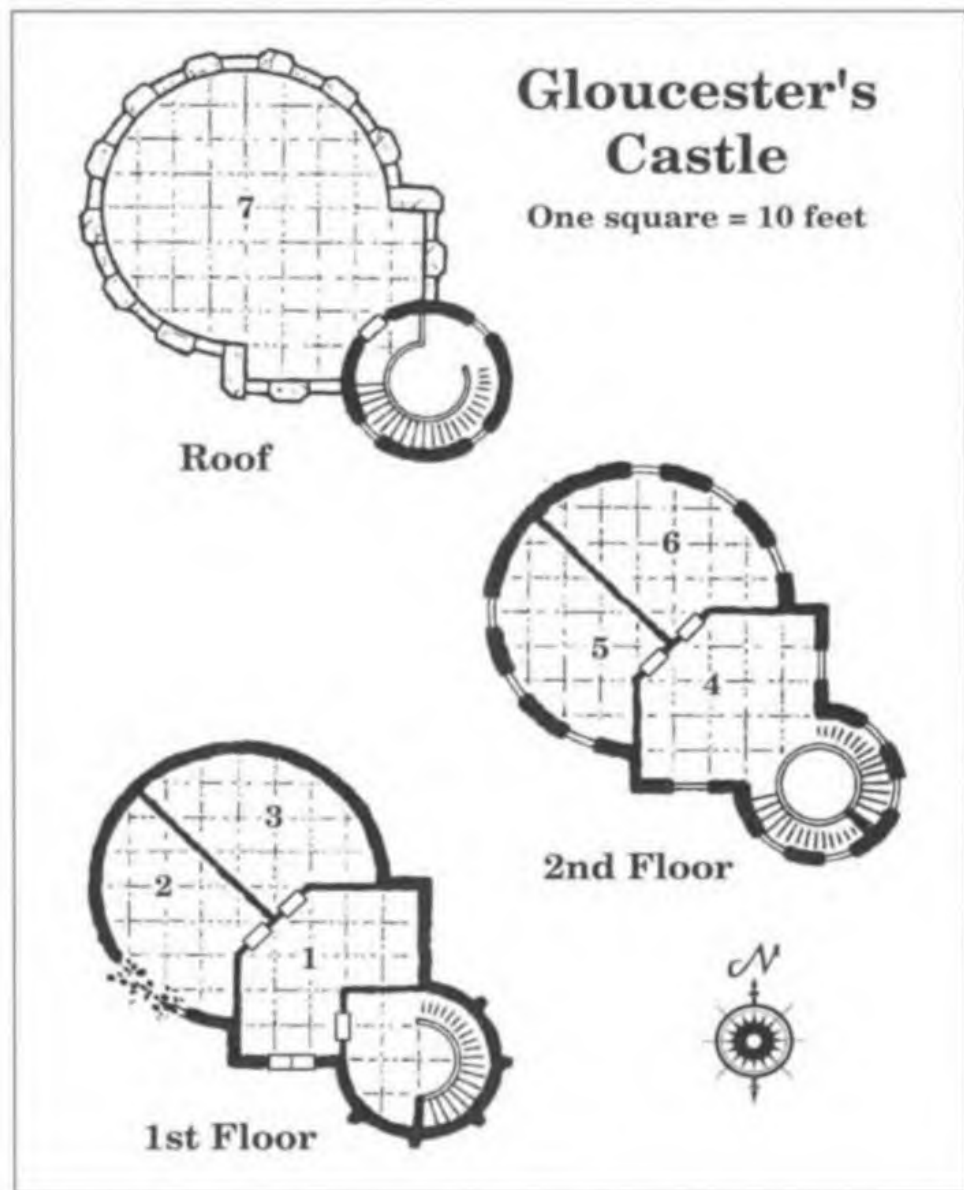
4. Storage Room. In this room are hundreds of giant-sized and human-sized items: food-stuffs, draperies, furniture, art, clothes, cart wheels, wine, farm implements, and so on.

5. Edgar's Chamber. This room contains a giant-sized bed, a 10'-tall bookcase, a giant desk, two giant padded chairs, and a large nightstand atop which rests a lamp containing five gallons of oil.

The bookcase holds storybooks and other mundane tomes. On top of the bookcase are two 6'-tall, golden candlesticks, each fitted with a wax candle and worth 1,200 gp.

On the south wall, a wardrobe holds Edgar's rich clothes and a 2' x 3' x 3' oak chest (unlocked) containing Edgar's treasure: a bag of thirty gems worth a total of 3,000 gp and books including a human-sized *manual of puissant skill at arms*. Next to the chest is another book titled *Poor Tom Turlygod*. The story concerns a human beggar who runs naked and feigns madness in pursuit of alms.

6. Gloucester's Chamber. A canopied double bed dominates a room arrayed in tapestries, chandeliers, dicerions, carpets, and plush furniture. An 8' x 5' portrait of Gloucester and his late wife Magda hangs on the west wall. An 18'-long sword and a 16'-tall battle-axe cross the north wall. A 22'-high suit of plate armor and a 14'-diameter shield occupy the north-west corner. The 20'-tall wardrobe contains



fine clothing, some bearing jewels and precious metals. On a shelf inside the wardrobe rests Gloucester's treasure (now Edmund's), including three massive wood chests bearing 4,000 cp, 6,000 sp and 4,000 gp respectively. An alabaster chest, itself worth 200 gp, holds forty gems worth 10,000 gp, a ruby and platinum crown worth 2,000 gp, two gold wristlets worth 700 gp each, a diamond stick-pin worth 1,000 gp, a coral necklace of state worth 100 gp, and a *gem of insight*.

7. Roof. Eight-foot-tall battlements top Gloucester's castle. Aside from the bugbears who stand watch day and night, the roof holds little of interest.

Gloucester's Castle

One square = 10 feet

Act II, Scene iii: Poor Tom Turlygod

The storm begins to muster beyond this 2,000'-high flat-topped mountain, upon which Lear's land castle stood until its destruction one week ago.

You have come to a flat-topped mountain, its wind-whipped cliffs high and jagged. Leaping from various crags in the mountainside are six white horses with beautiful, feathered wings. They seem to be flying toward you.

One set of giant-sized tracks leads from Gloucester's castle to the top of the mountain;

any PC who makes a successful Tracking proficiency check at a +4 bonus can follow the trail to Edgar's location. However, as the PCs approach the mountain, they are greeted by a herd of pegasi who have pledged their loyalty to Edgar and have seen fit to deliver the PCs to their troubled master, hoping the PCs can help him regain his senses.

The pegasi do not allow evil PCs to ride them, but they are otherwise eager to transport the PCs safely to the top of the mountain. If the PCs are already capable of flight, the pegasi try to lure them to the mountaintop to confront Edgar. The pegasi attack the PCs only if attacked or if Edgar's life is threatened.

At the top, the castle has been leveled. Living in the rubble is Edgar, disguised as a mad beggar. He resembles a wild-eyed, 21'-tall frost giant wearing only a braid binding his hair. He acts mad, fearing his father's wrath and not knowing Edmund is behind his troubles. Still, he is sane and good, having shown kindness to the lost Lear.

To reach the castle, the PCs can climb the rough mountain (see PH for climbing rules) or avail themselves of the pegasi. However, Edgar does not want company and uses his *control winds* power to assure he doesn't get it. PCs mounted on pegasi are unaffected by the winds, regardless of their intensity.

Once the PCs are atop the mountain, the pegasi depart. They circle above the peak, waiting to see what happens. Read or paraphrase the following once the PCs reach the ruined castle:

The winds threaten to blow you off the mountain. Against the ruins of a massive castle stands a deranged white giant who wears naught but a hairbraid. He bats at unseen foes and screams, "Away! The foul fiend follows me! Away, you fiends! You will not take Poor Tom O'Bedlam! Away! Poor Tom's a-cold!"

As if in answer, the winds heighten in intensity. The giant reaches into the rubble for a large rock.

Though his actions suggest madness, the fact that he does not dash the PCs to the cliff should betray his sanity (or at least that he isn't a frost giant, since they rarely get cold). He scurries behind the castle, hurling rocks to dissuade PCs. He spits nonsense about fiends pursuing and corrupting him. His tale evokes Poor Tom Turlygod, a serving-man whose vices overcame him, and who eats tadpoles and rats to survive. He shadows this falsehood amid a disorienting façade of irrational commentary.

Edgar resists overtures that mention his name, his father, or his half-brother's treachery, as those are the tricks one would expect from fiends. But if the PCs intimate that King

Lear might die without his aid, they can crack Edgar's guise. Also, if Edgar's *hat of disguise* braid is cut or removed, his defenses come crashing down and he talks lucidly and fervently, telling of this castle's former splendor. After his sanity is restored, Edgar races over the mountains to his father, Gloucester. He knows vaguely where Lear is, in the mountains to the north.

The castle's foundations have been blown out, leaving a cracked shell. Though the walls were 100 feet high, the highest standing wall is 40 feet tall. Everything inside has been crushed. The floor has at least four feet of rubble everywhere. Amid the rubble are the remains of furniture, large weapons, tapestries, vases, and so forth. One casualty protruding from the wreckage is an intact 25'-tall platinum-inlaid mirror frame (worth 5,000 gp) whose faintly magical smoky glass has been shattered. This was one of three interconnected *mirrors of transport* between Lear's three castles, but the mirror is now unsalvageable and nonmagical.

Edgar (storm giant): AC 0; MV 15, swim 15; HD 19+6; hp 105; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10+12 or by weapon type +12; SD water breathing, immune to electricity; SZ G (26' tall); ML 18; INT exceptional; AL CG; XP 15,000; MM/146; longsword (Dmg 3-24/3-36 base), *hat of disguise*, *Myrland's spoon*.

Edgar's "Turlygod" disguise conceals his purple skin, blue-black hair, and navy and royal blue robes.

Pegasi (6): AC 6; MV 24, fly 48 (C, D if mounted); HD 4; hp 20 each; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-3; SA dive, rear kick; SD *detect good/evil* (60-yard range) at will; SZ L; ML 11; INT average (10); AL CG; XP 175; MM/285.

Interlude: Storm Warnings

After the PCs help Gloucester and confront his two sons—the deformed Edmund and the deranged Edgar—they must head deeper into the mountains to save Lear and quite possibly Cordelia and France as well.

If they were captured in Act I, Cordelia and France are prisoners in Goneril's cloud castle (Act IV). Lear is currently alone on his mountaintop retreat (see Act V).

As the PCs seek him out, Lear lapses into catatonia, losing his subconscious to rage. This rage triggers the most violent storm in decades. On the first day of the PCs' quest, the sky grows more overcast and rain pours. The storm centers on Goneril's cloud island, which turns black from absorbing and expelling impossible amounts of water and electricity. On the second day, lightning alights the clouds for 100 miles. On the third day, gales and storms wrack the mountain range and the coast, and on the fourth day a

deadly tempest ravages the human kingdoms and coastal lands beyond the mountain range. On the fifth day, if Lear has not awakened from his catatonia, the cloud island tears at the seams, taxed too greatly by the storm. The PCs can stop this cataclysm only by waking Lear, and to awaken Lear they must first see Cordelia safely to her father's side.

PCs traveling among the mountains or near the coast must take precautions to avoid lightning. Those abandoning all metal and laying in ditches have 1% chances of being struck for 8d6 points of damage, but those standing in metal armor in the open have a 10% chance of being struck. These chances double on the third day, quadruple on the fourth day and octuple on the fifth day. If the PCs have not succeeded by the fourth day, they confront the full force of Lear's tempest.

Act II, Scene iv: The King's Fool

If the PCs try to wait out the storm or are troubled by how best to proceed, they are greeted by Clotpoll. (See the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar on pages 28-29 for hints on playing the Fool.) Clotpoll has been watching the PCs invisibly from a safe distance and gives the ominous warning about Lear's controlling of the storm: "If you cannot stop Nuncle Lear from thinking, can you stop your cities from sinking?"

Clotpoll believes (wrongly) that Cordelia has been imprisoned in Regan's undersea castle. He relays this information in short rhymes and riddles, letting the PCs make their own interpretations. For instance, if the PCs ask how to awaken Lear from his catatonia, the Fool might respond, "A daughter's love can wake the king, but trapped is she by the manta's wing." If the PCs ask how they might reach the undersea castle, Clotpoll responds, "Dive into the watery brine, placing pearls before the swine." The Fool is referring to the *pearls of the sirines* that the PCs may have recovered from Edmund in Castle Gloucester. If the PCs did not find the *pearls*, the Fool says, "If magic pearls you do not keep, a boat can take you to the deep."

If the PCs ask how best to reach the cloud island, Clotpoll says, "Feathers best suit thy needs, or ride thee on poor Edgar's steeds." The Fool refers to the six pegasi; PCs who free Edgar from his madness might persuade the giant to loan them his six pegasi. The pegasi agree to fly the PCs to and from the cloud island if they have no means of reaching the island otherwise.

Once the PCs have been given some direction, the Fool vanishes. Clotpoll has better things to do than entertain the party with rhymes! However, should the PCs become lost or misguided, the Fool reappears to set things aright in his own mischievous way.

Act III, Scene i: Defenders of the Deep

Fortunately for the PCs, a very clear path leads from the ruined mountain castle to the sea. By the sea, the forest has been cleared to furnish the lumber for four great barges. The giant-sized barges are moored on the beach. Out at sea, a buoy marks where the giants tie the vessels before swimming down to the undersea castle. If the Fool is with the PCs, he might *polymorph* something into an approximately equal-sized boat, but not into a potion of *water breathing*.

Each day, the risks of sailing change. On the first day, the wind is a strong breeze with little danger. On the second day, strong gale conditions are in effect. On the third day, a storm rages. On the fourth day, the coast is ravaged by hurricanes, and seaworthiness (DMG/170) should be checked every 6 hours.

If the PCs fall in the water, they might not drown. Any PC carrying Edmund's necklace of seven pearls of the *srimes* finds himself able to breathe water and swim at high speeds. Each pearl lets its owner breathe water, swim at MV 24 regardless of ability or encumbrance, fight underwater without penalty, communicate within 30 feet, and ignore the adverse effects of water pressure. A pearl does not protect equipment, so non-waterproofed items must be treated if the PCs wish them to survive the dunking. A pearl must be within 10 feet of its owner to function. The Fool can swim but cannot breathe water on his own.

Clotpoll knows the location of the sea castle and might lead the PCs to it. Moored above the castle is a large buoy covered in moss; this moss provides up to an hour of *water breathing* as the spell after it is picked from the buoy.

Swimming PCs encounter Cornwall about a mile from the castle. He wears a *cloak of the manta ray*, making him 90% indistinguishable from a manta. He has also enslaved two 35'-spread mantas with his *trident of fish command*. If PCs have a light or stay near the surface, they see the following:

Three graceful black mantas glide below you. They must each be thirty feet across, and they are hard to see against the dark ocean floor. As two of the mantas head away from you, the third flips over and heads at you. The manta, which you now see is a cloud giant in a manta-like cloak, shouts, "Traitors! My Regan counsels wise! You stubborn ancient knaves, you reverend braggarts, we'll teach you!"

With that, Cornwall rushes in as the mantas attack from the sides. In combat Cornwall uses his *trident*, and his *cloak* improves his AC by 2. (The *cloak* affords MV 18.) He can also use a tail spine to spear those behind, causing



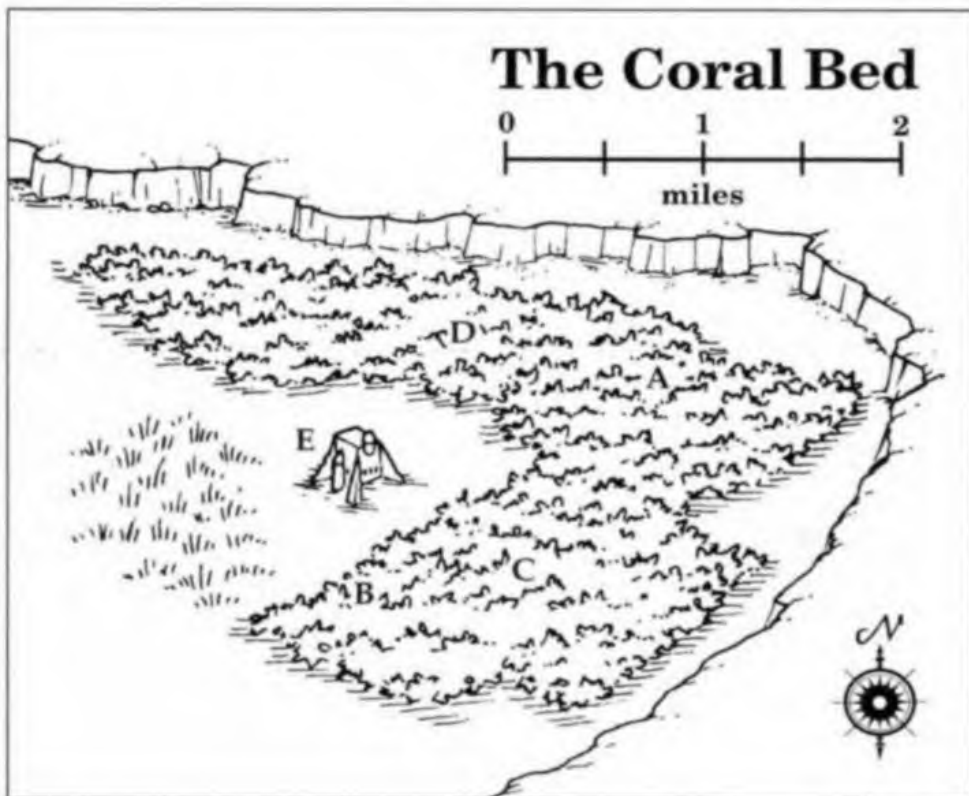
Cornwall confronts a sorcerous interloper deep beneath the sea.

2–12 points of damage. If hurt, he has the mantas interpose. If Cornwall loses his *trident*, he loses the manta rays as well; if his *cloak* is negated, he drowns unless he *levitates* or swims to the surface. If Cornwall escapes, he heads for Regan's castle.

The mantas attack by biting. Underwater combat is three-dimensional, so a manta can swoop below PCs and attack a character from the rear. A manta swallows prey (one man-sized or two small creatures) on a roll 2 higher than necessary. Swallowed victims die in 6 rounds but can attack from inside at a cumulative -1 penalty per round. If fleeing, the mantas attack pursuers with their tail spines.

Inside one ray's stomach are 210 cp, 60 sp, 75 ep, 82 gp, 20 pp, and 15 gems worth a total of 675 gp; inside the other are 187 cp, 150 sp, 34 ep, 45 gp, 30 pp, and a steel flask containing a potion of *fire breath*. Clotpoll may be coerced into *polymorphing* a slain manta into water (thus freeing the treasure within) if the PCs suggest that it will help free Lear.

Manta rays (2): AC 6; MV swim 18; HD 11; hp 70 each; THAC0 9; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 3–12 (bite) and 2–20 (tail spine); SA swallow whole, spine stuns (save vs. paralyzation or be stunned for 2–8 rounds); SD camouflage in darkness; SZ G (35' wingspan); ML 13; INT non (0); AL N; XP 6,000; MM/117 (fish).



Cornwall's statistics and equipment are listed in the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar on pages 28–29.

Act III, Scene ii: Kingdom Under the Waves

Read the following when the PCs first see the underwater castle:

The massive castle stands out among the dark seas. Light from the top illuminates seaweed-covered coral and marble walls. You see a hole where a roof should be, and large windows peer out in all directions. A coral garden surrounds the castle. A 40'-high oyster shell is imbedded on its tips, serving as an ersatz gate.

Regan is inside her castle (area E). Her actions depend on how much warning she receives. If the PCs kill Cornwall and waste no time, Regan might be surprised in her study (area E6). If the PCs spend more than an hour with Cornwall and the mantas, she spots them out the windows. If she sees the PCs coming, she casts a spherical *lightning bolt* (20' radius, like a *fireball*) when they close. If the PCs let Cornwall escape and then attack him outside the castle, Regan assists by attacking or unleashing her sea lions (from area C).

Read or paraphrase the following when Regan first appears:

A storm giantess strides through the oyster-shell gate in a stunning green dress. Through the water, she says, "My friends, why must you abuse my steward so? He mistakenly deemed you invaders, not allies. I welcome you to my realm, as we are united in purpose, if not yet in bond. I would help you in your foray to my sister's castle to release my dear father. 'Tis true, I led him to my darkling sister's clutches, and I weep for my folly. Pray, assist me." She steels herself, and looks at you with hope in her eyes.

Regan is lying about her father's whereabouts, hoping that the PCs are turned away. If Cornwall warns Regan, she can use her *mirror of transport* to escape with Cornwall to Goneril's cloud island. However, she prefers to use her natural guile to catch the PCs off guard. Regan walks out to greet the PCs, using her *pluiter of glibness* and *friends* spell to raise her Charisma to 22 and casting *emotion control* and *charm person* spells as they become necessary. If Clotpoll is present, he sees through Regan's treachery; he suggests the PCs not heed such a "raven-tongued viper." Regan continues if the PCs need goading:

"Please, be not belligerent. My father's Fool is correct in that I sided with my sister, but I could not know her true ambition. I hoped for accord with my dear sister Cordelia, but Goneril stands 'twixt myself and justice. Will you not help me restore the rightful throne? Please, come where 'tis dry, and we shall talk upon these matters."

Regan strokes the PCs' dignity, fairness, duty to the king, bond with Cordelia, fear of Goneril, lust for treasure, or any other tack to get them to drop their guard. If there, Clotpoll stands opposed: "You'll have me whipped for speaking true, but only with those arms that the tigress leaves you."

If the PCs enter, Regan attacks, perhaps with the sea lions and a refreshed Cornwall. She uses *cloak of fear* and *hold person* before high-damage spells. If she cannot lure them inside, she stalls until Cornwall can bring the lions to attack. If he is absent, Regan attacks alone with a *lightning bolt* in the water, then tries to escape.

Using the *mirror* in area E12, Regan can transport herself to the cloud island; she can also use her *rod of passage* to reach the island if the *mirror* is not convenient. If she wants to cover her escape, she stalls by unleashing Curan and her barbazus minions. (See area E10.) If Regan escapes, both Clotpoll and Kent (who is imprisoned at area B) can surmise that she's gone to the cloud island. Kent may be straightforward about this, but Clotpoll is coy, saying: "When Regan and her double are one, she is gone; if you wish to pass, you must embrace the glass. The portal is there, though I know not where."

Sea Kingdom Encounters

A. Coral Beds. This coral expanse is hard and stable. A man-sized creature walking on the coral without illumination has a 25% chance per round of stepping into a 5–20' hole.

B. Stockade. These 30'-tall coral and marble stocks have pincerlike wrist and ankle clasps. Imprisoned here is Lear's trusted vassal, Kent. Kent is stoic in captivity:

In gigantic stocks, a giant in torn robes struggles in his bonds as he glares at you. "Well, have you come to free or slay Kent? If you are hands of the robbers, I'll so carbonado your shanks!"

If PCs free the giant, he fights with them. However, Kent's primary concern is finding Cordelia. Although noble, Kent never misses a chance to vent a flurry of insults against Regan and Goneril, believing them "lily-livered, glass-gazing, finical rogues."

For Kent's statistics, refer to the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar.

C. Lion Kennel. Regan's four sea lions are chained to a post imbedded in the coral. Each steel chain allows a 50-foot rein from the 6'-tall post, which can be pulled out by a PC or NPC with Strength 20 or better. The post can be used as a leash rod for all four lions. Holding the rod does not stop the lions from biting if the holder is bite-sized. The torn shells of six giant crabs litter the den.

Sea lions (4): AC 5 (head)/3 (body); MV swim 18; HD 6; hp 36 each; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-12; SA mauling (if both claws hit, the victim cannot attack until a successful Open Doors roll is made; bite attacks receive a +4 bonus); SZ L (15' long); ML 12; INT semi (3); AL N; XP 420; MM/310.

D. Crabs. Giant crabs live here in the coral beds, attacking anyone who comes too close. When the crustaceans wander over to the sea lions, they do not come back.

Giant crabs (24): AC 3; MV 9; HD 3; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/2-8; SA -3 to opponents' surprise rolls; SZ L (15' diameter); ML 13; INT non (0); AL N; XP 65; MM/50.

E. Castle Regan. Regan's magnificent, 150'-tall castle is sculpted of blue marble with coral trim. The first floor entrance is preceded by an inverted giant oyster shell (see area E1 below). The lowest level of the castle is flooded. The roof is a permanent *wall of force* illuminated by light from within. The temperature inside the citadel is a constant 65° F.

The interior chambers of the upper levels are protected by multiple *airy water* spells. If the *airy water* spells are dispelled (vs. 16th-level magic), those inside the affected areas drown and succumb to water pressure unless immune to the effects of the depths.

E1. Oyster Shell Archway. Spanning the castle entrance and forming a triangular arch is a 40'-tall giant oyster shell imbedded into the coral. At the back of the oyster shell archway, set into the castle wall, are two stone doors inlaid with coral and multi-colored shells. The 24'-high doors are not locked but require a combined Strength of 75 or a singular Strength of 23 to open.

E2. Main Entrance. Regan typically greets her water-breathing guests here. The ceiling of this grand hall soars 60 feet. The lower half of this chamber is filled with water. The water is held to just below the second-floor balcony. Two coral stairways rise out of the water to meet the balcony 30 feet above.

The entire chamber is illuminated by six *continual light* spells—three cast on the submerged underside of the balcony, and three

cast on the shell-inlaid ceiling. The walls and giant pillars are decorated with coral mosaics depicting undersea creatures and great undersea battles.

E3. Pantry. This unlit, 25'-deep room cannot be reached except via the trapdoor in area E5. The submerged pantry is kept unnaturally cool (35° F) by a human-scale *bastard sword* +3, *frost brand* (+6 vs. fire-users) embedded in the floor under the carcass of a giant crayfish. Removing the sword from the floor requires a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll with a -10% penalty. The room contains the corpses of several dozen sea and land animals.

E4. Balcony. This balcony is furnished with two giant conch shell chairs and a recliner made from an overturned giant turtle shell.

Near the recliner, a silver tray (worth 300 gp) sports fish and vegetables, a pair of 2'-long silver tridents (worth 150 gp each) used as cocktail forks, and a 3'-tall glass of sea troll milk. The walls are adorned with two tapestries depicting seascapes (worth 650 gp each).

E5. Kitchen. Jutting from the south wall is a 13'-tall countertop covered with knives, cups, juicers, fish, blood, sponges, vegetables, and a 5'-long ivory box with sixty 4'-long pieces of silverware (worth 150 gp each). Among crystal and porcelain cups and glasses are four 5'-tall silver chalices (worth 500 gp each).

A 6'-tall *decanter of endless water* stands amid several large casks along the east wall. Resting in the northeast corner are a 20'-long mancatcher and a 15'-wide butterfly net used to snag food from the pantry (area E3). Set into the floor in the northwest corner is a 15'-square, oak trapdoor that requires a successful Open Doors roll to lift; PCs who open the trapdoor see iron rungs at 4' intervals forming a ladder to area E3.

E6. Study. This room is lit by five *continual light* spells. A pair of 25'-tall bookcases stand against the west wall, while another bookcase dominates the eastern wall. The books that line the shelves are made of steel, shell, cloth, wood, and seaweed. Each book is engraved or painted with blood or octopus ink. Regan's writing equipment is stored in a 10'-tall oak and coral desk pressed against the north wall. The books are written in triton, merman, locathah, sahuagin, and storm giant tongues and describe undersea life. There are no magical tomes stored here.

The northeast corner of the ceiling works as a *phase door* spell and allows Regan to enter area E13 three times, after which the spell must be recast.

E7. Corridor. The walls of this 40'-wide hall are adorned with four tapestries depicting

various undersea strongholds: a coral citadel inhabited by locathah, a spiral tower held by sahuagin, a city of glass spires occupied by aquatic elves, and a merman fortress inside a gigantic conch shell. Each tapestry depicts a real place and is worth 1,000 gp intact.

Also adorning the walls are two shields made from turtle shells, each crossed with a pair of coral tridents (worth 350 gp). These items are purely ornamental and cannot be used effectively in combat.

E8. Guest Chamber. This room, reserved for air-breathing giants, is lit by four *continual light* spells cast on the ceiling.

Against the south wall, near the door leading out to the balcony, stands a 24'-tall ivory and bone wardrobe and a 23'-tall silvered-glass mirror in a coral frame (worth 2,500 gp intact).

A waterbed shaped like a giant starfish rests in the middle of the floor. A 10'-tall, empty iron chest abuts the north wall.

E9. Guest Chamber. This chamber is reserved for water-breathing guests. The southeast 20' × 20' section of the floor can be lowered into area E2 by a winch and pulley system that requires a singular Strength of 22 or a combined Strength of 60 to operate. Chains run from the drop-floor to the ceiling and down to the iron winch in the southwestern corner; if the clasp on the winch is released, the section of floor splashes into area E2 below so that water breathers can be lifted expeditiously into the room.

Occupying the middle of the room is a 12'-diameter, hemispherical "water bubble" held in place by 16th-level magic. In the middle of this water-filled hemisphere rests a 10'-diameter oyster shell bed filled with plush cushions sewn with white pearls. There are 52 pearls total, each worth 100 gp.

E10. Cornwall's Treasury. Lying in the middle of the room are four unusual items: a young dragon turtle's shell, a galleon's bowsprit, a stuffed kingfisher with ruby eyes (worth 1,000 gp apiece), and an 8'-diameter glass bowl filled with brightly colored jellyfish.

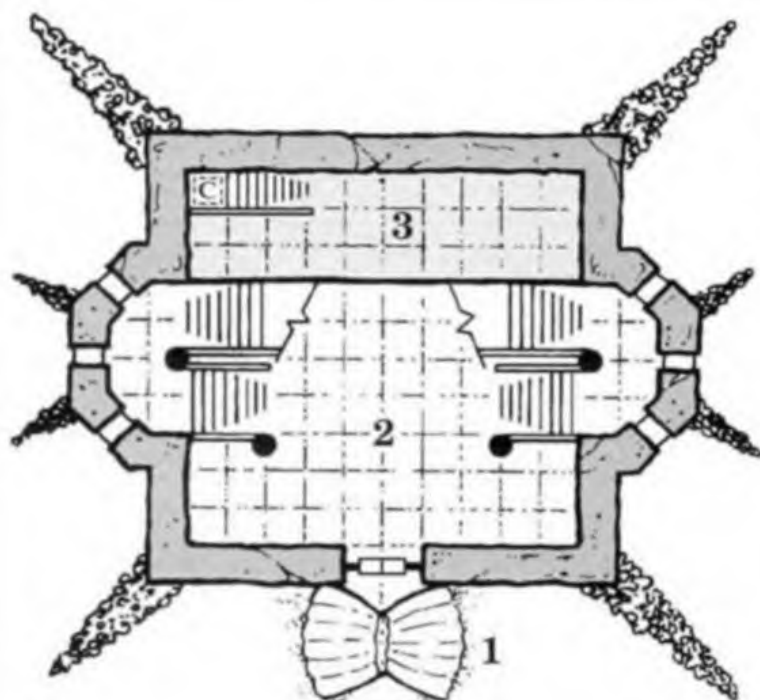
Against the west wall rests a 6'-tall amber chest (value 500 gp) holding seashells, a 3'-tall rusted iron chest containing 600 gp and nine coral figurines (carved to resemble aquatic elves and worth 50 gp each), and a 20'-long, silver-tipped spear (value 100 gp).

The giant bowl of jellyfish serves as the ersatz home of Curan, an erinyes bound to service through Regan's *iron flask*. Regan uses Curan to hold off the PCs if she needs to cover an escape.

When first encountered, Curan appears as a lithe aquatic elf:

Regan's Castle

One square = 20 feet



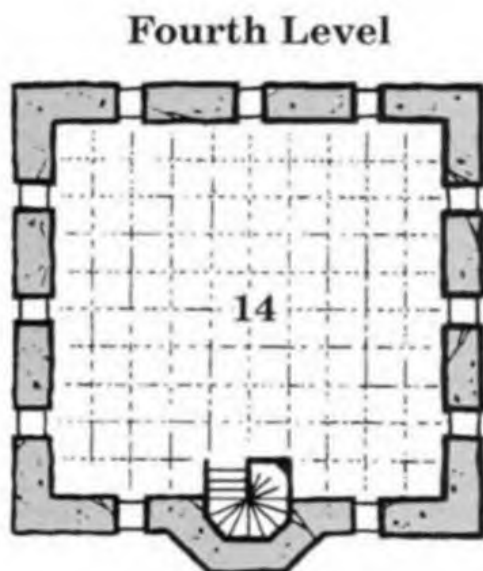
First Level



Third Level



Second Level



Fourth Level

The water inside the giant bowl roils, affording a somewhat distorted glimpse of a blue-skinned elf with small shells tied to her kelp-green hair. Previously hidden behind the jellyfish, she swims to the top of the bowl and rises up from the water, shaking jellyfish from her hair. She shivers, waves to you, and says, "Fare thee well. Seek you the foul mistress of this castle?"

Curan claims to be an aquatic elf who was captured by Cornwall while scouting the nearby coral beds for pretty shells. Curan spins whatever lies she needs to lure the PCs into an easily assailable place where she can spring her trap. When the PCs are vulnerable and off-guard, she covertly *gates* in four barbazu to attack. She drops her *polymorph* effect to *charm* a male PC and uses *fear* and her *rope of entanglement* to delay other PCs. If she successfully *charms* a male PC (who saves at half his level, rounded down), Curan orders him into her arms. Unless stopped, she *plane shifts* back to the Nine Hells, her PC captive dying quickly. The barbazu attack until slain, *gating* in more barbazu should the opportunity arise.

Curan *teleports* away from combat, trusting her resistance to magic and weapons to save her. If she believes the PCs have been dealt with, she *teleports* to Regan. The erinyes serves Regan but most of all wants to destroy Regan's *iron flask*, for she would then be free.

Curan (erinyes): AC 2; MV 12, fly 21 (C); HD 6+6; hp 41; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA *cause fear* (save vs. rods or flee for 1-6 rounds), *charm person* (victims make saving throws at half their levels), *gate* 1-4 barbazu (50% chance of success); SD suffers half damage from gas and cold, immune to fire and poison, +1 or better (non-iron) weapons needed to hit, telepathy; MR 30%; SZ M (6' tall); ML 12; INT high (14); AL LE; XP 7,000; PLANESCAPE MCA1/22 (baatezu); *rope of entanglement*, *dagger of venom* (Type D; 1-2 minutes onset; Dmg 30/2-12).

Spell-like abilities (usable one at a time, once/round, at will): *advanced illusion*, *animate dead*, *detect invisibility*, *infravision*, *invisibility*, *know alignment* (always active), *locate object*, *produce flame*, *polymorph self*, *suggestion*, *teleport without error*.

In her natural form, Curan is a long-legged vamp in a diaphanous wrap. She has black hair with flame-red highlights and ears that are slightly pointed.

Barbazu (4+): AC 3; MV 15; HD 6+6; hp 38 each; THAC0 13; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-8 or by weapon type; SA berserk rage (doubles number of attacks per round; +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls; +3 penalty to AC), *cause disease*; *gate* 1-6 barbazu (35% chance of success); SD suffers half damage from gas and cold, immune to fire and poison, +1 or better

(non-iron) weapons to hit, telepathy; MR 30%; SZ M (6' tall); ML 12; INT low (6); AL LE; XP 6,000; PLANESCAPE MCA1/20 (baatezu); glaive (Dmg 2d6; each wound inflicts an additional 2 points of damage per round until the wound is bound).

Spell-like abilities (usable one at a time, once/round, at will): *advanced illusion*, *affect normal fires*, *animate dead*, *charm person*, *command*, *fear* (touch), *infravision*, *know alignment* (always active), *produce flame*, *suggestion*, *teleport without error*.

E11. Cornwall's Bedchamber. This room is bedecked in bright banners and lit by four *continual light* spells cast on the ceiling.

Cornwall's waterbed is fashioned from the glistening hide of a green manta covered with a heavy bedspread of shells and gold (worth 500 gp). On the north wall, two 40'-long pikes cross a tapestry depicting a war between frost and fire giants. A 10'-tall oak chest contains outfits of many colors. A green stuffed coat rests on a coat rack near the door to area E10. An 8'-tall mirror is pegged to the right of the balcony door, and a 10'-tall night table beneath it sports a coral comb and a knife.

E12. Regan's Boudoir. Six *continual light* spells reflect off the 30'-tall red bead curtains that hide the door on the north wall and the mirror on the east wall. The floor and ceiling are decorated with subdued burgundy tapestries. Occupying the room are four giant chairs of orange sea cucumber hide, a 2'-tall stone footstool, and a 15'-tall clothes rack. The door to area E13 is not locked.

The 24'-tall *mirror of transport* affixed to the east wall is set in platinum trim. The mirror cannot be removed from the wall or its frame without shattering it. The mirror was once linked to both Goneril's cloud castle and Lear's mountaintop castle; however, the receiving mirror in Lear's castle was shattered, severing that conduit.

Any PC who looks into Regan's mirror and speaks the words "Goneril," "sister," or "cloud island" conjures forth an image of billowy white clouds, at which point any number of creatures can walk through the mirror and be instantly *teleported* to area A12 of Goneril's cloud castle. Speaking the words "Lear," "father," or "mountain castle" conjures forth total blackness; any PC stepping through the dark mirror is slashed for 3-12 points of damage and hurled back into the chamber, going nowhere. The mirror remains active for 1 full round, after which it ceases to operate for 1 turn.

E13. Regan's Chamber. This room is lit by four *continual light* spells cast on the ceiling. The western half features a platinum-inlaid ivory bed frame (worth 4,500 gp) with a white

whalehide sleeping bag. The southeast corner is taken up by a 25'-tall ebony wardrobe filled with rich, colorful garments. A 5'-deep secret compartment in the bottom of the wardrobe hides Regan's treasures: a steel chest containing 1,000 pp and a crystal box with 20 pieces of giant jewelry (worth 500 gp each). Against the north wall near the balcony door rests a 12'-tall coral nightstand covered with a deep blue tablecloth. Atop the nightstand rests a pearl-inlaid coral hairbrush (worth 425 gp), a 2'-tall glass, and a 3'-tall stone carving that tells the story of a triton kingdom that rose to the surface and was lost.

Regan can use the northeast section of the floor as a *phase door* spell to area E6. After three uses, the spell must be recast.

E14. Observation Chamber. A permanent *wall of force* spans the open roof and is treated as 16th-level magic for purposes of dispelling. Should the *wall of force* collapse, the sudden increase in water pressure forces PCs in this room (or the air-filled level below) to make Constitution checks each round to remain conscious. (Storm giants are immune to water pressure, as are PCs with *pearls of the sirines* or similar magic.)

The transparent roof allows PCs to view the ocean safely, as sharks, octopi, and giant sea turtles are attracted by the dozen *continual light* spells herein. Against the brilliant algae on the walls are moist, giant sponge chairs and 6'-tall shell tables. Four 4'-wide cauldrons each contain six misty puffers—blowfish that surface every few seconds and expel puffs of sweet gas. This makes the room smell like a garden and provides a comforting background noise for relaxation.

Act IV, Scene i: Kingdom on the Winds

PCs can reach Goneril's cloud island using the *mirror of transport* in Regan's castle or by their own devices. The cloud island floats among countless other storm clouds and is unusual only because it does not move with the wind. PCs trying to spot the cloud island from the surface have a cumulative 5% chance of success per hour; *find the path* and similar spells might help. PCs who have Clotpoll as their guide have no trouble locating the cloud island. However, getting to the island from below might prove troublesome in the storm. Under the island, the driving rain and slashing winds cause 1d6 points of damage per round. There is also a 10% chance per round that one randomly chosen PC is struck by a lightning bolt for 8d6 points of damage.

Goneril's cloud island is 10 miles across and features a small lake, waterfall, forest, and castle of cloudstuff. Forty-degree mists cover the top of the cloud island, limiting vision.

Cloud Islands

Cloud islands can be geosynchronous, or they can float on the winds (or against them) at a movement rate of 6. They hover at altitudes between 2,000 feet and 20,000 feet but can be raised or lowered. Their 14-day weather cycles collect precipitation without taxing the cloudstuff unless overloaded by magic.

Most cloud islands are oval or circular in shape and up to 10 miles across. They are ice hard and typically white, although the color changes to purple or black if storms prevail. The roughness of the cloud island's surface ensures solid footing even when wet. Broken pieces of cloudstuff dissipate into vapor and repair damage to the cloud by filling in holes.

The mists that rise 3 feet above the cloud island's surface can be shaped into columns 10-100 feet high. In the mists, visibility is reduced as per the *obscurement* spell. Normal vision ranges apply 20 feet above the cloud island, at which point the mist begins to dissipate naturally. Those in the mists suffer a -1 attack penalty with missiles, receive a +1 bonus to saving throws where visibility matters, and receive a +5% bonus to Hide in Shadows checks.

(Treat as an *obscurement* spell with a height of 20 feet.) The top of the island is also covered with 100 square miles of 60'-deep soil. The grass-covered soil is piled into 120'-tall hills west and north of the castle.

The cloud island floats at an altitude of 16,000 feet. The air is thin, so surface dwellers must limit their stays; each hour, PCs must make a successful Constitution check or fall unconscious. Unconscious PCs who are splashed with water or shaken vigorously awaken and are entitled to another Constitution check to remain awake for 1 hour; however, PCs aroused in this fashion suffer -4 penalties to their attack rolls, ability checks, and proficiency checks. An unconscious PC left undisturbed can make a Constitution check at the end of 1 hour to regain consciousness, suffering no penalties to attack rolls, ability checks, and proficiency checks upon waking.

If Regan gets here first, she warns her sister of the PCs' imminent arrival. Goneril assigns the beleaguered Albany to defend the *mirror of transport* (in area A12)—a gamble with his loyalty. When Goneril and Regan finally confront the PCs, Goneril commands her four pet rocs (see area D below) to attack the PCs while using her *horn of blasting* and most damaging spells from a safe distance.

Because the cloud island's surface is already enveloped in mist, *obscurement* spells have little added effect on the cloud island's surface. *Solid fog*, *fog cloud*, *pyrotechnics*, *wall of fog*, *stinking cloud*, *cloudkill*, *cloud of purification*, *death fog*, *mind fog*, and *horns of fog* allow manipulation of cloudstuff. *Water walk*, *part water*, *airy water*, *raise water*, *lower water*, *watery double*, and *metamorphose liquids* do not affect cloudstuff vapors. *Detect magic* reveals a general effect on the isle. Each casting of *destroy water* and *transmute water to dust* clears a 10' x 10' x 10' section of cloudstuff. *Earthquake*, *sink*, and *airboat* spells do not affect cloudstuff. *Call lightning* allows control of lightning even atop the island. *Weather summoning*, *control weather*, *weather stasis*, and *uncontrolled weather* subject the island to new conditions. Casting *wind wall* atop the island has the added effect of creating a *wall of fog*. The island saves against *disintegrate* attacks as hard stone and fully reconstructs itself after 1 turn. *Color sprays*, *hypnotic patterns*, and *rainbow patterns* seen through cloudstuff allow saving throws at a +1 bonus.

These rules update the rules found in Jeff Martin's "Adventure Among the Clouds" article from *Polyhedron* Newszine #28 and TSR's module UK7: *Dark Clouds Gather*.

Regan stands invisibly by her sister's side, ready to strike the first PC who closes into melee combat. Both giantesses use protective spells like *prayer* and *protection from fire*. If forced into melee combat, Goneril attacks with her *sword* or France's *maul of the titans*, using her knowledge of the isle to best tactical advantage. Regan withdraws from melee once the rocs attack and keeps her potion of *storm giant control* handy, just in case she needs it to dominate Cordelia, Kent, Albany, or her sister Goneril.

If Cordelia and France were captured in Act I, they are prisoners on the island. Currently, she does not know what to do with them. Goneril doubts her steward, Albany, so she keeps him busy with menial tasks such as tending the garden and guarding the *mirror of transport*. Assuming she was captured, Cordelia is locked in the basement of Goneril's castle (area A22). France is trapped in the roc aviary (area D). To free Lear from his nightmares and madness, the PCs must free Cordelia and escort her safely to her father. Only her voice can restore her father to health. (See Act V for details.)

If the PCs rescued Kent (see Act III), he willingly accompanies them to the cloud island. Kent defers to the PCs so long as his best interests are served. His first loyalty is to

the king, and he'll do whatever is necessary to restore Lear's sanity.

Lear is cataleptic, and the storms wrought by his subconscious have taxed the black cloud beyond its capacity to produce rain. After days of steady rain, the island has begun to contract, resulting in cloudquakes every 4 hours. If the PCs have not restored Lear's wits by the fifth day of the adventure, the cloud island is torn apart by the storm. Everyone trapped on the cloud island falls 3 miles and suffers 20d6 points of damage. (If Goneril and Regan are still on the island, they either flee to Regan's castle or command the rocs to carry them safely to the earth below.)

When the PCs are afforded their first view of the outside of the island, read this:

The great black cloud rumbles and churns. Swirling gray mist obscures vision, but you can discern forests rising from the ground soil that extends across the isle. A river meanders between the hills, and you hear the soft tumult of a waterfall. Toward the middle of the island, a magnificent castle rises high above the storm-clad soil.

Cloud Island Encounters

A. Castle Goneril. Goneril's castle is a 200'-tall cloudstuff sculpture with the consistency of porous stone. The walls, although solid, still retain their puffy, cloudlike appearance, and they feel moist to the touch. PCs can scale the walls with the usual chances of success.

The cloudstuff penetrates the soil, creating a 50'-deep basement. The cloudstuff walls, floors, and doors of the castle are pitch black; natural light is nonexistent in interior rooms and corridors, which are illuminated by 10'-tall torches placed in sconces.

A1. Roof. The roof's battlements hide huge, swivel-mounted ballistae on each tower. The ballistae have ranges of 200/500/1000 yards, inflict 4d10 points of damage, and can be wielded only by giants. The roof overlooks the entire island, although mist reduces vision (as per Table 62: Visibility Ranges in the PH).

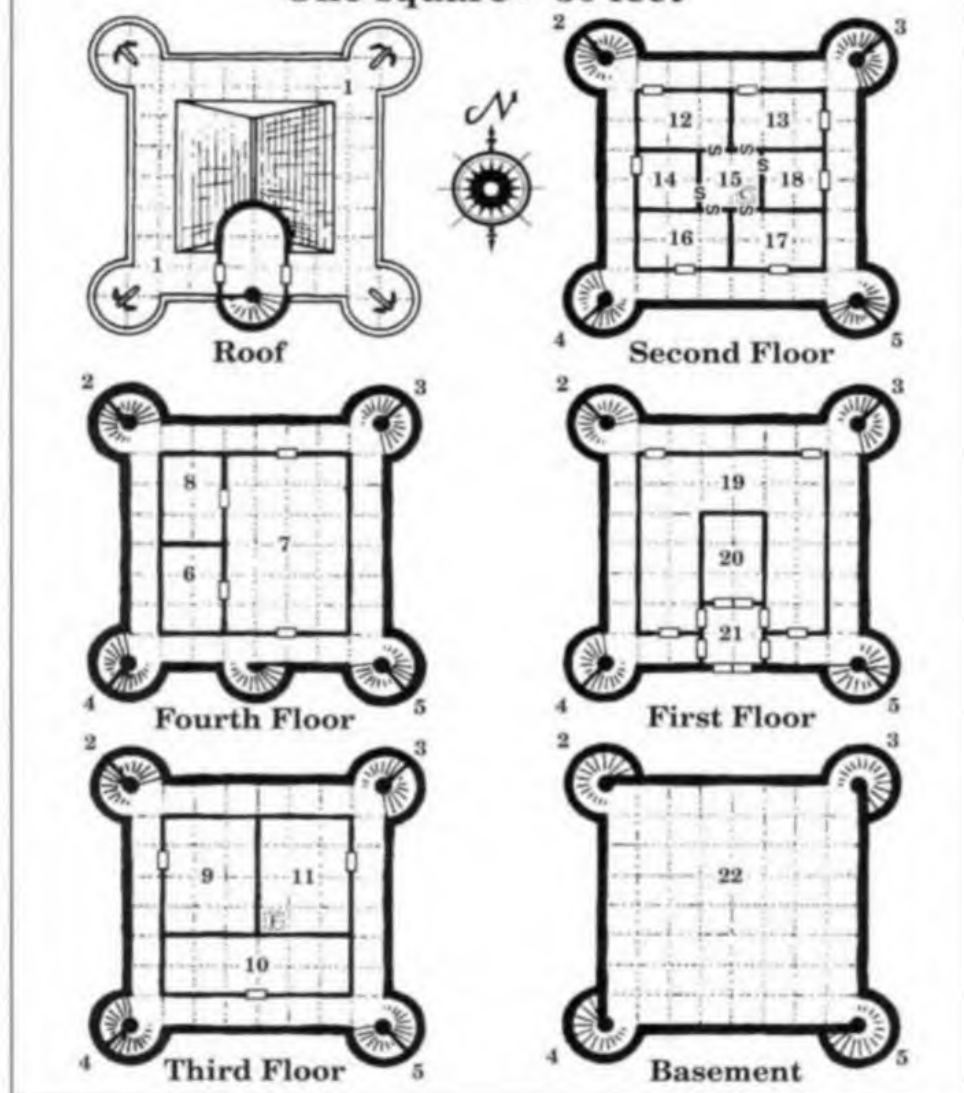
The southern guard tower is empty save for a 30'-wide spiral staircase that descends to the fourth floor.

A2-A5. Towers. Each tower contains a 30'-wide spiral staircase illuminated by torches placed in sconces. Each step is 3 feet high.

A6. Vestibule. This chamber has a pair of 13'-high benches placed against the north and west walls. A 27'-tall wooden coat rack stands in the southeast corner next to a 25' x 20' x 5' cloudstuff wardrobe against the south wall. The wardrobe contains eight fine robes, four handsome tunics, two regal cloaks, six leather

Goneril's Castle

One square = 30 feet



however, the receiving *mirror* in Lear's castle was shattered, severing that conduit.

Any PC who looks into the *mirror* and speaks the words "Regan," "sister," or "undersea" conjures forth an image of water cascading down the inside surface of the *mirror*, at which point any number of creatures can walk through the *mirror* and be instantly *teleported* to area E12 of Regan's undersea castle. Speaking the words "Lear," "father," or "mountain castle" conjures forth total blackness; any PC stepping through the dark *mirror* is slashed for 3-12 points of damage and hurled back into the chamber, going nowhere. The *mirror* remains active for 1 full round, after which it ceases to operate for 1 turn.

If Regan warned Goneril of the PCs' immi-

nent arrival, Goneril sends Albany to guard the *mirror*. If Regan precedes the PCs by more than 20 minutes, Albany is asleep:

Stepping through the *mirror*, you appear in a torchlit room whose tapestried walls are seemingly formed from dark clouds. Sleeping on a red carpet before a massive, ivory throne is a giant dressed in blue.

Albany sleeps soundly; a loud noise or attack is needed to wake him. PCs who wake Albany must convince him that they are trustworthy; they can do so by telling of Goneril's wooing of Edmund or their efforts to rescue Cordelia. This should involve a Charisma check if the PCs are alone; if present, Kent or

Clotpoll can help sway Albany toward a positive opinion of the PCs.

Albany's statistics are presented in the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar.

A13. Trophy Room. This chamber contains mementos of Lear's youth. On the west wall hangs an unbroken black dragon hide. Black pillars support a giant spirit naga's golden mask (worth 2,000 gp), a pit fiend's iron talisman, a giant skull choker of a priest of Kanchelsis, and a stone taken from an ancient giant city. The full plate armor worn by an evil titan stands intact, save for the sword split in the helm. On the walls are mounted the stuffed heads of a dragon turtle, mastodon, brachiosaur, and gorgimera, whose lion maw leads to a 2'-square secret door into area A15.

A14. Kent's Chamber. The sparsely furnished room has a 25' x 10' wooden bed, table, coat rack, and clothes chest containing ten outfits. A brown winter coat and a frilled white jacket hang on the rack above two pairs of boots. A painting of Lear and his wife on the east wall conceals a 2'-square secret door to area A15.

A15. The Fool's Secret Chamber. Exits from this room lead to areas A11-14 and A16-18. Everything here is a conundrum. An 8'-tall rainbow leads to a pot of gold, both insubstantial. Clotpoll's silk cocoon bed can be peeled to expose walls painted like a butterfly. Among other items, a 1'-square music box plays a colorful ditty when its handle is turned clockwise but is opened by forcing the handle backward, reversing the notes of the song. Inside the music box are a *folding boat* (currently folded), an *elixir of health*, and a *wand of magic detection* (40 charges).

If Clotpoll is with the PCs, he does not permit them to vandalize or plunder his belongings, using a *limited wish* (if necessary) to *teleport* the PCs to the waterfall (area J).

A16. Guest Chamber. This guestroom is reserved for visiting royalty. The 30' x 20' bed is canopied in gold and yellow silks. Next to the bed is a 10'-tall nightstand bearing a 4'-tall jade vase (value 250 gp). An empty wardrobe stands against the western wall, while two mahogany chairs, a 30'-tall mirror, a dresser, a coat rack, and a 14'-tall candlestand complete the ensemble. Above the dresser hangs a 5'-tall bronze mask depicting a storm giant visage with hollow eyes, nostrils, and mouth. Behind the mask is a secret door leading to area A15.

A17. Guest Chamber. This room houses lesser nobles. A green featherbed with yellow linen, two oak chairs, a mirror, and a dresser are here. A compartment in the bed's headboard serves as a 2'-wide secret door to area A15.

A18. Albany's Chamber. The steward's room is spotless, with each item placed just so. His 25' x 10' bed is neatly made, and his clothes are folded in a wardrobe. Books are stacked next to a stand against the north wall. On a north-east easel, an incomplete canvas depicts a snowy scene with intricacies that would challenge a human artist. Landscapes by Albany adorn the walls; one of a listing galleon hides a 2'-square secret door leading to the Fool's chamber (area A15).

A19. Dining Hall. The east wing of this U-shaped chamber contains a 70' long table surrounded by a dozen giant oak chairs. The west wing is currently bare. Until recently, the hall housed one hundred hill giants. Missing tables and cressets make the room look lopsided and barren. Albany, no fan of Lear's boorish escorts, has cleaned the room so that it is less obvious that a platoon stayed here.

A20. Audience Chamber. Three 4'-high cloud steps rise to a 35'-tall steel and gold throne weighing nine tons and worth 50,000 gp. The floor is carpeted and tapestried in orange with bannered trumpets, 20'-tall candlestands, and silver cressets (worth 500 gp apiece).

Seats for giants line the walls, and black cloudstuff pillars shaped like dragons support the ceiling.

A21. Entrance Foyer. The 40'-tall outer doors are made of oak-covered cloudstuff held shut by two 14'-long, 2'-thick oak bars. The doors are impervious to *knock* spells and can be opened only by giants or giant-sized PCs with a combined Strength of 45.

The foyer is decorated in royal blue and green, with a 20'-wide cloudstuff chandelier and an unadorned wooden coatrack. Huge paintings of Lear, his late wife, and daughters adorn the walls.

A22. Basement. This room's cloudstuff walls are dug into the surrounding soil. Among hundreds of items in the dark cellar are 70'-long tables, ballast and garden supplies, a 50'-long metal funnel, old clothes, 500' lengths of foot-thick rope, and chests holding 5,000 gp, 10,000 sp, 6,000 cp, 2,000 pp, and 100 gems worth a total of 15,000 gp. Only Albany and Kent can find things here; PCs must spend a minimum of 6 hours searching the room to find anything of use or value.

Cordelia is shackled near the middle of the basement. If PCs identify themselves, they hear a soft clanging. The clanging is hard to locate, as the boxes and implements make the cellar a maze. Albany can lead the PCs to Cordelia without difficulty.

When the PCs reach Cordelia, read or paraphrase the following:

The clanging leads to the wounded form of Cordelia in captivity. She is blindfolded, bound, gagged, chained, and surrounded by crates reaching to the ceiling. The chains are bolted to the cloudstuff floor and appear so tight and numerous that she cannot thrash free. She is manipulating one chain so that it taps another. You are not sure if she can hear you.

Strength cannot free Cordelia, but three successful Open Locks rolls or a *knock* spell will work. If present, Clotpoll changes her chains to roses. Cordelia has 40 hit points remaining and is in constant pain due to Lear's curse. If Lear is dead, Cordelia tries to kill Regan and Goneril, then banishes herself from the kingdom. If Lear lives, she joins the PCs to foil her sisters' plans and restore Lear to the throne.

For Cordelia's complete statistics, refer to the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar.

B. Garden. This tract houses a most bountiful garden: 2'-long pea pods, 50'-tall sunflowers, watermelons the size of small elephants, and so forth. The garden slopes from south to north. The south side is a 50'-long irrigation ditch, with tributaries crossing the garden to the stream bed. As Lear's tireless storm depletes the moisture in the cloud island, the amount of water in the ditch decreases.

C. Garden Shed. This 100' x 100' shed abuts the garden. It holds posts, planters, implements, bags of moss, and growth elixirs. Albany's 30'-long metal scythe can cut a 50'-long swath in one swing; however, no one smaller than the steward can use it.

D. Roc Aviary. Lear's four hungry rocs roost atop a 300'-wide, 60'-tall rise of cloudstuff featuring perches, troughs filled with bones of huge mammals, and a 25'-diameter pool. The rocs are trained not to leave the cloud island unless so commanded by Lear or one of his daughters. No others may command them.

If he has been captured, France is chained to a perch. Because he is wearing his *ring of invisibility and inaudibility*, his chains appear to float, baffling the rocs. Goneril assumes the rocs have eaten France, and Albany does not know where he is. When found, France has 43 hit points remaining. Still, he is eager to join the PCs and fight.

For France's complete statistics, refer to the "Dramatis Personae" sidebar.

Rocs (4): AC 4; MV 3, fly 30 (E); HD 18; hp 95 each; THAC0 5; #AT 2 or 1, Dmg 3-18/3-18 or 4-24; SA -5 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls when swooping; SZ G (60' wingspan); ML 11; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 10,000; MM/303.

E. Forest. Trees transplanted here include sequoias, pines, palms, and other species that rarely cohabit. Denizens include birds, boars, deer, horses, and cows.

F. Slaughterhouse. The island's livestock are cooked in this 50' x 50' cloudstuff shack, which contains huge knives, axes, and other implements as well as strong seasonings and 15'-tall water casks. Outside, a 20'-diameter coal pit is topped with spit racks and tarps. Under a canopy by the pit rests a 100'-long park table.

G. Lake Platform. This 200'-long marble platform extends out into the lake and serves as a patio. Two pairs of giant-sized (60' long) oak stilts for wading lie on the platform.

H. Small Lake. A *decanter of endless water* embedded deep in the cloud feeds this small lake. However, the amount of water depleted by the storm is more than the *decanter* can create, so the water level of the lake decreases steadily as the storm wears on.

I. Lake. The lake bed is 40' deep on the third day of the adventure and 20' deep on the fourth. In the middle of the lake, a 40'-tall steel funnel plugs a hole in the cloudstuff. If the funnel is removed, the water drains in an hour, leaving only a soil bed.

J. Waterfall. Here the stream falls away into the lake, creating a 50'-high waterfall. Huge boulders shore up the falls on either side. For the first three days of the adventure, the falls are active, but on the fourth they begin to trickle.

Act V, Scene i: Storms of Fire and Water

King Lear has withdrawn to his mountaintop retreat and unleashed his fury in the form of a devastating storm. Enraged by his daughters, Lear has called down the elements upon himself. This makes it possible for the PCs to locate Lear but also draws Goneril's courier, Oswald. If the PCs have freed Cordelia and France from their imprisonment atop the cloud island, they can lead the PCs toward Lear; however, they have few means to bypass the storm safely.

To reach Lear, the PCs must first survive the storm that rages all around him. If the PCs approach the tempest, they first feel rain from miles out. The rain is not torrential until they reach a rise. As they approach the crest, they are attacked by Oswald. Goneril has sent the courier to kill them before they can free the giant-king. As his dogs catch the PCs' scent, Oswald sends a message to Goneril via his *helm of sending*, then looses his eight monstrous hell hounds:



A fearsome foursome: the ill-tempered Oswald and his monstrous hell hounds.

Eight red mastiffs rush you, fire coursing from their maws. On a rise, a black giant with flame-red hair and crimson armor shouts, "A proclaim'd prize!" He cuts a cask from his bandoliers and prepares to throw.

The hounds close in 1 round. Oswald can lob two casks of oil from his bandoliers per round up to 200 yards for 2–12 points of damage. When the dogs close, they breathe on those with the scent of oil. The breath causes 7

points of damage (save for half damage) plus 4–24 points of damage from flaming oil on the first round and 2–12 points on the next round; items must also make a saving throw vs. non-magical fire. If the PCs have treated Clotpoll well and he is present, he uses his *wand of flame extinguishing* to quench PCs engulfed in flames. The rain has little effect on oil fires, but normal fires are doused in 1 round.

Oswald maintains his bombardment until attacked. Once a PC ignites, Oswald hits him or her with more oil. Oswald and his hell

hounds suffer no damage from the flaming oil. If the PCs close for melee combat, the giant dashes his remaining oil in a circle around him and taunts, "The sword is out that must destroy thee," torching the oil with his *flame tongue*. PCs suffer 2–12 points of damage each round they remain in the flaming ring.

Oswald is a disagreeable giant. He is cruel to those of lesser power but a coward facing superior might. If the PCs defeat Oswald, they can search him. Oswald has a 16'-tall suit of platemail, an 8'-long *flame tongue*, giant-sized boots of the north, and a 3'-wide *helm of sending*. Also on the body is a crumpled 4'-tall letter from Goneril to Edmund:

Edmund,
Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. My meddlesome father will soon be a problem no longer. Your wife, so I would say.
Your affectionate servant, Goneril

Once the PCs handle Oswald, they can head over the crest into the storm.

Oswald (fire giant): AC -1; MV 12; HD 15+5; hp 99; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1–8 or by weapon type +11; SA hurl rocks for 2–20 points of damage (200-yard range); SD 50% chance to catch large missiles, immune to normal fire, magical fire inflicts -1 point of damage per die; SZ H (18' tall); ML 16; INT average (10); AL LE; XP 10,000; MM/137; *two-handed sword* +1 *flame tongue* (Dmg 2d10/5d6 base), *boots of the north*, *helm of sending* (as the spell, usable twice/day), two bandoliers of 12 two-gallon oil casks. Oswald wears a crimson suit under his platemail. His skin is dull ebony, and his beard and hair are fiery orange-red.

Hell hounds (8): AC 4; MV 12; HD 7; hp 56 each; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1–10; SA breathe fire up to 10 yards for 7 points of damage (successful saving throw vs. breath weapon reduces damage to 4 points), grabs victim on attack roll of natural 20 (victim suffers automatic bite and fire damage on the following round), -5 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls; SD surprised on 1–2 only, see hidden or invisible creatures 50% of the time, immune to fire; SZ L (8' tall); ML 13; INT low (5); AL LE; XP 2,000; MM/187.

Act V, Scene ii: Lear's Tears

Whether they approach via land or air, the PCs eventually spot the mountain upon which sits King Lear's enormous castle, most of which lies in ruin. Once the mountain and castle are in sight, the PCs are buffeted by ungodly winds and drenched by heavy rain.

If he is still with the PCs, Clotpoll turns *invisible* and drinks his tiny potion of *lightning form*. Traveling at MV 96, the Fool returns to his king's side atop the mountain.

Climbing the mountain requires six successful Climbing checks. The mountainside is slippery, but there are abundant handholds; these modifiers cancel each other out. The DM should refer to Table 66: Climbing Modifiers in the PH for other possible modifiers. A failed Climbing check indicates that the PC has slipped and fallen, suffering 2d6 points of damage; the PC must also make another Climbing check to regain lost ground.

Flying toward the mountain is less time consuming but more dangerous than scaling the mountain, as the PCs risk being struck by a lightning bolt. For each PC who flies to the castle, the DM should roll a d6 five times. Each roll of "1" indicates that the PC has been struck by lightning for 8d6 points of damage; a successful saving throw vs. spell reduces this damage by half. Equipment worn by the PC must also make a successful saving throw vs. electricity or be destroyed.

Once the PCs reach the mountaintop, they see Lear for the first time:

Purple and black clouds roil and churn above the mountaintop, casting bolts of lightning down upon a once-great edifice of stone. Although many of the ancient castle's structures have fallen, a few walls and spires stand in defiance of the storm.

Standing in front of the shattered castle, drenched with rain, is a raging storm giant. His arms raised high, he calls down lightning upon himself. The giant is dressed in torn, regal attire and appears quite mad. Occasionally, a tiny bright figure appears to circle about the howling king, but it is difficult to track.

The giant is oblivious to everything but the storm. He shouts, "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout! You sulphurous and thought-executing fires, vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts, singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!"

Thunder wracks the mountain valley in response. The wind is strong, but you can move against it if you struggle.

Atop the mountain, the 175 mph hurricane inflicts 1–10 points of damage per round. Lear makes the storm deadlier by using *call lightning* and his *staff of thunder and lightning*. His Fool (the "tiny, bright figure" mentioned above) is caught by the wind and uses his *polymorph any object* ability to avoid smashing into things; his *blouse of protection from normal missiles* negates storm damage.

If the PCs catch Lear's attention, they risk serious harm. In his state, Lear assumes all the world works against him. Anyone who tries to touch him or cast spells at him is struck by

a lightning bolt for 15d6 points of damage (save for half damage). The only way for PCs to escape Lear's wrath is to suggest they have seen Cordelia; this causes him to stop stoking the hurricane, at which point he collapses into catatonia. Only Cordelia's voice will wake him. (See Act V, Scene iii below.) Once Lear falls unconscious, the storm intensifies, fueled by Lear's inner turmoil. Only the mountaintop—the eye of the storm—becomes tranquil. At this time, the Fool will be left to deal with the PCs:

As the winds above the mountaintop abate, you see that the storm has all but torn the mountaintop asunder, creating huge piles of jagged stone. From the wreckage comes a tiny plaint. A tiny man in colorful garb sits with head in hand. Under a coxcomb, his face is painted with green and white pancake makeup. The little man stands and shouts, "Nuncle Lear! Nuncle Lear! Tarry, take the Fool with thee!"

Clotpoll uses the latter phrase whether Lear is gone, slain, or just unconscious. The Fool can theorize that the PCs must reunite Cordelia and Lear, but he knows that Lear will have no peace until his evil daughters are dealt with. He manipulates the PCs as needed to save his master. See "Playing the Fool" (page 29) for details.

What If the PCs Haven't Met the Evil Sisters?

If the PCs have not yet encountered Regan and Goneril and managed to thwart their abduction of Cordelia in Act I, the PCs see the two sisters *teleport* atop the mountain and steal Lear away. (This *deus ex machina* should be used only if the PCs don't go forward with the adventure, instead intending to return home.) The two giantesses appear before the PCs. Goneril uses her *horn of blasting* to stun Lear and all in line of sight, while Regan uses her *rod of passage* to transport all three giants to the clouds. (If Lear is successfully abducted, he is taken to Goneril's cloud island and chained to the waterfall in area J.)

The Fool knows Regan could travel to either the sky castle or the sea castle. He settles on the sea because Regan owns the *rod of passage*, so she would choose its destination. Furthermore, Regan dislikes Goneril and would want her father interred in her own domain; Regan imprisoned Kent at her castle, so it has proven itself as a jail; the PCs can more easily reach the sea castle, which cannot move and has a mirror passage to the cloud island. Although the Fool's decision is completely wrong, the DM should let the PCs choose their own path and make their own decisions. Clotpoll uses this logic:

"Shall we choose sky or sea? A pointed puzzle needs a pointed answer. Mine Nuncle had daughters three, one bright as the fields, two dark as deepest ocean or stormy sky. Though the dark daughters are as one in patricide, still they do spit and spat. Mine Nuncle rests in but one of two castles, and the one will be chosen by she who spans sky and sea with a thought. This is not the boldest, nor the coldest, nor the oldest. As she in the middle chooses the course, she would choose her hovel 'neath the waves. And hovel it is, though well appointed, for the character of the occupants and not the walls makes it so. But you doubt, so I'll sound you out: Which is easier reached by thee, sky or sea?"

The PCs can answer as they wish. A clever answer such as, "Neither, for when I jump to the sky I come to ground, and when I swim in the sea, also must I come to ground," is countered by Clotpoll with, "Yes, indeed; thou wouldst make a good Fool."

If the PCs believe they can reach the sky more easily than the seabed, he notes that the sky castle can move and cannot be seen from below: "The castle of cloud you find with a clear sky and a clear mind, but if either is gray, you search all the day." If the PCs convince him it would be better to reach the sky castle, he agrees to go there first. If there is excessive debate, he demands, "We haw like donkeys all the day. To which castle shall we away?" The PCs had better come up with an answer, or Clotpoll grows angry. For more details, see "Playing the Fool" on page 29.

Act V, Scene iii: Every Inch a King

To complete the adventure, the PCs must reunite Lear and Cordelia. If Cordelia is dead, Lear dies of heartbreak.

If Lear hears Cordelia (or even an *audible glamor* of her voice), he wakes but assumes that he has joined her in the afterworld. If present, Cordelia tries to disabuse him of this misconception. She breaks down when she proves unable to return Lear to sanity. He speaks softly:

"Pray, do not mock me. I am a very foolish, fond old man, and to deal plainly, I fear I am not in my perfect mind."

The PCs must shock the mad Lear back to the reality that both he and Cordelia are alive and safe. The bodies of his evil daughters might be one method of restoring his sanity; another might be using his own *staff of thunder and lightning* to quell the storms or using his *helm of judgment* to remove Cordelia's curse. A

restoration or heal spell brings Lear around, but none of the giants can cast such a spell. (Any of these solutions might be confounded if Regan uses her potion of storm giant control to drive Lear mad again; his saving throw suffers a -4 penalty.) If the PCs succeed, Lear begs Cordelia's forgiveness, removing her curse with these words:

"Pray you now, forget and forgive. My realm shall not be torn asunder again, this I swear. There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a giant."

If restored as king of his realm, Lear banishes Regan and Goneril (assuming they are alive), reinstates Cordelia and Kent, and commends Albany and France. This is the best possible ending, but the PCs must work hard to make it come about.

If the PCs restore Lear, he assures them that they are welcome as heroes in any of his kingdoms as long as he lives. Few greater gifts can he offer, although if the PCs demand a monetary reward, Lear obliges. (There are many "trinkets" in the sea castle and cloud castle that the storm giant is willing to part with, at the DM's discretion.) If he hears of Gloucester's plight, Lear gives the PCs a ring of regeneration to restore the giant's sight. Once all is concluded, Kent transports the PCs back to their own domain using the *rod of passage* recovered from Regan.

In a fully successful ending, the PCs receive XPs for Goneril, Regan, and Lear, plus any giant they actually confronted; if they saved Gloucester, they receive his XP value as well. Regan and Goneril's items belong to Lear, so the PCs cannot keep any of these without incurring the king's wrath. Items belonging to Edmund, Oswald, or Cornwall can be taken by PCs, however.

Once the PCs restore Lear, the storms subside, ending the threat posed to the PCs' lands. If the PCs fail to restore Lear, the weather will be dire indeed, spelling certain destruction for their respective kingdoms. Ω



Dramatis Personae

King Lear's court is listed here. Lear rules giantkind, but he never imposes his will on non-giants. The royal house's control is mostly formal, as the actions of most giants escape Lear's notice. Most lesser giants are unaware that they have a king, but cloud and storm giants (with few exceptions) respect the ruling house.

The base statistics for the giants are presented below. Unless indicated, all possessions are giant-sized. These giants speak Common and their own tongues.

Storm giant: AC 0; MV 15; swim 15; HD 19+7; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +12 (Strength bonus) or 1-10; SD *water breathing*, immune to electricity; SZ G (26' tall); ML 18; INT exceptional (16); XP 15,000; MM/146.

Spell-like abilities (cast as W15/P15): *call lightning* (three bolts for 15d8 points of damage each), *control winds*, *control weather* (x2), *levitate* (x2), *lightning bolt* (15d6 points of damage), *predict weather*, *weather summoning*. Lear and his daughters can each use the *cloudview* spell three times per day. (See the "New Spell" sidebar below.)

Cloud giant: AC 0; MV 15; HD 16+7; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +11 (Strength bonus) or 1-10; SA throw rocks for 2-24 points of damage (240-yard range); SD 60% chance to catch large missiles, surprised only on 1; SZ H (24' tall); ML 18; INT very (12); XP 11,000; MM/132.

Spell-like abilities (cast as W6): *fog cloud* (x3), *levitate* (x3), *wall of fog*.

Lear is king of the giants. His kingdom includes the air, sea, and land, although he demands no obedience from men. He is an honest but vain giant whose torment has pushed him over the edge. He feels he cannot return to Cordelia after cursing her, and he fears his elder daughters. His skin is violet, and his hair and beard are pasty white. His red and white robes are in tatters.

Lear (storm giant): AC -4; hp 132; AL CG; chainmail, whip (Dmg 2-16 base), *staff of thunder and lightning* (13 charges; strikes for 3-18 points of damage), *amulet of proof against detection and location*, *helm of judgment* (allows Lear to cast *bless*, *curse*, and *remove curse* three times each per day).

Goneril is Lear's eldest daughter and heir to her father's air kingdom. She lives on the cloud island with her steward, Albany, whom she considers cowardly. She conspires with Regan to gain the allegiance of

Edmund, now the ruling giant on land. Goneril is spiteful and militant, but she is an expert at feigning respect. She is charismatic, even more so with her *philter*. Her purple skin is several shades darker than her father's, and her hair is the color of smoke. Her garments are black and angular, with platinum jewelry to shatter the color monotony.

Goneril (storm giantess): hp 115; AL CE; XP 18,000; human-sized *two-handed sword* +2 *giant slayer* (used one-handed), *horn of blasting*, 24-ounce vial of Type 1 poison, *philter of persuasiveness*.

Spells (cast as W7/P7): 1st—*burning hands*, *curse* (x2), *magic missile* (x3), *produce flame*, *sleep*; 2nd—*flaming sphere*, *hold person*, *resist cold*, *resist fire*, *slow poison*, *stinking cloud*, *web*; 3rd—*fireball* (x2), *protection from fire*, *pyrotechnics*; 4th—*cure serious wounds*, *ice storm*; 5th—*flame strike*.

Regan, Lear's second daughter, inherited her father's sea kingdom. She lives at the sea castle with her steward, Cornwall. She supports Goneril but would betray her in a pinch. Regan is less combative than her elder sister, but just as cunning. Regan's hair and skin are light purple, with a rose tint in her hair. Her clothes are purposefully non-threatening, often a sky blue sundress and ornate jewelry of pearl and sapphire. Her white fingernails are 15 inches long.

Regan (storm giantess): hp 110; AL CE; XP 17,000; *dagger of throwing* +4 (Dmg 3-12 base), *philter of glimmers*, *rod of passage* (38 charges), *iron flask*, *potion of storm giant control*.

Spells (cast as W7/P7): 1st—*cause fear* (x2), *charm person* (x2), *command*, *friends*, *sleep*; 2nd—*hold person*, *invisibility* (x2), *know alignment*, *scare*, *slow poison*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *emotion control*, *prayer*, *protection from fire*, *suggestion*; 4th—*cloak of fear*, *shadow monsters*; 5th—*cone of cold*.

Cordelia is Lear's youngest and dearest child, although she inherited the smallest domain—the land. Cordelia's *ring of truth* is a boon, for she is brutally honest. She loves her father deeply and seeks to unite the giants, so her present circumstance pains her. Beyond a floral garland used as a holy symbol, Cordelia's dress has no finery, as she has been wandering for some time. She resembles her late mother with blue-violet skin and bluish-blond hair.

Cordelia is cursed by Lear and suffers wracking pain while in his kingdom (-4 to all attack rolls, saving throws, and checks).

Cordelia (storm giantess): hp 104; AL CG; 16 Wisdom; *ring of truth, wand of paralysis* (74 charges).

Spells (cast as P9): 1st—*cure light wounds* (x5), *detect evil*; 2nd—*aid* (x2), *charm person or mammal*, *messenger*, *slow poison*, *speak with animals*; 3rd—*create food & water* (x2), *tree*; 4th—*cure serious wounds*, *neutralize poison*; 5th—*true seeing*.

Kent is Lear's vassal and most trusted advisor, and this trust is well-placed. He speaks his mind but was banished when he spoke against Cordelia's exile. Kent fights to protect Lear's honor but is currently held prisoner in Regan's sea kingdom. Despite his goodness, Kent can brandish insults with the best of rogues. Kent wears dirty brown peasant clothes with no ornamentation—a former disguise. His skin has only hints of light blue, and his hair is silver white.

Kent (cloud giant): hp 91; AL NG; *robe of blending, ring of water breathing*.

Albany is Goneril's steward and obeys his mistress, although recent events have shown another side of her. He deems his duty to the king equal to his duty to Goneril, who has forfeited his allegiance through her own traitorous actions. Albany has been chided by Goneril, who considers him a coward. He is only a few decisions shy of outright disobedience. Albany dresses in brass jewelry and fur-lined coats of blue and white. His skin is pale bluish-white, his hair silver in tint.

Albany (cloud giant): hp 72; AL NG; *ivory morning star* (Dmg 6–24 base), *gloves of missile snaring, scroll of protection against electricity*.

Cornwall is Regan's steward. If she dislikes something, Cornwall hates it. He fears Lear and Cordelia, thinks Kent a base villain, and distrusts Goneril. He loathes Edmund, as Regan's designs on the grotesque giant repel him. Cornwall is a snob and has few leadership qualities, but he is no coward. His skin is aquamarine, and what hair he has is pepper gray. When not wearing his black *cloak*, he dresses in green and blue clothing that blends with water.

Cornwall (cloud giant): hp 82; AL NE; *coral morning star* (Dmg 6–24 base), *cloak of the manta ray, trident of fish command* +1 (16 charges; Dmg 6–24 base).

France is Cordelia's steward, although she has no castle to keep. Cordelia has begged him to find a mistress with fairer fortunes, but France has sworn to remain with her

until death. He faults Lear for vanity enough to cast out an adoring daughter, but he respects Cordelia's wish that Lear be restored to sanity. France is a regal-looking cloud giant with white skin and brass-colored hair. His favorite colors are autumn reds, oranges, and browns.

France (cloud giant): hp 87; AL NG; *maul of the titans* +2 (Dmg 4–40 base), *ring of invisibility and inaudibility*.

Playing the Fool

Clotpoll is called Fool by Lear. Despite that epithet, Clotpoll is most perceptive. He couches advice in riddles, rhymes, puns, insults, chastisements, and threats—incisive and insightful, but never insipid. He is the only being who can call Lear a fool and live. As Lear became more disturbed, the Fool's words no longer aided him, and the Fool became more nurse than advisor. He calls his beloved Lear "Nuncle," as jesters call their masters. He wants the PCs to restore Lear's mind, although he's not exactly sure how this might be done. He believes the key to Lear's salvation is Cordelia, for Lear's mental state began to deteriorate shortly after his daughter's banishment. If the PCs heed his words, they might succeed.

The Fool often talks in rhyme. These rhymes might be limericks, couplets, or freeform such as, "Again it looks like rain." Thus he might say if rebuffed, "Your welcome is frigid cool, which makes me wonder who's the Fool."

His riddles often have obvious answers that suggest less obvious solutions. If he wanted to stop a PC from dispelling the *wall of force* in area E14 of Regan's castle, he might ask, "What good's a glass window in a hurricane?" His answer: "A window allows one to see the wind blow but not be blown oneself, unless it is broken."

His puns are never capricious, for they always have critical points. He might say, "The king's clouds may blot the sun, but we must block the daughter," playing on "sun" and "son." Though a genius, he is guided by the era; he thinks the sun circles the world but does not believe the world is flat.

The Fool is easily exasperated by dawdling. If PCs waste time, he might ask, "Why is your skull like a crab?" His answer: "Like a crab, your skull is hard but holds the softest part." His insults might sound like compliments until examined. He might say to a mage, "Your sorcery is second to none," meaning it is worse than none at all. He

could say to an elf, "The points you raise are sharp, but only those that support your cap."

His magic complements his commentary. He might create illusory hell hounds, saying, "Dogs nip at your heels; make haste so you are bitten only by their bark." A knight thinking with his sword might see it *polymorphed* into flowers with a suggestion, "Use thrusts of wit rather than thrusts of steel."

It's conceivable that Clotpoll's manner might cause PCs to attack him. Clotpoll has only 5 hp but has survived needling giants for years. His genius intelligence, 80% magic resistance, and magical items protect him. He can create illusions, misdirect his voice, *polymorph* weapons, and turn *invisible* at will. Clotpoll wants the PCs to help him free Lear; he is a serious Fool not easily swayed from his course. The PCs should welcome having him along, as long as they can handle his constructive (and perhaps reconstructive) criticism.

Clotpoll (leprechaun): AC 8; MV 15; HD 1/2+1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 0; Dmg 0; SA pick pockets (75% chance); MR 80%; SZ T (2' tall); ML 11; INT genius (18); AL N; XP 420; MM/220; *coxcomb of striding and springing* (as boots), *wand of flame extinguishing* (26 charges), *blouse of permanent protection from normal missiles*, *potion of lightning form*.

Spell-like abilities (usable at will): *ventriloquism*, *improved phantasmal force*, *invisibility*, *polymorph* (nonliving) *objects*, *limited wish*. Clotpoll wears clashing striped pink and olive jester clothes, and his greenish skin is painted with clown makeup.

New Spell

Cloudview (Alteration, Divination)

Level: Priest 3

Sphere: Divination

Range: 20 miles/level

Duration: 1 turn/level

Area of Effect: See below

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 5

Saving Throw: None

Cloudview allows the caster to see and hear events through any one cloud within the range of the spell. The caster's image appears in the cloud for all to see. The caster can see in any direction from the cloud, including up. Hearing is limited to relatively loud events such as shouts or explosions. Spells cast on the cloud do not affect the caster, though an effective *dispel magic* severs the connection between the caster and the cloud. The spell's material component is the cloud itself.

SIDE TREKS



BY PETER HOPKINS

Artwork by Michael Collins

"Veiled Threats" is an AD&D® Side Trek for 4-5 good-aligned characters of levels 4-6 (about 24 total levels). This short scenario is designed to precede a larger adventure and begins when the PCs are summoned to the court of the ruling baron. The baron, Kendric Rodham, can be replaced by an earl, duke, or king in the DM's ongoing campaign.

If the baron has enjoyed no prior dealings with the PCs, he learns of them by reputation. The baron has need of brave adventurers to complete an important quest. Before the purpose of the summons is divulged, however, the baron's meeting with the PCs is interrupted by some unexpected arrivals.

Cartography by Christopher Perkins

Adventure Background

For the past several months, innocent citizens of the barony have been threatened by the clandestine activities of the Faceless Ones, a sinister cabal that worships the tanar'ri lord Jubilex. The baron learned of the cult and sought to put an end to their nightly abductions and ritual sacrifices.

Thanks to the efforts and machinations of the baron's kenku spymaster and the local thieves' guild, three prominent members of the Faceless Ones were captured, detained, and questioned. The kenku believes he knows the location of the cabal's secret temple and

has advised the baron to hire adventurers to infiltrate and destroy it.

The Faceless Ones are aware of the baron's efforts, and they have taken measures to ensure their continuance. Rather than relocate their temple, they have opted to send a clear message to the baron—that the Faceless Ones are not to be trifled with.

Beginning the Adventure

The PCs are admitted into the baron's castle and escorted by four armed guards to the audience chamber. There they are greeted by the baron and his advisor, the kenku spymaster Krael.

The baron asks the guards to seal the audience chamber. Once the doors are closed, the ever-vigilant guards stand in pairs on either side of the sealed doorway, waiting for the baron's next order.

The baron believes he has the situation with the Faceless Ones well in hand. Krael has provided him with the location of the cabal's secret temple, and the baron is prepared to hire the PCs for the perilous task of eradicating the Faceless Ones from their lair.

If the DM wishes to use this encounter as a prelude to some other planned adventure, simply adjust the baron's agenda accordingly. Perhaps he intends to send his militia after the Faceless Ones, leaving the PCs to tend to more pressing concerns.

Once the PCs enter the audience chamber, read or paraphrase the following:

Four guards escort you to the baron's audience chamber, a 20'-high room with a black and white marble-tiled floor and a mosaic ceiling supported by six masterfully sculpted pillars. At the far end of the audience chamber, beneath three glorious leaded-glass windows, is a rectangular marble dais with three oak chairs atop it. The central chair is carved in the likeness of a dragon, while the smaller chairs are handsome but otherwise unremarkable.

Standing at the foot of the dais are two figures: a handsome, bearded man wearing a flashy green tunic, red hose, and fine leather shoes, and a shorter, hunched figure wearing a dark brown robe and cowl.

The soldiers close the double doors behind you and guard all of the exits, their faces expressionless. The finely attired gentleman beckons you forward, introducing himself as Baron Kendric Rodham as he steps onto the dais and seats himself in the dragon-shaped chair. The cloaked figure standing at the foot of the dais draws back his cowl with crooked talons, revealing a birdlike head and a sharp, orange beak. The baron introduces the robed creature as Krael, his kenku advisor.

VEILED THREATS

Baron Rodham is renowned for his nobility and fairness, and the PCs have no cause to feel threatened in his presence. Krael has served as the baron's advisor for three years, ever since Rodham awarded kenku settlers a tract of wooded land in his barony. Krael has many contacts within the local thieves' guild, many of them fellow kenku.

Baron Kendrick Rodham, human male F4: AC 10; MV 12; hp 29; THAC0 17 (15 with *longsword* +1); #AT 3/2 or 1; Dmg by weapon type (+3 with *longsword* +1); Str 14, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16; ML 16; AL NG; *brooch of shielding*, *amulet of proof against detection and location*, *longsword* +1 (hidden in throne). Kendrick is specialized with his magical *longsword*, which is named Legacy.

The baron's background can be tailored to suit the DM's campaign. Kendrick should be portrayed as trustworthy but shrewd, accommodating but not overly generous. He seldom decides on a course of action without first conferring with his kenku advisor (in private).

When not enforcing the king's laws and overseeing his barony, Kendrick likes to hunt and fancies himself a talented zither player, although Krael might beg to differ.

Krael (kenku): AC 5; MV 6, fly 18 (D); HD 4; hp 23; THAC0 15; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6; SA/SD thief abilities, spells, *invisibility* at will; MR 30%; SZ M (6' tall); ML 13; INT high (14); AL N; XP 975; *dagger* +2, *longtooth*.

Thief abilities: PP 50%, OL 20%, FRT 15%, MS 60%, HS 50%, DN 45%, CW 60%, RL 10%.

Spells (2): 1st—*magic missile*, *shocking grasp*.

Krael's *dagger* is a kenku variation of the typical *longtooth* and lengthens to short sword size only when wielded by a kenku (retaining its +2 attack and damage bonus). Krael keeps the *dagger* hidden in the folds of his robe.

Krael rarely greets visitors; he usually remains invisible and within whispering distance of the baron. The kenku is quick to act when the baron's life is threatened and prefers to backstab opponents with his *longtooth* or surprise a foe with a *shocking grasp* spell. The baron has asked Krael to remain visible in this instance because he doesn't want to give the PCs cause to distrust him.

Baron's guards, human males F2 (4): AC 4; MV 9; hp 17, 15, 15, 14; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; roll 2d4+6 for ability scores; ML 16; AL NG; chainmail, shield, halberd, *longsword*.

Getting Down to Business

The baron wastes no time coming to the point. He tells the PCs why he needs their help and

offers a fair payment for their services. If the baron has employed the PCs in the past, he seems much more receptive to "small talk" and expresses interest in hearing about the party's recent exploits.

If the baron is hiring the PCs to attack the secret temple of the Faceless Ones, he hands them a scroll upon which is drawn a rough map of the temple, drawn by one of the three captured cultists. (If the PCs inquire as to the whereabouts of these cultists, the baron informs them that the captives are being held under lock and key in the local jail, guarded by several dozen men-at-arms.)

As the PCs are haggling over price or discussing the specifics of the assignment, the meeting is interrupted by a heavy knock at the door. This sudden disturbance startles Krael and annoys Kendrick. The baron commands whoever knocked at the door to enter while Krael renders himself invisible and takes position near Kendrick.

Enter the Villains

The Faceless Ones have sent fourteen cultists to kidnap the baron. The cultists are led by one of the leaders of the Faceless Ones, a powerful transmuter named Gulgulax. He is accompanied by his apprentice Xala, his henchmen Azulos and Tezzifer, and ten of the cabal's most skilled fighters.

By kidnapping the baron and offering him to Juiblex as a sacrifice, the Faceless Ones hope to gain the power to summon Juiblex's avatar and call upon it to defend the temple in their time of need. (Whether this sacrifice is enough to win Juiblex's favor is unknown.) Gulgulax has concocted an elaborate ruse to gain safe entry into the baron's castle.

Using a magical scroll, Gulgulax has cast a *veil* spell on himself and his followers. The *veil* makes Gulgulax appear as an old crone, Xala as the old woman's walking stick, and all of the warriors as members of the local militia (with Azulos disguised as a Captain of the Guard). The illusion created by the *veil* spell has visual, auditory, thermal, and olfactory components and can be thwarted only by a *true seeing* spell or a *gem of seeing*. If a *veiled* individual is touched by someone not concealed by the illusion, the *veil* around the touched individual is instantly dispelled, revealing the person's true identity. Likewise, the instant a *veiled* individual attacks, the *veil* around that individual disappears.

In addition to the *veil* spell, Gulgulax has cast a *delude* spell on himself and assumed a chaotic good alignment. *Know alignment* and

detect evil spells fail to reveal his evil disposition. The *delude* spell protects only Gulgulax.

Finally, Gulgulax has spent the last few days casting *stoneskin* spells on himself, Xala, Azulos, and Tezzifer. Gulgulax and Xala have also cast *strength* spells on the two fighters.

Gulgulax pretends to be an eccentric seer claiming to have seen visions of the barony's doom. Azulos plays the role of the superstitious militia captain who is lulled into believing the old woman's prophecies. Using his rank to intimidate the guards at the castle gate, Azulos sees to it that the "old crone" is escorted to the baron's audience chamber.

When Gulgulax and his followers enter the audience chamber, read or paraphrase the following:

The baron's guards open the heavy oak doors. Standing in the hallway beyond are a dozen armored soldiers, their shields proudly bearing the crest of the barony. As they advance into the audience room, you see that the soldiers are led by a tall and imposing man wearing the uniform of a militia captain. The oak doors close behind the captain and his men as they approach the dais.

Surrounded by the guards and barely visible behind the hulking captain is a haggard, hunch-backed woman with white hair and milky eyes. She wears a thin, billowy gown and leans heavily on a gnarled walking stick.

The baron, looking mildly irritated, asks, "What's the meaning of this interruption? Who is this woman?"

The captain approaches the foot of the dais, his helmet tucked under his arm. "A thousand apologies, my lord. This haggard crone is a seer. She claims to have seen a vision of the barony's destruction. She has frightened many citizens with her dark prophecies."

"We're all doomed!" cries the half-blind woman. "I see cloaked figures skulking in shadows, summoning forth the Faceless Lord! A great ooze stirs in the depths of darkness and is soon to awaken. I see a demon about to be unleashed, and it will destroy the baron and all who follow him!"

The soldiers and the old woman seem to pay the PCs no heed. In actual fact, Gulgulax and Azulos are concerned that the PCs' presence might complicate matters and adjust their tactics accordingly.

The Faceless Ones are unaware of Krael's presence. Moreover, the invisible kenku, not

The Faceless Ones

The Faceless Ones worship Juiblex, the tanar'ri lord of oozes, slimes, jellies, puddings, and the like. The Faceless Ones believe they can gain favor from the Faceless Lord through human sacrifice. They wear black robes and cowls during their ceremonies, and their lairs almost always include a collection of slimy monsters that serve as Juiblex's "eyes and ears." The members detailed below represent only a small fraction of the cult.

Gulgulax, human W(Tra)9: AC 8 (*stoneskin* spell absorbs first 6 attacks); MV 12; hp 31; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon or spell; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 7; ML 14; AL CE; XP 3,000; *wand of polymorphing* (12 charges), *cloak of symbiotic protection* (see EM/311), *ring of free action*, dagger.

Spells (5/4/4/3/2): 1st—*color spray*, *magic missile* (x2), *sleep*, *shocking grasp*; 2nd—*darkness* 15' radius, *improved phantasmal force*, *levitate*, *strength* (already cast on Azulos); 3rd—*delude* (already cast), *fly*, *hold person*, *slow*; 4th—*improved invisibility*, *polymorph self*, *stoneskin* (already cast); 5th—*feeblemind*, *teleport*.

Gulgulax is a narrow little man of indeterminate age with oily black hair and green eyes. He prefers loose, billowy attire.

Rigged to his right forearm is an easily concealed quick-draw apparatus to which his *wand of polymorphing* is attached. When he extends his arm, the wand shoots forward into his hand, reducing his initiative modifier to +1. The wooden quick-draw device is designed for wands and other slender items and won't hold daggers, swords, and the like.

Gulgulax's *cloak of symbiotic protection* confers immunity to the effects of green slime, olive slime, obliivax, violet fungi, yellow musk creeper, yellow mold, and russet mold. It grants a +4 bonus to saving throws vs. spore attacks of all other sorts. The *cloak* has a black cowl that is always drawn to hide Gulgulax's features.

Xala, human female W(Tra)4: AC 9 (*stoneskin* spell absorbs first 7 attacks); MV 12; hp 13; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon or spell; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 9; ML 12; AL CE; XP 420; *wand of viscid globs* (11 charges; see EM/1496), *magical scroll (dimension door cast at 9th level)*, *ring of fire resistance*, dagger.

Spells (4/3): 1st—*burning hands*, *color spray*, *sleep*, *spider climb*; 2nd—*strength* (already cast), *web* (x2).

Xala is Gulgulax's apprentice. She is a large, flabby girl with hazel eyes and hair like straw. She wears a billowy black robe

with a cowl, which is usually drawn to conceal her identity. Her primary weapon is the *wand of viscid globs* loaned to her by Gulgulax. The wand fires a glob of magical adhesive up to 60 feet away. Anyone within 5 feet of the point of impact must make a successful saving throw vs. wands or be held fast; even a *ring of free action* provides no protection. The glob can be dispelled or dissolved with a flask of alcohol.

Azulos, human male F6: AC 3 (*stoneskin* spell absorbs first 6 attacks); MV 9; hp 52; THAC0 15 (14 with Gulgulax's *strength* spell); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1 (*Strength* bonus) or +3 (afforded by *strength* spell); Str 16 (18/40 with *strength* spell), Dex 10, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 12; ML 17; AL CE; XP 420; chainmail, shield +1, footman's mace +1, dagger.

Azulos is a tall, broad-shouldered man of sadistic disposition. He wears a black robe over his armor. He lets his thinning blond hair grow long in the back, and his face is unshaven. The end of his mace is shaped like a lion's head.

Tezzifer, human male F5: AC 7 (*stoneskin* spell absorbs first 5 attacks); MV 12; hp 39; THAC0 16 (15 with Xala's *strength* spell); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +3 (afforded by *strength* spell); Str 15 (18/20 with *strength* spell), Dex 8, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 8; ML 17; AL NE; XP 175; studded leather armor, longsword, three flasks of green slime.

Tezzifer is a twisted, evil man who was ousted from the militia for his brutal behavior. His bald head sports a large, bat-shaped tattoo, and he wears a suit of black studded leather armor too tight for his heavy frame. Tied to his belt are three glass flasks containing green slime. Tezzifer can hurl one flask per round up to 40 feet away, striking targets as if they were AC 10 (modified by Dexterity and magical protections). Each flask shatters on impact, spilling its contents onto the victim. The green slime dissolves quickly through wood, metal, and flesh.

Tezzifer's longsword is made of green steel. The unusual metal has no magical properties, but the weapon can be sold for twice the value of an ordinary longsword (30 gp).

Faceless Ones, human males F2 (10): AC 4; MV 12; hp 19, 18, 16, 15 (x2), 14, 12 (x3), 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; roll 2d4+6 for ability scores; ML 12; AL NE; XP 35; chainmail, longsword, wineskin.

These loyal cultists obey Gulgulax and Azulos. If both leaders are defeated, these warriors must make a successful Morale check each round or surrender. Each guard carries a wineskin filled with alcohol and uses the alcohol to dissolve the magical adhesive from Xala's *wand of viscid globs*.

recognizing the captain of the guard, is suspicious of him and his men. As the crone speaks, Krael moves into position behind one of the soldiers and draws his magical dagger.

The PCs can take whatever actions they like at this time. The baron takes no offense if they ask to question the captain or the old crone. Gulgulax and Azulos use such an opportunity to learn as much about the PCs as possible. However, if the Faceless Ones notice one of the PCs casting a spell (such as *detect evil*), they prepare to drop the veil.

After hearing the crone speak, the baron gives the soldiers an annoyed glare. "I've heard enough of this nonsense," he says. "Age has deprived this woman of her faculties as well as her sight. She is mad, captain, nothing more." If the PCs suggest that the crone might be referring to the Faceless Ones, the baron nods and replies, "That could be, but I'll not have this woman inciting fear among the people. We'll deal with the Faceless Ones soon enough." The baron then instructs the captain to take the old woman to an asylum, where she can be "properly cared for" by clerics and nurses. Gulgulax, realizing that he must strike, drops the veil.

The Battle

The goal of the Faceless Ones is to capture the baron and take him back to their hidden temple as a sacrifice to Juiblex. Since they have no wish to be captured and interrogated, their plan is carefully designed to minimize their own losses. The DM should carefully review the Faceless Ones' statistics and equipment. (See "The Faceless Ones" sidebar.) These villains are merciless and should be played as cunningly as possible.

The following outline provides a general round-by-round synopsis of the NPCs' actions during combat. The DM should be prepared to improvise as the need arises.

Round 1: Gulgulax casts *improved invisibility* on himself. Xala draws forth her *wand of viscid globs* and aims the first glob at the doors to the audience chamber, sealing them. Azulos attacks the nearest PC with his mace, while Tezzifer hurls a flask of green slime at a PC spellcaster. The remaining Faceless Ones attack the baron's guards and any remaining PCs. Meanwhile, Krael backstabs one of the Faceless Ones, becoming visible. The baron draws his magical longsword +1, which is hidden in the arm of his throne.

Round 2: Gulgulax casts a *hold person* spell on the baron, imposing a -3 penalty to the baron's saving throw. Xala spends another charge from her *wand of viscid globs* to seal the doors leading to the baron's private chambers. Tezzifer hurls another flask of green slime. The kenku, if he's not trapped by Xala's *viscid glob*, turns invisible again. The baron, if not held, joins the battle.

Round 3: If he's managed to stay out of melee, Gulgulax casts his *feeblesind* spell at a PC spellcaster or a *slow* spell upon an entire group of enemies. (The *slow* spell affects up to nine foes within a 40' cube.) Xala continues using the *wand of viscid globs* or casts a *sleep* spell on the baron's guards. Tezzifer hurls his last green slime grenade or attacks the nearest foe with his longsword. The invisible kenku attacks Xala or tries to backstab the nearest enemy fighter.

Round 4: If the battle is going poorly, Gulgulax draws forth his *wand of polymorphing* and targets the most threatening foe (but not the baron). Gulgulax uses the *wand* to turn the target into a helpless pool of green slime. Xala escapes melee combat by crawling up a pillar using her *spider climb* spell. In subsequent rounds, she uses her *wand of viscid globs* or remaining spells. The kenku, if alive and mobile, renders himself invisible. If the situation is desperate, Krael casts his *magic missile* spell.

Also on Round 4, reinforcements arrive from within the baron's castle. The doors to the audience chamber are held shut by Xala's *viscid glob* and refuse to open; the guards spend the next 4 rounds smashing through the heavy oak. They burst into the room at the beginning of Round 8.

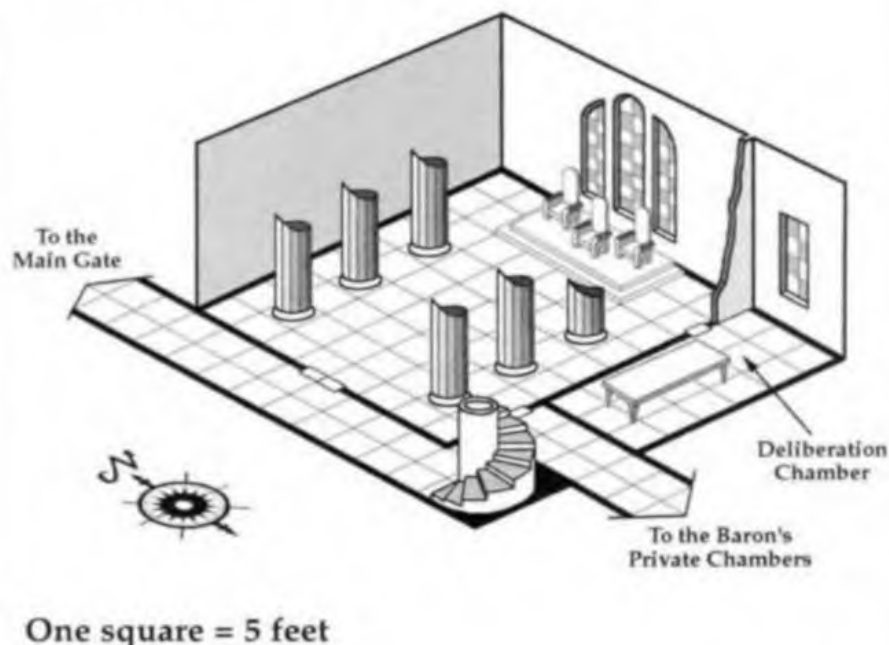
Round 5: Gulgulax does whatever he must to incapacitate the baron. This includes casting his *sleep* or *color spray* spell. Anyone standing in Gulgulax's way is targeted by the *wand of polymorphing* and transformed into green slime. (Gulgulax's *cloak* protects him from the harmful effects of green slime.) If the baron has been immobilized, Gulgulax grabs him and *teleports* to the secret temple of the Faceless Ones. Xala assists Gulgulax by using her *web* spell to surround and encase the baron; Gulgulax's *ring of free action* allows him to move through the webs unimpeded. Meanwhile, the kenku casts a spell or backstabs the nearest opponent.

Rounds 6-7: If Gulgulax has not yet reached the baron, he tries to do so, *teleporting* away once he has the baron in his clutches. If the baron has been successfully abducted, the surviving Faceless Ones try to escape. Xala tries to cast a *dimension door* spell from a scroll given to her by Gulgulax. The Faceless Ones use the *dimension door* to safely depart the castle, then flee into the streets.

Round 8: Reinforcements burst through the oak doors leading to the audience chamber. If the baron is gone and Krael and the chamber guards are dead, the arriving guards attack PCs and Faceless Ones indiscriminately. If Krael or one of the audience chamber guards is alive, they protect the PCs from the other guards' ire.

Guards, human males F2 (16): AC 4; MV 9; hp 13 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; roll 2d4+6 for ability scores; ML

Baron Rodham's Audience Chamber



16; AL NG; chainmail, helmet, medium metal shield, longsword.

Round 9: Any Faceless Ones who have not escaped through Xala's *dimension door* surrender when confronted by the baron's reinforcements.

Players Running NPCs

If the battle becomes complicated, the DM might allow one or more players to run Krael or any of the castle guards. This may be particularly appropriate if one of the PCs is killed, incapacitated, or *polymorphed* into green slime by Gulgulax's *wand*. However, the baron should remain an NPC.

Concluding the Adventure

If Gulgulax *teleports* to safety with the baron, the PCs can attempt a rescue using the scrollmap obtained by Krael, which reveals not only the location of the Faceless Ones' underground temple but also the general layout of the structure. (The temple map might not be entirely accurate, however, as the information used to create the map was obtained from captured cultists.)

If the Faceless Ones fail in their attempt to kidnap the baron, each PC should receive 1,000 XPs as a story award. Baron Rodham,

incensed by the audacity of the fiend-worshipping cabal, promises to double the PCs' payment if they successfully eradicate the cultists and destroy their secret temple. He even calls upon Krael (if the kenku is alive) to procure some magical potions that might benefit the PCs during their mission.

If any of the Faceless Ones are captured, they can be interrogated. (If Krael is alive, he asks to conduct the interrogation.) Gulgulax, Azulos, Tezzifer, and Xala refuse to cooperate, but magic can be used to coerce information from them. (They know the names of the other cabal leaders, as well as the various temple defenses.) The remaining Faceless Ones are lesser minions who can provide no useful information beyond what Krael and the PCs already know. Ω

Peter designed this short scenario as a means of introducing new villains to his campaign. In his game, the Faceless Ones' desperate attempt to kidnap the baron was thwarted, but Gulgulax and Xala managed to escape. Gulgulax and the Faceless Ones have continued to crop up in Peter's ongoing campaign.



The nixie Dorothea is trapped by Freckles the crypt cat.

PEER AMID THE WATERS

BY JOHNATHAN M. RICHARDS

You conduit if you try!

Artwork by Fred Rawles
Cartography by Renee Ciske

Johnathan writes: "I'd like to thank my sons Stuart and Logan and my granddaughter Samantha for playtesting this adventure—especially Stuart, who lost an elven wizard in the deal!"

"Peer Amid the Waters" is an AD&D adventure designed for 4–6 non-evil PCs of levels 1–2 (about 8 total levels). The module begins at the edge of a lake, although it can easily be transported to any large body of water in the DM's campaign world. It uses rules taken from *Of Ships and the Sea* and an item from *Aurora's Whole Realms Catalog*, but neither work is required to run the adventure.

A paladin's ability to lay on hands would come in handy in this adventure, as most other methods of healing damage might be problematic, but paladins are not absolutely necessary for success.

Adventure Background

Centuries ago in a desert kingdom, the pharaoh's favorite concubine was a young woman of common birth named Othaey (pronounced Oh-THAY). She was a caring woman and loved by the general populace. Many believed that she was touched by the gods as well, for she had a special affinity with cats and trained even fierce leopards to walk peacefully beside her.

In time, Othaey died of natural causes and was given full burial honors, including her own small treasure-laden pyramid built alongside the one destined for the pharaoh himself. This was common practice for female royalty, but the pharaoh decided to grant his beloved Othaey the same honor, despite her low birth. This didn't sit well with the pharaoh's chief advisor, a wily wizard named Psutekh, who disapproved of the concubine's common birth and coveted the treasure for himself. He ensured that a golden bracelet was placed in the pyramid along with the rest of Othaey's treasure. Unbeknownst to the pharaoh, the bracelet was one of a pair that allowed transport from the location of one bracelet to the location of the other; see the "Conduit Bracelets" sidebar for further details. Psutekh planned to use his bracelet to enter the concubine's tomb after it was sealed and loot the place of its riches. However, he died in an earthquake before he could put his scheme into motion, and his bracelet passed from hand to hand over the centuries with none of its owners aware of its true power.

Recently, the bracelet ended up in the hands of a colony of nixies living in Stillwater Lake. Two of the nixie children, Dorothea and Vhanyssa, were playing "catch" with the bracelet when Vhanyssa accidentally activated the bracelet's power. She called out "Dorothea, catch!" with the bracelet in her hand. The first three syllables of her sister's

name (pronounced "Door-oh-THAY-uh") matched the command word Psutekh used when he created the bracelets: "Dhour-Othaey" ("Othaey the commoner"). Upon activation, the golden band enlarged into a magical portal connected to its twin in the concubine's tomb. Immediately, the waters of the lake began draining into the tomb, not only filling the tomb with fresh water but sucking the two nixie girls into the vortex.

A trio of nixie warriors who saw what had happened gathered their weapons and entered the portal to rescue the girls. They never returned. Several *charmed* human slaves were next sent into the portal, with similar results. The nixie leader is understandably concerned, not only for the fates of those who went through the portal but also that whatever deadly menace lies on the other side of the portal might enter Stillwater Lake and threaten the entire community. Since the nixies cannot deactivate the portal and the leader is unwilling to send in any more of her people, she's put several nixies on guard duty around the portal and sent the remaining nixies and human slaves in search of help. That's where the PCs enter the picture ...

Players' Introduction

To begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

Your travels have taken you along the shore of Stillwater Lake, its tranquil surface dappled with sunlight.

Suddenly, there is a slight disturbance in the water as a small, dark form breaks the surface about 30 feet out. The shape swims toward the shore, rising up out of the water as it draws closer. The figure is a young woman. As she approaches, you see water trickling from her nostrils and mouth.

Standing 3 feet from shore, she calls out to you: "Adventurers, we have need of your services! Please, will you help us?"

The woman's name is Larista, and she's one of the *charmed* human servants of the nixie band living in Stillwater Lake. Larista thinks of herself as a vital part of the nixie community and has developed a strong bond to the nixies. As such, she refuses to approach the PCs too closely, fearing they might try to "rescue" her from the lake. She comes no closer to shore than waist-level, so she can escape back into the waters should the PCs try anything.

Following the nixies' orders, Larista tell the PCs that the nixies wish to hire them to brave unknown dangers to rescue several missing nixies and humans. If they are willing to listen, she returns with the nixie leader, who explains everything. If the PCs try coaxing Larista onto shore, she politely refuses. At the

Conduit Bracelets

Conduit bracelets are created in pairs, and each is inextricably linked to its twin. The *bracelets* are perfect circles of ornately carved gold, often fashioned into a snake swallowing its own tail or patterned after a Möbius strip. A command word is decided upon at the time of the *bracelets'* creation; this command word (or short phrase) activates the powers of both *bracelets*.

To activate the *conduit bracelets*, one of the pair must be held in the hand (not worn) when the command word is spoken aloud. Immediately, both *bracelets* hover perpendicular to the ground. At the same time, they begin to expand, attaining a 6' diameter and displaying a plane of shimmering blackness in the center of the golden circle. Anything passing through the plane of blackness in the center of one *bracelet* emerges from the center of the other. The user can step through one *bracelet* and arrive immediately at the location of the other.

There are some limitations to *conduit bracelets*. The teleportation conduit formed by the *bracelets* cannot pass from one plane of existence to another (although the *bracelets* can be hundreds or even thousands of miles apart). The *bracelets* remain absolutely fixed in place once activated and cannot be moved or repositioned for better effect. The user cannot bring the *conduit bracelet* with her when she passes through it; both *bracelets* remain at their original positions when they are deactivated (by repeating the command word). This means that if a warrior leaves one *bracelet* in his castle stronghold and takes the other with him, he can activate it and use the conduit as a quick means back to the castle, but the *bracelet* he stepped through stays behind with whatever danger caused him to flee in the first place.

If one of the *bracelets* is worn when a user attempts to activate the other, the worn one vibrates silently on the wrist of the wearer, signaling a desire to set up a conduit. The *bracelet* must be removed before the conduit

can form; if the wearer ignores the vibration (or if he's unable to respond, due to unconsciousness, immobility, or death), the attempt to activate the *conduit bracelets* fails. The same holds true if anything pierces the center of a *bracelet* when the activation attempt is made; a *bracelet* hung on a nail or a hook cannot be used to form a teleportation conduit. Any obstruction in the planes of the circular bands prevents the conduit from forming.

When the teleportation conduit is no longer needed, the user simply holds one of the hovering, 6'-diameter bands and repeats the command word. This deactivates the conduit, and both *bracelets* shrink back to their original size. In addition, the *bracelet* at the far side of the conduit (from the user) falls to the ground from where it was hovering. A *dispel magic* cast upon an active *conduit bracelet* can also close the conduit. (The *bracelet* resists as 12th-level magic.) If the *bracelets* are deactivated this way, a conduit cannot be formed again for 1–4 rounds.

The creation of a set of *conduit bracelets* is a lengthy and expensive undertaking. When Psutekh created his set, he took a few shortcuts: Realizing that one of the *bracelets* would be sealed in Othaey's tomb forever, he didn't bother making the teleportation conduit formed by the *bracelets* permanent. As a result, once the conduit is formed (using the command word "Dhour-Othaey"), it remains in place for up to 12 hours before dissipating, in effect "shutting itself off." Furthermore, once shut off, the conduit cannot be formed again; in effect, Psutekh created a single-use set of magical items. This was fine for his purposes, as he planned on using the *conduit bracelets* only once, to loot Othaey's tomb. As a result, once Vhanyssa accidentally activated the *conduit bracelets* and filled Othaey's pyramid with water from Stillwater Lake, the countdown began.

Unbeknownst to the PCs, they must complete their task and get out of the pyramid before the conduit shuts itself off for good; otherwise, they could be trapped in the concubine's tomb.

first sign of spellcasting (fearing a *charm person*, *hold person*, or similar spell), or if any of the PCs enter the lake, she ducks under the water and races back to the nixies for help. An armed nixie war-party arrives 2 turns later.

If the PCs agree to listen to the nixie leader, Larista returns shortly with Mhartryn, the *acquer* (leader) of the nixie community. They are accompanied by ten more nixies (five males, five females) armed with daggers and shell-tipped javelins.

Mhartryn's actions depend upon the PCs' initial reaction to Larista. If they agreed to wait for the nixie leader, she approaches them

boldly, stepping out of the lake and onto the shore as a sign of trust. Larista and the warriors approach only to waist level, as commanded. While the warriors hold their javelins at the ready, Mhartryn's dagger remains sheathed at her side. She asks the PCs for their help, stating what she knows about the danger to the lake: Two nixie children disappeared into a mysterious "hole" that formed suddenly in the lake, and the nixie warriors and *charmed* human servants who went in to rescue them have not returned. She wishes to send the PCs through the portal to rescue those who have gone missing, defeat

the menace on the other side, and find a way to close the portal. In return, the nixies agree to free all of their current *charmed* slaves. Furthermore, anything of value on the other side of the portal is the PCs' for the taking. The nixies' main concern is for the safety of the nixie children, as they are Mhartryn's own daughters. One day, one of them will assume the mantle of *acquer*—a hereditary position passed from mother to daughter.

If the PCs were initially aggressive, trying to remove Larista from the lake by force when she first called to them, Mhartryn and the others stay submerged up to their necks far from the shore, and the nixie *acquer* calls out for parley before coming closer. If the PCs agree, she comes closer and makes the same offer as above, but stays far enough from the shore that she can duck back into the waters to escape if the PCs try anything.

If the PCs are unwilling to assist the nixies, the adventure is over, and Mhartryn goes elsewhere in search of adventurers to help her community. (The nixies could try *charming* one of the PCs, but Mhartryn fears that *charmed* slaves might not fight as effectively as those with their full faculties; the three *charmed* slaves they sent in earlier never returned, after all.)

If the PCs agree to help the nixies, the nixies approach the shore and beckon the PCs to enter the waters of the lake. The nixies bestow *water breathing* upon each PC (via a kiss) unless the PCs possess some other means of breathing underwater (a *helm of underwater action*, for instance). Note that the nixies' *water breathing* works the same as the potion of the same name, but the effects last for a full 24 hours. While underwater, the PCs can extract oxygen from the water but cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components. See *Of Ships and the Sea*, page 68, for further details.

Once the PCs have all been granted *water breathing* of one type or another, the nixies lead them to the location of the magical portal.

Larista, 0-level human female: AC 10; MV 12; swim 12; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (currently unarmed); Str 10, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10; SZ M; ML 10; AL LG. Larista wears a one-piece swimsuit made of giant water spider silk, which allows her to double the distance she can swim. (See "Swimwear, Drow" on page 93 of *Aurora's Whole Realms Catalog* for details.)

Mhartryn (nixie *acquer*): AC 7; MV 6; swim 12; HD 1/2; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA *charm person*; MR 25%; SZ S (4' tall); ML 10; INT high (13); AL N; XP 270; MM/328. Mhartryn wears an ornately carved bone dagger, the symbol of her office, on a belt woven from water plants. Like Larista, her simple, one-piece garment is woven of giant water spider silk. Several shells are woven into her dark green hair. Streaks of gray show

at her temples, and she looks tired; the concern for her daughters is eating away at her.

Nixie warriors (10): hp 4 each; otherwise use Mhartryn's statistics, above. Each warrior carries a dagger and a slim javelin. They wear simple loincloths made of giant water spider silk or woven water plants.

Entering the Portal

Since nobody who's entered the magical portal has ever returned, the nixies have no idea what to expect on the other side. They do not think to worry about such things as light sources, since they dislike bright lights themselves and their wide, silver eyes provide excellent underwater vision. Should the PCs think to ask, the nixies do have one magical light source available to them: a *dagger +1* that sheds magical light in a 20' radius when unsheathed. The *dagger* belongs to one of their human slaves, a 1st-level rogue with a twisted leg whom the *acquer* did not send into the portal. Since the *dagger's* illumination is automatic (and cannot be shut off), the nixies store it in the air-filled web of the giant water spider that dwells nearby. At the PCs' request, a nixie fetches the *dagger* for their use. The spider does not permit its removal otherwise.

Giant water spider: AC 4; MV 15; swim 15; HD 3+3; hp 16; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA poison (save or die); SZ M (8' diameter); ML 12; INT semi (3); AL N; XP 420; MM/326. The nixies have a trade relationship with this spider; in return for food, it provides them with the silk with which they weave garments for themselves and their slaves. In addition, the spider's air-filled web is a good storage area for metallic items owned by the slaves; rather than let them rust during the slaves' year of servitude, the items are stored in the web-shelter 40 feet below the surface of the lake. (The shelter resembles a diving bell.) Besides the *dagger +1*, the web currently holds 120 gp, 15 sp, two nonmagical daggers, a nonmagical short sword, and a metal helmet.

The portal stands motionless in the water, perpendicular to the lake bed and only a few feet above the sandy bottom. Its interior surface is completely black, preventing anyone from seeing through it. The portal is guarded by two nixie warriors with statistics similar to those accompanying Mhartryn. PCs inspecting the gold rim of the portal find no runes, command words, or other features.

When the PCs enter the portal, read or paraphrase the following:

As soon as you place even a part of your body into the plane of the hovering portal, you are sucked into and through the circle and deposited into a dark, flooded tunnel. A set of stairs descends into the gloom

before you. The portal floats at the top of the stairs, just inside a 6'-tall, rectangular doorway. You can see a room hidden behind the portal, but the portal completely blocks access. For now, it looks like your only way is down the stairs.

Anyone re-entering the portal from the tomb side is immediately sucked back through the conduit and returned to Stillwater Lake. The portal can be entered only through the one side. (If one goes to the opposite side of the portal in the lake hoping to be shunted into the room behind the portal in the tomb, nothing happens; the surface between the circle on that side of the portal is solid.)

PCs reduced to Tiny size can squeeze into area 11 behind the fixed portal. PCs of Small size or larger are too big to reach area 11 with the portal in the way.

Othaey's Tomb

Unless described otherwise, all tunnels within the tomb are 5 feet wide and 8 feet tall, and all chambers are 12 feet tall. The tomb is made entirely of stone. There is no light within the tomb save that which the PCs bring with them. The fact that the tomb is filled with water renders most mundane light sources (like torches and lanterns) useless.

1. Stairwell. The top of the stairwell is a 5' x 5' platform, level with the room north of the portal (area 11). The stairs descend southward to the main level of the tomb.

The walls of the staircase are carved with birds, beetles, people, eyes, weapons, feathers, and geometric shapes. These are actually hieroglyphs; anyone casting a *comprehend languages* spell or wearing a *helm of comprehending languages* and *reading magic* can decipher the symbols as a warning to would-be tomb robbers, commanding them to turn back or face the wrath of the gods.

The third step from the bottom and the third step from the top are actually *permanent illusions* concealing rows of small spikes. Originally, these spikes were coated with poison, but the rush of water coming through the magical conduit has washed away the poison. Anyone stepping on the spikes suffers 1d3 points of damage (1d3-1 points if hard boots are worn). Of course, this is not a danger to swimming PCs, but PCs cannot swim while wearing nonmagical metal armor; those doing so must walk along the floor and are subject to damage from the hidden spikes.

2. Central Chamber. This is the largest room in the tomb, with a ceiling 20 feet high. The two longest walls curve and meet at the top, giving the entire chamber the shape of a half-

cylinder on its side. The walls and ceiling are carved with many of the same hieroglyphs appearing on the walls of the stairway (area 1), although there are more human figures in various poses. This is especially true along the curved ceiling, where entire armies of figures stand in single file, many of them sporting the heads of various animals. These hieroglyphs were designed to protect Othaey's soul during her transition to the underworld. Due to the large size of the room and the poor lighting, the PCs are unable to read all of the hieroglyphs in the central chamber at once, but a *comprehend languages* spell suggests that the markings are a form of nonmagical protection.

A life-sized statue of a woman stands in each corner of the room, her arms spread in benediction. The women are dressed similarly, with tightly wrapped robes, sandals, and ornate headdresses covering their hair. Close examination reveals that each is slightly different and has the emblem of a different animal (scorpion, cobra, jackal, crocodile) carved into her headgear. These are statues of protective goddesses, in place to guard the concubine's remains. They are nonmagical but would likely frighten a tomb robber of the pharaoh's ancient religion.

It is unlikely that the PCs can see all of this room at once, given the poor illumination available. (The *dagger +1* provided by the nixies illuminates only a 10' radius area; a *light* spell likewise provides a 10' radius globe of illumination, and *continual light* spells have an underwater radius of 30 feet.) Midway along the south wall, a silent battle is raging. Once the PCs' light reaches that area, read or paraphrase the following:

A scratching sound like metal on stone emanates from somewhere up ahead, but it's hard to tell exactly how far away or in exactly which direction. Suddenly, two strange figures appear at the range of your field of light: an emaciated humanoid shape and a large beetle.

The beetle is greenish-black and darts and swims with a practical efficiency, biting at the white-clad humanoid. As the beetle darts aside, you notice that the humanoid is bound in loose rags that flap and float in the current, and a large sword pierces him through the shoulder blades, yet still he moves, feebly fighting off the giant beetle. As his struggles turn him in your direction, you see his face: a withered, inhuman look of death, disease, and hatred.

The figures are a mummy and a giant diving beetle that wandered into the portal after the first two waves of nixie warriors and human slaves entered in search of the acquar's daughters. The mummy had been severely wounded in the battle with the nixies



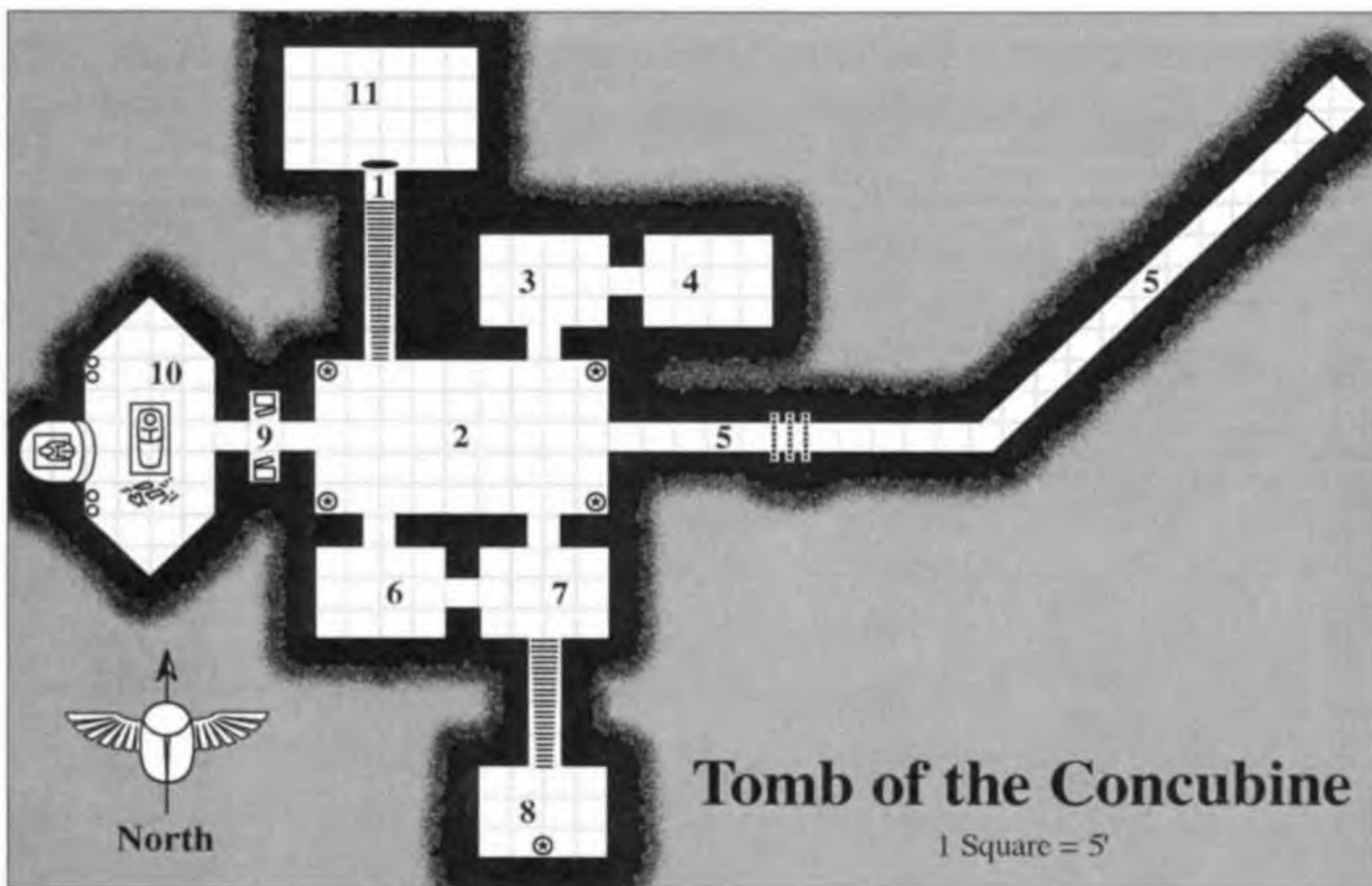
Heroes confront a sinister and seemingly unstoppable foe.

and humans but managed to slay the intruders before it was attacked by this new threat. Once the PCs stumble onto this scene, they must each make a saving throw vs. spell or be paralyzed with fright for 1d4 rounds. Human PCs receive a +2 bonus to their saving throws.

If the PCs enter the fray, the beetle backs off, fearing the PCs' numbers. (It is primarily a scavenger, attracted by the tantalizing spices used to preserve the mummy's undead flesh.) It flees if pursued. The mummy sees the PCs as intruders in its mistress's tomb and attacks until they or it is slain, never checking morale. If the PCs successfully slay the mummy, the

beetle returns to snack upon the undead remains once they leave the area. If the PCs back off and leave the two creatures to fight their own battle, the mummy slays the giant diving beetle in another 2d4+2 rounds. (While the mummy was badly hurt in its battle with the *charmed* slaves, the beetle cannot actually harm the mummy as it has less than 4+1 Hit Dice. (See Table 48: Hit Dice vs. Immunity in the DMG.)

Mummy: AC 3; MV 6; HD 6+3; hp 30 (currently 12); THAC0 13 (17 while underwater); #AT 1; Dmg 1-12 (1-6 while underwater); SA fear, disease; SD +1 or better magical weapons



Tomb of the Concubine

1 Square = 5'

to hit; immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, cold-based attacks, poison, and paralysis; MR special (fights until destroyed); SZ M (6' tall); INT low (6); AL LE; XP 3,000; MM/261.

The mummy is not well adapted to fighting underwater and strikes last each round with a -4 penalty to hit. It cannot swim or even float and is limited to walking slowly along the floor of the water-filled tomb. On the other hand, the mummy's greatest weakness—fire—is not likely to be a factor in the current environment. The mummy's touch inflicts mummy rot, which is fatal in 1-6 months. In addition, anyone coming within 10 feet of a mummy underwater has a 50% chance of contracting the mummy rot disease, as the creature exudes particles that float around it in the water.

The sword sticking out of the mummy's back is a *longsword* +1—the weapon of one of the human slaves who went on the second rescue mission into the tomb (and was slain, along with his comrades). The mummy has been unable to reach the *longsword* to remove it, and it was the sound of the hilt scratching the stone wall of the tomb that first alerted the PCs.

Giant diving beetle: AC 2; MV 6, swim 15, fly 9 (C); HD 4; hp 16 (currently 11); THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SZ M (5' long); ML 8; INT non (0); AL N; XP 175; *DRAGON Magazine* #250/89. The beetle has a bubble of air adhering to its body and paddles swiftly through the water with its oarlike rear legs. If the PCs slay the beetle, they can poke their heads into the air bubble to cast spells with verbal components or activate magical items requiring command words.

3. Servants' Chamber. This 15' x 20' room is filled with numerous carved, wooden statues depicting humans engaged in various tasks: threshing grain, baking bread, gathering fruits, fishing with slim spears, and so on. Each statue stands 3 feet high, and many are tipped over on their sides or leaning against the walls or against each other. The pharaoh included these statues in Othaey's tomb so that she'd have plenty of servants to see to her needs in the next life. PCs investigating the statues of the fishermen find that their fishing spears are made of metal and can be pulled from the statues' wooden hands, serving adequately as javelins. There are six in all.

Floating at the top of the room is a small, overturned boat similar to a canoe. It tipped over when the lake waters rushed into the tomb, trapping a small pocket of air under it. This air pocket provides the PCs a place to swallow the contents of a potion or cast a spell requiring verbal components.

4. Food Storage. The first PC to enter this 15' x 20' room is struck in the face by a trout swimming blindly out of a murky cloud centered in the room. The cloud is a mixture of flour, dried plants, and grains that were stored here to feed Othaey in the next life. The foodstuffs were perfectly preserved for centuries until the lake waters spilled into the tomb; the cloud reduces visibility in the room by half. (See the "Underwater Adventuring" sidebar on the next page.)

The walls are carved with pictures depicting a variety of foods: bound sheaths of grain, fruits, vegetables, and strutting game birds.

The trout wandered into the tomb by accident. It is not a threat to the PCs but might be a source of amusement. The trout wanders throughout the tomb complex looking for a way out and might be encountered again.

5. Entryway. This long hallway is the original entrance to the tomb and was sealed off upon Othaey's entombment. Three portcullis block the passage as a deterrent to tomb raiders who might dig their way into the tomb in the hopes of uncovering the riches within. At the moment, the portcullis are the only things keeping Dorothea alive, for she managed to squeeze her lithe body between the bars while being pursued by a crypt cat.

The undead leopard (Othaey's pet) is having a bad day. It was interrupted from its eternal slumber by the sensation that intruders had entered its mistress's domain. Returning to unholy life, it was amazed to see the tomb filling with water! Now completely submerged, it struggles with two conflicting impulses: to destroy the intruders and to curl up and hide from all of the water! It chased Dorothea down the hallway, but she managed to slip through the bars. The crypt cat waits at the threshold of the first portcullis, reaching in with its claws in a vain attempt to catch the young nixie.

Dorothea is glad to see the PCs and warns them of the danger once they come within 30 feet. The crypt cat is grateful for a foe it can actually reach and leaps to the attack.

Freckles (crypt cat-leopard): AC 7; MV 15 (7 underwater); HD 4+1; hp 13; THAC0 17 (21 underwater); #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA rake for 1-4/1-4 points of damage if both front claws hit, disease; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, death magic, and poison; SZ M (4' long); ML 10; INT semi (4); AL CN; XP 650; MCA2/26 (modified).

Freckles's fear of water causes it to make a Morale check each round; failure indicates that it does not attack that round as it's distracted and befuddled by the water. If it attacks and inflicts damage, the victim must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or become infected with a disease: 2 points of damage from each wound inflicted by the crypt cat do not heal, by magical means or otherwise, until a *cure disease* or *heal* spell is cast upon the victim. Freckles can be turned as a wraith and appears as a gaunt leopard with skin stretched taut over a skeletal frame. Clumps of fur are missing from its mangy coat, and what fur remains is covered in patches of wet clay.

Dorothea (young nixie): AC 7; MV 6, swim 12; HD ¼; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA *charm person*; MR 25%; SZ S (3½' tall); ML 10; INT very (12); AL N; XP 270 (for rescue only); MM/328 (sprite).

Like all nixie children, Dorothea wears a bone dagger on her hip. She can talk underwater (her vocal chords are built for aquatic communication) and can see with 60' infravision. Of course, her infravision isn't helping much at the moment, since the stone walls of the tomb are of uniform temperature and the

Underwater Adventuring

Of Ships and the Sea does an excellent job describing the differences between adventuring on land and adventuring underwater. If this source is unavailable, underwater combat is covered in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*, and rules for underwater spellcasting are found in *The Complete Wizard's Handbook*. The swimming rules can be found in Chapter 14 of the *Player's Handbook*.

In Stillwater Lake, the PCs can see to a range of 50 feet at the surface, and 10 feet less for each 10 feet of depth. The sky is clear during the adventure, so the PCs need not worry about decreased light due to cloudiness. Once they pass through the magical conduit, however, they must depend upon their own light sources for illumination, as the pyramid's interior is pitch black.

Some important things to keep in mind:

- Artificial light sources function at "half effectiveness" underwater. Thus, the 20' illumination provided by the nixie slave's *dagger* +1 extends only 10 feet while underwater. Spells such as *light* and *continual light* suffer a similar halving of their radius of effect.

- The PCs under the effects of nixie-bestowed *water breathing* cannot speak, as their lungs and vocal chords are filled with water. This prevents wizards and priests from casting spells with verbal components and also prohibits the use of any magical item triggered by a command word. The only exceptions to this are if the PCs make it to one of the air-filled areas in the pyramid (areas 3 and 5, or the beetle in area 2); even then, it takes a full round of sputtering and coughing up water before normal speaking is possible. PCs breathing underwater by a different method (a *helm of underwater action*, an *airy water* spell, etc.) might be able to speak, depending on the magic involved.

crypt cat radiates no body heat. Like all nixies, Dorothea is frightened by bright lights, and she backs down the corridor at the presence of magical illumination. She's been all the way to the end of the corridor and knows that the passageway is both blocked off and air-filled at the end.

If the PCs defeat the crypt cat, they can coax Dorothea out from behind the portcullis by simply letting her know that they've come to bring her home. (She assumes they are *charmed* slaves sent by her mother.) If the PCs don't have Vhanyssa with them, Dorothea insists that they find her before leaving the tomb, even if it means slipping away from the PCs and looking for Vhanyssa on her own.

The bars of the portcullis allow Small-sized PCs to slip through but prevent larger PCs

- Unless the PCs are lucky enough to possess a *ring of free action*, *helm of underwater action*, or similar magic, they add 4 to their initiative rolls and suffer a -4 attack penalty while underwater. This penalty applies not only to the PCs but also to the other non-aquatic denizens of the tomb, namely the mummies and the crypt cat. To speed up combat, the DM might wish to ignore the penalty on both sides when the PCs are battling the mummies and crypt cat. The PCs' -4 attack penalty can also be dropped when they're fighting aquatic creatures by simply giving the aquatic creatures a +4 bonus to their attack rolls.

- If the PCs find it difficult to slay either the mummies or crypt cat, the players should keep in mind that slaying the undead is not the PCs' primary goal. They were sent into the tomb to find and rescue those who entered the tomb before them. Mummies and crypt cats are normally suitable foes for characters of higher level, and there is no shame in backing off from combat with more powerful enemies.

The mummies' slow movement rate underwater and the crypt cat's habit of freezing up at the thought of being surrounded by water should make it easy for the PCs to disengage and seek refuge long enough to find a place where they can apply whatever healing they have available, before reengaging the undead in battle if necessary.

- The two easiest ways to provide magical healing while underwater are a paladin's "lay on hands" ability (as this does not require the paladin to speak) and eating a *goodberry*. Priests with access to the *goodberry* spell would do well to create as many of these healing berries as possible and distribute them evenly among the party members before entering the underwater tomb.

from passing. Each portcullis requires a combined Strength of 32 to lift, and only two PCs can fit side by side to attempt it. (Dorothea or a gnome or halfling PC can add his or her Strength from the other side of the portcullis; assume the young nixie has a Strength of 7.) Beyond the three portcullis, the corridor bends northeast, rising at a 45° angle. The last 35 feet of the ramp is filled with air, as the water filled the tomb only to the top of the magical conduit and the ramp extends beyond that elevation. If the PCs can get past the three portcullis, the air bubble makes a good place in which to cast healing spells, drink potions, or simply talk and plan strategy.

The northeast end of the corridor is sealed by a giant marble block that cannot be pushed or lifted. Bypassing the block requires spells

such as *dig*, *passwall*, or *transmute rock to mud*. If the PCs somehow make it to the exterior of the pyramid, the DM should feel free to place it in some out-of-the-way desert location in his or her game world. Of course, the pyramid has been abandoned for centuries, and it's likely that the whole thing is now buried under a sand dune.

6. Early Historical Chamber. This chamber has carved pictures on each of the walls, among which are fitted the hieroglyphic symbols of Othaey's ancient language. The carvings on the wall depict her as a small child in the poor quarter of the city, as a young woman tending to a wounded kitten, and as an older woman with a leopard by her side.

The room is currently occupied by the corpses of three warrior nixies and three human slaves. Each is mutilated beyond recognition, although their races are still identifiable by their sizes and garments. The mummies, for lack of a better place to put them, stacked the corpses in one corner after slaying them. Each corpse has decomposed unnaturally as a result of mummy rot; since they've been dead more than 6 rounds, it's impossible to revive them with a *resurrection* or *raise dead* spell. Stacked alongside the bodies are the nixies' three daggers and three javelins, as well as a short sword and a mace belonging to two of the slaves. (The third slave owned the *longsword* +1 planted between the shoulder blades of the mummy in area 2.)

7. Late Historical Chamber. Similar to area 6, this room tells in carved pictures and hieroglyphs of the pharaoh's first meeting with Othaey, their falling in love, and her coming to live at his palace as his concubine. The entire east wall is a gigantic carved mural of the pharaoh and a smaller Othaey at his side, smiling serenely. A leopard sits at her feet.

A short stairway leads down to the next level, 20 feet below.

8. Cat Heaven.

This room is dominated by a black marble statue of a woman with a cat's head. A jeweled necklace hangs from her throat, and her eyes are glittering gemstones. She watches over scores of small cat statues scattered in random fashion on the floor. Some are wooden, some stone, and some are glazed pottery. All are painted with an amazing attention to detail.

Each cat statue is about 1' tall and worth 10d10 gp. There are 42 statues in all. PCs who explore the chamber notice that the walls are carved with idyllic scenes of cats running through fields, chasing butterflies and birds, and so forth.

The cat-headed woman represents one of the deities of Othaey's pantheon. (It was said that this goddess gave Othaey the ability to tame even the fiercest felines.) Although the pharaoh's civilization has been dead for centuries, the gods still have some sway into the world of mortals. Anyone who takes a cat statue from the tomb or pries the jeweled eyes from the cat-headed goddess is cursed (no saving throw). The mere presence of a cat brings on a severe allergic reaction, filling the cursed individual's eyes with tears, closing sinuses, and causing a sneezing fit. During such time and for 1–10 turns after leaving the cat's presence, the cursed victim incurs a –2 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws and suffers a +2 penalty to Armor Class. Freckles, as an undead creature, does not trigger this reaction.

The curse can only be revoked by a lawful good priest casting a *remove curse* spell, after which the individual must perform a quest in the service of the cat goddess. (She'll visit the infidel in a dream and inform him or her of the task.) The exact quest is left to the DM but should involve a cat somehow: rescuing a member of a rare cat species, freeing a displacer beast from a wealthy nobleman's private zoo, or something similar.

The necklace around the statue's neck becomes a *necklace of strangulation* once removed. The tiger's eye gems that serve as the goddess's eyes are worth 20 gp each.

Swimming among the various cat statues is a lamprey that was sucked into the vortex shortly after the nixie girls. It has been swimming blindly through the dark waters of the tomb, searching for food. It attacks a random PC, attempting to fasten its sphincter-like mouth onto exposed skin so it can suck blood. Unless slain, it bites a PC on the first round and automatically inflicts 2 points of damage each round for 2 rounds before detaching. If still alive after detaching, it swims away, its thirst for blood temporarily assuaged.

Lamprey: AC 7; MV swim 12; HD 1+2; hp 5; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA blood drain; SZ S (2' long); ML 7; INT non (0); AL N; XP 65; MM/117 (fish) and MC2 (lamprey).

9. Mummy Niches. These two niches hold a pair of upright stone sarcophagi that once contained mummies. The mummies were placed in Othaey's tomb as guardians.

Both sarcophagi are open and empty, as the mummies have responded to the threat posed by intruders in the tomb. (One mummy is encountered in area 2, the other in area 10.)

10. Othaey's Resting Place.

This six-sided room has a peaked, 30'-high ceiling. It is dominated by an enormous and elaborately decorated stone sarcophagus in

the center of the room, which rests on an even larger slab of black marble. Behind the sarcophagus is a semicircular niche with a raised dais, upon which rests a painted wooden statue of a beautiful woman seated on a golden throne with arms sculpted like griffins.

Blocking the entranceway is an emaciated, white-garbed figure with wisps of cloth swaying in all directions as it reaches in vain for something above it. Sensing your presence, it turns slowly and faces you with sunken, hate-filled eyes.

This is the second of the two guardian mummies; PCs must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or be paralyzed with fright for 1–4 rounds. (PCs who are paralyzed with fear lose any Dexterity modifiers to their Armor Class.) This mummy chased Vhanyssa in here and is trying to reach her. It attacks the PCs on sight, fighting until turned or destroyed.

Mummy: hp 30 (currently 23); other statistics are the same as the mummy in area 2.

Vhanyssa (young nixie): hp 2; other statistics are the same as Dorothea in area 5.

Vhanyssa and Dorothea spilled down the stairs and into area 2 when the conduit was accidentally formed. Dazed by hitting the stone floor, they ran in fright when the mummies exited their coffins and pursued them through the quickly rising waters. The two nixies were separated, Dorothea heading toward area 5 and Vhanyssa dodging into areas 6 and 7. By the time the first rescue party entered the tomb, Dorothea was trapped by the crypt cat behind the portcullis at area 5. Vhanyssa had to duck into this room to avoid the mummy that had dispatched the earlier groups of rescuers. She's managed to remain out of range by swimming to the top of the chamber where the mummy cannot follow, but she has been afraid and unable to swim past the tireless undead guardian.

If the PCs manage to slay the mummy, Vhanyssa descends from the ceiling. If Dorothea is with the PCs, Vhanyssa rushes to her sister's arms and embraces her with obvious relief. If Dorothea is not present, Vhanyssa insists that the PCs help her find her sister, going off on her own if necessary.

The sarcophagus is sculpted in the form of a young woman—the same woman depicted by the wooden statue in the alcove. The stone lid covering the sarcophagus requires a combined Strength of 40 to lift. In addition, its seamless fit requires the PCs to chip handholds into the lid with a chisel before attempting the lift. (Telekinetic magic, if available, might come in handy here.) If the lid is removed, a bubble of stale air rises from the sealed sarcophagus to float at the top of the peaked chamber, and Othaey's mummified body is revealed. She has been perfectly pre-

served, looking the same as she did in life. Othaey is not undead and does not move if her sarcophagus is opened. Tomb robbers are in for a disappointment as well; as befits her humble beginnings, Othaey's mummy was not buried wearing riches and jewelry. (Those are all in a separate chamber upstairs.)

On the floor at the foot of the sarcophagus is a pile of broken clay pieces. Some of the chunks are big enough to show details of a feline form with painted glazed spots. (This is the remains of Freckles's clay sarcophagus, which it broke to pieces "hatching" in response to the violation of Othaey's tomb.)

Two of the corners each hold two ceramic jars. These are Othaey's canopic jars, in which her internal organs are stored as per her religious beliefs. They underwent a preservation process similar to the rest of Othaey's body; opening a jar reveals a lump of tissue still recognizable as one of her major organs (lungs, heart, stomach, liver, and intestines).

The wooden statue is nothing more than an elaborate carving of Othaey as she appeared in life. The statue is meant to act as a receptacle for the young concubine's spirit, although it is nonmagical. The griffin throne is covered in gold but is far too heavy to lift.

11. Treasure Room. This large chamber is the cause of the whole misadventure, for it is piled high with all manner of golden statues, fine silks, gems, jewelry, intricately carved pieces of marble, jade, turquoise, and the like, all worth the ransom of a king. Unfortunately for the PCs, the earthquake that killed Psutekh centuries ago also caused the magical *conduit bracelet* to fall from its perch on a cabinet of gold-banded teakwood onto the floor near the doorway to the stairs. Thus, when Vhanyssa

accidentally triggered the conduit, it formed so close to the doorway that it effectively blocks the way into the treasure room. Once activated, the conduit cannot be moved, so there's no way to move the portal out of the way without permanently severing the link to the other *conduit bracelet* in Stillwater Lake.

However, all hope is not lost for the PCs. Since the magical conduit is circular and the doorway is rectangular, there are gaps in the corners large enough to stretch an arm into the room. The PCs won't be able to clean out the place, but there are a few small objects within reach. Below is a list of the visible objects in the treasure room within reach that can fit through the gap between the conduit and the floor. Tell each player what his or her character can see within reach and let the player decide what to grab:

- Necklace comprised of strings of small rubies (worth 500 gp total).
- Black carving of a beetle. This is actually a *scarab of protection* +1 carved from obsidian.
- Polished silver hand mirror set in ivory (worth 75 gp).
- Nonmagical gold ring (worth 50 gp).
- White marble cylinder. This is actually a playing piece to an ancient board game and is worth 1 sp.
- Small turtle shell. This is an actual turtle that swam through the conduit!
- Sealed vial containing perfume valued at 100 gp (but ruined if opened underwater).
- Ornate golden dagger valued at 125 gp, but too weak a metal for a combat weapon.

If the PCs investigate the treasure room immediately upon entering the tomb, the DM should allow them to reach all of the above items without incident. However, they were

sent through the portal not to gather up treasure but to rescue those who entered the tomb before them. Once the "goodies" have been gathered up, a subtle reminder should be given: Perhaps the PCs hear the combat between the mummy and the giant diving beetle in area 2.

If the PCs investigate the treasure room after having explored the rest of the tomb (and hopefully having rescued the nixie children), the *conduit bracelets'* time limit has nearly expired, and the magical portal is about ready to shut down permanently. As soon as the second object is removed from the treasure room, the conduit starts to flicker. This is a sign that the magic is starting to fade. (As mentioned in the "Conduit Bracelets" sidebar, Psutekh did not bother making the *conduit bracelets* permanent, believing that he would never need them again once Othaey's tomb had been looted.) For each round after the conduit starts to flicker, there is a cumulative 5% chance that the conduit closes, permanently stranding anyone still in the tomb. PCs would be well advised to grab what they can quickly and make it through the portal before its magic fades forever. If they've been rescued by the PCs, Dorothea and Vhanyssa jump through the portal at the first opportunity, worried more about seeing their family again than about what buried riches might be available in the tomb.

Returning To Stillwater Lake

Read or paraphrase the following once the PCs leave the pyramid via the conduit; the text assumes that the PCs rescued Dorothea and Vhanyssa and should be modified if the PCs were unsuccessful.

continued on page 44



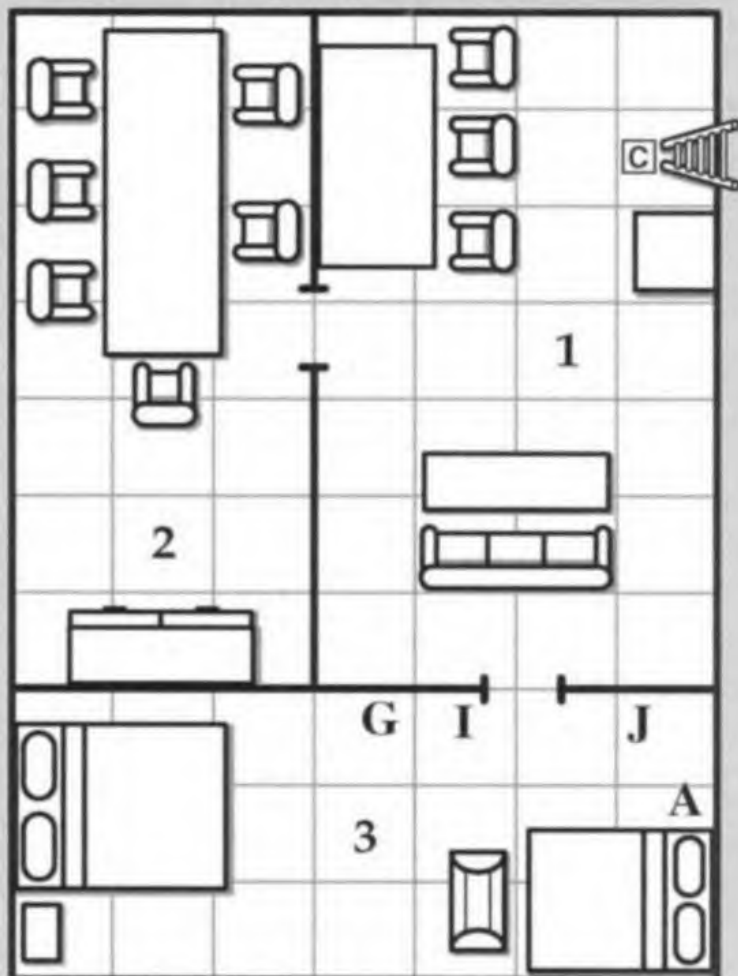
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by Aaron Williams



SIDE TREKS

Bag of Lodging One square = 5 feet



BY JEFFREY P. CARPENTER

Cartography by Renee Ciske

"Unexpected Guests" is an AD&D® Side Trek adventure designed for 4-6 PCs of levels 4-6 (about 25 total levels). The module can be placed in any setting, as the focus of the adventure is a new magical item, a *bag of lodging*. The ideal scenario for the adventure is that the PCs find the *bag* among other items in some small treasure hoard or in a storage chamber.

The *bag of lodging* looks like any other dusty, half-full sack, and it is tied at the top with a small leather cord.

The Treasure Within

When a PC attempts to untie the *bag*, the knot refuses to loosen. Physically attempting to open or cut the *bag* proves extremely difficult. (See the "New Magical Item" sidebar for details.) A PC who lifts up the *bag* to examine its bottom notices a small piece of frayed leather on the floor beneath it. The strip of leather has a single word branded into it: "mogorat" (the command word to loosen the cord and open the *bag*). If a PC speaks this word aloud, the cord on the *bag* glows with a

soft blue light, and the PC who spoke the word can now loosen the knot easily. No other PC, however, can loosen the knot unless she, too, speaks the proper command word. The *bag* remains open for 1 turn before the rope tightens once more, and a PC must once again utter the command word to loosen it.

When a PC opens the *bag*, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

As you untie the knot and open the dusty sack, the bag's opening begins to expand, reaching a diameter of five feet. Suddenly you see two long, wooden planks appear out of thin air inside the sack. The planks are, in fact, the sides of a ladder whose first rung materializes about six inches into the sack. The ladder appears to lead down to the floor of a large chamber that is lit by some unseen source. From the opening in the sack, you can see that the wooden floor is covered by a large rug, and a small table stands to one side of the ladder. An ornate pitcher rests on the table.

The source of the lighting is not visible from the opening of the *bag*. The ladder and the chamber below remain in sight even if the open *bag* is lifted off the floor. If any of the PCs decide to climb down the ladder, its rungs are coarse and easy to grip. The ladder remains in place if the *bag* is moved or tied up.

As the PCs reach the bottom of the ladder, read or paraphrase the following:

The air is warm and fresh in this rectangular room. The chamber is lit by three shining orbs hanging from the ceiling. Next to the ladder is a square oak table with an empty pitcher on it. Positioned against the opposite wall is a large table with three matching chairs. In the center of the room is a plush sofa with a low table in front of it. A tapestry hanging on one wall depicts a tall tower of stone standing at the foot of a gray mountain. Two archways lead from the room, one near the large table, the other behind the sofa.

Each chamber is lit by glass spheres with *continual light* spells cast upon them. The spheres are mounted to the tips of iron shafts that protrude from the ceiling about eight feet above the floor.

Waiting in area 3 are four derro who have been imprisoned in the *bag of lodging*. The derro watch the PCs as they descend the ladder and prepare an ambush. The DM should either have the PCs roll for surprise once they reach the chamber floor or make secret surprise rolls for them.

Anglinar is a male derro savant, and Induras and Gromara are his students. (They are also brother and sister.) Juspetta, the other

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

female derro, serves as Anglinar's bodyguard. The derro's positions are indicated on the map with letters (A, I, G, and J respectively).

If the PCs move through the archway to area 2 within 3 rounds, the derro try to escape. Anglinar uses his *spider climb* spell to run along the wall nearest the ladder while the students run to the base of the ladder and use *levitate* spells to escape. Juspetta guards the rear, and Anglinar casts *levitate* on her after he escapes from the bag. It takes 2 rounds for all the derro to escape. Once they are outside, they try to close the bag and trap the PCs. If the PCs speak the proper command word, they can loosen the bag, at which point the derro simply flee.

If the PCs stay near the ladder but are surprised by the derro, Anglinar has already cast *invisibility* on Juspetta, and Juspetta quietly approaches and attacks any obvious spellcasters, preferring a wizard to a priest. Once visible, Juspetta uses her improved tumbling abilities to dodge any attacks directed at her. Anglinar casts his *slow* spell at the PCs. Meanwhile, Gromara casts *wall of fog* on the PCs, then attacks with her crossbow. Induras casts *invisibility* on himself and attacks the weakest-looking PC from behind. If things go badly, all three derro spellcasters attempt to *levitate* out of the bag while Juspetta covers her master's escape, climbing the ladder when an opportunity presents itself.

The Occupants

The derro were imprisoned in the bag by Drutheb, a rival savant who was jealous of Anglinar's influence within the derro community. Drutheb realized that if he could trick Anglinar into the bag, he could rid himself of his rival in a manner that would not arouse undue suspicion. Anglinar was known to disappear from the derro community for months on end, exploring the Underdark in search of new magic.

Upon learning of the bag, Anglinar brought two of his most adept students and his personal bodyguard to explore the extradimensional space. Drutheb escorted the four derro into the bag and then used a *ring of spell storing* to escape the bag via *teleport*; he then closed the bag, trapping his rivals within. Unfortunately for Drutheb, his luck ran out; on the way home, he was captured by a group of bugbear slavers. The bag was taken, but the slavers could not open it. During an escape attempt by several slaves, the bag was stolen,

and it changed hands for almost a year before the PCs found it.

Anglinar (male derro savant): AC 2; MV 9; HD 7; hp 31; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; SA spells; SD spells, *comprehend languages* and *read magic*; MR 30%; Str 9, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 13; SZ S; ML 14; AL CE; XP 4,000; MM/96-97.

Anglinar wears *bracers of defense* AC 4 and carries a *secari* (dagger) and *potion of extra-healing*.

Spells currently memorized: 1st—*spider climb*, *ventriloquism*, *wall of fog*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *levitate*; 3rd—*slow*; 4th—*confusion*.

Anglinar has secretly resigned himself to his captivity. He has spent a great deal of time studying the effects of his spells in this extradimensional space, and he has continued to educate his students. He is normally calm and calculating, but the thought of finally being free (coupled with his desire to exact terrible revenge on his treacherous rival) have rendered him almost insane. He does whatever it takes to escape the bag, even if it means leaving his followers behind.

Induras and **Gromara** (derro student savants): AC 4; MV 9; HD 5; hp 28, 25; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type or spell; SA spells; SD spells, *comprehend languages* and *read magic*; MR 30%; Dex 16, Int 15, roll 2d4+6 for other abilities; SZ S; ML 13; XP 2,000; MM/96-97.

Induras carries a spiked buckler, spear, and *secari* (dagger). He wears studded leather armor and a *ring of fire resistance*.

Spells memorized: 1st—*magic missile*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *levitate*.

Gromara carries a buckler, military pick, *secari* (dagger), and repeating light crossbow (#AT 2/round; Dmg 1d3; holds six bolts). She wears studded leather armor and *eyes of minute seeing*.

Spells memorized: 1st—*wall of fog*; 2nd—*levitate*.

Induras and Gromara are normally arrogant and demanding, but they have become abject during their confinement in the bag. However, with the possibility of freedom in reach, they fight with cool resolve. They feel that Anglinar's overwhelming pride is responsible for their imprisonment and, if they escape, they might even try to close the bag and trap Anglinar inside. Despite their treacherous nature, the siblings are loyal to one another.

Juspetta (derro lieutenant): AC 2 (-2 when tumbling); MV 9; HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 15;

The Bag of Lodging

1. Main Room. This chamber contains a sofa, a table with three chairs, and a small table with a fine silver pitcher (worth 30 gp) on it. The pitcher radiates magic and functions like a *decanter of endless water* inside the bag; however, its magic functions only as long as the pitcher remains in the bag. If removed from the bag, the pitcher temporarily loses its ability to produce water. The command word for the pitcher, "everful," is engraved on the bottom of it.

The ladder to the outside remains intact against the wall. A small silver bell hanging on the wall behind the ladder rings whenever the bag is opened from the outside.

The walls of the chamber are paneled with oak, giving it the look and feel of a comfortable lodge. Hanging on the wall next to the small table by the ladder is a finely spun tapestry depicting a stone tower at the foot of a mountain. The tapestry is worth 100 gp and weighs 10 lbs.

2. Kitchen. This chamber contains a long table and six chairs. A small cabinet holds a set of silver dishes (worth 150 gp total), and a small drawer in the cabinet contains silverware (worth 50 gp total). A large ladle fashioned from a gorgon's horn lies on the table, and *unseen servants* use it to conjure enough gruel for up to six humans per day. The "ladle" functions only within the confines of the bag.

3. Bedroom. The derro hide here. The bedroom contains two large wooden beds, thick shag rugs, a small chest, and a wooden nightstand with a drawer. The chest and nightstand drawer are both empty unless the DM wishes to place something here that leads PCs to another adventure. (See "Concluding the Adventure.")

New Magical Item

Bag of Lodging

This bag appears to be an ordinary cloth sack, two feet wide and four feet high, and has a leather cord for tying the sack closed.

Once the proper command word is spoken, the bag of lodging opens for 1 turn before its cord magically knots itself, sealing the opening until the command word is spoken again (from either outside or inside the bag). When opened, the "mouth" of the bag expands to five feet in diameter.

The extradimensional space inside a bag of lodging consists of 1d4+1 rooms. The rooms are 15' high, and at least one room serves as a kitchen, complete with one or more *unseen servants* who prepare three meals per day (according to the tastes of the bag's creator) for up to six persons. The ingredients for the meals are summoned magically, as per the *create food and water* spell, and prepared by the programmed *unseen servants*.

The bag appears empty from the outside if there are no living creatures within. (Undead and magical constructs such as golems are not considered living creatures.) However, if the bag is occupied by one or more living creatures, it appears half-full of some bulky material and weighs 10 lbs. per man-sized creature inside, up to 60 lbs. maximum.

The bag and its cord cannot be torn or broken by sheer strength; they must be cut by an edged weapon. Both are AC -2 and require 20 points of damage to cut through. Cutting through either the sack or the rope destroys the magic of the bag, and all creatures and items in the sack are cast into the Astral Plane. A *dispel magic* against 14th-level magic opens the bag for 1 turn before it closes again. The bag cannot be opened inside an *anti-magic shell* and has no special resistance to fire, acid, electricity, extreme cold, or similarly damaging effects. A *disintegrate* spell destroys the bag and jettisons all occupants and contents into the Astral Plane.

XP Value: 3,000

GP Value: 9,000

#AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1 (Strength bonus); SD Tumbling NWP (-4 bonus to AC by foregoing all attacks in a round); MR 30%; Str 16, Dex 18, roll 2d4+6 for other abilities; SZ S; ML 13; AL CE; XP 2,000; MM/96-97.

Juspetta wears *studded leather armor* +1 and wields a *hook-fauchard* +1, +3 vs. magic-using or enchanted creatures (25% chance to knock opponent off balance; victim requires 1 round to regain balance) and *secari* (dagger).

Juspetta is a skilled warrior who takes her duty to protect Anglinar seriously. The students are afraid of her. When she is out of earshot, they mock her about her "worthless devotion" to Anglinar. Juspetta gives her life to protect the savant, but she has no qualms about leaving the siblings behind once the savant has escaped.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs defeat the derro, they are free to keep and use their new magical bag for as long as they like, provided they remember the command word. Note that if there are no living creatures inside the bag, it appears to be empty from the outside. It appears half-full if there are living creatures inside the extradimensional pocket, so a wandering creature might steal the bag if the PCs do not take measures to guard or hide it when in use.

If the derro escape, they attempt to close the bag and flee with the PCs trapped inside. If the PCs remember the command word to open the portal, they can try to escape at any time. If the derro took the bag with them, the PCs might be forced to fight the derro (and any allies they have found) to escape.

Follow-up adventures exist if the DM decides to place a set of old papers in the nightstand of the bedchamber (area 3) that provide a detailed description of the location of some wondrous magical item or a map to an abandoned castle (or the tower depicted on the tapestry in area 1). Perhaps the original owner of the bag, having learned of its discovery, seeks out the PCs to retrieve the item. Ω

Jeff works as a network communications engineer and writes: "Working in IT can be like opening the bag: You often don't know what's in store for you, and by the time you find out, it's too late."

You pass through the magical portal and find yourselves back in the lake. Mhartryn has a worried look on her face, but she beams with joy upon seeing her daughters. There are twenty nixies and six human slaves with Mhartryn, each holding a spear or dagger in case something dangerous exits the portal.

Your emergence from the portal is followed by a crackling sound. The blackness within the golden band vanishes as the band shrinks to the size of a small bracelet and sinks slowly to the bottom of the lake.

Mhartryn is saddened to hear of the deaths of the three nixie warriors and three human slaves. True to her word, she releases the slaves upon the safe return of Dorothea and Vhanyssa (both of whom can vouch for the fact that the other nixies and humans were slain by the mummies inside the tomb). Mhartryn touches each slave on the cheek, and they blink as if waking from a dream. Oddly, none of them bears the nixies ill will, and one even chooses to remain with the nixie community (as he's getting on in years and has no other family).

Mhartryn gives the *conduit bracelet* to the PCs, not wanting its evil magic in her lake. (It's nonmagical at this point, but she doesn't know that.) The bracelet is worth 50 gp.

If the question of mummy rot is brought to Mhartryn's attention, she takes the afflicted PCs to Maralinda, a nymph who lives in the nearby forest. Maralinda casts *cure disease* as needed. If the PCs don't think to ask, they'll find out about the disease in the months that follow. (See the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome for details on mummy rot.) The nixies, never having encountered mummies before, know nothing of mummy rot or its consequences. A kind DM might have the elder slave who wants to stay with the nixies recall having heard of the dangers of mummy rot.

As for the rest of the former slaves, they are more than happy to swim to shore and return to their former lives. Most, like Larista, are 0-level humans, but at the DM's option one of the former slaves could be an NPC willing to become a henchman to the PCs. This is also an excellent opportunity to add an extra PC to the party if the players are lucky enough to have another friend wanting to join the game. If this is the case, then the PCs really have found a "peer" amid the waters of Stillwater Lake! Ω

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ALTERNITY.

SCIENCE FICTION ROLEPLAYING GAME

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FAST



PLAY

Bill Slavicsek

What Is This?

This self-contained game gives you and your friends the experience of playing the **ALTERNITY**® science fiction game in an easy-to-learn format. In this *Fast-Play Game*, you and your friends take on imaginary roles in an action-packed tale of brave heroes, weird aliens, and futuristic technology.

This demo version of the game is designed to give you the feel of playing the **ALTERNITY** game. The full game contains all sorts of options to help you create your own ongoing science fiction campaign. We'll tell you more about that at the end of this game.

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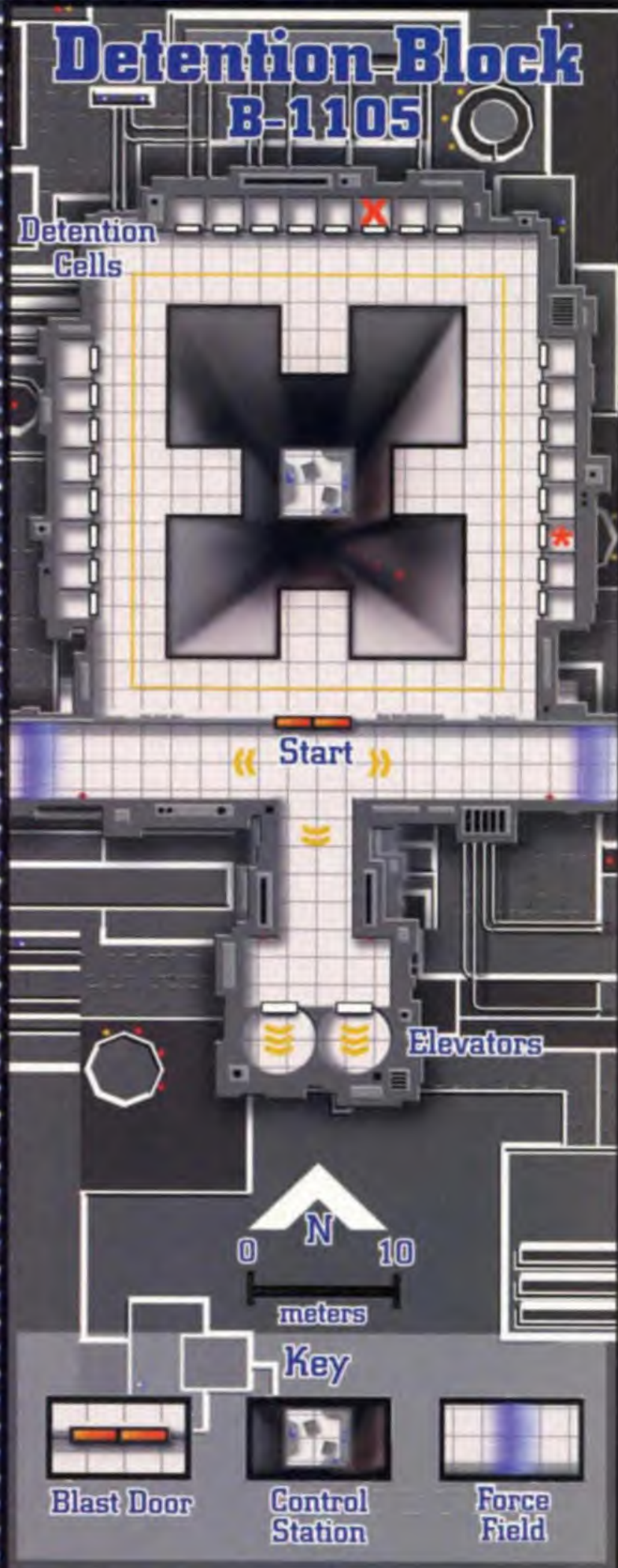
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Based on the **ALTERNITY** game by Bill Slavicsek and Richard Baker

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How Do We Play?

The **ALTERNITY**® *Fast-Play Game* isn't like other games. There's no board, no joystick, no playing pieces. All you need is your imagination, this booklet, and at least three six-sided dice.

One of the players is called the Gamemaster, or GM. The GM's in charge of running the game. The best storyteller in your group should be the GM. Stop reading now and give this booklet to the player who will be the GM.

The GM coordinates the action, tells the other players what their characters see and hear, and resolves battles. You're two parts storyteller, one part CPU, with a little bit of "banker" and stage manager thrown in.

You run the world, and everything in it does your bidding.

The other players run the heroes, who influence the world with every action they take. The players tell the GM what their characters do in situations the GM presents. The heroes—futuristic combat specialists, technicians, free agents, and diplomats—battle evil aliens, protect the galaxy, and collect money so they can buy the coolest tools and weapons that the technology of tomorrow has to offer. If the heroes survive the adventure, the players win the game.

The Heroes

There are four hero sheets in the center of this booklet. Each describes one of the heroes in this far-future tale. Photocopy each sheet, or just remove them and give one sheet to each player. (You don't get a hero sheet. You get the adventure and all the GM characters in it.)

While the players take a few moments to examine their hero sheets, you need to read "The Game Session," below.

The Game Session

How does this work? Well, the *Fast-Play Game* walks you through an **ALTERNITY** adventure, presenting the game rules when you need them—you don't have to memorize anything to play.

In the game, the other players take on the roles of galactic adventurers. You follow the directions presented here, describing situations, making embellishments, and reacting to what the players want their characters to do. In addition, you get to play the roles of the GM characters in the adventure.

Remember, all the action takes place through discussion and dice rolling. Nobody should run around the table or try any stunts—this is make-believe!

Players can speak "in character" ("I attack the robot") or refer to their heroes in the third person ("Furgar attacks the robot"), depending on whatever way they feel comfortable playing. You can decide to use different voices and sound effects when you're running the villains, or you can play it straight and describe the scenes like a narrator in a movie.

GM Aids

Throughout this booklet, you'll find the following visual aids to help you run the adventure.

The Map, printed on the inside cover, is for your eyes only. Use it to keep track of the action and to help describe what the heroes see.

Red Text is called a "Read-aloud." Read this text out loud to the players to describe what their heroes see and hear.

Boxed Text contains rules and advice for running a particular scene in the adventure. It provides you with important directions for playing the game. Don't read boxed text to the players, but do follow the directions contained within it.

✧ That's it! Now we're ready to start playing!

GM Secrets and Sidebars

appear everywhere else in the booklet. Don't read this material (or anything that isn't red text) to the players. We tell the GM everything, but the players should figure out the adventure's secrets for themselves. Note that you can skip the Sidebars entirely if you want. They contain advice and suggestions, but aren't crucial to the adventure itself.

Scene 1: Battle at the Blast Doors

Once the players have looked over their hero sheets, you can start the adventure. Remember, only read the shaded text to the players. Everything else is for your information only.

At the end of the shaded text, you turn things over to the players. They decide if their heroes open a blast door, attack a surge-soldier, run away, or something else entirely, depending on the situation. It's their choice.

Handy GM Tip: Sketching a Map

You might want to make a rough sketch of where the heroes are so that the players can visualize the scene. Use the map on page 46 as a guide. (Just draw the blast doors, the side corridors, and the corridor leading to the elevators. Nothing else can be seen from where the heroes are at this point in the adventure.)

The players tell you what their heroes are doing. You then tell them the results of what they did. This booklet walks you through the hard parts, and tells you how to handle the situations presented. When the heroes try something that isn't covered in the text, just make it up! That's the fun of the **ALTERNITY** game.

Now turn on your imagination and read the following to the players:

Each of you has a hero—a wren marine, a technical specialist, a spy, or a spacehand. These valiant adventurers are devoted to ridding the galaxy of evil. It's the far future, and the heroes utilize fantastic technology, amazing weapons, and their natural skills to keep Known Space safe. If your heroes do well, they'll win the day and survive to gain power and experience. And together, we'll tell an exciting story.

I'm going to be the Gamemaster for this adventure. I'll describe what your characters see, and you'll tell me what your heroes do based on those descriptions. Ready? Let's begin.

Let the players introduce their characters to each other. Then read:

You work for the Galactic Concord, a union of stellar nations devoted to the advancement of civilization. Many enemies threaten the Concord, including the Serin-Ru. Using powerful surge-soldiers and killer robots, the Serin-Ru have invaded Concord space and attacked peaceful planets. In a recent raid, the Serin-Ru captured Talo Kestrel, a Concord ambassador whom Intelligence believes is being held in a Serin-Ru space-station prison orbiting the moon, Polmiir.

You have been sent in your starship, the Lancelot, to break into the station, locate the ambassador, and rescue him. An hour ago, you avoided the protective sensor arrays and took your ship into an empty hangar bay on the station. Now, you have located the blast doors that lead to Detention Block B-1105 (where Intelligence says the ambassador is being held). There's a computer panel next to the locked doors. Before you can begin the process of opening the doors, the elevators on the far end of the corridor slide open and a squad of surge-soldiers spill out.

What are your heroes going to do?

You've asked the players what they want their heroes to do. Now, they need to tell you what actions their heroes are going to perform.

The heroes have a couple of obvious options. They can run away down the corridor to either side of the blast doors. They can attack the surge-soldiers. Or they can try to open the blast doors. Find the action below that comes closest to what the heroes are doing and follow the directions. (Note: The characters don't all have to do the same thing. Three can attack and one can try to open the blast door, for example.)

A. Run Away

This really won't do a lot of good. The heroes are on a space station, many decks away from where they parked their starship. While they have avoided detection up to now, it appears that the Serin-Ru know that intruders have invaded the station. Force fields block the side corridors, preventing the heroes from going too far to the right or left. If they remain by a force field, the soldiers move into the corridor and attack (see "B").

B. Attack the Surge-Soldiers

If the heroes decide to attack the surge-soldiers, read this out loud:

Six surge-soldiers take positions in front of the elevators, using the corridor walls for partial cover. Each soldier wears dark red armor emblazoned with the silver slash marks of the Serin-Ru. The armor covers each soldier from head to foot, offering protection from most attacks. The surge-soldiers carry quantum blasters, heavy-looking weapons that are more powerful than pistols but not as bulky as rifles. They raise their weapons and start firing.

What are your heroes going to do?

In an action round, each character can perform one action. An action can be any skill use, including an attack. (A selection of skills is listed on every hero sheet.)

In a combat action round, each hero makes one attack. If the attack succeeds, that hero makes a damage roll, and you record the damage the enemy suffered.

Then you make one attack for each enemy, rolling for damage if a surge-soldier successfully hits a hero. As GM, you run the surge-soldiers as you see fit. You decide which heroes get attacked and what the surge-soldiers do in the round.

If there are still heroes and enemies standing after the first action round, keep playing through rounds until the enemies have been defeated, the heroes have fallen, or the heroes have opened the blast doors and moved into the detention block.

Heroes Attack

The players make the attack skill rolls for their heroes. To make an attack skill roll, a player rolls three dice.

If the total is **equal to or less than** the hero's skill number (as recorded on each player's hero sheet), the attack succeeds.

If the total is **greater than** the hero's skill number, the attack fails this round.

(The heroes can make **rifle** or **pistol** attacks from a distance, depending on the skills and equipment on their sheets. If the heroes advance to fight close up, they can make **grav mace** or **brawl** attacks.)

If an attack succeeds, the player then makes a damage roll, as listed on the hero sheet. You record this damage on the Surge-Soldier Durability chart (see below). When all of a surge-soldier's Durability boxes are marked off, that soldier dies.

Amazing Success: If someone rolls three 1s when making a skill check, that's an Amazing success! The skill use succeeds spectacularly.

When making an attack, an Amazing success means that the target goes down in spectacular fashion, regardless of how tough the enemy is. When using another skill, consider an Amazing success to be the best possible result—the hero climbed like an acrobat or spotted the most obscure clue, for example.

Critical Failure: If someone rolls three 6s when making a skill check, that's a Critical Failure. The skill check fails, and sometimes something awful occurs. If the heroes are having a difficult time, you can determine that a Critical Failure just means the skill didn't work.

If they're breezing through the adventure, use a Critical Failure to throw an obstacle in their way. A weapon runs out of ammo or a security alarm sounds an alert, for example. It all depends on what skill was used at the time.

After each of the heroes has had a chance to attack once, it's the surge-soldiers' turn ...

Surge-Soldiers Attack

You roll for the surge-soldiers. The soldiers have pistol skills of 10. Roll three dice for each soldier. If the total is **equal to or less than 10**, the soldier hits.

If a soldier hits a hero, roll one die and add 2. The hero marks off that many Durability boxes (printed on the hero sheet). If all of a hero's Durability boxes are marked off, that hero dies.

The surge-soldiers can achieve Critical Failures. See the "Heroes Attack" box for details. For the purposes of this Fast-Play Game, however, they can't get an Amazing success. Three 1s just indicate ordinary success.

Close-Up Attack

If the heroes get close enough to use their **brawl** or **grav mace** skills on a surge-soldier, that soldier won't be able to bring his quantum blaster to bear. Instead, he'll have to use the weapon like a club.

The soldiers have **club** skills of 11. Roll equal to or less than 11 on a club attack, and the soldier hits. A club attack inflicts one die of damage.

Surge-Soldier Durability

Soldier 1	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Soldier 2	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Soldier 3	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Soldier 4	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Soldier 5	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Soldier 6	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Keep playing rounds of combat as described above until the heroes beat the soldiers or the soldiers defeat the heroes.

Handy GM Tip: Cool Voices

Use a flat, lifeless voice when the surge-soldiers speak. For the sentinel robots, use a mechanical voice and use lots of one- or two-word sentences. The big villain, Warden Klu-donn, has a deep voice.

By changing your voice to match the GM character you're playing, you set the tone of the scene and help your players better visualize the action.

Handy GM Tip: Dead or Defeated Heroes

Death happens. The threat of getting your hero's clock cleaned adds excitement to the game. However, dead heroes aren't much fun. Here are some options for retrieving dead characters:

***Is the Hero Really Dead?** A character who loses all of his or her Durability is out of the game—unless someone applies a trauma pack. Laskk, Daw, and Furgar each carry one trauma pack. This item restores lost Durability if administered at the first opportunity.*

***Share Characters.** If a player is running two heroes, and another player's hero dies, give that player one of the remaining heroes.*

***Bring in a New Hero.** The heroes can find a friend in one of the prison cells. (After they search and open a cell, that is.) Just change the name. Daw becomes Dallas, for example.*

***Start Over.** If all of the heroes are killed or defeated, the Concord sends a new band to rescue the ambassador. They have the same statistics as the previous group; they just have different names.*

If the heroes are defeated, they wake up in a cell in the detention block. See the Sidebar on "Dead or Defeated Heroes." After the heroes defeat the soldiers or otherwise get through the blast doors, go on to the next section of the adventure.

Taking a Quantum Blaster

The heroes can take the quantum blasters off the surge-soldiers if they defeat all of the soldiers. This weapon requires the **pistol** skill to use. To determine the damage, roll one die and add 2 to the result.

C. Open the Blast Doors

The blast doors are made of thick, heavy metal that can't be damaged by any of the weapons the heroes are carrying. There is a computer control panel in the wall next to the doors. The heroes can use either the **computer hacking** or **repair** skill to disengage the electronic lock through the computer panel. Use these rules:

Each player who tries to open the electronic lock rolls three dice. If the roll is equal to or less than his or her hero's **computer hacking** or **repair** score (as recorded on each player's hero sheet), the lock is disengaged.

Each skill use requires one action round. If the check fails, the hero can make another attempt in each subsequent round until the blast doors open. If a hero gets a Critical Failure (by rolling three 6s), that hero can't figure out the lock and has to stop trying. Another hero can pick up the slack, however.

Remember, if the surge-soldiers are still around, they'll attack the heroes to keep them from opening the blast doors. This shouldn't deter the heroes, but it will make life interesting.

Once the heroes get the blast doors open, go to scene 2.

Scene 2: In the Detention Block

When the heroes have successfully opened the blast doors, read the following aloud:

The immense blast doors slide open to reveal a cavernous chamber. Cell doors line the walls, and similar decks extend above and below this level. The overhang in the center of the chamber gapes like the hungry maw of a bottomless pit, waiting to swallow anyone who steps too close to the edge. A control station is suspended in the center of the overhang, separated from you by four meters of open space. Concord Intelligence didn't know the number of the cell holding the ambassador; you'll need to find that out for yourselves.

What are your heroes going to do?

The heroes have defeated the surge-soldiers or gotten out of the line of fire by opening the blast doors and slipping inside. The doors close behind them as soon as they enter, and there's nothing immediately dangerous in the chamber.

The heroes can do a variety of things in the chamber, either together or separately. Ask the players what their characters are doing, then check below for the entry that comes closest to a hero's actions. Remember, if a hero tries something that isn't covered here, make it up! Just be fair and consistent, and everything should work out fine.

A. Finding a Computer Terminal

There's a computer terminal on the wall next to the blast doors that matches the one in the corridor. A hero can use the computer to look up prisoner details.

This requires the use of the **computer hacking** skill. The player rolls three dice. The player needs to roll **equal to or less than** the skill score for the action to succeed.

If the action succeeds, the hero discovers the exact location of the ambassador. He's in Cell B-1105/14 (marked with an X on the map.)

If the roll is greater than the skill score, the action fails. The hero can't break through the

ALTERNITY

Furgar



Marine (Weren)

Ability Scores

Strength	14
Dexterity	10
Constitution	12
Intelligence	8
Will	9
Personality	7

Durability

24 ::::

Skills Roll 3 Dice

Grav mace	16
<i>Damage—roll 1 die and add 3</i>	
Brawl	15
<i>Damage—roll 1 die and add 2</i>	
Rifle	12
<i>Damage—roll 1 die and add 1</i>	
Knowledge	9
Perception	10
Intimidate	11

ALTERNITY

Daw Kolos



Technical Specialist (Human)

Ability Scores

Strength	10
Dexterity	11
Constitution	8
Intelligence	13
Will	8
Personality	10

Durability

16 ::::

Skills Roll 3 Dice

Jump	12
Pistol	13
<i>Damage—roll 1 die</i>	
Starship Piloting	13
Knowledge	14
Computer Hacking	15
Repair	14
Perception	11
Charm	12

Wealth

(Record any wealth and new items Daw acquires here.)

Weapons

Laser Pistol Damage: Roll 1 die

Equipment

In addition to her laser pistol,
Daw Kolos carries:

Comm Gear-	a radio headset for keeping in touch with her companions
Trauma Pack-	one use, restores 2 dice of Durability
Data Slate-	a handheld computer
Data Jacks-	for connecting her data slate to other computers
Tool Kit-	for making repairs in the harshest of circumstances

Who is Daw Kolos?

Daw Kolos is a pilot and technical expert for the Galactic Concord (a union of stellar nations that keeps the peace and promotes the advancement of civilization throughout Known Space). She has worked with the other heroes before, providing her skills and expertise on many dangerous missions. She loves new technological toys, and this mission promises to give her access to lots of unusual Serin-Ru technology.

Wealth

(Record any wealth and new items Furgar acquires here.)

Weapons

Grav Mace Damage: Roll 1 die and add 3
Laser Rifle Damage: Roll 1 die and add 1

Equipment

In addition to his laser rifle and his grav mace
(a powered bludgeoning weapon), Furgar carries:

Comm Gear-	a radio headset for keeping in touch with his companions
Trauma Pack-	one use, restores 2 dice of Durability
Flashlight-	can be worn on wrist or attached to rifle
Field Rations-	for keeping his ever-present hunger in check

Who is Furgar?

Furgar is an alien. His species is called the weren, and they are known for their great strength and battle prowess. He is a combat-tested marine working for the Galactic Concord (a union of stellar nations that keeps the peace and promotes the advancement of civilization throughout Known Space). He considers the other heroes to be good allies, and he's ready to defend them to the very end. He considers it a matter of honor to rescue Ambassador Kestrul from the Serin-Ru.

ALTERNITY

Laskk Overon



Spy (Human)

Ability Scores

Strength	9
Dexterity	12
Constitution	9
Intelligence	9
Will	12
Personality	9

Durability

18 ::::

Skills Roll 3 Dice

Jump	10
Brawl	10
Damage—roll 1 die	
Pistol	14
Damage—roll 1 die	
Sneak	15
Knowledge	10
Perception	14

ALTERNITY

Brag Sanders



Spacehand (Human)

Ability Scores

Strength	12
Dexterity	11
Constitution	9
Intelligence	10
Will	8
Personality	10

Durability

18 ::::

Skills Roll 3 Dice

Jump	13
Brawl	14
Damage—roll 1 die	
Pistol	13
Damage—roll 1 die and add 1	
Knowledge	11
Repair	12
Perception	9
Bargain	12

Wealth

(Record any wealth and new items Brag acquires here.)

Weapons

Charge Pistol Damage: Roll 1 die and add 1

Equipment

In addition to his charge pistol,
Brag Sanders carries:

Comm Gear-	a radio headset for keeping in touch with his companions
Flashlight-	can be worn on wrist or attached to pistol
Tool Kit-	for making repairs in the harshest of circumstances

Who is Brag Sanders?

Brag Sanders is a spacehand. He's a jack-of-all-trades who loves to make deals, fix ships, and talk his way out of any jam. He's a valuable asset of the Galactic Concord (a union of stellar nations that keeps the peace and promotes the advancement of civilization throughout Known Space). Brag has worked with the other heroes before, keeping their starship in peak condition and their spirits high. He's quick with a joke, a tall tale, or an outright exaggeration if it will defuse a tense situation or make his teammates smile. He wants to get his hands on a robotic capacitor, and he's sure to find one in the Serin-Ru prison space station.

Wealth

(Record any wealth and new items Laskk acquires here.)

Weapons

Laser Pistol Damage: Roll 1 die

Equipment

In addition to his laser pistol,
Laskk Overon carries:

Comm Gear-	a radio headset for keeping in touch with his companions
Trauma Pack-	one use, restores 2 dice of Durability
Flashlight-	can be worn on wrist or attached to pistol
Sensor Gauntlet-	for analyzing and scanning the immediate area

Who is Laskk Overon?

Laskk is a talented spy working for the Galactic Concord (a union of stellar nations that keeps the peace and promotes the advancement of civilization throughout Known Space). He used to work alone. Now he utilizes his sneaky ways as part of a team. Laskk fights if he has to, but he prefers stealth and trickery to direct conflict. He has a need to know everything he can about an enemy. The chance to learn more about the mysterious Serin-Ru and their surge-soldiers makes this mission particularly intriguing to him.

security programs. The group of heroes will have to search each cell to find the ambassador.

If the roll is a Critical Failure (three 6s), alarms start to blare. Go to "B" below.

If the roll is an Amazing success (three 1s), the hero discovers a datafile that will help the Concord's efforts to stop Serin-Ru aggression. It contains details of battle plans and patrol routes used by the Serin-Ru in Concord space.

B. Sentinels Arrive

If the heroes set off an alarm, a pair of sentinel robots arrives. Read:

Suddenly two cylindrical robots swoop down from a higher level and propel themselves toward you. Wicked, multijointed mechanical arms unfold and drop from the central globe, displaying sharp blades and crackling energy dischargers. "Unauthorized access," the first sentinel declares. "Opposition is useless," the second sentinel proclaims.

What do your heroes do?

The obvious options include trying to trick the sentinels, surrendering to the robots, or attacking the robots.

1. Trick the Sentinels

The sentinels aren't extremely bright. If a hero comes up with a good story and makes a successful **bluff** skill check, the sentinels can be tricked. There are lots of ways the heroes can trick the robots. They can pretend to be guards or a repair crew. They can try to convince the robots that the surge-soldiers in the corridor need help. Or they can come up with something equally clever, just so long as they make a successful skill check. If the check fails, the robots attack.

To make a **bluff** skill check, a player briefly explains what kind of bluff his or her hero is attempting to pull off. Then the player rolls three dice. If the total is **equal to or less than** the hero's **bluff** score, the trick succeeds.

2. Surrender

If the heroes surrender, the sentinels order them to drop their weapons. If the heroes refuse, the robots attack (see below). If the heroes comply, read the following to the players:

The sentinel robots hover before you, keeping their energy dischargers aimed directly at you.

Four of the cell doors along the left wall slide open. "Step into the detention cells," the first robot orders. "One prisoner to a cell," the second robot adds.

If the heroes enter the cells, the doors slide shut and lock. They are prisoners of the Serin-Ru and fail to rescue the ambassador. The Concord will have to send a second team of heroes to save the day.

3. Attack the Sentinels

The heroes might attack the robots, or they might be forced into a confrontation if another tactic fails. If the heroes declare that they are attacking, they go first in the combat action round. If they get to this situation by failing a **bluff** skill check (as described above), the sentinels attack first.

Heroes Attack

The players make the attack skill rolls for their heroes. To make an attack skill roll, a player declares what kind of attack his or her hero is making and rolls three dice.

If the total is **equal to or less than** the hero's skill number (as recorded on each player's hero sheet), the attack succeeds.

If the total is **greater than** the hero's skill number, the attack fails this round.

If an attack succeeds, the player makes a damage roll, as listed on the hero sheet. You record this damage on the Sentinel Durability chart (next page). When all of a sentinel's Durability boxes are marked off, that robot is destroyed.

Brag and Daw can retrieve robot components from a destroyed sentinel.

Amazing Success: If someone rolls three 1s when making an attack, that's an Amazing success! The attack succeeds spectacularly and the sentinel explodes.

Handy GM Tip: Winging It

Players will eventually try something that isn't covered in the Fast-Play Game. That's one of the cool things about the game, and the reason that it works best with a live GM and not a computer AI. As the GM, you consider a player's action and judge how successful his or her hero is.

When a situation comes up that you don't have an answer to, make something up! If you're fair, consistent, and having fun, everything will turn out fine. This is the fine art of "Winging It." It's a perfectly acceptable tactic for handling the unexpected.

Consider the situation. What is the player trying to accomplish and how likely is it to succeed? If need be, call for a roll against a particular Ability Score. (Roll three dice. If the result is less than or equal to the chosen Ability Score, the check succeeds.) For example, trying to run past a sentinel robot might require a Dexterity check to avoid its blades and energy dischargers. As the GM, it's up to you. Just be cool, be fair, and keep in mind that it's only a game—the object is to have fun.

Critical Failure: If someone rolls three 6s when making an attack, that's a Critical Failure. The attack fails, and the hero either drops his or her weapon or runs out of ammo. The hero must spend an action round recovering the weapon or reloading, depending on what you decide.

After each of the heroes has had a chance to attack once, the robots attack ...

Sentinels Attack

You roll for the sentinels. The robots have **energy discharger** skills of 12. Roll three dice for each robot. If the total is **equal to or less than 12**, the robot hits its target. (Each robot can target two heroes in a round because they each have two energy dischargers.)

If a robot hits a hero, roll one die and add 2. The hero marks off that many Durability boxes (printed on the hero sheet). If all of a hero's Durability boxes are marked off, that hero dies.

On a Critical Failure, a robot's discharger shorts out. It can't use that weapon again. The robots can't get Amazing successes, however.

Three 1s just indicate ordinary success.

Close-Up Attack

If the heroes get close enough to use their **brawl** or **grav mace** skills on a sentinel, that robot won't be able to bring its discharger to bear. Instead, it attacks with the sharp blades on its mechanical arms.

The robots have **blade** skills of 11. Roll equal to or less than 11 on a blade attack, and the robot hits. If a blade hits, roll one die and add 1 for damage.

Sentinel Durability

Sentinel 1 ○○○○○○○○○○○○
Sentinel 2 ○○○○○○○○○○○○

C. Checking Cells

All of the cell doors are locked. There's an electronic keypad next to each door. A small transparent panel is set in each door to allow a guard or someone else on the outside to look into the cell. Inside, each cell contains a small, hard bed, a sink, and a toilet. All of the cells on the left wall are empty.

To unlock a cell door, a hero must make a **computer hacking** or **repair** skill check. The player rolls three dice. If the total is **equal to or less than** the skill score, the cell door slides open.

If the check fails, that hero can't open that particular cell.

There are six prisoners (including Ambassador Kestrul) in the cells on the other two walls. All of them have been wrongfully imprisoned by the Serin-Ru. The prisoners are weak from their ordeal, they can walk on their own, but they won't be able to fight. If the heroes want to free the prisoners, there's plenty of room in their ship to carry them all.

One cell, marked with an asterisk (*) on the map, contains a battered backpack. It can be seen through the cell's window. The pack belongs to a prisoner who recently died in the next cell over. (His body is still within the cell.) If the heroes retrieve the pack, they find the following items:

Handy GM Tip: When a Hero Doesn't Have a Skill

A hero can try anything. It's just that some heroes are better at certain tasks than others. If a hero has a skill listed on his or her hero sheet, that's a skill the hero excels at. But if a skill isn't listed, you can still allow a hero to try.

If a hero doesn't have a skill but wants to try an action, you must determine which Ability comes closest to that action. The Ability Score is used as the target number; the hero must roll equal to or less than the Ability Score to succeed.

Here's a quick run-down on what each Ability covers:

Strength covers any skills that require physical power, such as climbing or brawling. Dexterity covers skills that need good agility or hand-eye coordination, like shooting or sneaking.

Constitution is great when you want to see if a hero can withstand pain or fatigue. Intelligence deals with a hero's education and mental acuity and covers skills like computer hacking and repair. Will is a measure of a hero's awareness; it covers perception and intuitive skills. Personality measures a hero's charisma and covers skills like charm, bluff, and bargain.

\$1500 in Concord dollars, papers identifying the man as Concord Administrator Balthus Tane, a frag grenade (requires **throw** skill, inflicts two dice of damage), a data slate containing more information on the Serin-Ru, and a coil of 50 meters of high-tension rope.

If the heroes know which cell contains the ambassador, they can move directly to it. If not, they have to check all of them until they spot the ambassador. When they open the ambassador's cell, go to Scene 3.

D. The Control Station

The control station for this level of the detention block is suspended in the center of the central shaft. More detention levels are stacked above and below this level all along the vertical shaft.

Walkways can be extended between the control station and the edge of the shaft, but the controls to operate the walkways are located on the control station's computer panels. The control station also features switches that can unlock all of the cell doors at once.

To reach the control station, a hero must leap across the 4-meter-wide gap. To do this, the player makes a **jump** skill check. Roll three dice. If the total is **equal to or less than** the skill score, the hero successfully leaps the gap.

If the check fails, the hero must make a Dexterity check to catch onto the edge of the control-station platform. If this check also fails, the hero falls to his or her death.

Note that if a hero has found the rope from the cell and tied it around himself, then even if the hero misses the leap, the remaining companions can pull him or her up from the shaft.

Scene 3: Battle at the Blast Doors

When the heroes open the cell containing the ambassador, read the following:

Ambassador Kestrel looks up at you with a blank expression. Then his eyes clear and he says, "You're not Serin-Ru! Has the Concord sent you?"

Before you can answer, you hear the hum of an anti-grav engine as it slides up behind you. A man in dark red armor, much more

massive and ornate than that worn by the surge-soldiers, stands atop an anti-grav disk. He holds a quantum disruptor—much deadlier than a quantum blaster—at the ready.

"Step away from the prisoner and lower your weapons," the armored warrior demands in a deep voice. "You are now in the custody of Warden Klu-donn of the Serin-Ru!"

What are your heroes going to do?

Warden Klu-donn oversees this portion of the detention block. He has called for reinforcements, but they won't arrive before this battle ends. If the heroes can defeat Klu-donn, they can exit the detention block and return to their ship. If not, Klu-donn either captures or kills them and the ambassador remains a prisoner of the Serin-Ru.

Klu-donn attacks first, as soon as the heroes show any hint of aggression or delay in complying with his orders.

Warden Klu-Donn Attacks

You make the attack rolls for Klu-donn. He has a **quantum disruptor** skill of 13. Roll three dice. If the total is **equal to or less than** 13, Klu-donn hits his target.

If Klu-donn hits a hero, roll one die and add 4. The hero marks off that many Durability boxes (printed on the hero sheet). If all of a hero's Durability boxes are marked off, that hero dies.

On a Critical Failure, the disruptor runs out of energy. Warden Klu-donn must spend a round slapping in a new power pack. Klu-donn can get an Amazing success. If you roll three 1s on an attack roll, Klu-donn's weapon inflicts extra damage (roll two dice and add 4).

Whom does the Warden attack? That's up to you. Play the warden as an intelligent opponent. He attacks the dangerous-looking heroes first and tries to avoid fighting too many heroes at once.

Close-Up Attack

The heroes can't use close-up attack skills while Klu-donn is riding the anti-grav disk. When Klu-donn takes enough damage to mark off more than half of his Durability boxes, the disk runs out of power and Klu-donn leaps down to the deck. When in close-up combat, Klu-donn uses his disruptor like a club.

Klu-donn has a **club** skill of 10. Roll equal to or less than 10 on a club attack, and Klu-donn hits. Then roll one die and add 1 for damage.

Warden Klu-Donn Durability



Heroes Attack

The players make the attack skill rolls for their heroes. To make an attack skill roll, a player declares what kind of attack his or her hero is making and rolls three dice.

If the total is **equal to or less than** the hero's skill number (as recorded on each player's hero sheet), the attack succeeds.

If the total is **greater than** the hero's skill number, the attack fails this round.

If an attack succeeds, the player then makes a damage roll, as listed on the hero sheet. You record this damage on the Warden Klu-donn Durability chart (above). When all of the warden's Durability boxes are marked off, the warden dies.

Amazing Success: If someone rolls three 1s when making an attack, that's an Amazing success! The attack succeeds spectacularly and the warden takes double damage (roll damage normally, then double the result).

Critical Failure: If someone rolls three 6s when making an attack, that's a Critical Failure. The attack fails, and the hero either drops his

or her weapon or runs out of ammo. The hero must spend an action round recovering the weapon or reloading.

When Warden Klu-donn runs out of Durability, read the following out loud:

Warden Klu-donn lets out a loud scream and stumbles toward the edge of the central shaft. His eyes blaze at you from inside his dark red helmet, then he silently falls into the shaft. You have won.

Cool! Now What?

The heroes gather the ambassador and head back for their ship. Will they run into more trouble? Will they have to fight their way out of the space station? That's up to you and what you want to happen in your next **ALTERNITY** science fiction adventure!

This **Fast-Play Game** is only the beginning! The full **ALTERNITY** Game offers a complete and comprehensive set of rules that allows you to create your own science fiction adventures.

In the **ALTERNITY Adventure Game** (shown on the adjacent page), you get everything you need: more rules, which means more options and more excitement; more hero characters to choose from; more enemies to battle; more weapons and more equipment; and more ready-to-play adventures. You also get rules for hero improvement and advancement.

Look for this game and other fine Wizards of the Coast products at a book or hobby store near you, or check out www.wizards.com for more information.

Aegis System Update, Year 2501

Bluefall—Criminal mastermind Thon Mardian is being transported to the Aegis system to face charges of terrorism, piracy, and murder. Thuldan and Concord Intelligence officers tracked Thon Mardian for 9 months across the Verge before finding him on Oasis. Six military officers were killed apprehending Mardian.

Charged with the murders of more than 60 people and believed

responsible for the attempted abduction of Regent Hale of Bluefall last year, Mardian is expected to arrive on Bluefall tomorrow aboard the Regency Star Vessel *Tuscarora*. Authorities plan to increase security at all starports in the system.

For more information, check out "**Deepstrike**" in this issue (page 86). For additional information on the Aegis system, check out the **System Guide to Aegis**, on sale in stores this month!



A statue of the Great Tree-Frog watches over the Iristone caves.

TRIAL OF THE FROG

BY TITO LEATI

Get a gripli!

Artwork by Michael Collins
Cartography by Diesel

Tito lives in Bologna, Italy, and has played the AD&D game since high school. He served in the army and now works as a freelance graphic designer. Tito created the maps of Waterdeep in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Interactive Atlas developed by Profantasy Software Ltd.

"Trial of the Frog" is a short AD&D adventure for 3-6 PCs of levels 3-4 (about 16 total levels). A good mix of PC classes and races is recommended. The adventure can take place in any tropical region.

For the Players

The adventure begins in the morning of a sunny day, while the PCs are traveling through a densely wooded area. The DM should read or paraphrase the following:

Tall trees blot out the sun along the path, but the shadows provide little relief from the bugs and heat of this jungle. As you stop for a brief pause, dripping with sweat, your attention is drawn to the rustling of thick vegetation on one side of the trail. Suddenly, two big yellow eyes pop open amid the foliage, revealing a camouflaged, humanoid tree-frog about 3 feet tall. The creature's mimetic skin and grey-green apparel blend perfectly with the background. After looking you up and down, the creature leaps onto the path and bows respectfully.

The frog creature is a male gripli. He carries a dagger strapped to his back and a blowgun as a pilgrim's staff. If the heroes mean no harm to him, he introduces himself as Bemibil, a young noble from a gripli village about 50 miles away. The little guy looks worried and needs help, setting aside his suspicions toward complete strangers like the PCs.

Bemibil tells the PCs (in Common) that he cannot complete an important quest if he does not obtain some assistance to overcome an unexpected obstacle:

"I wish to fulfill my dream of becoming a hero. A new Tribe Mother—the most beautiful and tall female of them all—will soon rise to power in my village and choose her mates among young nobles. This will happen in a ceremony called the Trial of the Frog. There, the suitors will bring the most shiny and colorful gems tied in long necklaces as gifts for the new queen. She will then make her choice before the idol of the Great Tree-Frog.

"The lucky donors of the three best jewels will become the Tribe Mother's beloved companions for all life. Alas, being poorer than my rivals, I am at a disadvantage. So I

decided to come here and search for the legendary Iristone—a giant, volcanic rock that arose from unknown depths long ago. Tales say that it was packed with brilliant, wonderful crystals. Legends also say that the first members of my race were born near the warm Iristone and lived there blissfully for many generations, carving the first effigies of our deity. One sad season, however, the envious Spider-Demon and Snake-Demon made this jungle too dangerous for my people, spawning a multitude of their offspring. The gripli were forced to scatter all over the world. Nobody could forget the legend of the Iristone, though. Its fragments are surely the most colorful and shiny objects a gripli can desire.

"I want those gems for my queen's necklace, of course. In the past, only a few brave gripli heroes have ever come back to claim some fragments of the Iristone. Two days ago, guided by old legends, I followed a big stream called the Vein, avoiding many enemies with camouflage and stealth. There, among the idols raised by my ancestors, I found the Iristone, a cracked mesa whose uneven top is always shrouded by a cloud of smoke. I discovered the passage that leads inside its shiny heart, but the tunnel was blocked by a massive door. I could not open it. I knocked wildly and screamed at the top of my lungs, but nobody came to open it. I could do nothing else except seek aid. Please, help me!"

If the PCs ask about the enemies he has avoided, the gripli describes huge spiders, giant constrictor snakes, and small monkey-like humanoids (tasloi). Bemibil fears that more powerful spawn of the demons mentioned in gripli mythology prowl near the Iristone, but he does not tell this to the heroes for obvious reasons. He shows the PCs some white pearls as an immediate reward for their help. These are not considered very precious by the gripli because they are colorless, but their standard value is 100 gp each. Bemibil offers three pearls. If the heroes accept, he shakes hands in gratitude and leads them off the path to the Vein, a wide stream that runs slowly into the dense wilderness.

Bemibil (gripli): AC 8; MV 9, leap 15; HD 2; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise; SZ S; ML 10; INT very (11); AL N; XP 175; MM/180; dagger, blowgun, elixir of health.

Bemibil's blowgun needles are coated with Type C poison. Gripli are not a warlike race, and Bemibil is no exception. He always tries to stay behind the front line in combat, shooting poisoned needles. He gives his elixir to the party only if there is no other way to save a PC's life. Bemibil is somewhat mischievous

and pretentious with his "hirelings," but he is friendly nonetheless.

For the Dungeon Master

Bemibil's words and intentions are true. He really needs help and must trust the PCs to complete his quest. His sole concern is the recovery of some crystals from the Iristone. The presence of the door makes Bemibil think that some intruder has claimed the rock as his own. However, no gripli has visited the Iristone in the past century, and Bemibil has no clue regarding the identity of the usurper, who could have occupied the Iristone for a very long time.

The new occupant of the Iristone is Ulifarn, a duergar cleric/fighter. He has occupied the place for the past 15 years. Ulifarn found the rock after following the directions of the *Onazma*, a sacred tome of the cult of his patron deity, Laduguer. The book records the ancient eruption that brought the Iristone to the surface and destroyed a large area of the Underdark. It also describes the crystals inside the volcanic mesa as shards of a rare schistose substance that can be cut and polished into exceptionally bright pieces. Taken away from the depths of the earth by a cataclysm, the crystals have acquired a symbolic value among duergar clerics, a prize once belonging to the Underdark that must be recaptured by its dwellers. The *Onazma* also suggests that the crystals are the material component for a powerful ritual, one that could summon an avatar of Laduguer and grant incredible power to the summoner.

Ulifarn is the first duergar priest to find the crystals, having reached the Iristone after a dangerous journey across the wilderness. During his long stay, Ulifarn has been preparing for the ritual described in the *Onazma* but is still far from being ready. Nevertheless, the hard-working, obsessive nature of the duergar keeps him stuck to the daunting task of raising a huge crystal idol of Laduguer within the Iristone. Ulifarn has killed many tasloi and animated them as skeletal laborers. He has also befriended some huge spiders and trained them as bodyguards. Ten years ago the duergar finished building a giant, magical furnace in his new home. Since then, he has been exploiting the crystals for his shady ends.

Journey Along the Vein

Read or paraphrase the following text if the PCs accompany Bemibil on his journey to the Iristone:

Guided by Bemibil, you follow the flow of the Vein. The trees loom menacingly as you delve deeper into the damp, tangled forest.

The trip to the Iristone takes two days. Bemibil leads the heroes along the stream, carefully trying to avoid encounters with monsters. However, the whole party is much more noisy and intrusive than a single gripli, and the nasty dwellers of this uncivilized area are just waiting for unusual prey. During each day of travel, the heroes have a number of random encounters equal to the total number of PCs discounting halflings, elves, rangers, druids, and thieves.

Refer to the "Random Jungle Encounters" sidebar. Each encounter occurs just once. If one occurs again, the DM should ignore it and treat the result as no encounter.

As the PCs near the Iristone, they begin seeing gripli idols representing the Great Tree-Frog. These are carved in various sizes, up to 10 feet tall, from chunks of hard volcanic rock scattered by an ancient explosion. The eroded statues, now covered with vines, moss, and mushrooms, increase in number as the PCs get closer to the Iristone.

The Iristone

Read or paraphrase the following text once the PCs reach the Iristone:

The trees thin out a bit, and you hear a small waterfall ahead. After a few more steps, you are dazzled by the light in a huge clearing. In the middle of this rocky clearing stands a dark mesa whose uneven top is clouded by white smoke. Many idols and carvings around its base testify to the presence of the gripli in the distant past.

The PCs reach the Iristone in the afternoon. The diameter of the rocky mesa at the base measures about 200 yards. An incredible number of decorative carvings and idols mark the place. Effigies of the Great Tree-Frog, carved by gripli artisans centuries ago, appear everywhere.

The Vein plunges into a steamy pool just before a short flight of stone steps. The steps lead to a 10'-wide irregular tunnel that leads to the only accessible cave inside the Iristone. The steps have been kept remarkably clean of vegetation and debris.

The thin cloud of smoke that hangs over the mesa and the warm temperature of the water in the pool suggest mild volcanic activity in the subsoil. If the PCs take some time to inspect the surroundings, they find the stumps of many trees that have been cut down recently. A ranger or PC with the Carpentry proficiency might notice that the job was accomplished by many short, unskilled laborers. There are also some large heaps of rock fragments in the vicinity—the waste material from a nearby mine. A dwarf, gnome, or PC with the Mining proficiency can

Random Jungle Encounters

Roll 1d8:

1. **Giant constrictor snakes** (2): AC 5; MV 9; HD 6+1; hp 28 each; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1-4/2-8; SA constriction; SZ L; ML 9; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 650; MM/320.

The mated giant snakes coil around high tree branches and drop on victims to attack. They are active only during daytime.

2. **Boalisks** (2): AC 5; MV 12; HD 5+1; hp 23 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/2-7; SA gaze, constriction; SZ L; ML 10; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 975; MM/320.

These two snakes attack like their cousins above. Their gaze causes a rotting disease similar to that of a mummy.

3. **Huge spiders** (8): AC 6; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 11 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA poison, surprise; SZ M; ML 8; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 270; MM/326.

These spiders hide amid the foliage and pounce on victims, imposing a -6 penalty to surprise rolls. Their poison is Type A with a +1 bonus to the saving throw.

4. **Giant flying spiders** (5): AC 4; MV 9; fly 9 (D); HD 3+3; hp 14 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA poison; SZ L; ML 13; INT low (5); AL CE; XP 650; MM/326.

The poison of these spiders is Type A with no bonus to the saving throw.

5. **Tasloi hunters** (13): AC 6; MV 9, climb 15; HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (javelin or club); SA surprise; SZ S; ML 10; INT low (7); AL CE; XP 35; MM/340.

The tasloi arrived in this region about 100 years ago. They have a village somewhere in the jungle near the Iristone. This hunting party does not attack the heroes immediately but stalks them, following in tree branches until the PCs are weakened after their next battle with some other opponent. The humanoids then wait for sunset and attack with surprise (-4 penalty to the PCs' surprise rolls). They hurl javelins first

and use clubs in subsequent rounds. Since the tasloi follow the party for a long time, any halfling, elf, druid, ranger, or thief PC can make an Observation proficiency check or an Intelligence check at a -4 penalty to spot one of them. Whenever a tasloi is slain or incapacitated, all remaining humanoids must check morale or flee at once. If the PCs question a captured tasloi about the occupant of the Iristone, the humanoid whimpers of a "giant spider." Tasloi speak their own language only.

6. **Tasloi wasp-riders** (4): AC 6 (5 with shield); MV 9, climb 15; HD 1; hp 7 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (javelin); SA surprise; SZ S; ML 10; INT normal (9); AL CE; XP 35; MM/340.

The wasp-riders are elite tasloi troops that patrol the jungle at night. They attack from above using javelins as stabbing weapons and try to engage spellcasters first. The wasp-riders do not receive a bonus to surprise because their wasp mounts nullify their stealth.

Giant wasps (4): AC 4; MV 6, fly 21 (B); HD 4; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/1-4; SA poison; SZ M; ML 10; INT non (0); AL N; XP 420; MM/204.

These giant insects are trained to fight with the tasloi. They must check morale to continue fighting if their rider falls. Their poison inflicts 5d6 points of damage and paralyzes victims for 2d6 hours.

7. **Unstable Ground.** The PCs traverse very rough terrain. One PC (chosen at random) must make a Dexterity check to avoid a fall and injury from rocks, vines, and thorns (1d6 points of damage).

8. **Nasty Bug Bite.** One PC is stung by an insect. The PC must make a Constitution check to avoid a painful allergic reaction (-2 penalty to THAC0, AC, saving throws, and ability checks for 1d4 days unless a *cure disease* spell is cast).

detect traces of iron ore and tiny shards of brightly colored quartz in the rubble. A successful search for tracks reveals a lot of small, skeletal footprints (from tasloi skeletons) and, in the muddy ground near the pool, the impression of a single dwarf-sized boot.

Rogues and PCs with the Mountaineering proficiency can reach the top of the mesa with a normal Climbing check. Climbers who fail must make a Strength check to hang on and avoid falling for 3d6 points of damage. Atop the mesa, among many small cracks, is a natural chimney about 20 feet wide at the mouth. Thick smoke and hot air rise from the chimney. PCs can determine that the heat is too

intense to account for deep volcanic activity, and that a mighty furnace must be burning in the caves below. After a 10' descent into the Iristone, the chimney narrows to a 5-wide shaft, where the heat is even more intense.

Descending the shaft requires a successful Climbing check and some form of fire protection, such as a *resist fire*, *protection from fire*, or *flame walk* spell or a *ring of fire resistance*. The temperature of the fire below is hot enough to melt metal, and those without magical protection from fire suffer 2d6 points of damage per round from the intense heat. Moreover, a *detect magic* spell reveals a slight trace of Conjunction/Summoning magic in the smoke

that emanates continuously from Ulifarn's enchanted furnace.

The main entrance to the mesa is blocked by a massive door. The stone wall built around its frame merges perfectly with the natural rock walls. The door is 7 feet tall and made of local wood and iron. Its lock and hinges are well-oiled. It is obviously the work of a skilled artisan, perhaps even a dwarf.

The door is locked. Any rogue who makes a successful Detect Noise roll hears the tapping of metal against stone behind it. The door can be opened with a normal Open Locks roll or a *knock* spell. The heroes can also destroy the door in 2 turns with axes, fire, or a tree trunk battering ram. Of course, this alerts the duergar and gives him at least 20 rounds to gather his troops and cast his defensive spells. The door frame is trapped with a *glyph of warding* that releases a *cause blindness* spell on the first person who steps across the threshold without uttering the duergar word for "friends." PCs may detect and remove the *glyph* with a successful Find/Remove Traps roll at half the normal chance or by magical means such as a *dispel magic* spell.

The Caves

1. **Shrine of the Great Tree-Frog.** The cave walls inside the Iristone are encrusted with quartz that reflect torchlight in a dazzling array of colors. The cave ceiling is about 15 feet tall. When the PCs explore beyond the entrance, the DM should read or paraphrase the following:

Beyond the entrance lies a roughly egg-shaped cave with walls of crystalline rock. A primitive idol of the Great Tree-Frog stands in the middle of an uneven cave, its goggle-eyes staring out of the ages. The tapping of many small picks stops suddenly, and you realize that the cavern is filled with the animated skeletons of many small humanoids. They advance mindlessly, their bony feet clattering on the stone floor, the picks clasped in their claws.

A 10'-tall idol of the Great Tree-Frog stands in the middle of this cave, supporting the ceiling like a caryatid. It has four faces, each pointing toward one of the main compass directions. Many handaxes and saws lie at its feet. The cave walls are roughly hewn.

Before the PCs arrive, twelve tasloi skeletons were slowly and clumsily digging out rock pieces with small picks. The best shards have been sorted out by Ulifarn and gathered in an iron bucket at the far end of the cave. Only a few chunks of this raw material can be worked into decent gems. There are also three large wooden kegs full of waste material near the entrance.

The tasloi skeletons attack the heroes as soon as they enter. As many as three of them can attack a single man-sized PC. They can be turned as normal skeletons by a cleric.

Tasloi skeletons (12): AC 7; MV 9; HD 1; hp 3 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (small pick); SD suffer half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SZ S; ML special; INT non (0); AL N; XP 65; MM/315, 340.

The only treasure in this area is the bucket of fine raw crystals, enough to make twenty gemstones. The quartzlike substance is colorful and shiny, but rather brittle. If properly cut and polished, each piece can be sold for 5 gp on the open market.

2. Main Mine. This cave has been dug by Ulifarn and his undead slaves to reach a large vein of iron ore. Twenty tasloi skeletons are digging and heaping rocks here. There is a wooden mining cart for transporting ore to the furnace and hauling waste out of the complex. This cave is also used to store wood for fuel and building purposes. There are two massive piles of logs and a heap of charcoal near the entrance. A small pool of warm spring water bubbles in the lower northern section of the cave.

Tasloi skeletons (20): AC 7; MV 9; HD 1; hp 3 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (small pick); SD suffer half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SZ S; ML special; INT non (0); AL N; XP 65; MM/315, 340.

3. Spiders. The exoskeleton of Ulifarn's pet steeder, which died of old age five years ago, has been stuffed with sawdust and glue on a rocky pedestal molded with *stone shape* spells. Now it stands in the center of this cave, menacing but harmless, with its peculiar duergar saddle firmly strapped over its haunches.

Four huge spiders from the nearby jungle live here in rocky cavities, ready to attack any intruder. These arachnids have been befriended and trained by Ulifarn, who takes great care of them. The dry carcass of a devoured giant wasp lies on the cave floor behind the stuffed steeder.

Huge spiders (4): AC 6; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 11 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA poison, surprise; SZ M; ML 8; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 270; MM/326.

4. Great Furnace. The 20'-high ceiling of this cavern is supported by a central idol. The idol, however, is very different from the statue of the Great Tree-Frog seen in area 1. This one has not been carved from the natural rock but is comprised of seamless white blocks of opaque, crystalline material. The 15'-tall statue is partially encased in wooden scaffolding. The statue represents an emaciated, bald, and frowning dwarven figure holding a warhammer in his right hand. It has no left



arm, but a crystalline peg juts from the shoulder for the assembly of the missing part. A PC making a Religion proficiency check or a dwarf making a successful Wisdom check with a -4 penalty recognizes the idol as an image of Laduguer, a duergar deity. Some heavy wooden beams and bulky iron hinges lie at the edge of the cave floor. When this cave was first being constructed, these beams were used to support the ceiling.

The cave is lit and warmed by a great furnace built over the main volcanic shaft of the Iristone. Ulifarn uses it both to melt iron and liquefy crystals. It is fueled by wood, volcanic heat, and magical energy conjured with the *Onazma*. Air is blown into the furnace with large bellows made of wood and giant snake skin. Ulifarn obtains the material for the statue by mixing the refined crystals with ordinary glass. The molten mixture is poured into rock molds, and the cool blocks are put together with *stone shape* spells. Two large molds, one for the left arm of the idol and one for a round shield, are almost complete and lie on the floor near the furnace.

Ulifarn has a fully equipped smithy in this cave. There are two anvils: a large, blackened one and a smaller, shiny one. The latter comes from the Underdark and is decorated with grotesque and elaborate carvings. It is made of steel and radiates magic when a *detect magic*

spell is cast. The anvil grants to any skilled user a +2 bonus to Weaponsmithing proficiency rolls involving the manufacture of blades and arrowheads. This bonus also applies to the creation of magical weapons. The smaller anvil weighs about 150 lbs. and may be worth up to 2,000 gp to a weaponsmith who realizes its properties. The necessary tools for smithing and gem cutting are well polished and arranged neatly on a wooden shelf. These are nonmagical, but any skilled artisan would pay up to 400 gp for the entire set.

A small living area is furnished with a single bed carved from a large tree trunk, a table, a chest, an ornate wooden chair, and a stone lectern. The blanket on the bed is made of sewn boalisk skins (worth 200 gp). The chest contains dried fruit, salty snake meat, several coconuts, a pouch containing 45 gp, and a pair of silver chainmail gloves (worth 100 gp). On the stone table rest an electrum candlestick shaped like a salamander (worth 50 gp), a lamp, a dozen wax candles, three flasks of oil, a quill made from a cockatrice's feather, an ink well, a stack of parchment sheets, and a leather bag. Ulifarn has drawn a lot of sketches of the idol and written several notes about the *Onazma*. If a PC glances through the notes with a *comprehend languages* spell or makes a successful Read Languages roll, he or



Lock and load: The villainous duergar Ulifarn readies himself for battle.

she understands that the idol of Laduguer can magically shrink to dwarf size under certain circumstances (see below).

The leather bag contains 55 pieces of cut and polished rock crystal worth 5 gp each. These gems are the treasures most sought by Bemibil.

The *Onazma* is solemnly laid on the lectern. It consists of twelve basalt tablets, carefully carved and bound together with fine steel bands. A sturdy padlock keeps the *Onazma* chained to a steel ring at the base of the lectern. The stone tablets describe how to build a crystal idol of Laduguer and the lengthy and complex ritual to summon his

avatar. The book can be used only by a duergar priest, but it reveals a lot of facts about the religion and culture of the grey dwarves. With Ulifarn's drawings and notes, the *Onazma* might be worth up to 1,000 gp to a sage specializing in the study of the Underdark.

Ulifarn lives, works, and worships here. He leaves his lair only at night, *invisible* and always accompanied by his huge spiders. He is a typical gray dwarf with a sullen expression. Ulifarn wears a short black tunic over chainmail and a steel mask bolted to his skullcap. The mask covers his nose and cheekbones, accurately reproducing his deeply dug features. Ulifarn has a fuzzy grey beard, and

his mouth is filled with steel-crowned teeth. Bemibil nicknames the duergar "steel face" as soon as he sees him. Ulifarn is paranoid, obsessive, and fanatical. He never surrenders.

Ulifarn, duergar male C6/F6: AC 4 (3 with shield); MV 6; hp 39; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise, *enlarge*, *invisibility*, spells; SD +4 bonus to saving throws versus magical attacks, immune to poison and paralysis; MR not affected by Illusion/Phantasm magic; Str 13, Dex 15; Con 16; Int 14, Wis 13; Cha 4; SZ S; ML 15; AL LE; XP 1,400; MM/96 (variant); chainmail, shield, light crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts +2, warhammer, potion of *heroism*, keys for the door in area 1 and the padlock to the *Onazma*, holy symbol of Laduguer (round shield with broken crossbow bolt motif).

Memorized spells (4/3/2): 1st—*cure light wounds*, *darkness*, *detect magic*, *magical stone*; 2nd—*aid*, *find traps*, *wyvern watch*; 3rd—*prayer*, *stone shape*.

Granted powers: +1 bonus to natural AC, *meld into stone* (once per day).

The Statue of Laduguer

Even incomplete, the idol of Laduguer that supports the ceiling is already imbued with Conjuraction/Summoning magic. This magic comes directly from Laduguer's avatar and is treated as 12th-level for dispelling purposes. Moreover, the misleading influence of the duergar god makes the idol impervious to *find traps* spells. A dwarf or gnome PC making a Wisdom check or a thief searching for traps at half the usual chance has a "bad feeling" about the ceiling and the statue. The trap cannot be disabled by nonmagical means short of propping up the ceiling—a lengthy and unsafe job indeed.

If someone other than Ulifarn strikes the statue, moves the magical anvil, or tries to take the *Onazma* away from the lectern, a booming voice from the statue shouts a single word in the duergar language ("Intruders!"), at which point the 10'-tall statue shrinks magically to dwarf size. The unsupported ceiling rumbles and is marked by terrifying cracks as rocks begin to fall down. Each PC must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation each round or suffer 1d4 points of damage from falling debris. The ceiling collapses completely after 4 rounds, killing everyone inside the cave complex and burying the whole place under several thousand tons of rubble. If the heroes dash off, it takes 1 round to flee outside at MV 12, 2 rounds at MV 6, and 4 rounds at MV 3. The PCs may well be involved in a frantic rush to grab treasure before being destroyed. If a greedy or irresolute PC is just 1 round away from safety when the cave-in occurs, the DM might allow the PC a Dexterity check to escape with his or her life.

The Battle

If warned of intruders, Ulifarn gathers all his tasloi skeletons and huge spiders in area 3. He casts *magical stone* on three stones, *aid* upon himself, and *wyvern watch* over the lectern in area 4. On the way to the entrance, Ulifarn hides his two keys under the saddle of his stuffed steeder in area 3. He then drinks his potion, rushes to area 1, casts *prayer*, becomes *invisible*, and waits behind his minions for the incoming PCs. As soon as he spots the PCs, Ulifarn shouts a final warning in the Common tongue: "Begone, strangers, or face the power of the gray ones!" He does not speak anymore and attacks the heroes as long as they continue to invade the caves.

Ulifarn prefers to fight with missile weapons. He attacks tall PCs over the head of his short minions, gaining the initiative in the first round due to his *invisibility*.

If the heroes open the door using stealth or magic, they are attacked immediately by the tasloi skeletons of area 1, but Ulifarn has less time to prepare for the battle. His troops rush to the entrance and try to stop the heroes there. The tasloi skeletons from area 2 and the huge spiders from area 3 arrive in 1 round. Ulifarn himself arrives at the beginning of the third round and drinks his potion along the way. He does not take the time to hide the keys, however.

If Ulifarn is reduced to fewer than 20 hp, he turns *invisible* and uses his *meld into stone* ability to hide. He escapes outside only if the heroes trigger the idol trap in area 4.

In battle, Bemibil uses his blowgun against the huge spiders and Ulifarn. He does not know about duergar immunity to poison, however, and always tries to shoot "steel face" if the heroes do not persuade him to choose another target. Only if the PCs are badly outnumbered by tasloi skeletons and there are no other dangerous foes in the vicinity does the gripli consider a heroic leap to stab the undead. Ulifarn considers Bemibil a puny opponent and never attacks him in favor of the PCs. The gripli always behaves cautiously and is not likely to trigger the idol trap in area 4.

Concluding the Adventure

If the heroes recover the refined rock crystals from area 4, Bemibil asks for twenty of them as his share of treasure. He then invites the PCs to accompany him to his village and watch the Trial of the Frog. If the PCs accept, they must travel about 50 miles to reach Bemibil's home in the wilderness. Once there, they are welcomed by the gripli as friends. The Trial of the Frog is a very pleasant celebration for everyone, and a sumptuous feast is given in honor of the new Tribe Mother. The

gripli eat fruit, roots, insects, and lizards. The Tribe Mother bestows her blessing upon the village and asks for her suitors to come forth. Many noble gripli then present their gifts and describe how they made or obtained them. With his necklace and wonderful tale, Bemibil is among the chosen ones. The Tribe Mother takes him as one of her three mates to live happily thereafter. During the feast, boasting heroes can share their adventures to an audience of curious gripli. More pragmatic PCs can trade some "shiny and colorful" gems from the Iristone (value 5 gp each) for "white and dull" pearls (value 100 gp each). The gripli nobles haggle a bit but consider four refined crystals for a pearl a good bargain. Give the party a story award of 2,000 XP for attending the Trial of the Frog and witnessing Bemibil's triumph.

If Ulifarn is still alive, the PCs could be in serious trouble. The duergar diverts his obsessive and malicious temperament toward vengeful purposes. He will surely seek the help of his brethren to destroy the spoilers of his sacred work and regain his treasures. Ω

Special Thanks To This Issue's Playtesters

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Tobias Johnson
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Jason Clebe
Tesrell Hardy
Jerry Groce
James Smith
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Marianne Feltham
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Kyle Sauter
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Darrell Alexander & Company (Thorn Blade,
Fingers, Trevor Widespan, and Prestine)

Michael Fox & Company (Gerrick, Kerrig, Jessium, Kala,
Ingold, and Arlus)





THE WINTER TAPESTRY

BY STEPHEN C. KLAUK

Ice capades

Artwork by Tony DiTerlizzi
Cartography & Tapestry by Diesel

Stephen picked the editors' brains during a seminar at the 1998 Wizards of the Coast Game Camp in Seattle. At the time, the editors were looking for more adventures featuring "really cool locations," and Stephen was quick to follow up with this adventure featuring a frost giant's icy abode.

This AD&D® adventure is designed for 4–6 characters of levels 5–8 (about 35 total levels). A general mix of character classes is preferred, although several fighters and at least one thief are recommended.

The adventure revolves around the discovery of a tapestry that conceals the map to an ancient white dragon's lair. Although the dragon is long deceased, a family of frost giants has moved in and converted the dragon's island lair into a rich home, allying themselves with a resident clan of yeti who share the isle.

Adventure Background

This adventure begins with the PCs acquiring a fabulous and ancient tapestry that contains a secret map to a white dragon's hoard. The DM can roleplay the discovery and acquisition of the tapestry in a manner to fit his or her campaign or use the beginning below.

After a recent raid on a bandit lair, the PCs recover a trove of items the bandits had stolen from travelers on the local road. One of the items recovered from the bandits' lair is a tapestry used to cover their ill-gotten wealth. Although the bandits had amassed quite a fortune, most of the treasure recovered by the PCs is confiscated by the local law (it is stolen, after all) and given back to its rightful owners, leaving the PCs with only the tapestry. Two days after the PCs recover the loot from the bandits' lair, a young sage named Ergrin Magson (grandson of the wizard Selgaard) tracks them down and inquires about the tapestry. He wishes to retrieve the heirloom, having recently discovered the true purpose behind the ancient tapestry.

Although he is willing to pay the PCs to repurchase the tapestry, Ergrin would much rather hire them to follow the tapestry's secret map to the dragon's lair. (See "The Tapestry" section below.) If the PCs are willing to work with Ergrin, he agrees to reveal the history behind the tapestry in return for a full share of the dragon's loot.

Ergrin has no intention of accompanying the PCs on their quest, although he does help them gather provisions for the journey. If the PCs use Ergrin's resources to garner supplies for the expedition, he insists all costs be taken out of the PCs' shares.

Ergrin knows very little about his grandfather's earlier expedition to the dragon's lair, other than what is indicated in "The Tapestry" section below.



Some PCs might be unwilling to work with Ergrin, either not trusting the young man or thinking they can search for the dragon's treasure themselves. Any PC who makes a successful Local History proficiency check knows the tale of Selgaard and his trip to the dragon's lair. Bards who examine the tapestry have a 5% chance per level of also knowing the background. PCs can have it appraised by another sage before accepting an offer from Ergrin. As part of the appraisal, the sage regales PCs with the tale of Selgaard and the history behind the tapestry. The DM may assign a monetary value to the tapestry; 500 gp is recommended. Few appraisers can afford to buy the tapestry but might offer to find a buyer for a modest handling fee (determined by the DM).

Ergrin Magson, human male W3 (sage): AC 10; MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); Str 9, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 16; SZ M (5' 7"); ML 12; AL N.

The DM can choose Ergrin's spells as needed; he prefers Divination and Abjuration spells. Ergrin has all the abilities of a sage and is specialized in history. (His minor field of study is geography.) Ergrin is honest and straightforward, never beating about the bush or hiding his intentions. This openness has won him many friends, and he is respected throughout the local area. Although he can barely defend himself if attacked, Ergrin has

connections in the local government (having scribed several memoirs of local-born nobles and generals). Thus he can expect abundant and powerful help to make the PCs' lives miserable if he is harmed.

The Tapestry

The ancient tapestry (illustrated on the next page) depicts a journey by a band of adventurers across an arctic wasteland. The journey begins in the town of Molvencold and ends at the white dragon's island lair on the Cold Sea. The mural has six scenes, described below.

The first scene depicts a group of adventurers—including Selgaard the wizard—departing an inn and waving goodbye to the barkeep. (This scene originally took place in the town of Molvencold.)

The second scene shows the adventurers warding off a pack of wolves in a forest as the wizard casts a spell while atop a leaning rock.

The third scene shows the group traversing an icy bridge that has cracked in the middle. One of the adventurers—a fighter—falls into the abyss below. (The "abyss" is actually Charon's Crevasse, which is located west of Molvencold.)

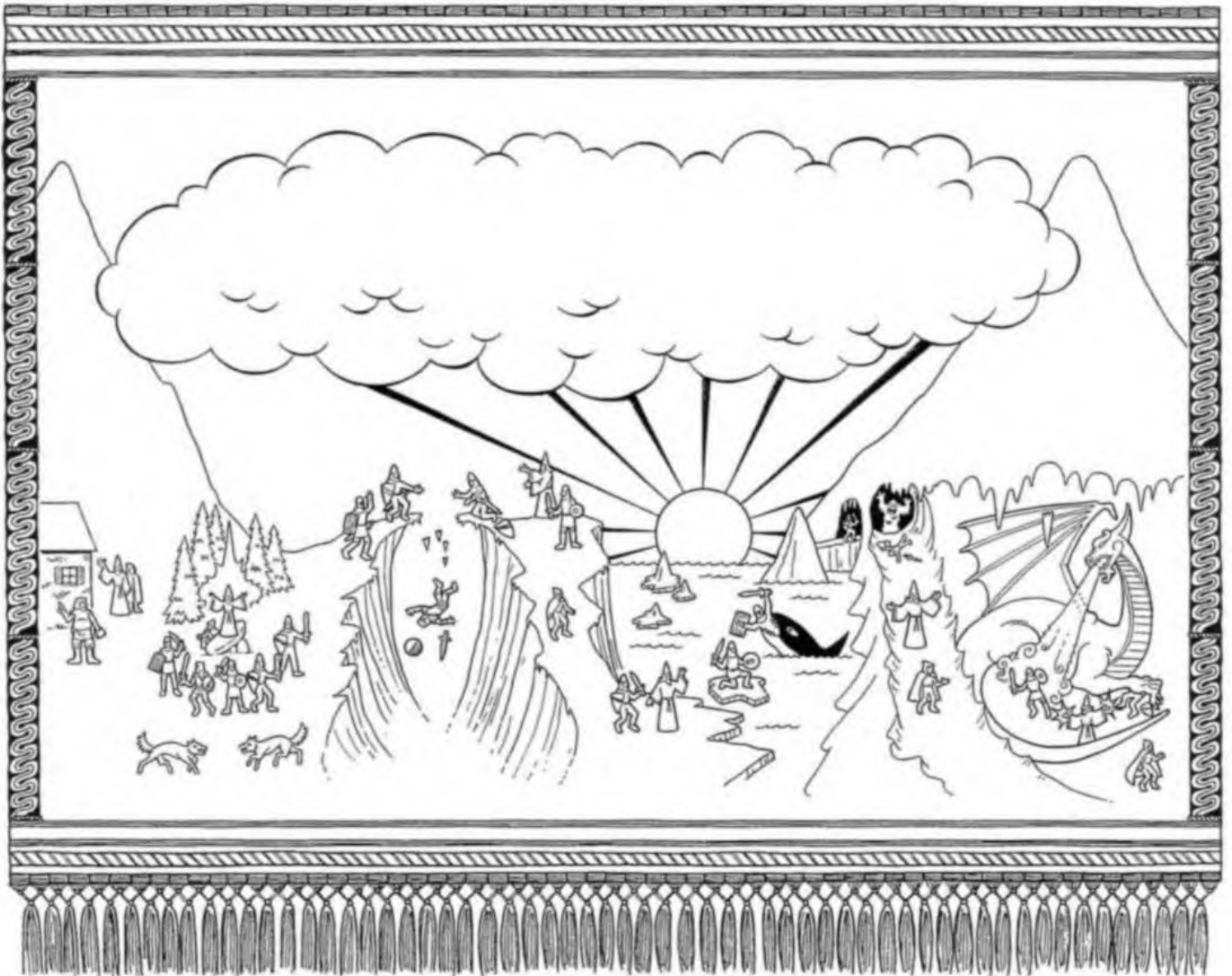
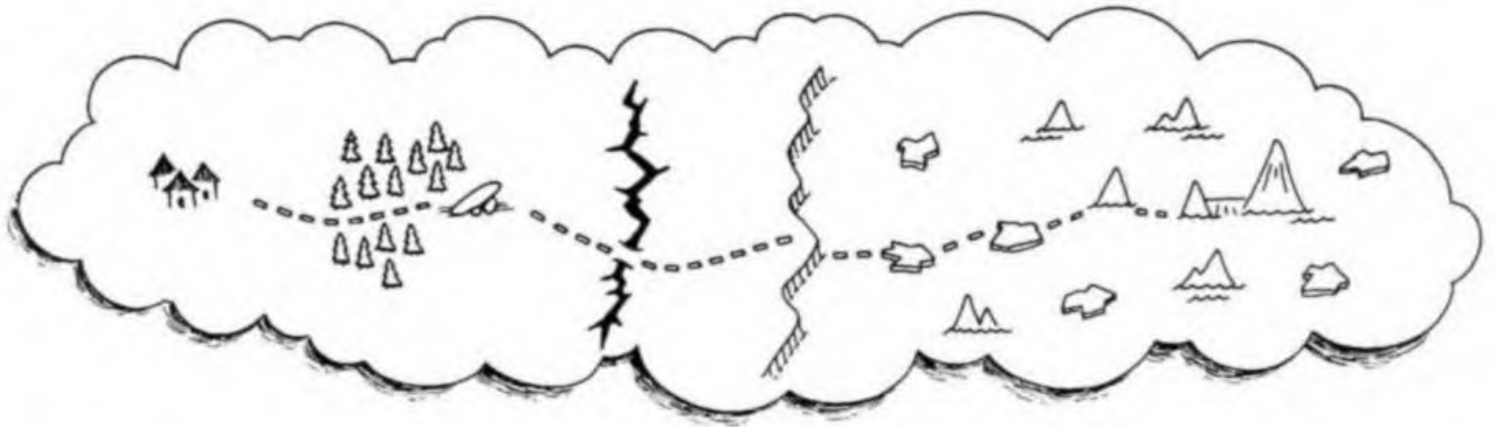
The fourth scene shows the remaining group hopping over ice floes as a killer whale devours one of the other fighters. (The scene actually takes place on the Cold Sea.)

The fifth scene shows the adventurers being ambushed in a cave by white, apelike humanoids with glowing blue eyes (yeti). One of the fighters lies on the ground, dead.

The sixth scene features a dramatic battle with a white dragon in an icy cave. One of the fighters is blasted by the dragon's icy breath, and another fighter lies pinned beneath one of the dragon's claws. One of the stalactites from the roof is falling down. This is actually a depiction of a piercer, but this cannot be verified even by close examination.

Commissioned by Selgaard nearly 100 years ago, the tapestry commemorates a journey made by the wizard and his companions. The original group consisted of the wizard Selgaard, the thief Belarus, the fighter brothers Dauther and Austin, and three men-at-arms the group had hired to round out their party. Selgaard and his band confronted the white dragon Stormfrost, who had been raiding gold mines and trade routes along the northern frontier. Only Selgaard and Belarus survived the encounter, narrowly escaping with their lives and Belarus's treasure-filled bag of holding. The badly wounded dragon sealed itself inside its icy lair and was never seen again. Selgaard and Belarus amassed enough of a fortune to live comfortably for years afterward and never returned to the dragon's lair.

The upper portion of the tapestry (which depicts a cloudy sky) can be torn away to



reveal a map that leads to the old dragon's lair and the remaining hoard. This portion of the tapestry has never been revealed, and it has remained hidden for many years. Ergrin, who has researched the tapestry extensively, knows that this map exists but hasn't seen it. He seeks the tapestry for this reason.

The map depicted on the tapestry has had its polar directions reversed (south is north, east is west, etc.) to make deciphering it a little more difficult. Further, there are no place names on the map, although the locations of forests, rivers, roads, towns, and the icy sea are marked. The dragon's isle is shown on the map in exaggerated scale.

If he is allowed to study the map, Ergrin can identify key landmarks (the Cold Sea, Charon's Crevasse, and the Blizzard Woods) and guesses that the town depicted on the far left must represent Molvencold. However, he is quick to point out incongruities; for example, he knows that Charon's Crevasse lies west of Molvencold, not east as shown on the tapestry map. From this, PCs might conclude that the map has been reversed.

The DM can replace the map with one more appropriate to the campaign world if necessary.

Arriving in Molvencold

If the PCs accept Ergrin's quest, they must travel north to the icy frontier town of Molvencold. Molvencold receives trade from independent miners who occasionally stop by for drinks or human company.

If PCs stay at the Inn of the Howling Wolf (Molvencold's only inn), they find an ancient copper plaque in the common room with the names of Selgaard and his party engraved on the surface. The current innkeeper, Irdol Firehand, was a child when Selgaard and his company visited the inn, but he remembers the flamboyant wizard quite well. If the PCs speak to Irdol about Selgaard, he recounts the following from childhood memory:

➤ Irdol's father, Kelborn, was especially fond of Selgaard and spoke well of the wizard.

➤ Upon returning from the expedition to the dragon's lair, Selgaard recounted the tale of the epic battle with Stormfrost while lamenting the deaths of his five companions.

➤ Selgaard's companion, Belarus, gave Irdol a gold coin from the dragon's hoard. Irdol keeps the coin in his room and is happy to show it to the PCs. Aside from its ancient mintage, the coin is unremarkable.

Irdol is a congenial, elderly fellow with silver hair and a crooked smile.

Irdol Firehand, 0-level half-elf male: AC 10; MV 12; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club); Str 11, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14; SZ M (5' 6"); ML 12; AL NG.

The Journey Overland

PCs striking out from Molvencold should be prepared for cold weather and wild beasts in the land beyond. Following the tapestry's map correctly from Molvencold leads PCs northwest through the Blizzard Woods, a pine forest that is home to various creatures. (The DM should use the random encounter table on the next page to determine encounters in the forest.) Prudent PCs should look for the leaning stone depicted in the tapestry. The stone has been inscribed on top with a magical compass rose, though accumulated snow and ice hide it. Selgaard made this inscription during the group's first passage through the area. Carved next to the northwest compass point is the word "Dragon" in Common.

Beyond the Blizzard Woods lies Charon's Crevasse, an area where a large portion of the western glacier is breaking away from the main glacier and sliding into the Cold Sea. The crevasse is about 100 feet deep at any given area, with an average width of 50 feet, and measures nearly 100 miles long. PCs can circumvent the crevasse by magical means or by crossing one of many ice bridges. Scaling down, across, and back up is risky business, due to loose ice and flaying winds that howl through the crevasse.

The bridges that span the crevasse are formed from ice that has remained intact as the two sides of the crevasse split. One never knows if the strain of the parting ice has made a bridge too weak to support a load, and wind from the crevasse can upset crossing PCs. A bridge has a cumulative 10% chance of collapsing per Medium-sized creature or PC crossing it. The chance decreases to 5% for Small-sized creatures and increases to 20% for Large-sized creatures. PCs who find themselves on a collapsing bridge must make a successful saving throw vs. paralysis to avoid falling for 10d6 points of damage. PCs can apply their Dexterity reaction adjustment to the saving throw as a bonus. PCs tied to ropes cannot add their reaction adjustment bonus to their saving throws but do not suffer damage if the ice bridge collapses and the rope is secured.

Characters who search along the length of the crevasse for a day find an old marker left by Selgaard's party to mark the loss of a friend. The marker consists of a rusted two-handed sword thrust blade-first into the ice. The blade is brittle and snaps in two if the PCs attempt to pull it free. Inscribed on the blade is the following epithet in Common: *"Here fell Dauther, a warrior of cold heart whose bravery and prowess we shall remember forever."*

Beyond Charon's Crevasse, the frigid plain continues for several miles. The glacier ends rather abruptly, collapsing into the open sea, which seems to be filled with ice fragments,

some of them miles wide. Reaching the sea from the top of the glacier requires a harrowing climb down the crumbling walls of ice. Footing is horrible in most places; apply a -40% penalty to Climbing checks due to the melting, crumbling ice. It is a 150' drop from the top of the glacier to the sea below. PCs can find a relatively safe path down to the water by making a successful Tracking proficiency check with a -5 penalty.

There are several ways for the PCs to cross the Cold Sea and reach the dragon's isle: They can use magic to fly across the water, use a boat (brought from Molvencold) to cross the expanse, or traverse the ice floes.

If the PCs choose to travel across the ice floes, they must leap from one ice floe to the next. Over the course of their journey, the PCs must make six successful Dexterity checks; a failed roll indicates that the PC has fallen or toppled into the icy sea while leaping between ice floes. PCs who are not immune to normal cold suffer 2d4 points of damage and lose 1 point of Constitution per round of immersion. PCs emerging from the icy sea continue to suffer 1d4 points of damage per round until stripped of their wet gear and wrapped in warm, insulated clothing.

Regardless of how the PCs cross the Cold Sea, the DM should check for random encounters. (Consult the table on the next page.)

The Dragon's Isle

The dragon's isle is an odd bit of rock that thrusts up from the icy depths of the Cold Sea. It is covered in ice and snow with no portion of the solid stone showing beneath. Although several windows open into the interior of the dragon's isle, they are very difficult to see and might be mistaken for bits of rock protruding from the snow. The windows are about 10 feet high and 5 feet wide. The sills are covered with ice, snow, and thick, sharp icicles that camouflage the windows fairly well and make passing through them difficult.

Climbing through a window requires that the icicles be broken off (with a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll at a +15% bonus) or smashed with a heavy, blunt instrument (like a mace or club). Passing through the windows without first removing the icicles causes 1d3 points of damage because of the sharp ice.

The sides of the island are steep, angling at about 60 degrees. The walls should be treated as sheer and slippery for climbing purposes.

The temperature outside the isle is cold indeed, averaging about -4° F when the air is still. The interior of the dragon's isle is considerably warmer, though still an icy 24° F.

1a. Ice Run-off. These icy platforms are about 2 feet thick and consist of frozen ice that has cascaded down from the walkway (area 1b).

Blizzard Woods Encounters

The DM should roll 1d6 once every 3 hours; encounters occur on a roll of 1.

Roll 2d10

2. An enormous white buffalo. The buffalo avoids contact but fights savagely if cornered.

White buffalo: AC 7 (head 3); MV 15; HD 8; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 1d10/1d10; SA charge and trample for 4d6 points of damage; SZ L; ML 10; INT semi (2); AL N; XP 1,400; MM/243 (variant).

3-8. 1d4 winter wolves. The wolves flee if they lose 50% of their number.

Winter wolves: AC 5; MV 18; HD 6; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SA frost breath weapon (6d4 points of damage; usable once per turn); SW suffers +1 point of damage per die from fire-based attacks; SZ L; ML 13; INT average (8); AL NE; XP 975; MM/362.

9-13. 1d8 moose. The moose are aggressive but easily frightened off by loud groups. The moose also flee if they lose 50% or more of their hit points.

Moose: AC 7; MV 15; HD 5; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8/1d8 (hooves); SA charge and gore for 3d6 points of damage; SZ L; ML 10; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 175; MM/241 (stag—variant).

14-17. 4d8 reindeer. These reindeer are fast and stay at

least 500 feet from PCs. If attacked, the reindeer flee.

Reindeer: AC 7; MV 24; HD 2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA stampede for 1d4 points of damage; SZ M; ML 3; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 35; MM/241 (stag—variant).

18-20. An ettin looking for an easy meal. The ettin fights until it has lost 75% or more of his hit points, then flees to its lair.

Ettin: AC 3; MV 12; HD 10; THAC0 10; #AT 2; Dmg 3d6 (right-handed club)/2d8 (left-handed club); SD surprised only on a 1; SZ H (13' tall); ML 14; INT low (5); AL CE; XP 3,000; MM/135.

Cold Sea Encounters

The Cold Sea is surrounded by glaciers and filled with huge shards of ice that collapse into the sea from the nearby glacial walls. Ice floes and icebergs clash in the rough waters of the sea. The clashing ice can crush ships, and killer whales ply the cold water seeking meals of seal and any other being they can catch. Yet even the killer whales must beware the arctic wyverns that scour the icy sea in search of easy prey.

The DM should roll 1d6 once every hour; encounters occur on a roll of 1.

Roll 2d10

2-4. A killer whale hunting for prey. The whale attacks PCs in small boats or on ice floes, striking the boat or ice with considerable force. PCs in the boat or atop the ice floe must make a Dexterity check or fall into the water—easy prey for the whale.

Killer whale: AC 4; MV swim 30; HD 9; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 5d4; SD tail attack for 5 points of damage; SZ H; ML 14; INT average (10); AL N; XP 975; MM/358.

5-9. Weak ice. The ice cracks beneath the weight of a single PC, dumping the character into the Cold Sea unless a saving throw vs. petrification is successful.

10-11. Overturning ice. The ice beneath the PCs suddenly flips over, and each PC must make a successful saving throw vs. petrification or be hurled into the water. Those in nearby boats must make a successful Seamanship proficiency check, or their ship suffers 1d2 points of hull damage from the rolling ice.

12. Falling ice. If the PCs are near the shore, a wall of ice collapses into the sea dangerously close to them; if at sea, a nearby iceberg cracks, sending huge chunks of ice falling toward the PCs. If PCs are in a boat, the pilot must make a Seamanship proficiency check, or the boat suffers 1d4 points of hull damage. Those PCs in the path of the falling ice must make a saving throw vs. petrification to avoid taking 2d10 points of damage.

13-15. 3d4 seals bask on a nearby ice floe. There is a 30% chance per turn of a killer whale showing up to attack the seals.

Seals: AC 5; MV 12, swim 18; HD 1+1; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SZ S; ML 7; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 15; MM/241 (otter, sea).

16-18. A nearby ice floe is not what it seems; this arctic form of trapper waits for unwary prey to land upon it so it can entrap and smother its victim.

Ice trapper: AC 3; MV 3; HD 12; THAC0 9; #AT 4+; Dmg 4 + victim's AC; SA smother victim in 6 rounds; SD immune to heat- or cold-based attacks; SZ H; ML 11; INT high (13); AL N; XP 3,000; MM/229 (variant).

19. An adult arctic wyvern and 1-2 young. The wyverns attack until either one of the young is slain or the mother is reduced to half hit points. The survivors then break off the attack.

Arctic wyvern: AC 3; MV 6, fly 24 (E); HD 7+7; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8/1d6 + poison; SZ G; ML 14; INT low (7); AL NE; XP 1,400; MM/366 (variant).

Arctic wyvern, young: AC 3; MV 6, fly 24 (E); HD 4+4; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8/1d6 + poison; SZ H; ML 14; INT low (5); AL NE; XP 420; MM/366 (variant).

20. Frozen carcass of a dragon turtle. The dragon turtle wandered into the area and froze to death; it might not be apparent that this is the corpse of a dragon turtle due to the collected ice on the shell. Resourceful characters can use the shell as shelter once they discover the truth about it.



The ice is slick (characters should make a Dexterity check if jogging, running, or fighting to keep from falling), and climbing up the ice cascade to the walkway is difficult without tools. (Treat as a smooth, slippery surface for climbing rolls.) The ice that cascades down from the walkway is 30 feet tall.

Although the ice platforms can support the weight of the yeti and the PCs, they are not strong enough to support the frost giants or the white dragon. Any boulder cast by the frost giants forces the ice to make a saving throw vs. crushing blow (as if the ice were made of glass) or shatter.

1b. Main Entrance. The main entrance is 30 feet above the level of the water and coated with a thick, icy glaze. There are no handrails to hold onto, but the frost giants, yeti, and white dragon are unaffected by the slick ice. PCs running or fighting in this area must make a successful Dexterity check or slip and fall, automatically losing initiative the following round.

There is a cave entrance to the white dragon's hovel (area 2) and to the main cavern (area 3). Unless the PCs take great pains to conceal their presence (by using *invisibility* and *silence* spells, for example), they are detected by the white dragon in area 2.

2. White Dragon's Hovel. Carved into an icy spire is a small cave that serves as home to the frost giants' pet white dragon, Crystalline. She is bound within the hovel by means of a massive chain and collar but can reach up to 25 feet outside the cave. Crystalline cannot crawl down to the ice platforms (area 1a), but her icy breath weapon can reach PCs who are standing on them.

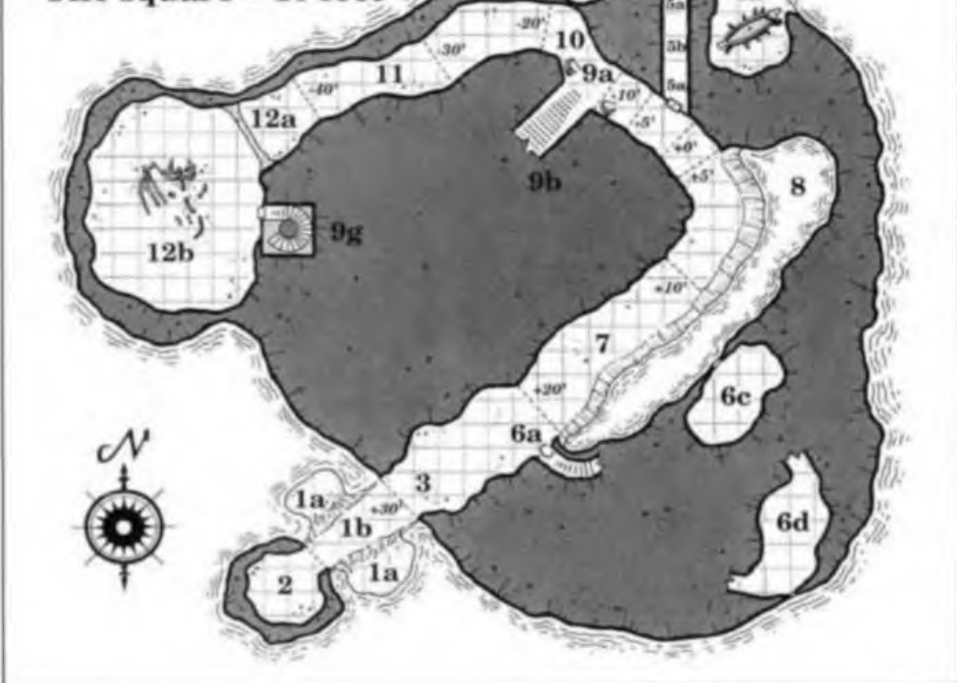
Crystalline's chain is attached to a secure iron bracket on the cave wall near the door. The chain and collar have been treated with an oil solvent so that the white dragon cannot shatter the metal with her icy breath, and the chain is strong enough to hold against the creature's strength. If freed, the dragon does not wander far. The eldest son of the frost giant clan emerges once every three days to feed Crystalline, giving her a hearty meal of seals and whale blubber. Due to the additional food Crystalline receives from the yeti, Crystalline is rarely hungry.

The yeti fear Crystalline but are granted safe passage in exchange for small offerings of food. (A seal or two usually suffices.) Since Crystalline has become familiar with the yeti scent, she does not attack the yeti that feed her. PCs receive a cold reception from Crystalline, who is unfamiliar with their scent, and cannot appease her with offerings of food.

If Crystalline attacks, she unleashes a mighty roar that is 75% likely to alert both the yeti and the frost giants. (Roll separately for

DRAGON ISLE

One square = 10 feet



each; a failed roll indicates that the giants or yeti think Crystalline was simply chasing off some predator or other beast that came too close to the isle.) PCs who remain outside the dragon's melee range are attacked by the her frosty breath.

Crystalline (very young female white dragon): AC 3; MV 12, fly 40 (C), burrow 6, swim 12; HD 7; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d6+2/1d6+2/2d8+2; SA breath weapon (75'-long cone with 25'-wide base; inflicts 2d6+2 damage); SD immune to cold; SZ L (12' body, 8' tail); ML 16; INT low (5); AL CE; XP 4,000; MM/69.

3. Dragon's Isle Entrance. The entrance to the main cavern was kept clear while the dragon Stormfrost was alive; since that time, snow and ice have accumulated around the mouth of the tunnel. Those passing through the entrance have a 20% chance of causing loose ice and snow to cascade from the walls and ceiling, burying characters who fail a saving throw vs. breath weapon. Such a collapse deals only 1d4 points of damage if the saving throw fails, but the victim requires 1d4 rounds to dig out from under the ice.

Although the collapse itself won't attract the yeti or the giants, any loud noises or shouts from the PCs alert the yeti in area 6 to the party's presence. Two yeti investigate the disturbance, appearing in 3 rounds.

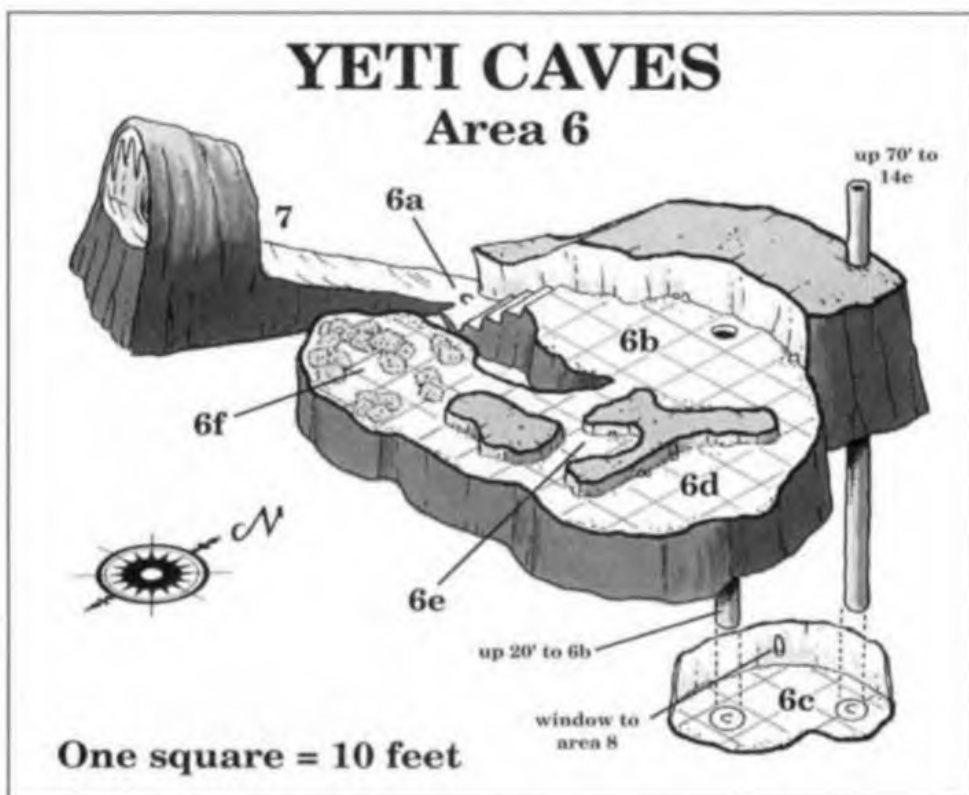
4. Dock. The dock on the north side of the isle sits about a foot or two above sea level. It is little more than a stony outcropping 5 feet thick, covered with a 2'-thick layer of ice. The dock is strong enough to support the giants' weight.

4a. Jmondar's Longship. The frost giant Jmondar keeps his longship here. The ship is mounted on four wooden posts to protect it from the ice floes that pervade the icy sea. The human-built longship was captured by Jmondar, and he now uses it to haul food, materials, furniture, and slaves to the isle, as well as to transport portions of the dragon's hoard off the island. Getting the longship to the water requires some ingenuity; moving the boat requires a singular Strength of 21 or the combined lesser might of no fewer than eight humans.

Unknown to Jmondar, the dragon head carving on the longship is magical, granting those in the boat a +4 bonus to all proficiency checks, saving throws, and attack rolls. If the dragon head is removed, the bonus is lost.

PCs who explore the inside of the longship find only two large, empty wooden trunks.

4b. Mooring Post. This 6'-high, 2'-diameter stone post is used to anchor the longship for loading or unloading. The post shows the wear of many years of use but is otherwise unremarkable.



5a. Doors. The ironbound doors at each end of this hallway are sealed from the outside by giant brass locks. Being of frost giant proportions, each door stands 25 feet high and is 10 feet wide. The locks are about 2 feet tall apiece, and a human hand can fit easily into the keyhole.

The locks are of exceptional quality (~20% chance to pick) but have been treated with special oil that keeps them from freezing. Both locks require the same key, which Jmendar keeps about his neck. Breaking the lock is difficult and requires a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll. Smashing the lock open with a metal weapon (wood or lesser substances cannot harm the sturdy lock) succeeds if the lock fails a saving throw vs. crushing blow at a +4 bonus.

5b. Stone Hall. This hall was constructed by Jmendar to allow easy access from the dock to his home. Dwarves who can detect new stonework can tell that this hallway is a fairly recent construction. The hall is unlit and clear of snow and ice.

6. Yeti Caves. A tribe of yeti has dwelled in these caves since Stormfrost occupied the island. Even though the dragon has been dead for years, the yeti still revere the ancient cavern in which the dragon rested (area 12b), and they do not descend past area 10. The yeti accept the presence of Jmendar and his family,

although they remain aloof and do not consort with the giants. Jmendar is regarded as the new ruler of the isle, and the yeti do not oppose him unless presented with strong evidence that Jmendar has betrayed their trust.

If the PCs manage to communicate with the yeti (by successfully *charming* or *subduing* them), they tell the PCs that Jmendar has already claimed the dragon's treasure and shipped at least some of it to the mainland. The yeti do not regard Jmendar's claim to the dragon's treasure as a bad thing; in fact, they feel that Jmendar has every right to claim the trove. The yeti have no interest in the dragon's treasure.

6a. Yeti Cave Entrance. The entrance to this cave is not easily seen because the yeti have placed a snow-covered hide over the entrance to keep out unwanted visitors. The entrance can be detected as a concealed door. The hide is worthless for resale; if torn down, the yeti replace it in 1d4 days and place a sentry at the door, rotating the guard every 4 hours.

6b. Meeting Cavern. If the yeti are expecting intruders, the males from the clan cavern (area 6d) hide along the white, frosted walls while the females and young retire to the clan cave. The males attack PCs who enter the cave, imposing a -3 penalty to the party's surprise roll due to their natural camouflage.

The yeti use this cave during the evening and early morning hours for recreational and social activities. During daylight hours, however, this cave is unoccupied.

In the northern section of the cavern is a large hole in the floor that leads to a 4'-diameter shaft hewn from the cold rock. The shaft has rough handholds for easy climbing and descends to the lookout room (area 6c).

When this room is in use, the large boulder that would otherwise cover the hole is rolled aside so that yeti can enter and exit the tube freely. The boulder requires a singular Strength of 18 or a combined Strength of 30 to roll, and if less than 50 Strength is used, the sound of it grating across the floor alerts the yeti in the other parts of the complex.

A small niche in the south wall contains several gemstones the yeti use in their games. There are about twenty gemstones of various types kept here, worth 25 gp each. Also in the niche is a piece of ivory carved with various yeti pictograms. The yeti made it from a walrus tooth. It can be sold for as much as 75 gp.

6c. Lookout. This cavern is manned during the evening and early morning hours by two yeti sentries. The window through which the yeti watch area 7 is about 3 feet in diameter and 20 feet above the water level of area 8. The yeti have a 60% chance of noticing anyone traversing the passageway of area 7 and an 80% chance of hearing anyone swimming in area 8. If the PCs are detected, the yeti guards silently alert the rest of the tribe, and a hunting party of 2-5 yeti is dispatched to capture the PCs. PCs pretending to be slaves of the frost giants are still attacked.

Aside from the window overlooking areas 7 and 8, the only exits from this room are a pair of 4'-diameter shafts in the ceiling. The southernmost shaft leads up 20 feet to area 6b; the northernmost shaft leads up 70 feet to area 14e and is covered with a stone plug that requires a combined Strength of 20 to move. The yeti are adept at scurrying up or down these shafts and need not make Climbing checks.

Yeti males (2): See area 6d below for complete statistics.

6d. Clan Cavern. This cave is where the yeti sleep, mostly during the afternoon. They lay amid the various rock shelves carved into the walls or atop the icy floor. Discounting the yeti in areas 6c, 6e, 6f, and 15d, there are nine yeti males, six yeti females, and three yeti young. At any given time, 1d4 yeti males are out of the complex on a hunting expedition; these yeti usually return after 2-5 days.

A 7' x 3' crack has formed in the east wall; it leads outside, 5 feet above sea level. The yeti use this natural fissure as a back door to their lair, packing it with snow when not in use.

Yeti adults (15): AC 6; MV 15; HD 4+4; hp 25 (males), 23 (females); THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA squeeze on natural 20 for 2d8 points of damage; SD immune to normal cold, invisible in snow and ice; SW suffer an additional 50% damage from fire attacks; SZ L (8' tall); ML 13; INT average (9); AL N; XP 420; MM/368.

Yeti children (3): AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4/1d4; SD immune to normal cold, invisible in snow and ice; SW suffer an additional 50% damage from fire attacks; SZ M (4' tall); ML 10; INT average (8); AL N; XP 120; MM/368.

6e. Guard Post. Regardless of the time of day or night, at least one male yeti is posted at this spot at all times. The guard has a 45% chance of hearing any commotion in the other rooms and is entrusted to repel invaders and alert the tribe. The yeti moves to the source of the commotion, and if trouble is spotted, emits a high pitched keening that is 85% likely to alert the rest of tribe. After spending the first round keening, the yeti guard attacks and fights to the death.

Yeti male: See area 6d for complete statistics.

6f. Chieftain's Lair. This room houses the hereditary yeti chieftain, Katora, and his entourage. The room is covered with soft snow and the tanned pelts of great beasts brought by yeti hunting parties to gain Katora's favor. The room has a reek of dead flesh and a strong musk odor. The bones of former prey, mostly humanoid, are scattered about the room. If Katora and his entourage have been warned of the PCs' approach, he and the other yeti in this room take cover by hiding within the piles of pelts, hoping to catch intruders by surprise.

Although the pelts are worth relatively little, most can be used as cloaks or blankets to protect against the cold; if worn in proximity to the white dragon Crystalline, the scent on the pelts makes the dragon believe the wearer is a yeti.

Scattered amid the bones and pelts is the treasure the yeti chieftain

has amassed over the years. There are 50 gp, two gems worth 100 gp each (both pearls), and a knife +1 engraved with its name (Tongue-lasher) in Common. Locating all the treasure requires 1d8+2 rounds of searching.

Katora (yeti chieftain): AC 6; MV 15; HD 4+4; hp 36; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA squeeze on natural 20 for 2d8 points of damage; SD immune to normal cold, invisible in snow and ice; SW suffer an additional 50% damage from fire attacks; SZ L; ML 13; INT average (10); AL N; XP 650; MM/368.

Yeti males (3): See area 6d for complete statistics.

Yeti females (3): See area 6d for complete statistics.

7. Great Passage. The icy floor of this 30'-high tunnel has a slight troughlike curvature and runs alongside the interior lake (area 8), descending toward area 9. Icicles hang from the rocky ceiling. The passage is slippery and treacherous; PCs who run or fight in the tunnel must make a successful Dexterity check each round or slip and fall, automatically losing initiative the following round.

There is a 15% chance that a female slave from the giant's household is here collecting water; if encountered here, she begs for aid in escaping from the frost giants.

The yeti in area 6c watch for intruders wandering along this section of

the passage and might send a yeti or two to harangue PCs. See area 6c for details on the yeti's reactions.

PCs with a light source who study the ceiling have a 15% chance of noticing three flat, 5'-diameter slabs embedded in the tunnel roof above the midpoint of the underground lake (area 8). The stone slabs, half-hidden by icicles, are 30 feet above the floor of the tunnel and are difficult to reach short of levitating or flying. The slabs were designed to conceal three murder holes that the giants use to attack intruders in the tunnel (see area 14d); unless the giants have reason to suspect that intruders are in the tunnel, the murder holes are not in use. The slabs cannot be pushed open from the underside, although casting a *knock* spell causes one slab to open, allowing access to area 14d.

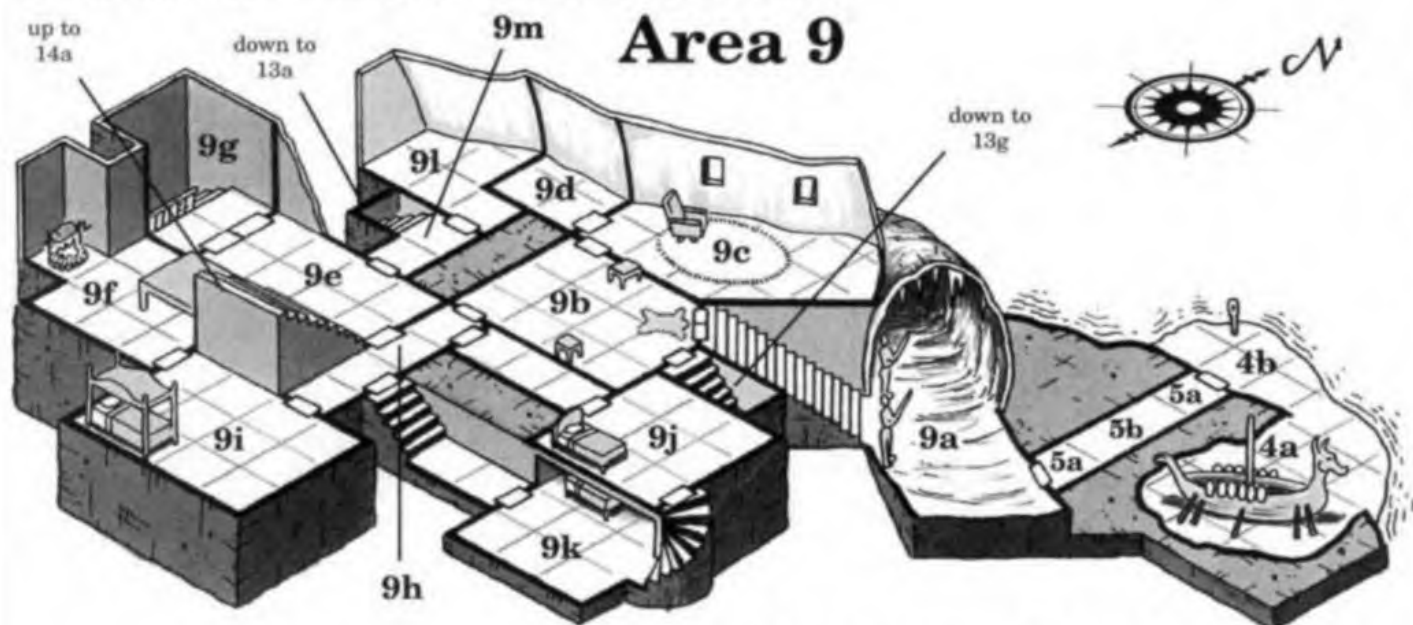
8. Interior Lake. A deep underwater vent connects this lake with the Cold Sea. Note that the water within the lake is fresh water, which is used by the yeti and the frost giants. The perpetual cold means that the entire surface of the water is covered with a thin layer of icy slush that cannot support the weight of any being. The interior lake has an average depth of 30 feet, and those diving to the bottom can find the vent that leads out to the sea. Small arctic fish can sometimes be found in the interior lake. However, no other creatures dwell here.

The water is cold, and those who jump or fall into the water and are not protected against cold must make an immediate System Shock roll. Those who fail are paralyzed for 1 round by the cold water and suffer 1 point of damage for each round spent in the water. PCs not protected against the cold water can remain in the water for a number of rounds equal to half their Constitution before hypothermia sets in. For each round beyond that time limit, the PC must make a Constitution check at a cumulative -1 penalty (-6 penalty maximum) or fall unconscious and begin suffering 1d4 points of damage per round. Note that unconscious PCs left immersed in the water might drown before losing all hit points from hypothermia. PCs suffering hypothermia continue to lose hit points even when taken out of the water. Other PCs can wrap those affected by hypothermia in warm, dry clothing to stop the loss of hit points, but without treatment



JMONDAR'S MANSION

Area 9



One square = 10 feet

from someone with the Healing proficiency or healing magic, those between 0 to -10 hit points remain in a coma.

9. Frost Giants' Lair. The home of Jmondar and his family is a fairly recent addition to the caverns. Jmondar carved the stone rooms of the house with the aid of his relatives. The materials to build and protect the house were purchased from distant Gianttown with gold from the dragon's lair, although there is still enough of the treasure left for Jmondar and his family to remain comfortable for many years to come.

The house is richly furnished and seems very spacious. Most of the rooms have a 40'-high ceiling, and most of the halls are 25 feet high. Doors are approximately 12 feet wide, 22 feet tall, and built of logs bound together with decorative yet crude iron bands. The iron bands have been treated with special oil, making them resistant to the cold. The doors are counter-weighted so that they can be opened easily by human or frost giant alike. Each door can be locked by means of a stout iron bolt approximately 15 feet off the ground. Once locked, only characters with exceptional Strength or magic can open the door. Treat the doors as if *wizard locked* for purposes of making Open Doors rolls. Small PCs (halflings and gnomes) who make a successful Dexterity

check can squeeze under a door; a failed check, however, indicates that the PC has become stuck. A stuck PC can be freed only by making a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll; a new roll can be made each round.

Due to the enchantments and blessings Jmondar paid to have placed on the house, the entire structure radiates weak Abjuration magic. The house, though cool, is bearable for humans wearing winter garments. This chill grants a saving throw bonus of +4 against fire magic, and each die of fire damage deals 1 less point of damage (minimum 1 point). A successful *dispel magic* spell vs. 7th-level magic negates this effect for a number of rounds equal to the dispeller's level.

Jmondar and his family might be encountered anywhere in the house, and the children move constantly from room to room. If the family is alerted to the presence of intruders, Jmondar and the eldest son suit up and grab their weapons (requiring 1 turn). They scour the house for any intruders while Ylonda and the youngest son retreat to the master bedroom and wait for Jmondar to give the all-clear. The taskmaster (see area 13d) orders all the slaves to their pens and waits for Jmondar's elder son to give him a signal before releasing anyone.

Jmondar does not take kindly to strangers and views humans and demihumans as little

more than bandits intending to steal his treasure and harm his family. If PCs keep cool heads, act peacefully, and are mindful of Jmondar's house and family, PCs can allay the giant's fears about their presence, although he demands that they leave at once. Failure to comply results in hostility. The DM should remember that Jmondar is evil and will attack the PCs if provoked.

Use the following table to determine random encounters in the house. There is a 1-in-6 chance of an encounter occurring; the DM should check each turn.

Roll 1d6:

1. Jmondar (see area 9c), who attacks PCs on sight unless convinced they mean him and his family no harm.

2. Beargunne (see area 9k), who attacks and calls for his father if overwhelmed.

3. If the household is on alert, treat this a roll of 2; otherwise, Gholar (see area 9j) encounters the PCs and attempts to play with them. If threatened or harmed, he calls for help. There is a 50% chance that Ylonda responds, a 25% chance that Jmondar responds, a 15% chance Beargunne comes to Gholar's aid, and a 10% chance the taskmaster and 1d3 lieutenants arrive to help.

4. If the household is on alert, treat this as a roll of 1; otherwise the PCs run into Ylonda

(see area 9e), who assumes the PCs are thieves but pretends to mistake them for slaves. She attempts to lure them into the taskmaster's hands while seeking to warn her husband about the PCs' presence.

5. If the household is on alert, treat this as roll of 6; otherwise the PCs encounter 1d3 slaves (see area 13c) performing cleaning chores. They beg to be taken from the frost giants' home and returned to their home town. If attacked, they cower or flee.

6. Taskmaster and 1d3 lieutenants (see area 13d). The taskmaster and his lieutenants immediately attack to subdue the PCs. If possible, the taskmaster calls for aid from Jmondar or Beargunne.

9a. Stair Entrance. The staircase that leads up to the frost giant's abode is framed by massive carvings of two 10'-tall women warriors clutching great stone swords. They frown on all interlopers who dare approach the stairs. The stairs are made of huge slabs of stone, each as white as ice and polished to a mirror-like finish. Each step equals at least three human ones both in height and width.

The statues guarding the stairs are actually giant-sized caryatid columns and activate if any nongiant sets foot on the stairs or if the caryatid columns are attacked.

Although the caryatid columns are of giant size, they are not especially resilient. This is due to the limited magical prowess of the shaman Jmondar hired to enchant the statues, who was forced to draw on rather weak spirits to infuse and animate the statues. Because of the weak spirits, the caryatid columns are slow to activate and respond, attacking at the end of every round.

The caryatid columns are protected from the first attack that strikes them by the equivalent of a *stoneskin* spell. This effect works only in the round they animate. Once animated, the caryatid columns attack until the PCs flee for the entrance to the island. The golems pursue PCs who run toward the docks (areas 4 and 5) or down toward the dragon's lair (areas 10-12). Those who leap into the underground lake (area 8) are left alone.

Giant caryatid columns (2): AC 5; MV 6; HD 10; hp 33 each; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SD +4 bonus to saving throws, nonmagical weapons inflict half damage, magical weapons cause full damage but do not receive magical bonuses, 25% chance that any weapon striking a caryatid column shatters (-5% chance per "plus" for magical weapons); SW attack last each round, destroyed instantly by *stone to flesh*, *transmute rock to mud*, or *stone shape* spell if saving throw fails; SZ L (10' tall); ML 20; INT non (0); AL N; XP 3,000; MM/171 (variant).

The double doors leading to area 9b are trapped, as indicated below.

The Giants' Tactics

The giants have strategies should they face an armed assault or a slave revolt. If an alarm is raised in the house, Jmondar (area 9c) and Beargunne (area 9f) immediately retrieve weapons and armor from area 14b. It takes 1 turn for Jmondar and his son to reach the weapon cache, don the armor, and return to their posts. In the meantime, Ylonda (area 9e) grabs Gholar (area 9k) and locks herself and the child in the master bedroom (area 9i). The taskmaster and his lieutenants quickly gather up the slaves and rush them down into their cells in area 13c. Two of the taskmaster's lieutenants are then stationed at the dungeon entrances to thwart any attempts at a slave breakout.

Once Jmondar and Beargunne are armed and armored, they take up defensive positions in the house. Jmondar waits in the den (area 9c), listening and watching for intruders. Beargunne takes up position in the main hallway (area 9h), near the door to the master bedroom (area 9i). If PCs enter the hall, Beargunne peppers them with shots from his bow. If rushed, he flees through the door to his room, locking it behind him. He then sneaks behind PCs still in the hall by coming through his and Gholar's rooms (areas 9j and 9k). Jmondar listens for combat in the hall and flanks PCs while they engage his son, cleaving with his giant axe.

9b. Foyer. When the double doors to this room are opened without speaking the command word, "Nish" ("Silence" in Giantish), a *magic mouth* immediately sounds. If the visitor is a frost giant, the *magic mouth* announces loudly in Giantish, "Welcome to Jmondar's manor, honored guest," and the doors swing wide to allow entry. If the visitor is not a frost giant, it screams "Intruders!" in Giantish before the doors lock. PCs can hold the doors open by making a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll, or they can pick the lock once the doors close. The lock is of superior quality. (Apply a -20% penalty to Open Locks rolls.)

Jmondar's family knows the password to bypass the magic on the door, as does the taskmaster. Because the taskmaster occasionally sends slaves out to area 8 for water and dislikes accompanying them, all of the slaves know the password to bypass the door.

This area is perhaps the most richly decorated room in the entire house. The walls have a thin glaze of bluish ice on them, which has been sculpted and cared for by Jmondar and his family. The pelt of a massive polar bear has become the welcome mat just inside the double doors to the room, and two small tables (each 9 feet tall) have various stone ornaments, each crafted by Jmondar, on them. The

If PCs manage to penetrate the dungeons and encounter the taskmaster or his lieutenants, they warn Jmondar by ringing the gong in area 13e. Once the gong is rung, Jmondar moves to the stairs at areas 9m and 13a while Beargunne covers the stairs at areas 9b and 13g. Jmondar then raises a lever that seals the fire pit vents in the dungeon (see area 13c), causing the dungeon level to fill with smoke. Jmondar and Beargunne then kill any humans or demihumans (including the taskmaster and his lieutenants) who attempt to escape the smoke. The giants have debated killing the slaves and the taskmaster in the event of a revolt. Jmondar has decided that should a slave revolt occur, it would be easier to find new slaves rather than risk possible harm attempting to recapture them—or face a future revolt by the same slaves. Jmondar keeps the lever activated until the smoke fills the entire dungeon and begins to creep up toward the main level of the house. He then reopens the vents and allows the dungeons to vent. Note that neither the taskmaster nor his lieutenants are aware of the consequences of ringing the gong; they believe it simply alerts the household to the presence of intruders.

As a side note, if the alarm is raised in the house, there is a 65% chance that the yeti are also aware of the threat and send two yeti to set up an ambush at the bottom of the stairs at area 9a.

tables also hold sealed globes filled with iridescent moss that lights the room with a warm glow. The strange moss was originally found in Stormfrost's lair and thrives in cold temperatures. The objects on the table are of low value to a mason or other stoneworker but could be worth up to 50 gp each to a collector of frost giant art.

On the walls hang various hunting trophies (mostly the heads of victims, including arctic bears, caribou, and a mastodon). One of Jmondar's mounted trophies is the skull of the dragon Stormfrost, slain by Jmondar in area 12b. The hunting trophies are worth 5-20 gp each. (The white dragon's skull is worth 250 gp.) However, each trophy weighs approximately 12-25 pounds, while the dragon skull weighs about 30 pounds.

9c. Den. Jmondar is normally encountered in this room, sitting in the stuffed chair. If the house is on alert, Jmondar hides behind the door and slams it shut after one or two characters enter. He then throws the bolt once it is closed. Those still entering when the door is shut must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or be knocked back into area 9b, suffering 1d8+1 points of damage. Success means the PC can dive into the room before

the door is shut. Jmondar then attacks the PC(s), calling for his son to help destroy the remaining group. If his son hears the call from his father, Beargunne arrives in 1d3 rounds.

The den's floor is covered with a soft blanket of snow, with a few dressed pelts laid out like throw rugs. A giant stuffed chair, made from the hide of a killer whale, faces out toward the windows. A 9'-tall table rests nearby. On the table Jmondar keeps his whittling knife, a small lamp filled with glowing moss, and his current project. Jmondar is fond of carving dragons and caricatures of those frost giants he knows well, which he occasionally sells abroad.

Also in the room are several bookcases filled with hide scrolls about a variety of subjects, mostly stonemasonry and woodworking (Jmondar's hobbies). There are also several scrolls on Giantish genealogy (both Jmondar's and Ylonda's lineage). The scrolls are written in pictograms, and PCs who wish to read them must either read and write the Giantish tongue, possess the Read Languages ability, or cast *comprehend languages* to decipher the writing. Most of the writing is of little worth to adventurers, but those who study the stonemasonry or woodworking scrolls for five weeks can gain the Stonemasonry or Woodworking proficiency when one or more proficiency slots become available. Furthermore, the genealogy records could be sold to a sage (such as Ergrin) or another interested party for 5-20 gp per scroll; there are about fifty scrolls total. However, each scroll weighs roughly 5 pounds.

Jmondar (frost giant): AC 5 (0); MV 15 (12); HD 14+4; hp 116; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+9 (2d8+9); SA hurl rocks for 2d10 points of damage; SD impervious to cold; SZ H; ML 14; INT high (14); AL NE; XP 7,000; MM/140.

Jmondar is a craftsman by trade, preferring to work with stone and wood. He is much brighter and less chaotic than his brethren, although he can be cruel and evil when provoked. He prefers to wear a simple off-white jerkin and pants, stained with paint and dust from his work. He often wears a leather apron and carries a belt of tools, any of which can serve as an improvised weapon (dealing 1d8+9 points of damage). Jmondar prefers his isolated life and despises those who barge into his house unwelcome. He

tends to assume such interlopers are after the remains of the dragon's gold and can be quite vocal about his opinions of such theft.

The statistics in brackets should be used if Jmondar has been forewarned of the party's presence. This allows Jmondar to retrieve his magical ax and chainmail armor



from area

14b. If caught unprepared, the giant grabs a nearby piece of furniture and wields it as a heavy club (inflicting 2d6+9 points of damage). While Jmondar fights, he bellows about the PCs' audacious trespassing; this bellowing brings help within 1d3 rounds and places the entire household on alert.

Besides his weapons and armor, Jmondar carries the keys to several areas of the house. The keys to areas 5a, 9b, 14e, and the trunks in

12b are around his neck. He also wears a gold wedding ring worth 750 gp.

9d. Shop. Jmondar performs his woodcraft projects in this chamber, which is filled with giant, crude woodworking tools. Logs, some of them carved, are stacked against the walls. Much of this wood will be used to make furniture that Jmondar can sell in his tribal homeland. Currently there are no completed projects within the room.

The room is not normally lit, although Jmondar keeps a coal oil lamp in the corner for a light source and wood-honing tool. Note that the oil lamp is sized for giants and is approximately 3 feet tall.

9e. Kitchen. This is where Jmondar's wife, Ylonda, spends most of her time, and she can be found here along with 2-5 female slaves. Jmondar's wife dislikes the taskmaster and the lieutenants, and the latter have learned to avoid this room.

For a frost giant's kitchen, the room is richly appointed and furnished. Surprisingly, the majority of the cooking utensils are human-sized, and the slaves perform most of the food preparation, although Ylonda always supervises. The room also contains the giants' dining table, which is set against the stairs. This allows the slaves to reach the tabletop and prepare the table by climbing up the stairs. The giants eat three times a day: at dawn, at noon, and at sundown. A constant fire in the cooking pit lights the room.

Ylonda was the chieftain's daughter in Jmondar's old tribe and an up-and-coming shamaness as well. Ylonda tricked Jmondar into falling in love with her by means of a *philter of love*. Once it took effect, Jmondar convinced the chieftain (with much gold) that he was fit to marry Ylonda, and in very short order it was so. Ylonda has remained faithful and obedient to Jmondar, although she is somewhat aloof toward him. She rarely practices her magic nowadays, and she has plenty of idle time on her hands since the slaves perform most of the housework. She does not trust the slaves one whit and does not leave them out of her sight in the kitchen.

Ylonda is canny; if confronted by the PCs, she tries to trick them into submission or into

the arms of her (hopefully forewarned) husband or the taskmaster. She uses magic only when she must. If all else fails, she begins slinging pots, pans, and kitchen knives at opponents while yelling for help.

Ylonda wears golden earrings worth 250 gp each and a diamond-studded wedding ring worth 2,000 gp.

Ylonda (frost giantess): AC 5; MV 15; HD 14+3; hp 65; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+7; SA throw pots & pans for 2d8 points of damage, spells; SD impervious to cold, spells; SZ H; ML 13; INT very (12); AL CE; XP 10,000; MM/140.

Spells (3/2): 1st—*cause fear*, *command*, *curse* (reverse of *bless*); 2nd—*charm person or mammal*, *hold person*.

Ylonda carries a giant-sized (25'-long) *staff of the serpent* (python). The snake that is formed is unaffected by normal and magical cold-based attacks.

Staff of the serpent (giant python form): AC 5; MV 9; HD 6+1; hp 26; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4/2d4; SA constrict (requires 60 total points of Strength to free victim); SZ L; ML 9; INT animal (1); AL N; XP 975; MM/320.

Hidden behind the pantry is a set of double doors; see area 9g for details.

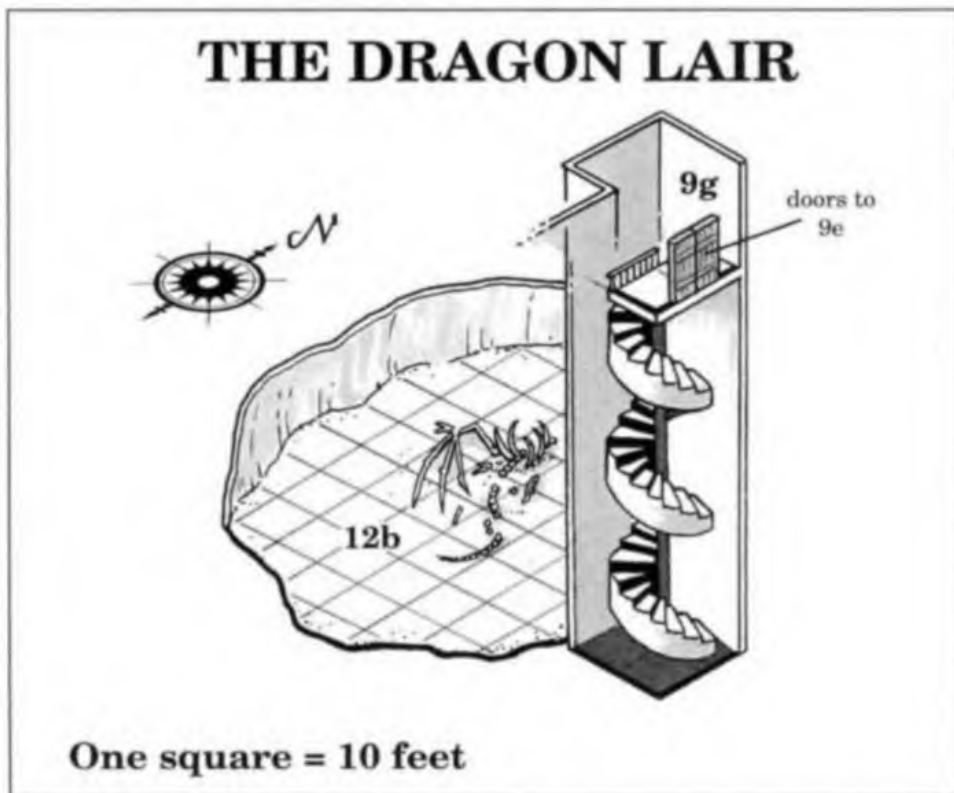
9f. Cooking Pit. This fire pit was built more for the use of the slaves than the frost giants. The frost giants prefer their food raw, or at best, very rare. The human and demihuman slaves use coal to keep a fire lit and keep the chill off as they work. They are careful to put the fire out before they retire for the night. The fire pit is vented with the same ingenious system that vents the dungeons, so smoke from the burning coal is not normally seen from outside.

9g. Stairs to the Dragon's Lair. The double doors at the top of the stairs are hidden behind a kitchen pantry that swings out when the catch is released. The catch is 15 feet off the ground. The double doors are locked, and Jmondar keeps the key to the doors in the master bedroom (area 9i). The stairs descend 90 feet to the icy lair of the dragon (area 12b).

The slaves are unaware of the movable pantry and the doors behind it.

The stairwell is dark, and there are no light sources. There is a 5'-diameter bronze disc mounted on the wall to the left of the entrance at the top and bottom of the staircase, about 15 feet from the floor. The discs appear to be somewhat battered and dented from use. Removing a disc from the wall requires a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll and reveals the activation mechanism beneath the plate. Striking the disc forcefully deactivates the traps on the stairs for a period of 1 hour.

The stairs are doubly trapped. Both traps are mechanical in nature and were devised



and constructed by Jmondar. The first trap activates once PCs descend 30 feet. If the bronze disc at the top of the stairs is not struck, a pressure plate is activated on one of the steps. This opens an area above the ceiling at the top of the stairs, dropping a huge boulder onto the winding staircase. The boulder begins to roll down the stairs, moving at a rate of 15. Most of the boulder has been hollowed, so those caught in the boulder's path suffer only 1d12 points of damage when struck. (PCs who dangle from the railing to avoid the boulder must make a successful Strength check to hang on. Those who dive off the side of the stairs to avoid the boulder suffer 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet fallen.) The boulder continues to roll until it lodges itself at the base of the stairs, sealing off the lower exit. The boulder can be stopped on the stairs if a PC makes a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll, and it can be rolled back up the stairs by anyone with 19 Strength or better.

The second trap has been placed on the bottom 10 feet of the stairs. When 100 lbs. or more is placed on the trapped step, two serrated blades lash out horizontally from the two steps immediately above and beneath the trapped step. Anyone caught on the steps suffers 2d6 points of damage, half if a saving throw vs. paralyzation is successful. (PCs aware of the trap can apply their Dexterity Reaction Adjustment as a bonus to their saving throws.) Anyone who fails the saving

throw must make a second saving throw (also vs. paralyzation), or the damage reduces the victim's movement rate by half until the wounds are fully healed or a *cure serious wounds* (or stronger healing magic) is applied. The slits from which the blades emerge are easily visible if searched for, allowing thieves a +25% bonus to find (but not disarm) this trap. PCs running from the boulder have no chance to spot the trapped area.

If Jmondar suspects intruders inside the caverns, he uses this staircase to check the dragon's lair, striking the bronze plate to disarm the traps before descending. The staircase was built after he had cleaned out most of the dragon's lair, but it is used rarely. He had intended to move his woodworking projects into the icy cavern below, but after a log fell and nearly put a hole in the cavern wall, he abandoned the idea.

9h. Hallway. If intruders have been detected, Beargunne (detailed in area 9j) is stationed in here, near the door to the master bedroom (area 9i). He peppers those entering the hall with arrows from his bow and, if rushed by the PCs, flees into his room, locking the door behind him. He reemerges from Gholar's room (area 9k) to attack the PCs from behind, reversing the above tactic as needed.

This hallway is the main thoroughfare between the bedrooms of the giants. It is made of plain stone, with icicles dangling from the

ceiling and hard-packed snow on the ground. It is lit by eight translucent globes, each about 2 feet in diameter. They are placed equidistant from each other along the ceiling and contain phosphorescent moss of sufficient mass to keep the hall moderately lit. Since the slaves are not allowed into this area and cannot reach the globes, Ylonda tends to the plants. Ylonda keeps the moss within the globes healthy and alive, feeding and watering them once a week.

The stairs down toward area 9k descend only 10 feet. If the house is on alert, the door to these stairs is kept locked.

9i. Master Bedroom. This room is dark when not in use. The room can be lit by means of several globes of glowing moss affixed to the walls, similar to the ones in area 9h. Ylonda tends these "houseplants" and keeps them covered with black sackcloth when the giants are sleeping or if the room is left unattended.

Against the northwestern wall rests the adult giants' bed, a massive structure made of hand-carved timbers. The bedposts have been carved with images of Jmondar's deceased ancestors, a superstitious gesture meant to protect him and his wife from bad dreams and other ills while sleeping. The thick mattresses are made of sheets of thin, soft bark sandwiched between strips of interwoven leather, sewn together to create one pliable, soft mass. The blankets upon the bed are covered with intricate designs in blue and white and were woven by Ylonda. The pillows are made of the stuffed hide of an arctic buffalo filled with down from arctic snowbirds—Jmondar had them imported especially for his needs. If the PCs care to disassemble and transport the bed back for sale, it is worth over 2,000 gp. The bed, mattresses, pillows, and blankets, however, weigh a total of 3,000 pounds!

Also in the room is a dresser made of fine wood containing Jmondar's breeches, belts, and other bits of clothing. One of the drawers contains Jmondar's keys to several areas of the house, including the double doors at areas 9b and 14e.

Opposite the bed stands a large wardrobe. The wardrobe contains mostly average quality dresses fashioned by Ylonda, as well as two very expensive dresses Ylonda purchased for special occasions. Although the normal dresses are worth little beyond the cloth they are made from, the good dresses are worth 500 gp each, though they are bulky.

Hidden in a small bag dangling in the wardrobe is a crystal vial containing a *philter of love* similar to the one Ylonda used many years ago to ensnare Jmondar. She keeps it handy in case Jmondar's love for her fades. Also in the wardrobe is Ylonda's jewelry case (carved from pine wood by Jmondar), containing twelve pieces of cheap jewelry worth

5–50 gp each. Hidden in the case is Ylonda's favorite diamond earrings, worth 2,500 gp. The case is trapped with a poison needle. The poison is a magical distillation of arctic wyvern poison Jmondar purchased from an apothecary in Gianttown. A failed saving throw vs. poison turns the victim to ice (similar to the *flesh to stone* spell). Since this room is used almost exclusively for sleeping and changing clothes, there is little else of value here.

Jmondar or his wife are found in this room only at night. Jmondar and his family treat those found rummaging through the room as thieves of the worst sort, and they attack immediately.

9j. Beargunne's Room. Lit by globes of glowing moss, this room is well kept. The floor is carpeted with the pelts of arctic mammals. The eldest son's bed occupies the southwest corner of the room, and a variety of wooden shelves decorating the rest of the room keep the young giant's assortment of scroll-books. Most of the non-scroll items on the shelves show that the eldest son is learning his father's woodworking craft and has great skill like his father.

Beargunne, the eldest son, can be found studying the scrolls in this room if the house is not on alert.

The curving stairs on the eastern wall descend 10 feet to area 9k. The door at the top of the stairs can be locked, although this is only done when the house is on alert.

Beargunne (young frost giant): AC 5 (0); MV 15; HD 13+2; hp 86; THAC0 7; #AT 1 (1 or 2); Dmg 1d8 (2d6+9 with battle-ax or 2d8+9 with giant bow), SA hurl rocks for 2d10 points of damage; SD impervious to cold; SZ H; ML 14; INT exceptional (15); AL NE; XP 4,000; MM/140. If Beargunne uses the bow (which is treated as a ballista shot), targets are treated as AC 10, adjusted for Dexterity and magical protection.

Beargunne is much like his father, but he has his mother's affinity for magic. However, Beargunne is more interested in wizardly magic than clerical magic. He has an extensive collection of stories among his scrolls and has copies of a few of his father's woodworking scrolls as well. Beargunne is much more literate than his father, but he has had no training in the wizardly arts and cannot cast spells. If he sees a spellcaster in a group, he attempts to capture the spellcaster and bargain with the wizard or priest to learn magic. Note that Jmondar does not approve of such action, and it could get Beargunne and the spellcaster into a lot of trouble if Jmondar finds out.

The statistics in parentheses should be used if Beargunne is aware of trouble in the house. In such a case, he has donned a suit of chainmail from area 14b and armed himself

with a battle-ax and giant bow from the same room. If attacked, he yells for assistance, which arrives in 1d3 rounds. Such assistance is either his father (80%) or the taskmaster and 1d3 lieutenants (20%).

9k. Gholar's Room. This room is lit by globes of phosphorescent moss affixed halfway up the northern wall. The room seems rather plain, with cold stone walls and a stony floor.

Shoved into the nook created by the protrusion of Beargunne's room (which overlaps the northern 10 feet of this room) is Gholar's bed. The nook is 10 feet high and deep, and runs 30 feet from the west to east wall. The bed is cloaked in perpetual shadows, allowing the youngest son to sleep, but the rest of the room is illuminated to keep the child's fear of the dark at bay. Gholar's plain wooden bed is not of the same quality as most of the other furniture seen in the house, but it is sufficient for his needs. A variety of wooden toys lay scattered about the room, some of which show signs of damage from rough play.

If the house is not on alert, Gholar is playing with his toys during the day and asleep in his bed at night. When the house has been alerted to intruders, Gholar is in area 9i with his mother, Ylonda.

The curving stairs on the eastern wall ascend 10 feet up to area 9j. The top of the stairwell ends at a door that can be locked, although this is only done when the house is on alert. The stairs to the west ascend upward 10 feet as well (to area 9h) and are locked when the house is on alert.

Gholar (very young frost giant): AC 5; MV 15; HD 11+1; hp 46; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+2; SA hurl toys for 1d10 points of damage; SD impervious to cold; SZ L; ML 14; INT low (6); AL N; XP 270; MM/140.

Gholar has the mentality of a five-year-old and does not understand the danger strangers can present. He assumes the PCs are the taskmaster's assistants and, unless threatened, does not attack PCs. If threatened, he attempts to put some distance between himself and the PCs, throwing toys as he flees. Luckily, the toys are not as dangerous as rocks, dealing only 1d10 points of damage each. (The toy must make a saving throw as thick wood vs. crushing blow or be ruined). About 65% of the time, Gholar flees to get help from his elder brother first, running up the eastern stairs to do so. Otherwise, Gholar heads west to look for his father.

9l. Storage. This room is unlit and rarely used. It contains odds and ends that Jmondar and his family have no use for. There is a variety of older, worn furniture stacked in here, along with damaged hunting trophies, old ax heads, and even a few moth-eaten blankets covering old boxes of broken toys. Everything is



draped in layers of seemingly ancient webs, and those investigating must make a Strength check each round or become caught in the webs (as per the *web* spell).

There is sufficient space within the room for the PCs to hide without fear of discovery, as long as they are quiet and stay out of plain sight. If the giants are searching the house for intruders, they check this room; those hiding here can make a Hide in Shadows roll with a +30% bonus (or give PCs without the ability a base 30% chance to hide) to remain unseen.

Two phase spiders have made this room their haven. The spiders have been careful to keep their presence in the house secret. The room is so rarely visited, the giants are unaware of the phase spiders' existence. Although the pair are normally hunting on the Ethereal Plane, there is a 1-in-6 chance per turn that they return, and in so doing try to make a meal out of the PCs.

Phase spiders (2): AC 7; MV 6, web 15; HD 5+5; hp 30, 26; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + poison (-2 penalty to saving throws); SA phase (-3 to initiative; if they beat their opponent's initiative by 4 or better, opponent cannot counterattack), rear attack (+4 to hit); SD flee to Ethereal plane if outmatched; SZ H; ML 15; INT low (6); AL N; XP 1,400; MM/326.

The phase spiders hold their attack until they can catch opponents by surprise. They strike quickly, luring PCs into the webbing so they can deal with them at their leisure. If the phase spiders fail a Morale check, they flee to the Ethereal plane. If captured, they bribe PCs with treasure, which is hidden in their nest on the Ethereal plane. The phase spiders have accumulated 100 gp, 55 pp, three gems (one jet

worth 100 gp, one malachite worth 10 gp, and one rhodochrosite worth 10 gp), a *wand of conjuration* with 5 charges remaining, and a wizard scroll with the spells *fireball*, *ice storm*, and *affect normal fires* cast at 10th-level. There is also a *trident* +1 that can summon a killer whale 1/day to the wielder's aid (in a manner similar to a *trident of scaly command*). Of course, the summoner must be in a place where the killer whale can reach him, such as in the Cold Sea. The *trident* has been inscribed with the words "Orca's Lure."

9m. Stairs Down to the Dungeons. Small globes of glowing moss light the hall and stairs here, filling the area with shadows. Although these stairs are designed to accommodate frost giants, only the slaves, taskmaster, and lieutenants use them. The ceiling of the stairs is only 20 feet tall, so if any of the frost giants except the youngest descends the stairs, he or she must stoop to do so. The stairs lead down to area 13a.

10. Passage Leading Outside. From this point forward, the passage is completely below sea level. This particular area marks where the tunnel turns from stone to solid ice. The change is subtle and can be noticed only by the translucent blue sheen of the walls. The frozen ice of the passage beyond the rock is about 8 feet thick, and there is no fear of it melting without the aid of magic. The ice passage can easily support the weight of the PCs and frost giants and was originally used by the dragon Stormfrost.

The yeti believe that this area constitutes the sacred grounds of the deceased white

dragon, and they do not pursue PCs beyond this point, although they might wait and ambush PCs who return this way.

11. Underwater Tunnel. This tunnel is carved from solid ice and was created by Stormfrost. The floor of the tunnel is covered with packed snow, and the walls have the consistency of rough glass.

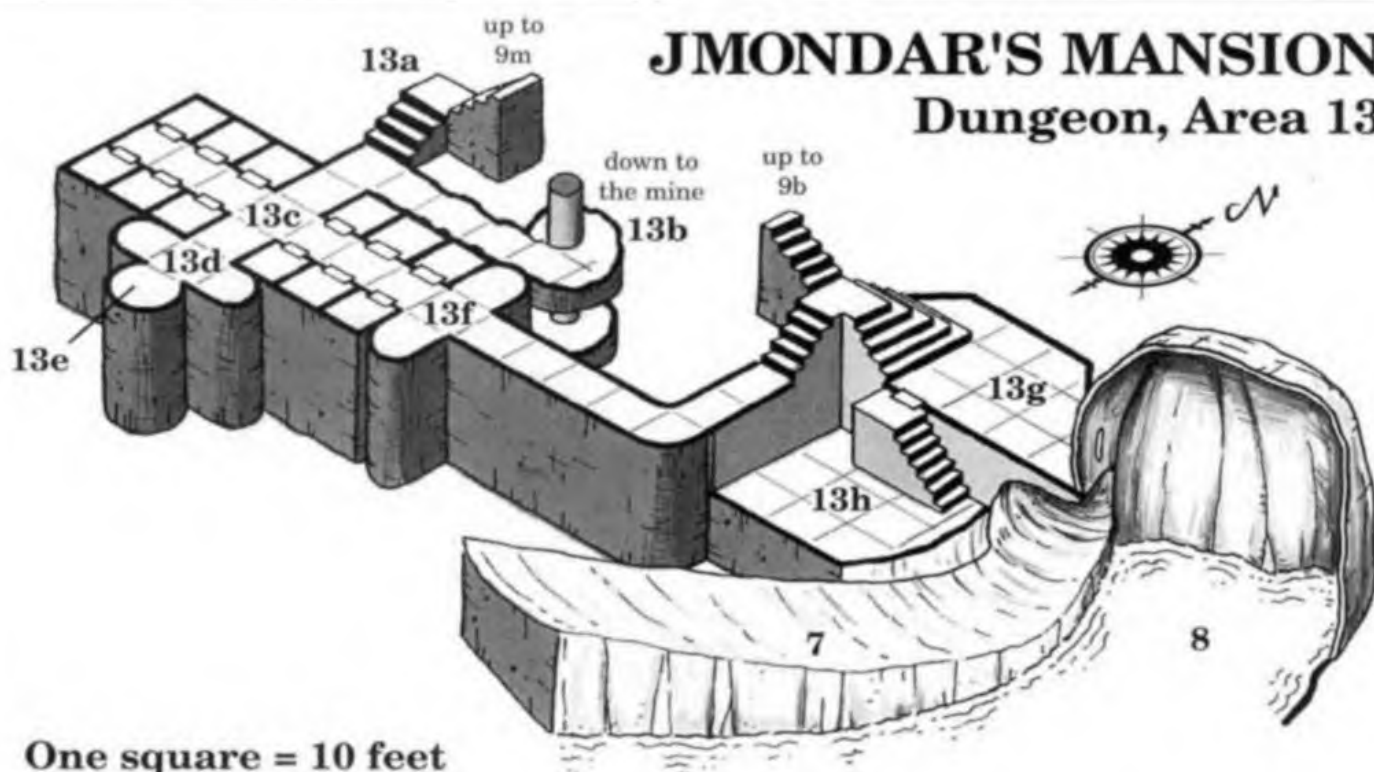
Ancient icicles dangle from the 30'-high ceiling, concealing a large cluster of ice-covered piercers. The piercers once dwelled in the upper caverns and were brought to the island by the dragon as a secondary defense to its lair. Since the dragon's death, they have fed on carrion and wayward slaves roaming the hall, but Jmondar's presence has reduced the piercers' numbers and driven them into the icy hallway. PCs who carefully investigate the hallway encounter the broken, stony shells of several piercers, giving them some warning to the piercers' presence. Jmondar is aware of the piercers and feels that they are a good defense against nosy slaves or unwanted strangers. Besides, he has direct access to the dragon's lair from his home and does not need to traverse this passage.

The frozen ice of the passage is about 8 feet thick, and there is no fear of it melting without the aid of magic. PCs can use torches to melt the ice, although it takes about 30-50 minutes for a PCs to deliberately melt a torch-sized hole into the wall to the outside.

Note that Jmondar won't throw boulders in the hall; he is unsure whether the boulders might break holes in the wall, and he doesn't want to find out. If heavy items (100 pounds or more) are thrown about, the walls must

JMONDAR'S MANSION

Dungeon, Area 13



One square = 10 feet

make a saving throw (as metal) vs. crushing blow. A failed saving throw results in a breach, triggering floods and further collapse of the tunnel structure. Against fire-based spells, the ice makes all saving throws as glass but gains a +4 bonus due to its incredible thickness.

If the tunnel begins to flood because of a breach, assume a boulder-sized or torch-sized breach floods areas 10–12 in 1 hour (6 turns). To see whether the breach enlarges, the DM should make a saving throw vs. crushing blow with a +4 bonus (treating the walls as glass) each round. If the saving throw fails, the breach increases in size, halving the time it takes for the tunnel to flood. Those within 5 feet of a breach must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon or be swept away by the force of the rushing water, suffering 2d6 points of damage. Success means the PC just receives a good splash of icy water.

Piercers (14): AC 3; MV 1; HD 4 (x3), 3 (x5), 2 (x6); hp 15 (x3), 12 (x5), 8 (x6); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6/HD; SA surprise; SZ S–M; ML 8; INT non (0); AL N; XP 120; MM/290.

The piercers are interspersed along the length of the hall, though the larger piercers tend to be surrounded by 1–3 lesser piercers who hope to increase their chance of successfully attacking a victim within the hall. The DM should randomly roll 1d6 for each PC to determine if he or she walks beneath a patch

of piercers. On a roll of 1, 1d4 piercers of various sizes attack the PC. The 4–HD piercers avoid each other, and only one can drop on a PC in the same attack.

12a. Dragon's Lair Entrance. To discourage unwanted visitors, Jmondar sealed the entrance to the dragon's lair with a solid sheet of ice. He fashioned it by melting, sculpting, then refreezing the ice into a smooth, glassy wall that about 1½ feet thick. The ice is translucent, and those who look closely can catch the glimpse of the lair's interior and make out the bones of Stormfrost within.

There are several ways the PCs can breach the ice, from hacking the wall with weapons to using spells. The wall has 25 hit points per square foot, although spells that generate intense heat (such as *flaming sphere* and *fireball*) inflict double damage to affected sections. However, using magic to open the entryway can be very dangerous—the PCs are under 20 feet of water and protected from the Cold Sea by only 8 feet of ice. The walls, ceiling, and floor are connected to Jmondar's wall of ice, so magic that removes the entire wall (such as *fireball*) might damage the tunnel walls by accident as well.

12b. Stormfrost's Cavern. Once the home of Stormfrost, this cavern is now mostly a

garbage heap. Most of the dragon's flesh and other body parts were seized by Jmondar; all that remains of Stormfrost's corpse is a mound of bones—the spine, ribcage, and part of the wingbones—all old and brittle. Some of the dragon's white scales have frozen into the floor below; melting the ice to retrieve one scale requires a fire source and 1d6+4 rounds of effort. Persistent PCs can recover enough scales to fashion a single cold-resistant breastplate or shield.

Also in the lair are the remains of the dragon's hoard, now supplemented by Jmondar's funds. Jmondar keeps the treasure in four locked coffers (each 6' x 6' x 4') frozen under the ice. He paid Ylonda's mother, a powerful shamaness, to trap each of the chests. Only the fourth chest can be seen and is easily accessed, although like the others it is locked. It requires at least 30 minutes to free the other chests once found. All chests are locked (–15% penalty to Open Locks rolls), and only Jmondar carries the key. The chests open with the same key, and Jmondar knows how to safely bypass all traps on a given chest. Their contents are below:

Chest #1: This chest is *fire trapped* and causes 1d4+7 points of damage to those who attempt to open it. The chest contains a sack with 50 pp, 200 gp, 1,000 sp, and five ivory dragon claws (worth 25 gp each).

Chest #2: Jmondar has trapped the lock with a deadly poison needle; a failed saving throw vs. poison turns the victim to ice (similar to the *flesh to stone* spell). This is the same poison used in Ylonda's jewelry box in area 9i. The chest contains 100 gp (scattered), a small silver candelabra (worth 15 gp), a silver mirror (worth 150 gp), a small jade statue with coral eyes (worth 250 gp), and a giant-sized brass goblet (worth 15 gp). Buried under the gold is a black silk bag containing an iron amulet gilded with gold and decorated with a single bloodstone (worth 150 gp). An ancient inscription on the amulet dedicates it "In friendship, from Selgaard to Austin." It was left behind by Selgaard and his companions during the battle with Stormfrost.

Chest #3: The bottom of the trunk is inscribed with a lightning *glyph of warding* set to deliver 7d4 points of damage to anyone other than Jmondar who opens or breaks into the trunk. Inside is a small bag with 50 pp, three gold nuggets (worth 200 gp each), and a frozen potion of *extra-healing*. This chest also contains a smaller box (2' x 2' x 2') with no apparent means to open it. A *knock* spell, a successful Find Traps roll at a -40% penalty, or three successful Intelligence checks on 1d20 allow a PC to figure out the solution to opening the box. The inside of the box is lined with soft velvet, and resting in the middle of the velvet is a fist-sized garnet worth 1,000 gp.

Chest #4: This chest contains no trap and is filled with scraps of worthless bone. It is meant to discourage and delay those who attempt to steal from Jmondar.

13. Dungeons. The dungeons are much smaller than the rest of the frost giant abode. The dungeons have a ceiling height of 10 feet at the bottom of the second flight of stairs. Since this area is occupied by slaves, Jmondar has not paid a great deal of attention to the decor. All walls are unfinished stone, and the whole area has a moldy, damp smell. Icy water drips from the ceiling, but the area is noticeably warmer than the rooms above, although it is still cold enough to be miserable for humans.

13a. Dungeon Stairs. If the household is on alert, one of the taskmaster's lieutenants (see area 13d for statistics) is waiting here. He attempts to capture lone PCs; if outnumbered or outgunned, he flees to area 13d to warn the taskmaster and ring the gong to alert the frost giants above.

The stairs to the dungeon consist of two flights of giant-sized stairs that lead up to area 9m of the frost giant abode. On the western wall of the landing, 17 feet above the floor, is a large lever. Jmondar devised the lever to preempt a slave revolt and hired a clan of nearby bugbears to build the attached mechanism. To

keep his isle's location secret, Jmondar fed the bugbears to Crystalline once the mechanism was finished, and no being outside his family is currently aware of the true nature of the lever. By throwing the lever, Jmondar can close the fire pit vents in area 13c, forcing the slaves out of the lower chambers as the smoke fills the dungeons. Jmondar has not used the lever yet, but he does not hesitate to do so if the gong in area 13e is rung.

See area 13c below for the effects of smoke in the dungeons.



13b. Mine Shaft. Jmondar's male slaves work in the mineshaft. The mine descends 1,300 feet into the rock, and the slaves have discovered almost none of the precious gold and silver Jmondar has instructed them to find. Mining has revealed several lodes of coal, which Jmondar has either stored or sold. Since Jmondar and his kin have little use for burning coal, the slaves have been allowed to save enough to keep their rooms warm.

During the day, there are 12-18 male slaves working in the mine. At least one of the taskmaster's lieutenants stands guard at the top of the mineshaft. See area 13c for details on the slaves and area 13d for details on the taskmaster's lieutenants.

13c. Slave Quarters. Each of these rooms contains a triple bunkbed, a small firepit, and

1-3 slaves. The slaves are present in the room only at night. Each door can be locked from the outside and has a small barred window that can be opened only from the jailer's side. The doors are locked at night to prevent escapes.

The fires in the rooms vent by means of an ingenious system Jmondar devised (and had mercenary humanoids build) that links the vents from the north rooms to a single vent on the east side of the isle. A similar system links the vents from the south rooms to a single vent on the same side. The vents disperse smoke so that by the time it reaches the exterior, it is no longer visible to the naked eye (but can be seen with infravision as an odd shimmer on the east side of the isle).

The gender, demeanor, race, and age of the slaves can be determined randomly, although all slaves are human or demihuman and are of young adult to middle age. If rescued, each slave can offer a reward (5d10 gp) for his or her return, once home. Most female slaves help with the cooking and cleaning chores in the giants' house, while most males work in the mines (area 13b) or aid Jmondar in his building projects. The taskmaster keeps the male slaves segregated from the female slaves.

To prevent a slave revolt, Jmondar has installed a lever (in area 13a) that allows him to seal the slaves quarters and shut the firepit vents. Once the vents are closed and the cell doors locked, smoke from the fires begins to

build. In 26 rounds, the dungeon fills completely with smoke, forcing the slaves out of the dungeon or asphyxiating them in their rooms. For each firepit that is extinguished, the time it takes to fill the dungeon increases by 4 rounds. Those who inhale the smoke must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or suffer 1d3 points of damage and suffer a -2 penalty to all ability checks, saving throws, and attack rolls. The effects last until the smoke is cleared and for an additional 1d6 rounds thereafter. The effects of multiple failed saving throws are cumulative, and once a character reaches a -8 penalty, he or she collapses into unconsciousness.

Slaves (18 males, 18 females): AC 10; MV 12; HD 1-1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 (punch) or by weapon type; SZ M; ML 12; INT average (9); AL any good or neutral; XP 200 (if rescued).

13d. Taskmaster's Area. This area is home to the taskmaster, Pugo, and his lieutenants. Pugo is a fat, snobbish slave to Jmondar, but he is also responsible for the other slaves' performance. A coward at heart and a ruthless bully, Pugo is lazy and has become accustomed to his position. His fear of Jmondar is such that he betrays PCs who try to rescue him or the slaves.

Pugo's lieutenants are not blindly loyal. Although they are bullies and bootlickers, once they realize that the PCs have come to free them, they must make a Morale check. If the check fails, the lieutenants realize that the PCs are their best chance to escape and help the PCs to the best of their ability. If the lieutenants make their Morale check, they remain loyal to Pugo and betray the PCs to better their own positions.

If the PCs cause Pugo any grief, he or one of his lieutenants rings the gong in area 13e, alerting the giants above. Neither Pugo nor the lieutenants have any idea of the consequence of ringing the gong; they believe it simply alerts Jmondar to trouble in the dungeon.

Pugo the Taskmaster, human male T5: AC 8 (leather jerkin); MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger) or 1d2 (whip); SA entangle opponent with whip, backstab; Str 12, Int 14, Wis 9, Dex 15, Con 15, Cha 16; SZ M; ML 15; AL NE; XP 975; leather jerkin, whip, dagger.

Thief skills: PP 50%, OL 42%, FRT 40%, MS 40%, HS 31%, DN 20%, CW 90%, RL 25%.

The taskmaster prefers his title to his real name; he rather loathes the name "Pugo" and is easily inflamed if called such. He has gained his position with his slick tongue and constant bowing and scraping to Jmondar. The slaves all despise the taskmaster but fear his wrath. Pugo's favored weapon is his whip; if he succeeds with a hit by 4 or more, he has wrapped the victim about the throat. If the character cannot get free (with a successful opposed Strength check), he or she chokes to death in a number of rounds equal to half his or her Constitution, rounded down. If the taskmaster is disarmed, he keeps a dagger hidden in a sheath near the small of his back. It takes him a round to reach and draw the dagger, but others can find the weapon only if the taskmaster is carefully checked.

Lieutenants, human males F3 (3): INT average (8-10); AC 6 (hide armor); MV 9; hp 21 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 (halberd); SZ M; ML 16; AL LE; XP 65.

Each lieutenant has gained his position through displays of cruelty toward his fellow prisoners and by being unswervingly loyal to the taskmaster. The taskmaster has managed to convince Jmondar to provide his guardsmen with halberds to keep the slaves in line and to keep potential thugs out of the giants' house. The guardsmen are not afraid to use the weapons, although they do not turn against the taskmaster or the giants unless the PCs manage to persuade them to escape.

13e. Gong. A large pull rope is suspended in this round area. If pulled, it sounds a loud gong that alerts the giants to trouble in the dungeons. The giants assume a slave revolt unless they are aware of the PCs' presence.

Once the alarm is sounded, Jmondar descends to the landing at area 13a while Beargunne mans the stairs at area 9a, watching for slaves trying to flee up from area 13g. When Jmondar reaches the landing at area 13a, he pulls the lever that seals off the vents to the firepits and locks the doors in area 13c, causing the dungeon to fill with choking smoke. Jmondar and Beargunne attack anyone attempting to flee from the smoke by exiting up the stairs. This includes the taskmaster and his flunkies, who are not aware that they might be targets.

13f. Guard Post. The taskmaster keeps at least one lieutenant on duty at this location. (If an alarm sounds, the guard moves to area 13g.) At any given time, there is a 25% chance that the guard has fallen asleep in the alcove.

The lieutenant fears the taskmaster, although PCs can sway him to help if he can be reasonably convinced that escape from the frost giant's home is possible.



13g. Coal Storage. If the household is on alert, one of the taskmaster's lieutenants (see area 13d) is stationed on the staircase landing, waiting to attack intruders. If outmatched, the lieutenant flees to area 13d to warn the taskmaster and ring the gong.

The stairs leading down from area 9b open onto this landing, which has a 10'-high ceiling. This room contains numerous stacks of coal. A single window overlooking the lake (area 8) keeps the gas from the mined coal from building in the room and provides the only view the miners have out of the dungeon.

13h. Temple. Several steps descend into this room, which has been converted into a chapel by the miners. Once a week, the miners gather here to worship, and they have placed crude decorations in the room to show their devotion to their gods. The items are worthless for resale but are greatly prized by the slaves.

When the room is not in service, it is empty, as there is no permanent slave priest to keep vigil. When the temple is in use, the miners take turns leading the services. PCs who steal items from the church raise the ire of the slaves and have a 5% chance of being *cursed*; PCs must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or have their prime requisite scores reduced by 2 until they atone for the deed or an *atonement* spell is cast. The curse can be removed by a *remove curse* spell only if the caster is at least 10th level.

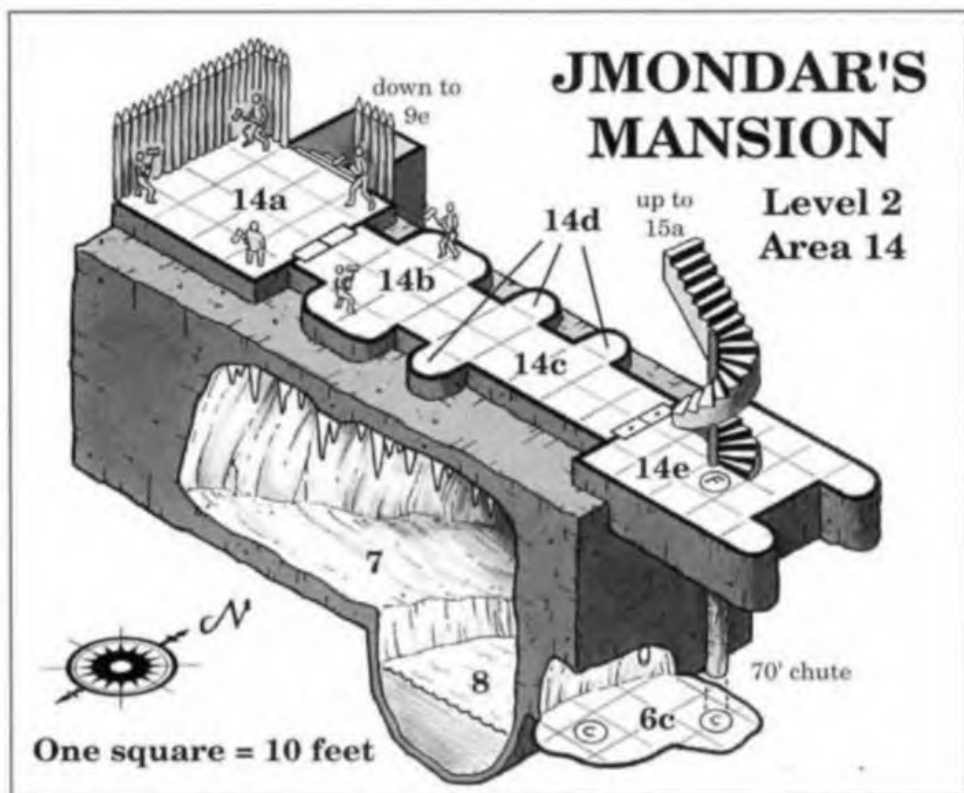
14. Second Story. This area of the frost giants' abode protrudes into what used to be yeti territory. Although Jmondar keeps the doors to areas 14e sealed to prevent the yeti from entering his house, the yeti use the room to reach their old lookout cavern at area 15d, entering through a passage in the floor of area 14e.

Jmondar uses this area to store weapons in case of an island siege, and he and his eldest son might use the area to thwart PCs if they are aware of the party's presence.

The rooms on this floor have inwardly curving, 30' high stone ceilings. The hallway running from areas 14a-14e is 25 feet high, except for area 14b which is 30 feet high.

14a. Entry Room. The walls of this room are dressed with wooden logs standing vertically, giving it a fortlike appearance. The floor is bare stone, and each corner contains a life-sized stone carving of a frost giant clutching a stone battle-ax. A god of craft (appropriate to the campaign) took delight in the craftsmanship in Jmondar's work and enchanted the statue in the northeast corner, transforming it into a stone golem.

The golem activates if a non-frost giant crosses within 20 feet of the center of the room or disturbs the statues. Once activated, the golem attacks those who remain in the room



or attempt to open the doors to area 14b. It will not heed the commands of a priest of the god who created it, but it does not attack such priests unless they attempt to reach area 14b.

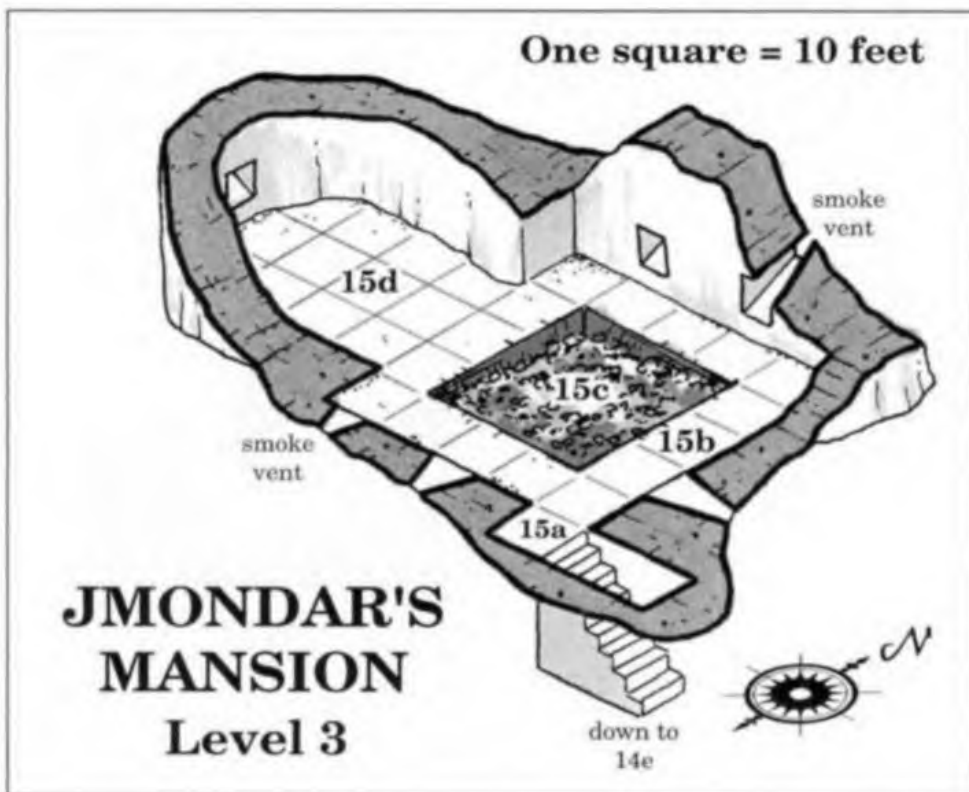
Stone golem: AC 5; MV 7; HD 11; hp 50; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 3d10; SA +2 weapons to hit, cast *slow* spell once every other round; SD *transmute rock to mud* slows golem for 2d6 rounds; *transmute mud to rock* heals all damage to golem; *stone to flesh* allows normal weapons to damage golem for next round; SZ L; ML 20; INT non (0); AL N; XP 8,000; MM/166.

14b. Weapon Storage. This section of the hall has a 30'-high ceiling and a white marble floor. The center stone in the room consists of a 10' x 10' slab of glittering marble carved with the relief of a frost giant battling a white dragon with his bare hands. In each alcove of the room stands a stone statue of a frost giant, as in area 14a. However, these statues are non-magical and are dressed in suits of chainmail. Each statue clutches a double-bladed metal ax. All of the items are of frost giant size. These items can easily be removed and donned by Jmondar or his eldest son. Also, along the southern and northern walls are an assortment of ornamental weapons: frost giant-sized daggers with ivory handles (treat as short swords), intricately carved scabbards for knives (which depict entwined white dragons), and a giant bow with 20 arrows,

with the fletching made of arctic roc feathers. The bow can be used only by someone at least 18 feet tall and possessing a Strength of 19 or greater. The arrows from the giant bow are treated as if shot from a ballista, dealing 3d10 points of damage and ignoring armor. (Dexterity and magical bonuses to AC still apply.) The ranges of the bow are 9/18/36.

The heavy slab in the center of the floor contains a hidden chamber that is found as a concealed door. Opening the slab requires a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll. Within the 3'-deep recess is a velvet carpet, upon which lies Jmondar's most prized weapon: a razor-sharp, double-headed frost giant's ax. If Jmondar is aware of the PCs' presence and has time to prepare, he removes the weapon from its compartment beneath the slab. The ax is decorated with a multifaceted, egg-shaped crystal at the top, which glitters with an entrancing display of colors when brought into the light. The weapon is a *two-handed battle-ax* +3 that can cast a *hypnotic pattern* 3/day. Also in the compartment under the slab is a nonmagical dagger carved from one of Stormfrost's claws. The dagger would be the equivalent of a short sword in human hands and is worth 500 gp.

14c. Defensive Hall. This hall is rather plain and appears to be unfinished. Deep alcoves are carved into the north and south walls, and



the heavy doors to area 14e are kept locked at all times. Jmondar wears the key to area 14e around his neck and keeps a spare key in the master bedroom (area 9i).

14d. Defensive Alcove. Each of these alcoves has a circular stone plate in the floor that can be lifted to observe the tunnel and lake (areas 7–8) below. Lifting a plate requires a successful Open Doors roll or a *knock* spell.

Jmondar and Beargunne can use these alcoves to pepper opponents in areas 7 and 8 with missiles such as boulders, spears, or arrows. It is a 30' drop from the alcoves to the lake below.

14e. Staircase to Lookout Tower. The doors to this room are kept locked at all times. Jmondar wears a key around his neck and keeps a spare key in area 9i.

This room has been marked with crude yeti drawings carved into the unfinished stone walls. The yeti pictograms are meant to protect the room and keep it sacred to the yeti, but unless PCs know how to read the pictograms or use magic, they appear to be little more than scratches.

A granite staircase spirals up toward area 15a. At the base of the staircase is a stone plug set into the floor. The stone plug requires a Strength of 19 to lift and move aside. Opening the plug reveals a rough, 4'-diameter shaft

that leads down 70 feet to area 6c. Navigating the shaft requires a successful Climbing check, but there are numerous handholds. The yeti waiting in area 6c attack PCs climbing down the shaft. Such attacks occur as the PCs prepare to exit the bottom of the shaft. The yeti are adept at scurrying up or down the shaft and need not make Climbing checks.

15. Lookout Tower. This area was originally a natural cavern used by the yeti. Shortly after Jmondar moved in, he had the cavern worked to create a signal flare in case of emergency. He has not used it yet but keeps it ready in case of danger. The cavern is still sacred to the yeti, and Jmondar has left a portion of the cave untouched for the yeti's use (area 15d).

15a. Entry to the Tower. These stairs are the continuation of the stairs in area 14e.

15b. Pit Walkway. This walkway runs the entire perimeter of the signal pit, and the walls are marked with tapering windows (akin to arrow slits) that lead to the outside. When the firepit is lit, smoke pours out of the upwardly slanted windows. The windows can be used to enter or exit the isle, but the surface outside is sheer and slippery. Those who lose their footing (i.e., fail a Climbing check) risk falling 130 feet down the sharp slope to the icy water below, suffering 10d6 points of damage.

PCs who use grappling hooks to scale up to the windows find their efforts thwarted by the yeti in area 15d, which sever the ropes or unhook the grappling hooks if they can.

15c. Signal Fire. This 10'-deep depression in the floor is filled with a blanket of coal and other powders to create a signal flare when lit. Once lit, the powders mixed with the coal create a huge volume of smoke (akin to a *pyrotechnics* spell) that is used to alert the distant frost giant village of trouble at the isle. If the signal fire is lit, a search party of 5–12 frost giants arrives at the isle in 5 hours to investigate. Jmondar lights this signal only if he is fairly certain he cannot defeat the PCs. The yeti do not light the signal fire, as they do not understand its purpose. Those caught in the fire suffer 1d10 points of damage per round, and there is enough fuel to keep the fire burning for 2 hours.

15d. Yeti Lookout. This cavern is considered holy ground to the yeti. The yeti shaman, Yarteg, who has three yeti warriors with him at all times, tends to this cave. The walls of the cavern are filled with the pictorial history of the yeti clan, from their discovery of the isle and the dragon within, through the beast's death and the arrival of Jmondar and his family. PCs who study the pictograms using their Read Languages ability or by magical means (such as a *comprehend languages* spell) discern some meaning from the pictures. While not a lot of important information is conveyed, the PCs discover that most of the dragon's hoard was used by Jmondar to build and furnish his home, and that the yeti fear and respect the frost giant almost as a god.

The yeti shaman is deeply offended if the PCs enter this area and fights to the death to preserve it from desecration.

Yarteg (yeti shaman): AC 6; MV 15; HD 4+4; hp 28; THAC0 15; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1d6/1d6 or spells; SA squeeze on natural 20 for 2d8 points of damage, spells; SD immune to normal cold, invisible in snow and ice, spells; SW suffers an additional 50% damage from fire attacks; SZ L; ML 13; INT average (10); AL N; XP 975; MM/368 (variant).

Spells (3/2): 1st—*cure light wounds*, *endure heat*, *faerie fire*; 2nd—*messenger*, *obscurement*.

The yeti shaman casts *endure heat* on himself when facing any fire-bearing PCs. If he has a round or two, he uses *messenger* to call for help from the yeti chieftain before he attacks. Given the chance, he casts *obscurement* to shroud himself and his warriors in fog to surprise an enemy, possibly climbing out of one window and back into the chamber via another window to better his chances.

Yeti males (3): See area 6d for complete statistics.

Concluding the Adventure

Once they realize that the dragon's hoard has already been claimed (and mostly spent) by Jmondar, the PCs might be tempted to leave the frost giants' lair. Once they discover the presence of the slaves, however, good-aligned PCs should feel compelled to free them. The frost giants frown upon such action, fighting to the death to keep their slaves. However, if the PCs capture or seriously wound any members of Jmondar's family, the frost giant is willing to let PCs leave with the slaves in exchange for the lives of his wife and children.

If the heroes successfully negotiate the release of the slaves without slaying Jmondar and his family, they should be awarded full experience points for defeating the giants.

Once the exploration is complete, the first concern for the PCs is to return to a safe haven, possibly with the freed slaves in tow. This can be a long and dangerous trek across the arctic wilderness, and the PCs should receive commensurate experience points for the difficulty of the journey. About 200–500 XP per freed slave is recommended.

There is also a chance that the PCs might turn Jmondar's house into their own fortress, and this is an acceptable course of action once the giants and the yeti have been removed. First, the magic that causes the unbearable cold in the house must be circumvented or destroyed to make it habitable. The magic on the entrance door to the giant's abode must also be dispelled or bypassed, or PCs must

contend with the caryatid columns. The PCs might be able to train the white dragon Crystalline to recognize them as her new masters (requiring successful application of the Animal Training proficiency over a period of several months) or find and raise a replacement. The frost giant king from the nearby settlement of Gianttown becomes suspicious if he does not hear from his daughter in a few months and might take a few of his bodyguards with him to investigate. If Jmondar and his family somehow flee the island after a PC onslaught, Jmondar is sure to return to the house with a score of frost giant warriors to take care of the PCs.

PCs might also decide to hunt down the slavers who have been supplying Jmondar with human and demihuman slaves. The slavers are well known and hated among the miners of the area and consist of a band of spriggans who use their size-changing ability to snatch human-sized prey and strike fair deals with the giants. The miners offer a steep reward for the slavers' capture—about 2,000 gp for destroying the slave ring.

PCs might also become more curious about the wizard Selgaard, who had the tapestry commissioned that started the quest in the first place. Although long dead, the old wizard might have left several caches of magical spells and items as well as small hoard of dragon gold hidden in his hometown. With some investigation, hints to the locations of these forgotten treasures might become known to the PCs. Ω

Coming in Issue #79

Cover by
Andrew Goldhawk

"The Akriloth,"
by Matthew G. Adkins.
An AD&D® FORGOTTEN
REALMS® adventure,
levels 10–12.

"Keep for Sale,"
by Peter Zollers.
An AD&D adventure,
levels 1–3.

"Cloudkill,"
by Jeff Fairbourn.
An AD&D adventure,
levels 4–6.

"Bad Seeds,"
by Kevin Carter.
An AD&D adventure,
levels 1–3.



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by Aaron Williams





A pair of hungry alien sharks encircle their next meal.

DEEPSTRIKE

BY JAMES WYATT

Dive hard—with a vengeance

Artwork by Jim Crabtree
Cartography by Rob Lazzaretti

A fan of James Bond movies and novels, James watched Thunderball for inspiration while writing this adventure. The best part of running the game, for him, was watching his wife play a Concord marine with a BattleKlaw—a whole new side of her personality.

"Deepstrike" is an ALTERNITY® adventure for 2–4 heroes of levels 6–8. A mix of professions is important, since the heroes need a variety of skills to complete their mission. The adventure assumes that at least one of the heroes works for an intelligence, espionage, or military organization. This organization could be the Concord Investigative Bureau, Star Force, the Concord Marines, the Army of the Regency of Bluefall, or possibly another agency or military group.

This adventure takes place in the Aegis system, described in the *System Guide to Aegis* and the STAR® DRIVE™ Campaign Setting.

Gamemaster's Background

Thon Mardian is a well-known terrorist in the Verge, believed responsible for last year's attempt to kidnap Regent Hale of Bluefall. Since that failed attempt, Mardian has been a fugitive; any reasonably well-informed resident of the Verge has probably heard of him. A hulking Thuldan mutant, Thon Mardian is a ruthless killer, a former Legionnaire who received a dishonorable discharge after torturing a prisoner of war.

Despite his discharge, Thon Mardian remains a patriot, and he has always aimed his terrorist activities at promoting his vision of the goals of the Thuldan Empire. He pursues these goals with no regard for normal diplomatic channels and no respect for human life. On Bluefall, Thon Mardian can see no future for the Thuldan Empire that includes an independent Regency, so he has set himself the task of eliminating the Regency. If the Galactic Concord threatens to interfere with the Thuldan destiny to rule Bluefall, then he must eliminate it too—or at least its representatives on Bluefall.

Before his ill-fated attempt to kidnap Regent Hale, Mardian was involved in arms smuggling, ocean piracy, random bombing attacks on Regency and Concord settlements, and a hijacking incident that ended in the deaths of sixty hostages. During last year's kidnapping attempt, Thon Mardian and his terrorist troops were accosted as they tried to bluff their way through the last ring of security protecting Regent Hale, and a gunfight erupted. Mardian escaped with only three of his men, while fifteen Regency army personnel and seven terrorists were killed. Following the attempt, the Regency sea navy located and obliterated Thon Mardian's base on Corvus Island, but Thon Mardian had already fled the

system. Regency and Concord intelligence personnel searched the Verge for nine months before finding him on Oasis two weeks ago. Six more Regency military personnel lost their lives apprehending Mardian.

The RSV *Tuscarora*, carrying the prisoner, is due to make starrise in the Aegis system on the day the adventure begins. The *Tuscarora*'s arrival causes a stir in the local media. Nearly every news holo channel broadcasts regular updates on the ship's progress through the outer system toward Bluefall, and as she approaches the planet's atmosphere, the coverage is continuous.

Thon Mardian has never lacked for allies and sympathizers in his terrorist plots. Many Thuldans, particularly in the military, are frustrated at the pace of diplomacy in the Verge as well as the Concord's incessant meddling in everyone else's business. These nameless allies have provided Mardian with weapons, armor, explosives, and other useful equipment through the years—always untraceable, of course. In his latest plot, however, Mardian has secured the assistance of two powerful collaborators: a Thuldan captain named Muin Endrin, and a mysterious alien, a gardhyi. (For details on the gardhyi, see the STAR*DRIVE ALIEN COMPENDIUM: *Creatures of the Verge* accessory.)

An old hawk who staunchly resisted the end of the Second Galactic War, Muin Endrin believes his superiors sent him to the Verge so he couldn't pose a threat to the Emperor. Despite his misgivings with official policy, Endrin is a respected captain in the Thuldan Legions and recently received a commission aboard one of the Empire's new submarines on Bluefall. Until recently, he has followed his orders, even when he disagreed with them. However, Endrin has a few old skeletons in his closet—secrets that, if they came to light, would cost him not only his career and his reputation but also, quite possibly, his life. As the RSV *Tuscarora* approached Bluefall, a mysterious figure stepped out of the shadows in Endrin's command cabin and, though not in so many words, threatened to reveal all of his nastiest secrets unless he agreed to cooperate. In accordance with the gardhyi's instructions, Endrin put together a crew he knew would work with him and acquired two MRB missiles for his submarine, the *Marlin*.

The gardhyi's motives for helping Thon Mardian are inscrutable—like everything else about its race. It seems clear that the gardhyi have some interest in events on Bluefall, since that planet is one of the places they have been most often seen. Conspiracy theories also place gardhyi as advisors to ranking officials in the Thuldan government and Legions. It is possible that the gardhyi hope to provoke a confrontation between the Thuldans and the Concord for some reason—or, conversely, to

force them to cooperate against a common enemy. This gardhyi might even realize that the heroes' presence on Bluefall makes them likely candidates for responding to Thon Mardian's escape. The gardhyi might even pull strings in the CIB or Regency military to ensure that the heroes are assigned to the case!

Since the gardhyi's purposes in this adventure are unknown to anyone else, you can determine the gardhyi's motivation based on your future plans for the campaign or simply leave the gardhyi's goals unspecified and mysterious. He remains a nameless, almost invisible presence behind the scenes throughout the adventure.

When the RSV *Tuscarora* arrives in the Aegis system with Thon Mardian, the gardhyi uses its star web to transport aboard the *Tuscarora*, plants an explosive, and leaves with Mardian moments before detonation. Thon Mardian is transported via dimensional travel to the Thuldan submarine *Marlin*, at which time the gardhyi commands Captain Endrin to head into the open sea 1,000 km west of Regency Island. Believing that his captain is being blackmailed, the first officer of the *Marlin*, Aaron Brunor, sends a covert message to the Thuldan authorities alerting them of Thon Mardian's whereabouts. When the first officer's deed is revealed, Thon Mardian kills him with his bare hands.

Getting the Heroes Involved

Involving the heroes in the action on Bluefall is easiest if at least one of them has an allegiance to a military or espionage organization. This could be the Concord Intelligence Bureau (CIB), the Concord Star Force, the Regency Army (which is trained in anti-terrorist tactics), or the Sea Navy. Since all of the stellar nations have some stake on Bluefall, heroes involved with any nation's military or intelligence forces can be assigned to investigate this incident as part of a cooperative venture organized by the Concord.

The trigger scene assumes that the heroes are on Bluefall to rest and relax or recuperate from their last adventure. Their presence on the planet serves as explanation enough for their involvement: The CIB could assemble a crack team of expert agents for this assignment, but it would take at least a week. In that time, a terrorist of Thon Mardian's reputation could destroy the planet. Instead, the Concord assembles a team from whatever agents are available—Concord agents, Regency divers, or VoidCorp spies.

If the heroes do not have an appropriate allegiance, the Concord hires them for the mission as freelancers. In this case, the heroes can expect a significant monetary reward—at least \$10,000 per person plus expenses—as payment for their work.

Trigger Scene: Holocaust Disaster

The heroes begin the adventure on a Bluefall vacation. No matter how hard they try to avoid any contact with the outside world, Hughes Island is abuzz with a hot news story: the arrival of Thon Mardian to stand trial for his crimes. The entire native population of Bluefall, whipped into a frenzy by the holo media, is eagerly anticipating his trial and sentencing. Everyone vividly remembers his attempt to kidnap Regent Hale last year, and many still mourn the fifteen government workers and soldiers who lost their lives preventing the attempt. Read the following text to the players to begin:

Your vacation on Bluefall isn't living up to your high expectations. What was it you were looking forward to? Lying on a lonely beach, soaking up the sunshine? Making the most of Hughes Island's resorts and casinos? Taking a tour on a submarine or snorkeling in the fabulous, pristine oceans that earn Bluefall its name? Whatever activities you had in mind, you've earned them, and you had every intention of enjoying them to the fullest.

However, your vacation is ruined by constant newscasts. The waiters in your hotel's overpriced restaurant practically ignore you as they follow every word on the holos. Your fellow tourists carry dataslates with them everywhere, monitoring each news report. The world's current preoccupation centers on Thon Mardian, a terrorist who's been on the run from the law ever since he tried to kidnap the ruler of Bluefall's Regency government. Thon Mardian was picked up in a nearby system two weeks ago.

Today, the RSV *Tuscarora* arrives in-system, bringing the terrorist to trial. Her star-rise shimmers with blue and violet. As she crawls toward Bluefall to deliver the terrorist to Regency Island, holocameras show every detail of the courtroom, his jail cell, the incredible security throughout the star system.

It's hard to avoid the holo screens, especially at this hour of the morning as the *Tuscarora* makes her final approach to Starport Sigma One on Regency Island. You need to get some breakfast before a hard day of recreation, so you can't avoid the hotel restaurant. Almost involuntarily, you crane your necks with the rest of Bluefall to watch the *Tuscarora* disappear in a fireball, raining charred wreckage into the crystal ocean and sending a cloud of black smoke into the perfect blue sky.

It takes time for Regency operatives to investigate the explosion, decode the message

Terrorist Assassin Team (3)

Human Mutant Combat Spec, Level 2, Thuldan

STR	11	[+1]	INT	9
DEX	12	[+1]	WIL	10
CON	11		PER	7

Durability 11/11/5/5 Action check: 14+/13/6/3

Move: sp 22, ru 14, wa 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 0

Attacks

Unarmed	12/6/3	d6+1s/d6+3s/d4+1w	LI/O
9mm charge pistol	14/7/3	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	HI/O
Nunchaku	12/6/3	d6+1s/d6+2s/d8+4s	LI/O
Combat knife	12/6/3	d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+4w	LI/O

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

CF short coat d4-1 (LI), d4-1 (HI), d6-3 (En)

Skills

Athletics [11]; Melee Weapons [11]—*bludgeon* [12] or *blade* [12]; Unarmed Attack [11]—*power martial arts* [12]; Modern Ranged Weapons [12]—*pistol** [14]; Stealth [12]—*shadow* [13], *sneak* [13]; Vehicle Operation [12]—*land vehicle* [13]; Stamina [11]—*endurance* [12], *resist pain* [12]; Knowledge [9]; Security [9]—*protection protocols* [10]; Interaction [7]—*intimidate* [9], *taunt* [8].

* The assassins have a base situation die of -d4 with their pistol skill.

Mutations

Adrenal Control (Ordinary): -1 bonus to Athletics, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, Acrobatics, and Movement skill checks; +1 damage on any successful Unarmed Attack or Melee Weapons skill check. Burst lasts d4+1 rounds.

Improved Reflexes (Ordinary): -1 bonus to action checks.

Toxin Tolerance (Ordinary): -2 bonus to Constitution feat checks made to resist poison or drugs.

Light Sensitivity (Slight): +1/+2/+3 penalty to all actions in Ordinary/Good/Amazing illumination (protective goggles reduce penalty to +1/+1/+2).

Equipment

Business suit, protective goggles, weapons and armor (one has nunchaku, and the other two have combat knives), comm gear, motorcycle.

from the *Marlin's* first officer, formulate a plan, and summon the heroes for their assignment. Allow the heroes an opportunity to gather information on their own or take other action in the hour or so following the explosion, but don't let the action drag. As soon as the heroes begin running out of ideas, pursuing fruitless courses of action, or wondering what's going to happen next, continue with the next scene.

The heroes might wish to obtain background information on Thon Mardian or the situation on Bluefall. If a hero makes a successful Knowledge-computer operation or Knowledge-Bluefall check, summarize appropriate information from the "Gamemaster's Background," the *System Guide to Aegis* acces-

sory, or the *STAR*DRIVE* Campaign Setting, with the level of detail appropriate to the hero's degree of success.

Heroes with expertise in Demolitions or System Operations-sensors can attempt to analyze visual or other sensor records of the explosion. A successful check with either of these skills (assuming that the hero can gain access to appropriate sensors in the latter case) reveals that the explosion was located in the *Tuscarora's* stardrive. A Good or Amazing success suggests sabotage—evidence of a smaller explosion aboard the ship just before the large stardrive explosion that destroyed the vessel. There is no evidence of a surface-to-air missile, however; the sabotage clearly originated aboard the *Tuscarora*.

Scene 1: Strike Team

Once intelligence forces on Bluefall have had a chance to analyze sensor data and piece some facts together about the *Tuscarora* disaster, they assemble a team of operatives—the heroes—to investigate. When the summons arrives, all of the heroes suddenly find themselves with ringing cell phones, urgent messages on their dataslates, or special alerts arriving on their comm gear. The message is simple: "Proceed immediately to dock 713-A on Luiza Bay and board the *RBV Vector*. Your briefing will follow."

The orders are simple, but one obstacle stands in the way of the heroes carrying out the orders. Fully aware of the heroes' presence on Bluefall and anticipating their interference, Thon Mardian has dispatched a strike team to get the heroes out of the way before they can cause real problems. This team of three assassins catches up with the heroes about 10 km from Luiza Bay.

The three assassins, riding motorcycles, approach the heroes with little subtlety. If the heroes are in a vehicle, use the vehicle combat rules as the assassins open fire. If the heroes are on foot, the assassins try to run them down, dismounting to fight with guns or melee weapons only if the heroes force them to. The clear sky offers Ordinary illumination, so the assassins all suffer a +1 penalty to their actions because of their mutation drawbacks. The terrorists are fully detailed on the "Terrorist Assassin Team" sidebar.

If the heroes kill or incapacitate two of the assassins, the third attempts to flee. Captured terrorists reveal nothing about their allegiance or mission. They do not know anything about Thon Mardian's current plans, even if subjected to a mindwalker's questioning. If the heroes are wounded in this scene, they receive medical treatment aboard the *RBV Vector* in the next scene.

Scene 2: Submarine Briefing

Assuming that the heroes survive the assassins' attack, they board the *RBV Vector* at dock 713-A on Luiza Bay. The *Vector* is a Regency submarine identical in design to the *Glory*, shown on page 169 of the *STAR*DRIVE* Campaign Setting. Lieutenant Commander Alexa Walker of the Regency Sea Navy welcomes the heroes aboard, then assigns an Ensign to escort them to the briefing room. (Seriously wounded heroes receive treatment before the briefing occurs.) Meanwhile, the *Vector* weighs anchor and begins its journey toward Thon Mardian's suspected location.

In the briefing room, the heroes find holo projections of all their superiors—CIB, Regency, or other intelligence forces (see "Getting the Heroes Involved," above), as

well as Lieutenant Ellen Indris of the Regency Sea Navy, surrounded by equipment and gadgetry. An extra holo screen shows footage of the *Tuscarora* explosion, already familiar to the heroes from the newscasts. The Concord representative, a CIB officer identified only as Theta, addresses the heroes first. Read the players his opening speech:

"My apologies for interrupting your vacation," the white-haired man in Concord-style business wear begins. "You are doubtless aware of the significance of the *Tuscarora* disaster—that she was carrying a dangerous terrorist. Our analysis of the explosion suggests that this was neither a retributive strike nor some foolish attempt to kill Thon Mardian before he could stand trial. In fact, we believe that Thon Mardian survived the explosion."

"We received a coded transmission from one of our submarines, the *Marlin*, verifying that Thon Mardian is aboard. Not only that, but somehow he has commandeered the vessel and altered its course. This is puzzling, because we don't know how he ended up there. Captain Muin Endrin and his crew are patriots. They would never associate with the likes of Thon Mardian."

If the heroes are not CIB agents, they may take this opportunity to negotiate the terms of the assignment. If another intelligence agency is working cooperatively with the CIB by supplying agents (heroes with another allegiance), the appropriate superiors chime in on the holo to confirm Theta's orders, urging complete cooperation with the CIB on this mission. If the heroes are freelancers, Theta negotiates their remuneration—\$10,000 per hero, plus expenses. Heroes making a successful Interaction-bargain skill check at a +1 penalty can increase this amount depending on the degree of success: Ordinary, \$2,000; Good, \$4,000; Amazing, \$8,000.

Theta can replay the communication sent by the *Marlin* upon request:

"Mardian is aboard. Has instructed Captain Endrin to take the *Marlin* to an undisclosed position due west of Regency Island. Believe the captain is acting against his ..."

The best Regency and Concord analysis so far suggests that Thon Mardian somehow transported off of the *Tuscarora* before she exploded. Scientists are hard at work determining how such a thing could be possible, but if Thon Mardian is alive and free, the more pressing issues are his intentions.

Satellites are tracking the *Marlin's* position. Filtrane Island, the seat of Thuldan power on Bluefall, has tried to contact Captain Endrin, but the submarine is running silent. Government officials hotly deny rumors that Captain Endrin is a terrorist sympathizer.

The heroes' mission is a four-stage operation. First, the *Vector* transports the heroes to a safe distance from the *Marlin*, where they disembark aboard swimmer delivery vehicles (SDVs) for their final approach to the Thuldan submarine. Second, the heroes board the Thuldan submarine and confirm the disposition and patriotism of the crew. Third, they locate Thon Mardian aboard the vessel and either take him into custody or kill him (if absolutely necessary). Finally, they exit the Thuldan sub and return to the *Vector* aboard the SDVs.

Once Theta has outlined these four stages, he answers any questions the heroes might have. If the heroes think to ask, Theta provides them with the names of all crewmen aboard the *Marlin*. Heroes can use this information to bluff their way into the submarine. (See the "Deception" section in Scene 4.)

If the heroes have no more questions for their superiors, they sign off and turn the briefing over to Lieutenant Indris. Indris has the responsibility of completing the briefing and equipping the heroes for the mission.

Lt. Indris is attractive and personable, but she is much more interested in her gadgets and devices than the heroes or their mission.

She provides the following equipment, alternating her explanations of each device's operation with dire warnings about protecting these items from harm:

• Two dataslates preloaded with schematic information about the *Deepstrike*-class Thuldan submarine. Give the players a copy of the *Marlin* deck plans on page 97.

• 11mm charge pistols specially designed for underwater use. The weapons fire supercavitating slugs at a velocity of around 2000 meters/second, surrounding the bullet with a sheath of steam that reduces water resistance. The statistics for these weapons are identical to standard 11mm charge pistols, except the costs for both the weapon (\$1,100) and the clip (\$75) are higher.

• Tungsten-neutronite combat knives for each hero. Smaller than the similar TN blades described in the *STAR*DRIVE Arms and Equipment Guide*, their statistics are summarized in the "New Vehicles and Weapons" sidebar below.

• Diving gauntlets, as described in the *Arms & Equipment Guide*. These gauntlets include sonar devices, inertial mapping systems, and blood chemistry monitors to prevent dangerous illness. The gauntlets reduce any penalties for visibility and disorientation by 2 steps and provide a -1 step bonus to Movement-swim and Acrobatics-daredevil checks made while diving.

• Gravsled swimmer delivery vehicles—one for each hero. These small, submersible vehicles use gravity induction technology to adjust their buoyancy and create propulsion, moving the sled at impressive underwater speeds. A swimmer in scuba gear trails behind the sled, grasping the handles on the sled's rear, while a transparent polymere shield protects the swimmer from the water rushing past. A smart skin equipped with electromagnetic turbulence control devices minimizes both water drag and vehicle noise.

Each sled has two spearguns mounted on its front, equipped with an automatic reloader

New Vehicles and Weapons

Vehicle	Skill	Drv	Acc	Cruise	Max	Type	Dur	Avail	Cost
Gravsled SDV	Water	—	25	100	200	G	8/8/4	Com	20K
Mini-submersible	Water	+1	20	60	80	G	20/20/10	Com	35K
Weapon	Skill		Acc	Md	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)		
TN combat knife	Melee-blade		0	—	Personal	LI/G	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m		
Speargun	Mod-rifle		0	F	50/100/250	HI/O	d6+2w/d6+4w/d4+2m		
Weapon	Actions		Clip Size	Clip Cost	Hide	Mass	Avail	Cost	
TN combat knife	4		—	—	+3	3	Com	400	
Speargun	1		1	20	—	4	Con	550	

and a total of ten spears. The polymere shield protects the swimmer from frontal attacks with the equivalent of attack armor [d4+1 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6-1 (En)]. The sleds' statistics are detailed in the "New Vehicles and Weapons" sidebar.

The vehicle-mounted spearguns, Indris happily explains, use magnetic accelerators to increase the velocity of the CO₂-propelled spears. See the "New Vehicles and Weapons" sidebar on the previous page.

- Scuba gear, including an oxygenator that extracts oxygen from the water and recycles the diver's exhalations (as described on page 144 of the *Player's Handbook*).

- Dry suits with soft carbonate-fiber weave, providing protection equal to a CF softsuit [d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6-1 (En)].

- Comm gear, in the form of a tiny wireless earphone with microphone.

- Sonic goggles, as described in the *Arms & Equipment Guide*, which allow heroes to see sound waves and navigate by sonar echolocation while swimming. These goggles negate any penalties for poor visibility underwater.

- Standard-issue Thuldan naval uniforms, which enable the heroes to blend in aboard the Thuldan submarine.

For the remainder of the journey, Lt. Indris helps the heroes become accustomed to the new equipment. After 6 hours, the *Vector* arrives at a safe distance from the *Marlin*—about 50 km, outside of sonar range. At this distance, the heroes leave the sub and swim for their rendezvous with the *Marlin*.

Scene 3: Shark Attack!

Speeding through the water with their gravsleds, too small to register on the *Marlin*'s sonar, the heroes can reach the Thuldan submarine in about 20 minutes. No Vehicle Operation skill check is necessary for this routine travel. However, the heroes have one major obstacle to overcome before they arrive at their destination: a small school of Moore's spotted sharks—smaller, warm-water relatives of the deadly Moore's shark. Sharing their larger cousins' telepathic abilities, the five spotted sharks form an arc around the swimming heroes and attack. Refer to the "Underwater Actions" section below for rules governing the heroes' actions and attacks underwater.

Like Moore's sharks, these fish attack with their psionic abilities as a single creature, with each fish contributing a rank of 1 to their base Telepathy skill score of 5. Thus, five sharks make a single *mind blast* attack with a total skill score of 10.

Shortly after defeating or avoiding the spotted sharks, the heroes come into visual range of the *Marlin*. Their next challenge is getting aboard; proceed with the "Gaining Entry" scene.

Underwater Actions

The alien environment of the ocean imposes certain penalties and limitations on surface-dwelling heroes. The water and buoyancy

impose a +2 penalty to the heroes' action checks and all Strength- or Dexterity-based skills. Heroes lose their Dexterity resistance modifiers, since they are unable to dodge effectively.

Only melee weapons designed for piercing are effective, including daggers, spears, bayonets, and combat knives. Bludgeoning attacks and slashing weapons such as sabers and axes are ineffective, as the water drag reduces the impact of a blow. Powered melee weapons do not function underwater.

Normal firearms function poorly underwater, suffering a 50% reduction to range. Salt water has a tendency to gum up the works of metal guns in particular, doubling the chance of a Critical Failure. If a hero rolls a 19 or 20 on the control die when firing an ordinary firearm, consult the "Weapon Failures" sidebar on page 45 of the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Render rifles and mass weapons function normally underwater. Stutter guns and laser weapons suffer a 50% range reduction but are otherwise unaffected. Waterproof firearms designed for underwater firing suffer no range reduction or increased chance of weapon failure. Regency charge guns function underwater but suffer a +1 accuracy penalty.

Crossbows and spearguns work normally underwater; thrown weapons and other ranged attacks suffer a 75% reduction to their range underwater.

The heroes' sonic goggles negate penalties for visibility underwater. Heroes who lose their goggles will be in total darkness and suffer a +3 penalty to any attacks. This penalty is in addition to the +2 penalty for underwater combat.

Scene 4: Gaining Entry

By the time the heroes reach it, the *Marlin* is holding position 1,000 km due west of Regency Island. Fearing that other vessels might track the submarine's wake, the *Marlin* is circling slowly, its gravitic induction engines set on silent running.

The *Marlin* has a large airlock forward of the dorsal fin, near the bow, designed to accommodate swimmers on SDVs, a small submersible craft for rescue or salvage missions, or other craft. There is also a smaller airlock on the dorsal fin itself, designed for swimmers or emergency rescue. These two airlocks are the only ways for the heroes to enter the submarine without flooding a compartment. The heroes might attempt to gain entry either through deception or by forcing their way in. Each method is detailed below.

Deception

A successful System Operation—communications skill check allows the heroes to establish

Moore's Spotted Sharks (5)

STR	10	(d4+7)	INT	3	(Animal 7 or 3d4)
DEX	10	(d4+7)	WIL	11	(d4+8)
CON	12	(d6+9)	PER	5	(Animal 10 or 4d4)
Durability	12/12/6/6		Action check:	11+/10/5/2	
Move:	swim 48		# Actions:	2	
Reaction score:	Ordinary/2				
Psionic energy points:	11				

Attacks

Bite	13/6/3	d4w/d8w/d12w	LI/O
Mind blast	10/5/2	d4+2s/d6+2s/d8+2s	n/a

Armor is ineffective against a mind blast attack. Each shark that is killed reduces the skill score by 1. Four or fewer sharks inflict only d4+1s/d4+2s/d6+2s with a successful attack.

Defenses

Armor: d4+1 (LI), d6-2 (HI), d6-3 (En)

Skills

Unarmed Attack [10]—brawl [13]; Movement [12]—swim [18]; Stamina [12]—endurance [15]; Awareness [11]—intuition [12], perception [14]; Telepathy [5]—mind blast [10], tire [6].

a link with the bridge of the submarine using their comm gear. With communication established, the heroes must bluff their way into the airlock, somehow convincing the sailors at the controls to open the airlock doors. While a Deception-bluff skill check is really all that is required, you should make the players concoct a believable story. For example, the heroes might claim to be crew members of the *Marlin* who departed the sub during the previous watch, and pretend to be indignant that their departure was not properly recorded in the duty logs. This bluff would be more convincing if the heroes requested the crew roster for the *Marlin* before embarking on the mission. (See Scene 2 for details.)

If the bluff is successful, the heroes enter the airlock and the crew responds appropriately. (For example, if the heroes claimed to be stranded divers in need of assistance, sailors are sent to the airlock to escort the heroes to a secure location where they can't interfere with the sub's mission.) If the bluff fails, the Thuldans send two divers (see adjacent sidebar) out the small airlock in the dorsal fin (area 17) to deal with the would-be invaders.

Refer to the "Underwater Actions" section for rules governing combat underwater. Naturally, the Thuldan divers suffer the same combat penalties as the heroes.

With the airlock open for the divers' exit, it becomes much easier for the heroes to gain entry into the submarine. No one aboard the *Marlin* knows the outcome of the battle between the Thuldan divers and the heroes, so the heroes gain a -1 step bonus to their Deception skill checks when trying to persuade the command crew to close the airlock and admit them to the submarine. There is also a set of controls inside the airlock itself, so the heroes can simply swim in and admit themselves.

Forced Entry

Each airlock has controls located on the inside and outside of the submarine. However, when the vessel is submerged the external controls are disabled. A hero with the Security-security devices skill can trick the airlock mechanisms into functioning with a complex skill check of Ordinary complexity (4 successes required) and Moderate difficulty (+2 penalty to each check). Success at this skill check also disables the sensors that alert sailors aboard the vessel that the airlock is in operation, thus allowing the heroes to enter unnoticed.

A hero with any Technical Science skill can attempt to force the airlock open (use the same complex skill check), but in this case the sensors still function normally unless a hero first makes a complex Computer Science-hacking skill check (5 successes required; no step penalty to the rolls) to disable the alarms.

Thuldan Divers (2)

Human Mutant Combat Spec, Level 2, Thuldan

STR 10

DEX 11 [+1]

CON 11

Durability 11/11/5/5

Move: sp 20, ru 12, wa 4, eas 2, sw 4

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

INT 9

WIL 10

PER 9

Action check: 14+/13/6/3

Actions: 2

Last Resorts: 0

Attacks

Unarmed (claws) 12/6/3 d4w/d4+2w/d4m LI/O

Speargun* 13/6/3 d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m HI/O

Combat knife 12/6/3 d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+4w LI/O

* These are handheld versions of the spearguns mounted on the heroes' SDVs. They require an action to reload; each diver carries 5 extra spears.

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

CF wetsuit d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6-1 (En)

Skills

Armor Operation [10]; Athletics [10]; Heavy Weapons [10]; Unarmed Attack [10]-brawl** [12]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11]-pistol [12], rifle [12]; Primitive Ranged Weapons [11]-bow [13]; Vehicle Operation [11]; Movement [11]-swim [13]; Stamina [11]-endurance [12], resist pain [12]; Knowledge [9]-first aid [10]; Interaction [9].

** The divers have a base situation die of -d4 with their brawl skill.

Mutations

Improved Natural Attack: These mutants possess deadly claws, protruding nearly 3 cm from their fingertips.

Minor Physical Change: As their claws are not retractable, the mutants suffer a +2 penalty to skill checks involving Personality or any interaction with other characters.

About the Marlin

The *Marlin* is one of the Thuldan Empire's new submarines, designed to challenge the Regency's domination of Bluefall's vast ocean. Powered by a mass reactor, the *Marlin* and the other vessels in its class rival small starships in size, defenses, and support systems.

The *Marlin* crew consists of thirty enlisted men, most of whom are nonprofessional sailors with statistics equal to a Marginal soldier as described on page 99 of the *Gamemaster Guide*, but with System Operation in place of Armor Operation. They ordinarily move about the submarine unarmed. However, eight crew members are well-trained mutant sailors called battlecats, with the same statistics as the divers detailed above. Aboard the sub, they abandon their spearguns in favor of autoflèche shotguns (skill score 12/6/3, d4w/d6w/d4m, HI/O) in addition to their natural weaponry and combat knives. Rather than CF wetsuits, they wear CF bodysuits

[d8-1 (LI), d8-1 (HI), d6 (En)]. The rest of the crew consists of four officers (Diplomats with Combat Spec as their secondary profession), Captain Muin Endrin, and Thon Mardian. The officers are equivalent to Ordinary military officers, as detailed on page 98 of the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Statistics for Muin Endrin and Thon Mardian appear later in the adventure.

Most of the crew believe that they are on a routine patrol mission, exploring the seas, keeping their ears open for signs of the deep-fallen, and testing the capabilities of their relatively new ship, including the missile firing procedures. They do not know that Muin Endrin is betraying his command. They are personally loyal to Muin Endrin, and they place that loyalty above their allegiance to the Thuldan Empire. Any crew member the heroes encounter treats them as enemies if ordered to do so, and nothing the heroes say has any effect on that perception.



A deepsea operative stealthfully approaches the Deepstrike missile submarine.

Once alerted to the presence of intruders, the officers dispense 9mm charge pistols to each sailor (broad skill score 10/5/2, damage $d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m$). Even on this high-tech submarine of the future, quarters are close, and the heroes cannot escape detection for long, as well-armed battlecat patrols move through the ship looking carefully for the intruders. The heroes encounter these patrols at your discretion; each patrol consists of two battlecats, as described above. Their comm gear keeps them in constant communication with the bridge; if a patrol enters a firefight with the heroes, reinforcements arrive in 1d4+3 action rounds.

Crew members try to force the heroes to surrender, firing weapons only if the heroes are blatantly hostile. If the heroes allow themselves to be taken prisoner, they are relieved of their visible weapons and brought before Thon Mardian for questioning.

If the PCs attack the bridge, go to Scene 5. If the PCs are captured and brought before Thon Mardian and Captain Muin Endrin on the bridge, proceed with Scene 6.

Deck Plan Key

The deck plans contain a simple key indicating the purpose of each area of the submarine. Only a few of these areas warrant detailed description here.

1. Sensor Fin. This large fin on the bottom front of the submarine contains sonar and blue-green ladar arrays, chaff, and jammer defense systems. All of these systems are controlled from the bridge.

2. Torpedo Room. The missile tubes and their control systems take up much of the submarine's forward portion, spreading between the lower two decks. The weapons control systems are located on the lower deck, along with one bank of five torpedo tubes and the missile stores. The missiles, piled under the upper-level walkway on the starboard side, all hold CHE warheads.

A ladder leads between the two decks, rising in front of the missile stores on the lower deck to just inside the upper deck hatchway

(leading to area 8). A walkway leads from that hatch to the upper platform, where the second bank of five missile tubes is mounted. These tubes can lie flat for firing torpedoes against other waterborne targets, or they can angle upward for firing missiles at surface targets. They are currently in the angled position, and two tubes are loaded with MRB warheads, counting down to launch. The missiles have been targeted at the islands of Regency and Diandes.

Two crew members are stationed here at all times. During the countdown, a third sailor—a battlecat (see "About the Marlin" section)—is on duty here as well, standing guard near the door to make sure the other sailors complete their assigned task. If Thon Mardian knows the heroes are loose aboard the ship, he adds a second battlecat to this guard duty.

During the countdown to launch, Thon Mardian has redirected control of the missiles from the control station here to the computer terminals on the bridge (area 16). However, it is still possible—through hacking or other

means—to prevent the launch from this room. See Scene 7 below.

3. Crew Quarters. Like most submarines, the *Marlin* is crewed at all times. The thirty crew members work in two shifts, which means that at any given time, fifteen sailors are either here sleeping or in the mess/lounge (area 11) on the middle deck. Unless a general alarm has been sounded, the sailors are unarmed.

4. Brig. The hatchway to the brig has Good toughness and 6 durability points, while its electronic lock imposes a +2 penalty to any attempt to disable it using the Security—*security devices* skill. If the heroes are imprisoned here (see Scene 5), two armed battlecats are stationed outside the hatch.

Contained in a plastic bodybag at the rear of the brig is the submarine's first officer, Aaron Brunor, who was killed by Thon Mardian. Strapped to Brunor's left shin is a TN combat knife (see "New Vehicles and Weapons" sidebar) that escaped detection.

5. Life Support Systems. This room is dark and crowded with machinery. Medium or Heavy cover is available to a hero or crew member engaging in a firefight in this room.

6. Mass Reactor and 7. Gravitic Induction Engine. The mass reactor provides power to all the ship's systems, including the engine. The gravitic induction engine propels the ship swiftly and silently through the ocean.

8. Crew Mess and 9. Galley. Though fifteen crew members are off duty at any given time, rarely more than a handful are in these areas at once.

10. Sick Bay. The heroes can obtain medical supplies here. With the exception of the trauma pack II and certain pharmaceuticals (antivenom and psi-enhancers), all of the medical gear described on pages 137–139 of the *Player's Handbook* can be found here.

11. Officer's Mess and Lounge. The *Marlin's* five officers operate on two shifts a day. It is typical for two or three off-duty officers to relax in the lounge at a time. Neither Captain Endrin nor Thon Mardian socializes in this area, entering only to get food to bring to his cabin.

12. Engineering Room. The engines and support systems of the submarine are controlled from the computer stations in this room. The ship's locker is also here and contains thirty-five 9mm charge pistols and twelve 11mm charge rifles, along with plenty of ammunition. There are five sailors on duty here at all times.

13. Airlock/Hangar. The *Marlin* holds a small submersible designed for rescue, exploration, or swimmer delivery missions. The *Sand Dollar* is a disk-shaped vehicle propelled by gravity induction, just like the heroes' SDVs. However, the *Sand Dollar* is not capable of supercavitation (the Thuldans have not mastered the application of this technology to vehicles as the Regency has), so it's slower than the SDVs. The mini-submersible's statistics are presented in the "New Vehicles and Weapons" sidebar.

The *Sand Dollar* seats six crewmen (with gear) comfortably and has the following equipment: an AT missile turret on top, a sonar array, rescue gear, and (of course) airtight configuration. The airlock is located on the underside of the disk.

14. Officer's Quarters. When Thon Mardian came aboard the *Marlin*, Captain Endrin's first officer questioned Thon Mardian's presence. Captain Endrin believed that Officer Brunor's loyalty was beyond question, but Brunor threatened to inform Filtrane Island of the situation aboard the vessel. Thon Mardian personally eliminated the security threat, then took over Brunor's quarters—the forward cabin on the starboard side, adjacent to the hangar (area 13) and across the hall from the captain's cabin (area 15). Thon Mardian is rarely found here and spends most of his time on the bridge (area 16).

The *Marlin's* officers work in two 14-hour shifts per day. When not on duty, a given officer is either in his or her quarters or in the officers' mess/lounge (area 11).

Thon Mardian, Terrorist Leader

Human Mutant (warrior) Combat Spec, Level 10, Thuldan

STR	14	[+2]	INT	12	[+1]
DEX	12	[+1]	WIL	11	[+1]
CON	13		PER	11	
Durability 13/13/6/6			Action check: 16+/15/7/3		
Move: sp 26, ru 16, wa 6			# Actions: 3		
Reaction score: Ordinary/3			Last Resorts: 4		

Attacks

Unarmed	15/7/3	d4+2s/d4+3s/d4+4s	LI/O
Chainsword	16/8/4	d8+3w/d8+4w/d4+3m	LI/O
Mass pistol	15/7/3	d6w/d6+2w/d6m	En/G

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee and ranged attacks
Attack armor d4+1 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6-1 (En)

Skills

Armor Operation [14]—combat [17], powered [16]; Athletics [14]—climb [15], throw [15]; Heavy Weapons [14]—direct [15]; Melee Weapons [14]—blade [15], powered [16]; Unarmed Attack [14]—brawl* [15]; Modern Ranged Weapons [12]—pistol [15], rifle [17], SMG [13]; Vehicle Operation [12]; Stamina [13]—endurance [16], resist pain [14]; Survival [13]—desert training [14]; Knowledge [12]—first aid [13]; Tactics [12]—infantry [15], vehicle [13]; Demolitions [12]; Security [12]—security devices [13]; Resolve [11]; Interaction [11].

* Thon Mardian has a base situation die of -d4 with his brawl skill.

Mutations

Redundant Vital Organs: All mortal damage Thon Mardian suffers is halved, and he gains a -3 bonus to all Stamina—endurance checks related to mortal damage.

Enhanced Strength

Night Vision: Penalties for darkness (short of total darkness) are reduced by 2 steps.

Minor Physical Change: Because of his leonine features, Thon Mardian suffers a +2 penalty to skill checks involving Personality or any interaction with other characters.

Slight Reduced Ability Score (Intelligence)

15. Captain's Cabin. In addition to Muin Endrin's personal belongings, his cabin contains important documents such as the ship's orders (which he is disregarding for the moment) and the captain's log. If the heroes search this room, they discover that Endrin has been keeping two sets of logs—one accurate and one falsified for official purposes, making no mention of Thon Mardian or the ship's actual activities.

16. Bridge. Thon Mardian spends most of his time here, having (in principle, if not in actual fact) taken over the role of ship's captain. Muin Endrin is usually here with him, and he keeps two battlecats near him at all times. There are usually two officers and four sailors here as well. See Scenes 5 and 6 below for more information about Thon Mardian's activities and tactics.

One of the consoles on the bridge controls the submarine's missile launchers. Only Captain Endrin knows the code to activate or deactivate the launch sequence; Endrin has not shared these codes with Thon Mardian, who would rather intimidate the captain than remember the codes himself.

Another bridge console permits access to the submarine's radio transmitter. Heroes making a successful System Operation–communications skill check can use the radio to contact the authorities or the nearest Regency vessel in range.

From the bridge's helm station, heroes can control the speed, depth, and direction of the

submarine. Properly maneuvering the submarine from the helm station requires a successful Vehicle Operation–water skill check.

17. Airlock. This smaller airlock cycles much faster than the hangar, making it the entrance or exit of choice when large equipment or vehicles are not involved. The airlock opening is on the small deck atop the submarine's dorsal fin, while the airlock chamber itself extends down onto the topmost deck, opening in the rear of the bridge.

18. Conning Tower. The sensor equipment more suited to surface use is housed in the submarine's dorsal fin, including a periscope, multiband radar, and radio transceiver. All of this equipment is accessed from the bridge.

Finding Thon Mardian

Thon Mardian divides his time between the bridge (area 16) and his cabin (area 14). During the heroes' "visit," he is on the bridge.

While the movements of crew members are tracked through the distinctive signatures of their comm gear, Thon Mardian is not a part of the ship's regular crew and thus does not appear in that system. Instead, the hero must hack into the system that controls the ship's surveillance cameras and search for Thon Mardian visually. The process requires a series of complex skill checks based on the Computer Science–hacking skill. First, the hero must use a break-in or lockpick program to

gain access to the system, bypassing the standard log-in procedure. This requires 2 successes, with a +1 penalty applied to the attempt. (This penalty may be offset by the quality of the hacker's break-in software.) Second, the hero must locate the appropriate data. Locating this data requires a single success with Computer Science–hacking, using a datascan or similar program.

Accessing the ship's surveillance system requires 3 successes. The ship's Marginal computer offers no penalty to the attempt. Each skill check represents 1 minute of game time.

Exploring any system other than the surveillance camera records provides no record of Thon Mardian's presence aboard the ship. Exploring the surveillance data files requires another simple hacking or Computer Operation skill check using a datascan, netsearch, or locator program. Because of the small scope of the computer system involved, using netsearch affords the hero a –1 bonus, while locator gives a –2 bonus. Success shows the hero what he or she is looking for: Thon Mardian sitting on the bridge with Muin Endrin and eight loyal sailors: two officers, two battlecats, and four enlisted sailors. If a general alarm has been sounded, the officers and enlisted sailors are armed; otherwise, only Thon Mardian, Captain Endrin, and the battlecats have weapons.

Naturally, there are other ways for the heroes to locate Thon Mardian, from the esoteric (ESP–clairvoyance) to the mundane (barging into the bridge with weapons ready). The results are the same regardless.

Scene 5: Storming the Bridge

If the heroes defy Thon Mardian's attempts to capture them and storm the bridge, they must overcome the bridge crew. If the heroes prevail, they can barricade themselves against the remaining crew and use the bridge controls to commandeer the submarine.

If the security of the bridge is compromised, Thon Mardian orders Captain Endrin to activate the security lock-outs designed to prevent deactivation of the submarine's missile launching sequence. If confronted by the heroes, Thon Mardian gloats while defending against their onslaught:

"Your efforts to stop me are futile! Soon my teams of insurgents will complete their task, crippling Bluefall's satellite defenses. Once the Regency satellites are disabled, nothing can stop my missiles from striking their intended targets. You are too late!"

Unable to flee, Thon Mardian fights to the death. Captain Endrin and his bridge officers take cover behind command consoles and fire their 9mm charge pistols at the invaders.

Muin Endrin, Captain of the Marlin

Human Diplomat (Combat Spec), Level 6, Thuldan

STR 11 [+1] INT 11 [+1]

DEX 10 WIL 11 [+1]

CON 11 PER 12

Durability 11/11/5/5 Action check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sp 20, ru 12, wa 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

Unarmed 12/6/3 d6+1s/d6+3s/d4+1w LI/O

9mm charge pistol 12/6/3 d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m HI/O

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks

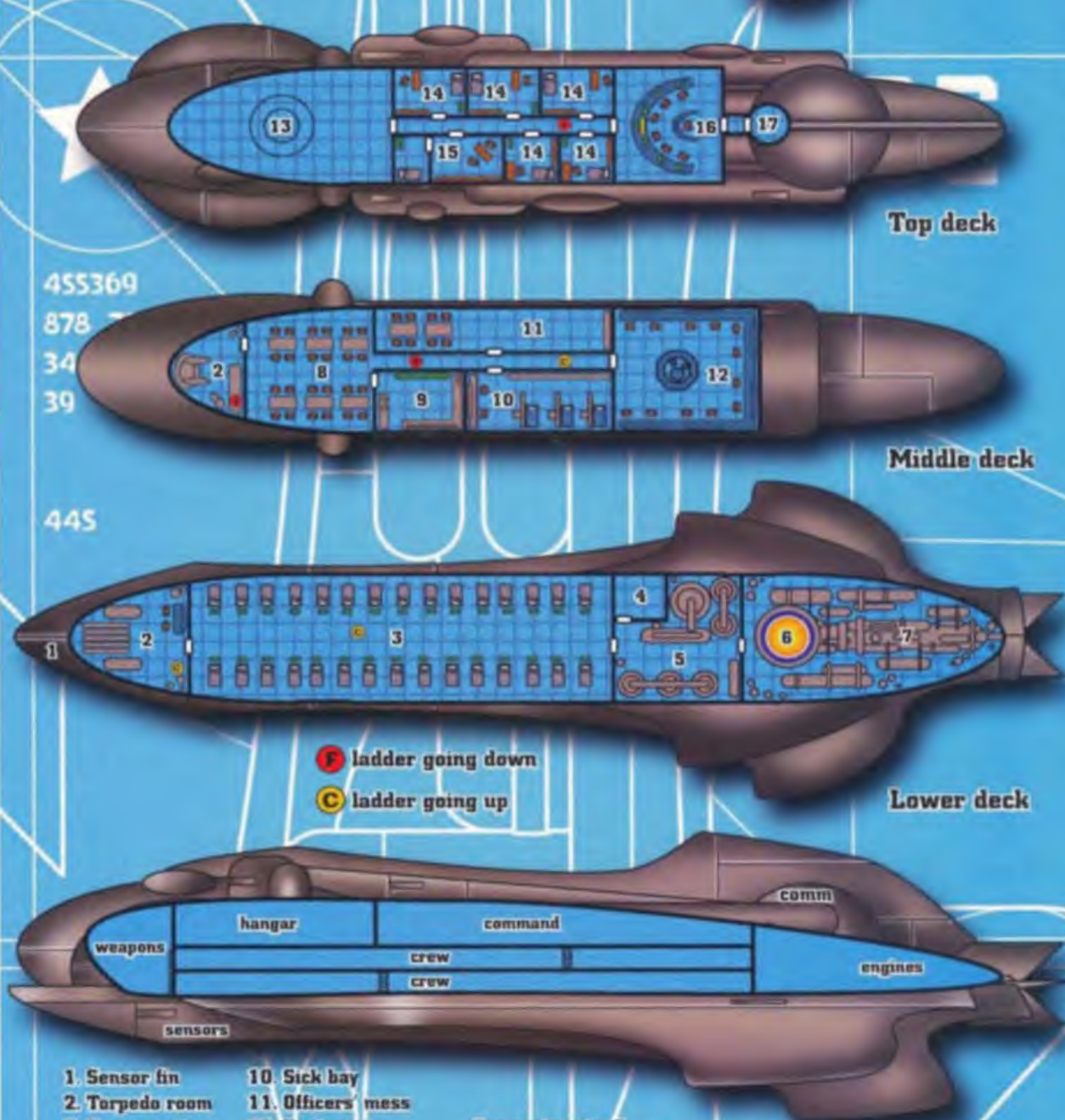
Battle jacket d6–1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4–1 (En)

Skills

Armor Operation [11]; Unarmed Attack [11]–*power martial arts* [12]; Modern Ranged Weapons [10]–*pistol* [12], *rifle* [12]; Vehicle Operation [10]–*space* [11]; Knowledge [11]–*computer operation* [12], *military history* [12]; Navigation [11]; System Operation [11]–*sensors* [12], *weapons* [12]; Tactics [11]–*vehicle* [12]; Investigate [11]–*interrogate* [12]; Leadership [12]–*command* [14], *inspire* [13].

Thuldan Deepstrike-class Scout Submersible

Gamemaster's Map



- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Sensor fin | 10. Sick bay |
| 2. Torpedo room | 11. Officers' mess |
| 3. Crew quarters | 12. Engineering |
| 4. Brig | 13. Hangar/airlock |
| 5. Life support | 14. Officers' quarters |
| 6. Mass reactor | 15. Captain's cabin |
| 7. Waterjet engine | 16. Bridge |
| 8. Crew mess | 17. Airlock |
| 9. Galley | 18. Conning tower |
- One square = 2 meters

Compartments: 6
 Durability: 30
 Maneuver Rating: +1
 Acc: 20 mpp
 Cruise Speed: 60 kph
 Berthing: 36
 Armament: 10 missile tubes
 Minelayer

Defenses: chaff, stealth hull (1 dur)
 Armor: Moderate cerametal (3 dur)
 d4+1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4+1 (EN)
 Computer: Marginal computer core,
 Good dedicated battle/sensor
 Engines: Gravitic induction engine
 Power: Mass reactor (5 power factors)



His plans thwarted, the villainous Thon Mardian readies himself for battle.

Once the bridge is secured, the heroes can stop the missile countdown from the bridge by making a Computer Science—*hacking* complex skill check. If the heroes achieve 5 successes, the missile launch is successfully aborted. (The submarine's Marginal computer offers no penalty to the heroes' skill checks.) If the heroes roll 2 failures, the security lock-outs prevent them from aborting the missile countdown from the bridge. Each skill check represents 1 minute of game time.

If Thon Mardian is killed and Captain Endrin survives, Endrin's resolve weakens and he surrenders. Persuading Endrin to abort the countdown requires a successful Interaction—*bargain*, Interaction—*intimidate*, or Deception—*bluff* skill check at a +1 step penalty. (The Gamemaster should apply bonuses or penalties to this roll based on circumstances and the heroes' handling of the situation.) The heroes cannot persuade Endrin to abort the countdown so long as Thon Mardian is alive and aboard the submarine.

If the heroes kill Captain Endrin, they must stop the countdown on their own. (See Scene 7 below.) The surviving crewmen, enraged by Captain Endrin's death, do everything they can to thwart the heroes, showing no mercy to those who are captured.

Scene 6: Caught!

Whether they are hunted from the outset or stumble into trouble on the bridge, the heroes could find themselves captured. Thon Mardian offers them every opportunity to surrender but does not hesitate to kill one or more heroes to secure the surrender of the others. (This might be a good time for heroes to spend last resort points!) If the heroes are subdued, they are disarmed and shackled in Good quality binders (+4 step penalty to Manipulation—*lockpick* or *prestidigitation* skill checks). A megalomaniac villain, Mardian relishes the opportunity to parade his triumph.

Before sending the heroes to the brig (escorted by four armed battlecats), Thon Mardian delivers a victory speech, relating his plan to destroy Regency and Diandes with the MRB missiles aboard the submarine. Read his speech to the players, taking care to convey his triumphant, gloating tone:

"Behold my triumph! In 20 minutes, my teams of insurgents will sabotage and cripple key tactical defense satellites orbiting Bluefall. Once the satellites are disabled, two missiles armed with mass-reaction

burst warheads will speed toward Regency Island and the Concord's island, Diandes. With the satellites down, the missiles cannot be intercepted before they strike their intended targets. When they detonate, there will no longer be any opposition to Thuldan dominance on this planet. First Bluefall, then the Verge, and at last the galaxy! You are witnesses to history in the making!" Turning to his guards, Thon Mardian gestures dismissively. "Take them away." Then to you, he says, "You needn't worry about trying to escape. We'll summon you from the brig to watch the fireworks as the missiles reach their targets."

With that, the sailors escort the heroes to the brig (area 4). The heroes' weapons remain on the bridge, as well as any other obvious equipment. The sailors do not remove the heroes' dry suits if they are still wearing them, nor do they perform a thorough search for concealed weaponry.

Two battlecats remain stationed outside the door to the brig while the heroes are inside. They carry 11mm charge rifles, and one holds the keys to the heroes' binders.

Allow the heroes to plot their escape; possible methods include using Deception—*bluff* to persuade a guard to open the door (with a possible modifier to the check depending on the nature of the bluff), using a concealed TN combat knife to cut through the door, or making a Security—*security devices* skill check (at a +2 penalty). Most of these methods also require the heroes to either pick the locks on the binders (Manipulation—*lockpick*) or slip out of them (Manipulation—*prestidigitation*).

The heroes' escape shouldn't take more than 20 minutes so that they feel the pressure of time to prevent the missile launch. If they don't free themselves, the mission is over.

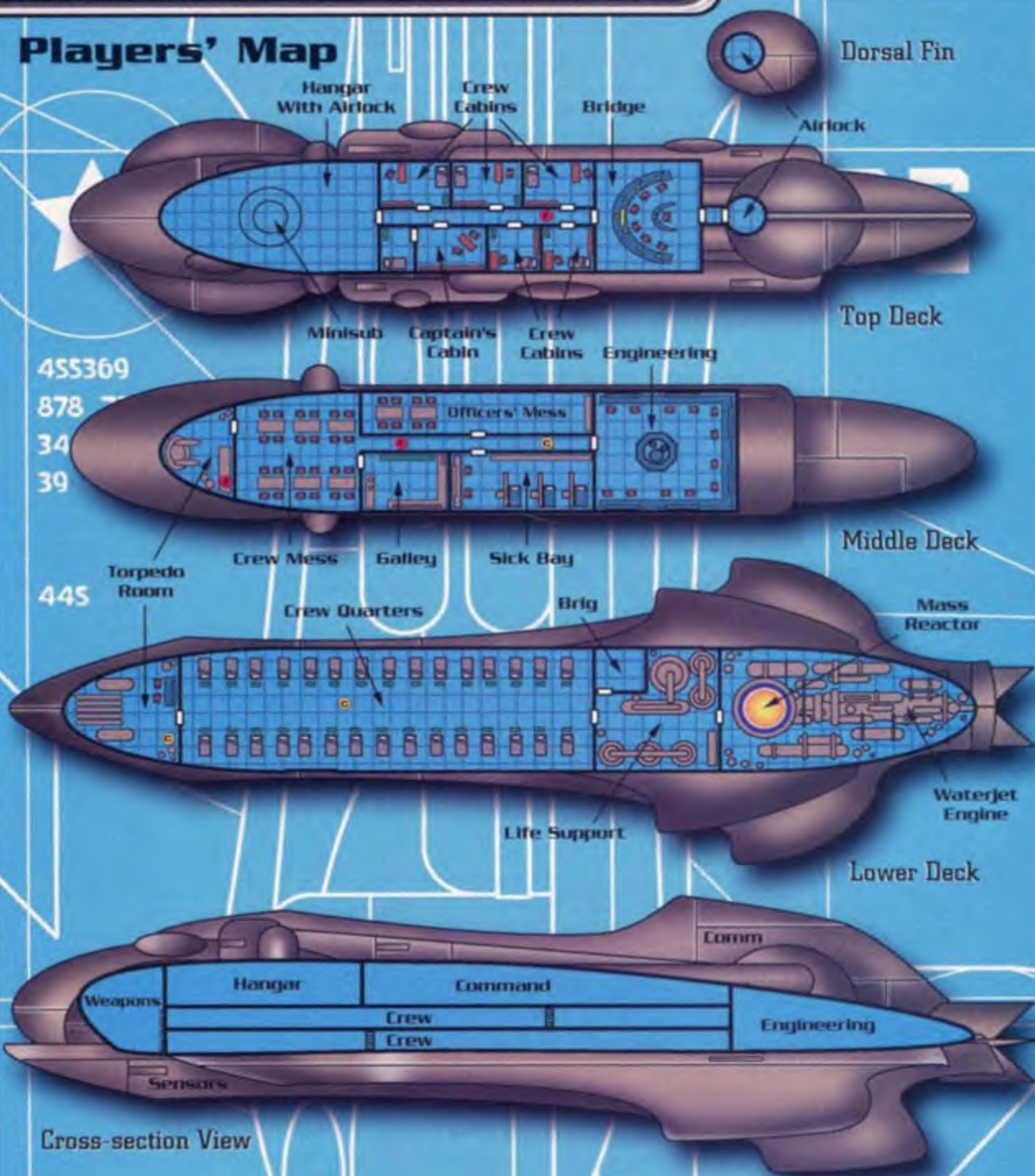
Scene 7: The Countdown

The countdown to missile launch is set at T minus 20 minutes. Thon Mardian has timed the launch to coincide with the disabling of two satellites orbiting Bluefall. The satellites are programmed to track and destroy missiles fired over Bluefall, which means they must be disabled before Thon Mardian's attack can succeed. The terrorist teams responsible for sabotaging the satellites are loyal to Thon Mardian and are coordinated by the mysterious gardhyi, who uses its star web to move between the terrorist saboteurs and the sub.

While it is possible to stop the launch from the bridge, the heroes would face the daunting task of seizing the bridge and would most likely end up right back in the brig. It is far easier to disarm the missiles or stop the countdown from the torpedo room (area 2).

Thuldan Deepstrike-class Scout Submersible

Players' Map



The Marlin

One square = 2 meters

Compartments: 6
 Acc: 20 mpp
 Cruise Speed: 60 kph
 Berthing: 36
 Armament: 10 missile tubes
 Minelayer

Power: Mass reactor
 Engines: Gravitic induction engine
 Armor: Moderate cerametal
 Defenses: Chaff, stealth hull

When the heroes enter the torpedo room, two sailors sit at the weapons station with their backs to the hatch, while one battlecat (two if Thon Mardian knows the heroes are free) stands guard. The countdown to launch is clearly visible on the control station, ticking away the seconds. The room seems dark despite the bright overhead lights, and the shadows seem clustered on the upper deck. The hero who rolls the best *Awareness-intuition* check result (with a +3 step penalty) notices a dark-garbed figure sneaking out the upper hatch; this is the gardhyi who helped Thon Mardian escape his captivity. (The alien has the skills and abilities of the "typical" gardhyi Free Agent described in the *ALIEN COMPENDIUM* accessory.) One or more heroes can try to follow the gardhyi; by the time the heroes make it up the ladder and out the hatch, they catch a glimpse of the shadowy figure disappearing down the hallway from the crew mess (area 8). When the heroes reach the hallway, they see the hatch to the engineering room (area 12) close. Those who enter the room find it empty. The gardhyi has used his star web to escape the submarine.

Make surprise checks normally for the sailors, applying a +1 penalty to their rolls for the dim illumination. Reinforcements for the beleaguered sailors do not arrive until the heroes are working on the missiles.

Heroes may use a variety of skills to disable the missiles:

- *Demolitions-disarm* to disable the warheads: this requires an Ordinary complex skill check (5 successes) with no check modifier. Each roll represents 1 minute of game time.

- *Computer Science-hacking* to return control of the missiles to this weapon station and stop the countdown: This requires a Good complex skill check (5 successes). There is no modifier to the attempt unless the hero has already hacked into this system, which gives a -2 bonus to each check. Each check represents 1 minute of game time.

- *Technical Science-juryrig* to physically prevent the missiles from launching, perhaps to detonate inside the submarine. This unusual application of this skill requires a Good complex skill check (6 successes), with a +1 penalty to each check. Each check represents 1 minute of game time.

- The players might well have other ideas; adjudicate these as you see fit. Any course of action should require several minutes, allowing reinforcements to arrive and put pressure on the heroes.

A hero working directly on the missiles (as opposed to the weapons station or the torpedo hatches) should make an *Awareness-perception* skill check at a +1 penalty. If either check is successful, the hero notices a strange device attached to the missile he or she is currently working on. If the hero finds one, he or she can easily locate the device on the other missile. The device is clearly of alien construction, and its purpose is inscrutable. These devices were planted by the gardhyi. There is no time to examine the devices at this point in time; their nature is discussed below, under "Concluding the Adventure."

One minute after the heroes begin working to stop the countdown, four battlecats appear through the lower hatch and open fire

on the heroes. A hero working on the missiles or torpedo tubes has Heavy cover, but a hero working at the weapons station is right in the thick of combat, probably with his or her back turned to the attackers.

Thon Mardian's Escape

With the immediate threat of the missile launch eliminated, the heroes must deal with Thon Mardian. (If they have booby-trapped the missiles to detonate inside the submarine, their only concern might be escaping before the missiles explode.) As soon as it becomes clear that the heroes will succeed in disarming the missiles, Thon Mardian makes his way to the mini-submersible in the hangar (area 13) and prepares his escape.

By this time, the heroes have probably killed enough battlecats and other sailors that Muin Endrin recognizes defeat as well. With neither Thon Mardian nor the gardhyi holding threats over his head, he does not put up a struggle when the heroes return to the bridge.

With the hangar flooded for Thon Mardian's escape, it is impossible to open the hatch leading into it. If the heroes wish to pursue the minisub, they must either wait for the hangar to make a complete cycle (giving Thon Mardian a 5-minute head start), or exit through the dorsal fin airlock (area 17). The heroes' SDVs are probably in the hangar, but its outer hatch is open, so they can reach them easily.

A hero on a graysled SDV can catch up to the minisub with ease. Once the heroes reach the minisub, there are at least three options:

- Use the *Demolitions-set explosives* skill to destroy the minisub. A single skill check is required. The effect depends on the type and amount of explosive used; see page 180 of the *Player's Handbook*.

- Enter the minisub through the airlock on its ventral surface. This requires no skill checks but brings the heroes into face-to-face combat with a powerful opponent.

- Punch a hole in the minisub's hull with a TN combat knife or other weapon. Use the normal combat procedure to determine the effects of the heroes' attacks.

Scene 8: Wrapping Things Up

The action should end dramatically, with the heroes simultaneously dealing with Thon Mardian and Captain Endrin. They might radio the *Vector* to take Endrin into custody and escort the *Marlin* to Filtrane or Regency Island, or they can return to the *Vector* as originally planned.

Endrin, under interrogation, can explain anything the heroes haven't figured out on their own. He emphasizes that he was acting without authorization from the Thuldan

Thuldan Deepstrike-class Scout Submersible

Roll	Compartment	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Dur
1-2	Command	Marginal computer core (0/0) Good dedicated battle computer (0/0) Good dedicated sensor computer (0/0) Officers' quarters (1/0) Sick bay (2/0) Dorsal fin: Airlock (0/0) Radio tranceiver (0/0) Multiband radar (0/0)	6/6/3
3-4	Engineering	Mass reactor (2/0) Waterjet engine (2/1) Life support (2/2)	12/12/6
5-7	Weapons	Missile tubes (3/0) Minelayer (2/1)	10/10/5
8-10	Electronics	Sonar array (0/0) Ladar array (0/0) Chaff (1/0) Internal monitors (0/0)	2/2/1
11-14	Cargo	Minisub hangar (5/0)	10/10/5
15-20	Crew	Crew quarters (5/0) Brig (1/0)	12/12/6

colony on Filtrane, and the Thuldan ambassador, Andrew Stott, completely denies any knowledge of Endrin's actions when contacted by the Regency. Endrin claims that he was blackmailed, but he does not volunteer information about his blackmailer (the gardhyi) or reveal anything about the nature of his own dark secrets.

Uncovering the truth about Captain Endrin requires either painstaking research (several complex Computer Science—*hacking* feat checks) or several well-placed bribes within the Thuldan military (requiring several successful Deception—*bribery* checks). As a young fighter pilot during GW2, Endrin was involved in an obscure but important battle. A small Thuldan starship found itself severely outgunned by a larger Solar vessel. When the Thuldan ship was vaporized, only a handful of one-man fighters remained; Endrin was one of the pilots. The wing commander managed to lead the survivors in a last-ditch attack on the Solar ship. Endrin, however, refused to join the attack and withdrew from the battle. The fighters destroyed the Solar ship thanks to the wing commander's brilliant plan, but only two pilots survived the assault.

Fearing that they would report his cowardice, Endrin shot down the two fighters as they limped toward the nearby planet. When Thuldan reinforcements arrived, they found only Endrin alive. Endrin claimed that he had led the daring final assault and collected both a promotion and a medal as reward for his cowardice. How the gardhyi came to learn Endrin's secret remains a mystery.

If asked about the gardhyi, Muin Endrin pleads ignorance about the alien's motives

and actions. He honestly does not know what interest the gardhyi has in Thon Mardian and assumes that the two became acquainted while Thon Mardian was off Bluefall, on the run from the law. He does not know what the gardhyi was doing while he was aboard the *Marlin*, nor does he know where the alien might have gone. He does have a basic understanding of the creature's star web—that is, he knows that the gardhyi possesses some technological item that allowed it to transport Thon Mardian from the *Tuscarora*, but he is not familiar with star web technology.

In the unlikely event he is captured alive, Thon Mardian is unwilling to provide information about the gardhyi or his escape from the *Tuscarora*. He remains belligerent and indifferent regardless of the intensity of the interrogation:

"You think you have defeated me, but you have only delayed the inevitable. I have many friends, not only on Bluefall but throughout the Verge. They will see that you pay for your interference."

If the heroes or their superiors study the gardhyi devices planted on the MRB missiles, they face a difficult analysis. If a hero is conducting the investigation, he or she must make a complex Knowledge—*deduce* skill check of Amazing complexity. Apply a modifier to each check based on the results of a single Technical Science broad skill check: Failure, +3 penalty; Ordinary, +2 penalty; Good, +1 penalty; and Amazing, no modifier. On a Critical Failure, the device is damaged and disintegrates. Each roll in the complex skill check requires a week of analysis.

The results of the hero's investigation are left to you to determine, based on the gardhyi's possible motivation. Some possibilities include:

- A complex biomechanical device intended to terraform the islands after the MRB warheads had done their work, transforming them—and all of Bluefall—into a strange alien environment.

- An infectious agent that would have devastated the surviving populations of the targeted islands. (At your discretion, the hero might have to make Stamina—*endurance* checks to resist this disease and might unwittingly trigger the same epidemic the gardhyi hoped for.)

- A sensor device intended to record the exact physical characteristics of the blast, including its effects on nearby lifeforms and structures.

- Another alien device of your own invention.

These devices, like the gardhyi, can provide the springboard for any number of future adventures in your campaign.

Rewards

Award the heroes 2 achievement points apiece for preventing the missile launch and 2 achievement points apiece for neutralizing Thon Mardian.

Award an extra point or two for exceptional roleplaying or extraordinary acts of heroism during the adventure. You should also consider awarding promotions (a +1 increase in authority level) to heroes who are members of an intelligence or military organization that sponsored this mission. Ω

Gamer's Guide

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Map of Mystery

