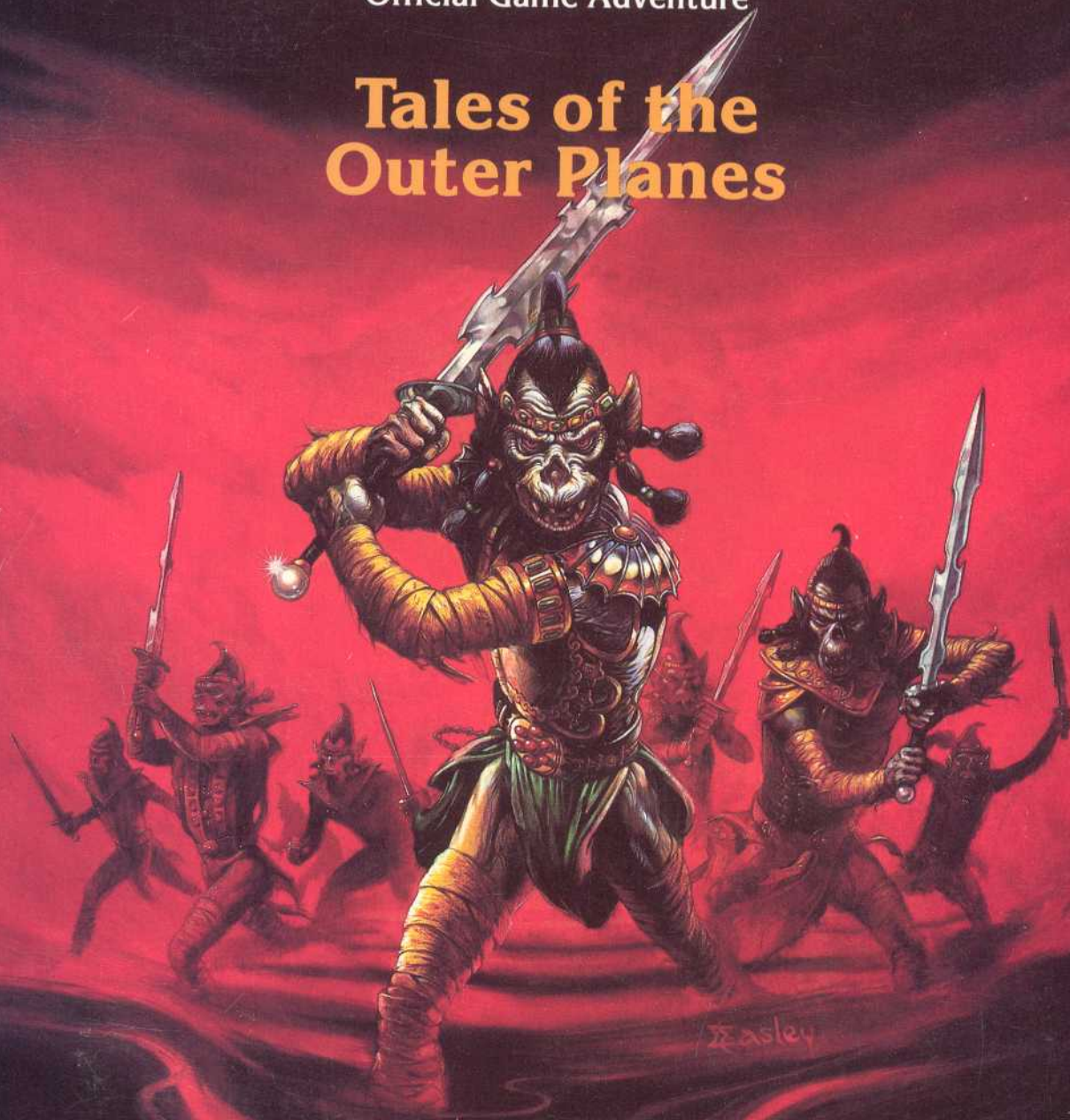


Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Official Game Adventure

Tales of the Outer Planes



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TALES OF THE OUTER PLANES

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This book provides the referee with a series of pregenerated planar adventures to insert into any AD&D® game campaign. Each mini-module is a stand-alone scenario, suitable for incorporation into an on-going campaign or for one-time play as a unique adventure. Besides 11 adventures into other realms, there are 17 lair adventures, each focusing on a creature from another plane.

Most of the adventures start from the World Serpent Inn, an interdimensionally transtable (bigger on the inside than on the outside) tavern with a number of "convenient" exits to other planes. With its godlike barkeep Mitchifer, the inn is the center from which PCs can go out and journey to the other planes. Most adventures have other optional beginnings, for referees who choose not to use the World Serpent Inn.

Terms Used in *Tales of the Outer Planes*

There is a set of fairly standard terms used throughout the text of this work that are defined here. Every DM should be familiar with these terms.

AC: Armor class is a measure of how difficult it is to hit a creature. It reflects the type of protection worn or inherent protection a creature has due to its physical or magical nature or its speed.

Move (MV): Movement represents the usual speed a monster is able to maintain for lengths of time. Short bursts of greater speed are possible. If more than one speed is listed, the monster can travel via two or more different methods:

- X" = ground speed
- /X" = flying speed
- //X" = swimming speed
- (X") = burrowing speed
- *X" = climbing in a web
- @X" = climbing in trees

HD: Hit dice are used to calculate the number of hit points (hp) a monster has. This number also deter-

mines the THACO of the creature (see below) and saves of a creature.

#AT: Number of attacks shows the number of physical attacks the creature is able to make during a given melee round. The 3/2 listing means a creature can attack once on the odd melee rounds and twice on the even melee rounds.

Dmg: Damage per attack indicates the hit point range a creature can inflict after a successful strike.

THACO: This is an acronym for "To Hit Armor Class 0 (zero)." This gives the number that needs to be rolled on 1d20 for that being to hit armor class 0. To determine whether the attack hits another armor class, subtract that armor class number from the THACO to see what number needs to be rolled for a hit. If a creature with a THACO of 15 attacks a PC with an armor class of 4, the creature needs to roll an 18 ($15 - [-3] = 15 + 3$).

This number eliminates the need to consult tables or keep charts for each character. One simple calculation tells you whether the attack hits. You will find that this calculation quickly becomes automatic.

SA: Special attacks detail such things as dragon breath, magic use, and the like special abilities of creatures.

SD: Special defenses detail things like defensive magic, camouflage abilities, and so on, that must be factored into a fight with that type of creature.

MR: Magic resistance is the percentage chance that a creature is able to ignore the effects of a spell cast at it.

AL: Alignment indicates the behavior of the monster, whether it is of good or evil intent.

- gp: gold pieces
- cp: copper pieces
- sp: silver pieces
- ep: electrum pieces
- pp: platinum pieces

Ability Checks

In an effort to simplify life for both players and DMs, and to give a character's abilities the importance they deserve, recent TSR® products have made use of a mechanism for resolving actions called the *Ability check*.

When asked to make an Ability check (e.g., a Wisdom check, a Dexterity check, etc.), roll 1d20 against the character's appropriate ability score. A roll equal to or less than the appropriate score means the action succeeded, while a roll greater than the ability score indicates failure and the character suffers whatever dire consequences await. Sometimes an Ability check enables a character to avoid all or some of the damage from an attack. Some actions are especially easy or difficult and have bonuses or penalties to the ability score to reflect the level of difficulty.

The Ability check is a wonderful mechanism for resolving the results of almost any action. The DM needs to decide which ability applies to the situation, whether there should be any modifiers due to circumstances, and then roll away.

AD&D® Rulebooks

There is no way that *Tales of the Outer Planes* can include all of the information you'll need for every adventure without being 10 times its size. In particular, you'll need *The Manual of the Planes* (also referred to as *MoP*) to give you the detailed background on each plane and realm visited by the player characters. Survival, movement, and magic effects vary considerably from plane to plane. Before any adventure, you'll want to study up on this information.

For the most part, you should be able to play any adventure in this book without consulting any of the monster manuals or other reference books (except for spell effects and magical item effects, which could not be included due to space restrictions). You may want these books handy,

How to Use This Book

though, for some of the more arcane monsters, so your players can at least see what they look like.

Lair Format

The 17 lairs in the back of this book are organized in alphabetical order. Various difficulty levels are included, from those designed for lower-level parties to those for higher-level groups.

Each creature encounter is itself a series of encounters that can be used all at once or in part during a game. The referee can easily use these encounters without much preparation during the middle of a game or can use them to start off an adventure.

The creature featured in each adventure is listed at the top of the first page of the adventure. Next to the creature name is a number in parentheses. This is the total number of these creatures that might be encountered in the adventure. At the top of the first column of text is a box that contains general information pertinent to the adventure. This lists the terrain, total party levels, total magic X.P., total g.p. X.P., and three degrees of monster X.P.

The *terrain* of the encounter is given at the top of the box. This gives the type of area the PCs must be in to encounter this particular monster.

The listing for *Total Party Levels* is an aid to the referee to determine the power of the group the adventure was designed for. If a party is larger or smaller than the total party levels listed, adjustments should be made. Adjustments can be made in several areas. To adjust the encounter downward for a weaker party, several things can be done. Reducing creature hit

point totals for a weaker party is one answer. Halving the damage done by traps is another solution. In the case where the encounter must be made tougher, a simple increase in the number of creatures can bring the encounter level up to where it should be. In both of these changes a modification to the *Monster X.P.* number should be made.

The (*avg.*) listing for the Total Party Levels is a calculation that should be made at the beginning of the adventure by the DM. This is an indication of the power and type of creatures a party should be facing. If the party average falls below or above the listing for the encounter by more than one, changes should be made in the encounter.

Experience points appear under three different listings for each encounter: *Total Magic X.P.*, *Total g.p. X.P.*, and *Monster X.P.*

The *Total Magic X.P.* listing deals with the magical treasure of the encounter. All of the treasures have been added into this figure and appropriate subtractions should be made if the party does not find all the treasure.

The *Monster X.P.* entry is computed from the *Dungeon Master's Guide* listings and a subjective addition has been made for the tricks and traps of any given encounter. Three listings are provided under the monster experience points. These listings are used by the DM as the situation merits. The *Kill* listing is used when the characters have killed all the creatures in the encounter. The *Defeat* entry is used in the event the party drives off some of the creatures or otherwise meets and wins out over the creatures without causing the death of all the monsters. The *Retreat* listing is used if the party

made an effort to defeat the creatures in the adventure, but was forced to retreat. This last entry enables the DM to recognize that the party learned from the encounter, but just could not quite finish it off.

Every encounter has from one to three *Set Up* features. These are bits of information on situations to help the referee get the party into the adventure. They can also be used to get the party back on track if the group has taken an unplanned tangent and not gone the way the Dungeon Master thought they would.

This section may also contain information pertinent to all of the ways the PCs could get into the adventure (i.e., there may be three different people or situations that introduce the PCs to the adventure, but all three would enable them to gain certain basic information).

Following the *Set Up* is the *Lair* section. This is the main body of the adventure and includes a detailed description of the lair as well as the monster's tactics and several separate encounters within the adventure. The encounters eventually lead to the climactic battle in which all is won or lost.

The beginning of this section gives a little bit of background on the creature(s) and why this encounter is where it is. Then there is a short description of the encounter area and what is there and easily observable. The rest of the information is the series of encounters the party will meet when dealing with the creature listed. Sometimes the end of the encounter has a brief listing that can lead the party to other encounters in the lairs in *Tales of the Outer Planes*.

A Simple Deed, Well Rewarded

by David & Martha Ladyman

DM's Information

A Simple Deed is designed to introduce 1st- and 2nd-level characters to the World Serpent Inn, in Arabel (and elsewhere!), and to its potential for adventuring in the planes. Not much emphasis is placed on details of specific planes, or on difficulties of getting from one to another. Rather, it gives players a taste of planar unearthliness, and demonstrates the usefulness of the Inn in reaching these realms. At no point in this adventure are characters given the opportunity to pick a portal at random—if they do at some later time, the results are up to the DM!

Having found the Inn, parties should have no trouble continuing with the other adventures in this book, or into Planar realms of your own devising.

Also, note that the Inn, and its barkeep, Mitchifer, are different from time to time and from place to place. It rarely presents exactly the same aspect twice—at times its appearance will be radically changed! As DM, feel free to alter it as much or as little as you please.

This scenario also demonstrates a few things about the Powers which inhabit the various planes.

Most importantly, characters in the habit of hacking now and asking questions later are asking only for trouble. Therefore, statistics aren't given for any of the Demi-Powers or Powers in this adventure. Statistics in *Legends and Lore* and elsewhere describe a being's attributes and hit points while on the Prime Material plane, not while at home. Assume that anyone below 25th or 30th level foolish enough to take arms against a Power or Demi-Power on its home plane gets just what he or she deserves, as quickly (or as prolonged!) as the Power desires. Who needs to know hit points in cases like that?

Synopsis

By some means or other, the party has heard of the World Serpent Inn and how to reach it. In this adventure, the Inn is set in Arabel, in Cormyr of the Forgotten Realms, but you can move it to any city on any world you wish. The Inn is there, as well!

Dropping in for drinks, the PCs find themselves tricked by a jester into an unexpected commitment: to perform a service for Hecate, the Greek goddess of magic. She wants a hound from the Wild Hunt (of Celtic renown) to crossbreed with her own hellhounds.

(The jester becomes their guide through the planes, so detailed knowledge of where they're going or how to get there isn't necessary for this introductory adventure.)

Drawn into a chase with the Wild Hunt, the PCs help dispatch a clutch of grave-robbers, then place their request before the Master of the Hunt. Not turning them down flatly, he says that he will give them some of his hounds if the party recovers his missing spear and hunting horn; a raven is responsible for their disappearance.

Upon further investigation, the party discovers that the trickster Raven lives on the plane of elemental Air. Proceeding to his lodge, they find the spear and horn. The theft seems successfully concluded, when they emerge, not home, but on the Happy Hunting Grounds, where Raven is visiting his Beastlord friends. Recovering his stolen belongings from the PCs, Raven promises to return the spear and horn if the party can acquire a piece of art from the suddenly reclusive Sumerian god of artistry, Enki, on Nirvana.

Arriving on Nirvana, the players find that Enki's withdrawal is caused by unrequited love for the goddess Lliira. This is very uncharacteristic of her, as is the report that she is working at the Zannibar pleasure palace, operated by Tazy and Soshi (Tlazolteotl and Xochipilli, Central American gods of vice, gambling and chance).

Traveling to a different Prime Material plane, a world of jungles, they work their way, with difficulty, to Lliira. She reveals that she was tricked into a realm where she was powerless, then cursed by Hecate so that she could return no man's love, not even that of Enki, her beloved. Hecate, it seems, had briefly been enamored of Enki herself and what Hecate wants, Hecate gets. The infatuation over, Hecate has neglected to remove the curse, leaving Lliira stranded in Zannibar.

Having come full circle, the party is finally able to fulfill their task—Hecate is happy to remove the curse in exchange for the hounds; Lliira's return lifts Enki's spirits, for which he rewards the party with the artistry Raven desires; Raven returns the spear and horn, and the Master passes one of his hounds to Hecate. The party passes on to a well-deserved rest.

Experience Earned

It's hard to quantify the experience points each PC earns in this adventure. The recommended approach at the first or second level is to award each PC enough to gain one level if he has done well, less otherwise.

Of course, this adventure could be used for characters five or six levels higher, and they would still be powerless to do anything but negotiate with the beings they encounter. They should receive no more than 2,000 to 3,000 points, as well, unless one or more distinguishes himself above and beyond the call of the adventure.

The Adventure

The World Serpent Inn

It is just past sunset, and the party can see the vague outline of the moon in the deepening sky as they walk the streets of Arabel. Around them tired merchants are closing their booths and counting their profits for the day. Meat pie vendors anxiously try to sell one last pie before day's end; they call to the PCs as they pass by. The day-

A Simple Deed, Well Rewarded

time folks are going home to supper and bed, and the night people are just now hitting the streets. A group of not-really-ladies are clustered on a street corner; they whistle and call out to the party as they pass by. The party should wander through back streets until they reach a small tavern near the eastern wall of the city—hardly the most fashionable part of town. The outside is grimy with age. A sign proclaiming it to be “The Wild Goose” hangs crookedly above the door, flapping in the breeze. In reality, this is the World Serpent Inn, a multidimensional tavern that exists in every plane, but is open only to those who know the secret: knocking in the air on an imaginary door, then invoking the name of any Power or Demi-Power. Those who do not follow this ritual enter an ordinary tavern. This secret can be given to player characters as a tip for a well-performed service; as gossip overheard in the market place, thieves’ hall, or alleyway; as a message “accidentally” read while being carried from one NPC to another; or by any other means the DM desires.

One player should make a knocking gesture, saying “By the name of X (saying an appropriate name), I will enter.” If any PC glances back at the sign, he sees it changed to “World Serpent Inn.”

The party goes down a passageway into the main room. It is smoky and strangely lit; they can see the bar, situated in the middle, but the distant walls seem unclear. It is very smoky, as thick as fog. The decor is definitely unusual; this should be the oddest place they’ve ever seen. For one thing, the place seems much larger than it appeared on the outside. For another, it must have countless meeting rooms and private areas. What else could account for all those doors? Every couple of feet there is another door. If they try to count the doors, they should lose track before finishing. In fact, some of the doorways seem to be shifting about, vanishing and reappearing!

This is the place to see and be seen. It is packed with folks all talking and

laughing, seated at tables and booths scattered throughout the room. Those that couldn’t get seats have made room on the floor, and PCs have to watch their step to keep from tripping over them.

A PC might stumble over three men dicing in a corner. If this happens, one of the dicers will snarl at him. This particular man happens to have ram’s horns growing out of his head. Over near the far wall is a green woman talking to a pig. A coat with six armholes is slung over a chair. The PCs hear snatches of conversation, but much of it is in an unfamiliar language. That which they do understand still seems gibberish—it concerns places and people they’ve never heard of before.

The Inn is an unbelievable place. Not only are its inhabitants from other planes, but some are actually Powers in disguise, relaxing safely in the protection of the Inn’s powerful magic.

The bar is situated in the middle of the room, with a light shining directly above it. The barkeeper is a fat man, with a long white beard, red cheeks, and a big booming laugh. The PCs should have an impulse to laugh when they see him, in spite of themselves. He beams at them and calls them by name. “It’s good to see you; first time here, I say. Well, don’t be shy! What’ll you have? Venetian mountain brew? Sigma flytrapper? Sterozium? Elysium Elixir? I make the best in the universe—fresh otters! Mitchifer is the name, gentlebeings,” he shouts. “Name your poison.” Whatever they order, he instantly slaps down in front of them. There is nothing they order that he does not have.

Behind Mitchifer, the PCs can see various bottles filled with strange liquids: some fizzing, some smoking, some with flashing lights. Surrounding him are his helpers, wearing white aprons and carrying trays filled with strange and exotic drinks. The PCs don’t recognize the contents of any glass. The helpers are all short—not a one over three feet six—with pointed ears and red noses. They chatter to each other in shrill voices as they race

around serving the different tables, sometimes running through the aisle, sometimes ducking under tables or running on top of the bar, but never spilling a drop.

At the bar is a man drinking what appears to be a pink cloud of smoke; further down is a purple fizz that reeks. If a PC looks closely at the clothing of his neighbor, he will see that it is not made of cotton or wool like an honest man’s clothing, but something light, and strangely colored, and shining—fairy cloth perhaps? He’s wearing an orangish-yellow jewel of a totally unfamiliar material.

In fact, looking around the room, they should see few, if any, people dressed as they are. Most are wearing different colors, different fabrics, different styles than they’ve ever seen before. Some aren’t wearing any clothes at all.

Eerie music filters through the room as it darkens, and a spotlight focuses on the same green woman the party saw before. She is dancing a strange dance, whirling and twirling in a sea of multicolored scarves. As she dances, her porcine companion nods and bangs his hooves on the table, in evident enjoyment of the entertainment. She finishes, bows deeply (the better to scoop up the coins and jewelry being thrown her way), and runs off.

Party Tricks and a Party Tricked

Sooner or later the party should spy an open table, or have a helper guide them to one. They will be closely followed by another helper with a full tray of fresh drinks. A jester, dressed in top hat and tails, approaches. (The jester flirts with the male or female in the party who has the highest Charisma or Comeliness, so should be the opposite sex of that character.) She (or he) bows deeply, saying,

“Friend, it would do you well to clean your ears now and then. One never knows what one will find.” She then removes a coin from a PC’s ear, and hands it to him.

“The same holds true for your

helm." She takes another PC's cap, shakes it twice, and a dove flies out. She takes a PC's drink, sips, sputters and coughs, and suddenly flowers are blooming in the glass.

All this attracts the interest of those at tables near the PCs, and they too start applauding and smiling. One of the PCs discovers a rabbit in his shirt; another finds a coin at the bottom of his drink; yet another gets his ears "cleaned" and finds scarves, toads, and more coins. In fact, everyone at the table ends up with a coin. The jester does not perform for the other tables; all of her attention is centered on the PC's table.

If any PC examines his coin, he will note that it doesn't look like any coin he's ever seen. It appears to be platinum with a dragon engraved on one side and the head of an unknown ruler on the other. There is an inscription, *Not all things in hell are evil; not all things in the Inn are good.*

The jester seats herself at the table, and calls for more drinks. She politely presses drinks on the entire party. Should they refuse, she will continue urging them. After most of the party drinks, those at the surrounding tables shake their heads (or similar appendage). The PCs hear snatches of conversation.

"Did it again?"

"Like shooting fish in a barrel."

"Smooth as silk, how does she do that?"

"Did you hear what happened to the last group?" as they conspiratorially put their heads together and whisper.

"Gentlepersons," the jester says silkily, smiling. "Having accepted both wage and sustenance, you have committed yourselves to service, albeit brief, in the employ of Hecate." The whisperers at the next table hoot in laughter and proceed to place bets on how long the party will last.

"Now, think not that you can avoid this service; you need merely ask X or Y", naming two of the party's deities. "But fear not that this," she continues, picking up one of the coins, "is your sole reward. There are twenty more for each of you upon completion of our

simple task." She sits back and smiles.

Anyone in the tavern, and any of the PC's higher priests, can confirm that they have indeed bound themselves to one task in Hecate's service, and that it would not go well for them if they refused or avoided it. Should anyone refuse, he will have a run of bad luck the next week. Like his house burns down. His girlfriend marries his best friend. His sword breaks in two. His mother runs off with a fish peddler. The Princess accuses him of acting in an ungentlemanly manner toward her, and demands the guillotine. It shouldn't be hard to convince the character that it is in his best interest to take the jester on her word.

When the party is ready to go (either now or later, after having been convinced), they will be escorted by the jester through one of the doors in the tavern.

Hecate, the Dark Queen of Magic

Upon passing through the door, the party finds itself on Phlegethos, the fourth of the Nine Hells.

The immediate feeling is one of severe heat. Streams of sweat roll down the PCs' bodies; their first reaction may be to shed any furs or excess clothing. They are standing in the midst of blackened, charred terrain, next to a river of fire— not magma, not lava, but fire! If anyone is so foolish as to dip a finger in the river, he'll find it burns like fire, too. Volcanoes surround the party and extend to the horizon as far as the eye can see. The jester takes them to the nearest volcano.

There, in the crater, sits a stunning woman on a throne of obsidian, studded with fire opal. She has jet black hair, milk white skin, and red eyes that glow like embers. She is dressed in deep red robes, and her nails are scarlet. She is incredibly beautiful, and incredibly frightening. This is the goddess Hecate.

The jester leads the party to her.

She gives them one contemptuous glance, raises an eyebrow, and sighs. "Is this the best you could do, jester?" Behind her, a volcano explodes to mirror her dissatisfaction. "Trust me, Lady," assures the jester, "these men and women are highly capable couriers who will be able to do Your Lady's bidding in a satisfactory manner. Trust me." A trickle of sweat runs down the jester's brow. Hecate sighs, and a nearby flame flares up twenty feet high. She leans forward.

"Hear me, then, mortals. I desire a simple deed, easily done, and well rewarded. All you must do is secure some breeding stock for me. Nothing difficult; just a dog to mate with my hellhounds. In particular, a black dog, large, with a tongue of green flame and green fire in his eyes. It must be a male. I don't anticipate this being something that will take long, so I will require him in about two weeks—no longer." She leans back, then forward again. "Should you succeed, your reward will be great. If you fail . . . well, it's been a long time since I've burned anyone alive. It might be fun." She leans back again. "You are dismissed."

The volcano in the background booms out another eruption, and the jester, bowing as she backs away from Hecate's presence, leads you again through the doorway into the tavern.

Let the PCs work on the problem of where to find a dog to fit Hecate's description. If they haven't solved it in a week, the jester will figure it out and tell them. The party must go on a Wild Hunt, as detailed in *Legends and Lore*.

A Wild Hunt

Two nights after deducing exactly what Hecate desires, the jester bursts into the tavern and, rushing over to the party, shouts, "Hurry, the Hunt is on!" He leads them through a new portal. As the party arrives, they discover themselves on a moor. The time is late evening. The ground is damp, and there is a smell of decaying plantlife. It is cold and foggy. A foreboding sense of danger and excitement is in the air.

A Simple Deed, Well Rewarded

In the distance can be heard the baying of hounds, and the sound of a high, squeaky bugling. The baying gets steadily louder, and within seconds the Hunt is upon the party! There are twenty dogs, each huge and black, with green fire for tongues and eyes, casting an eerie glow in the darkness. Following close on their heels is the Master, a man with jet black skin and glowing green eyes, clad in black leather. He is wearing a set of stag antlers, which cast weird shadows in the gloom—altogether a most terrifying sight.

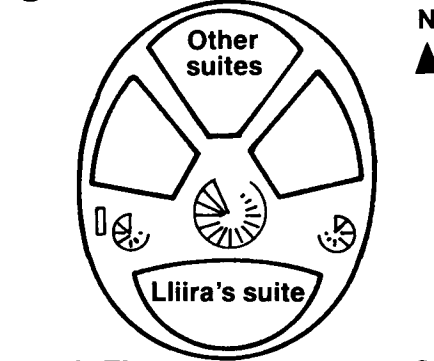
The party *must* run along with the hunt; they have no choice. They race at breakneck speed up and down hills and valleys, taking no notice of fences or walls (but never going inside a building). At each mile the Master toots his horn.

The party runs pell-mell for hours (who knows how long?) until they come into a clearing where lies a cemetery. The party sees distorted, hunch-backed, warped creatures pulling bodies from the graves. If a PC looks closely he might guess that the creatures (ghouls) are eating the bodies, but the light is so bad and the green glow from the dogs so eerie that it's difficult to tell. These creatures are the Hounds' objective, and they rush at the ghouls.

The leader (a ghost, hp 28) turns and flees—right toward the party! The PCs can do nothing but attack it. If a party cleric turns it, it will huddle against the base of the mausoleum and the party must attack it, being under compulsion with no option. Anyone it hits must save vs. paralysis or be frozen in place until the Hunt Master touches him (after the melee). The Hounds will dispatch all the other ghouls.

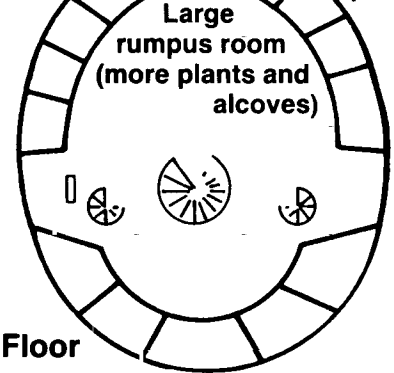
The Hunt Master bends over and starts tending to any wounded Hounds, rubbing and stroking them. Curiously, he makes no sound when caring for them. The Master never speaks. When the PCs approach him, he will stand to listen, silently, and will nod in reply to introductions or to show he is listening, but he will not make a

Staff stair Dumbwaiter

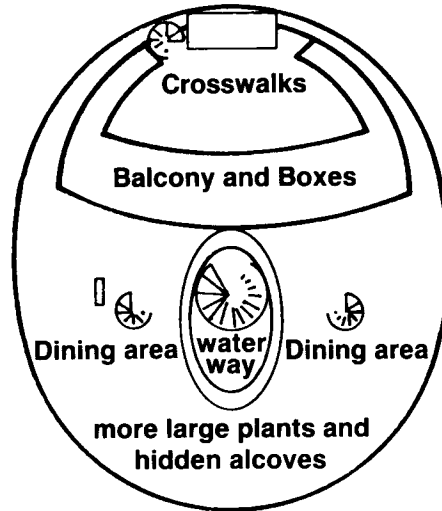


4th Floor Tristar on door

Private rooms around the perimeter

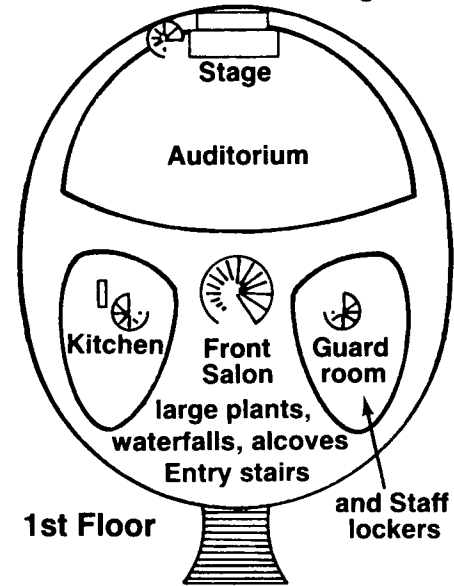


3d Floor



2d Floor

Backstage



1st Floor

and Staff lockers

sound.

The PCs should put Hecate's request for one of the Master's Hounds to him. At first he angrily refuses, silently twisting his face in a snarl (much like his Hounds) and brandishing his sword at them. As he pulls his sword out he notices what he is holding. A clever smile crosses his face, and he throws the sword and tin horn at the PCs' feet.

(The sword is an ornate short sword, inscribed "Jacktooth". Make sure a PC picks it up, and keep track of it—it's important to the next adventure on the Ethereal plane. It is almost as short as a dagger, and appears to have been prepared for enchantment,

yet it radiates no magic. All this might change, of course, on the Ethereal plane!)

If a PC has a spear the Master takes it as an example; otherwise he sketches one in the air as he mimes that he wants his spear. Similarly, he indicates that his hunting horn is missing. The sword and tin horn are but cheap substitutes. The Master then whistles to a Hound, and points to where some birds have started picking over dead flesh. Quick as a flash the hound pounces, snaring a raven. The Hound brings the raven to its Master. With either the sword or a spear the Master spears the raven, brandishes it, and throws it to the

ground. Somehow a raven seems to be at the source of his troubles.

Throughout the entire pantomime, what the PCs can't figure out, the jester will. The Master indicates that if the spear and horn are returned to him, he will give the PCs a hound. The Master and the hounds then run off, and the jester leads the party back to the tavern.

A Raven's Roost

If the DM desires, the party can be left to research who Raven is. Otherwise, the jester tells them about Raven (see *Legends and Lore*). The jester knows how to find Raven's home on the plane of elemental Air.

When the party is ready, they meet the jester at the Inn and walk through yet another doorway, toward a bright blue-green shimmering curtain hanging in front of them. The curtain seems to shift and wave, and cannot be touched, but can be passed through. As the party passes the curtain they come into a dense fog. They see nothing but fog, and have no sense of direction: they cannot so much as see the ground. They are wise to hold hands as they walk. They are wholly dependent on the jester to lead them.

After walking for an indeterminate time (how can one tell time when there is nothing to judge time by—no stars, no light, no anything) they pass through a similar curtain, this one bright blue, coming out into a crystal-clear day, but there's only sky—no ground! However, they do not fall. The jester affects an outstretched pose and flies off. The PCs discover they, too, can fly. After about an hour they arrive at Raven's lodge.

The lodge is quite impressive—about 100' by 300', and 50' tall. It is constructed out of timber with a thatch roof, and has two large smoke holes, but no smoke. The only other means of entrance is a large double door at one end. The door is barred from the inside. Should the PCs knock, there will be no answer. The timber and thatch are impenetrable, so the only entrance is through the smoke holes.

Interior rafters should help if a PC brought a rope.

Going down the smoke hole will be like descending into a black hole. The lodge is very dark, with the only light coming from the flickering flames of smokeless fires scattered about. Mysterious shadows rise from every corner, cast by the dancing flames. The hole enters directly into one very large, very ornate room. The PCs see sleeping furs piled up in one corner, wooden tables, pottery, pipes, and other items of Amerindian lore. Should the PCs inspect these more closely, they will see that everything in the lodge is very finely crafted, not of wood or pottery, but of fine stone, gems, and metals.

In the center of the room is a veritable treasure house of bric-a-brac — glittering items from all over the various worlds and planes. The PCs see Grecian vases, Venetian firestones, Caasi musical instruments, Qatar rugs, Elven artistry from Evermeet, and many other exciting and wonderful things—including the Hunt Master's spear and horn, leaning against a marble table. Two shining spheres, 1' in diameter, red and blue, dominate two out of three corners of this area. Oddly enough, the PCs can't get within 10 feet of either sphere, but no such restriction exists for the other treasures. The PCs can take whatever they want, but the jester takes nothing.

The Happy Hunting Grounds

As they leave the lodge the PCs find themselves not in elemental Air, but in the Happy Hunting Grounds. They are greeted by the most tranquil landscape imaginable. Green grass with flowers scattered throughout it grows on soft hills. Clear, sparkling blue water rushes by in a nearby stream, and the PCs can see fish leaping in the currents. Trees are everywhere, mostly birches and beeches. On every side is wildlife—squirrels race along on tree branches, while the sweet song of birds surrounds the party. Insects buzz merrily along, and every-

where you look a fat buck or rabbit is scampering without fear through the woodlands.

There's something curious about these animals, though. Should one of the party attempt to harm one, the animal will innocently step out of the way. A PC may shoot an arrow at a deer, but the deer will bend her head at the crucial moment to nibble a blade of grass, and the arrow will pass harmlessly overhead. The jester doesn't know where they are.

Walking along the only visible path, the PCs gradually discover that the animals can talk to them. A deer walks up to one PC wearing a leather jacket. "Hmmm, nice jacket," the deer observes. "Where did you get it?" A rabbit hops up and examines another's fur-lined boots. "I love the boots!" it exclaims. "The color is so lovely! And the trim must keep you so warm in the winter." A bird will ask if the feathers on another PC's arrow help it to fly straight. A bee will buzz up and ask for a taste of honey (or honeyroll) from their pouch. A bear might inquire as to the spices used in making their jerky. None of these creatures will make any overly hostile moves, yet these pointed questions seem to carry veiled anger, and the PCs will soon notice that these animals are herding them in a particular direction—the path has disappeared.

Finally, the party comes to a forest glade with a stream rushing through it. The glade is dominated by a large silvery oak. Perched on a lower branch of the oak is a 6' raven. The raven sweeps one wing across his chest and mockingly bows to the party. "Welcome, friends," he says. "How gracious of you to come visit me, and how thoughtful to bring me my own possessions, should I have need of them. Please, I pray you, place them on that tree stump yonder." Should any PC hesitate about returning his booty, Raven will lean forward glaring and state emphatically, "All of them." After the loot is placed near the stump, Raven leans back and cackles. "Well, sirs, may I offer you some elderberry wine? It is cooling at this moment in

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my stream. It is customary to drink it when welcoming strangers for the first time to the Beastlands or, as you know them, the Happy Hunting Grounds. Won't you join me?" Wine bottles and glasses are cooling in the stream. Drinks are passed around for those who want them.

"Now, what brings such pleasant company to my realm!" Raven listens politely to the predicament, applauding the party's daring and initiative. "Now, that was a clever trick, if I do say so myself. Well," and he spreads his wings wide, as if stretching, "there is a simple solution. You may have the Hunt Master's spear and horn, for one simple little service to me. Perhaps you may have noticed amongst my trinkets those lovely, lovely red and blue globes? Those, kind sirs, are the fabulous Enki's Spheres—surely you've heard of them? I blush to admit it," and indeed, he does somehow manage to look bashful, "but the thing I desire most above anything is the third Sphere. I've tried reasoning with Enki; he refuses to sell it to me, or barter, or trade, or even speak to me. Artists can be so temperamental at times." Here Raven sighs. "So, get me the Sphere, and the horn and spear are yours. Now, if there's nothing else, I'll be taking my leave." And Raven flies gracefully away. Unfortunately, his possessions disappear shortly after he does.

The party is left in the forest glade, surrounded by the animals that guided them there. The jester remarks that if the beasts wish the party to leave as much as the party wants to do so, they'll escort them to the nearest entrance to the Inn. An owl speaks up, saying such an outcome is certainly desirable, and appoints an "appropriate escort"—a rat—to lead the party.

After a couple of hours finding paths (accompanied by baleful glares from any animals they happen to meet on the way), the rat reaches a pool and tells the party to jump in. Jumping in, the party finds themselves brought to a standing position in the middle of their leap, perfectly dry, at a portal into the tavern.

Woes In Nirvana

The jester mumbles, "I better get overtime for this. No one mentioned traveling all over creation for that stupid hound...", and goes off to confer with Mitchifer. She returns in a considerably better mood. "Ok, we're off to Nirvana. That's where Enki should be, but no one's seen hide nor hair of him for the last couple of months. Clockwork worlds. Bah!" she shudders.

Passing through yet another portal, the party finds itself standing on a giant wheel suspended in space, a disk made completely of copper. They are surrounded by other wheels upon wheels upon wheels, all interlocked and all slowly turning in unison. It does look like one gigantic clockwork.

The jester leads the way from the portal and, with her customary speed, flies across the disk of copper. Should the PCs stop to examine the disk, they find that everything—ground, trees, cities, even birds—are made of copper. The jester leads them across the copper disk, then up at a right angle to a forested disk of hills and dales. The party speeds across the center of the disk, then across to a counter-rotating, cultivated disk with rows and rows of green plants, tended by four-legged creatures wearing lilac robes.

Another turn, and a right angle down (or is it up?) to a disk governed by a splendiferous sun, with nicely-warmed sand, then over to a water disk, spanned by woven gold and finely-crafted crystal. By this time the party has traveled about three hours, and the jester has occasionally taken out a timepiece, examined it, shaken it, and then sped up even more.

At last, the party comes to a stop in front of an ornate stairway leading to a ziggurat-shaped, multifaceted palace made of quartzite and jade. The jester sighs. "This is it. Let's find that sphere and get this job over with."

The party is met at the head of the stairs by a ruddy, bald servitor wearing a white sarong trimmed with green. Intricate gold stitchery is worked into the hem and the green armband he wears. He bows deeply.

"May I help you good people?"

Anyone attacking to get past the servitor find himself quickly disarmed. His responses include the following information:

"I'm sorry, my lord is receiving no guests this month. Perhaps if you returned next year?"

"My lord is most distressed and is unable to be of assistance to anyone."

"I'm sorry, only my lord decides upon whom to bestow his artistry, and he is, at present, making no decisions."

"Ahem, he appears to be enamored of one who returns not his affections."

"A fey lass, beautiful of countenance, yet cold of heart, Lliira by name."

The PCs should recognize Lliira's name as a patron goddess of Cormyr, and know that while "beautiful of countenance" is appropriate, "cold of heart" is nowhere near accurate. If the party disputes the doorkeeper's assessment, he replies, "I have only the evidence to go on. At first she led my lord on with choice words and sweet embraces, then refused to make any reply to his entreaties, not even granting him the courtesy of a farewell. What else is he, or am I, to think?"

The doorkeeper should add at some point that "the one who could unfreeze her heart, to such a one I am sure my Lord Enki would give anything in his power. If you desire the third sphere, that is the only foreseeable path to it. Lately, the report is that this female is practicing her trade as chief attraction at Zannibar. Seek her there. Good day."

The jester, informed of this latest development, is depressed by the additional prolongment of their task, but her eyes light up at the prospect of a trip to Zannibar, "and on the clock, too!"

Jungle Pleasures

Zannibar, the jester explains, is a pleasure palace in a jungle world, run by Tazy (Tlazolteotl) and Soshi (Xochipilli)—now *they* know how to

throw a good party! "If I know the Powers like I should," the jester continues, "Enki has cast a temporary conduit to their realm, and it should be located," looking around, "right over there, on that little island covered with ruby hearts and golden stars, unless I miss my guess!"

The jester runs across the water with the PCs in tow. ("Don't think about it, just do it.") Diving backward through the portal with a shout of anticipation, the jester disappears. PCs who follow find the jester being borne up into the palace by (if he's male) two beautiful, laughing women or (if she's female) two husky, bronzed laughing men. Of course, any PCs who jump through find themselves sprawled on the ground. As she disappears inside the palace, the jester cries out, "Let me know when you're ready to go, but don't hurry too much!"

Zannibar is a pleasure palace indeed, appealing to all five senses the couple possesses (and probably a couple they don't, as well). It consists of spacious rooms filled with beautiful, well polished furniture and thick, rich carpet. The walls are hung with works of art; statues and ancient vases are scattered throughout. The sound of carefree and joyous music is heard always, lovely enough not to annoy. Musks and other arousing scents envelop the patron in a pleasing cloud, while tasty tidbits from a thousand worlds can always be had. The temperature is kept at a constant 78 degrees F. It is perpetually evening here—truly a seductive assault on the senses.

That much the party can tell from the outside, and it's probably better inside. Unfortunately, between them and Zannibar's delights is one very determined doorkeeper—a dark-skinned, muscular man with gleaming white teeth, dark flashing eyes, and a furrowed brow.

He is dressed in a feather robe—a tumultuous riot of color. "Admission," he informs the party, "is (10 times the total worth of the party, expressed in ounces of gold, per person). That, of

course, admits one to the first floor. Higher levels run several times more than that."

If asked about the goddess, he smilingly answers, "Yes, Lliira is here. She's our chief attraction, at the highest level."

Throughout this conversation, people and other forms of life are constantly arriving through other portals, and being shown, with many deep bows, into Zannibar by the doorkeeper. All the portals they appear by are one-way; the party cannot escape that way. In fact, should the party try to return by the portal they used, they will discover it, too, is one way. If the PCs claim anyone is good for their bill, the doorkeeper will reply, "We should have someone heading in that direction in another month or so. We'll check and, if you're right, there will be no problem." Messages to Lliira go unanswered, and bribes to send these messages drain the party's resources even further.

The doorkeeper is unmoveable and unanswerable. The PCs must find employment (as guards, servers, dishwashers, actors, card dealers, or whatever), or try to sneak in. Of course, the problem with sneaking in is that the entire exterior is patrolled by ocelot-headed guards in loincloths while monkey-headed guards are perched above all the likely routes up the sides.

Each PC must find an excuse for getting in, and must prove his ability. Thus, potential guards must sparably; actors must strut their stuff; servers and dishwashers must show they can do the job. Don't hire anyone on just his own say-so, but reward anyone who devises a clever approach with admittance.

Once inside, again, they can't just ask for Lliira and walk up to her door. If they have a job to do, they are given the uniform for the job and expected to do it. Weapons are impounded, and guards are given fancy clubs (d6/d3). If a PC is found where he shouldn't be, he is called on the carpet and, if no good excuse is provided, is fired. Other servitors won't be blind to them. If a

stagehand is wandering through the kitchen or the third floor rumpus room, expect him to be challenged.

On the other hand, there won't be a native servitor everywhere all the time. PCs just have to pick their times, providing appropriate alibis and diversions, and they'll succeed.

By the way, just because there are finally people the party can actually hurt doesn't mean wholesale slaughter of the staff is the proper approach. Someone is likely to notice. Give a Wisdom ability check to anyone who suggests this approach or hears such a suggestion, to figure out the likely consequences.

The Layout

First Floor

The front stairs lead into a large, open salon with plants, waterfalls, and hidden alcoves throughout. A large, gilded, circular stairway leads up and down toward the back of the salon.

To the left is the kitchen area with a smaller staff stairwell and a dumbwaiter.

To the right are the guardroom and staff lockers, and another small stairwell.

The auditorium and stage occupy the lion's share of the first floor. Backstage, a third small stairwell leads to the crosswalks above the stage.

Hallways connect the whole.

Second Floor

The main stair opens onto a large dining area with more large plants and hidden alcoves. A small stream runs completely around the stair and supplies the first floor waterways.

All three staff stairs extend to the second floor, as does the dumbwaiter.

A balcony and private boxes overlook the stage.

Third Floor

Smaller than the first two floors, this floor is dominated by a large "rumpus room", complete with more plants and alcoves.

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Private rooms circle the exterior, broken only by the two staff stairs and the dumbwaiter.

Fourth Floor

Smallest of all, only four suites occupy the fourth floor. Lliira's, to the south of the main stair (and across from the top of the stairs), is indicated by her tristar on the door, and is briefly described below.

The other three suites are marked by two interlocked circles, a trident, and a spout of flame. PCs venturing into these suites will be greeted with a voracious appetite.

The two staff stairs and dumbwaiter service this floor as well.

Lliira

Assuming they locate and reach Lliira's suite, the PCs find her alone, sobbing quietly. She is a lovely young woman, seeming about eighteen, with dark hair and fair skin. She is dressed in a flowing robe of white, decorated with a cascade of orange, yellow, and red stars. Jewels gleam in her hair. Her suite is decorated with some orange, yellow, and red motif, with no furniture except some bright cushions piled in mounds around the room. A tray of meats and fruits, with a decanter of wine, is near her on the floor. It appears to be untouched.

Drying her tears on a silk scarf, she questions them regarding their quest. Sniffing, she replies she cannot help them. "I have no choice in the matter. If you could only know what she has done to me...oooh!" and she bursts into fresh tears. Controlling herself with an effort and blowing noisily into the scarf, she continues. "You see, I am cursed, cursed by an evil goddess who had a momentary infatuation for my true love, my darling, my own sweetness and light, my adorable Enki. Oh, I just go all shivery when I see him in one of those towel things! And, alas, that woman tricked me most cruelly into traveling to the Hells, where I am my weakest. What a miserable thing to do! Once there, I was cursed so that I can return no man's

love, and imprisoned here at Zannibar. Although," and Lliira places one hand dramatically on her head, the other at her breast, "if I can never love again, then let me remain here, shut away from the world!" Realization of the terrible fate that befell her strikes her afresh, and she falls wailing into a pile of cushions.

Further questions can reveal that "that woman" is Hecate (have Lliira call her "that witch" if the party is slow to catch on), and that Hecate no longer desires Enki, but has negligently left Lliira cursed.

The party will be unable to leave Lliira in Zannibar, even temporarily. She has taken new hope and insists on leaving with them. If anyone suggests leaving her, she fixes him with a steely gaze and says, "I don't think that would be wise, do you?" Remind the denser PCs that she is a Demi-Power over Cormyr, despite her current predicament.

Allow the party to smuggle her out, if they're careful. (Also, they might try to find the jester. That could be an adventure itself, if the jester isn't ready to leave.)

The exit portal is the only opening downstairs from the first floor: a door, locked beyond any PC's ability to pick it. Making the knocking gesture, and invoking a Power or Demi-Power, opens it into the World Serpent Inn. Lliira has had no prior interest in leaving, so she doesn't know the way out. The jester does know how to leave, but so do most other occupants of Zannibar, so the jester isn't absolutely necessary to their departure.

Once back at the Inn, Mitchifer dispatches messengers to Hecate, the Master, Raven, and Enki. When Enki arrives with a large parcel, he rushes to embrace Lliira, who turns a cold shoulder, looking forlorn. The scarf comes into play again, as she dabs discreetly around her eyes.

Hecate arrives next. She slinks up to Enki and pinches him on the cheek. "We could have been good, sweetie!" Neither Enki nor Lliira are amused. Mitchifer discreetly removes from Lliira's hand the knife she has

grabbed. The Master arrives, a hound at heel. Mitchifer frowns briefly, then turns to a helper. A large bone and sandbox are quickly fetched. Hecate kneels by the hound, looking into its eyes. The exchange of red and green flashes are eerie, even for the Inn.

A strident horn announces Raven. The Master rises in anger, fists clenched. Raven, in human form, enters, notes Enki's parcel immediately, and tosses horn and spear to the Master. "Had to get one more good blast out of it," he grins.

Hecate turns to Lliira, waves a finger at her, and then tosses a sack to the PCs. (The sack contains 20 coins for each PC.) She takes the hound by the scruff of the neck as they leave together. The Master leaves too, horn and spear in hand, as though late for an appointment.

Lliira and Enki, locked in an embrace, are oblivious to anyone else. Raven uncovers the shining yellow sphere carefully, then just as carefully replaces the cover. If the party has done well, he turns to them and says, "If you ever need a trick that works well, let old Raven know." After handing the parcel to Mitchifer for safe-keeping, he grabs a drink and joins a cluster of bar-braggarts intent on out-doing each other.

Lliira eventually remembers herself and embraces and kisses each PC. "If ever you need sorrow or anger turned to joy, call on me!" Enki, too, is grateful, shaking each PC's hand and handing to:

- each thief-type a set of finely tooled lockpicks (+8% on pick locks);
- each fighter-type a personalized grip for his favorite weapon (+1 to hit, not transferable to any other weapon);
- each cleric-type an empty vial, ornately engraved with his deity's symbol; and
- each mage-type a finely crafted pen (+20% on chance of successfully copying a spell).

(No more than one gift per PC, of course.)

Castle at the Edge of Time

by Christopher Mortika

This adventure challenges a party of four to seven 2nd-level characters in a visit to the Ethereal plane. Because role-playing is more important than combat in this adventure, minimal adjustments can be made to challenge parties of characters up to 5th level.

DM's Information

Synopsis

Centuries ago, the legendary Sapphire Mage and his young apprentice Montgomery left their home on the Prime Material plane and took up residence in the Ethereal, in a castle which the Mage built near a curtain of vaporous color leading to the dangers of the Demi-Plane of Time. In this way, the Sapphire Mage could not only instruct Montgomery and conduct his experiments without interruption, but could also provide the useful service of warning unwary travelers away from the shadowy curtain.

In more recent times, the Mage pronounced Montgomery's training complete and soon after departed beyond the veil of Time, never to be seen again. Montgomery assumed the mantle of the Sapphire Mage and continued his mentor's investigations.

Of late, the castle and the curtain have begun drifting towards each other, necessitating a change of address. The Sapphire Mage has decided that the PC's home city, Arabel, would make an ideal headquarters and has determined to buy it for a considerable sum. The party is sent as bodyguards of the mayor's envoy to deliver the polite answer, "No." But the envoy has ideas of her own, and begins negotiations for the sale, despite the Mage's condition that Arabel's citizenry be removed from the city. It is up to the party to convince the Mage to withdraw his offer, simultaneously protecting him from the envoy's treachery and increasingly murderous intrigues.

The Adventure

As the PCs are gathered to consult on future plans, to reminisce about past adventures, or merely to enjoy one another's company, they are approached by an adolescent half-elf who bows politely and introduces herself as Dalia, a city messenger. She shyly asks the PCs their names, and once satisfied as to their identities, produces a scroll sealed with the official seal of Arabel. The paper reads:

"Unto (insert the name by which the party is known), Myrmeen Lhal, mayor of Arabel, sends salutations and hopes of finding you in good health.

"A serious matter has arisen, one which requires your expertise in certain matters. Should you come by my office in the citadel tomorrow morning, you would find me grateful.

"Yours in service to Arabel and Cormyr, (seal)"

Any inquiries regarding the nature of the audience will be futile. The best conclusion the party might draw is that the "matters" Myrmeen refers to must be either subtle or less than urgent.

The Audience

The next day, the PCs are led into the mayor's office, her letter acting to clear their way through any red tape.

The room itself is large and a bit sparse, with walls of wood and stone, an unlit fireplace along one wall, a window looking out into the courtyard of the citadel. Furniture consists of some fine oaken chairs, a padded bench against the window, a variety of potted plants, and a large desk. To the side of the desk is a rack of rolled-up scrolls, and behind it a sheathed sword and a shield hang on the wall.

There are two figures in the room. One is a woman in her early thirties, dressed well yet comfortably in a dark green robe and a tan cloak. Her attitude is one of welcome, and her manner is one of quiet potency. The other is a short figure, not over five feet tall. He is heavysset, and his features are impassive. Most notably, he appears to be carved solid from some dull

black rock, with dim yellow lights occasionally flickering beneath the surface.

The mayor invites the party toward the chairs, as she sits on the front of her desk. After everyone is comfortable, she will nod towards the black figure.

"This golem made his way to my office yesterday with the following message." Myrmeen turns towards the figure. "Pean, repeat your request."

In a stiff, guttural voice, the golem responds, "I am Pean. On behalf of my master, the Sapphire Mage, I bring greetings to the mayor and people of Arabel. As the lands about your city are well-suited for my lord's needs, he would desire to dwell in Arabel. However, he feels it is impossible to carry out his experiments in such close proximity to others.

"Therefore, he offers the people of Arabel 50 enchanted swords and half again as many spears of a similar nature, as well as potions to extend a man's life by nigh a century, and emeralds and rubies equal in value to over 100,000 of your gold lions. In return, he requests that all citizens vacate the city and the surrounding lands for two miles, and that such property be ceded to the Sapphire Mage. One part in four will be paid to the city within a fortnight of her acceptance of this proposal, the balance to be paid when the evacuation is complete.

"My master recognizes the inconvenience that willing compliance with his will might entail, but nonetheless feels his offer is more than generous. He can not be persuaded to increase his payment.

"It is natural that the city should want to discuss these matters with the Sapphire Mage. If so, I am permitted to lead a diplomatic mission to his sanctum. My lords asks that such a delegation be chosen with promptness. The Sapphire Mage advises you that he dwells deep in the Ethereal realms, recommending that you plan appropriately."

Myrmeen turns toward the party and explains that, despite the Mage's

generous offer, she cannot accede to his requests for the following reasons:

"In the first place, I don't have the authority. Arabel, as part of Cormyr, belongs to the king, Azoun IV, and only His Majesty could agree to such an arrangement.

"Even if I could, I'd refuse the offer. Arabel is militarily and economically crucial to Cormyr, and the price offered would not begin to make up for her loss. And the memory of Gondegal's would-be empire, based as it was in Arabel, is too fresh; many of the Dalelands might see fit to invade. All in all, it's a bad idea.

"The matter of justice also says no. However lucrative the payment, it would go to the kingdom coffers, or perhaps to the merchant houses in Arabel; the populace would be sure to get little or nothing.

"The Mage's deal is tempting, and the veiled threat that he would take Arabel by force if we declined, seem strong enough; the Sapphire Mage's powers have been legendary for centuries. I summoned the city elders last night for an emergency council, and opinions were divided. But our final answer must be no.

"To this end, I've asked Lady Cheodot, a pursuivant from the House of Hiloar, to speak on Arabel's behalf." Myrmeen turns to a door besides the fireplace and calls for Lady Cheodot to enter the office.

Two humans come into view through the doorway. The first is Lady Cheodot, a former illusionist, now an assassin (AC 4; MV 12"; I4, A4; hp 12; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; THAC0 20; S 15, I 17, W 17, D 18, C 14, Ch 18, Cm 14; AL NE). She looks to be in her late fifties, although she carries herself well and has the health of a woman half her age. Her hair is gray-to-white, cut in a conservative style. Her garb is red and tan, of a comfortable but carefully-tailored fit, with a low collar. She wears a *ring of protection* +2, and carries a *dagger* +2 at her waist. The weapon has the ability to *poison* (as the spell) once per day, but glows with a dull red light for two turns afterwards. A victim must be touched for

the poisoning to take effect.

Although she no longer pursues her illusionist skills, she keeps with her a traveling spell book containing the following spells:

Level 1: *Darkness, hypnotism.*

Level 2: *Alter self, detect magic, ultravision.*

Although Lady Cheodot has associated herself with the merchant House of Hiloar, her true loyalties lie with the Zhentarim, an organization which might well benefit from Arabel's collapse. Cheodot seized the opportunity to be appointed envoy to the Sapphire Mage, and now intends to further the Zhentarim cause by bringing to bear the following situations, in order of preference:

"The Sapphire Mage and Cormyr agree to the exchange."

"The Zhentarim gain possession of the Sapphire Mage's payment, by whatever means."

"The Sapphire Mage grows angry at Arabel and Cormyr."

As the envoy of Arabel, Cheodot is certain she can at least cause the last situation.

To aid in these pursuits, Lady Cheodot has the non-weapon proficiency of Diplomacy:

Diplomacy (two slots, appropriate ability intelligence, die roll modifier -2): A character with this skill is adept at negotiations and political intrigue. In long-term negotiations, a character with diplomacy adds 5% to his influence each day of dealing with an NPC. Also, a character with diplomacy can often discern another character's true objectives. If the skilled character is approached by someone else who attempts to persuade him or her, a successful Proficiency Check would reveal something about the speaker's objectives, although not about his reasons or motivation (the character with Diplomacy might know what somebody wants, but not necessarily why). The nature and thoroughness of this information is left up to the DM.

Lady Cheodot is usually polite and refined. Her bearing gives the PCs suggestions of an age and a station in

life beyond that capable of much physical exertion. She will stay out of most fights which do not concern her directly, and no one would blame her.

The placid facade hides a woman who is both mentally and physically in excellent shape. When the need arises, she is quite capable in combat.

A final word about Lady Cheodot must concern her professionalism. Whether she is acting for the Zhentarim or House Hiloar, she conducts herself coolly and skillfully. In the rare instances when her schemes unravel, she keeps her wits about her and does her best under the circumstances. She considers this quality essential to an assassin.

The man accompanying her is her scribe, Goodman Alex: AC 9; MV 12"; T1; hp 6; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; THAC0 20; S 12, I 17, W 15, D 15, C 12, Ch 10, Cm 11; AL LN. He stands 5 feet 5 inches, two inches less than Lady Cheodot, and his clothes are well-made but not tailored. His appearance is one of servitude and social awkwardness. But, like Lady Cheodot, he is more than what he appears.

Goodman Alex is a spy in service to Aldolphus, a sage of Arabel. A friend of His Majesty Azoun, Aldolphus has entertained vague suspicions about House Hiloar, and Lady Cheodot in particular, for some time. When Cheodot was given a diplomatic mission to the Sapphire Mage, Aldolphus made certain that his agent would accompany her.

Alex is a competent scribe, literate in most languages. He is also skilled at Diplomacy. Although his low charisma makes Alex a poor negotiator, he listens well and picks up conversational subtleties others miss.

As the adventure begins, he does not suspect Lady Cheodot's true allegiance, nor does he even know Myrmeen's position on the Sapphire Mage's offer (no one has thought to tell him, and he does not wish to seem overbold and ask). Aldolphus has assigned him to watch Cheodot and report any suspicious actions. Alex will probably find himself involved more deeply than he expects.

Alex is not a member of the local Thieves' Guild, but has contacted it infrequently. Any PC thief who is curious about Alex, and who makes a successful Intelligence Check can recollect seeing him before, but specific information requires a roll of 1 on the check.

For her part, Cheodot has given Goodman Alex more thought than any of her other servants. Should she bother to assess the scribe, her conclusion would be "He whines," and that would be the end of it. Alex's only credit in her eyes is his use as a scapegoat to frame if her plans go awry.

Both Lady Cheodot and Goodman Alex enter the mayor's office carrying baggage as though they were leaving for a journey. Additionally, Goodman Alex carries a set of scribe's tools and a sheaf of scrolls.

Myrmeen introduces the party to them as guards for the mission. "Although I hardly expect a need for armed guards, your ladyship can well appreciate the use of companions skilled in alien dimensions. These adventurers have such experience, and yet are not powerful enough to imply a threat to the Mage. If this is acceptable both to her ladyship and to you adventurers, I am prepared to offer you payment of five hundred lions per person.

"By the gods, I charge you the task of guarding the person of Lady Cheodot and the interests of Arabel, keeping each free from harm."

Myrmeen sits back then, allowing a moment for the party to ask questions. Then the mayor addresses the golem. "Pean, the diplomatic mission is ready to follow you."

At this, Pean animates. With the same stiffness as characterizes his speech, he walks out the door. Lady Cheodot and Goodman Alex make haste to follow.

Pean leads the party to the Wild Goose, where he stops and gestures subtly before proceeding through the entrance. Thus does he step into the World Serpent Inn.

A Golem Comes Home

The passage through the World Serpent is brief. A walk up one set of stairs, across a balcony where two umber hulks try to drink each other under the table, down another staircase, and back through the front door leaves the party still in the streets of Arabel, but only as ephemeral phantoms. Pean has led the mission into the Border Ethereal.

Pean changes direction, heading deeper into the Ethereal and fading from the PCs' view. Due to the nature of the plane, the party can follow by the desire to do so. As they travel away from the border, the city of Arabel recedes in all directions. Soon, the party is in the Deep Ethereal, next to a blue-green curtain. Pean is there as well and continues his journey. Moving slowly enough for the party to follow, Pean takes 40 turns to reach the castle.

One of the first things that transpires is the revelation that Jacktooth (the short sword won during the introductory adventure) is magical. Indeed, in the Ethereal plane, Jacktooth glows cobalt blue and vibrates softly. The blade is +1 to hit and damage, and can hit any creature native to the inner planes, doing at least average damage any time it is used in a backstabbing or assassination attempt.

If the DM did not play the first adventure, he should arrange other means so the party has such a weapon.

About two hours after the party begins their Ethereal trek, they pass by an irregularly-shaped copper-colored curtain, which writhes and undulates as the party nears. This curtain marks the border to the demi-plane of Electro-Magnetism, and the perturbations warn of an imminent attack.

When the party is but 14" away from the curtain, five figures are disgorged from the stormy veil and come racing toward the party.

Four of the figures are shockers (AC 0 or 10; MV 9"; HD 1+2; hp 7 each; #AT 1; Dmg 10; SA disintegrates on attack; SD if a shocker disintegrates upon a successful attack, it reforms

itself on its home plane and returns to the battle after a delay of three rounds, completely healed; AL CN). The shockers attack fiercely, targeting any character carrying a magical item.

With the shockers is a fifth figure, a dim gray glow with a bright white pinpoint nucleus. This creature, which has yet to manifest itself on a Prime Material plane, is a lodestar (AC 3; MV 9"; HD 4; hp 23; #AT 0; SA magnetism; SD magnetism; AL CN; size S (4' globe)). The lodestar communicates telepathically with the shockers, directing the assault. It has no damaging attacks, but all metal within 20 yards is affected by its magnetic powers. Any character within this range wearing metal armor of a ferrous nature suffers a penalty of -2 on dexterity. Anyone using a metal weapon must divert some muscle to counteract the lodestar's effect: the character's strength is reduced by 1. Should the lodestar be killed, the shockers immediately rout, and the fight ends.

Lady Cheodot and Goodman Alex are useless. Alex has no means of attack, and Cheodot does not wish to reveal hers.

Pean, on the other hand, does lend a hand: ether golem (AC 1; MV 5"; HD 6; hp 25; #AT 1/2; Dmg 2-20; THAC0 13; SD regenerates 1 hp every three turns spent in the Deep Ethereal, immune to mind-affecting spells, able to enter the Border Ethereal from any point of the inner planes at will; AL N.)

Aionias, the original Sapphire Mage, constructed Pean and nine other ether golems centuries ago as servants. They are sturdy, if slow, fighters, but their primary use is non-combative. Of all the golem types, the ether golem is best able to follow complex commands.

As the fight progresses, the DM should roll an Intelligence Check for each party member, adding +2 to the chance of anyone specifically looking out. To those who make the roll, the DM should reveal that a shadowy figure, like a human-shaped hole in the ether, is watching from a distance. This figure will appear later in the

Castle at the Edge of Time

adventure. Should a PC attempt to investigate him here and now, the figure immediately vanishes. The rest of the trip to the castle is uneventful.

To Meet the Sapphire Mage

As the party arrives, the first thing that comes into view is the curtain to the demi-plane of Time. The pearl and silver sheet is nearly 20" long and over half that in height. It is brighter than most curtains, and illumines the plane in a soft light. At times, large portions of the curtain fade to translucence and reveal the Ethereal beyond. In these areas appear a handful of shadowy, indistinct human-shapes, peering back out at the PCs.

As the party draws nearer, a sculpted hill of dark ethereal stone rises to obscure the smallest portion of the bottom of the curtain. The Mage must be sure of himself indeed to build his home so near such a spectacle.

Upon arrival, the party is met by a fortyish-looking man in blue robes and a second golem, blue with white sparks but otherwise identical to Pean.

He smiles warmly as he looks over the group of travelers. "I may assume you are the delegation from Arabel?" he asks in a deep, friendly baritone.

The man in blue asks Pean to show the party to suitable quarters, and sends the other golem, Vair, for medical supplies if anyone in the party was injured in the encounter with the shockers.

Montgomery (AC 6; MV 12"; MU 10; hp 34; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon or spell; THAC0 19; S 12, I 17, W 17, D 16, C 13, Ch 15, Cm 14; AL NG). Montgomery was the student of Aionias, the first Sapphire Mage, and has taken the title after his mentor disappeared behind the curtain so long ago.

Physically, Montgomery has long brown hair pulled back in a ponytail and a short, well-groomed beard. He stands at 6 feet and weighs 170 pounds.

The ten ether golems in the castle obey his exact wording at all times, so Montgomery has a cautious reserve

when speaking. Mostly out of habit, he completely examines a thought before speaking it. A listener gets the impression he always means what he says.

As cautious as he is, Montgomery admires spontaneity and initiative in others. His duties and experiments leave him little time for roving explorations, so he admires those who set forth regularly on expeditions to accomplish non-evil goals.

Montgomery is a good man and an honest one. He has scribed upon and been a part of enough dealings with cunning people to be far from naive, but his ideals are intact, and his position will always be formed from his beliefs in personal honor and charity.

Montgomery is today a lonely man. He was Aionias' apprentice at an early age, and spent centuries with no other company. After the first Mage left, Montgomery continued his studies alone. Except for the occasional lost traveler or curious explorer, he has had few visitors since. The golems make poor conversationalists, and scrying into other realms just isn't the same.

Montgomery's studies involve summoning and controlling creatures of the inner planes, and his knowledge is so complete that he can answer questions as if he were a sage in this minor field. He requires that the populace vacate Arabel because some creatures he summons are deadly, and he dares not expose such a large city to so great a hazard.

The Castle Proper

The castle was built by Montgomery, under Aionias' instruction and guidance, from ethereal stone and wood, and stands five stories. Through various powerful spells Aionias supplied, the lighting in each room can be adjusted through the use of will of the inhabitant with the highest wisdom, from dim night-lighting to the full intensity of a *light* spell. Rooms which face the curtain have shuttered windows.

Staircases are superfluous in the Ethereal plane, and so he designed a

central open shaft through the castle, with encircling rooms. In the center of the open area hangs a decorative, abstract piece of metal artwork.

The ground floor is the largest. Besides a long hallway from the doors of the castle to the center area, a hallway filled with potted plants and beautiful paintings, it includes the kitchen (Vair is a passable chef) and a prodigious amount of stored goods.

The second floor is the most used, with a library, an intimate parlor, a music room (the Mage, even after centuries of practice, is an uninspired harpist), and the dining room.

One story higher can be found the personal quarters. (Lady Cheodot asks that she and Goodman Alex be given rooms a distance from the PCs', and the Mage complies.) All rooms can be locked from the inside with a simple bolt mechanism which cannot be picked (only forced) from the outside. Also on this floor is a small shrine to Deneir.

On the fourth level are the Mage's studies and workroom. In the studies may be found a *crystal ball with clair-audience*, a variety of maps and notes regarding places in sundry dimensions, and, on top of a stack of other tomes, Montgomery's spell book. It is *wizard locked* at 7th level and contains the following spells:

Level 1: *Comprehend languages, dancing lights, detect magic, reduce, friends, magic missile, protection from evil, read magic, unseen servant, wizard mark, write.*

Level 2: *Continual light, detect evil, forget, locate object, magic mouth, ray of enfeeblement, scare, web, wizard lock.*

Level 3: *Blink, clairaudience, detect illusion, dispel magic, fireball, haste, hold person, material, secret page.*

Level 4: *Charm monster, dimension door, extension I, fire trap, ice storm, magic mirror, minor globe of invulnerability, polymorph self, wizard eye.*

Level 5: *Conjure elemental, contact other plane, dismissal, dolor, monster summoning III, telekinesis, wall of stone.*

The Sapphire Mage also owns sev-

eral magical items. Although he normally wears the *cloak of protection +2*, his other items can be found in his studies: a *staff of thunder and lightning* (only +1 in the Ethereal), a *ring of earth elemental control*, a handful of potions, and a *ring of materialization*. This last item, unique to the Mage, is usable only in the Border Ethereal, or in the Astral plane near a color pool. In these cases, wearing the ring projects the wearer into the nearby plane until the ring is removed. At that point, the character is immediately launched back to the Border Ethereal or Astral plane. When using a *ring of materialization*, a character cannot travel the planes in any other way, and neither can he be forced to do so against his will.

In the workroom can be found a chalking of a thaumaturgic circle—the appropriate protection against summoned creatures—as well as vials of a variety of exotic chemicals, and inscrutable charts and diagrams.

Whenever the Mage is elsewhere, all rooms on this floor are locked. There are no modifications to a thief's chance to pick these locks, although only the unwary would attempt such a deed.

The fifth floor was Aionias' private chamber. All doors on this level are *wizard locked* at 24th level. Not even Montgomery, who could *dimension door* in at will, has chosen to breach these doors, and he will not react well to any other attempts to do so.

The peace-keeping force in the castle is the ten golems, each distinct in coloring but identical to Pean in statistics. They will immediately attempt to subdue (using a pummeling attack from *Unearthed Arcana*, Appendix Q, System II, attempting to stun, the fists considered small hard objects, and strength considered 18/01+) any character who attacks the Mage, tries to pick any locked door, or tries to enter the fifth floor. Should a character wish to participate in clandestine activity, he can avoid the golems by rolling 1-4 on a d6 every turn in hiding. Thieves who fail this roll but successfully hide in shadows remain untouched.

The Negotiations for Arabel

Once the party is settled, the Mage suggests that the diplomacy begin the next day. Since real time in the Ethereal flows ten times as slowly as subjective time, he recommends two negotiating sessions of eight hours each, followed by a few hours, for a daily cycle of about 36 subjective hours, or little more than 3 1/2 real hours. Cheodot is agreeable to this arrangement.

The DM can handle negotiations with the following system. During each negotiating session, each participant may make several attempts to sway the opinions of other participants. During one session, A may make only one attempt to persuade B, but A may also argue with C, who can in turn treat with B. For each attempted persuasion, percentile dice are rolled and the following modifiers are applied:

- +5% for the negotiator's diplomacy proficiency.
- +10% if the negotiator knows the target's true goals.
- 10% if the target has diplomacy proficiency, plus the negotiator's charisma reaction modifier.
- 5% for each additional attempt at persuasion the negotiator is attempting this session.
- + up to 20% for the quality of argument presented by PC negotiators.

If a modified roll is:

- under 20, the target is insulted, and perhaps suspicious of treachery on the part of the negotiator.
- between 20 and 80, the target does not change his position.
- between 80 and 100, the target is impressed. The negotiator has a +15% modifier for the next sessions.
- above 100, the target is persuaded to compromise on one point.

If the unmodified roll was 00, the target immediately agrees with the negotiator's current position.

If two negotiators succeed with the same target in the same session, the

one with the higher result wins.

Once negotiations begin, they can be ended after any session by the voluntary withdrawal of any participant. The negotiations must end when a target agrees with either the negotiator's current position or one more beneficial to the negotiator.

Lady Cheodot's position has been outlined under her character description. Goodman Alex does not negotiate and hence cannot use this system to influence anyone. Should the PCs wish to join in, the DM should ask them to appoint a spokesman (presumably a character with a high charisma) for the group, and then ask that character to detail a position which includes acceptable compromises.

For his part, the Sapphire Mage's position was explained openly by Pean. His goal is to own the lands surrounding Arabel, and to vacate those lands of people in the name of safety. He will swear fealty to Cormyr if necessary.

He wants to do this while paying as little as possible. He does not have the weapons, but knows of their location elsewhere in the Ethereal, in the hands of evil psionic monks. Montgomery has no qualms about stealing them.

Other acceptable compromises, the most desirable first, include:

To pay Arabel very little and have the populace stay. The Sapphire Mage would emphasize the danger here, perhaps by offering to demonstrate just what sort of creatures he summons.

To cooperate with the sages of Cormyr to find an alternate place. Montgomery's time is limited, Arabel is ideal, and this seems like a delaying tactic.

Lady Cheodot, of course, would rather that the Mage just conquer the city. This idea is repugnant to the Sapphire Mage, although he believes he could do so if the need would arise.

The following is an approximate time table for events which may occur during the diplomacy. As PCs are remarkably enterprising, things may

well move more rapidly than described. Make whatever modifications you find necessary.

During the first day, Lady Cheodot and the Mage begin. It should become apparent within an hour that Lady Cheodot is not representing Arabel's interests. If the PCs protest, she reprimands them: they are the guards, and she is the envoy, speaking with the voice of Arabel. The Mage, however, invites the party to the join the debate in the second session of the day. That evening, the Sapphire Mage privately asks Pean what was said earlier in the golem's presence. Armed with that information, he is 20% more inclined toward any negotiator representing the mayor's actual position on the matter.

That night, Lady Cheodot hides her thieves' tools in Goodman Alex's calligraphy supplies, hoping to frame him for any misdeeds. She also resolves to agree with Alex in all things publicly, to imply that he may have her *charmed* or otherwise under his influence.

The second day's first session is unremarkable. But during the second, Goodman Alex finally understands what Lady Cheodot's true goals are, and concludes that she is an enemy of Cormyr. If the party has earned Alex's trust, he shares this information with a PC. Otherwise, he will keep to himself and merely look nervous throughout the day.

That night, much activity goes on. Goodman Alex gets no sleep, trying to find and warn the Sapphire Mage. He has no luck, as the Mage is out walking and reminiscing.

Also, Lady Cheodot is up, retrieving her tools from Alex's belongings and breaking into the workroom. There, she steals a vial of acid and alters the thaumaturgic circle just enough to render it useless. Lady Cheodot takes care not to be caught by the golems.

The first session the next day goes as planned. However, between the two sessions, Montgomery takes a break and retires to his workroom. Twenty minutes later, his blood-curdling scream is heard throughout

the castle. In an attempt to see if the elemental planes touched upon the demi-planes, Montgomery accidentally summoned 12 fire bats (AC 8; MV 6"/20"; HD 2; hp 7 (x 5), 4 (x 7); #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 16; SD immune to fire; AL NE). He also summoned six shadow spiders (AC 6; MV 18"; HD 2+2; hp 8 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA surprise, poison; AL N). The shadow spiders' hit points and magic resistance fluctuate with the available light, just as do those of a shade (see *Monster Manual II*). Their poison is weak, and in the Ethereal, poison is ineffective in any case. A victim would have to be bitten ten times before he required a saving throw.

Quick action is required. The Mage was completely surprised, and has not sufficiently gathered his wits to throw spells. The PCs inside the castle can arrive on the second round of combat. Golems do not arrive until the fourth, with two joining the fight every round until all ten are involved.

If still conscious on the third round, the Mage tries to retrieve his Staff. This takes four rounds.

Lady Cheodot and Goodman Alex gather a safe distance away to watch, but neither joins in combat.

After the summoned creatures are dispersed, Montgomery, grateful for assistance, cooperates with any investigations by the PCs. He discovers the accident in the spell that caused him to invoke the wrong creatures, but confesses ignorance as to how the fire bats and shadow spiders were able to escape the circle. Only upon careful examination do the alterations of the night before become apparent.

Lady Cheodot has another scheme in mind, and so wants the talks to continue, and she is more than willing to cast suspicion on Goodman Alex or a PC.

In the negotiations, the PCs find that their heroism has won the Mage over to their side. Regardless of whether the party was engaged in negotiations, Montgomery will be easily persuaded to agree with them.

The Incident at Dinner

Lady Cheodot's final intrigue takes place at dinner. When the chaos began earlier, she poured acid into the drinks that the golems had set out for dinner.

Early in the meal, the Mage stands and raises his cup to Arabel. But before he can complete the toast, the Mage sees a man at the opposite end of the table. This is the "hole in the ether" that the party saw when fighting the shockers. Moreover, Montgomery recognizes him.

"Aionias," he gasps.

The transparent figure is silent, and the party can sense a change in the lightning outside, as the entire curtain falls translucent, with hundreds of dim figures watching from beyond. Aionias points solemnly at the cup, and then at Lady Cheodot, who is visibly afraid despite her normally professional attitude. He then vanishes.

At this, Cheodot realizes the jig is up. She will attempt to escape, using both her illusionist spells and her skills at assassination. For purposes of the *alter self* spell, Cheodot is familiar with shapes of trolls and ogre mages. She might also attempt to disguise herself as one of the ether golems.

Loose Ends

The Sapphire Mage will of course see the party safely back to Arabel. If she successfully escapes, Lady Cheodot might well return to take revenge upon the party.

To extend this adventure, here are several "hooks" for further development:

Is Aionias still alive in the demi-plane of Time? Is he responsible for the recent drift of the curtain towards the castle? And what is behind the doors of the top level?

Where can Montgomery settle down? He might hire the PCs to investigate likely places in different lands, or even foreign planes!

How did an assassin find her way to the position of envoy? Was she working alone? Is the entire House of Hiloar a front for the Zhentarim?

by Thomas M. Kane

This adventure is intended for up to ten 3rd- and 4th-level characters of any class or race.

DM's Information

Synopsis

In this adventure, the PCs attempt to rescue Ben-Abbas, an amir of the jannee, who has been kidnaped from a djinn landhold on the plane of elemental Air. The kidnapers left a message demanding that "Abou" be released from prison.

When the PCs arrive at the djinn landhold, they find it embroiled in intrigue. Djinn may be good, but they are also chaotic. Abou was an especially powerful sheik who tried to overthrow the caliph and has been imprisoned for his attempt. However, he had nothing to do with this kidnaping. A group of ildriss grue had noticed long ago that the djinn were disorganized, and so conspired with wizards on the Prime Material plane to infiltrate the caliphate and betray its location. This would let the sorcerers trap the djinn in magic rings, leaving their treasure for the grue.

Only the jannee threaten this plot. They travel between planes frequently and could warn the djinn, as Ben-Abbas almost did. For this reason, the grue kidnaped Ben-Abbas and mentioned Abou to increase turmoil. Once they own the city, they will demand a better ransom. To rescue Ben-Abbas, the PCs must make a daring assault deep within a raging storm.

The DM should review the rules for the plane of elemental Air and inner planes in general. Remember that PCs need a native guide to keep from getting lost. When PCs can see a specific objective, such as a floating city, they can move to it, but even a passing cloud might strand them. Therefore, the party must find a guide or gingerly flit between landmarks. Do not use random rolls to determine travel time; encounters and distances in this caliphate remain regular as shown.

The Adventure

This adventure begins when the PCs meet a prince of the jann named Abdul at the World Serpent Inn. Abdul wishes to speak with adventurers in private, for his father has been kidnaped. The abduction occurred only five hours ago when Abdul and his father, Amir Ben-Abbas, were traveling on the plane of elemental Air to warn a djinn caliph about a threat to his people. Ben-Abbas had heard of a sorcerer who planned to enslave dozens of djinn in magic rings, and Abdul's father wanted to warn his ally directly. As custom required, he had not told even his son any details of the plot. As the two jann flew towards the caliph's palace, a great storm surrounded them, full of noises like blowing sand. When it ended, Ben-Abbas was gone. A camel's bone had been thrust into Abdul's robe, and a magic mouth spoke from it, saying "Time is short. You may gain the release of Abou or you may plan the funeral." Abdul knows nothing about Abou except that he is an enemy of the caliph.

No jann can survive for long away from the Prime Material plane, even a hardy amir, so Abdul hires the PCs to rescue his father. He can get up to three members of his father's tribe to help guide PCs to the point where Ben-Abbas vanished, at encounter 1, but no jann will linger on the plane of Air in these troubled times. When the party finds Ben-Abbas, he can bring them home. The jann will pay the PCs in advance, giving them both a *carpet* and *broom of flying* for use on the Plane of Air.

Jann (4): AC 2; MV 12'/30" (MC:A); HD 6+2; hp 26 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8+6; THAC0 13; SA spell-like powers; MR 20%; AL NG.

Adventure Notes: The DM should keep careful track of time in this adventure. Ben-Abbas will remain unharmed for 43 more hours and then begin losing hit points, at the rate of one per hour. Since he has 95 hit points, this gives the PCs several days

to find him, but they cannot delay too long.

If the PCs fail to interrupt the grues' plans for three days, the monsters will complete their trap, described under encounter 10. When the grue have their snare ready, they move it to a vantage point above one of the djinn landholds at area 4 and start catching djinn. From then on, their society has less need for secrecy. Wizards on the Prime Material plane will demand a better ransom by leaving Abdul another talking camel's bone, which demands riches. Of course, he will probably not be able to contact the PCs. Abdul will not pay this ransom.

Since this adventure concerns only the location and rescue of Ben-Abbas, it does not need details about the wizard's society or djinn trap. You may make these features trivial or monumental, as suits your campaign. If you want to design more adventures around this scenario, make the sorcerers a world-spanning network of high-level magicians and have the trap devastate this whole djinn caliphate. If you want the story to end with this module, be less earthshaking; the trap might depopulate only one landhold, leaving it ripe for plunder.

The sequence of events before the adventure is also important. When the PCs first investigate, they may wrongly suspect Nabih, a djinn sheik met below, of kidnaping Ben-Abbas. However, his landhold was being scrutinized by constables at the time of the abduction, making it impossible for him to have kidnaped anyone.

Abou attempted his coup two weeks before this adventure. While the caliph was hunting on a distant part of the plane, Abou marched into the capitol and announced his claim to the throne. He knew that the djinn populace would be as happy to have him rule as anyone, and he trusted that the caliph's disunited viziers would be unable to oppose him. However, since a new caliph threatened their positions too, the viziers were able to oust Abou. None of them cooperated with each other, but they all fought Abou independently. Amidst this strife, the

The Brewing Storm

caliph returned and condemned his rival to prison.

Using the Map

The encounters in this adventure have been arranged on a map (see page 21), showing their positions relative to each other. Although conditions constantly change on the plane of elemental Air, this map will retain its usefulness for several months. Since change cannot occur without an intelligent witness on this plane, weather patterns can last for many weeks. This adventure occurs within a great mass of cool air blowing from the plane of Ice toward the plane of Smoke.

The map has been drawn using perspective graphs as in the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*. The grids show each object's lateral location, and the distance between them represents vertical distances. Because of the natural laws on the elemental planes, any direction can be "up". Clouds have been outlined with wavy lines, while pockets of elemental earth or water have rigid sides and shaded interiors. Things inside a cloud are invisible from outside. Characters within cloudbanks cannot see more than 50 yards through the fog. Wind patterns have been shown on this map with arrows, and the effects of specific winds are described at areas 6 and 10.

1. Nabih's Landhold: When the PCs arrive on the plane of elemental Air, they find themselves floating in an azure sky. A palace of white domes hangs suspended 2000' ahead, with gleaming spires pointing in all directions, the landhold of a djinni sheik whose name is Nabih. If PCs approach, Nabih's cupbearer is a young djinn who wears a red silk vest, and he invites them to feast at the sheik's table. Since subjective time flows faster on the inner planes, the PCs will realize that they are already hungry. At the feast, Nabih introduces himself as "Mummas" and talks earnestly with the PCs.

Nabih sponsored Abou's rebellion, hoping to be appointed vizier under a new caliph. Now he fears that the

imprisoned sheik will reveal his complicity. If the PCs have not described their errand, Nabih/Mummas tells them about the wonderful rewards that Abou would offer anyone who freed him and ask the PCs to release the rebel. This may make the party suspect that Nabih kidnaped Ben-Abbas. If the PCs have told Nabih about the kidnaping and the ransom message, he keeps his intentions secret, then pretends to be worried about Ben-Abbas and tells the PCs that one of the caliph's prisoners, a djinn, may be able to help them find the kidnaped jann. Should the PCs agree to try to free Abou, the sheik dispatches his cupbearer to guide them to the caliph's palace. The cupbearer leaves as soon as the PCs have arrived safely, so that if the party is caught, nobody can implicate Nabih. Even if the PCs betray him, they think his name is Mummas.

If the PCs refuse to try to free Abou, Nabih remains courteous (since djinn are always hospitable), but he does whatever he can to keep the PCs away from the caliph's capital. There, they could accuse him of supporting Abou. When the PCs decide to leave, they find that none of Nabih's 20 djinn servants can spare time to act as elemental guides. They are repairing damage done by agents of the real Mummas, vizier of the caliph, who have been ransacking this landhold for several days. The inspectors left only an hour ago. PCs may hire Nabih's air elemental as a guide at the standard payment described on page 25 of the *Manual of the Planes*. This creature has little intelligence, but it knows whether Nabih trusts the PCs or not. If the party does not agree to rescue Abou, the elemental leads them to the storms of rain, hail, and lightning beneath the thunder cloud at area 7.

There is little else of interest in Nabih's stronghold. Many of the buildings are actually great tents, forced into rigid shapes by gusts of elemental air. Nabih has 100 gp, perfume worth 1,500 gp, and three potions of *gaseous form*. The djinn sheik wields a

great *scimitar* +3, the size of a two-handed sword for PCs. It will be reduced to a *two-handed sword* +1 on the Prime Material plane.

Djinn (21): AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 7+3; hp 33 each, (59 for Nabih); #AT 1; Dmg 2-16 (+3 for Nabih); THAC0 13 (10 for Nabih); SA *whirlwind, create soft objects and food, gaseous form, wind walk*; AL CG.

Air Elemental (1): AC 2; MV 36"; HD 8; hp 37; #AT 1; Dmg 2-20; THAC0 12; SA *whirlwind*; SD hit only by +2 weapons; AL N.

2. The Caliph's Capital: Rosy mists drift about the caliph's palace like some sunrise which never ends. A curtain of elemental fire surrounds this earth pocket, and anyone who tries to pass through it takes damage as if he entered the plane of Fire for one round. PCs may enter and leave safely through an earthen tunnel which projects from the city. Three djinn guard it, under the control of Vizier Mustapha (see below).

Djinn Guards (3): AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 7+3; hp 40 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; THAC0 13; SA *whirlwind, create soft objects and food, gaseous form, windwalk*; AL CG.

An exotic mix of aerial creatures dwell in the caliph's city, and DMs may choose them from the air encounter table on page 34 of the *MoP*, not using evil creatures. Street bazaars dot these byways, where djinn merchants sell perfumes and incense, which PCs might buy for hiring guides. The PCs might ask any elemental they meet to guide them. However, they can be arrested for hiring a guide without asking permission. This must be obtained from a vizier—and since no vizier recognizes the pronouncements of another, the PCs will either have to get permission from all six or evade at least some of them. The caliph restricts guides to keep potential invaders from scouting his sheikdoms. His laws do not prevent air elementals from being guides; they only punish the explorers that hire them. This way the caliph's citizens can freely make money by guiding strangers, and only the outsiders face any danger.

Every 1-20 turns, the PCs encounter a patrol from one of the viziers. These police bring lawbreakers before the caliph for punishment. When the PCs encounter these police, use a d6 to determine which vizier they serve (see below). If the PCs have hired an elemental guide without permission from that particular vizier, the guards arrest them.

Patrolling Djinn (2): AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 7+3; hp 40 each; #AT 1; Dmg 216; THAC0 13; SA *whirlwind, create soft objects and food, gaseous form, wind walk*; AL CG.

3. The Caliph's Court: A great palace of gold-painted stone rises from this city, sheltering both the offices of state and the dungeons where Abou is held. Five djinn guards/servants protect this palace. The viziers' officers form a circle around the caliph's apartment, and the dungeons lie below them all. Caliph Aran Nidal delegates all his authority except judgment to the six viziers, who can be identified by their sky-blue turbans. Strict laws prevent the viziers from cooperating with each other. Supposedly, this prevents any one vizier from overthrowing their caliph, but in practice, it merely causes anarchy. Since no vizier knows what acts the others have approved, they pretend that the others do not exist.

The viziers are djinn with maximum hit points, and unless PCs specify which vizier they want to see, you may select one randomly with a d6: 1. Mustapha. 2. Assad. 3. Kho. 4. Assif. 5. Anwar. 6. Mummas. Each vizier has one djinni bodyguard and a chest of treasure holding 500 gp worth of perfume. PCs can get a vizier to approve most reasonable requests by offering "tribute" worth at least 100 gp.

Djinn Viziers and Guards (17): AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 7+3; hp 33 each, 59 for viziers; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; THAC0 13; SA *whirlwind, create soft objects and food, gaseous form, wind walk*; AL CG.

Mustapha, Mummas, Anwar, and Assif are all independently trying to track down the conspirators against their caliph. Anwar suspects Nabih of

supporting Abou and has had his police search Nabih's landhold, but they found nothing incriminating. By listening to Anwar's descriptions, the PCs will realize that the "Mummas" they met was actually Nabih. Naturally, the real Mummas will be livid if the PCs say that someone named "Mummas" asked them to release Abou. Kho and Assad both ignore the attempts at revolution because they have found something even more disturbing to them—a settlement of ildriss grue in the nearby thunderclouds. They know nothing about the grue except that they have been sighted. Assad's police have fought with a grue, but they were unable to take it alive. However, they did capture its bodyguards and have them in prison (see below).

The caliph can usually be found in his central office, and PCs will only see him if they are arrested for some crime. Caliph Aran Nidal wears a turban of pure white and sits with a slouch that makes his shoulder blades stick up. The caliph will judge any character that is arrested for helping Abou, creating disturbances, or becoming caught between rival viziers. The first time a party appears before Aran, he decides the case by saying, "I will test your own judgment. There were once two pickpockets, and both of them jostled their victims and were caught. The first went brazenly to the constable and complained that his victim had robbed him. The second was humiliated and stabbed his victim quickly so that nobody would know of his crime. Which of those thieves was the least evil?" If the character chooses the second thief, Aran pardons the PC, saying, "Thou art right, for he knew shame, and might yet change. Emulate that thief." Aran sentences any PC who chooses the first thief to be imprisoned for 1-10 years. Characters who are arrested twice will automatically be jailed. The djinn guards will take all of their victim's possessions except for clothing.

Caliph (1): AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 10; hp 80; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; THAC0 10;

SA *whirlwind, create soft objects and food, gaseous form, wind walk*; AL CG.

The caliph's prison is a straight tunnel of whitewashed brick that leads through the center of this city's foundation. It has two doors: one in the palace basement; the other 3,000' away, opening onto a city street. These doors are lined with wet leather and fit so snugly that creatures cannot escape in gaseous form. Inside, the doors have no handle or keyhole, but outside, a simple bolt holds them shut. Once per day, a djinn guard opens one of the two doors, chosen randomly, for one round to give the prisoners air, food, and water. Four djinn guard each door. Everyone in this city will try to recapture jailbreakers.

Djinn Guards (8): AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 7+3; hp 40 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; THAC0 13; SA *whirlwind, create soft objects and food, gaseous form, wind walk*; AL CG.

Abou is imprisoned here, along with a group of five vortices who once served the grue but were captured by Vizier Assad's police. The vortices remain inactive until someone makes an escape attempt. Then they attack the fugitives wildly, fearing that they will be left behind. Abou is a plump djinni, who considers the vortices a terrible omen. He often laments that he should be fighting these invaders, and would, if only the caliph would abandon petty politics and release him. The caliph sees things differently. Abou also knows that his ally Nabih has been under scrutiny for several days and could not have kidnapped Ben-Abbas. If the PCs help Abou escape, he will act as their guide on the plane of Air without payment. Abou will not fight to defend PCs, but he might *create objects or food*.

Vortices (5): AC 0; MV 15"; HD 2+2; hp 14 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 points/round + helplessness + 5% cumulative chance of death per round to one spinning victim; AL CN.

Abou (1): AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 7+3; hp 59; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; THAC0 13; SA *whirlwind, create soft objects and food, gaseous form, wind walk*;

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AL CG.

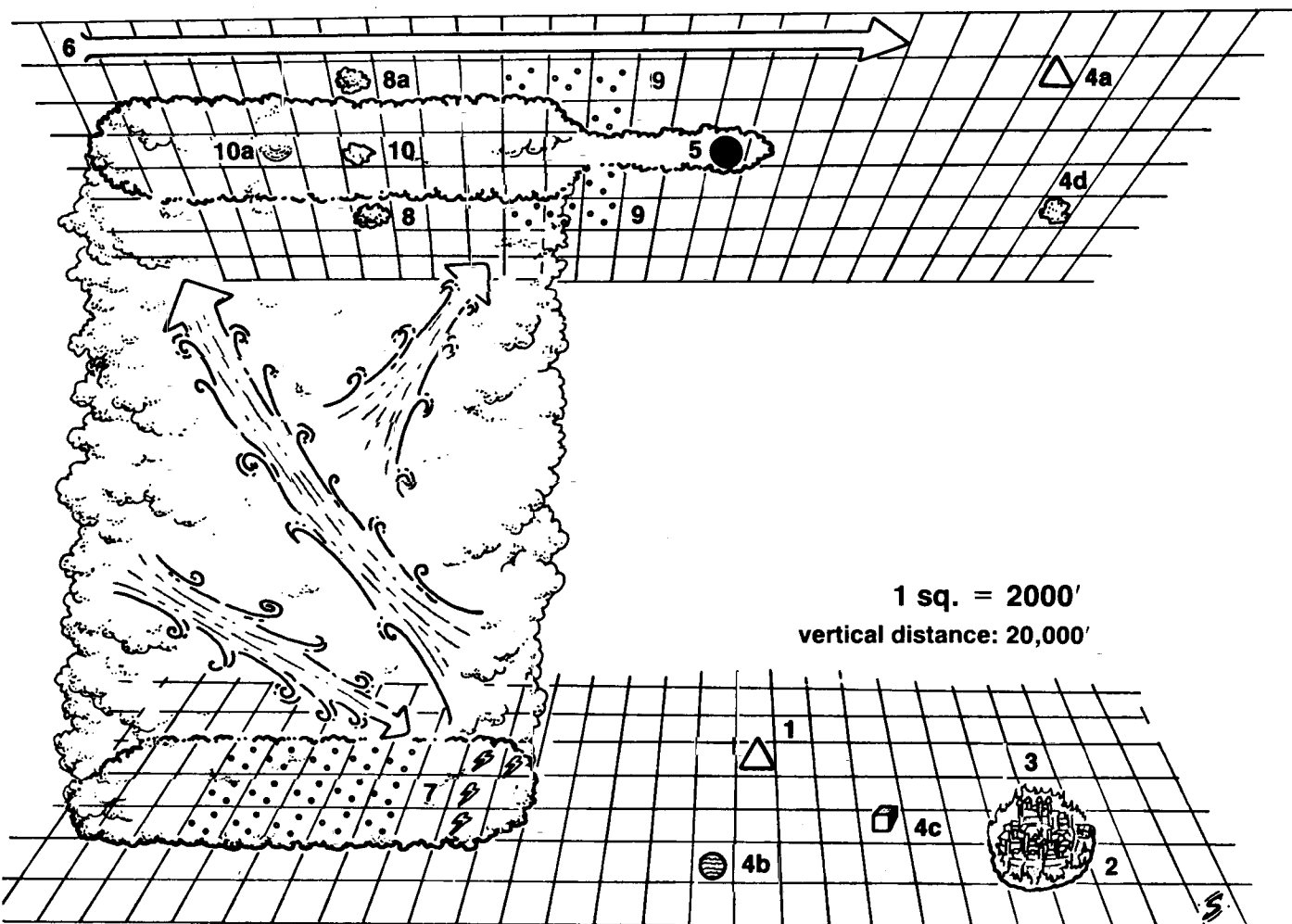
4. Djinn Landholds: These earth pockets have been colonized with colorful cities of domes and tents. The djinn invite even the humblest wayfarers to eat with their servants, while noble travellers can expect to be waited on by the sheik himself. None of these landholds can spare members to act as elemental guides. Each landhold shelters 10-30 djinn and 1-10 other elemental creatures, which the DM may choose. All jann have fled this region. The djinn at each settlement have 10-1,000 (d% × 100) gp worth of perfumes, gems, incense and other valuables. Use the statistics below for all of these djinn.

Djinn: AC 4; MV 9"/24"; HD 7+3; hp 36 each, sheiks have 53 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; THAC0 13; SA *whirlwind, create soft objects and food, gaseous form, wind walk*; AL CG.

The sheikdom of Mahomas, at area 4a, is in mourning now because Mahomas's son has been killed. They are holding wakes on carpets in mid-air, which inexperienced PCs may mistake for *carpets of flying*. Everybody that passes by is expected to kneel on a carpet and eat from the funeral roast, an animal camel. Refusing to do so is a great insult, which causes two djinn to attack the offender. Characters who ask questions will learn that Mahomas's son vanished while gathering

ice crystals from atop the nearby thunderstorm. The djinn collect these crystals for making a sherbet-like drink.

The djinn of area 4b do not have a "landhold" at all but live on a globule of elemental water. Its citizens constantly revel and play. A bold young sheik named Simet the Free-Heart rules this dominion, or at least presides over the festivities. Many of Abou's old servants have fled here, so most of the conversation in "waterhold" consists of bad jokes about the caliph. They give presents to any character who thinks of a particularly funny jibe about the caliph. The first gift is a stick of incense worth 10 gp, and jokesters who continue to amuse them will receive a bot-



tle of *oil of impact*. If the PCs defend the caliph, two djinn will assume whirlwind form and terrorize them by zooming by as great waterspouts.

Sheik Ayatollah Nidas rules a perfectly formed stone cube at 4c. The Ayatollah is one of the caliph's cousins, and he considers Aran Nidal to be a spiritual heir to a prophet. Nidas's humped back is even more pronounced than the caliph's. The Ayatollah hates the disrespectful activity at Simet Free Hearth's realm, but he cannot unite the viziers to raid the landhold. Therefore, he tries to capture "infidels" himself.

When the party dines here, the Ayatollah thrusts his head within inches of a PC's face and says in a grim voice. "Roses are red, violets are blue, camels are humpbacked and the caliph is too." If the PC laughs, or worse responds with another joke, Nidas points at them and shouts a command, "grab". Eight trained animental war dogs will attack. When one of these dogs successfully hits, it inflicts damage and can hold one limb immobile until the PC makes a bend bars roll to escape. Two dogs concentrate on one victim, trying to grab both hands. No djinn will enter combat except in self-defense, but while the dogs hold a character, a djinni will chain the victim's hands and disarm the prisoner. Then the dogs attack a new victim. If the PCs defeat these dogs, the Ayatollah will grudgingly let them leave, but if they are captured, he will take his prisoners to the caliph's court (area 3), and have them imprisoned for sedition.

Animental Mastiffs (8): AC 7; MV 12"; HD 2+2; hp 12 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 16; SA see ethereal, become ethereal, hold; SD immune to air-based magic; AL N.

Craters and ashes cover the stony lump that is 4d. This was once Abou's sheikdom, but Assif's police completely destroyed it. Only one djinni lives here, tall and wearing a decorative breastplate and jeweled burnoose worth 500 gp. This is Urbi, who once served Abou as a general. When Abou was captured, Urbi had hoped to

escape to the Prime Material plane with the help from a jann friend, so he made the long journey to the jann's home. When he arrived, all the jann had vanished. Urbi does not know where they went, or why, and his predicament may help the PCs realize that Ben-Abbas's kidnapers did not serve Abou. Urbi will act as an elemental guide in return for being transported to a safer plane where he can become a general for some other lord.

5. Frigid Clouds: A chill breeze of ice crystals blows past PCs here, and they cannot see farther than 100 yards in these cirrus clouds. The cold forces characters to make a Constitution check at a +6 penalty each hour or suffer 1-4 points damage. These clouds shelter an animental polar bear, who follows the grue and eats the carrion they create. The animental looks like an ordinary polar bear, with fleecy clouds trailing from its fur. This mist spreads into wings as the bear moves. A hollow chunk of filthy ice serves as a cave for this bear.

Animental Polar Bear (1): AC 6; MV 36"/27"; HD 8+8; hp 40; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/2-12; THAC0 12; SA hug for 3-18 points damage, become ethereal, see ethereal; SD immune to air-based magic; AL N.

When the PCs encounter the bear, it lies in its den, sipping the airy essence of Mahomas's child, remaining docile unless annoyed. PCs can tell that the bear did not kill this meal. Mahomas's son was lacerated to death by tiny particles, perhaps blowing sand. Actually, an ildriss grue slew the boy for trespassing. The corpse still wears a magic dagger, which PCs can wield as a sword +2, although it is only a normal blade on the Prime Material plane.

6. Jet Stream: An amazing wind whips through this area at 100 mph. It prevents missile fire, penalizes melee combat by -8, stops characters from moving against the wind, and multiplies the speed of travellers going with the wind by a factor of six. When the party goes here, they see a streamlined horned creature downwind, which looks vaguely like a thin bull covered with white feathers. The monster

is an animental bull, and it will become infuriated if disturbed. It attacks by holding still against the wind, using its enormous strength and streamlined body. As the bull remains immobile, powerful winds cast victims against its horns. This gives the bull a +2 to hit and lets it inflict charging damage. After each impalement, the bull gallops downwind and attacks again. This bull was Abou's pet, which fled when his landhold was assaulted, and naturally, Abou would be delighted to have his bull captured and returned. There is still a gold ring in the bull's nose, worth 100 gp. Characters who grab the ring by making a successful roll to hit, can control the bull with it.

Animental Bull (1): AC 7; MV 45"; HD 4; hp 18; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; THAC0 15; SA charge or use wind (see above) for 3-12 + 1-4 points damage, can become ethereal, can see ethereal; SD immune to air-based spells; AL N.

7. Severe Weather: As the map shows, dreadful hails, rains, and thunderbolts hang behind this cloud, ready to converge on PCs. While in the lightning area, characters have a 50% chance per turn of being struck, lowered to a 40% chance for small creatures and raised to 60% for large beings. Lightning victims must save vs. spell or lose 10% × d6 their current hit points. Those who successful save suffer 1-10 points of damage. Characters in the hailstorm take 1-2 points of damage per round, which increases to 3-18 points of damage if the PCs are moving at speeds over 120 yards per turn. Small creatures suffer only 2-12 points of damage at high speeds, but large creatures lose 4-24 hit points. Rain falls throughout this entire area, and should be treated as a *cloudburst* spell.

8. Cloudline Defense: A few dark clouds hover here above the gigantic storm, forming an outer defense for the grue lair. Guards hide in each cloud, and will attack any party that comes within 2,000' of their posts. Each of these guard detachments consists of five vortices, led by one ildriss grue. There is only one safe way through this defensive area, and

The Brewing Storm

that is area 8a, where the guards have been captured by Assad's constables (see area 3). When PCs fight a guardpost, all guards fight until the vortices are slain. Then the grue leader flees to area 10 to warn the other ildriss of an impending attack. This gives them time to bring down their trap, and prepare to change (see area 10).

Vortices (5): AC 0; MV 15"; HD 2+2; hp 14 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 points/round + helplessness + 5% cumulative chance of death per round to one spinning victim; AL CN.

Ildriss Grue (1): AC 2; MV 24"; HD 4; hp 18; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; THAC0 15; SA 4 in 6 chance of surprise, always attacks first; SD immune to air-based spells, +2 weapon to hit; AL NE.

9. Minefields: Powerful updrafts in this storm hurl hail in all directions, regardless of "up" and "down". Near the grue lair, vortices use their winds to direct these stones into strategic areas and leave them there. Since missiles cannot fly on the plane of Air without being touched, the hailstones hang in place until someone disturbs them, then cause damage. Characters take 1-8 points of damage during every round they spend in these missile areas.

10. Storm: This cloud has a few silvery tips, but its vast, black body swells around them all. Incredible winds race through this storm, forcing characters along with it. These winds blow at 130 mph, preventing missile combat and movement against the wind, penalizing melee by -8 on to hit rolls, and multiplying the speed of characters moving with the wind by eight. The grue make their lair here, above all winds, on a pocket of elemental earth in a gloomy bulge of cloud. Six grue live in this cloud, along with Sarum, a wizard from the Prime Material Plane, and Ben-Abbas, their prisoner. Sarum's face is concealed behind a messy white beard. His bizarre theories and experiments have caused most colleges of magic to expel him, so he journeyed to the elemental planes to help position the hooks for catching djinn. He hopes to gain admission to a society of wizards by providing this service.

Ildriss Grue (6): AC 2; MV 24"; HD 4; hp 18 each; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; THAC0 15; SA 4 in 6 chance of surprise, always attacks first; SD immune to air-based spells, +2 weapon to hit; AL NE.

Sarum: AC 6; MV 12"; MU7; hp 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 or spell; THAC0 19; S10, I17, W15, D18, C11, Ch14; AL NE. Sarum has an *iron flask*, a *dagger* +2, which functions only as a normal dagger on the elemental planes, and a *potion of fire breath*. He knows these spells: *magic missile*, *burning hands*, *feather fall*, *sleep*, *magic mouth*, *flaming sphere* (×2), *lightning bolt*, *dispel magic*, *enchanted weapon*.

If the grue have been warned about an approaching party, four ildriss will enter a windstream which faces the invaders and hurtle to attack the PCs. This change maneuver negates the usual -8 on melee combat and actually gives the grue a +2 to hit and the ability to inflict double damage. When the grue do not expect enemies, the PCs will encounter the whole group at its lair. In battle, one grue concentrates on keeping PCs away from Sarum, so he can use his magic. Sarum has an *iron flask*, and since the PCs are extra-planar creatures here, he can catch them in it. Another hurries to area 10a to deploy the monster's strongest weapon. This grue launches the trap which they have been assembling—a specially enchanted region of mobile hooks, which was intended for catching djinn.

A grue can push this trap at a speed of 1" without being trapped, due to a magical ward. The snare looks like a sea of spinning rainbows, 10' in diameter. Djinn who look at it will instantly be drawn inside, and other characters will be affected as if by a *hypnotic pattern*. Both the grue and Sarum have learned to look away, but everyone else must save vs. spell or be affected. The grue and their wizard allies created this trap by hiding *hooks* (page 35, *MoP*) inside a cloudy mist, where the traps are invisible, but their radiance can refract through water droplets. While PCs contend with this, the grue attack them. Remember that

if the party's guide becomes trapped, they cannot travel without a new one. Any PC who enters the bewildering phantasmagoria that is this trap must make a Dexterity check each round to avoid touching a *hook*.

Each day, the wizards prepare more *rings of djinn summoning*, and more hooks appear, which makes this trap visible from farther away, and hence, more effective. It can be seen from 1,000 yards away the first day, 2,000 yards the second, and a maximum of 3,000 yards the third. The grue plan to hide their trap here until it is full-sized, then move it into the djinn landholds.

Ben-Abbas is chained by one leg to this earth pocket. He is a noble jann, quiet and wise. The grue keep their belongings on the opposite side of this landhold from Ben-Abbas, and the heap of treasure contains keys to Ben-Abbas' chains, 3,000 gp, five flasks of perfume worth 100 gp each, and one flask of *oil of elemental invulnerability*. They also have a book of magical formulas about locating planar hooks and moving them. These treatises are worth 5,000 gp to a magic-user. The jann amir can *teleport* up to six PCs back to the Prime Material plane. If there are more characters, once Ben-Abbas gets back, he will send other jann to bring the rest home.

Ben-Abbas: AC 2; MV 12"/30" (MC: A); HD 6+2; hp 95; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8+6; THAC0 13; MR 20%; AL NG.

After the Adventure

Depending on what happened in this adventure, the party may have many friends, or enemies, or both. You may develop the wizardly society that cooperated with the grue or the intrigues of the djinn caliphate. Feel free to make up more landholds under the control of Caliph Aran Nidal. The jann might also help the PCs again, providing easy transport between planes. If the PCs did not defeat the grue, large numbers of djinn will be enslaved in *rings*, and the PCs' next adventure might be to track those *rings* down and free the slaves. This can inspire more adventures on many planes.

by Vince Garcia

The Voyage of the Nereid, set within the elemental plane of Water, is best played with four to six characters from 3rd to 4th level.

DM's Information

Synopsis

Far beyond the Stygian depths of the sea, in a palace of black coral at the heart of the elemental plane of Water, dwells Olhydra, Princess of the Sea and its forces. Her enemies are many and well known, but perhaps the most bothersome has proved to be a human wizard by the name of Orion.

Long ago, he dared to journey to Olhydra's citadel bearing gifts and a request: to learn from the princess herself of the sea's mysteries.

Such impudence amused Olhydra, and thus she did not slay the intruder but instead kept him as a "guest" within a section of her citadel suited for air-breathing creatures.

Fifteen other such "guests" also dwelt there, and soon Orion became their leader, with all pinning their hopes upon him to end their imprisonment.

In the years that passed, Orion never missed an opportunity to exercise his glib tongue upon the sea princess. Then a conflict arose upon the Prime Material plane between Olhydra's minions and those of Imix, of the plane of Fire. The source of contention was an undersea volcano populated by a number of Imix's servants. Such an incursion disturbed Olhydra, but she was at a loss as to the best means of handling the problem.

Orion stepped forth to offer his sorcerous talents, in addition promising the aid of the other surface-dwellers. His only request was that if he should please Olhydra that she would honor him by granting his request to learn the mysteries of her realm.

In the conflict that followed, Orion proved victorious through the power of a wand he fashioned in preparation, which possessed the capability of

absorbing the essence of fire elementals. With it, Orion and his followers succeeded in routing enough of Imix's forces to please Olhydra.

Satisfied with his performance, she did teach the doting wizard much about her realm. And when he later suggested that his building a watertight craft would be of great aid should she ever desire to move the group again, the idea met with approval.

The result was the *Nereid*, a *Nautilus*-like submersible designed and built by Orion and Cyrino, a gnomish engineer also "questing" at Olhydra's citadel. Ostensibly propulsionless, the spindle-shaped craft was to be carried about by several elementals when the need arose.

In the years it took to build, Orion learned more of Olhydra's realm than the most learned of her servants. Then came the day the *Nereid* was completed.

Deep inside the vessel, Orion discharged his wand, releasing two fire elementals into specially prepared containment chambers. Next, he went out and asked Dryllevilyn, the sea hag shaman in charge of the "guests", to summon a pair of water elementals to push the vessel about the undersea harbor "to check its handling".

No sooner had she done so than the wizard struck her from behind. A short fight ensued, and Orion soon knocked the unconscious hag into the water—but not before her *staff of withering* had forever crippled his right leg. He then turned his wand—which Olhydra never suspected had power over any but Imix's servants — against the water elementals, absorbing them within.

Limping back inside the *Nereid*, Orion released the pair in chambers across from the fire elementals. A valve was turned, allowing contact between the four opposites, and the resulting steam jetted out a conduit at the vessel's stern. Slowly the *Nereid* submerged and slipped out of the harbor, leaving Olhydra's citadel behind it.

A pursuit force led by the revived Dryllevilyn failed to catch the

escapees before their vessel slipped through a vortex back to the Prime Material plane, and for her failure the sea hag was exiled to a sunken temple on the far outskirts of Olhydra's coral island.

That was three year ago. Since then, the *Nereid* and its crew have returned several times on salvage operations, each time making good their escape before being noticed—until their latest incursion.

While exploring an old temple for valuables, members of the crew found they had stumbled into Dryllevilyn's new lair. Four men were captured by her minions as the group retreated to the *Nereid*.

Cursing the fact his useless leg kept him chained to the confines of his ship, Orion reluctantly got underway, barely outrunning a huge water elemental pursuing them—at the cost of two propulsion elementals.

Both adversaries know each other well. Orion is aware the sea hag will keep his men captive as bait to draw him back in a rescue attempt.

Dryllevilyn's concern is to recapture the renegade wizard on her own so as to return to the good graces of her mistress. Thus, Orion's men have been placed in an air-chamber at the top of the temple. Sooner or later, she knows, their captain will return for them—and a reception will be waiting.

The Adventure

As the party dines in the World Serpent Inn, unknown to them their thoughts are being scanned by Orion's *ESP* spell. The old wizard sits at a nearby table with an equally aged gnome, and his magic has revealed to him that the adventurers are likely prospects to aid in the rescue of his crew.

After the group has supped, they are approached by the armorless old gnome, who bows and introduces himself as Cyrino.

Cyrino: AC 8; MV 10"; T6; hp 30; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 +2; THAC0 19; S 10, I 15, W 14, D 16, C 13; AL NG; *dagger* +2.

The Voyage of the Nereid

The gnome informs the adventurers that he is the retainer of a wizard seeking to sponsor a party on a sea quest to recover treasure from an ancient temple, and asks if they would be looking to undertake such an endeavor.

Assuming the group expresses an interest in hearing more of the proposed adventure, Cyrino directs them over to Orion's table.

The *Nereid's* captain is an imposing figure. Although apparently a human in his sixties or seventies, Orion's rugged features suggest the demeanor of an old soldier more than that of a wizard. His dress is a suit of black leather, and upon his head rests a billed cap emblazoned with a golden trident.

Orion: AC 5 (*bracers*); MV 4"; F5/ MU12; hp 50; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+4; THAC0 12; S 17, I 18, W 17, D 7, C 15, Ch 17, Cm 15; AL LN; *short sword* +3. He has these spells memorized: *magic missile*, *mending* (× 2), *sleep*, *ESP*, *strength*, *vocalize* (× 2), *dispel magic*, *lightning bolt*, *protection from normal missiles*, *suggestion*, *remove curse*, *wall of ice* (× 2), *airy water* (× 3), *cone of cold*, *chain lightning*.

After cheerfully greeting them, Orion explains just enough to whet the adventurers' appetites: he knows the whereabouts of an ancient sunken city in which lies a temple that he believes to contain quite a bit of treasure and magical items. In return for an equal share of treasure, he will provide transportation to and from the site in addition to any appropriate spells and equipment necessary for a watery adventure.

Orion avoids direct reference to the plane of Water unless specifically asked. Under no circumstances does he reveal the temple's proximity to Olhydra's citadel or his own experiences with her.

If specifically queried about potential dangers, the *Nereid's* captain does his best to be vague, admitting if pressed that four of his crew failed to return from an incursion inside, but due to the fact that he hasn't personally been within the temple, he cannot

say exactly what creatures dwell there.

Assuming the adventurers are willing to undertake the quest, Orion asks them to gather their gear and follow him to his room. As Cyrino helps him to his feet, the group will become aware of his severe handicap. Orion, relying on the gnome's assistance, is barely able to shuffle along, and the grimace on his face reveals the pain he suffers. If asked about it, he says only that the leg is a result of a battle fought years previously.

Within his room, a comfortable chamber decorated in a nautical theme, Orion casts an *airy water* spell. Cyrino then opens a door to a darkened closet, and Orion motions for the group to follow him.

As the party steps through, a dizziness engulfs them, and they feel as though falling through space. The discomfort soon passes, and they find themselves floating weightless in a hazy blue sea. Motionless before them hangs a spindle-shaped craft. A deadly-looking ram spouts from the vessel's prow, and lights can be seen glowing from both a conning tower above the deck and a large viewport amidships. The sleek, black hull from that point gently tapers back to the stern, ending in a graceful set of finlike rudders and hydroplane assemblies. No obvious means of propulsion is evident.

Orion and Cyrino assist the group through the unfamiliar element, herding them to a position beneath the *Nereid's* bow. There, a sea hatch leads into a large tank which all enter, closing the exit behind them. Above is another hatch that Cyrino opens. The party then ascends the ladder into the *Nereid* itself.

The Nereid

A. The party emerges into a storage area holding non-perishable food and various sorts of equipment, including diving suits.

B. This is a bunk area, normally home to 13 men. The party will also be quartered here, making use of the

missing men's bunks, with hammocks slung for any needing them.

The *Nereid's* crew, it is noticed, are very old humans and demihumans, all of whom are polite but rather tight-lipped.

C. This is the control room, filled with a maze of pipes along with a shelf of charts and a plotting table. At the center of the room, a winding stairway climbs to the conning tower, which is not separated from the lower level by a watertight hatch.

Within the tower, manned by three crewmen, is a large brass wheel and a series of levers controlling the vessel's hydroplanes. Speaking tubes allow communication with various parts of the boat, and a watertight hatch at the back of the tower permits exit to the deck when surfaced. Two eyelike viewports, several feet in diameter, allow the pilot to see forward.

D. This is the ship's mess.

E. A small laboratory and aquarium is here, and Orion spends much time in this compartment working on experiments.

F. This large, richly-decorated chamber houses Orion's parlor. A couple of divans, a table, and a wine cabinet may be seen, and it is here that the party may relax and take meals.

G. These are Orion's quarters, which are always kept locked. Inside can be found a library (most of whose books were penned by the ship's master), a small area for magical research, and a bed. A secret compartment in the after bulkheads holds Orion's DM-generated spellbook and the *Nereid's* log, a 10-minute perusal of which will reveal the party's true purpose in being brought here, with an hour of reading telling the whole story of the ship and crew.

H. The hatch to the propulsion room is always kept securely barred by Cyrino, who virtually lives back here with Tinker, another gnomish assistant. At the fore of the compartment, a tank holds a captured air elemental, which when stimulated by contact with the fire elemental in the chamber

The Voyage of the Nereid

next to it expands, forcing water out of the ballast tanks when the vessel sails the Prime Material sea.

Six huge tanks line the sides of the compartment, those portside meant for water elementals, while the starboard are designed for fire elementals. Propulsion is created by opening a valve between the set, allowing the occupants to make contact. The result is superheated steam, which is jetted out a conduit at the stern, pushing the vessel forward (or backward, if another conduit is used).

With nothing more than an irritation to the elementals, a low cruising speed may be maintained. This speed can be increased to the maximums

listed below, with each elemental sustaining one point of damage each hour of travel for every mile per hour above the listed cruising speed they must push the vessel. Periodically, then, various sets of elementals must be taken off-line so that they may heal up (at a rate of one point per hour). A listing of the *Nereid's* propulsive capabilities follows (note that the speeds are halved on the elemental plane of Water).

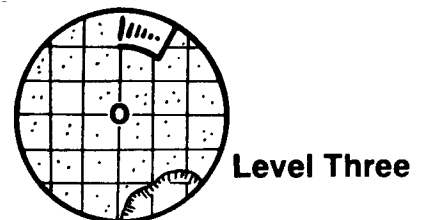
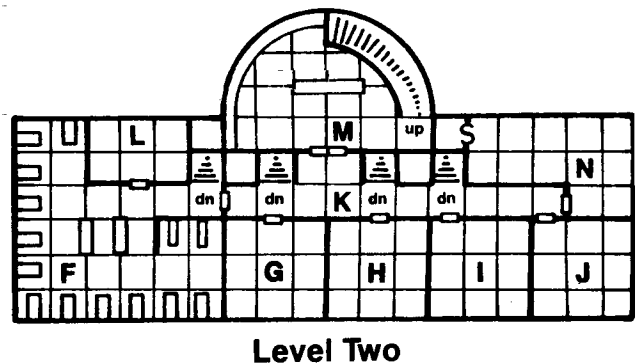
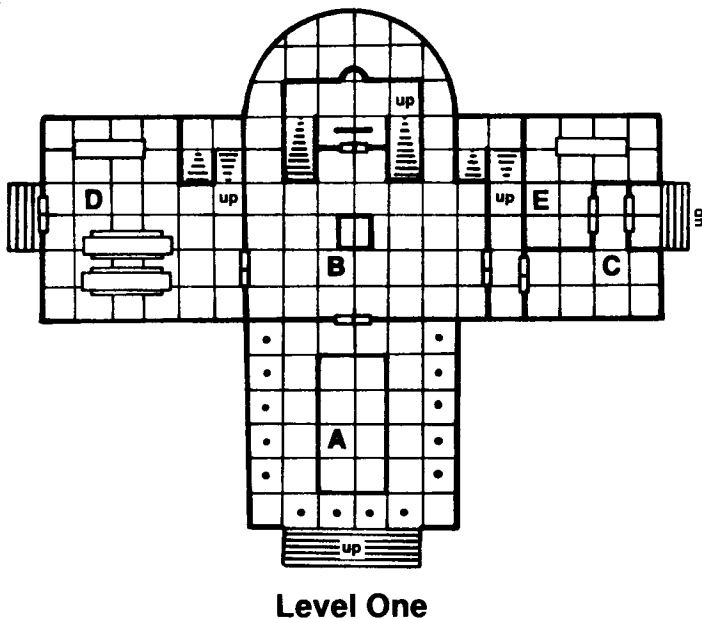
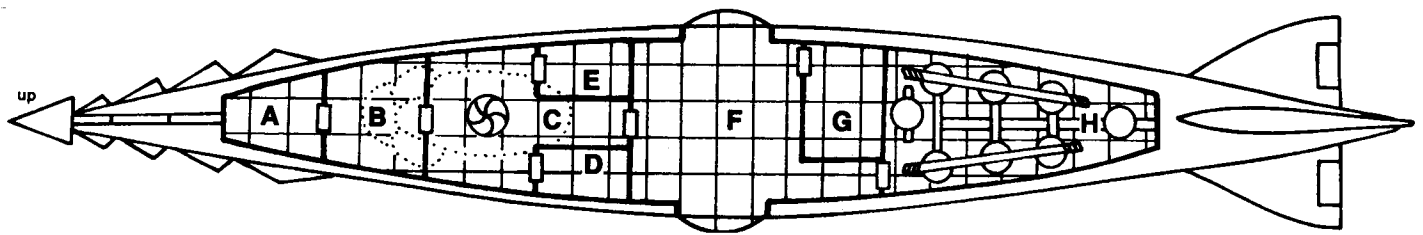
- 2 elementals: 1/15 mph
- 4 elementals: 2/20 mph
- 6 elementals: 4/25 mph

Presently, there are available one

fire and one water elemental (60 and 72 hit points, respectively), along with a spare fire elemental with 65 hit points. Orion certainly wouldn't mind the group's managing to capture another water elemental during the quest!

This compartment is off limits to the adventurers.

Finally, the *Nereid* is 250 feet in length, with a 40-foot beam. Her hull's seamless construction was created through Orion's specially researched *mending* spell, and has a value of 120 points. Oxygen needs are met through a rare variety of kelp planted throughout the ship, which thrives on carbon dioxide and releases large



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amounts of oxygen. Illumination is provided by shuttered lamps of *continual light*.

Except for Orion and Cyrino, the crew are all 2nd- and 3rd-level fighters.

The Voyage

Forty-eight hours after getting underway, the *Nereid* halts in a safe area near the rock and muck of a pocket of the plane of Earth. For several days, Cyrino instructs the newcomers in the techniques of survival upon the plane of elemental Water, and proper use of the diving suits, made of a large copper helmet attached by a harness to a canvas body suit. Once again, oxygen is provided by kelp, in this case stored in a bulky back canister.

During this time, the DM may arrange a minor encounter if he wishes, although spellcasters will be at a minor disadvantage, finding that the breathing apparatus inhibits spell usage with verbal components (a 10% chance of spell failure).

On completing the training, the *Nereid* makes course for Olhydra's coral island, taking five days to reach it. If at any time the party discovers the true reason they are here and confronts Orion, he will apologize for misleading them and make every possible attempt to persuade the group to help recover his men, gladly acceding to any reasonable demands. Should the party absolutely refuse to help, the frustrated captain and crew will mount their own rescue operation, losing 2-5 crewmen in the process, and then return the adventurers—unpaid—to the World Serpent Inn.

Arrival

As the *Nereid* approaches Olhydra's island, the party is summoned by Orion to the conning tower. On their arrival, they observe through the forward viewpoints the remnants of a vast, ancient city in the depths below them. Literally hundreds of buildings in various conditions dot the landscape. Here and there, huge rifts in the earth suggest that some sort of titanic cata-

clysm struck the luckless inhabitants. Yet, paradoxically, many buildings look almost entirely intact, with even delicate mosaics and statuary seemingly unravaged by whatever event befell the metropolis.

Gently skimming over the rooftops of the city, the *Nereid* follows a line of ruined buildings down into a deep trench, gently coming to a stop as Orion shouts through a speaking tube for Cyrino to take the propulsion off-line.

Turning to the adventurers, Orion indicates that the temple they seek lies several hundred feet directly above them. While they depart the *Nereid* and explore it, he will keep the vessel hidden in the trench, lights dimmed, and await their return.

To assist the group, he first of all offers the use of his *short sword* +3, and for missile weapon assistance, a crossbow with four *bolts* +3 is available. Each of these bolts is tipped with a small glass bead containing a stunning poison effective against sea humanoids (duration one hour). In addition, he provides the magic-user with a crystalline wand. This is, of course, his *wand of elemental entrapment*. In the event of the group's being attacked by a water elemental, the wand should be fired at it. If the wand's magic is not resisted, the elemental will be destroyed (he does not make the party aware that the creature is in fact absorbed into the wand, which presently has the storage capacity of up to 50 hit dice of elementals).

Finally, the party may choose whether to don diving suits (which are not usable with plate mail!) or to use some other means of survival. Orion can cast a maximum of two *airy water* spells on those requesting them, the first being on the party magic-user. For an emergency back-up, two vials containing a total of seven doses of potions of *water breathing* are given out.

In the forward compartment, eight crewmen are waiting to follow the group and then take up positions guarding their ship. Each is armed with a crossbow and several bolts sim-

ilar to those offered to the party.

The Temple

On departing the *Nereid*, the adventurers need about a turn to reach the temple, which sits upon a ledge overlooking the trench. Majestic columns support a peaked roof, and the multi-story structure is crowned with a large dome. Outer stairways lead to three potential entrances at the temple's front and sides.

A. Main Entry. A huge marble stairway leads to what formerly was the main entry. A series of pillars supports the 10-foot wide covering of an atrium, with a pool at its center, now filled with growths and kelp of various sorts. If the pool is explored, there is 75% chance of a character's coming into range of an attack by a patch of strangler weed.

Strangler weed (4): AC 6; MV 0; HD 2; hp 10; #AT 1; Dmg special; THACO 16; SA crushing; AL N.

Against the far wall of the atrium, a pair of bronze double doors offer entry into the interior of the temple.

B. Hall of Worship. The center portion of the temple's lower level holds the chief worship area. Near the main entryway, a large pedestal some six feet high and 10 feet wide holds a bronze statue of a sea deity, now unrecognizable due to defacement. To the north of the chamber, a massive altar of marble, decorated with now defaced carvings of sea reliefs, stands above the tiled floor. A series of steps leads to a sacrificial brazier of blue coral (value 1,000 gp with an encumbrance value of 2,000 gp) mounted atop a brass tripod set in a raised block. A combined strength of 50 will allow the assembly to be slid aside, revealing a secret compartment in which is stored Drylleivlyn's treasure: 750 gp, 970 sp, a gold and pearl necklace valued at 1,000 gp, and a potion of *longevity*.

Unknown to the sea hag, a secret compartment was built into the storage chamber. If successfully discovered, the remnants of the temple's valuables will be revealed: a platinum

and pearl skullcap (value 800 gp), a rotted ceremonial robe of blue silk, a sceptre of gold entwined with mithral wire (value 1,250 gp), and a *rod of splendor* with 10 remaining charges.

Two sets of stairs lead from the altar upward to the priests' quarters in the level above. The set directly on the altar's eastern side leads to a trap at the head of the stairs, where apparently a curiously low roof allows nothing more than a crawl space to squeeze through.

In fact, the "roof" is a stone slab muscled into position over the stairway by Dryllevilyn's sahuagin guards. It now hangs motionless, awaiting contact by an intelligent creature. If the slab is touched in any way, it will fall, crushing any standing within a 10-foot square below it for 2-12 points of damage, and seal off the passage in the process. (Note that any character larger than a halfling who attempts to squeeze through has a 20% of making contact with the trap, and thus being crushed for an automatic 12 points of damage.)

The stairway to the west of the altar is not trapped, but waiting to ambush the party from area K are four of Dryllevilyn's sahuagin, who attack as the group ascends.

Sahuagin (4): AC 5; MV 24"; HD 2+2; hp 10, 8, 6, 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (trident); THAC0 16; SA net; AL LE.

The smallest of the monsters is armed with a net, which will be employed on the weakest-looking character in the front rank of the party. If a successful roll to hit is made, the character becomes entrapped, unable to free himself without assistance unless his strength is 16 or higher (in the event, an *open doors roll* will suffice).

Because of their keen senses, the sahuagin cannot be surprised unless, for instance, a thief moves silently or the fellowship advances under a *silence* spell.

The sahuagin have no treasure.

C. Side Entry. If the party chooses, entry to the temple can be gained through a pair of double doors in the eastern wall of the temple. A danger,

however, is a steam current (caused by the *Nereid*, in fact) which has been circulating in the general area. There is a 75% chance that characters exploring here will be exposed to 1-8 points of heat damage from it.

Past the bronze double doors, a hallway decorated with ancient sea murals reveals two other sets of portals, those directly west leading to the priests' dining area (E), while double doors to the southwest allow penetration to the main worship area or ascension up a stairway to the second level.

D. Refectory. Temple acolytes took their meals here, and the adventurers find surreptitious entrance through the outer doors frustrated by a thick iron bar, sealing the doors shut.

A search of the room reveals little of interest apart from a serving table at the north of the room, and two dining tables to the south. Double doors to the southeast allow entry into the main temple, while a stairway to the north leads up to the second level.

E. Priests' Dining Room. Here, the chief priests of the temple took their meals. Atop a once-fine mahogany table, a few utensils of silver remain (value 5 gp), with nothing else of interest to be seen.

F. Acolytes' Quarters. This large chamber on the second level held the living area of the temple acolytes, including a number of bunks and a pair of tables. On guard at the head of the stairs are two sahuagin.

Sahuagin (2): AC 5; MV 24"; HD 2+2; hp 9, 7; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (trident); THAC0 16; AL LE.

Providing some cover for them are four crossbow bolts hanging motionless, facing down the stairs. Any character seeking to engage the sahuagin must spend a round touching a bolt from the side so that it may continue its flight without danger. Otherwise, the character must roll against his Dexterity to slip around the trap, automatically being struck by a bolt for 1-6 points of damage if unsuccessful.

G. Bed Chambers. Various sorts of rubble are piled within the room. Hiding amidst the mess is a black sea

urchin.

Urchin: AC 5; MV 15"; HD 1+1; hp 6; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; THAC0 18; AL N. Inside the urchin's body can be found a black pearl valued at 75 gp.

H. Bed Chamber. This room is empty, save for the remnants of a bed and a closet filled with rotted robes.

I. Bed Chamber. This room currently is empty except for four sets of diving outfits belonging to Orion's men, and a *long sword +1* (+3 on the Prime Material plane) all lying strewn about the floor.

J. Dryllevilyn's Quarters. This room is filled with kelp and other sea growths, and it is here the sea hag usually resides, although she currently lies in wait for the party in the dome above this level (O). If explored, a few bones can be noted lying scattered about.

K. Hallway. This area is reached by several potential paths, and is guarded by four sahuagin prepared to ambush those ascending the western stairway (for a full description of them, see area B above).

L. Vestry. This was formerly the acolytes' vestry, now abandoned and containing useless rubble.

M. Library. This was a large library used by the chief priests. A huge, semicircular bookcase once holding an incredible wealth of knowledge now houses only the rotted remnants of books and tomes. A long study-table stands at the center of the room, and to the east is a winding stairway leading to the top of the dome—and to Orion's men.

N. Barracks. Once the priests' vestry, this chamber now serves as the barracks for Dryllevilyn's sahuagin. Currently, there are four occupants.

Sahuagin (4): AC 5; MV 24"; HD 2+2; hp 9, 7, 6, 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger) or 1-6+1 (bolt); THAC0 16; AL LE. While all have crossbows and two *bolts +1* (taken from Orion's men), only two of the creatures, who presently are standing next to the secret door, have the opportunity to make use of them, the others resorting to daggers.

The Voyage of the Nereid

In the northwest side of the room is a secret door to a small storage closet, inside which lies the treasure of the sahuagin: 50 gp, 123 sp, a silver jewelry box (value 40 gp), and two sets of ceremonial *chain mail* +1, formerly belonging to a pair of temple priests, and now seeming quite unmagical on this plane.

O. Dome. At the very top of the temple lies what were once the quarters of the high priest. The top eight feet of the dome has been converted into an airchamber, and Orion's four men, weakened from Dryllevilyn's less than merciful treatment, lie atop a pile of rubble to the southeast, which reaches a few feet out of the water.

A forest of oxygen kelp grows beneath the surface of the water, some seven feet deep. Hidden within it is Dryllevilyn, warily keeping watch for the inevitable rescue attempt.

Dryllevilyn: AC 7; MV 15"; Shaman 5; HD 5; hp 25; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5 + special; THACO 15; SA spells, death gaze; MR 50%; AL CE; *staff of withering*. She has these spells memorized: *cure light wounds, cause light wounds, sanctuary, chant, resist fire, slow poison, meld into stone*.

She will allow the group to reach Orion's men; then the water in the chamber will begin churning, and after a round her most powerful servant will arise to confront the party.

Water elemental: AC 2; MV 18"; HD 12; hp 60; #AT 1; Dmg 5-30; THACO 10; SD +2 weapon needed to hit; AL N.

As the elemental rises, the magic-user with Orion's wand may fire before it is in full position to attack. A blue beam will strike the creature, causing it to save vs. spell or be drawn within the device. From round to round thereafter, the elemental will be bathed within a blue glow, requiring subsequent saves at the beginning of each round, with a cumulative penalty of -1 on the second and succeeding rounds of attack until it fails to save or the magic-user ceases to fire the wand.

The sea hag will avoid entering combat unless the elemental is

destroyed. Even then, the DM should bear in mind Dryllevilyn's first concern is that she survive the encounter. If the party has defeated her minions and still looks in good shape, she may attempt escape rather than to fight overwhelming odds singlehandedly (should the DM desire to generate her actions randomly, assume a 10% chance per living PC that she will flee, using her *sanctuary* spell for protection). If the DM decides she will fight, her first mode of attack is her *death gaze*, which will cause a single target—even if avoiding eye contact—to save vs. poison or die. Even so, she will not use this attack more than once, fearing it must be saved for employment against Orion in the event he suddenly makes an appearance.

If forced into melee combat she employs her staff, activating its *withering* potential only if reduced below 15 hit points. The staff has 13 non-replaceable charges remaining.

Once Dryllevilyn is no longer a threat, Orion's weakened men can be escorted back to their vessel, completing the party's mission.

Concluding the Adventure

Back aboard the *Nereid*, Orion and his crew will rejoice at the return of their friends. For the party's help, the ship's master will offer his eternal gratitude, willingly providing funds for a *resurrection* if any PCs fell to the sea hag or her servants. In that event, he will also deliver to the group leader a DM-determined magical item usable by the dead person's class (excluding his *wand*, which he will not part with).

The *Nereid* gets quickly underway, leaving Olhydra's island behind it, and several days later, the fellowship is returned to the World Serpent Inn with all the goods they salvaged from the temple.

Their experiences with Orion, of course, need not necessarily end here. If the group desires to adventure further with their sponsor, Orion and the crew would be more than happy to have some "new blood" aboard the

Nereid. A world of adventure awaits both within the Prime Material sea and Olhydra's plane of Water (the lost city, at least, is certainly still filled with treasures—and the vengeful Dryllevilyn if she survives!). The novel and movie to Jules Verne's masterpiece, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, can also provide the DM with a number of inspirational ideas to consider.

Through the Fire

by Deborah Christian

This adventure is designed for five to six PCs of 5th to 6th level and can be completed in one or two sessions.

DM's Background

The notorious Mad Duke, Arn Morisnor, has taken a whim to collect artwork, a compulsion he pursues to the exclusion of all other ducal interests. His current obsession is statuary, and in connection with this, the duke recalls a tale related by Madame Molina, his court wizard.

The famed planar traveler, Kiev the Curious, wrote about his journeys. The book, long believed to be pure fabrication, nevertheless tells about the curious fire statues of the efreet, artworks made of living flame. In particular, Kiev detailed one that decorates the home of Marshud, an efreeti who resides on the outskirts of the City of Brass. Madame Molina was acquainted with Kiev in her younger days, and that elvish wanderer told her the location of a planar vortex which gave admittance to Marshud's estate. It was, indeed, the same vortex used by Kiev to visit the plane of Fire.

Lord Arn has set his heart upon acquiring one of these fabled fire statues. Since the one belonging to Marshud is the only one he knows to be accessible, the duke has commanded that the fire sculpture be acquired for him. One of his loyal knights volunteered, but died in the effort last year—or so it is assumed, since he never returned. The duke, impatient and more obsessed with the fiery artwork than ever before, has renewed his efforts to obtain the rarity.

To this end, the duke "invites" the adventurers to pay him a visit of state. He has heard of their reputation and adventures, and decided that they are best suited to fulfill his wishes. The duke is capricious; he can offer them great riches if they are successful, or a long term in his dungeon if they refuse.

This is a perfect opportunity for the

DM to provide characters with lands, a stronghold, titles, and so on, depending on what they want and deserve. The duke can give them much, though he is an unpredictable master (see Rewards, below).

The Vortex

The town of Regnorheim lies not far from the duke's capital. There, on New Year's Eve almost a century ago, a stable burned down. The fire was not ordinary, and the place is said to be haunted, for on the anniversary of its destruction the stable reappears and burns down again in green-tinged flame. Stories agree that a powerful magic-user once lodged in the empty stable; whether he caused the fire by accident or design is not known.

This unearthly fire is one terminus of an elemental vortex, according to Kiev. It remains open for eight hours, vanishing at sunrise, and provides two-way access to the plane of Fire. The characters can use it to go there and return. Since time on the elemental plane passes twice as fast as on the Prime, the party actually has only four hours in which to accomplish their tasks—or be stranded on the plane of Fire.

Player's Information

You and your companions receive an unexpected invitation to visit Lord Arn, Duke of Nimm. The "invitation" is irresistible, accompanied as it is by an escort of 50 of the duke's men and a courteous but insistent captain named Ralf. Ralf explains that the duke has heard of your reputation, and wishes to meet you himself.

The duke is a small, dark-haired man, given to nervous gestures and short, clipped speech. He does not invite you to sit down but stares at each of you in turn.

"Heard about your exploits," he snaps, tugging an earlobe. "You're brave fellows. Good. Need fewer

cowards. Courage is its own reward." His foot taps the floor as he considers a moment, then he speaks in a rush.

"Know you'll be happy to assist. Have a little job. Need something done. I'm generous, you know—that's something to think about. Don't bother to haggle. No marketplace, this. Loyal vassals, that's you. I'll reward you anyway. I'm in a hurry to get the statue, and you don't have much time before the gate opens. Madame Molina handles details. Talk to her."

As the Duke waves his hand, an elderly woman enters the room. She bows to Lord Arn and motions you to follow her.

If PCs insist on talking longer to the Duke, he humors them for a few minutes, but is easily distracted and has nothing of substance to say. He says no more about the task he expects the party to accomplish, but if asked about rewards speaks vaguely of lands and titles.

Duke Arn: AC 3; MV 12"; F12; HD 12; hp 65; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3+2; THAC0 10; SA *ring of protection* +2; AL N.

The elderly woman is Madame Molina. She can answer the party's questions, and tells them they need merely go through the efreeti's garden, through the outer court, and take the statue from the inner court adjoining it. She can share any of the knowledge detailed under DM's information. She can also warn that missile fire is not possible on that plane; additional information may be imparted at the DM's discretion. If the party refuses to cooperate they spend an indefinite amount of time in the duke's dungeons. If they cooperate only for a price, the Duke offers them a coffer of gold—but he will keep it safe for them until they return.

Madame Molina: AC 8; MV 9"; MU15; HD 15; hp 41; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; THAC0 16; SD 30% resistance to *sleep, charm*; AL NG; spells, as appropriate to 15th-level magic-user with intelligence of 15.

Through the Fire

Preparation

In a few days, the vortex to the plane of Fire will open once more. A troop of guards escorts the party to Regnorheim, and the area around the phantom stable is cordoned off. Madame Molina comes along, bringing everything she needs to prepare the party for a brief stay on the plane of Fire.

The wizardess has spent most of the last two years preparing for a venture like this, and has items meant to aid the party in their quest. She makes it clear that these valuables are the property of the Duke, and are to be returned when the adventurers are back. That said, she gives each character a *ring of fire protection* and an *ioun stone* that sustains its user without air.

The *ring* makes the wearer invulnerable to normal fires and unaffected by the elemental environment. Unique phenomena such as hot spots may affect one to some extent; such results are noted in the appropriate place in this adventure. The *ring's* wearer gains +4 on saving throws vs. fire, and damage from magical fires (i.e., spell or dragon breath, not elemental fire) is reduced by 50%.

The *ioun stone* is an iridescent spindle. If exposed to attack it is treated as AC -4 and can sustain 10 points of damage before it is burned out and worthless. If it is netted or snatched out of the air where it circles the user's head, the character no longer benefits from the *stone's* effect. Any character forced to breathe naturally on the plane of Fire suffers 1d10 points of damage per round, and is affected as if by a *cloudkill* spell if not protected from poison.

Any PC capable of providing one or the other of these functions for himself may do so, but should be protected for at least the four hours of subjective time that the vortex remains open, in case the party stays that long on the plane.

Molina tells the party that they will enter the plane through a fire fountain in the garden of the efreeti Marshud. They must pass through his garden,

through the adjoining court, and into an adjoining chamber where the statue is kept. The sculpture they seek is a fire-dragon, two feet high and made of flame on a movable base of basalt. As long as the party is protected from fire, they should have no difficulty moving the statue. Of course, the acquisition of the work is not intended to be thievery, and four five-pound blocks of rare wood—mahogany and ebony—are given to the party to leave in exchange. As a final warning, Molina reminds them that if they stay on the plane for longer than four subjective hours, the gate will close and they will be stranded.

The Adventure

An hour or two before midnight, the eerie shape of a half-formed stable flickers into existence on the empty lot before you. Yellow-green flames lick at phantom posts, and wood chars in a silent inferno. A hush falls over those who watch. You feel no heat from the flames. Madame Molina wishes you luck as you step into the burning vortex.

One moment you are walking among half-formed timbers, the ghostly stable looking as if it will crash down on your head any moment. In the space of a few heartbeats, the color of the flames turns sharply vivid. Brilliant yellows and reds lick at your feet while orange-rimmed coals line the path before you. Behind you is a fountain of fire, before you a garden of flame. You have arrived on the plane of elemental Fire.

Adventuring on the Plane of Fire

Characters are protected from the hazards of the plane when they arrive. If for any reason this protection is lost, dire and immediate consequences await. If PCs are forced to breathe normally, effects are detailed above. Characters without fire protection suffer the following. Flammable materials ignite immediately, inflicting 3d6

points of damage on the wearer. Metal softens and melts in two rounds; if worn, the character is affected as if by a *heat metal* spell, suffering 2d4 points of damage, and an additional 3d10 points from molten metal. Fluids boil away, and touching the steam inflicts 2d10 points of damage. Potions must save vs. fire. From the terrible heat alone, the character must save vs. breath weapon or die. A successful save results in a mere 4d10 points of damage per round.

Throughout the plane, characters will be unable to distinguish the form of natural elementals from the general conflagration around them. Infravision shows only hot spots (like the Hot Pond below); non-native materials and persons are cooler dark spots.

The Efreet's Estate

In the Garden

The path of coals stretches ahead, lost in haze and glare, flanked to each side by foliage of living flame. Behind you, a broad-based fountain 30 feet across sends liquid fire spouting high into the air. The flame cascades down into a series of rock catch basins, finally pouring into the black basalt pool from which you have emerged. The fire in the pool glows with a greenish tinge.

The green color is a result of the magical vortex. As long as the vortex is open, the odd color is visible.

The characters have arrived in the enclosed garden of Marshud's estate. The luminescence of fire and the misty atmosphere obscures vision beyond 120 feet. The garden is circular and 400 feet across, surrounded by walls of seamless brass 40 feet high. The fountain is in the center of the garden. The path of glowing coals leads away from the fountain to the gate between garden and outer courtyard.

The path of coals rings the base of the fountain, but does not extend beyond it. Behind the fountain is a flat

area glowing more hotly than the surrounding flames. This is the Hot Pond, detailed below. To either side of the fountain are elemental plants resembling growths from the Prime Material plane. Wandering freely through the garden are several squirrel-like animentals.

The safest path out of the garden is the one of coals that the characters are standing upon. If garden denizens find the PCs of interest, or if characters investigate the garden, results are explained in the encounters below.

Hot Pond

A cleared expanse of ground glows bright white. Yellow-white gas rolls gently across its surface. The area is circular and about 50 feet across; the gas lies on the surface to a depth of at least 10 feet.

This is the hot pond, an area of great temperature even for this plane. The efreet enjoy it much as humans do a sauna for relaxation. Immersion in the super-hot gases here heals 1d10 hit points per turn to an injured elemental. Although the pond is supposedly only for efreet, Marshud's gardeners and guards use it occasionally on the sly.

Even though protected from elemental fire, characters entering the

hot pond suffer 1d10 points of damage from the exceptional temperature for every round they spend in it.

Flame Roper

A five-foot-tall pillar of orange-red fire stands between low-lying shrubs flickering with dull blue flames. Flares of yellow gas shoot out from the pillar and dissipate in the air.

There are three flame ropers in the efreeti's garden. Trained not to leave the confines, they keep down the population of animentals and troublesome fire bats. PCs are not likely to recognize this creature as a roper. Regarded by Marshud as a captive, semi-sentient ornamental plant, the flame roper gladly ensnares anyone foolish enough to walk within its grasp. Like its mundane counterpart, it can disguise itself as a tree of fire, grabbing victims with the yellow flares of gas it can release. Ropers move within attack range of characters on a roll of 1 in 6, checked once per turn.

Flame roper (3); AC 0; MV 3"; HD 5; hp 30 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; THACO 15; MR 50%; SA rope-like flares shoot out to a range of 20 feet; disguise as fire tree; hit causes *weakness* (-50% strength in 1-3 rounds); prey is drawn in, 10" per round; SD unaffected by lightning, very susceptible to water

(-4 on saving throw); AL CE; XP 1,615 each.

Animental Squirrels

With eyes like embers and a tail of flickering orange, a squirrel-shaped elemental makes crackling sounds from the limb of a tree of yellow fire.

A number of squirrel-like animentals inhabit the garden. In themselves they are not dangerous, but they are very curious. On a roll of 2 in 6 they notice the PCs and tag along for 2d6 rounds, hoping for food. If the squirrels are following the PCs, it is more likely that the gardeners' attention will be drawn to the intruders as noted below.

Animental squirrels (2-8): AC 6; MV 12"; HD 1/2; hp 3 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; THACO 20; AL N; XP 5 each.

Gem Trees

The garden path near the gate is lined with fiery trees, 10 on each side of the walk. Glittering gems hang on the branches, reflecting the colors of the garden fires.

Force must be used to remove a gem from a tree; when plucked, it flares briefly with a hot magical fire. Anyone holding the gem when this occurs



Through the Fire

must save vs. spell or suffer 1d8 points of damage. These gems are of three times the normal value if transported back to the Prime Material, and are especially treasured as a component in magical items and spells. They must cool for two weeks before they can be handled, and in the meantime burn through any container that is not magically protected from heat.

There are 2d10 gems on each of the trees, of these types: rubies, 60%; yellow topaz, 20%; sapphires 10%; diamonds, 10%.

Fire Bats

A glowing, smoking lump of flame rises from the burning foliage. Wings extend, claws rake the air and a batlike figure swoops downwards.

Most of the gem-trees are also home to fire bats which live in the upper branches. These creatures are indistinguishable from the glowing branches and flaming leaves of the foliage until they move and attack. They attack any non-native who passes within 10 feet of a tree, or who disturbs the flame-gems.

Fire bats (2-16): AC 8; MV 6"/20"; HD 2; hp 9 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 16; SA swooping attack; once attached, automatic hit for a total of three rounds, then drop off and return to tree; SD detect invisible and attack without penalty; AL NE.

Fire Chimes

Suspended in the arch of the gateway is a mobile of thin plates of obsidian, shimmering with blue-tinged flame. The chimes emit a harsh sound like the crackle of burning wood and the whoosh of air into a hot fire. The sound grows louder closer to the gate.

There are five chimes, making a sound the efreet consider to be musical. The chimes are loud and noticeable within 30 feet of the gateway; the

device is also magically fascinating, and acts upon the characters as the spell of the same name. Characters passing in earshot must save vs. spell or be *fascinated* by the chimes for 2d10 rounds. This effect can be interrupted by destroying the chimes, although the cessation of noise will alert the gardeners. The chimes hang 15 feet overhead and withstand 10 points of damage before they are ruined. The chimes are only ornamental on the plane of Fire, but are worth at least 5,000 gp to collectors on the Prime Material. As with the flame gems, the chimes can ignite flammable material and require a cooling period before they can be touched on the Prime Material plane.

Gardeners

The greatest danger to the party in Marshud's garden is also the least visible one: the gardeners themselves. Two fire elementals tend this area, and notice non-native intruders on a roll of 3 in 6, or 5 in 6 if the party is followed by animal squirrels. This chance should be rolled for when the party first arrives, and checked once every three rounds characters spend in the garden. The gardeners automatically notice the party if they disturb the fire bats, or if the fire chimes stop their distinctive sound.

Fire elementals (2): AC 2; MV 12"; HD 12; hp 72, 60; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; THAC0 9; SA burn inflammables; SD hit by +2 weapons; AL NE; XP 7,860.

The gardeners respond to intruders by attempting their capture. They strike to stun, and may grapple with opponents, in which case they should be treated as if they had a strength of 19. If the elementals are victorious, they take intruders to Marshud. If one gardener is slain, the other flees to alert the estate guards.

The Outer Court

Beyond the garden arch is a courtyard, a broad expanse of glowing coals. It is enclosed by galleries on

three sides, with walls and pillars of brass supported by a foundation of basalt. A doorway is visible in each wall, flanked by brass pillars; each one is covered by curtains of deep red flame.

The outer courtyard provides access to different areas of Marshud's estate. Unfortunately, nothing Molina told them prepared the party for the decision about which direction to take.

The Curtains

The curtains are not harmful to protected characters passing through them, but they do serve to hide what is on the other side. It is impossible to listen at the curtains for noise, since the flame of their substance gives off a constant quiet hiss.

To the Right

The passage to the right leads to Marshud's reception court. In one wall of the court is the main entrance to Marshud's estate, a gate which faces onto the Street of the Viziers in the City of Brass. Opposite the entrance gate a passage leads to Marshud's reception hall.

This area is attended by elemental servants and phantom stalkers. It is immediately clear to characters advancing down this high-ceilinged passageway that it gives onto a large open-air courtyard. The DM may wish to remind imprudent characters that they are looking for an enclosed room. Any PC who moves within twenty feet of the end of the passage, or who emerges into the entrance court, is sighted by guards, who rush to apprehend the PCs.

Phantom stalkers (4): AC 3; MV 12"/24"; HD 6; hp 48, 40, 35, 30; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1-8 (scimitar) or 1-4/1-4/ (claw/claw); THAC0 13; SA *polymorph self, fly*; SD can cast forth life essence as 6d6 *fireball*, then perish; AL N; XP 2,418.

The guards fight to subdue, shouting an alarm as they charge the party, and four more guards arrive from the

same direction 1d4 rounds later. If two of the original four are slain, the remaining pair retreat until their companions arrive, but keep the party in sight. Captives are taken to Marshud.

It should be virtually impossible for characters to get through the entrance courtyard and into the estate buildings beyond. If they make it that far, they will soon be overwhelmed by guards. Also, for the purposes of this scenario, the rest of Marshud's estate is irrelevant and not detailed here. If the characters get sidetracked in that direction, the DM can expand the efreeti's estate as he sees fit.

Straight Ahead

The passage straight ahead of the garden arch is a short one, and opens into a chamber.

Beyond the curtain, a short 10-foot long passage opens into a round chamber 60 feet wide. Directly across the room, a flame curtain obscures another doorway. The curtain is difficult to see, for in the middle of the room a cloud of dense orange gas hovers, swirling slowly in mid-air.

Oddly-formed volcanic rock lines the base of the brass wall on the right side of the chamber. The wall itself can be clearly seen only near the opposite doorway, for it is impressed all around with a pattern of burning sand. Blue flame twines around yellow, the whole bordered by a ribbon of orange. The effect is that of a tapestry or mosaic, worked in flame.

To the left, three basalt shelves protrude from the wall. On the bottom one, five feet above the floor, rests a small chest of wood glowing light blue. On the second, ten feet above the ground, is a jar of green-and-white marbled stone. On the third, five feet higher, is the fire statue, a dragon sculpted from flame on a stone base.

The volcanic rocks are used as hassocks when Marshud entertains in

this room. The swirling gas in the center of the chamber is an intelligent fire elemental magically bound in service to Marshud as punishment for insubordination. The elemental guards the valuables here, and serves as company for anyone wishing conversation. It has the statistics of the elementals given above, but has an intelligence of 16 and is named Faid.

Faid takes form when the characters enter the chamber. He is anxious to negotiate a deal; if the characters free him from servitude, the elemental will help them get away with the valuables. Faid promises to help the party fight off the guards if necessary. Although he may promise more, Faid is not capable of doing too much more than this. If the characters cannot free the elemental, he is compelled to fight them and defend the treasure.

Sadly, Faid has no idea how he might be freed. All he can tell the party is that the chamber was redecorated from top to bottom just before he was put in it. Once in, Faid has been unable to leave.

Although it is not obvious, the spell that binds Faid is worked into the sand tapestry on the walls. If the sand pattern is destroyed, the spell is broken. This can only be done by a magical weapon or tool, and takes 2d4 rounds to deface a sufficient amount of wall space. If PCs do not think of this on their own, the DM may wish to let magic-users make an intelligence check to recognize an arcane pattern in the "tapestry".

If Faid fights the party, there is no subtlety in his tactics, just brute force. He interposes himself between the party and the treasures on the wall.

The treasures are not trapped in any way. The glow around the wooden chest is a *protection from fire* spell. The contents of the jar are safe on this plane as long as its lid is not removed.

The statue weighs five pounds and is unwieldy. If dropped or hit on the plane of Fire, it must save (as ivory) vs. a normal blow or shatter. XP: 15,000.

The wooden chest is 6 inches wide, 6 inches long, and 3 inches deep.

Inside is a *deck of many things*. XP: 1,000.

The stone jar contains 30 *smart pills*. Swallowing one *pill* increases the individual's intelligence by one; two *pills* increase it by two. Taking more *pills* has no effect. The increased intelligence lasts for 24 hours. After the effect wears off, the person's intelligence decreases by a similar amount for 12 hours. XP: 3,000 (100 per *pill*).

If the party fought its way past guards or servants to get this far, more are soon on the way. The timing of their arrival is at the DM's discretion. Guards can approach the chamber from both of the passageways that lead into it, but two fighters at each entrance should be able to hold them off for a while. Faid is true to his word and helps in combat as needed. There are a total of 20 guards in Marshud's estate. If they cannot capture or kill the intruders after one turn, they alert Marshud to the problem. The efreeti arrives at the end of four additional rounds.

Marshud (efreeti): AC 2; MV 9"/24"; HD 10; hp 80; #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; THAC0 10; SA *grant up to three wishes, assume gaseous form, detect magic, enlarge, polymorph self, create an illusion, wall of fire, produce flame, pyrotechnics*; SD *become invisible*; AL NE; XP 3,070.

Marshud is delighted to wade into the thick of the fight, not seriously believing that fragile creatures from the Prime Material can do him much harm. He also fights to subdue, since the idea of Prime prisoners amuses him (see Consequences). However, the efreeti has no compunction against killing an adventurer who harms one of his treasures. Invaded here in his own home, the efreeti and his staff do not give up, retreat, or surrender.

If the PCs are captured, Marshud's activities and the party's options must be determined by the DM. The efreeti likes the thought of using them for slaves, servants, perhaps even gladiators in arena combat in the City of Brass. If the party amuses Marshud enough—or makes him money on

combat wagers — the efreeti will even arrange to feed them periodically, although that is a troublesome thing on this plane.

To the Left

The passage to the left leads to the servant's quarters. This area is vacant for the time being, but there is a 1 in 6 chance per turn that 1d2 fire elementals will enter the area. Their statistics and reactions are the same as those given above for the gardeners.

Marshud and the Pool

The passage out of the servants' quarters leads to the equivalent of a large bathing pool. This brass-walled court is open to the "sky"; sunk in the "floor" is a large depression lined with coals and filled with a burning liquid. The liquid is naphtha, an elemental pocket treasured by Marshud who, in fact, is bathing in the pool during this time. There are two exits from this room. They lead deeper into Marshud's estate and are not relevant to this scenario. PCs venturing past this point are overwhelmed with guards, as at the entrance court.

The identity of the bathing efreeti should not be apparent to the party. Anyone investigating this room from the hallway observes a fire elemental standing by the poolside (a servant), two scimitar-armed humanoids by a fire-curtained door (phantom stalkers), and a massive, 12-foot tall efreeti bathing in the fiery liquid. The servant and guards have statistics as given above. If characters are captured elsewhere, they are brought immediately to Marshud at the pool. If the party attacks the efreeti here, he calls for his guards and a melee ensues.

Backtracking

The return to the fire fountain takes the party through and past the same hazards they encountered when they entered the estate. Even close to the fountain, it is still possible for the party to be nabbed by gardeners if Marshud's staff is not yet alert to their presence.

If the party returns to the fire fountain and is not being pursued, they need simply step into the flames. A moment later, they walk out of the ghostly burning stable in Regnorheim.

If the party was delayed beyond their four-hour limit, a chilling sight greets them in the garden. The fountain is just a fountain, with no sign of a vortex, and the adventurers are stranded on the plane of elemental Fire. Whether or not they have been detected yet, this now becomes their greatest problem, and a predicament for the DM to handle in future gaming sessions. If his help has been enlisted, Faid may be useful in getting the party out of Marshud's estate and steering them to the location of another vortex.

Faid has a final surprise for the party when he leads the PCs to the fire fountain. The elemental will be spellbound for eternity if his connivance becomes known, and Faid has decided it's in his best interest to escape Marshud the best way he can. He does not warn the party of this intention, but simply follows them out of the burning stable. Once on the Prime Material, Faid is not under anyone's control. The elemental would most enjoy consuming a few houses and devouring some nice wood. His further ambitions are for the DM to determine.

Pursuit

If pursuit is hot behind them, the PCs can flee back the way they came. If they have not taken Marshud's treasures,

pursuit does not follow them past the fire fountain. If they have taken valuables, 1d4 guards follow them into the fire fountain, and there is a 25% chance that Marshud dashes right after them. Otherwise the efreeti awaits his guard's report. If the guards fail to recover the treasure, Marshud himself may pay the party a visit at some unexpected time (see Consequences).

Rewards

The Mad Duke is ecstatic if the fire sculpture is brought to him undamaged. His gratitude knows only the bounds the DM cares to put on it — at least until his fickle mood changes in a day or two. If the sculpture is damaged, the duke's gratitude is cut by half. A ruined sculpture or an empty-handed party produces the following results. (The duke is not interested in other treasure items; the party may keep anything else they brought back.)

Roll Result

- 1 Rewards party with *ion stones* and 500 gp each "for your trouble".
- 2 Payment of 100 gp apiece, "for your trouble".
- 3 Hires assassin to spy on party for one month, to see if they have somehow smuggled the sculpture back and plan to sell it elsewhere.
- 4 Orders party imprisoned; kangaroo court sentences PCs to public punishment and 1,000 gp fine per person.
- 5 Furious rage; party imprisoned for 1d6 months.
- 6 Duke banishes PCs from realm; posts reward for their heads if seen in the territory after one week.

The Missing Kristal

by Bruce Nesmith

Duke Graven's daughter has been kidnaped by an old enemy, a dao on the plane of Earth. The duke hires the party to rescue her.

The Adventure

While far from Arabel between adventures, the party is met by a lone messenger and conducted into the presence of Duke Graven, lord of the principality through which the group is traveling. In fact, his principality is small and of little political value, but the party does not know this. What is known is that they are in the wrong place at the right time.

Entering the duke's room, you immediately notice a dozen men at arms. These tough-looking veterans flank two older men of distinction, one seated, the other standing behind his high-backed chair. The seated man has the clothing and bearing of nobility and authority. The greybeard standing behind him is either a magician or an impressive imposter. Both are haggard and worn, while the men-at-arms appear to have recently fought.

The seated man speaks: "My name is Duke Graven, and my mood is foul. Do not make it worse by interrupting me. My daughter, Kristal, the joy of my heart, has been kidnaped by an evil dao, my nemesis of many years. Catching us by surprise, he overcame my court magician and fled back to his own dismal dimension with her.

"He must be pursued while there is still a chance to rescue Kristal unharmed. I have selected you to return my beloved daughter to me, not because of your great prowess or singular abilities, but because you are my only option. Each man that returns will receive 2,500 pieces of gold and my gratitude, provided Kristal is returned alive and well. Do you accept?"

The duke answers questions, but

there is a sharp edge to his voice and a note of impatience in his response. He does not tolerate detailed or long questions, and will demand a yes or no answer from the party. The price offered is firm and the party is free to go if they do not accept.

He is willing to provide virtually any normal equipment in reasonable quantities. He will not supply the party with weapons or armor.

The Vortex

Within the castle walls is the gateway used by the dao to return to the elemental plane of Earth. It can be reached in a few rounds.

A shimmering seven-sided plane of dim light hangs suspended in the air. Through it can be seen a natural cavern. Strewn about the gateway are several large chunks of stone, piles of dirt, and far too much drying blood. "The fight was bitter," Duke Graven says in a tight, clipped voice. "How long, Roway?"

"Six minutes more," whispers the mage, "then the gate closes." The wizened Roway hands you a scroll, saying, "Upon this scroll are written the mystic symbols to return you to this world."

The scroll has a *plane shift* spell on it. Normally, this spell can carry up to seven persons back to the Prime Material plane. If the party is larger than six (save a spot for Kristal), then there are two spells on the scroll. The duke has no other advice other than that the dao is clever and dangerous. The party has six rounds to enter the gateway or else it closes.

The Elemental Plane of Earth

As the last member of your group steps through the shimmering portal, it fades away. You find yourselves standing on a wide rock ledge enclosed by cave walls on three

sides. The opening to this alcove looks out upon a strange sight.

A wide river flows by the alcove entrance, filling the vaulted cavern from wall to wall. The river's surface is flat and as smooth as glass, despite its speed. Swirling eddies of brown, gray and blue can be seen. Shockingly, this river is made of flowing stone!

As is much of this adventure, the stone river is in an elemental pocket, so the party will be able to move, see, and breathe. The river is cool and solid enough for someone to stand on top of it. In fact, anything on its surface is propelled along at the river's speed of 12" like on an escalator. The river is 50 feet across in a cavern 40' high. There are no traversable shores in sight.

Up to this point, the PCs have instinctively chosen a "down" direction for gravity that corresponds to that expected in the Prime Material plane. They can of course change this notion at any time to permit, for example, travel across the ceiling at normal walking speed. Otherwise, "down" is always in the direction originally assumed.

The lair of the dao is downstream. Any upstream travel should be discouraged by whatever means present themselves. While on the river, any of the events listed below can be used to add to the atmosphere.

Random Events on the River

1. A harmless animental phases through the cavern wall for a "drink" at the river. Upon sighting the party, it flees back through the cavern wall.

2. An elemental constrictor snake phases through the cavern ceiling and lands on a player. Combat ensues, of course.

Constrictor (1): AC 3; MV 9"; HD 6+1; hp 25; #AT 2; Dmg 1-4/2-8; SA constriction; AI N.

3. Minor earthquake showers party with stone and rock.

4. Animental fish leaps out of the "water", possibly frightening, but not dangerous.

The Missing Kristal

Well of Thunder

In the distance, a low rumble can be heard by the party. To a dwarf, the increased speed of the river is apparent. Other characters must roll to detect it. At this point, the party is a half a mile from the well of thunder—a full day's travel by unaided walking, but only a half day using the speed of the river to augment travel.

The well of thunder is a roughly hewn hole through which the river drains. By the time the party is within sight of it, the roar of breaking rock has made conversation impossible and the speed of the river has doubled to 24".

Ahead is a large hole in the floor through which the river plunges. On the wall on the far side of the hole is an arched engraving. To the left of the hole is a shelf of rock clear of the river.

Unless the party hesitates for a foolishly long time, there should be no problem reaching the haven of the rock shelf. Anybody that falls through the hole on the river dies in the maelstrom of breaking rock below.

The rock shelf is adjacent to both the river and the well. The party can easily peer down into the well from there. The wall carving above the well reads "The Well of Thunder, Gateway to Granite Gloom", in the genie language of the dao. This is the entrance to the lair of the kidnaper.

Looking down into the well, the party can see the Rock Falls. To the side of the falls is a scalable wall, although slippage would mean a fall down into the gravel lake a hundred feet below. The climb might be necessary since the cavern and lake have gravity, put there by the dao, that cannot be altered by the whims of the PCs.

A few feet over the lip of the hole, the stone water of the river breaks apart into large rocks and boulders. These stones fall about a hundred feet into a shifting gravel bed where they are

dashed into smaller gravel pieces that fly about in all directions.

On the trip down, check once for each character to see if anyone slips and falls. Roll a d100 for the height of the fall; damage is normal for falling. If a rope is used to secure the climbers, there is no chance of falling.

The base of the cliff is the constantly shifting surface of the gravel lake. Within 50 feet of the base of the rock falls, each round there is a chance of suffering 1 point of damage from flying gravel. This includes the last half of the journey down the cliff.

The chances of this damage are determined by using the armor class of the PC times ten. For example, one with AC 5 would have a 50% chance each round of being hurt by flying rock chips. Characters of armor class 0 or better have a 5% chance.

The Gravel Lake

A wide lake spreads out from the rock falls underneath a vaulted cavern roof several hundred feet high. Waves ripple and crest along its surface and small breakers lap the shoreline. The illusion of normalcy is broken by the nature of the lake. It is made entirely of gravel, constantly shifting pebbles, and small rocks.

The surface is treacherous to walk upon. Each round a character stands still, he sinks 6 inches into the gravel. Movement is slowed to two-thirds of normal. Any character moving recklessly has a 1 in 6 chance per round of falling.

Except for the 120 feet of cliff face on either side of the falls, a wide shoreline extends all the way around the lake. The cavern walls have many dimples, alcoves, and protrusions, but none are entrances or exits from the lake cavern.

The shoreline is 40 to 120 feet wide. Two rounds after the party makes it to shore, a small group of four xaren phase out of the wall at the far end of the gravel lake cavern.

Xaren (4): AC 1; MV 9"; HD 5 + 5; hp 30 each; #AT 4; Dmg 1-3(×3)/4-16; SA surprise on 1-5; SD immune to fire, cold; AL N; XP 295 each.

The xaren are nomads, and have only recently entered Granite Gloom. Having just feasted on a rich mineral vein, they have only a 10% chance of attacking if not offered metal. In exchange for metal magic or 250 gp worth of gems or coins, one of them will ferry the party to the nearest breathable pocket, but no farther. The xaren cannot act as a guide because it has never been here before. It will not fight for the party under any circumstances.

If for some reason the party does not obtain a xaren to transport them through the rock, there is an alternative. A few hours later an earth elemental, a servant of the dao, phases into the gravel lake area. It is willing to act as a guide for the party throughout the Granite Gloom, but only after some hard dicker-ing on the price. At an opportune moment, specified below, the dao's servant will attack the party.

Earth elemental: AC 2; MV 6"; HD 8; hp 40; #AT 1; Dmg 4-32; SA battering ram; SD +2 weapon; AL N; XP 1,300.

Bear Cave

Just because the xaren or elemental takes the party safely to the next Air pocket does not mean that they are safe.

The smooth gray stone walls curve away to both sides to form a perfect cylinder, bending in a perfect semi-circle. A rank odor assaults your senses, a combination of rock dust and animal stench. Whatever lurks around the corners cannot be seen.

The bear cave is a perfect donut carved with superhuman smoothness from a single block of stone. On the far side from where the party enters is a secret door opening into a narrow tunnel which leads away from the donut. The donut is 100 feet across from outer edge to outer edge. The hollow interior where the party enters is 25 feet in

diameter.

Two bears live inside the earth in the center of the donut. The larger bear moves immediately through the earth to attack the party. A round later the second bear phases through the stone walls behind the party. The bear resembles their Prime Material equivalent only as any other four-legged creature would.

Black bears (2): AC 5; MV 12"; HD 3+3; hp 20, 16; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA hug, 2-8 dmg; AL N; XP 165, 149.

Tunnel to the Spider's Wheel

The tunnel is only three feet across, so narrow that the party will most likely have to crawl through one at a time. Combat is impossible here. Fortunately nothing attacks the PCs while they worm their way through the tunnel. Eventually it ends at a small bubble of air about the size of an elevator.

Spider's Wheel

The cramped, rough room reminds each of you that people can sweat and stink as much as any animal. However, that unpleasant idea is quickly wiped from your minds as you watch the smooth, slightly curved, far wall grind past at a slow even pace.

The spider's wheel is a sphere of stone in constant motion. There are several tunnels leading from edge to edge. By waiting at the end of one of these tunnels, eventually it will line up with another aperture and the party can jump through. The conjunction lasts for two rounds, during which the party must decide. Anything caught between the wheel and the outer rock is crushed. The sphere spins on multiple axes, causing the openings to move in a seemingly random fashion. At any given entrance it takes d100 rounds before there is an alignment. Roll randomly for which connection is made.

The rolling rock is named for its primary inhabitants, five huge spiders that roam through the stone and its tunnels. Each turn spent in the spider's wheel there is a 1 in 6 chance that a spider will find the party. The spiders look similar to their Prime Material cousins, differing only in two major areas. The spiders are made from smooth-faced, sharp-edged stone, and the eight double-jointed legs radiate from the body in all directions, unlike a normal spider.

Huge spider (5): AC 4; MV 18"; HD 2+2; hp 10 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA poison (+1 save), surprise 1-5; AL N; XP 175 each.

The wheel is laced through with twisting and winding tunnels. In most places they are wide enough to

accommodate an upright human. Mapping is impossible from within the tunnels. For those players that insist on following the details of movement, use the table below. Otherwise the party reaches a new exit from the wheel in d10+10 rounds.

Each few rounds roll on the table below to see what terrain feature has been encountered. Use common sense if the die roll makes no sense.

d10	Feature
1	Dead end
2	Continuation
3	Three-way intersection
4	Four-way intersection
5	Five-way intersection
6	Bottleneck (tunnel narrows)
7	Bubble (tunnel widens)
8-10	Exit (edge of the wheel)

When an exit has been found, there is the wait mentioned above (d100 rounds) for it to line up with another area. Use the table below to determine which area is in conjunction with the exit. In order to get into the crystal garden where the duke's daughter can be found, two gemstone keys must be retrieved.

The other tunnels leading away from the wheel are all roughly hewn stone bending out of sight. The various side rooms are described below.



The Missing Kristal

d6 Side room

- 1 Game room
- 2 Fanghorn and One-eye (key)
- 3 The "prisoner"
- 4 Emerald guardian (key)
- 5-6 Crystal garden

Game Room

The 80-foot twisting tunnel ends in one end of a 15-foot diameter, 15-foot tall cylinder. The other end is open to the game room. As the last member of the party clambers into the cylinder, they are all *teleported* into its mirror image on the far side. Of course, this new location has no exit. To get back, the party must cross the game room.

The small cylinder opens into a huge room. The walls of this perfect cube are veined with granite, with minerals and crystals of all colors. Hanging inside this enormous vault are four smaller cubes of differently colored minerals.

The game room vault is 150 feet in each diameter. Each suspended cube is 10 feet across and hangs at a point exactly 50 feet in from each wall. This produces exact spacing from wall to cube, and cube to cube. The cubes are made of four different mineral ores: bronze, copper, silver, gold.

Inside each cube lives a team of 11 elemental kobold athletes. Each kobold is equipped solely with a modified *wand of paralyzation* (6 charges, 6" range). The peculiar magic of this place makes any *paralyzed* creature appear to be *turned to stone*. The dao is a lover of games, and had this room built at great expense. Here any combination of the four teams compete in non-lethal combat for the pleasure of the dao and his consorts.

Through years of practice, the kobold athletes have refined their abilities and tactics to a fine edge. This is reflected in their armor class and their +2 modifier on saves where speed plays a factor, such as area effect weapons, wands, and so on.

Kobolds (11): AC 3; MV 6"; HD 1; hp 3 each; #AT 1; Dmg *paralyze*; SD +2

on saves; AL LE; XP 35 each.

When the party enters the game room, the bronze team takes the court. They act as a team, employing superior tactics: dispersing to avoid area effect weapons, using the cubes as a shield to fire from, or sandbagging by leaving a kobold behind a cube until the party passes by. Play them as smart as you can within the rules. If the party defeats a team, they can pass freely to the other side and exit back into the tunnel. Any *wands* can be gathered up and taken as well.

If a team *paralyzes* the whole party, they are gathered together and dumped back into the cylinder from which they started. When the party tries to cross the game room again, a different team comes out to meet them. If all four teams defeat the party, they are allowed to cross the game room unmolested.

Fanghorn and One-eye

The entrance to this room is a perfect pentagon. The room itself is a rounded sphere whose surface is made of geometric shapes of all kinds. You can see no other exit from this place. Across the room are two high pentagons, each carved with the horrible stone visage of a demon. The demon faces are separated by a 10-foot rectangle of stone along the surface. One face has two short horns and small tusks protruding from its mouth. The other has but a single eye and pig-like snout.

They are of course, animate. Until one of them is addressed, even if indirectly, they remain still. When that happens, they begin to talk. At first they pour insults at the party, threatening them with all manner of horrible deaths. When it becomes obvious that the party is not going to leave, they stop.

The faces then each swear that the other face is a death trap. Each proclaims that behind his own face lies great treasure.

These two have lived centuries

alone in the same room. They hate one another with a passion. By the law of the dao, the one with the horns must always tell the truth about the room and his companion. The other with the single eye, must always lie about the room and his companion. Notice that they are not compelled to answer all questions, nor are they required to lie or tell the truth about any other object.

This is a classic riddle. If the players can deduce which face is telling the truth, they are safe. If not, they may face great danger. The group can only command one of the faces to open. Both faces are impervious to destructive forces, magical and otherwise, until one of them is chosen.

If the party chooses the truthful face with the horns, it spits out a fist-sized ruby of apparently great value. This is one of the two keys used to open the door to the crystal garden. If the ruby is examined, a heart of jet can be seen in its center. If they choose the lying face with the single eye, it lunges out from the wall and attacks the nearest character as a tunnel worm.

Tunnel worm (1): AC 2; MV 6"; HD 9+3; hp 45; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2-16; SA lunge at +2 to hit; AL N; XP 1,980.

The "Prisoner"

The tunnel opens into an irregular cavern. The heat here is oppressive to say the least. The far half of the cave has walls, floor and ceiling of flowing, molten rock. Splitting the cavern in half is a web forming from the flowing streams of lava. Small fiery creatures scuttle across the web, pulling and shaping the red hot liquid stone.

Inside the searing cage floats a gaunt humanoid of stone. The sharply pointed head almost touches the roof and the wide flat feet curl a mere foot from the floor. Its glowing sunken eyes fix upon you feverishly.

The earth-troll prisoner was once a servant of the dao, but is imprisoned

here for the crime of severe impertinence. The elemental magma is one of the few substances that can hold it. Even so, the burns and scars from the molten rock heal quickly.

Earth troll (1): AC 2; MV 12"; HD 6+6; hp 30; #AT 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/2-12; SA three opponents at once; SD *regeneration*; AL CE; XP 765.

The small creatures that tend the cage are elemental magma spiders. Without them, the "bars" of the cage would lose their shape and sag into the walls in a few turns. Any hostile actions kept up for that time by the part can keep them off the web.

The earth-troll will tell any lie, promise any gift to escape from its prison. It specializes in groveling and flattery. Of course it has no intention of fulfilling any promises made. If released, it will immediately attack the party in hopes of regaining favor with the dao.

Elemental Guardian

The room is a large sphere, with walls all made of sand. Resting on the sands at the far end is a white stone fist about 3 feet across. A silver band circles the index finger. Mounted on this ring is a fist-sized emerald!

At the end of the tunnel is a large volume of sand, about a half mile across. Sleeping within this soft earthen bed is the demi-power Jaggak, a 40 HD earth elemental and distant cousin to Grumbar. His full size is 60 feet tall, of which the PCs are seeing only his fist.

The room itself is about 50 feet in diameter. The sands are packed and can support weight easily. Walking on the surface is like walking on a beach. Any sand kicked up stays suspended in the air a few inches above the surface.

As a minor favor to the dao, Jaggak wears a giant ring upon which is mounted one of the keys necessary to open the crystal garden. He is under no compunction to protect it, since the dao is really an inferior creature. Even in his semi-sleeping state, Jaggak is capable of defending himself, or at

least his arm. However, if he receives sufficient damage to the arm, he flicks off the ring, hoping that the party will leave him to sleep. For purposes of combat, the arm is treated as a 6 HD monster.

Stone arm (1): AC 0; MV 0; HD 6; hp 48; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; SA +4 vs ground-based opponents; AL N; XP 663.

The first character to approach within 20 feet of the fist is attacked. The stone hand shoots out, spraying sand in all directions. If no opponents remain within striking range, it withdraws back into the sand until only the fist is visible.

It has a range of 21 feet in which it can successfully strike. Damage is normal to airborne opponents, +4 if it can squish one against the sand. When it is "killed" (see below), the hand flicks free the ring and retreats into the sand. The silver band of the ring is worth 2,500 gold pieces. If examined closely, it can be seen that the emerald has a heart of black jet.

Jaggak willingly suffers only one round of damage if he cannot strike back at the party. If this happens, he withdraws his arm completely under the sand for 1-6 turns. For example, if the party chooses to stand back and send *magic missiles* at the fist, the first round after taking damage the fist retreats below the sands. Remember that normal missiles do not work on the inner planes.

In this case, the party might choose to go digging for the fist. The digging is fairly easy, but they may discover the true nature of Jaggak.

Up until this point the party was an annoyance that he could sleep through. However, digging through the sand to attack him is a grave insult. Jaggak awakens and moves to put his 10-foot high face into the air pocket. He tells the party that since they would not fight fair for the ring they shall have to pay for it. Blocking the entrance with his 12-foot tall rocky foot, he demands to be paid with a magical item. As DM, pick one of the three most valuable items the party has. Jaggak names it directly in his

demand, hinting that he obviously knows everything about the party and what they carry.

The Crystal Garden

Slowly a circular brass disk as tall as a man swings into view. The rim is sunken into the stone. On the disk is a bas relief of a humanoid face. The head is bald and slightly pointed, definitely not human. The mouth is an open sneer with a fumanchu style mustache drooping over it. The eyebrows are sharply pointed at angles over the vacant eye sockets. No eyes are carved here; instead, there is a fist-sized hole where each eye would be.

This is, of course, a portrait of the dao. Unless those stones are placed into the eye sockets, the door cannot be opened, even with a *knock* or *dispel magic*. Once in place, the door can be pushed open. It swings up and fits perfectly into the wall, looking for all the world as though carved there.

The placement of the gems in the eye sockets bonds them permanently into place. They cannot be removed whole from the face. Persistent attempts to remove them only shatter them. For each eye, this results in d6+10 gems worth 25 gp each. The jet center is worth 100 gp.

The 10-foot wide shaft is pentagonal, its five even sides carved with curious figures and arcane writings. Otherwise, the grey stone is seamless and straight as an arrow. In the distance, the tunnel faces into darkness.

A hundred feet down the shaft, a *continual darkness* spell has been cast. Inside the darkened area are 20 arrows suspended in mid-air. Each of these arrows was fired from a bow by the dao, the centermost one having the spell cast upon it. By the normal laws of this plane, as soon as they left the bow the arrows ceased moving, hanging in the air. However, they still

The Missing Kristal

have all of their kinetic energy. If anyone touches one, it becomes active, releasing its kinetic energy as if the character had been standing in front of the dao when the arrow was fired. Any unsuspecting PC who blunders through the dark sets off d4+2 of these arrows for 1-6 damage each.

This is an almost perfect trap. The arrows are spaced so that there is only a foot of distance between them. If touched from the front, they are deadly. If touched from the back, they can be pushed forward safely for any distance. Touched from the side, they advance rapidly until only the butt of the arrow is being touched, then stop and hang in space again.

The tunnel extends for another 100 feet past the trap, opening into a huge amorphous cavern. This is the crystal garden, one of the dao's favorite airpockets.

The huge dirt-walled cavern is filled with floating crystals of all colors, sizes, and shapes. Some glow with an internal light while others have murky dark shapes moving within them. Some are covered with hundreds of sharp crystalline spikes, others are as smooth as glass. Some are the size of a small house, others no bigger than an egg. All are suspended motionless in the air.

The cavern is 500 feet across and 300 feet wide. Its walls are all of hard packed black dirt. In the cavern there are about 50 crystals larger than a man, and hundreds smaller.

A greedy PC will immediately start scheming to take back some of these crystals, assuming that they are valuable. Aside from being curiosities, the crystals larger than a man's fist are of little value, but 10% of the smaller ones are minor gem stones. Unfortunately, only a jeweler or dwarf can tell the difference. Each is worth 100 gp. There are 150 of these smaller stones floating about in the room. It takes 3 hours to find and gather them all. Several of the large crystals hold creatures. Some are prisoners, others

merely pet curiosities. It is not known how some of them are kept powerless inside their prison cells. From the outside, all appear to have mysterious dark shapes moving within them. One of these holds the duke's daughter, Kristal. Each occupied crystal is described below. Unless otherwise mentioned, the crystals can not be seen into, and only blows from smashing weapons do any significant damage to them.

Crystal 1: The many jagged edges and sharp points make it tricky, but not impossible, to handle the outer surface of this dark blue crystal. It is 25 feet high and 15 across. It takes 40 points of damage to free its captive, a very angry marid. Marids and dao are visually very similar and the party might mistake this marid for the dao.

Marid (1): AC 0; MV 9"/15"/24"; HD 13; hp 40; #AT 1; Dmg 8-32; SA water jet; SD immune to water-based spells, lessened damage from cold- and fire-based spells; MR 25%; AL CN; XP 5,000.

Tricked into the crystal by the dao, the marid has spent many centuries dreaming of its revenge. It does not agree to help the party in any way, but does wait for the arrival of the dao. Upon his arrival, the marid attacks immediately. The ensuing battle is ferocious and the marid is most likely to emerge the victor. If that happens, he uses his *alter reality* power to transport himself back to the elemental plane of Water.

Crystal 2: A perfect 20-sided geometric shape, this smooth-faced yellow crystal is the home of the dao's pet basilisk. It takes 20 points of smashing damage to break open this crystal. While its gaze is harmless to the dao, it can be deadly to the party. Any character attempting to peer into the crystal has a 1 in 3 chance per round of seeing the basilisk, in which case their gazes will meet and a saving throw is required.

Crystal 3: An amorphous crystal with many irregular smooth faces, this ruby red stone is the prison of the duke's daughter, Kristal. The gem is huge, 30 feet high and 20 feet across,

needing 50 points of smashing damage to break open. Clinging to the exterior is a crysmal, guarding the girl. It is impossible to tell the creature from the cage. Any attempt to open her crystal prison is the signal for the crysmal to attack. Inside the crysmal are 17 rough gems, each worth 200 gp.

Crysmal (1): AC -4 or 0; MV 6"; HD 6+6; hp 25; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; SA missile; SD some spell immunity; AL NE; XP 1,075.

Kristal is breathtakingly beautiful (Charisma 18) with long flowing blond hair. She is small and frail, and appears to be completely unable to defend herself, but in her bodice she has concealed a *dagger +1*, and she fights so ferociously as to be the equivalent of a 2nd-level fighter.

Crystal 4: This is the single largest crystal in the cavern, measuring 40 by 30 feet. It takes only 20 points of damage to break it open. Inside are 13 exotic creatures of the elemental plane of Earth. All are animals with no intelligence; none is interested in sticking around for a visit with the party. Within two rounds of the crystal being shattered, all will have fled into the dirt walls. The characters see only a small flood of moving dirt, stone and clay figures race past them.

The Dao Returns

Just after the second crystal is opened, or six hours from entering the garden, whichever comes first, the dao returns home. Needless to say, he is surprised to find the party there. If the earth elemental servant is with the group, it chooses this moment to attack them. If the characters can defeat the elemental and bring the dao down to less than 10 hit points, he surrenders. In exchange for his life and freedom, he gives them Kristal, anything they wish from his cavern, and up to 30 additional rough gems used to feed his crysmal. These 30 gems are worth 200 gp each.

Dao (1): AC 3; MV 9"/15"(6"); HD 8+3; hp 35; #AT 1; Dmg 3-18; SA spells; SD immune to earth-based spells; AL NE; XP 2,020.

by Bill Slavicsek

This adventure is designed for up to six characters of 7th to 8th level. There is adventure to be had, worlds to save, and experience to be earned in the Astral plane—but only if the PCs are clever, resourceful, quick-thinking, and willing to take chances against incomprehensible foes.

DM's Information

Synopsis

This adventure begins in the World Serpent Inn. Here, a mysterious figure in a hooded cloak approaches the PCs seeking adventurers to enter the Astral plane and rescue his master, the mage Senra Teridon.

Provided with a magical jewel to lead them to the missing Senra, the PCs enter the Astral plane. After a variety of deadly episodes, the PCs discover Senra within a *gem of life trapping*, held by 5 daemons.

As the PCs fight the daemons, another group approaches. Six githyanki knights, riding atop six huge nightmares, use the confusion of battle to steal the gem, making a quick retreat before either daemon or PC can counter.

The PCs chase the githyanki through the Astral plane, trying to retrieve Senra.

Finally, the chase leads the PCs to a small fortress built atop an island of matter. This githyanki stronghold protects not only the *gem of life trapping* containing Senra, but another treasure as well—a fabled magical item of great power and the true object of this entire quest. If it should fall into the wrong hands, it could be used to wage war across the multiverse, because it provides the key to unlimited travel from plane to plane. It will be up to the PCs to determine this item's ultimate fate.

Background

Senra Teridon is a magic-user whose life work is to explore, study, and map the planes. Her efforts uncovered an

intriguing legend; it was said that somewhere there exists a magical tome dedicated to the understanding of the alternate levels of reality called "the planes". What's more, this *book of the planes* provided its readers with the ability to travel at will through the many planes. Senra knew she had to possess such a *book*.

After much magical searching, she discovered the tome on the Astral plane, under the guardianship of the githyanki, that fell race which is native to the Astral plane. No matter; Senra was sure she could liberate the *book* or offer something in trade. So, leaving her body in the care of her apprentice, Senra projected herself into the Astral plane.

Unknown to Senra, her apprentice, Kefron Celet, is actually a githzerai magic-user. He was assigned to the Prime Material plane to watch anything that could tip the age-old war against the githyanki in the githzerai favor. He was attracted to Senra and her work, sure that her contact with the many planes would benefit his mission. When he learned that the hated githyanki possessed such a potentially powerful *book*, he knew he had to retrieve it for his people. He would wait for Senra to return with the tome, then spirit it away at the first opportunity. However, one problem has nagged him these past few days. Senra never returned.

The mage fell victim to a charonadaemon long before she ever reached the githyanki fortress. This lesser daemon was sent to the Astral plane to ferry three beautiful princesses back to his own master, Charon, who intended to offer them as gifts to get on the good side of Anthraxus, the Oinodaemon. Luckily, the princesses were rescued by a powerful group of adventurers as the charonadaemon's skiff made its way toward the river Styx.

Convinced that his continued existence depended on securing a suitable replacement for his master's gift, the charonadaemon sailed the Astral barrens in search of other beauties. When he spotted Senra, his heart soared. What are three beautiful prin-

cesses when compared to one beautiful—and powerful—magic-user? So, with the aid of a *gem of life trapping* (a specially designed magical item that holds astral forms within its enchanted facets) and a number of hydrodaemons to act as bodyguards, the charonadaemon tricked Senra into gazing upon the gem. Now Senra and her kidnapers travel through the Astral plane on their way to the portal to Charon's own dread plane.

New Magic

Book of the Planes: As with all magical writings of this nature, the metal-bound *book of the planes* appears to be an arcane, rare, but non-magical book. It will radiate a magical aura if a *detect magic* spell is cast upon it. Any single magic-user or cleric can read one chapter at a time (taking 1-12 months to assimilate the information) in total isolation to gain knowledge about a particular plane. After that character has read a chapter as described above, he gains the ability to travel freely to and from that plane. Once a chapter has been read, there is a 5% chance the *book* will disappear. This chance is cumulative, so that after three chapters have been studied, the chance of the book disappearing is 15%. Any non-magic-users or non-clerics who attempt to read the manual must save vs. spells or go insane.

The Adventure

It's a normal night at the World Serpent Inn. Mitchifer works behind the bar, drawing mug after mug of potent ale for his odd clientele. When the PCs arrive, they are directed to a corner table by one of the waiters. Mitchifer's best ale and a platter of "today's special" soon cover the table as the jovial mood of the inn wears away the day's tensions.

The Offer

After three platters of food and quite a few mugs of ale, the PCs notice a

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strange, hooded figure at the bar, speaking to Mitchifer in hushed tones. The barkeep shakes his head and gestures toward the corner table where the PCs sit. With a nod of thanks, the hooded figure approaches the PCs.

The figure wears a plain, brown cloak with its hood drawn tightly about the head. Unadorned save for a sash covered with magical runes, he appears quite monastic. He speaks with a strange, barely noticeable accent, and gets right to the point.

"I am Kenfron Celet, apprentice and student of the great magic-user, Senra Teridon. I have come to this inn to seek out a group of adventurers to undertake an important task," explains the hooded figure. "My master entered the Astral plane, in her astral form, some days ago. She sought a magical item that would assist her in her work, the study of alternate levels of reality. She has not yet returned and I grow fearful for her safety. Mitchifer knows my master and has aided her in the past. He assures me that you can enter the Astral plane, recover my master and the item, and bring them both safely back to this plane."

Celet promises the PCs adequate compensation for their services, but refuses to go into details. Besides, Senra will assuredly increase any reward upon her return, he explains. If the PCs require more details as to their reward, Celet will list figures until they seem satisfied. (After all, it isn't his money.) "And," he reminds them, "who knows what treasures await you in the Astral plane, lying in wait beside the item my master seeks?" Of that item, Celet says he knows nothing except that his master considered it important to her work.

He can provide them with some small help for their journey, placing an *enchantment* spell on the PCs' possessions so their items can travel in astral form, or giving them an *amulet* that can lead them back to the Prime Material plane if they enter the Astral plane physically. He also gives them a magical jewel that will lead them to

Senra's astral form. "Follow the jewel's glow," Celet says, "for its brightness increases as you move closer to my master."

The apprentice leaves the PCs with a final warning. "My master's body yet lives, but her astral form has not returned. There is something within the bleak, barren realm with the power to hold one's astral form in thrall. Who knows what other terrible powers it possesses? Be careful, for my master's safe return depends on your success."

Into the Astral Plane

However the PCs decide to enter the Astral plane, either physically through a door in the World Serpent Inn or in their astral forms, give them a few moments to become accustomed to this disconcerting realm. Describe the other-dimensional nothingness, the barren expanse of grayness that extends in all directions.

This is the plane of transit, the stepping place between the inner and outer planes. Here are swirling wormholes, interdimensional links from the Prime Material to the outer planes. There spout glistening color pools, portals to other levels of existence.

The jewel they carry glows softly, leading the PCs farther into this apparently quiet realm.

The Color Pool Storm

The PCs' first encounter in the Astral plane involves two-dimensional pools of rippling colors that lead to a myriad of alternate worlds. While some of these pools are fixed and do not move, others pop up randomly. There are occasions when an area of the Astral is disturbed by a color pool storm, an area of violent color-pool activity.

As the PCs make their way across the gray expanse, suddenly bright pools of color begin appearing. Like colorful fireworks or blossoming flowers, the pools burst open out of the nothingness in rapid succession. Blue, green, and jet black pools

explode to the PCs' right. Olive, flame, and diamond pools gape to their left. Soon there are portals everywhere, threatening to deposit the group into some hostile, alien world.

For the play of this mini-adventure, this color pool storm should serve as a suspenseful reminder of the inherent dangers of this plane. The PCs should still be required to come up with a way to carefully maneuver through the storm, but should be in no real danger. It is beyond the scope of this scenario to have the PCs deposited in another plane. But DMs are encouraged to expand this adventure as they see fit, and a side excursion into another plane could be interesting.

From a Rust-Colored Pool

As the storm abates and the PCs think the trouble is over, a most deadly surprise awaits them. The last pool bursts forth some distance from the adventurers, then the normal calm of the silver atmosphere returns. The PCs may decide to wait a few moments to make sure the storm has really run its course. Nothing more occurs.

Then, as they once more set out to follow their glowing jewel, a rust-colored pool gapes open before them. From out of this portal to the plane of Hades emerge four diakka. These tall monsters resemble huge storks with bills, human-like faces, and thin, human-like arms. Disturbed by the sudden shift in their surroundings, the diakka attack.

Diakka (4): AC 0; MV 21"; HD 6 + 6; hp 46; #AT 1; Dmg 1-12; THAC0 13; SA *weakness* by touch (1 per day), *jump* (twice per day), *audible glamor* (once per day), and *enfeeblement* (all 4 must circle their opponents and hoot for 4 consecutive rounds); MR 30%; AL NE.

The Hunt

Celet's jewel glows brighter still as it leads the PCs toward a jagged, rocky island floating freely in the gray expanse. The adventurers must go around, over, under, or across the island of matter to continue on their

quest. Whichever they decide, they spot an armor-clad figure lying among the jutting rocks atop the island.

If they approach the island to investigate, the PCs see a male warrior of unknown origin. He isn't moving, and dark stains cover the surrounding rocks. If the PCs check the body, they discover that the figure is that of a human male. He wears the armor of a fighter, but it doesn't seem to have provided much protection from whatever he encountered. The fighter has been ripped apart, his body partially eaten. From all indications, he wasn't killed too long ago.

As the PCs contemplate this tragedy, the hunters attack: a *berbalang*, an unusual creature whose astral form roams the other-dimensional nothingness in search of food, working in tandem with an invisible stalker. The *berbalang* seeks to slash the weakest-looking member of the party, then flee to the rocks to hide. It knows the PCs are stronger than it, but it hopes to confuse and frighten them with lightning-quick attacks. While the *berbalang* makes its darting attacks, the invisible stalker rushes from PC to PC inflicting terrible wounds. The monsters will play this suspenseful game of hide and attack for as long as they can, counting that the adventurers know very little about their powers and abilities. In fact, they are counting on the adventurers to think they are one creature with strange and deadly powers. If it is hurt, the *berbalang* will hide and let the stalker finish the fight.

Berbalang (1): AC 6; MV 6"/24"; HD 1 + 1; hp 9; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6; THAC0 18; AL CE.

Invisible stalker (1): AC 3; MV 12"; HD 8; hp 58; #AT 1; Dmg 4-16; THAC0 12; SA surprises on 1-5; SD *invisibility*; MR 30%; AL N.

When the battle is over and the monster have fled (or been defeated), the PCs can examine the remains of the previous victim. The human entered the Astral in physical form. His armor and shield are well made, but contain no magical properties. His sword, however, is a *long sword* +2. His pack contains remnants of two

weeks' worth of rations; only enough for a day remains. Other odds and ends include a 20' rope, spikes, a hammer, a small mirror, a tinder box, and an *amulet of the planes*. Unfortunately, the *amulet* is broken and will only transport its wearer to the Astral plane.

Psychic Winds

The two hunters defeated, the PCs continue on their way. The jewel glows ever brighter as they travel through the silver nothingness. But then, the silver-gray "sky" rapidly darkens, turning jet black, shot with streaks of indigo, as the PCs watch (1d10 rounds for this to occur). As the sky darkens, the adventurers feel some buffeting and shaking, as if the plane itself were rebelling against their presence. This is the psychic wind. As quickly as it comes, the wind passes, but not before it does damage. Refer to the "Psychic Wind" table on page 67 of the *Manual of the Planes* for the wind's results. Also roll 1d6 every three hours thereafter; on a 1, consult the "Astral Encounter Chart" on page 66 of the *MoP*. If the PCs meet encounter number 13 on the "Astral Encounter Chart", this is the charonadaemon currently holding Senra. Proceed directly to "The Daemon Skiff" below for this encounter.

Astral Searchers

The jewel gives off a bright radiance as the PCs approach the point where Senra entered the Astral plane. At this place, the mage's invisible silver cord stretches across the boundaries back to her body on the Prime Material plane. But the PCs have not reached this place alone. There, attempting to push through the weakness in the fabric between the two realms, are a cluster of nebulous humanoid shapes—astral searchers!

A large group of astral searchers seek to enter the Prime Material plane via the point where Senra entered the Astral. These mindless creations want to inhabit Senra's currently empty body. If the PCs try to stop these driv-

en beings, the astral searchers will attack until destroyed. If the PCs ignore them, they will take over Senra's body and will have to be *exorcised* before the mage can return to her plane.

Astral searchers (14): AC 10; MV 12"; HD 2; hp 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; THAC0 16; SA all victims AC 5; MR 50%; AL NE.

If the PCs have entered the plane astrally, the searchers could be encountered going after their own bodies. If the PCs are traveling physically, the searchers will turn on them, trying to reduce one character to zero hit points or lower. If they accomplish this, the mind and personality of the victim is destroyed and the searchers possess the body.

The Daemon Skiff

Whether the jewel finally leads the PCs to this encounter, or they meet it as a result of the "Astral Encounter Chart," the enchanted jewel glows a brilliant white. Senra is near.

The adventurers notice a small skiff traveling the silver waves. A thin, hooded figure stands tall at the rear of the vessel, its attention totally focused upon a glowing ruby dangling from a golden chain. Four other figures move about within and beside the skiff. These 10-foot tall, grotesque creatures glide alongside the skiff while one is always within the vessel with the hooded figure.

This is a charonadaemon and its skiff, sent to the Astral plane on a mission for its master, Charon. It currently travels with four hydrodaemons, summoning them to serve as bodyguards for its precious cargo. The cargo in question is Senra Teridon, whose astral form is trapped within a *gem of life trapping*. Only cunning trickery and Senra's own curiosity allowed the daemon to capture the powerful magic-user.

The jewel they carry alerts the PCs to Senra's presence, but they should not immediately realize that she is within the *gem*. The charonadaemon orders the hydrodaemons to attack,

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not wanting to take the chance of losing yet another potential gift to a group of powerful do-gooders.

Any PCs who reach the skiff must deal with the charonadaemon personally. He first tries to trap any *astral projection* travelers within the *gem* with Senra by getting them to gaze upon the ruby. If this doesn't work (or the PCs are traveling in physical form), he lets his anger build and his eyes grow fiery red. Any PCs confronted in this fashion must save vs. fear or flee in terror.

Charonadaemon (1): AC -1; MV 18"; HD 10 +20; hp 70; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 10; SA gaze inspires *fear*; MR 80% to first-level spells, AL NE.

Hydrodaemon (4): AC 2; MV 6"/6"//24"; HD 9 +36; hp 76; #AT 3 (5 if airborne); Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8/1-8/1-10; SA bite drains 1 life energy; SD can *teleport*, *dimension door*, *create darkness* within 10', *create water*, *water walk* at will; MR 70% to first-level spells; AL NE.

While the battle with the daemons rages, the charonadaemon places the

gem containing Senra down within the skiff so that he can fight freely. As adventurer combats daemon, all hear the vicious approach of six nightmares. Atop the demon horses ride armored knights—githyanki knights! Before any can react, one knight uses his inborn ability of rapid movement to reach the skiff, snatch the *gem of life trapping*, and return to its skeletal mount.

As the nightmares gallop off, their hooves burning like embers, the charonadaemon calls off the attack. The hydrodaemons return to the skiff to wait. Let the humans and githyanki fight over the gem, thinks the daemon, then we shall strike and remove it from the dead hand of the victor! The demonic crackle of laughter echoes from the skiff as the PCs decide what to do.

Nightmare Race

If the PCs decide to chase the githyanki, it becomes a race across the Astral plane. The nightmares carry

their grim riders past wormholes, under color pools, and across islands of matter as the PCs follow. If they lose the demon horses' trail, their jewel will still lead them to Senra. If they overtake the steeds, the githyanki use their powers and rapidly move toward a fortress some distance away. The nightmares, however, remain to attack.

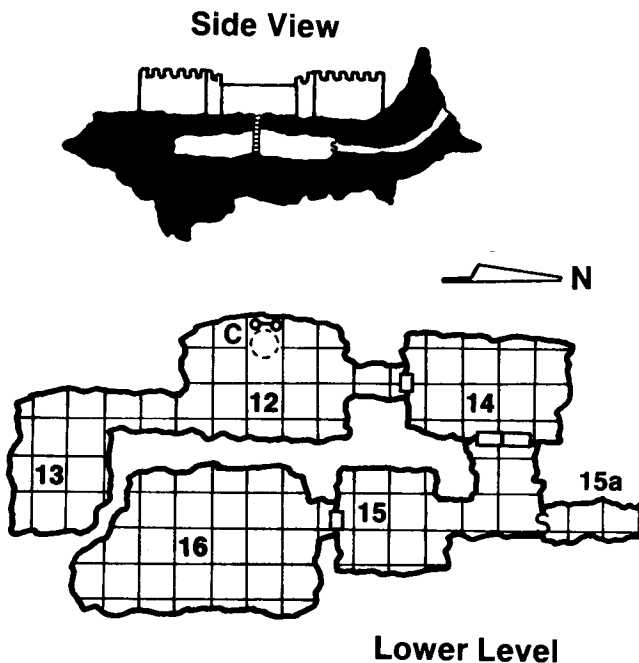
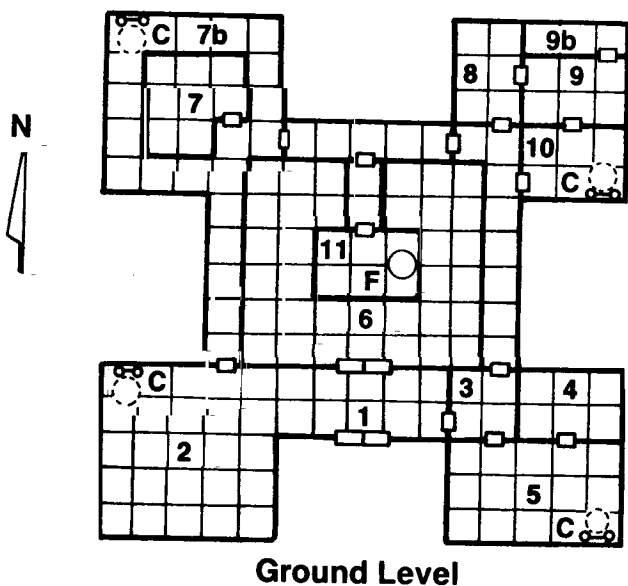
Nightmares (6): AC -4; MV 15"/36"; HD 6 +6; hp 36; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/4-10/4-10; SD opponents save vs. breath weapon or attack at -2 to hit and damage dice; AL NE.

The Githyanki Fortress

After the battle with the nightmares, the PCs can make their way to the structure on the horizon. If the nightmares outraced them, the PCs arrive at this spot by following the jewel they carry.

Upon a jagged chunk of matter, floating against the silver sky, is a one-story stone structure. The small fortress consists of four towers

Map #5—Githyanki Fortress



surrounding a central court. Heavy double doors, braced with bronze bands, provide the only noticeable access to the fortress's interior. Parapets line the tower walls, and an occasional form can be seen moving about behind the protective barrier.

There are actually three ways into the githyanki fortress: 1) through the double doors to area 1; 2) via the secret passage to area 15A; or 3) through the trap doors in the roof to areas 2, 5, 7B, and 10. The double doors are locked. The secret passage is well concealed and requires four rounds of active searching (and a roll of 1 on a d6) to discover. After the first round of searching, a githyanki patrol (see below for statistics) wanders by on a roll of 1-4 on a d6. Roll each round until the passage is discovered. If no one finds the secret passage by the fourth round, there is no chance these adventurers will discover it. A githyanki patrol is stationed on the roof and must be defeated to use these entrances. All trap doors are locked.

Githyanki patrol (6): AC 3; MV 96"; F2; hp 12; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; AL LE.

The Ground Level

1. The Grand Hall. The main doors open into an ornate, though disturbing, hallway. Grim carvings adorn the stone walls, depicting scenes of violence and maliciousness. Everything is quiet. In addition to the patrol on the roof, there are two other patrols wandering the fortress. Every turn the PCs spend in a hallway, roll a d12. On a 1 or 2, a patrol encounters the PCs (unless all three have been destroyed).

2. The Stable. This large area contains piles of molten rock, troughs full of boiling lava, and various pieces of gear used for the care of the githyanki's nightmares. If the PCs did not encounter these fearsome creatures earlier, they are in this room and attack as soon as the PCs enter. Otherwise, the area is empty. A ladder in the northwest corner leads up to a trap door in the ceiling, an access to the

roof.

3. Guard Room. This small room, complete with four chairs, a table, and a keg of ale, is constantly occupied by four guards. These githyanki protect the supreme leader's quarters and the war room, as well as watch the great hall through a hole in the west door. However, the guards are involved in a cut-throat game of gith-flay, and unless the PCs make excessive noise they should be able to approach this room without the alarm being raised. Gith-flay is a githyanki invention that uses small black and white stones, a cup, and an extremely sharp knife.

Githyanki sergeant (1): AC 1; MV 96"; F4; hp 25; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; AL LE.

Githyanki guards (3): AC 4; MV 96"; F4; F2; hp 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; AL LE.

4. Supreme Leader's Quarters. This baroque chamber houses the fortress's supreme leader. This powerful githyanki is not here when the PCs arrive; they meet him in area 11. The room contains a desk, chair, ornate bed, a chest covered with vile etchings, and a cabinet.

On the desk is a small statue of a female lich. A crown adorns her head. Any lawful good characters who touch it are shocked for 2-20 points of damage. In the desk are scrolls, written in githyanki, that tell of a weapon that will finally destroy the hated githzerai. One scroll is a *protection against possession*. Under the mattress on the bed is a pouch containing 120 pp. The chest is locked and trapped. Any one who opens it without disarming the trap must save vs. poison or die 1d4 rounds after returning to the Prime Material plane. The chest contains 1,000 sp, 2,000 gp, and 4,000 pp. In this pile is a *ring of mind shielding*. Inside the cabinet (locked, but not trapped) are three two-handed swords (one is +2), a shield, a crossbow, 20 quarrels (5 are +3), and a *cloak of protection* +3.

5. The War Room. This spartan chamber contains a large 10' x 30' table. The table is set up to represent the Astral plane, Limbo, and the con-

necting conduits. Figures representing githyanki and githzerai forces are spread about the surface. The armies look of equal strength and seem set at a standstill. A ladder in the southeast corner leads to a trap door in the ceiling (access to the roof).

There are five githyanki in this room, pondering the positions of the armies. If the PCs listen before entering, they also hear mention of "a weapon that will turn the tide of war." The githyanki fight to the death.

Githyanki captain (1): AC 0; MV 96"; F8; hp 50; #AT 2; Dmg (*long sword* +3) 1-8+3/1-8+3; AL LE.

Githyanki knight (1): AC 0; MV 96"; F8; hp 45; #AT 2; Dmg (*silver sword*) 1-10+3/1-10+3; AL LE.

Githyanki warlock (1): AC 2; MV 96"; MU4; hp 14; #AT 1; Dmg (*dagger*) 1-4; SA spells; AL LE.

Githyanki sergeant (1): AC 1; MV 96"; F6; hp 36; #AT 1; Dmg (two-handed sword) 1-10; AL LE.

Githyanki gish (1): AC 4; MV 96"; F4/MU4; hp 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA/SD spells; AL LE.

6. Dragon Room. This odd-shaped room houses the githyanki's pet dragons. Two small red dragons wander this area. They are trained to attack any non-githyanki.

Red dragon (2): AC -1; MV 9"/24"; HD 4; hp 24; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-16; SA breath weapon; AL CE.

7. Common Room. The lower-level githyanki warriors assigned to this fortress make their home here. There is also a chest containing 2,000 cp, 380 sp, 540 gp, and 60 pp. Area 7B leads up to the roof.

Githyanki warriors (10): AC 4; MV 96"; F2; hp 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; AL LE.

8. Knights' Room. The knights sleep here. There are six beds, six chests, a table, and two chairs. Each chest contains clothes, personal items, and 1,100 pp. In addition, one of each of these items will be found: *potion of healing*, *oil of etherealness*, *scroll of protection against dragon breath weapons*, and a *manual of puissant skill at arms*.

9. Warlocks' and Gish's Room. This room is where the githyanki war-

locks and gish sleep. There are four beds and four chests. Each chest contains 800 gp, in addition to clothing. A gish is here when the PCs arrive, studying his spell book.

Githyanki gish (1): AC 5; MV 96"; F4/MU4; hp 21; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA/SD spells; AL LE. He has a *wand of magic missiles*.

Area 9B is a storage room containing six potions of *healing*, three potions of *poison*, blank scroll paper, a scroll with three magic-user spells, a *hat of disguise*, and a *long sword* +2.

10. Captains' and Sergeants' Room. Five beds, five chests, a table, three chairs, and a ladder to the roof furnish this room. Each chest holds 4,000 gp, in addition to personal belongings. One contains a *gem of insight*. This room is empty when the PCs arrive.

11. Shrine to the Lich-Queen. This room, filled with grim devotions to the githyanki deity, is oppressive and totally evil. Lawful good characters fight at -2 to hit and damage while in this chamber. The idol of the lich-queen is a disgusting edifice, complete with golden crown, ornate cape and armor, and baroque weaponry. She seems almost lifelike. Kneeling before the statue is the githyanki supreme leader. Enraged that non-githyanki have entered the shrine, he attacks.

Githyanki supreme leader (1): AC -2; MV 96"; F11; hp 62; #AT 2; Dmg (*silver sword*) 1-10 +3/1-10 +3; AL LE.

If the statue is moved, the PCs discover a ladder leading down.

12. Welcome Chamber. As the PCs step down into this rough-hewn chamber, they notice that the rocky floor is littered with bones. Two columns of rock rise out of the floor. These are storopers, coexisting with the githyanki in return for food. They attack the PCs, assuming them to be food provided by their githyanki masters.

Storopers (2): AC 0; MV 1"; HD 6; hp 35; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA hit by tentacle causes weakness (50% loss of strength in 1-3 rounds); AL CE.

13. Empty Cavern. This chamber is empty.

14. Margoyles Room. Six margoyles, left within these caverns since this island of matter drifted into the Astral plane, guard this chamber for the githyanki. They have an uneasy alliance with the githyanki, but will not oppose them because they fear the knights and magic-users.

Margoyles (6): AC 2; MV 6"/12"; HD 6; hp 33; #AT 4; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-8/2-8; AL CE.

The margoyle lair contains 300 gp.

15. Final Guard Room. Six githyanki guard the forbidden chamber. They have a table and chairs, but all are nervous and standing in anticipation of the proceedings in the forbidden chamber. A secret passage (15A) leads outside.

Githyanki warlock (1): AC 2; MV 96"; MU7; hp 16; #AT 1; Dmg (*dagger* +3) 1-4 +3; SA/SD spells; AL LE; *necklace of missiles*.

Githyanki sergeant(1): AC 0; F7; hp 42; #AT 2; Dmg 1-10 +2/1-10 +2; AL LE.

Githyanki knight (1): AC 0; F8; hp 40; #AT 2; Dmg (*silver sword*) 1-10 +3/1-10 +3; AL LE.

Githyanki warriors (3): AC 3; F3; hp 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; AL LE.

16. Forbidden Chamber. This chamber houses the githyanki's secret weapon—the *book of the planes*. Unfortunately, they have yet to study the magical tome, as it is guarded by a nycadaemon. A protective circle has been drawn upon the rock floor around the *book*, and the daemon constantly prowls the circumstance looking for an opening. He is the tome's guardian, bound to it long ago by a mighty being. Currently, the githyanki captain with the task of securing the weapon is here, along with the four remaining knights.

They hope to use the *gem of life trapping* to capture the daemon, unaware that the powerful Senra Teridon is within its faceted prison.

Githyanki captain (1): AC 0; MV 96"; F7/MU6; hp 41; #AT 1; Dmg (*silver sword*) 1-10 +2; SA/SD spells; AL LE.

Githyanki knights (4): AC 0; MV 96"; F8; hp 40; #AT 2; Dmg (*silver sword*) 1-

10 +3/1-10 +3; AL LE.

Nycadaemon (1): AC -4; MV 12"/36"; HD 12 +36; hp 96; #AT 2; Dmg 9-16/9-16; SA *command*, *dimension door*, *wind walk* (all three times per day); *dispel magic*, *mirror image*, *reverse gravity* (all twice per day); *gaseous form*, *word of recall* (all once per day); *comprehend languages*, *detect invisibility*, *detect magic*, *enlarge*, *fear*, *invisibility*, *polymorph self*, *project image*, *read magic*, *telepathy* (all once per round); SD +2 weapons to hit, immune to paralysis, suffer half damage from acids, cold, and fire; MR 100% to first level, 95% to second level, etc.

Expanding the Adventure

This adventure does not have to end here. As long as the PCs are introduced to the *book of the planes* and the githyanki-githzerai war, anything can happen!

The *book* can disappear through a color pool, get carried off by its guardian, or be returned to the Prime Material only to be stolen by Celet. Senra can be freed, or the charonadaemon can reappear to capture her. Can the PCs save her from Charon and the Oinodaemon? And what about the escalating githyanki-githzerai war? How does the *book* fit into that? There's a lot to expand upon if you're up to it. Who knows where next the *book of the planes* will show up? It could lead to terrible wars within the planes.

by John A. Nephew

This adventure, for five to nine characters of levels 7 and 8, takes the adventurers to the Seven Heavens, which they must purge of a foreign evil.

Background

There are two ways to involve the player characters in this scenario. In the first, the astral deva Arelsis seeks out the characters, presents to them all the information he knows, and requests their assistance. In the second option, the characters stumble upon the citadel by chance, and it's up to them to discover what's amiss and remedy it.

The DM should select the situation that, with minor alterations as necessary, best suits his campaign and the characters' alignments. Also note that the second option is best for more powerful character parties and more experienced players, since the characters go into it without knowing what they're up against or how they might deal with it.

Option 1: Deva in Distress

To deal with a mysterious threat to his fortress (and perhaps all the Seven Heavens), the deva Arelsis has sought out the assistance of mortal adventurers. The most logical place to find such persons would be the World Serpent Inn (or a similar establishment), but if no one suitable is there, the deva might have to search the Astral or even Prime planes.

Once they are found, Arelsis explains his plight to the characters:

"I am Arelsis, an astral deva from Lunia, the Silver Heaven. My humble abode is a citadel on a small island in the great ocean of that plane. From there, I supervise the guards who protect against evils which seek entrance to our plane. We also provide assistance and hospitality to the good and just, be they of the Heavens or elsewhere.

"The placid sky of Lunia was disrupted three nights ago by a falling star. Ablaze, the meteor plummeted to the ocean, and the thunderclap of its impact echoed in the halls of the citadel.

"I would normally have reported the curious incident to my superiors and given the matter no more thought. But several hours later the meteorite washed ashore. Though a heavy rock, it apparently had nonetheless floated.

"I ordered the meteorite brought into the citadel, where it could be examined with more care. I did not examine it myself, since I had an obligation to fulfill on Solania, the Electrum Heaven. While there I sought advice concerning the mysterious object.

"I was told to return immediately to my citadel, and to inspect the situation carefully. It seems some powerful object or creature, some element of chaos, had come into Lunia that night. Its power was great and, supposing our meteor was indeed the chaos element, I had to exercise extreme caution. Because I am so purely lawful and good, its radiations could corrupt my nature—even in the Heavens, its chaos was so strong.

"My return to the citadel confirmed my worst fears. My former comrades and loyal servants, driven mad by the accursed object, fought me away as I approached.

"That is why I have sought you. Because you are mortals, I believe you would not be susceptible to this object's entropic power, or at least you could resist it. Those of you who follow the philosophy of lawful goodness do so because you choose it, not merely because it is an inherent part of your nature and being. And even if you were changed, because of your flexible nature, you could be changed back.

"I realize this is a dangerous task, but I believe it can be entrusted

to you—and to make it worth your while, I'll arrange for each of you to be granted a *wish* if you successfully contain the meteor.

"To contain the thing, draw a pentagram around it with this blessed and enchanted silver dust. Guard this carefully: if it is lost, the only place to find more is in the citadel itself.

"You are certain to meet opposition in your quest. Do not be afraid to use force in the citadel, and do not be deceived by appearances. Though they appear to be creatures of good, I suspect that all on the island have been corrupted by the meteor. The only way to purge them of its entropy might be to slay their present forms, that they might be reborn as lantern archons.

"As you do all this, I will go to get assistance from one greater than myself, such as a planetar or solar. They would know how to transport and destroy the hellish stone."

Arelsis, astral deva: AC -6; MV 18"/42"//15"; HD 9+36; hp 74; #AT 2; Dmg 10-21/10-21; THACO 9; SA *mace of destruction* +3, spell-like powers; SD never surprised, immune to life level loss, imprisonment of soul, and death spells; MR 65%; AL LG.

Option 2: The Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage to the home plane of one's deity is a meaningful demonstration of loyalty and devotion, and as such it is a good way to garner the favor of one's patron Power. Therefore it is not uncommon for characters (especially clerics) who possess the means to journey to the outer planes for this reason. While the Powers themselves are almost always too busy to have personal audiences with their faithful servants, most have shrines maintained for the purpose of receiving the transplanar travelers.

This adventure may start with characters being on a pilgrimage to the celestial shrine of a deity. The party should then be mostly worshippers of

a Power of the Seven Heavens or at least be of lawful good alignment themselves. The reason for the pilgrimage should be appropriate to the ongoing campaign, perhaps to atone for religious transgressions or disobedience, or to personally request advice or aid (the pilgrimage demonstrating worthiness). Characters who are not lawful good might be along simply to help their friends or possibly to seek divine guidance themselves.

To get the party embroiled in this adventure is then easy. When the characters enter Lunia, the first layer of the Heavens, they will be floating in the ocean of holy water, and the nearest land will be the island with the citadel of Arelsis.

DM Notes

The meteor which fell from the sky was indeed a powerful element of chaos—an imprisoned slaad lord, in fact. This creature of Limbo, Wartle by name, was placed in its present form after losing a struggle against Ygorl. That greater slaad master then had the transformed Wartle deposited in the Seven Heavens where, presumably, he would encounter final destruction. (In his current form, Wartle could be permanently destroyed, even though the Heavens aren't his native plane).

Characters introduced by Option 1 have a good deal of information from Arelsis, but some of it is incomplete or inaccurate, albeit unintentionally.

The meteor did not exactly float in the ocean. It is physically repulsed by *holy water*, and the nearest place out of the ocean was Arelsis's island.

The power of Wartle has been diminished by his own radiations. No longer can creatures of the Heavens be so easily corrupted by the meteor; it does, however, retain its power to *energy drain* Prime Material plane natives (Arelsis was not aware of this power in the first place). The creatures already mutated by Wartle remain so. The effect will wear away in seven months; or, if their present form is

slain, they will be purged of the chaos and be reborn as lantern archons.

The Citadel of Arelsis

For parties fulfilling Arelsis's request, getting to Lunia should not present any difficulty. The astral deva will see to it that the characters arrive there safely or quickly, via *plane shifting* or a conduit.

Upon entering the Silver Heaven, the characters find themselves in the surf of an ocean. Clearly illuminated by the plane's eternal starlight is the small island with Arelsis's white citadel.

Certain types of creatures are encountered quite frequently in the citadel, and therefore their common statistics are presented here. Varying specific details (such as hit points) are provided in each encounter description.

Agathion: AC 0; MV 18"; HD 7+7; #AT 2; Dmg 2-7/2-7; THAC0 13; SA spells as 7th-level cleric with wisdom 18; SD +1 weapon to hit, immune to energy drain, death spells, *disintegration*; psionic disciplines of *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, *object reading*, *suspend animation*, *aura alteration*, *dimension walk*, *mind bar*, *telepathic projection*, all at 14th level of mastery; MR 35% (saving throws as 14th-level cleric); AL CN. Unless otherwise noted, agathia can be assumed to be in human form, armed with maces. A typical spell list could be: *aid*, *bestow curse*, *cause light wounds* (×2), *cause serious wounds*, *cloak of fear*, *command*, *continual light*, *curse*, *dispel magic*, *detect magic*, *enthrall*, *hold person*, *know alignment*, *silence 15' radius*.

Hound archon: AC 1; MV 15"; HD 9; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; THAC0 12; SA *shape change* to dog or wolf; SD detect *invisible*, astral, and ethereal creatures, +1 weapon to hit; MR 40%; AL CN.

Warden archon: AC -1; MV 12"; HD 10; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/2-12; THAC0 10; SA all divination spells; SD +2 weapon to hit; MR 50%; AL CN.

Note that some powers (for example, *gating allies*, and *detect* or *protection from evil*) of the creatures found in the citadel have been lost because of the corrupted alignments.

The Island

The island is basically round, a mile and a half across. From the glittering silver beaches the land slopes upward, covered with low shrubs and bushes and the occasional small tree. Rising higher, with a few outcroppings of naked rock, is the hill on which stands the citadel. That building's white marble walls are nothing short of radiant in the starlight of Lunia's sky.

Floating around above the island's ground are about 200 lantern archons. These simple, benevolent beings have not been affected by Wartle, and are indeed quite unaware of the recent happenings. All they really do is lend the island a mystical aura with their soft glowing. They fight only to defend themselves, and then prefer to flee.

Lantern archons (200): AC 10; MV 12"; HD 1/2; hp 3 each; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/1-3; THAC0 20; SD magic weapon to hit, reforms in a day if slain; AL LG.

Of danger to the party is a group of corrupted archons that patrols the island. It consists of two hound archons (hp 39, 36) led by a warden (hp 42). The party has a 1 in 8 chance of encountering this patrol for every turn in which they explore the island outside the citadel.

The Citadel

The exterior and interior geometries of Arelsis's citadel are very different. On the outside, it appears to be a normal, three-storied fortress like those found on many Prime planes, although sculpted with perfect craftsmanship from flawless, extraordinarily white stone.

Most rooms have windows looking out on the island: those of rooms 1 through 6 correspond to the first floor, rooms 7 through 12 the second, and 13 through 20, the third. The layout of

the inside does not neatly fit that of the outside, since the interior of the three floors are located on the same spatial plane. This means that in the recreation room (room 5) one might look out a window and admire the countryside from the ground level; and then one might walk to the dining hall (room 7), without having any sense of vertical movement, and look out a second floor window.

Two special cases of the citadel's unusual geometry are the inner chamber (room 21) and the stairs to the roof (room 16). The former encompasses the interior of the citadel's round tower (located, outside, by the entrance) and has windows going out at all

levels. The stairs, although close together inside, go straight up to the tops of the towers; each is about 40 feet apart on the roof.

Inside the fortress, magnetic north is as indicated on the map; this does not necessarily correspond to "outside north."

Because of space restrictions, the cosmetic descriptions of rooms are in most cases not very thorough. The DM is encouraged to ad-lib room descriptions to make encounters more interesting. Describe the location and view through a window, for example, or detail a room's furnishings or its resident's personal possessions. Removable items of value are

rarely found, and then they are noted in the text.

Note that, among magical treasures, the pluses listed apply on the Seven Heavens. If the weapon or armor is of Prime plane origin (as, for example, in room 4), it will "gain" pluses on the Astral and Prime planes. Other weapons can be assumed to have been forged in the Heavens, and they are already at their natural level of magical value.

1. Gateroom: The castle's porter is a foo creature. Formerly a wary, alert, and fearless gatekeeper, after Wartle's influence it is more bark than bite. It paces the gateroom ceaselessly, slaving and panting, growling at any noise. The foo lion postures viciously when confronted with intruders, but the slightest gesture of confidence and defiance will change its growls into whines and whimpers. If attacked, the foo lion will defend itself, but will look for an opportunity to turn *invisible* and evade his opponents.

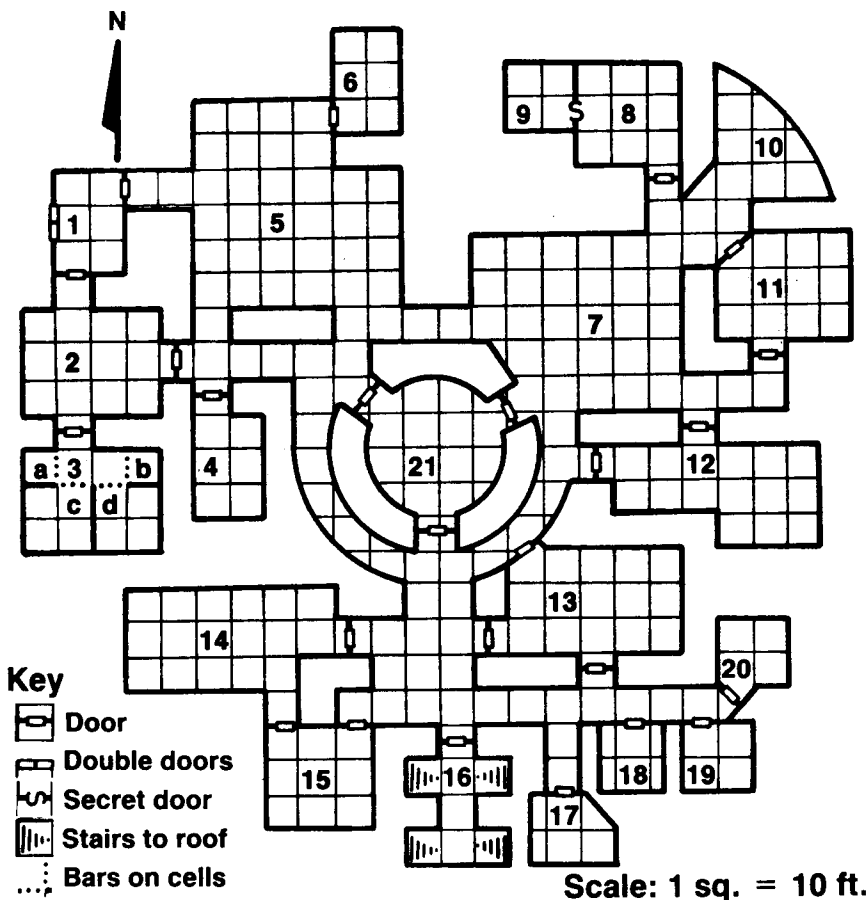
Foo lion (1): AC 0; MV 21"; HD 11+11; hp 58; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/2-16; THAC0 10; SD *invisibility*; MR 55%; AL CN.

The only furnishing in the room is the mat, in the southeast corner, on which the foo lion rests.

2. Guardroom: Filled with bunks, this is the domicile of the hound and warden archons who are the backbone of the citadel's defense staff. All but one are presently away, and they can be found elsewhere in the citadel or outside.

The one hound archon (hp 38) that is here is suffering from an extreme case of paranoia and cowardice. He huddles, cringing, between two bunks, moaning softly. Unless attacked by a character, he poses no threat; but if assaulted he will respond violently and without cease until he or his attacker is slain.

3. Prison: The cells are used to hold (physically, magically, or both) beings that have tried unsuccessfully to raid the Heavens. Prisoners await execution, deportation, or interrogation, depending on their identity and the circumstances of their capture.



An Element of Chaos

The individual cell occupants are as follows:

3a. Safely restrained here in a pentagram is a lesser daemon. Using *telepathy* to lie, bargain, threat and cajole, it will try to get the PCs to free it. Of course it feels no gratitude; PCs gullible enough to free it will be fortunate if it merely leaves the Heavens without first slaying its liberators.

Piscodaemon (1): AC (MS)1; MV 6"/18"; HD 6; hp 27; #AT 2; Dmg 2-16/2-16; THACO 13; SA seize opponents, venom fatal in six rounds, *invisibility, telepathy*; SD *detect invisible, read magic, comprehend languages, word of recall*, never surprised, water-based attacks do -1 hp/die, half damage from acid, cold, fire, immune to *charm, suggestion*, poison, paralysis, and non-magical weapons; MR 60% to first-level spells; AL NE. Note that daemons' *word of recall* ability will not work in this particular room.

3b. A little over a week ago, the citadel was assaulted by a group of evil humans. After a difficult struggle they were finally overcome, and the only one taken alive was a fighter.

Jalin Serel, human fighter: AC 8; MV 12"; F9; hp 63 (currently 12); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon +6; THACO 9; AL LE; S 18/00, I 13, W 11, D 16, C 15, Ch 13, Cm 14. Currently has no armor or weapons.

This human is being kept for interrogation, because it is suspected that his party was acting on something more than personal initiative. Diabolical meddling seems most likely, since a magician in the group summoned some abishai, who were conveniently near in the Astral plane, when the battle got desperate.

3c. Empty; a magic circle is inscribed on the floor.

3d. These lesser devils, awaiting termination, were summoned by a comrade of the fighter in 3b, above.

Devil, red abishai (3): AC 1; MV 18"/18"; HD 4+2; hp 20 each; #AT 3; Dmg 2-5/2-5/1-2; THACO 15; SA grappling combat damage 2-5 points, *change self, command, produce flame, pyrotechnics, scare*; SD *regenerate* one point per round, half damage from

cold and gas, immune to fire; MR 40%; AL LE.

4. Captain's Quarters: The captain of the guard, a hound archon (hp 45), has been quite rabid since being influenced by Wartle. She is so far gone, in fact, that she cannot recall how to open the door to get out of her room; so she paces back and forth, growling and clawing the furniture. Naturally, she will not behave in a gracious way toward visitors.

In a trunk beneath the bed are the possessions of the fighter Jalin Serel (see room 3b, above): iron rations, a wineskin, a suit of *splint mail* +2, a *long sword* +2, potions of *healing* and *invisibility*, and twelve gems (worth 1,800 gp, 3 × 500 gp, 6 × 100 gp, and 2 × 50 gp).

5. Recreation Room: This large, empty space is used for various activities, from games and meetings to combat practice and training. There is a 40% chance of a corrupted hound archon (hp 41) wandering through here at the same time as the party; it is otherwise empty.

6. Groundskeeper: The island's groundskeeper is a warden archon (hp 45). Wartle's influence caused him to go into hibernation, so he lies in the southeast corner of his room in a deep slumber. A character who goes to the trouble of waking the archon (no easy task) will have to face a very irate and chaotic creature.

The north end of the room is where a large collection of tools is stored. Among them is a *military pick* +1.

7. Dining Hall: The dining hall is presently in disarray. While some are set up for use, many chairs and tables are stacked up as if for storage, and most are just lying about.

Standing in the middle of it all, discussing the situation, are the citadel's steward (a shedu) and an agathion servant (hp 40), both quite mad. They have been here for about eight hours, debating how to set up the hall for a feast that is not going to happen.

Shedu (1): AC 4; MV 12"/24"; HD 9+9; hp 41; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; THACO 12; psionic disciplines of *animal telepathy, clairvoyance, detection*

of good or evil, mass domination, object reading, precognition, probability travel, telepathy, all at 9th level of mastery; MR 25%; AL CN.

The DM should enjoy himself in roleplaying this encounter. The shedu is taking a pretty straight role, but exaggeratedly so. He proposes decorating the room with life-sized, gem-encrusted, gilt statues of the various Powers who are supposedly going to attend (the DM should select the most stuffy and dignified lawful good Powers known to the players for name-dropping here). The servant says that the Powers are a bunch of pompous, overgrown cerebral parasites who don't deserve to have their images sculpted in stench kow dung. She thinks that if any special arrangements are to be done, it should be to place the tables and chairs in a pattern that could symbolize the ultimate ambiguity of existence.

The debate between these two can go on for hours more, and will unless the characters break it up. Player characters will be ignored unless the agathion and shedu must defend themselves against them (although the shedu might make use of PCs as props to demonstrate how aesthetically pleasing statues would be).

8. Seneschal: The second-in-command to Arelsis is Kalyron, the sword archon. Even this mighty creature could not avoid Wartle's influence.

Kalyron, sword archon (1): AC -5; MV 12"/24"; HD 12; hp 54; #AT 4; Dmg 2-8 (x4); SA spells as 15th-level magic-user, *Bigby's forceful hand, blink, burning hands, chain lightning, charm person, confusion, dancing lights, distance distortion, ESP, feeblemind, fire trap, fly, fumble, grease, haste, irritation, Melf's acid arrow, polymorph other, power word: stun, push, ray of enfeeblement, shatter, suggestion, teleport, wall of fire, wall of force, wind wall*; SD +2 weapon to hit; MR 70%; AL CN.

When the characters enter, Kalyron will have just slain (with a *cone of cold* spell) an agathion who dared to question a command. The seneschal is not

simply violent; but rather, Wartle has caused him to be obsessed with the fact that, in Arelsis's absence, he is in command of the citadel. Ever since Arelsis left, things have been falling to pieces. An agathion getting smart with him was just too much, and he let loose his ire.

In dealing with the characters, Kalyron will have regained his composure. He recognizes that the PCs are strangers (and thinks wryly to himself that the fool porter probably just invited them in, and maybe a few demon hordes as well), but perhaps they could be of use in putting the citadel back in order. He therefore recruits them to help enforce his directives to the rest of the citadel's staff.

Player characters would be best off to comply with the suggestion, lest they wish to face circumstances similar to those of the slowly thawing agathion.

Kalyron will lead the party to the nearest inhabited room, where he will issue a command (such as to clean up the area). The occupants of the room

respond by describing to Kalyron how he might go about cleaning up himself. The incensed sword archon then orders the PCs to attack and does so himself. This situation affords the characters the opportunity to fight with better odds, or escape (although Kalyron would doubtless hunt down such deserters).

The seneschal's room is tastefully decorated. Of possible interest are the three tapestries hanging on the walls (worth 500 gp, 600 gp and 800 gp). They depict scenes from famous legends about lawful good Powers.

9. Secret Room: The secret door to this room bears a *glyph of warding*, named "kartzah". Its effect, which can be avoided by a successful save vs. spells, is to reduce the victim's wisdom by half for 3-12 hours.

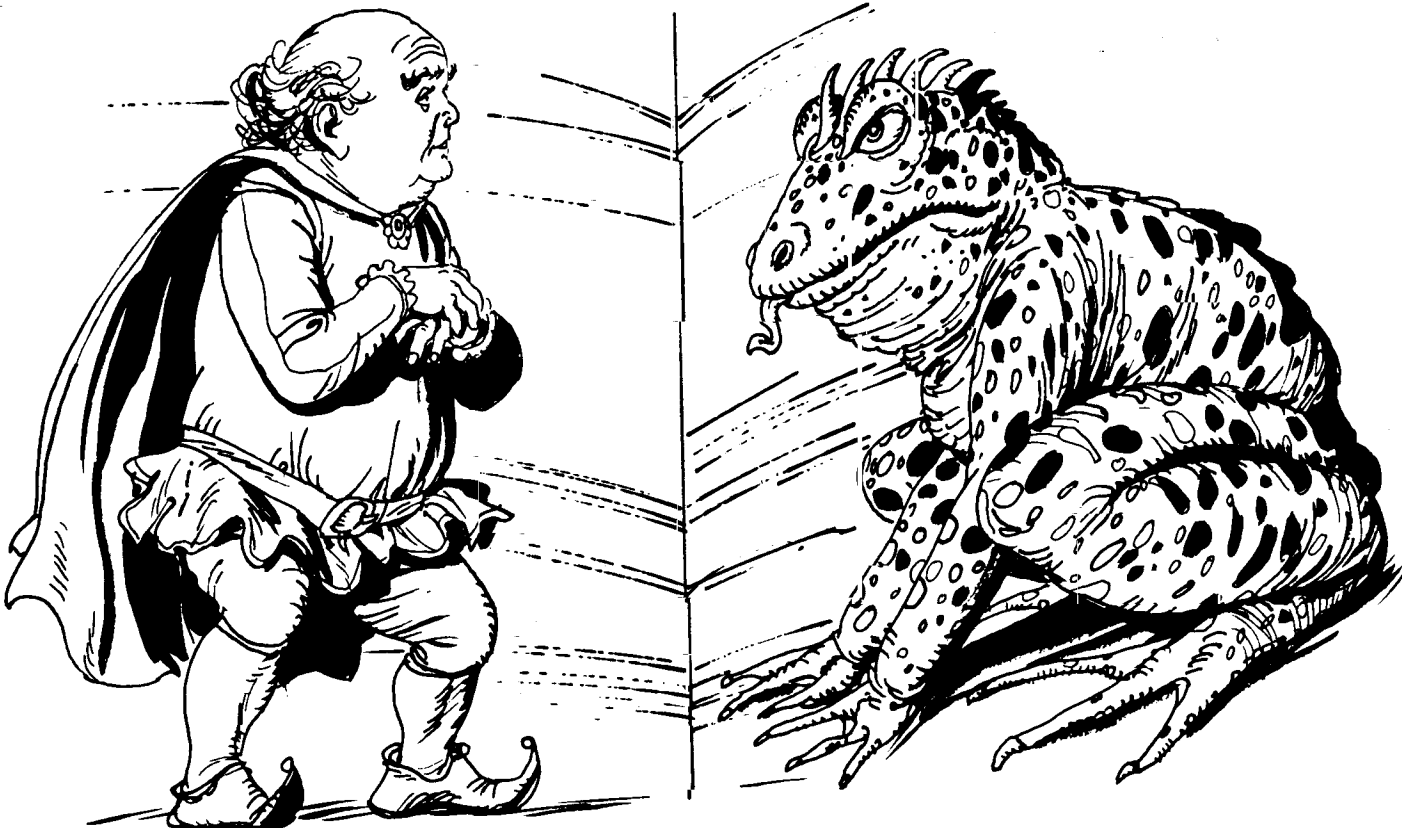
The room beyond is a study. Although accessed only from the seneschal's room, this is primarily the haunt of Arelsis, who can hardly get time or space to himself in the inner chamber (room 21, below). In this room he can get privacy to study, com-

mune or meet with superiors, conduct secret audiences, or just relax alone.

Of possible interest to the party is, in the desk, a quantity of enchanted silver dust identical to that given at the beginning of the adventure to PCs of the first background.

10. Astral Exit: The northeast wall of this room looks not unlike a starry night sky; it is, in fact, a view of the Astral plane. The wall is a one-way membrane which, if passed, will transport the individual to the area viewed (which is very close to the PCs' Prime Material plane).

11. Messenger: The once swift and ever-ready hollyphant who serves as the citadel's herald is now lost in apathy. She no longer even has the will to feed herself, let alone to wander over and gaze despondently into the astral portal (area 10), as she had been doing previously. Instead, she remains in her room, lying on her side and staring into space. Her apathy is so profound that even if attacked, she would hardly bother to defend herself—she might summon the energy to



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teleport away, just to avoid the bother of being killed.

Hollyphant (1): AC -4; MV 9"/42"; HD 8+8; hp 44; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/1-3; THACO 12; SA trumpet, *banish, bless, flame strike, light, teleport no error*; SD *cure serious wounds, heal, raise dead, constant globe of invulnerability*, immune to all diseases and poisons, +1 weapon to hit, psionic disciplines of *invisibility, levitation, mind bar, probability travel, reduction, suspend animation*; MR 60%; AL CN.

12. Laboratory: This room, filled with a noxious gray-green smoke, is lit by a pulsing red light. The effect of the smoke (which had filled the entire citadel when Wartle's strength was at its height) on PCs is disorientation and dizziness; each round, those breathing it must save vs. poison or suffer -2 on all hit rolls. Spellcasters, in addition, have a 10% chance of miscasting a spell because of the way the smoke interferes with their mental processes.

The western part of the the room, 20 by 30 feet, is the supply annex. Shelves here contain a wide variety of chemicals and rare potion ingredients and spell components. Normally Gerhaund, the lammasu librarian, works here, continually sorting and checking the stocks, but he has of late been concerned with another task (see room 13, below).

The pulsing light originates in the actual work area, to the east. Its source is nothing less than the meteorite itself, Wartle. It sits in the middle of the floor, looking like a strange egg, gray and bumpy. From inside comes the pulsing glow, and the dark silhouette of an embryonic, frog-like creature can be seen.

The smoke, which is what corrupted most of the citadel's inhabitants, is emitted by the meteor. Also, any Prime plane native that touches Wartle's present form will be drained of one energy level (this will also cause the thing to glow brighter). If Wartle were to drain enough energy levels, he could be freed from his present form; however, that would severely imbalance this scenario.

Polymorphed into the shape of a spider is a green slaad, a servant of Wartle that followed its master here. It lurks in the deepest shadows of the room, eyeing the character party warily. At an opportune moment, it will sneak behind them, *polymorph* to its large, natural slaad form, and attack.

Green slaad (1): AC 3; MV 9"; HD 9+3; hp 50; #AT 3; Dmg 3-8/3-8/2-16; THACO 10; SA *polymorph self, telekinetic, fear, continual darkness 15' radius, ESP, locate object, produce flame, delayed blast fireball (12-dice), gate* in other slaadi; SD +1 weapon to hit, *detect invisible, detect magic*; MR 50%; AL CN.

The slaad's aim is to grasp characters and touch them to Wartle, thereby bringing the master closer to freedom; for this reason, such attack forms as the *delayed blast fireball* will be avoided. If both clawing attacks strike a character, he or she has been held, and the next round will be pressed against Wartle. Damage totalling 15 or more hit points in a single round will cause the slaad to drop a character.

As far as the characters are concerned, Wartle in his present shape is invulnerable. But putting the pentagram of silver dust around him will contain him indefinitely, and also confine the smoke he emits. The rest of the fumes will dissipate in 2-8 rounds.

To wrap up the adventure once Wartle is dealt with, see the Conclusion below.

13. Library: The citadel's librarian and chief savant is Gerhaund the lammasu, and like others in the fortress, he hasn't avoided Wartle's entropic influence. The library is maintained primarily for guests from the Prime planes, and on the shelves are many titles concerning such things as meditation, the lives of great paladins, lawful good philosophy and spirituality, and why the killing of evil humanoids is morally permissible. The lammasu has decided, however, that the library's contents reflect too narrow and biased a perspective. To rectify the situation, he has been working day and night to produce such texts as, "Good vs. Evil: A Dialectical Anal-

ysis", "Do Gentlecreatures Prefer Succubi?" and "A Brief Criticism of Celestial Hierarchies".

Gerhaund, lammasu (1): AC 6; MV 12"/24"; HD 7+7; hp 49; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; THACO 13; SA *invisibility, dimension door, spells* (as 6th-level cleric): *bless, command, cure light wounds, detect lie, detect life, feign death, glyph of warding, hold person, know alignment, penetrate disguise*; MR 30%; AL CN.

Despite his new, radical (and perhaps in some beings' view, subversive) literary career, Gerhaund is not necessarily a threat to the player characters. He may be provoked to violence if someone argues in favor of any form of censorship, though, or refuses to accept that alternative viewpoints are equally valid (for example, that the chaotic neutral philosophy is just as true as that of lawful good). He will, of course, fight if necessary to defend himself or his archives, and he will not permit any written material to be taken from the library.

Among the texts, there is a *libram of gainful conjuration*. If the PCs entered the module without being made aware of the situation (that is, via background option 2), the DM should also have a text in the library that describes how to contain Wartle. Gerhaund would help characters find the tome, though he wouldn't allow them to take it.

14. Kitchen: The residence of the agathia of the citadel, this is also the workplace of several of them. Food is taken from never-empty containers and cooked in stoves and ovens that do not require fuel.

Presently in the room is a single agathion (hp 41), preparing broth for soup. The agathion's helper went off in search of meat for the dish (see room 20), but on account of impatience, this one decides that one of the PCs would do just as well, and chooses one to go after with his huge meat cleaver (treat as *battleaxe* +2).

15. Steward: While the steward is away debating decor (see room 7), his room is being trashed by a violently

crazed hound archon (hp 38). The once ornate and beautiful room has been reduced to shambles. Most of what here was valuable was so on account of exquisite craftsmanship and artistic talent, but now lies broken, shattered and worthless. About 100 gp in gold and silver and 1,000 gp in assorted small gems may be salvaged.

16. Stairs to Roof: Two corrupted hound archons (hp 38 each) are placed to guard the stairs and roof. Roll 1d6 to determine where they are when the characters arrive at this area: on a result of 1 or 2, both are on the roof; on 3 or 4, both are inside; on 5 or 6, one is in each area. If the archons are apart and one engages in combat, the other will arrive to help in 1-4 rounds. For fighting aerial opponents, each archon is armed with a *crossbow of speed* and a quiver of a dozen *quarrels* +3.

17-20. Guest Rooms: Pilgrims from the Prime Material are the most common occupants of these chambers. Each room is furnished with a bed, a dresser (with mirror), a desk, and a chair. Rooms 18 and 19 are devoid of occupants.

17. This room is occupied by a former pilgrim. Since having the misfortune of contact with the meteorite, he has become a juju zombie. The zombie lies face down on the bed, eyes open, and remains still unless disturbed, in which case it will attack suddenly and without respite.

Juju zombie (1): AC 6; MV 9"; HD 3+12; hp 26; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; THACO 13; SA climbs as 6th-level thief; SD +1 weapon to hit, piercing and blunt weapons and fire do half damage, turned as spectre, immune to mind-affecting magic, poison, electricity, *magic missile*, death and cold spells; AL NE.

The possessions of the former cleric, kept in the dresser, include such mundane things as normal clothing, provisions, armor and weapons, plus a scroll of clerical spells (*cure serious wounds*, *command*, *find traps*), a potion of *mountain giant control*, and a *wand of steam and vapor* (63 charges

remaining).

20. This room is a mess of gore, the result of a mad agathion cook (hp 22 now; armed with battleaxe) searching for meat for soup (see room 18). His prey, a human fighter who was staying here, did not agree with the former's culinary ideas, and put up a commendable struggle against the formerly gracious host.

Having acquired what he sought, the agathion has no interest in anything else here (including PCs). Unless someone quite forcibly gets in his way, he'll simply gather up the bloody remains and return with them to the kitchen.

The possessions of the deceased are as follows: clothing and such normal personal effects, 112 pp, 306 gp, 5 gems (worth 900 gp, 500 gp, 2 × 100 gp, and 50 gp), a potion of *animal control*, a *dagger* +1, a bow, and a quiver of 20 arrows (two of which are enchanted to +1 magic).

21. Inner Chamber: From this room, which is currently unoccupied, Arelsis commands the citadel. His lapis lazuli throne sits in the middle on the chamber, on a rotating platform. Light is provided by globes, upon which have been cast *continual light* spells, suspended from the ceiling. Glass windows display magnificent views of the starlit landscape from all heights of the round tower. The walls and ceilings are magnificently adorned with ivory and rare woods, silver and platinum inlays, gold leaf, and a kaleidoscopic array of gems. The total value of the precious substances is in excess of 200,000 gp, but of course the characters may not remove it. Anyone bold enough to do so will be struck by a *curse* (no saving throw permitted) that causes his or her hands to glow bright red whenever within 20 feet of a native of the Seven Heavens. A lawful good cleric of 12th level or higher is required to remove the *curse*.

Apart from nice decor to gawk at, there is nothing of real significance in this room.

Conclusion

Any time after Wartle has been contained, Arelsis may return to the citadel with a planetar. Once Arelsis has returned, the adventure is essentially over, since he and the planetar can clean up well enough. If the players get to Wartle quickly, the DM might give them time to explore more of the dungeon. On the other hand, a party of the second background option might never bother to contain the slaad. In such a case, Arelsis and the planetar should return before the party leaves the citadel; Wartle's power will have waned to the extent that it will pose no difficulties for the planetar.

Containment of Wartle will win each party member a *wish*. The DM mustn't let *wishes* get out of hand, however, and should be most stringent in following the exact, literal wording of each request. *Wishes* for money or magic will be granted, but not in excess of 10,000 gp value. Unreasonable *wishes* will not be fulfilled, but the player will be permitted to make a more reasonable request.

Treasure taken from any encounter except the Inner Chamber (room 21) may be retained by party members, even if Wartle wasn't contained.

Exactly what the planetar does with Wartle, after conferring with the Powers, is up to the DM. Decide on what is best, considering your campaign plans.

The simplest thing is for the meteorite to be taken all the way to Chronias, seventh of the Heavens, where it would be destroyed irrevocably.

On the other hand, it might be interesting to have Wartle around to spice up the outer planes, now that the player characters have had contact (of sorts) with the slaad lord. The lawful good Powers might decide to return Wartle to Limbo (this task could be assigned to the PCs); he'd then continue to give the other slaadi a hard time and possibly discourage them from trying to use Lunia as a garbage dump in the future.

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In case Wartle is kept around, his standard statistics and description are provided below. Keep in mind, when playing him, that he is not actually evil—just mindbogglingly, uncaringly chaotic. He might treat player character acquaintances with some kindness (especially if he thinks they might be of use to him), or he might pretend he doesn't know them as he sells them into slavery to another slaad.

Wartle

FREQUENCY: Unique (Very rare)
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: -4
MOVE: 12"
HIT DICE: 132 hit points (16 + hit dice)
LAIR: 35%
TREASURE TYPE: A (x2), Z
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3 or 2
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-16/2-16/5-30 or
by weapon +7
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Energy drain,
spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Regeneration,
spells, +2 weapon to hit, immune
to fire
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 80%

INTELLIGENCE: Genius
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic neutral
SIZE: M (5-1/2' tall in slaad form)
PSIONIC ABILITY: 286

Attack/defense modes: All/all
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: X/20,190

Though not as powerful as such masters as Ssendam and Ygorl, corpulent Wartle is nonetheless a dangerous beast. In slaad form, he is a short and bloated toad, grayish brown with spots of sickly green. His skin is dry and leathery. Small, backward-pointing horns make a crest atop his skull. In human shape he typically appears as a short, pudgy fellow with a whining, raspy voice. Though he appears to be weak, cowardly, and inept, he can deftly strike twice per round with a strength of 19. His favored weapon is a *morning star* +3 that can fight on its own, like a *dancing sword*. In any form, this slaad's body is profusely bespeckled with warts.

In battle, Wartle will typically begin in human form, then leave his weapon to fight on its own, as he *shape changes* to slaad form and attacks with a claw/claw/bite routine. His pow-

erful bite not only inflicts 5d6 damage; it also drains two life levels unless a save vs. spell is made at -6. Wartle may use any of the following powers, one at a time, once per round, at will: *advanced illusion*, *darkness 15' radius*, *flaming sphere*, *fire ball* (8 dice), *shape change* (human/slaad/normal toad), *teleport no error*, *true seeing*, and attempt to *gate* 1-3 green slaadi (55% chance of success). Once per day he may use any *symbol*, say a *power word: stun*, *transmute rock to mud*, and create a *wall of stone or iron*.

Flippant, whimsical, inconsistent and (most of all) crude, Wartle is also a distinguished liar. He is generally looked down upon in Limbo, although some lesser slaad take a liking to him. He rudely and regularly insults the other slaad masters, and has more than once suffered from their violent ire. He does not generally follow the practice of having slaves, human or otherwise, since he finds them more trouble than they're worth. He happily uses them to trade for favors from other slaad lords, though.

A Friendly Wager

by Ray Winninger

"A Friendly Wager" is an adventure designed for five to eight player characters of experience levels 9 to 10. As usual, a party with a good mix of character classes and races will have a much easier time overcoming the many challenges the PCs will encounter during play.

A basic knowledge of Greek mythology would be very helpful to any DM running this adventure. Interested Dungeon Masters are encouraged to consult the local library for basic references. Such works may provide the inspiration for hundreds of other AD&D® game adventures on the plane of Olympus, as well.

DM's Information

The mere fact that many of the great gods of legend reside among the outer planes makes traveling to and from these realms a risky (perhaps deadly) proposition at best. This adventure has been specifically designed to illustrate this principle, while allowing the player characters to interact with some of the famous figures from the Greek myths and legends.

The adventure begins when the player characters arrive on the plane of Olympus, home of the ancient Greek and Elvish pantheons in the AD&D game multiverse. Shortly after the party members arrive upon the plane, they are approached by a wizened shepherd, who is actually the god Hermes in disguise. Always amused by the many mortals who attempt to make their way through the domain of the gods, Hermes decides to have a bit of fun with the player characters. In the guise of the old man, Hermes informs the party members that Zeus himself has placed a magical barrier around the entire realm which prohibits any mortal entering via the lands dominated by the Greek pantheon on Olympus's uppermost plane from leaving without Zeus's own verbal consent. If the PCs ever want to see their home plane again, Hermes tells them, they must

venture forth to win Zeus's favor. Fortunately, the old shepherd just happens to know of a particular wood nymph that has recently caught the ever-romantic Zeus's eye. If the PCs can get the nymph to agree to become one of Zeus's many brides, the shepherd informs them, the Thunderer will surely be pleased enough to allow the adventurers to return home, perhaps offering the party a reward as well.

Everything that Hermes tells the PCs is true, but he is not sharing his information out of any interest for the party's well-being. The god is actually out to create as much mischief as possible. He knows that Zeus's jealous wife, Hera, will eventually discover the party's quest and take some sort of action to stop it. To Hermes's delight, this will most likely result in a first-class scandal among the Olympians.

To make things worse for the adventurers, shortly after talking to the player characters, Hermes boasts to the god Apollo of his brilliant scheme to drum up controversy. Intrigued, the Sun God then proposes a wager on the success of the party's quest. Apollo bets fifty golden apples that the PCs will return home, while Hermes bets his best lyre that the party will never be able to secure the favors of the nymph for Zeus.

What makes "A Friendly Wager" interesting is that the party members, in addition to overcoming a number of more traditional obstacles, must enter into a strange political struggle with the various Olympians themselves. Zeus, Hera, Hermes, and Apollo all have a vested interest in the party's actions, and for every god the PCs please, they are almost certain to bring down the wrath of another. Clever players, however, will be able to discover a "perfect solution" which was built into the adventure, enabling them not only to return home in peace, but with a handsome reward as well.

Getting to Olympus

The "World Serpent Inn" appears regularly on the uppermost plane of Oly-

mpus, near the Mount Olympus conduit (see the large area map) which leads to Gehenna, Hades, Tartarus, and an almost infinite number of alternate prime planes. If you wish, you can use the inn as the means by which the party members make the journey between their home plane and Olympus. On the plane of Olympus, however, the World Serpent Inn has an unusual property. Once a mortal traveler leaves the inn, he cannot re-enter until Zeus verbally grants his permission. This effect is one of the results of a powerful spell that Zeus cast in order to control the traffic in and out of the realm's Greek dominion. In fact, the inn is invisible and intangible to any and all travelers who arrived on the plane via the Greek dominion until Zeus gives each one permission to leave.

If you have decided that the World Serpent Inn does not appear on your campaign world, or have simply chosen not to use the inn for this adventure, the party members can reach Olympus by climbing Mount Olympus itself—why they would want to do so is up to you if "because it's there" is not a good enough rationale. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ campaign setting, Mount Olympus is located on the small island of Achea (see I13, *Adventure Pack 1*, "Blood and Laurels") which lies several hundred miles away from the territories depicted in the campaign setting.

In order to reach Olympus, one must reach the mount's absolute summit. Climbing the mount should be an adventure unto itself, probably occupying the PCs for as much as two months of game time (the mount has an elevation of 60,000 feet).

Because of Zeus's peculiar spell, anyone reaching the plane by scaling Mount Olympus cannot begin to descend again (or leave the plane by any other method) until Zeus has granted his permission. No matter how hard they try, the party members will be unable to find the proper peak to descend back onto the Prime Plane until Zeus has given his consent. It is also impossible for a traveler who



entered the plane via the area controlled by the Greek gods to use *plane shift*, a *book of the planes*, or any other magical means of leaving Olympus without Zeus's consent.

The Gods of Legend

Remember that the gods involved in this adventure are not "monsters" in the usual game sense. It is almost inconceivable that the party members would ever manage to kill any of the gods (take another look at divine powers found on pages 124-126 of the *Manual of the Planes*, and pages 8-9 of *Legends and Lore*); nor is it very likely that the gods would simply choose to attack the PCs (it really isn't worth the effort). In fact, unless the utterly extraordinary happens there will not be any direct conflict between the gods and the mortal party members at all.

The Greek gods are different from most other pantheons described in *Legends and Lore* in that they are

essentially mere super-powered beings, instead of omnipotent, omniscient creatures of eternity. The Greek deities possess all of humanity's flaws including rage, jealousy, lust, and greed. In fact, the Greek legends are filled with incidents in which mere mortals are able to outsmart the gods themselves!

Complete AD&D® game system stats for the gods that participate in this adventure can be found on pages 63-74 of *Legends and Lore*.

Olympus: General Description

When describing the various features of Olympus to the players, try to stress size and extravagance. Nearly everything on the plane (geographical features, buildings, creatures, and so on) is between five and ten times larger than its counterpart on the Prime Material plane. Mountains that are hundreds of miles high, strongholds the size of nations, and trees that stretch far out of view are not uncommon.

In addition, everything on Olympus seems laced with an almost inexplicable extravagance. The geographical features are all perfectly formed and sparkling, the architecture is intricate and breathtaking, and the denizens all seem to possess an unusually noble demeanor.

Encounter One: The Shepherd

No matter which method the party members use to travel to Olympus (the World Serpent Inn, climbing the mount, *plane shift*, or other means), they enter the realm high atop one of its many lofty peaks (marked "BEGIN HERE" on the Olympus area map) in the domain of the Greek pantheon on Olympus's first level. The PCs find themselves on a broad ledge overlooking a vast flatland. To their backs is a vertical cliff that ascends out of sight. Leading down onto the flatland is a gradually sloping trail approximately ten miles in length (half a day's travel on foot).

Since the cliff is impassable to non-thieves and stretches up for nearly thirty miles before sharply descending into a slightly lower mountainous region, the party should, sooner or later, decide to descend into the flatland. If the party members possess magic enabling them to fly, and attempt to sail over the cliff, you may have to steer them back on course a bit, or simply reverse all directions on the map and place the first encounter wherever they eventually decide to land.

At the base of the sloping path on the broad flatland is a small cave which immediately catches the PCs' attention. Once the party members approach the cave they hear rustling from within, and a wizened old man wearing tattered robes steps out to greet them.

"Eh, who's there?
"Ahh, mortals you be! You were very foolish to come here, you were. Did you not know of the barri-

er? Zeus himself has put up a mystical shield which prevents those mortals entering the land of the gods from leaving without his own express permission—and Zeus does not take kindly to trespassers! Indeed, if you ever wish to return to your home again, you are going to have to go out and win Zeus's favor, and that is none too easy.

"Say, I'll tell you what. I think I know a way that you can gain Zeus's sympathy. For 200 silvers, I'll share it."

The old man is actually the god Hermes in disguise (*shape change*). If the player characters decide to pay him the 200 sp (10 gp) he requested, he relates the following.

"A beautiful woman always catches Zeus's eye, and I happen to know that his current interests lie in Daphne, the young wood nymph residing in Almiador, across this

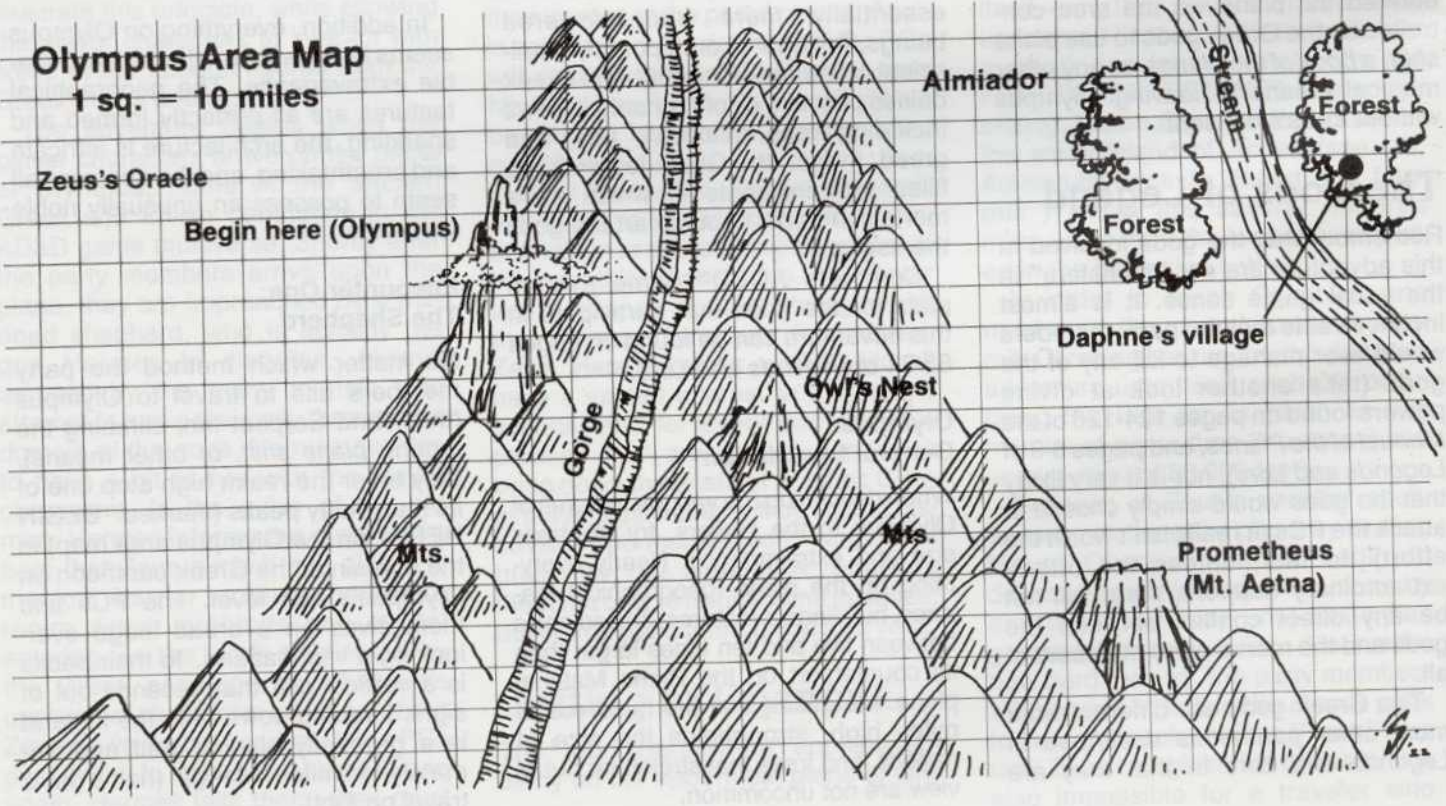
vast mountain chain. If you could somehow win Daphne's favors for Lord Zeus he will almost certainly allow you to return home, and may even reward you as well. If you manage to succeed in your quest, you should bring Daphne to Zeus's oracle located to the west in the flatland. He will certainly notice you there."

Hermes then gives the PCs a roughly sketched map with the locations of Daphne's village and Zeus's oracle scribbled in.

If the player characters ever question the old man as to his background or origin, he will claim that he is but a humble shepherd whom Artemis sentenced to wander across the plane of Olympus forever because he once mistended his flock.

**Encounter Two:
Traveling to Almiador**

After receiving Hermes's information, the party will probably attempt to



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make its way to Daphne's village, across the high mountain peaks. Traveling through the colossal Olympian mountains is grueling. The movement rate is approximately two miles per day on foot, across incredibly rocky terrain (mounted movement is impossible and extremely strong winds slow flight to five miles per day). Each party member must make a Constitution check once per day of travel through the mountains. Failure indicates that the character suffers 1d8 points of damage that day, due to exhaustion. You should also roll for one random encounter (on the Olympus Encounter Table at the end of the chapter) for each day of travel.

Approximately halfway across the mountain chain, the party runs into a vast gorge approximately two miles across. The gorge descends five hundred feet down to ground level, and it is impossible to cross the mountain chain without traversing it. No matter how far north or south the players attempt to cut through the mountains, they find a thin, rickety suspension bridge in sight just as they come to the edge of the gorge. Unless the party members are all capable of flight, they have to cross the bridge.

The suspension bridge is constructed of two-foot-wide wooden planks and rope. Anyone attempting to cross the bridge must make a total of three Dexterity checks. Failing a check indicates that the character has slipped through a series of weak planks and is now hanging by his arms. Such a character must then make a Strength check. Success indicates that the character is able to pull himself back onto the bridge. Failure means that he slips and falls down into the gorge (500 feet straight down—30d6 points of damage) unless rescued. It takes twenty seconds of free fall (four segments) to reach the bottom of the gorge and strike the solid granite below.

Once the party reaches the edge of the mountain chain, the foot movement rate increases to thirty miles per day (all other movement rates are normal). Continue to roll for encounters at the end of each day.

Encounter Three: Daphne's Village

When the party members finally make their way to the point on Hermes's map which marks the location of Daphne's village, they find a vast clearing in the center of which stand several large, isolated trees. The clearing is a good two hundred yards in diameter and is ringed by very dense forest—there are only two access trails, on opposite sides, leading to the clearing. The isolated trees at the clearing center are giant oaks, approximately eight hundred feet tall and eight feet in diameter. No other features or signs of life are visible.

The creatures of the nymph village actually live inside the trees themselves, with the help of an innate *dimension door* power. The villagers rely upon magic for their subsistence (food, shelter, and so on) and rarely leave their arboreal homes. They ignore the player characters' intrusion for as long as possible, but as soon as any of the PCs disturbs any of the trees, the head of the village, King Hiyawat, and two of his bodyguards come forth from their trees and demand to know the party's intentions. Hiyawat and his guards are Olympian wood elves (AC 3; MV 12"; HD 2+2; hp 18, 15, 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; THACO 18; SA +1 with swords; SD 90% resistant to *charm* and *sleep* spells).

While conversing with the party members, Hiyawat exhibits a somewhat gruff but seemingly benevolent manner. Early on in the conversation, King Hiyawat reveals that Daphne is actually his daughter. He will not let her accompany the PCs of his own free will for any purpose, unless the party members specifically inform him that Zeus is interested in the girl, in which case he will relate the following.

"You say Zeus fancies my daughter, do you? Well, I don't believe it. Not for an instant. Still, it is most unwise to take matters involving the gods lightly. If I were indeed to deny Zeus's wishes, his fury would most certainly

tear our humble village asunder.

"Thus, I propose a test. If you can complete three labors of my design, I shall be forced to accept your words as truth and allow my daughter to accompany you to her fate. What say you now?"

If the PCs refuse Hiyawat's challenge, he and his guards retreat into their trees until the party accepts. There is no way the player characters can force Hiyawat, Daphne, or any of the other villagers to leave their trees.

If the heroes agree to undertake the labors, Hiyawat continues.

"Good then. For your first task, you must retrieve a golden egg from the nest of Brobane, lord of owls. After you have the egg, bring it here and rap on this tree three times to learn your next task."

Hiyawat then indicates the location of Brobane's nest on Hermes's map and retreats into his tree, refusing to answer any further queries.

Encounter Four: Zeus's White Eagle

As the player characters are traveling toward Brobane's nest, roll on the Olympus Encounter Table at the end of each day of travel. Just after the party members cross into the vast mountain chain on the way to Brobane's nest, they see a huge white eagle (wingspan of 50 feet) perched upon a distant peak. Make it clear to the players that investigating the eagle will be very difficult and time consuming. If the party attempts to check out the eagle anyway, the bird flies away just as the group scales up to its location. The party members find only a makeshift nest in which the creature was perching.

Though apparently inconsequential, this encounter may be of great importance later in the adventure. This bird is actually the great white eagle of Zeus (AC 2; MV 6"/48"; HD 16+; hp 100; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/3-30; THACO 7).

Behind the Scenes

While the players are attempting to complete the first of Hiyawat's labors, Hermes bumps into Apollo just outside of Zeus's palace and boasts of his clever scheme to stir up controversy among the Olympians. Using magic to look in on the PCs, the two gods discover the party's efforts for King Hiyawat. Amused, Apollo offers Hermes a wager. The sun god bets one hundred golden apples that the party members will indeed succeed in returning home, while Hermes bets his best lyre that the party members will never succeed in their efforts to bring Daphne to Zeus. The two gods then begin carefully observing the party's progress.

Encounter Five: Brobane's Nest

Brobane's nest lies on one of the vast Olympian peaks. The same rules for Constitution checks apply for traveling through the mountains that applied in the second encounter. In order to reach the nest, the PCs must climb a good four miles up the side of a mountain, taking about two days. The climb is automatically successful.

At the top of the mountain, the player characters find Brobane's vast nest, lying on a slightly elevated outcropping of rock in the center of a flat located just below the mountain summit. The nest is approximately sixty feet in diameter and is constructed of huge pieces of dried straw and grass. The cracks and spaces between the blades of straw are large enough to permit a man-sized creature to enter, forming a sort of maze leading out onto the nest bed itself (see map). Without the use of flight or some other magical power, the PCs cannot see inside the nest until they make their way through the "straw maze."

Straw Key

Every round that the party moves through the straw, there is a one in six chance of encountering 2-5 giant ants like those in area A (AC 1; MV 18"; HD

4; hp 30, 18, 29, 24, 23; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; THACO 14; SA sting).

A. Insect Nest. This area of Brobane's nest has been overrun by a huge colony of Olympian insects. All told, there are eighteen giant warrior ants and four giant ticks. The insects are all so tiny compared to Brobane that she doesn't notice them.

Giant ants: AC 1; MV 18"; HD 4; hp 30, 18, 29, 24, 25, 23, 24, 20, 31, 28, 14, 16, 26, 24, 22, 20, 19, 22; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; THACO 14; SA sting.

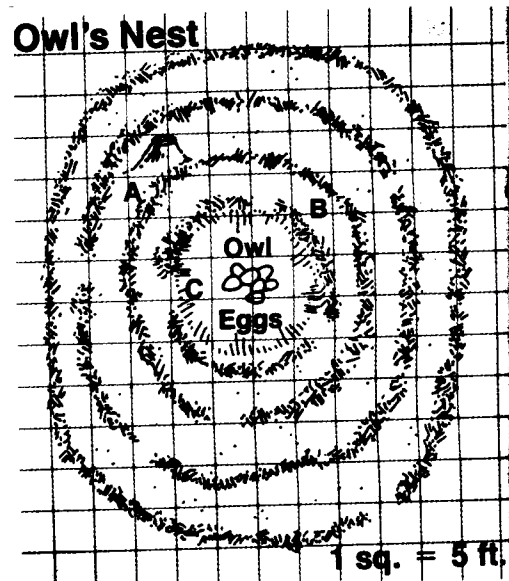
Giant ticks: AC 1; MV 3"; HD 8; hp 57, 53, 50, 61; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; THACO 12; SA blood drain.

The insect colony is comprised of a number of tiny passageways (too small for humans, but large enough for halflings) burrowed into the walls and floor of the straw nest. Half the colony will be scampering about the main corridor when the PCs arrive, while the other half will spend the first two rounds of combat inside the smaller passageways, emerging to reinforce their comrades on the third and following rounds. Scattered about within the smaller insect tunnels are: 450 gp, three gems (each worth 20 gp), and a *flame tongue* sword, all of which were possessed by earlier victims of the insects. Strewn across the main corridor in this area are 350 sp.

B. Oily Area. The straw in this area is entirely soaked in a strange slippery oil. Clever PCs can scoop up some of the oil into a vial and use it as *oil of slipperiness* later. There is enough oil in the area to fill only two vials. The oil is apparently part of the carrion remaining from one of the Olympian monsters that Brobane had killed and eaten.

C. Outside. Once the party penetrates the maze of straw and muck, they find themselves out on the main bed of Brobane's nest. The nest walls about them are 15 feet high. As the party members approach they find the 30-foot-tall owl sleeping in one corner of the nest, with two barely-visible golden eggs protruding from underneath her. It requires two successful Dexterity checks (both at -3) to remove each egg without waking Bro-

Owl's Nest



bane.

Brobane: AC 4; MV 3"/18"; HD 16; hp 128; #AT 3; Dmg 2-16/2-16/2-20; THACO 7; AL N.

If disturbed, Brobane will fight to the death to protect her young. Each egg is approximately three feet from end to end and any egg returned to the Prime Material plane can fetch a price of 5,000 gp or more. Brobane's golden eggs are quite fragile. The player characters may wish to take the appropriate actions to prevent them from breaking during the stress of combat or climbing, such as wrapping the eggs in blankets and keeping them toward the rear of the party. Remember to make the appropriate saving throws against breakage for any eggs carried by a party member that falls, is struck in combat, and so on. The golden eggs save as though made of glass, and a broken egg is not enough to fulfill Hiyawat's request. The value of a broken egg is only 500 gp.

After gathering at least one of the eggs, the party must make its way

A Friendly Wager

back to the nymph village. Again, roll for encounters daily.

Encounter Six: Damming the Eiphrates

After the party members return with a golden egg (they may keep the other one if they managed to retrieve two), Hiyawat once again comes forth from his tree.

"You have performed rather admirably, but the first task was merely a test. I believe you will find this labor a much more difficult undertaking. For your second task, I require you to go forth and dam the stream Eiphrates which occasionally overflows, flooding our forested valley. Be warned, however, that the hideous aerohydra often suns itself downstream and has thus far devoured every band of carpenters we have sent to accomplish this task. Return here when you are ready for your third and final challenge. And by the way, you may keep the aerohydra's teeth."

Before they set out, Hiyawat shows the PCs exactly where the Eiphrates is located on Hermes's map. The party may choose to dam the stream at any location they consider appropriate, using any method they choose. The stream is approximately twelve feet deep and forty feet across. Possible methods include a permanent *wall of force* or *stone*, felling a couple of the colossal Olympian trees into the stream (requiring at least a +1 blade to fell a tree), or the use of a *dig* spell or other dweomer to somehow alter the stream's flow. Try to encourage the players to take a good look at their characters' abilities (magical and otherwise) and solve this problem without any prodding on your part.

Two rounds after the PCs begin to make any sort of attempt to dam up the river (successful or otherwise), the colossal aerohydra appears in flight on the horizon. The beast is coming to investigate the threat to its watering hole, and certainly attacks the party.

The aerohydra is essentially a huge lernaean hydra with wings. Clever party members will notice that the dead aerohydra's carcass is large enough to make an excellent dam for the stream.

Aerohydra: AC -2; MV 9"/18"; HD 22; hp 162; #AT 11; Dmg 1-10 (x11); THAC0 7; SA grows new heads.

Hiyawat's unusual closing statement should tip the players off to the fact that there is something unique and valuable about the aerohydra's teeth. There is almost no way that the PCs would know this, unless there is a sage in the expedition or a party member casts a *legend lore* or similar spell. If the aerohydra's teeth are planted in the ground, an army of 50 gargoyles will arise from the spot and follow the planter's instructions for six turns, then dissipate. Because of Hiyawat's comment, the player characters will probably take the teeth after defeating the hydra, in hopes of discovering their function at a later date (any sage or an *identify* or *legend lore* spell can clue them in). If asked later, Hiyawat or any of the other NPCs refuse to reveal the true nature of the teeth. The teeth radiate strong magic if a *detect magic* is cast upon them.

Encounter Seven: The Final Task

After the players have dammed the Eiphrates and returned to the nymph village, Hiyawat comes forth to present them with their final task.

"You have completed my first two tasks without much effort, but the most difficult leg of your journey still lies ahead. For your third and final labor, you must travel to Mount Aetna and ask omniscient Prometheus, the rebel Titan, to prophesy the fate of our people."

Before returning to his tree, Hiyawat shows the player characters the location of Mount Aetna on Hermes's map. As the party travels to the mount, roll for random encounters as usual.

Encounter Eight: Hera Becomes Involved

Remember that both Hermes and Apollo are using magic to keep a close eye upon the party members as they attempt to win Hiyawat's favor. Both are quite determined to win the wager. If, in your opinion, the PCs have had an easy time on the quest so far, Hermes (who will lose the bet if the party's mission is successful) drops the appropriate hints at Zeus's palace, causing Hera to discover the adventurers and their quest. Angered, the goddess then sends forth a plague of insects to harass the party and impede its progress. These insects attack the PCs while they are on the way to Mount Aetna. The insects are giant Olympian stirges (AC 5; MV 3"/18"; HD 5+5; hp 45, 42, 38, 40, 38, 45, 33; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; THAC0 15; SA blood drain). Hera sends seven of the creatures in all.

Encounter Nine: Mount Aetna

Mount Aetna is one of the tallest peaks in the range that the party has been traversing back and forth throughout their quest. Prometheus lies chained to a huge rock at the mount's summit.

The climb up Mount Aetna is very grueling. It will take the party exactly 14 days to scale the mount from base to summit. During this period, each of the PCs must make a Constitution check each day. Failing this check means that the character suffers 1d8 points of damage due to exhaustion. Thieves may make a *climb walls* roll in place of the check. You should continue to roll for random encounters during each day of the climb and improvise any encounters or events as you see fit. As the party members climb, remember to describe the fierce, howling winds, exotic flora and fauna, and unearthly majesty of Aetna and the surrounding peaks.

When the party members reach the very pinnacle of Aetna, they find Prometheus (100' tall) chained to the giant rock. The chains binding the

titan are 50' long and 8' thick. They are utterly unbreakable without Zeus's verbal consent (another magical effect) and cannot, in any case, be broken by magic or a creature with a strength of less than 25.

Prometheus is more than happy to converse with the PCs, but refuses to deliver Hiyawat's prophecy unless the adventurers agree to remain on the mount until sundown and drive off the vulture that comes each night to pluck out Prometheus's ever-regenerating liver.

In order to drive off the vulture, the PCs must do enough damage to kill the creature, although it does not really die (it is automatically reborn and returns each night). The vulture has the following stats: AC -5; MV 48"; HD 30; hp 180; #AT 3; Dmg 2-16/2-16/3-30; THAC0 7.

If the PCs drive the vulture away, Prometheus offers the following.

"I thank you, brave mortals. Tell wise King Hiyawat that he need not fear. His people are safe for the time being, though all creatures and settlements must one day die just as all flowers must one day wither. This is simply the order of things. Even the immortal Zeus himself is inevitably headed for such a fate. The nymphs, however, have many millennia ahead of them.

"Now, brave folk, if I can just persuade you to stay and drive that vulture away one more night, I believe I can offer you some extremely vital information in return."

If the party members stay another day and succeed in driving away the vulture yet again, Prometheus informs them of the old shepherd's true identity, and of Hermes's scheme to use the adventurers to stir up controversy amongst the Olympians. Prometheus also relates the circumstances behind the wager that Apollo made with Hermes (including the exact bet that each made), and warn the characters that no matter which god wins the bet, the

other is sure to hold a grudge against the party.

**Encounter Ten:
Daphne**

Once the PCs have completed all three labors, King Hiyawat summons Daphne from the trees and orders her to accompany the adventurers. Daphne is a nymph (AC 9; MV 12"; HD 6; hp 16; #AT 0; Dmg none; SA druid spells). Upon learning of her fate, Daphne begins weeping incessantly.

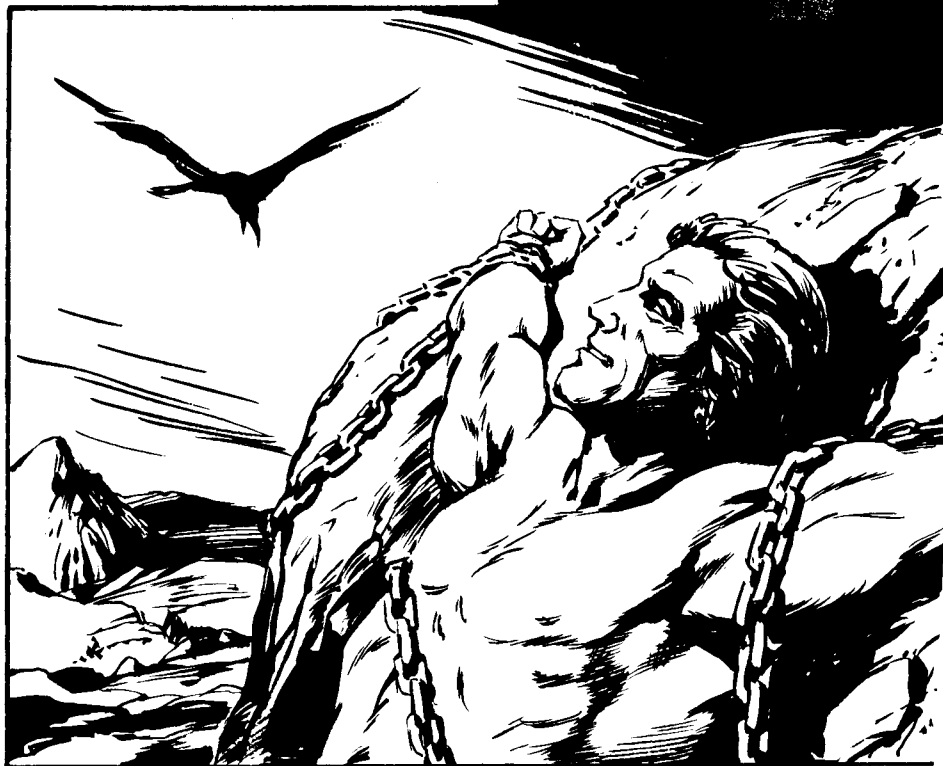
Just after the party members and Daphne set out for Zeus's oracle, Teleus, a minor demi-god, suddenly teleports into their presence.

Teleus: AC -3; MV 18"; F18, C16; #AT 2; Dmg 2-20; S 22, I 20, W 18, D 24, C 25, Ch 19.

"Mortals, you must help me! While tending to Zeus's flocks I foolishly left the aerie gate open, allowing one of the father's favorite white eagles to escape. Have you seen such a creature?"

The PCs must now make a choice. They can, of course, inform Teleus of the eagle's location (they saw it nesting earlier in the adventure), in which case the demigod will reward each of them with a useful +3 weapon. Clever players, however, will act as though they have not seen the bird and go to retrieve it themselves. They can then use the eagle to gain Zeus's favor instead of Daphne, in which case neither Hermes nor Apollo will lose the wager (read the exact terms of the bet again) and Hera will no longer feel enmity toward the group (this also causes Daphne to stop crying).

If they so decide, the adventurers will have no problem returning to the area where they spotted the eagle (roll for random encounters as the party travels), and the creature can be persuaded to follow the party to Zeus's oracle with a successful Charisma check.



**Encounter Eleven:
Zeus's Oracle**

At some point, the party will probably finally make it to Zeus's oracle with either Daphne, the eagle, or both. As they approach, a voice booms out, "So, mortals, you wish to return to your home. Give me one good reason why I should allow such a thing." At this point the party can offer up either the eagle or Daphne. No matter which they offer, the voice booms once again: "Forgive my earlier impoliteness, my children. Of course I will allow you to return to your home realm. You have pleased me. Accept these trinkets as a reward." With that the adventurers find themselves wherever they started (back on the Prime plane or at the World Serpent Inn) with an additional 15,000 gp, a *shield* +3, and an *apparatus of Kwalish*.

After the Adventure

Zeus's dismissal may not end the adventure. If the PCs managed to aggravate any of the gods with their exploits (the most likely candidates are Hera and Apollo), the Olympians in question will bear a grudge against the heroes, even after the adventurers have returned to the Prime Material plane. The exact penalty that the heroes incur due to these enmities is up to you; the Olympians' wrath can serve as a springboard for many adventures. Some examples may include, from the enmity of Hera: frequent attacks by insects, loss of a spouse or loved one, -1 to all saving throws for one game month; from the enmity of Apollo: -2 to all missile weapon fire for one month, the sun will not shine on any of the party members' holdings for two weeks, the sudden loss of all musical ability. In any case, the grudge will probably not last more than a month or so and the penalty is likely to be frequent but minor.

Olympian Encounter Table

Roll	Encounter	Roll	Encounter
1-10	1d12 Centaurs AC 3(2); MV 18"; HD 8; hp 45, 61, 33, 40, 23, 36, 40, 58, 51, 48, 39, 26; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6; THAC0 12; AL CG.	65-70	Androsphinx AC -4; MV 18"/30"; HD 24; hp 140; #AT 2; Dmg 2-12; THAC0 7; SA see <i>Monster Manual</i> page 89; AL CG.
11-18	Chimera AC 4/3/0; MV 9"/18"; HD 18; hp 123; #AT 6; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-4/1-4/2-8/3-12; THAC0 7; SA breath; AL CE.	71-75	Gynosphinx AC -3; MV 15"/24"; HD 16; hp 103; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 7; SA see <i>Monster Manual</i> page 89; AL N.
19-23	Gorgon AC 0; MV 12"; HD 16; hp 99; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; THAC0 7; SA breath turns to stone; AL N.	76-78	Titan AC -5; MV 21"; HD 44; hp 265; #AT 1; Dmg 8-48; THAC0 7; SA see <i>Monster Manual</i> page 94; AL CG.
24-32	2d6 Harpies AC 5; MV 6"/15"; HD 6; hp 25, 27, 31, 16, 23, 32, 40, 26, 14, 19, 21, 20; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; THAC0 13; SA <i>charm</i> ; AL CE.	79-86	1d8 Cyclopskins AC 1; MV 12"; HD 10; hp 47, 40, 32, 49, 60, 38, 22, 48; #AT 1; Dmg 3-13; THAC0 10; AL CE.
33-35	Hydra AC 3; MV 9"; HD 18; hp 108; #AT 9; Dmg 1-10; THAC0 7; SA see <i>Monster Manual</i> page 54; AL N.	87-90	Gorgimera AC 3/0; MV 12"/15"; HD 20; hp 120; #AT 5; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8/2-12/3-12; THAC0 7; SA breath; AL CE.
36-43	1d3 Manticores AC 2; MV 12"/18"; HD 12+6; hp 78, 83, 69; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; THAC0 9; SA spikes; AL LE.	91-94	Thessalhydra AC -2; MV 12"; HD 24; hp 136; #AT 10; Dmg 1-6(x8)/1-12/1-20; THAC0 7; SA acid; SD immune to acid; AL N.
44-46	Medusa AC 3; MV 9"; HD 12; hp 84; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; THAC0 9; SA gaze petrifies, hair of asps poisons; AL LE.	95-00	Giant Hornet AC 0/2; MV 24"; HD 10; hp 70; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; THAC0 10; SA poison, incapacitation; AL N.
47-55	1d6 Minotaurs AC 4; MV 12"; HD 12+6; hp 91, 83, 71, 68, 70, 59; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 9; SD surprised only on 1; AL CE.		
56-64	1d4 Giant Owls AC 4; MV 3"/18"; HD 8; hp 42, 40, 51, 38; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/2-5; THAC0 12; SA surprise on 1-5; AL N.		

Remember that all Olympian creatures have double Hit Dice, -2 to their listed armor classes and certain other bonuses (see *Manual of the Planes* page 93).

by Rick Swan

This adventure is designed for four to six characters of levels 9 to 10 who travel to the Abyss. The adventure begins at a meeting of the Council of Guilds (or appropriate governing body) in a city with which one or more of the PCs are affiliated.

Player Background

The PCs have been summoned to appear before an emergency meeting of the Council of Guilds. No reason was given, but the messengers indicated a matter of utmost urgency and secrecy.

Just after dawn, the PCs gather at the hall as requested. After thanking the PCs for coming on short notice, the council gets down to business.

"A few days ago in these chambers," begins one of the grim council elders, "we heard what we might ordinarily dismiss as the fantasy of a charlatan if it had not come from the lips of Gustofsen Eller."

The PCs recognize the name immediately. Even in the most desolate regions of the Forgotten Realms, there are few who haven't heard of Gustofsen Eller, an honored and respected cleric who has selflessly devoted every waking hour to opposing the forces of evil.

"As I'm sure you know," continues the elder, "Eller has spent much of his life attempting to contain the activities of Kali, the hellish goddess whose minions have plagued this region for centuries. Still, Eller is only one man, and one man can do only so much. It was a rare week that didn't bring word of another cult killing or another bloody ritual, all attributable to Kali and her minions. We long ago resigned ourselves to maintain constant vigilance just to keep the forces of Kali in check."

"But two months ago, it all seemed to stop. It was as if Kali had ceased to exist."

"And that was precisely the claim made to us by Eller. He had killed her! Somehow, he had managed to reach

into the Abyss and destroy her.

"As much as we longed to believe him, we were frankly skeptical. "Eller had anticipated our reservations. There was, he said, only one way to be sure: to journey into the Abyss and view Kali's dead body. He came to ask our permission.

"Again, we were shocked. Only a lunatic would make such a request, and certainly Eller was no lunatic. Nor could we doubt his motives, as his sincerity was obvious.

"We at last reached a compromise. We would grant permission if Eller agreed to take a company of bodyguards for protection. Eller resisted, saying it was foolish to endanger others, but on this point we were unyielding. Reluctantly, he agreed.

"We sent for you because you are all highly regarded and experienced. If you accompany Eller on his quest and get him back to us in one piece, there is a 5,000 gp award for each of you or for your designated heir. Since Eller has renounced all possessions, anything you find in the Abyss is yours to keep."

The council members answer questions, but have little to add. They all vouch for Eller's integrity; if anyone is capable of killing a goddess, Eller is the most likely candidate. They don't know any of the details of how Eller operates or how he plans to get to the Abyss, as they trust him to make his own arrangements. If the PCs agree to serve as his bodyguards, the council members direct them to Eller's home on the outskirts of the city. Eller will answer their questions.

DM Background

Eller is sincere but wrong. Kali is still very much alive. His attempts to kill her have not only been ineffective, but have gone completely unnoticed. Kali is and always has been unconcerned with the trivial activities of mortals, leaving it to her minions and worshippers to torment them as they please.

Kali has much grander ambitions. She desires to control and rule not

only her layer of the Abyss, but all of the outer planes and ultimately all planes of existence. Recently, Kali had a series of dreams which revealed to her portions of a complex ritual involving thousands of worshippers participating in a ceremony for a thousand years. The climax of the ceremony resulted in Kali gaining powers far beyond those she currently possesses. She was uncertain whether the dreams were hallucinations or actual premonitions, but she wanted to take no chances. For the past two months, she has been sleeping in a black crypt in the middle of an ocean of blood in the Abyss layer she controls. To nourish her while she sleeps, she has summoned worshippers to sacrifice themselves so she can feed on their souls. Demon servants are sent to snatch up those more reluctant. Since she has been gulping down sizable quantities of worshippers for the past two months, there hasn't been much Kali-related activity on the Prime Material planes.

Eller has misinterpreted this inactivity as proof that his attempts to kill her have been successful. In truth, his efforts have had no effect on Kali.

Meeting with Eller

The PCs find Eller's home on the edge of a dense forest several miles away from the city. Eller lives in a two-story tower made of mud and bricks. From a distance, the tower blends in with the surrounding vegetation completely.

Eller meets the PCs at the door. He is 60 years old and barely 5 feet tall. His body has been ravaged from a lifetime of brutal battles with the forces of Kali. One shriveled arm hangs limply at his side. His face is criss-crossed with deep scars, and one of his eyes is covered with milky film and rolls lifelessly in its socket. His back is bent, and his slurring voice is punctuated with raspy coughs.

Gustofsen Eller: AC 4; MV 12"; C14; hp 46; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (mace) or spells; THACO 12; S 10, I 14, W 18, D 10, C 8, Ch 5; AL LG. Equipment: chain mail, mace +3, potion of heal-

The Sea of Screams

ing (five doses), ring of feather falling, power compass (see below), scepter of passage (see below), silver holy symbol.

Spells: 6/6/6/5/3/2

In spite of his appearance, Eller is proud, even arrogant. His hatred of Kali has become an obsession.

Eller has been expecting the PCs and greets them at the door. He is courteous but guarded. He isn't too keen on bringing the PCs along as he assumes he'll be burdened with their protection.

He solemnly seats the PCs at a clean wooden table. After perfunctory introductions, he addresses them, using a tone an adult might take with children.

"It is unfortunate that our leaders see fit to needlessly endanger the lives of well-meaning but unprepared innocents," he says. "But that is the way of it, and we shall make do the best we can. If you do as I say and stay out of my way, your safety is assured."

He describes the Abyss as "an ugly and violent place where evil flourishes and the laws of nature are in chaos". He explains that although the layers of the Abyss are thought to be infinite in number, he has identified the layer controlled by Kali and knows a method to get there directly. They will be going to a place with a cloudless sky "as red as your blood". The layer is overgrown with blood-red vegetation and towering crimson trees. Kali's grave is in the midst of this scarlet jungle, on an island in the "sea of screams". If the PCs are unfamiliar with the outer planes, Eller answers any general questions they have.

If asked about his interest in Kali, Eller grimly recalls that as a boy, he watched as his entire family was slaughtered in a ritual sacrifice by the cultists of Kali. If the PCs press for details, Eller backs off; he has no interest in sharing the details of his personal life with strangers.

If asked how he was able to kill Kali, Eller takes them to a stone altar in the corner of the room. In the center of the altar is a pentagram drawn in charcoal, surrounding a jagged hole about

four inches across. Eller says the hole is a permanent gate to Kali's realm. By pouring magical poisons into the gate, he says, he was able to destroy the hated goddess.

Eller has two other magical items he shows to the PCs. One is a special power compass, a ruby in the shape of a serpent's head that glows to detect any activity of Kali or her minions. Proudly, Eller points out that the gem is completely dark. The other item is a special scepter of passage which will enable them to instantly traverse vast distances. Eller will demonstrate this device when they reach the Abyss.

If asked how they will get to the Abyss, Eller says this will be explained tomorrow. If there are no more questions, Eller suggests they get a good night's rest so they can get started early in the morning. The PCs may spread their gear on the floor and sleep in Eller's house, or they may sleep in the forest under the stars if they prefer.

The DM should do his best to see that Eller makes it through the entire adventure. If he dies, however, see "Troubleshooting" below.

Into the Abyss

There are at least 666 layers of the Abyss. The PCs will visit two layers in this adventure. They will be referred to as Layer 99, a layer with many disparate realms, and Layer 500, the layer ruled by Kali. These layers have breathable atmospheres, and time flows as it does in the Prime Material planes. Physical laws, such as gravity, may differ in the various realms, and these differences are spelled out in the Encounter Key.

The Realms of Layer 99

Layer 99 is composed of a number of strikingly different realms. The PCs will have an opportunity to visit seven of them. Each realm is identified in the Encounter Key by a name referring to a feature of its sky (such as the Silver Realm or the Lightning Realm). Each realm is adjacent to two, three, or four other realms. However, since physical

laws are different here, realms aren't always mutually adjacent; just because the Silver Realm leads to the Yellow Realm doesn't necessarily mean it leads back to the Silver Realm. This is all detailed in each section of the Encounter Key, but for convenience, a list follows:

Adjacent Realms in Layer 99

This

Realm:	Leads to these Realms:
Gray	Lightning, Swirling, Yellow
Lightning	Swirling, Fog, Silver
Swirling	Lightning, Silver
Yellow	Lightning, Gray, Silver
Fog	Swirling, Silver, Yellow, Star
Silver	Lightning, Swirling, Yellow
Star	Fog, Silver

The Star Realm also contains a conduit to Layer 500, and that's what the party is looking for. For the DM's reference, the most direct route is Gray to Lightning to Fog to Star. The party will have to discover the route to Layer 500 by trial and error. They will be helped by clues they may pick up along the way, but hindered by an overconfident Eller who thinks he knows more than he actually does.

The Encounter Key details what happens to the party on their first visit to each realm. Since it's likely the PCs will have to make return trips to some of the realms as they try to find their way, the Encounter Key also tells what happens on subsequent visits.

Movement in Layer 99

Visitors to the realms of Layer 99 can get visual clues as to which realms are adjacent by the horizon. If visitors are in the Yellow Realm, for instance, about one-third of the horizon has a gray haze, one-third has a silver glow, and one-third has lightning flashes. This indicates that the Lightning, Gray, and Silver Realms are adjacent.

Even though physical movement is normal, getting from realm to realm can be a problem. The easiest solution is to use Eller's scepter of passage, an amber scepter studded with

star sapphires that can *teleport* up to seven characters at a time an unlimited distance to any location they can see. To use it, the party must be within 5 feet of the *scepter*. Everyone must stare directly into the area into which they are *teleporting* for two uninterrupted rounds. If their concentration is broken, say by an attack, they must start over and concentrate for another two rounds. By staring into the gray haze, for instance, the party will be *teleported* into a random area of the Gray Realm. The *scepter* has 16 charges; it takes a full year to regain a single charge.

It is assumed the party will use the *scepter* to get around in Layer 99. If the *scepter* is lost or all of its charges are used up, see "Troubleshooting."

Getting Started

On the morning of their departure, Eller takes the PCs to the World Serpent Inn.

Encounter Key

The facilities of the World Serpent Inn, combined with what Eller knows about the Abyss, allow the party to pass directly through the Astral plane and into what Eller assumes is Layer 500. But unknown to Eller, Layer 500 isn't where it's supposed to be, due to the chaos of physical laws in the Abyss. Instead, the party find themselves in the Gray Realm of Layer 99.

1. Gray Realm

You are standing in a desert of black sand and rolling hills which stretch in every direction as far as the eye can see. The desert is completely barren. The sky is filled with dense gray clouds. It is dark and silent as a tomb.

About a third of the horizon is tinged with a yellow glow. Another third is saturated with a mass of swirling colors. Lightning bolts silently rip the black sky over the final third.

The silence is broken by eerie

music drifting from behind a hill about 50 yards ahead. The sounds resemble lute music, but the tones are metallic and discordant.

It should be obvious that the party is not where Eller said they would be. Even Eller is confused—where are the red skies, the scarlet jungles? If the PCs call his attention to this, he won't take the blame. When in doubt, he says, "head for the light". He explains the use of the *scepter of passage* if he hasn't already, then announces they must head for the swirling colors. This is a totally arbitrary choice and, as it happens, a wrong one. Eller agrees to go to one of the other two choices providing the PCs offer a strong enough argument. Before they leave, Eller plants his *holy symbol* in the sand; they will use it as a marker when they are ready to return home.

The PCs may wish to investigate the music. Wisely, Eller insists they stay together and not squander the *scepter* charges on such small directions. If they go to the hill, they can peer into the valley below and see a gaunt human about 20 years old, wearing tattered clothes and playing a lute. After plucking the strings in an unusual way, he places the neck of the lute against a sand dune, which amplifies the music into the eerie, sustained tones heard earlier.

The musician nervously looks around and immediately spots the PCs if they peek over the hill. He smiles and calls for them to join him. If they hesitate, he sheepishly adds, "Uh, You'd better come down quickly."

Rolly: AC 8; MV 12"; F2; hp 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; THACO 19; S 9, I 8, W 9, D 12, C 7, Ch 10; AL LN. Equipment: lute, dagger, leather armor.

Rolly is a would-be bard who came here by way of an *amulet of the planes*, now safely buried in a nearby sand dune. He uses the strange acoustic properties of the black sand as an amplifier. His practicing invariably

attracts a number of demons. The demons are fascinated by the music and won't attack him.

Two rounds after the PCs first see Rolly, eight dretch come shambling over a hill.

Dretch (8): AC 2; MV 9"; HD 4; hp 24 each; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-5; THACO 15; SA *darkness* (5-foot radius), *scare*, *stinking cloud*, all once per round; *telekinese* (500 gp weight), *teleport*, both once per day; SD *gate* in Type 1 demons (5% chance); MR 30%; AL CE.

If the PCs aren't next to Rolly, the dretch attack them on sight. If the PCs huddle near Rolly while he plays, the dretch ignore them and sway awkwardly to the music.

Two rounds after their appearance, the dretch gibber belligerently at the party; they don't want them there. Rolly panics. He drops the lute and begins to dig in the sand, searching for his *amulet of the planes*. It's every man for himself.

When the music stops, the dretch attack. They attempt to *teleport* behind random PCs, cast *scare* and *stinking cloud*, then attack with claws and teeth. They won't attack Rolly; they need him for music. None of the PCs will be able to duplicate the lute music to soothe the demons. Four rounds after the appearance of the dretch, four more appear. All attack the same way.

It takes Rolly nine rounds to find his *amulet*. If the PCs bribe him with a choice weapon or a magical item, he can be convinced to play his lute and lull the dretch, allowing the party to escape. Otherwise, Rolly will use the *amulet* to escape, leaving the PCs to fend for themselves. Under no circumstances will Rolly let the party use the *amulet*. He has no interest in them, and has no information.

Subsequent Visits: If the party returns to this realm, read the boxed text, omitting the information about the eerie music. Two rounds after their arrival, the wind begins to blow. Two rounds later, a blinding dust storm blows up so heavily that the party can't see the horizon; choose a ran-

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dom adjacent realm if they use the *scepter* to *teleport* out. Three rounds later, three dretch attack; attacks against the dretch are made at -2 due to the blinding dust. The wind subsides after 10 rounds.

2. Lightning Realm

Rain falls as streaks of lightning crackle across the black sky. The only natural features on this otherwise blank white landscape are stone pillars which rise miles into the air. The pillars appear in small clumps every 50 yards or so and are no more than 3 feet thick.

A battle of awesome magnitude has taken place here. Ripped bodies of dinosaurs and giant snakes bleed into the white earth next to decomposing bodies of huge apes and immense birds.

About a third of the horizon is saturated with swirling colors. Another third is shrouded in fog. The final third gives off a soft silver glow.

This realm is a battlefield for the demon princes Orcus and Demogorgon. Currently, the forces of Orcus are in control and are entrenched in small shacks made of bone that are scattered throughout the realm. The forces of Demogorgon are now mounting a surprise assault.

No sooner does the party arrive than they hear a spine-chilling roar behind them. They turn to face two giant slugs followed by a humanoid creature with pearly gray skin and huge white eyes without pupils beating the slugs with a silver whip. He motions for the party to join him.

Bodak: AC 5; MV 6"; HD 9+9; hp 50; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (silver whip); THAC0 12; SA death gaze; SD struck only by +1 or cold-wrought iron weapons, immune to *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, *slow*, and *poison*; AL CE.

Giant slugs (2): AC 8; MV 6"; HD 12; hp 65 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-12; SA spit acid; SD not affected by blunt weapons; AL N.

The bodak and the slugs are in the

service of Demogorgon, who has sent hundreds of similar teams to assault the bone shacks. While the slugs dissolve the shacks with their acid spit, the bodaks are to drive out the minions of Orcus inside. This particular bodak is having problems herding the uncooperative slugs. He intends to force the party to help him and is bellying a demand for their assistance.

As soon as the PCs attempt to move, they discover that this realm has a heavier gravity field, reducing their normal movement by 75%. (Native creatures aren't affected.) There is no chance to *teleport* while the bodak is in the area; even if they manage to slip over the hill, they will be confronted with a similar team in three rounds.

The bodak would prefer not to fight right now, but if the party attacks, he and the slugs fight to the death. A similar team arrives four rounds later, although the party has time to *teleport* if they hurry.

Warning of the bodak's death gaze, Eller urges the PCs to cooperate, at least for the time being. If they do, the bodak motions for half the party to mount one of the slugs and the other half to mount the other. The bodak gives the two PCs in front a silver whip and shows them how to beat the slugs to get them to move.

With the bodak behind them, the slugs carry the PCs ahead about 100 yards towards a bone shack. If the PCs resist at any point, the bodak and the slugs attack until they relent.

When they reach the shack, the bodak orders the PCs to dismount. The slugs begin to spit acid at the shack. When the first acid spray hits, five undead minions of Orcus stagger from the shack to attack.

Wight (2): AC 5; MV 12"; HD 4+3; hp 22 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; THAC0 15; SA energy drain; SD silver or magical weapons to hit, immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and cold-based spells. AL LE.

Ghast (3): AC 4; MV 15"; HD 4; hp 19 each; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8; THAC0 15; SA 10-foot radius stench causes -2 on attacks from those fail-

ing saving throw vs. poison, paralyzing touch on those failing saving throw vs. paralyzation; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*; AL CE.

The wights and ghosts ignore the slugs and attack the PCs; the bodak stays out of sight. The slugs continue spraying the encounter if unmolested. Eller joins the PCs in attempts to turn undead (remember that good clerics function as if two levels lower when turning evil undead in the Abyss).

When half of the undead are killed or turned, a 7-foot black skeleton with a single horn on its head leaps from the shack's roof onto a random PC.

Babau: AC -3; MV 15"; HD 7+14; hp 52; #AT 1 or 3; Dmg 1d6+7 (sword) or 2-5/2-5/2-8; THAC0 13; SA gaze affects as *ray of enfeeblement* if victim fails saving throw vs. spells; SD *darkness* 5-foot radius, *fear* by touch, *fly*, *levitate*, *dispel magic*, *polymorph self*, *heat metal*, *gate* (another babau, 25% chance), cutting and stabbing do only half damage; MR 50%; AL CE.

The babau is the leader of this platoon of undead. He fights with his sword, using *fear* whenever possible. The babau battles the party for only three rounds, then attacks the bodak.

After the undead are defeated, the party may take advantage of the fight between the bodak and the babau to *teleport* to another realm. The babau will win the fight in 1d6+4 rounds. If they like, the PCs may take three rounds to search the shack and discover a *dagger* +2, a *sword* +3, and a huge star sapphire worth 3,000 gp. However, if the party is still hanging around after the babau finishes off the bodak, the babau will fight them to the death. (The babau will have suffered 6d6 points of damage from the bodak battle.)

If the party has not yet been to the Swirling Realm, Eller suggests they head that way. If they've already been there, Eller suggests the silver glow. As always, the party is free to settle the argument of where to go next any way they please.

Subsequent Visits: If the party returns to the Lightning Realm, first read the boxed text. The balance of

power has shifted to Demogorgon, and now Orcus's minions are conducting assaults. The PCs see hundreds of ghostly forms swooping through the rain. For every three rounds they remain, there is a 30% chance of a wight shrieking out of the rain to attack them. (They won't be attacked more than three times.)

3. Swirling Realm

As you pass into this realm, you are momentarily suspended in a sky of swirling colors before plunging straight down into a churning ocean below.

A roaring multi-colored waterfall which appears to be at least 10 miles wide spills into the ocean. The waterfall empties from a glistening hole in mid-air more than a mile from the surface of the ocean.

Half of the horizon is saturated with streaks of lightning. The other half gives off a soft silver glow.

The waterfall originates in a conduit leading to the Abyss layer controlled by the loathsome demon lord Juiblex. The waterfall and the ocean are made up of puddings and jellies, dripping rot, and fungoid secretions pouring from Juiblex's layer.

The gravity field is reversed in this layer. When the PCs hit the ocean, have each make a Constitution check on 1d20. Those who fail take 2d6 points of damage, and those who succeed take 1d6 points. This represents damage from the fall and nausea from the foul ocean.

The ocean is as buoyant as regular sea water, and is filled with large floating fungus chunks. To regroup (necessary to *teleport* into another realm), the PCs may swim, or they may grab a fungus chunk.

Each PC must roll 1d8. On a roll of 1, the PC has come in contact with a fungus membrane that induces splitting headaches for the next 1d6 hours, causing all attacks to be made at -1 (no saving throw allowed for this). On a roll of 2, the PC is attacked

by an ochre jelly. Attacking PCs do so at -2, due to interference from the surging ocean.

Ochre jelly: AC 8; MV 3"; HD 6; hp 30, #AT 1; Dmg 3-13; THAC0 13; AL N.

Adjacent realms are the Lightning and Silver Realms. The confused Eller has no preference this time. Gravity will be reversed again when moving from this realm; a mid-air fall to the soft earth of the Lightning Realm causes 1d4 points of damage, but falling on the hard ice of the Silver Realm inflicts 2d6 points.

Subsequent Visits: If the party returns here, read them the boxed text, and follow the same instructions. This time, however, use 1d20 instead of 1d8 when rolling for the headache membrane and the ochre jelly.

After three rounds in the ocean, a vrock flies over the floating PCs.

Vrock: AC 0; MV 12"/18"; HD 8; hp 32; #AT 5; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8/1-8/1-6; THAC0 12; SA *detect invisible objects*, *telekinese* 2,000 gp weight, *gate* in another type I demon (5% chance) all at will; MR 50%; AL CE.

The vrock fights to the death, hovering just out of range and swooping in when it sees an opening.

4. Yellow Realm

This is a lush tropical forest, similar to those existing in prehistoric times. However, blades of grass are 50 feet high. A palm leaf is the size of a house. The bright yellow sky can barely be seen between the tops of the trees which rise over a mile into the sky.

If they hack their way through the brush in any direction, they reach a clearing of high ground after journeying 100 yards. The trip through the jungle is uneventful, accompanied only by the incessant chattering of unseen insects and the occasional unsettling sight of a tree that turns toward them after they pass by.

After the PCs have gone about 50 yards, they hear the agonized wail of a dying creature coming from behind a

thick grove of golden bushes. Eller insists that they investigate. Eller accuses any PC who argues with him of siding with evil. If the PCs do some fast talking, Eller will continue on, but demands they investigate.

If the PCs check out the cries, they discover a large red bird with stumpy wings and four legs standing over a mortally wounded pig-like creature. The bird is ripping the flesh from its still-living prey.

Achaierai: AC 8 (body), -1 (legs); MV 18"; HD 40 hp (body), 15 hp (each leg); #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-10; THAC0 12 (beak), 15 (claws); SD toxic smoke; MR 35%; AL CE.

The wounded creature is a baby thunder beast. The achaierai swooped from its nest and attacked the helpless creature as it wandered by. The achaierai is eating it alive.

Thanks to its keen senses, the achaierai is instantly alerted to any approaching PCs. It attacks them, chasing them if necessary to protect its kill. If it loses half of its hit points, it releases a cloud of toxic smoke in a radius of 10 feet, then flees. All PCs caught in the cloud take 2d6 points of damage and must make a saving throw vs. poison or suffer insanity for 3 hours (treat as *feeblemind* spell of limited duration).

If the PCs defeat the achaierai, they may search its nest, located in a low tree near the body of the now-dead thunder beast. The nest contains four chunks of solid gold (4,500 gp, 1,300 gp, 900 gp, 700 gp), and a *wand of magic missiles* and a *ring of protection*, both taken from an unfortunate visitor to this realm.

Six rounds after they first hear the cries, they hear a bellowing sound in the distance followed by the sound of rapid movement through the brush. One round later, two thunder beasts charge toward the PCs.

Thunder beast (2): AC 4; MV 9" (18" charge); HD 6+6; hp 37, 35; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; THAC0 13; SA trample (Dmg 6-24); SD *fog cloud*; AL N.

These are the parents of the murdered baby. The thunder beasts first attempt to charge, then attack with

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their bite and *fog cloud* (affected opponents attack at -2 for 1-4 rounds). The thunder beasts fight to the death. However, if the PCs ignored the advice of Eller and didn't investigate the baby's cries, the thunder beasts charge right past them to attack the *achaierai*, allowing the party to continue on their way, unharmed.

When they reach high ground, the party sees that one-third of the horizon is saturated with a swirl of colors, one-third features lightning flashes, and one-third has a dull gray haze. If the party hasn't yet been to the Swirling Realm, Eller suggests they head for the swirling colors. Otherwise, he is admittedly uncertain.

Subsequent Visits: If the party returns to this realm, read the boxed text. As before, if the party journeys about 100 yards in any direction, they find a clear area high enough to see the horizon. The trip should be uneventful, but if the party is excessively noisy or otherwise draws attention to themselves, a group of circling vrock is alerted. Lured by the promise of tasty human flesh, three vrock dive from the trees and attack. (Use vrock statistics from encounter 3.)

5. Fog Realm

You are surrounded by thick grey fog, heavy with the odor of decay and rot, so dense that visibility is reduced to three feet.

The surface underfoot is sticky and wet, like walking on jellyfish. The sounds of bubbling and popping surround you. In the distance, you hear the echoed wails of what sounds like babies crying. Far overhead drift the sounds of birdlike screeching and cackling.

This realm is an incubation area for demon spawn. The party is standing in a shallow, swampy pit which extends for miles in all directions, filled with demon embryos. The cackling above is from circling vrock looking for tasty embryonic morsels.

If the party attempts to use the *scep-*

ter while in the fog, they *teleport* randomly to one of the adjacent realms. Eller strongly urges them not to do this. Instead, he suggests they walk to search for a clear area from where they can see the horizon. This time, Eller is correct. If the party walks 50 yards in any direction, they enter a clear area. The walk, however, is not without its dangers. Every 15 yards, each PC must roll 1d6. On a roll of 1, there is a random encounter. Roll 1d6 on the list below to see what happens to the affected PC.

1. Snapping Embryo: A demon embryo snaps at the PC as he walks by, attacking as a 2 HD monster. If it hits, the bite causes 1-6 points of damage. The embryo is immobile and attacks only once unless the PC stops to fight it. In that case, the embryo attacks until killed. It has 8 hp.

2. Shrieking Spawn: The PC steps on a tiny demon spawn, instantly killing it. The spawn lets out a piercing shriek as it dies. If this encounter occurs a second time, the shriek attracts the attention of a hovering vrock, which attacks the PC.

3. Slippery Tissue: The PC slips on a chunk of slippery tissue. Failing a Dexterity check on 1d20, the PC falls into the muck. Failing a Constitution check on 1d20, the PC takes 1d4 points of damage from immersion in the filth.

4. Fume Burst: The PC steps on a bloated embryonic sac, bursting it. Any PCs within a 5-foot radius must make a saving throw vs. poison or suffer 1-6 points from the fumes.

5. Spore Burst: As above, but this one is infested with parasitic spores. Those within a 5-foot radius who fail their saving throws vs. poison suffer 1-6 points of damage.

6. Sticky Tissue: The PC steps in a sticky mass of demon tissue which adheres to the sole of his boot. Movement is cut in half unless the goo is scraped or burned off. The goo instantly rots any metal it touches. Magical weapons are not affected.

After the party has gone 50 yards, they enter an area where the fog has dissipated, allowing them to see the

horizon. About a fourth of the horizon is saturated with swirling colors, another fourth is filled with stars in a black sky, another has a yellow tinge, another gives off a silver glow.

6. Silver Realm

You are standing on a smooth, flat landscape of silver ice that extends for miles in every direction. It is blindingly bright and bitterly cold. About 50 yards ahead is the skeleton of a large animal. Aside from that, the landscape is featureless, with no sounds of any kind.

About a third of the horizon is tinged with yellow. Another third is saturated with swirling colors. The final third is dark and streaked with jagged lightning.

Physical laws of this realm are such that sound waves are instantly absorbed. The PCs will have to communicate by some means other than speech.

Eller frantically motions toward the swirling colors, indicating that the party should waste no time in *teleporting* there. (If the party has already visited the Swirling Realm, Eller indicates the yellow horizon instead, even if they've already been there.) If the PCs want to examine the skeleton, Eller shakes his head frantically to discourage them. The bones are nothing more than the remains of an unfortunate dinosaur who died from the cold.

No fires can be started here. Likewise, heat and fire-based spells won't work. After every two rounds, the PCs must all make Constitution checks on 1d20. Those who fail take 1d6 points of damage from the bitter cold.

Subsequent Visits: If the party returns, the encounter is repeated. Eliminate the reference to the skeleton.

7. Star Realm

A desert of black sand spreads out before you, pocked with vast, shallow craters easily 100 yards across.

Streams of molten lava flow between the craters, and steam and smoke spew from the cracks in the earth.

Thousands of beings are writhing in agony in the craters. Some of them stagger about blindly between the craters, falling into the pits or into the lava. All are emaciated and caked with filth, their faces twisted in pain. All moan and scream incessantly.

A number of short creatures with wings and fangs flutter about the craters, their red bodies oozing molten lava. They delight in tormenting their victims.

The black sky is filled with bright, pulsating stars. Some of the stars abruptly vanish, only to reappear elsewhere. At times, gaping holes open in mid-air. More victims plummet, screaming, from these holes into the craters below. The holes then close and vanish.

The tortured beings are cultists of Kali from the Prime Material planes and elsewhere. Most of them were brought here by Kali's minions. They are tormented here until their agony peaks, when they are taken to Layer 500 for Kali to consume. The short creatures are lava mephits; the fly creatures are chasme, demon slaves of Kali who fetch fresh sacrifices back to Layer 500. The holes in the sky are conduits which open and close to let the chasme in and out. They also open to deposit cultists who drop in from other planes. The blinking stars are conduits farther away. The glowing red opening is a permanent conduit leading directly to Layer 500.

Before the PCs can take any action, they notice Eller nervously fishing for something in his pocket. He takes out his *power compass*. It is glowing a dull red. He puts it away without comment, but if the PCs mention it, he says firmly, "It's nothing more than residual energy. Kali is dead." He refuses further discussion on the subject.

If the PCs don't acknowledge it,

Eller points out the red glow in the distance, saying it is the entrance to Kali's domain they've been seeking. Eller says they must move quickly, but he refuses to use the *scepter* to get there; the activity in the sky makes it too risky. Eller also gestures to the souls in the craters. "It is our duty to minister to the anguished," he says.

Any PC who is a magic-user recognizes the risk of *teleporting* in these conditions. Eller's idea of attending to the victims is admirable, but ridiculous—there are thousands.

Be that as it may, Eller steadfastly refuses to use the *scepter*—they will walk, and that is all there is to it. If the PCs rebel, Eller leaves them and starts off by himself, reminding them that they were ordered to serve as his bodyguards.

One way or the other, Eller coerces the PCs to join him. The walk isn't as bad as it looks. The lava streams are easy to avoid. The victims outnumber the mephits by a hundred to one, and the mephits ignore the PCs for the time being. The victims grope and paw at the party, but don't hurt them.

After walking a few yards, Eller bends down to minister to one of the humans in a crater. Eller holds the hapless human's hand, then recoils in disgust. The pupils of the eyes of all the captured humans have been changed to a scarlet silhouette of a snake's head. If asked, Eller admits that it is a symbol of Kali. Eller checks the *power compass* again; it's glowing brighter. Eller's outburst also draws the attention of two lava mephits disguised as pools of lava. They *shape change* and attack.

Lava Mephits (2): AC 6; MV 12"/24"; HD 3; hp 20, 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2-9/2-9/1-6; THACO 16; SA 1-8 points of heat damage if touched, spit lava 10-foot range for 1-6 points of damage, touch dissolves wood (one inch per hour) and metal (3 melee rounds); SD *regenerate* two hp per round if in contact with lava, *gate* 1-2 mephits in per hour (25% chance); AL CE.

As the fight begins, tortured victims swarm from the craters and grope at the PCs. During the battle, the PCs

attack at -2 from the interference of the cultists. The mephits fight to the death. The cultists do no damage.

Assuming the party wins and continues walking, Eller stops at another crater. He grabs a gibbering cultist and shakes him, screaming, "What's happened to you? What's happened?" Unless the PCs quickly shut him up, his outburst attracts the attention of a chasme.

Chasme: AC -1; MV 6"/21"; HD 7+2; hp 42; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/1-4; THACO 13; SA *darkness* 5-foot radius, *teleport*, *detect good*, *detect invisible*, *telekinetic* 1,500 gp weight, all at will, touch causes *fear*, drone induces sleep for 2-8 hours (100% chance minus 10% per level or hit die of opponent); SD *gate* in another chasme (15% chance); MR 40%; AL CE.

The chasme hovers about 50 feet over the heads of the party, then *teleports* directly in front of them to attack. Its strategy is to put the party off-guard with *fear*, then kill them with its fangs and claws.

Assuming the party survives, Eller learns his lesson. Unless the PCs try to attract the demons' attentions, the rest of the walk is uneventful.

The glowing red opening is a conduit to Layer 500, one of many leading to Kali's domain from this realm. The PCs reach it after walking about a mile, and have to step through it to arrive in Layer 500.

Layer 500

You have entered a realm overgrown with tangles of scarlet vines, fields of crimson flowers, and red tropical vegetation of every imaginable variety. The sky is cloudless and brilliant crimson. There are no special features on the horizon.

Directly ahead of you is an astounding sight—Eller's mud and brick home.

This is Layer 500, controlled by Kali. The building is not Eller's home, but is an *illusion* cast by the rakshasa who guards this conduit. The rakshasa

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used his *ESP* to pull this image from the minds of the PCs. He hopes to lure them close enough to attack.

Rakshasa: AC -4; MV 15"; HD 7; hp 45; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-5; THAC0 13; SA *ESP*, *create illusion*; SD only magical weapons hit, magical weapons below +3 do one-half damage; AL LE.

The astonished Eller can do little more than gape. Because the rakshasa's magic is fortified by the strong evil of this layer, the PCs cannot *dispel magic* or disbelieve the *illusion*.

If the PCs approach the building, they see it is complete in every detail. The rakshasa is safely hidden in the branches above the house. The moment a PC steps near the door, the rakshasa assumes its beast form and attacks as the building vanishes, surprising automatically. If the PCs don't approach the house, it attacks anyway, without the benefit of catching them off-guard.

After the encounter with the rakshasa, the party may continue through the jungle. They notice a number of other conduits scattered throughout the area, some suspended in the air. The conduits are used by Kali and her minions for passage into other realms and layers of the Abyss. If the PCs check them out, they notice that some lead to the Grey Realm, the Silver Realm, and other areas of Layer 99 they visited previously.

Shortly, the party hears the sound of a roaring ocean mixed with the sounds of screaming. Eller freezes. "The screaming sea!" he exclaims, moving quickly in that direction.

After following the sounds for 90 yards, the party emerges from the jungle and finds themselves on the shore of a vast ocean. But this is not ordinary ocean—it is filled with rich, red blood. About a half mile from the shore is a barren island containing a solid black structure with no doors or windows. The structure gives off a red, pulsating glow. This is where Kali is sleeping.

High in the sky over the ocean, conduits continually open and close. When a conduit opens, a screaming cultist drops through and plunges into

the ocean. The PCs occasionally catch glimpses of chasme and other flying demons dropping cultists through the conduits.

No sooner have the PCs taken all this in than Eller gasps in pain and falls to the ground. He clutches at himself; his robe is burning. If the PCs help him, they discover that his *power compass* is red hot and burning him. (If the PCs touch it, it inflicts 1-4 points of damage.) Once they get the *compass* out of his robe, Eller recovers. As they watch, the *compass* glows until it explodes in a ball of flame.

Eller shakes with anger. He turns to the island and screams at the top of his lungs, "Kali! Kali!" Regardless of what the PCs do next, the ocean begins to bubble as if boiling. Suddenly, thousands of black serpents erupt from it and rocket into the sky. The PCs have one round before the wriggling serpents fall.

The serpents rain down for two rounds. Have each PC roll 1d6 per round. On a roll of 1 or 2, they are bitten by the poisonous snakes. If they make a successful saving throw vs. poison they take 1d6 points of damage. If they fail, they take 2d6 points. If the PCs are smart enough to take cover in the jungle (or come up with similar protection), they are bitten only on a roll of 1.

Eller will not give up. After the rain of snakes, he races knee-deep in the blood ocean and shouts. "Show yourself! We will kill you with our bare hands if we have to!" One round after Eller begins ranting, the ocean boils again. The island shakes, the red glow intensifies, and the top of the crypt blasts off. An instant later, a monstrous Kali looms before them, standing on the surface of the ocean. She is nearly a mile high; her foot alone is 200 yards long, and she nearly blocks out the sky with her black form.

Luckily, this is only an *illusion* cast by Kali. She will fully regain consciousness in a few minutes.

If the party has any sense of self-preservation, they will run as fast as they can. If they hesitate, Eller leads the way—even in his distressed state

of mind, he's no fool. The party has no trouble locating a conduit. If they search for two rounds, they spot one that leads back to the Gray Realm. Once there, they may use the *scepter* to take them to their point of entry (marked by the *holy symbol*), from where they can return home.

If the PCs are stupid enough to remain near the ocean after the image of Kali appears, see "Troubleshooting" below. If they retreat, the image vanishes and Kali goes back to sleep.

Wrapping Up

The adventure is successful if the PCs return with Eller in one piece and report back to the council. They thank the PCs for their efforts and reward them each with 5,000 gp. There are other benefits from a successful completion:

Armed with the new knowledge of Kali's minions and domain, both the council and Eller will be able to deal more efficiently with her cultists in the future. After the disturbance, Kali never quite regains her deep sleep and eventually gives up, thus abandoning her plan to tap into the premonitions that could make her even more powerful. The PCs also gain a permanent and valuable contact in Eller, who gains the first true friends of his life.

Troubleshooting

If Eller Is Killed: The DM should try to make sure this doesn't happen, but if circumstances dictate otherwise, the adventure is a failure. The PCs may continue their quest, but the council won't be impressed. If Eller dies in their care, the PCs are disgraced.

If They Lose the Scepter or Use up Its Charges: Since the distances involved are dramatic, the PCs could be out of luck. However, a kindly DM might stage things so conduits corresponding to the appropriate horizons are available in each realm.

If They Decide to Tackle Kali: Fighting Kali is tantamount to suicide. Respect their wishes, and let 'em have it.

by John Terra

This adventure can be played by six to eight characters of levels 11 and up. For best results, the party should include at least one each of magic user, cleric, and thief, and two fighters. A paladin or a ranger is almost a necessity. Other good-aligned PCs are also needed in the party.

The DM should read this adventure carefully. There is a possibility of three different NPCs joining the group. The role-playing abilities of the players and DM will be sorely tested here. DMs may increase the number of monsters by 50%. Feel free to add encounters and islands of your own providing they are consistent with the spirit of the adventure.

Before the adventure starts, the DM should find the worst fear of each PC and log it for future reference.

Darned If You Do, Darned If You Don't

The party is enjoying a drink and dinner at the World Serpent Inn and taking in their surroundings.

At one table, four tridrones eat a lawfully balanced meal: one hot dish, one cold dish. Their intake of solids and liquids is exactly equal.

Quite a ways from the party, three frost giants ramble on about how they'd like to smash Thor's face in one of these days.

A group of six drow, their features mostly hidden beneath black velvety cloaks, stare at the party from across the room and glare most balefully at any elves. They are clergy of Lolth, and get quite a wide berth.

To the left of the PCs, the next table over, three astral devas consume a light, airy meal, washing it down with a sparkling golden drink. For dessert they are eating a spongy white baked confection (angel food cake, of course).

On the other side of the party the gnome god Garl Glittergold enjoys a mug of very strong brew with the dwarven god Moradin, both incognito.

During his stay, Garl may get bored and start playing practical jokes on unsuspecting patrons.

Sitting close to the fireplace are four erinyes. They are eating deviled eggs, deviled ham, and— you guessed it— devil's food cake!

For entertainment at the World Serpent Inn, no mere bard will do. Oghma himself, joined by Bragi, the Norse god of poetry, regale the clientele with epic tales, poems, and rowdy drinking songs.

Later that evening, after the music has died down and the patrons attend to their drinks, an arch-devil walks in with a brown haired human female over his shoulders. Using one of the many hidden gates that lead to this nexus, he appears to pass through a wall and into the common room. Turning back to face the wall, he beats away five dragon heads, a red, a green, a blue, a black, and a white, then walks away, shaking his head in annoyance.

This is Baalzebul. He drops the woman to the ground, looks around, sees the party, smiles, and heads toward them, dragging the woman behind him. The four erinyes bow respectfully, then resume their drinking.

The deva glare at him and turn their backs, while Garl blows a raspberry at him. Moradin merely stares at the Archdevil, absently fingering his warhammer.

Blithely ignoring them, Baalzebul sits at the party's table, a smug grin on his diabolical face. The woman groans as she is dropped at his feet.

"I would say 'good day', except that time is relative here at the nexus of all the planes," he starts, as he signals for his favorite drink, a flaming diablo.

"I hope you are enjoying your stay at the World Serpent, since it won't be around much longer," he continues after the barmaid gets out of earshot.

If pressed for details, he gives the following story, with what appears to be much reluctance.

"Certain powers-that-be in the political structure of Hell do not take kindly to this inn bouncing here and there

with such impunity. They are also not pleased with the fact that this place has portals that can give access to the layers of Hell to any stupid creature that has enough gold to be a customer. It is a threat to this faction's idea of absolute power and control of Hell. This faction is led by Asmodeus.

"He and his allies will destroy the place the next time it lands in the ninth plane of Hell, which by my reckoning will be in one month. Believe you me, he has the ability to do it, too.

"The reason I tell you all of this is that Asmodeus is my...ahem, rival for power in the infernal regions. Nothing would give me more joy than to see his plan fail. The resulting loss of prestige would make my cause all the more attractive.

"I picked you out because you are mortals from the Prime Material, and not a traceable part of any faction from Hell or any other plane. Hence, Asmodeus would not start an interplanar war or such.

"Furthermore, he will not avenge himself against you, for once you save the inn, the grateful Powers will keep him at bay.

"All you need do is to sail down the River Styx and reach a small island located in Stygia. A keep was built there to house the *Devilbane*, a gem that will protect this place forever against diabolical powers. It was put there by some chaotic Powers with a quirky sense of humor. Devils cannot enter the keep."

The party may at this point refuse. This does not bother Baalzebul, who languidly points out that if the patrons, past and present, ever caught wind that the inn's destruction could have been prevented by the party but they refused to help, then the party will become the most hunted beings in the multiverse. And, Baalzebul assures them with a wicked smile, he'll personally see to it that the Powers are duly informed.

A *legend lore* or other divinatory spell will tell the party nothing. Baalzebul will point out that the spell cannot work in this tavern, and that many spells in fact will not work in the tav-

ern. Of course, spells cast from the outside, against the place, are a different story. This is all a lie. Spells do work in the Inn, but the gem has been mysteriously protected from divinatory spells and abilities.

As an aid, Baalzebul insists that the party bring along "this wretched rangeress" that he found on his plane. She was looking for some legendary cure for her parents' disease, rumored to be found in Hell. Since she has already been to Stygia as well as his home plane, she could act as a guide.

Baalzebul further states that he can only send the party to the Styx in the next two minutes, so they had better decide quick. He further tells the party that they had better not try to use a tavern portal. First of all, none leads to Stygia. Secondly, he does not want the party to be caught wandering around another layer of Hell looking for the gate of Stygia.

All of this is a lie. Baalzebul is trying to overthrow Asmodeus, certainly, but the inn is in no danger. Note that a *detect lie* will not work on him. He's far too powerful. The gem is a conduit for diabolical power. In the hands of an arch-devil, spells work at full effect, range and duration. Victims save at -4, and their magic resistances are cut in half.

Its prime function, though, is to act as a barrier, preventing devils from overrunning the Prime Material plane. It was set in a keep by some deva, high-level archmages, paladins and minor deities. In order to work properly, it had to be placed in the middle of the plane that is home to the creatures meant to be barred. The keep they built is magicked to keep out non-good beings.

Baalzebul is living up to his reputation of Lord of Lies by misguiding the party to do his will. Even the so-called ranger is but an erinyes with a *polymorph self* in effect. She is supposed to keep an eye on the party, and eventually take the gem from them. If she manages to dispose of one or two party members, so much the better!

Arlea Brightarrow: AC 2; MV 6"/

21"; R10; hp 54; #AT 1; Dmg 4-12 (+3 *frostbrand*); S 18/01, I 15, W 16, D 18, C 15; Ch 18; Cm 20; AL LE (disguised as CG); *hat of disguise, bracers of archery, amulet of proof vs. detection and location, longbow +2, 24 arrows +1, frost brand long sword, cloak of elvenkind, erinyes dagger, rope of entanglement, ring of shielding.*

Arlea uses the *hat of disguise* to give her at least nominal ranger skills, and the *bracers* make her a convincing shot with a bow. Her identity is safe thanks to the *ring* and the *amulet*. She will not use the *rope* unless sorely pressed. She passes herself off as chaotic good. She does speak that alignment tongue, which is why Baalzebul chose her in the first place.

She should be played as what everyone expects a ranger to be like: grim, determined, defending the party, and always looking for tracks. She can also eventually "warm up" to one or two of the party, perhaps even a male with a high Charisma or Comeliness. She should not be played as an assassin. The DM should take every opportunity to show her as a helpful, loyal person.

Once the party agrees, they see the walls of the inn fade. They appear on an alien shore. Any item capable of granting *wishes* or causing plane travel is gone. Spells that enable plane travel are mysteriously wiped from the spell casters' minds, and their spell books have been left behind. This is Baalzebul's work.

Rolling on the River

A skiff approaches them, guided by a hooded boatman. This is Charon himself, hired by Baalzebul to ferry the party to Hell. Charon refuses the party's gold, conversation, or commands. The trip is uneventful save for the horrifying sights of the different planes they pass through. Remember that Hell is itself evil, so that a *detect evil* shows evil all around rather than at one subject.

Charon deliberately travels the "scenic route", which takes 10 days. He answers no questions, picks up no

new riders, and defends himself if attacked. He can summon a group of charonadaemons to his aid as well as toss violent members of the party into the Styx.

Eventually, the PCs arrive at the shore of a rocky island. Wordlessly, Charon gestures them to disembark. He then casts off, and with a hollow, mocking laugh, leaves the party to its fate.

Each island in Stygia is about 500 yards from either bank of the Styx, and has a diameter of 3d20 x 10 feet. Unless otherwise stated, the islands are made of barren stone. These islands are all interconnected by iron footbridges. Arlea traveled on a different set of bridges, so she is unfamiliar with this route. Her information is limited to general questions.

Landfall Island 1

The 150'-diameter island is barren and situated right in the middle of the Styx. It is 500 yards to either shore, and this itself is not promising, since the shore is nothing but frozen ice of the Stygian swamp.

Screams of the damned, their souls trapped waist-high in the ice, ring in the party's ears. Any who look out over the ice can see it dotted with these tormented souls, squirming in their icy prison and resembling so many writhing tombstones. The air has the sharp stink of frozen-over ordure.

There is no sun; the sky is covered in smoky black clouds. Maximum range of vision is 60 yards. *Light* and *continual light* spells cast here take on a soft grey lumination.

For random encounters, a 1-5 on a d20 indicates an encounter. This should be rolled every hour. Use the devils listed in *Monster Manual* and *Monster Manual II* to create a frequency table of the assorted denizens and visitors on the fifth plane.

Note that the party will not run into any other adventurer parties down here. Baalzebul and Geryon have seen to that.

The final detail of the island is a

black wrought-iron footbridge caked with frozen algae and slime. It leaves the island, arching high into the infernal sky, disappearing into the blackness.

It comes down upon another island 1,000 yards away. The bridge is 30' wide. This bridge system connects a string of islands that will eventually lead to the party's goal. Arlea tells the party this, and that these bridges are the safest way to get around. Almost as if on cue, Sekolah, the sahuagin god, burst forth from the ice, stares at the party, and licks his chops. He then dives again, but not before saying: "Before you leave, at least one of you will grace my stomach."

Arlea shivers at this, then explains that the bridges are quite slippery. Each time someone crosses one, a Dexterity check must be rolled at +2 penalty. If this first roll fails, a second roll, with no penalty, must be attempted. If the second roll fails, the hapless character plummets off the bridge and lands on the ice (45% chance), or in the Styx (55% chance). Using safety measures, such as rope, can be a lifesaver.

The bridge ominously trembles when walked upon, but no further detrimental effect occurs. Due to the nature of the bridge, consider a careful crossing from one end to the other to take two turns.

Dem Bones! Island 2

This island appears totally barren, its surface smooth and flat. However, there are eight bone devils under *invisibility* and ready to attack the party when it lands. Their *invisibility* ends after they make a free first strike.

When the party closes in for melee, have each PC make a Dexterity check or trip and fall, to prevent losing the attack that round.

Bone devils (8): AC -1; MV 15"; HD 9; hp 63 #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; THAC0 12; SA bone hook, *fear*, *create illusion*, *fly*, *become invisible*, all once per round, *wall of ice*, once per day; SD *summon* another bone devil (40%

chance); MR 40%; AL LE.

When the last devil dies, the island shimmers. It was covered with an *illusion* to appear smooth, hiding the islands's little crags and crevices. This is why the party had to check their Dexterities.

Ready, "Set", Go! Island 3

This island appears manmade. It is 100' square and made of large, limestone blocks. It is topped by an incomplete pyramid 90' high. The base is 90' square, so there is a 10'-wide walkway around it. Eleven men are working on the pyramid, putting stone blocks into place, using sheer physical strength.

What the party is seeing is the lunacy of a god. Set, not content with his reign in Avernus, has hatched a far-fetched plan to gain territory. Against all reason, he is building a pyramid as a focal point for his power in an attempt to gain a "beachhead" on Stygia.

Arlea looks especially angry at this and charges into battle. The men are, naturally, minions of Set.

Minions of Set (11): AC -2; MV 12"; HD 10; hp 25; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-12 (bite), +2 *khopesh swords* 4-10, or by form; THAC0 12; SA *polymorph* into giant snakes or scorpions; MR 10%; AL LE.

These minions are fanatically loyal to Set and need not check morale. If they *polymorph* into snakes, they inflict 1-12 points of damage by bite. As scorpions, they cause 1-10 points of damage with each of their two claws, plus a sting that requires a save vs. poison or death. The sting itself causes 1-4 points of damage.

The pyramid has a secret door on the side opposite from where the party landed. Inside, they find a small basalt altar flanked by two black candles. Laughing in exultant madness is Set himself.

This encounter must be played very carefully. Arlea will not charge Set. Upon seeing the party, he explains, "Behold, even unfinished, my temple

attracts worshippers!" If Set sees any obvious good *holy symbols* or trappings, he does not make this statement, but rather demands a sacrifice of a powerful magical item from each party member.

The party has a free round to react. If they are smart, they'll flee the island. If they foolishly choose to fight, use the stats provided below.

Set: AC -4; MV 18"; #AT 2; Dmg 7-70 (*spear of darkness*); THAC0 4; SA change victim's alignment to LE by touch; SD poison skin, +3 weapon to hit; MR 50%; AL LE. Set has the abilities of a 15th-level cleric, 17th-level fighter, 30th-level illusionist, and 15th-level assassin.

If You Can't Join 'em, Lich 'em! Island 4

As the party hits the apex of the next bridge, a sickly green lightning flash lights up the sky, followed by a dull rumble. A red rain falls, and in two rounds becomes a torrent. A howling wind kicks in. The party must make another Dexterity check at +4 penalty, since they are still on the bridge.

The island at the end of the bridge looks promising. There is an iron fortress 20' square and 30' high in the middle of the island. It is a *Daern's instant fortress* and has been here for millennia. Strange, vine-like growths cover it, giving some obscure clue to its age.

The only way to get in peacefully is to politely knock. The Hell-storm is getting worse; visibility is down to six feet. The wind is threatening to lift PCs off the ground and toss them across the icy surface of the Styx.

If someone knocks, a flesh golem answers the door and lets the party in. The room has a roaring fire in the fireplace, and soft chairs and divans to sit on. There is a stairway leading up, but the golem motions for the party to sit and wait as he takes his leave of the party.

Atop the fireplace is a jeweled skull. This is the demilich, Ignatz the Evil. Details for playing this special monster can be found in the *Monster Man-*

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ual II.

One turn after the golem has left, or two rounds after the skull has been activated, a robed, hooded figure descends the stairs carrying a gnarled staff.

The figure approaches the party and removes his hood. This is Gremaldius the Archmage, now a lich. Ignatz was his companion, but his life-preserving powers waned prematurely.

Gremaldius gestures and golden goblets of deep violet wine appear in everyone's hands. He then demands what the party's business is.

He is unsympathetic about the need for refuge. He demands that the party leave immediately. If they refuse or attack, he makes a sweeping gesture, and a water elemental springs from each goblet and attacks. The golden goblets are *gates* to the Water Elemental plane, creations of the lich.

Water elementals: AC 2; MV 6"//18"; HD 8; hp 40; #AT 1; Dmg 5-30; THACO 12; SD +2 weapon to hit; AL N.

Gremaldius: AC -2 (+2 *ring of protection*); MV 6"; HD 18; hp 90; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; THACO 7; SA cold touch *paralyzes*, spell use; SD spell use, spell immunities; AL LE; *staff of power*, +2 *ring of protection*, *evil robe of the archmage*, *horn of evil*, *shadow lantern*.

He functions as a 19th-level archmage, and should be assigned appropriate spells. Should he be slain, the golem and all the furnishings break up. All that remain are his items.

If searched further, a pouch is found in his robe with a small chest inside. This is *Leomund's secret chest*. Inside are 3,000 pp, two rubies worth 1,500 gp each, and a *libram of silver magic*, an item Gremaldius never got around to destroying. If the lich manages to escape, he will certainly pay the party an unexpected visit someday.

The storm abates in six hours. The second floor is empty if the lich was slain.

A Cavalier Attitude?

Island 5

This island is another desolate rock with a small lean-to. In front of it is a man in white full plate armor, his head bowed, crying profusely. Jammed into a rock is a battered white sword.

If approached, he introduces himself as Sir Perrin, a paladin in disgrace. The sword is his *holy avenger*, "Evil's End".

Sadly, he explains how he became caught up in the trappings of chivalry, and began depending on his weapons rather than his faith. Slowly, his faith crumbled. One day, he came down to Hell on a quest. During a melee, he suffered a faith crisis which dropped his *protection from evil*. His half dozen companions, who depended on that protection from him, were then torn apart by diabolical hordes.

Rather than kill him, the fiends decided to place him on this island. The devils knew that his lack of faith and overwhelming guilt would be his jailers, and that this punishment is

worse than death to him. He is so ashamed that he will not even tell the party which deity he serves.

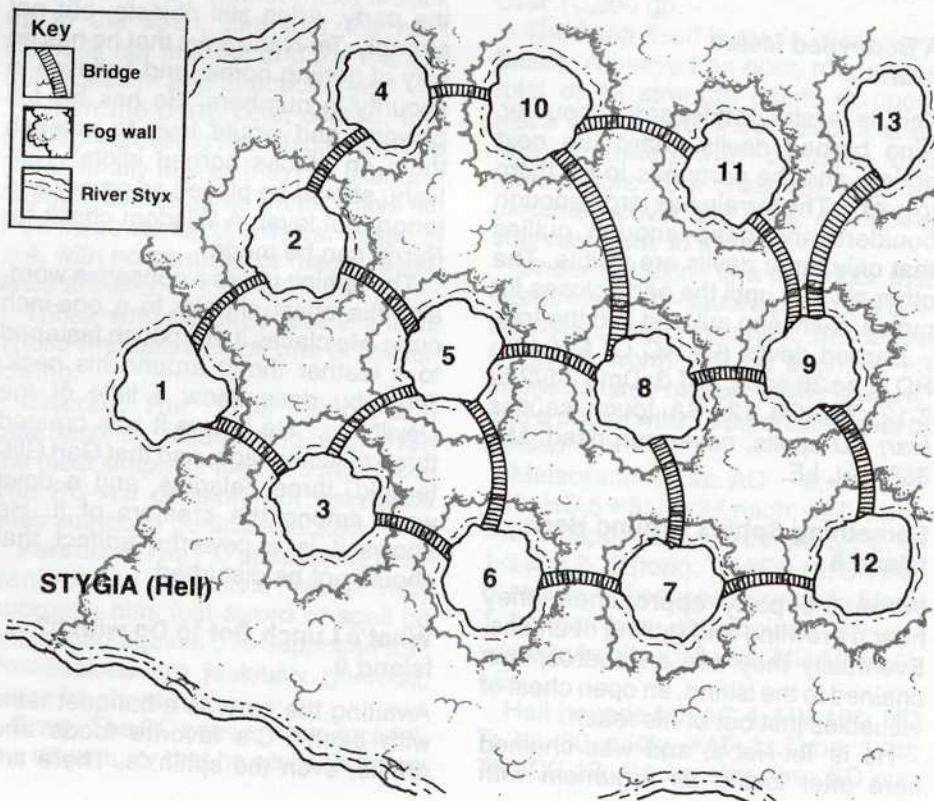
The party has several different options. They can ignore him and continue. Arlea advocates this. They can offer him the chance to join them and perhaps restore his faith. If made, he accepts this offer. Arlea and Perrin will never get along, and should be played as such.

Perrin: AC -3 (+2 *full plate*, shield); MV 6"; P11; hp 98; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8 +1; S 17/34; I 13; W 13; D 15/76; C 18/22; Ch 18/96; Cm 20; AL LG.

Perrin acts as an 11th-level fighter, his paladin powers having been cut off. His sword has been reduced to a non-magical weapon. Only by regaining his faith will his powers and sword bloom again.

To regain his faith, the paladin must make a Wisdom check after each encounter that results in the defeat of evil. On the first attempt, assign a +5 penalty. For each further attempt, lessen the penalty by one.

If this happy event does happen,



he'll emit a shrill whistle. One turn later, a black pegasus will land obediently by Perrin's side.

Expressing his undying gratitude, Perrin will explain that he still has a quest to fulfill and leave. He does tell the person in the party as closely aligned to him as possible, that he doesn't trust the ranger. He thinks she is a fraud.

He has never heard of a gem called *Devilbane*. For that matter, he has never heard of the World Serpent Inn.

It's the Mind Island 6

This island is cloaked in a sickly gray fog. When the party lands, the DM should consult his list of PC fears. A *phantasmal killer* is cast at each PC at complete surprise.

The monster that appears is the fear of each PC. Arlea feigns being attacked by her worst fear, Asmodeus. Perrin truly fears that he is being attacked by his deity. The DM should play out Perrin's fight, since he may die as a result of it.

A Bedeviled Melee Island 7

This is a straightforward encounter. Nine barbed devils guard the next bridge, and the party has to kill them to get by. The terrain has large enough boulders and deep enough gullies that only three devils are visible. The other six wait until the party closes for melee, then leap out and join the fray.

Barbed devils (9): AC 0; MV 12"; HD 8; hp 36 each; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/3-12; THAC0 12; SA touch causes fear; SD spells, never surprised; MR 35%; AL LE.

Something Sphinx Around Here Island 8

When the party approaches, they hear a growling and rattling of chains. Eventually they see an androsphinx chained to the island, an open chest of valuables just out of his reach.

He is Tet-Nabu, and was chained here after losing an argument with

Geryon. Geryon chose not to slay him, but as a perverse joke chained him here instead. The only way the chains can be broken is to answer the riddle:

What is the sound of one hand clapping?

The answer is best acted out by slapping someone's face. It takes guts to do this to an angry androsphinx. Perrin and Arlea do not know the answer. Arlea recommends that the party not bother, since the sphinx looks scruffy and shiftless. Tet-Nabu yells: "Shut up, you stupid female! It matters not if you are in human form or sphinx form, all females are pathetic and useless!"

Of course, the party could just take the sphinx's treasure away, something which Sir Perrin, if he's there, will object to, as should any lawful or chaotic good. The treasure contains 100 diamonds worth 500 gp each, a +2 shield, a gem of brightness, a wand of wonder, a dicerion of light and darkness, a pair of winged boots, and an egg of reason.

If the sphinx is freed, he is grudgingly grateful and offers his services to the party. Arlea still objects, but not strongly. Tet-Nabu says that he has no way of getting home, and believes in security in numbers. He has his full powers, and would love to unleash them on "those horned idiots". Tet-Nabu should be played as ornery and tough, but loyal. A Wisdom check for Perrin can be made.

The sphinx utters a nonsense word, and the chest shrinks to a one-inch cube. He places it in a pouch fastened to a leather thong around his neck. Tet-Nabu does know a little of the *Devilbane*. He knows it was created three millennia ago, and that Garl Glittergold, three paladins, and a deva were among the creators of it. He knows it is a powerful artifact that should not be disturbed.

What's Lunch Got to Do with It? Island 9

Awaiting the party is a banquet table with each PC's favorite foods and drinks, even the sphinx's. There are

scantly clad women and men lounging about, each with 18 charisma and 24 comeliness. There are two of the appropriate gender for each of the PCs and NPCs. There's even the androsphinx's dream come true: two lovely gynosphinxes with the intelligences of a twig.

Scattered about the island are gems, each easily worth 1,000 gp. There are 583 such gems, all precious. Swords, staves, shields, robes, maces, rods, wands, helms, girdles, gauntlets, books, boots, suits of armor of every type for every race, rings, potions, scrolls, and other miscellaneous items lie cast about randomly.

Over the island is a vast marble roof held up by intricately carved columns. The floor is smooth, golden marble, and the air smells like flowers, a welcome respite from the Stygian stench. Sweet music drowns out the screams of the damned so they become nothing but a bad memory. Once under the canopy, the terrain of Hell is replaced by idyllic woodland scenes with cute, furry creatures to soothe the Hell-weary eyes.

Amazingly, it is all real, and here for the party's taking. They may eat, drink, romance, and take items to their heart's content. Any item that a PC is searching for can be found here, except *vorpal blades*, *wish*-granting or plane travelling devices and spells, any item that slays, controls, or protects from devils, or any item of good alignment. There is only one of each item.

This is the Island of Temptation, and if the party succumbs, the effects will not be felt for a while. They may stay as long as they like and every turn they do, there is a cumulative 10% chance that a PC will want to stay permanently, saving throws, magic or charm resistance notwithstanding!

Anyone experienced enough to have an 11th-level character should know by now that there's no such thing as a free lunch, especially in the heart of ultimate evil.

The food causes the eater to wish to return to the island to eat again, when next mealtime hits. The hungry PC

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uses every means at his disposal to get back.

Getting involved with the lovely people makes the PC suffer the effects of a *love philter*, with no saving throw allowed. The effects will not wear off by themselves.

Taking items or gems has no immediate effect. All seems normal. The PC becomes more and more enamored with the item, never letting it out of his sight, until the thirteenth time it is used. After the melee or situation is over, the PC will find himself to be irresistibly forced to continue using the item non-stop. With swords or other weapons of destruction, this could prove disastrous.

The gems are more insidious. The PC will not wish to cash them in nor spend them. No experience points will be granted for them. The PC must never be parted from the gem. If he is, he will take every measure needed to get it back, his safety being no object.

The only way the effects can be halted is a *remove curse* and an *atonement* from a 16th-level cleric. Once cast, the item or gem in question vanishes in a puff of nauseous vapor. This procedure must be repeated for every item or gem taken by the party.

The food/drink/lovesickness requires a *neutralize poison*, *remove curse*, and *atonement* for each PC who partook.

As for the NPCs, Sir Perrin is too busy feeling guilty. He just waits for the party, crying and pacing. Arlea pretends to be interested, and even picks up items to show the party that they are not trapped. As a devil she is invulnerable to all the effects, but will not take anything, saying that she has all that a ranger is allowed to carry.

However, she will take a gem or two, claiming that some widows and orphans back on the Prime Material plane could sure use these. (Devils don't play fair!).

Tet-Nabu, the big dumb fool, falls hook, line, and sinker, and will need the party to get him out somehow.

The lovely people are not combatants, and a single successful hit slays one.

Bridge over Watered Troubles Island 10

The bridge to this island lost its apex, but an illusion exists of an intact span. When the party crosses, they plunge through the gap onto the thick ice below. It is a 40' drop, so each person takes 10d6 damage, and items save vs. crushing blow.

Worst of all, Sekolah, who has been monitoring his morsels' progress, smashes through a weakened part of the ice and attacks.

Sekolah: AC 0; MV 36" (swim); hp 329; #AT 2; Dmg 6-60; THACO 7; SA swallow whole; SD +2 weapon to hit; MR 47%; AL LE.

Sekolah fights as a 16 HD monster, and casts spells as a 15th-level evil cleric. He also gains the advantages listed in the *Manual of the Planes, Appendix IV*, for lesser Powers.

Sekolah is driven away if he takes greater than 50% damage or if he devours two victims. After the melee, if the party shows no signs of returning to the bridge, the ice begins shifting and cracking, thanks to the violence of the fight. If they cannot make it back up to the span, hint that the next island is not that far, and the ice has not broken in that direction—yet.

When the party, cold, scared, and probably smelling like Stygian swamp water, finally makes it to the island, a change comes over them. Have all PCs make saving throws vs. magic at -4, with no bonuses or magic resistance allowed.

Those who succeed feel a shiver. Those who fail, take on one of the following:

Discord: The PC is irritable and quarrelsome, disagreeing with even the most simple or logical suggestion. The PC will certainly not help if he sees someone getting attacked.

Paranoia: The PC sees all his companions as enemies. None may approach him, lest sword or spell be unleashed against this supposed foe. Possessions are jealously guarded, not to be shared.

Envy: The PC sees an item on a fellow adventurer that he wishes for very

badly. He asks for it, and if refused, attempts to take it by force.

Power-lust: The PC proclaims himself as leader, all-wise and powerful. Any objection is met by a challenge to fight to the death for the right to lead.

Arlea is immune, and will attempt to play the heroine. If by horrible luck of the die she is the only one unaffected, she will rescue a PC by bodily carrying him onto the next bridge, stopping the enchantment. If she is not alone, she will aid the PCs who are still in their right minds.

If Perrin makes his saving throw, let him have the idea of carrying someone off the bridge. This heroic act allows him another Wisdom check. If he fails his roll, assign him "discord".

Expensive Bridgework Island 11

This island has a small, black keep on it. This is not the gem's home, but rather a toll booth to the next bridge. Five malebranche and eight hell hounds patrol this place. The toll is a large gem or a magical item worth over 10,000 gp.

The keep itself is made of blackest basalt. A heavy iron door, requiring a total of 48 strength points to open, leads into the 90' x 90' keep. It is all one chamber, with benches and tables. Furs from creatures best left unnamed cover the floor. A winding stairway leads to the roof.

Under the skins is a trap door that opens into a 10'-square pit. At the bottom is a locked iron chest. Inside are 34 gems worth 500 gp each, a +3 dagger, a large bag of holding (empty), and a pouch with 13 pinches of *dust of illusion*.

Malebranche (5): AC -5; MV 9"/18"; HD 5+5; hp 27 each; #AT 4 or 1 with weapon; Dmg 1-4/1-4/2-5/1-3, or 1-3 and 2-12 (fork). THACO 13; SA fear 5' radius, tail causes wounds to bleed 1 hp per turn until bound; SD +1 weapon to hit, spell use; MR 50%; AL LE.

Hell hounds (8): AC 4; MV 12"; HD 7; hp 30 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; THACO 13; SA breathe fire; SD sur-

prised on a 1, surprise enemies on 1-4, spot hidden or *invisible* creatures 50%; AL LE.

Arlea, Perrin and Tet-Nabu have no money to pay, so they must rely on the party's generosity. The devils refuse the gems found on Temptation Island.

No Dragon Is an Island Island 12

The ground at the foot of each bridge leading to this island is a jagged, crystal-encrusted, brownish soil. The rest of the island is a hemisphere 20' in diameter, and is a rough black surface.

Should the party step onto the island, they'll be surprised when a black dragon's head breaks through the ice and attacks. The island, which is his back, heaves several times and sprouts the wings so carefully hidden.

The dragon's first order of business is to buck everyone off his back. Have everyone make a *Dexterity* check at a +2 penalty. Those that fail hit the ice, taking 6d6 damage from the fall.

The dragon's name is Blaffthatarus, and is a male, ancient, huge black dragon. He can speak and cast spells. He is not dead, but has been *geased* by a lawful evil archmage to remain here, serving as an island. If the party attempts to negotiate, he will be most grateful and break off further attacks if they could dispel the *geas* somehow.

Should this somehow occur, Blaff allows one rider in order to scout the area a bit. Further persuasion may get him to fly the whole group to the next island, but no further! He can take three riders at a time.

Blaffthatarus: AC 3; MV 12"/24"; HD 8; hp 64; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/3-18; THAC0 12; SA acid breath, spell use; AL CE. Blaff has no treasure. He was exiled to Hell by the 18th-level archmage Doultherien 200 years ago. Doultherien is now a lich, and will eventually find out about Blaff's release if it happened. He will not be too happy.

The White Tower Island 13

This island is substantially wider than all the others, there being only 100' from each shore of the Styx. Two bridges span this small distance, one on the left and one on the right. True to form, another bridge lies opposite the one the party takes to get on the island. The island is a perfect circle.

In the precise center lies a white tower whose very bricks shine with a pure white light. The tower is 100' tall. The surface of the island is a golden sand that resembles gold dust, but has no value. There is a pool of clear, cool, wholesome water near the entrance. Not only is it good to drink, it is *holy water*.

Closer inspection of the edifice reveals holy symbols from every good faith carved on the outside walls and filled with real gold.

There is no door, only a shimmering blue barrier. Carved on the door frame in the common tongue are the words:

"Let not evil folk, nor those who cannot decide, cross this threshold."

The barrier repulses evils and neutrals who attempt to cross. Only those of good alignment may pass through the haze. If any others make a second attempt at getting through, they must save vs. magic or be *turned to stone*.

Most spells bounce off the wall and hit the caster. Spells may hit the rest of the party if it has an area effect. The wall was put up at 25th-level ability. A *dispel magic* or *Mordenkainen's disjunction* are the only two spells that may possibly break the wall.

The inside of the round tower is all one chamber. The floors are white marble. The walls are painted with scenes of various good pantheons and their servants. Columns of solid platinum hold up the roof, which is covered in a mosaic depicting devas holding aloft a green gem, holding back a horde of devils from attacking innocent people.

At the point in the chamber farthest away from the door stands an altar carved from a single pearl. A carpet made of spun gold thread leads up to

it. Two platinum candlesticks hold burning *candles of invocation* (lawful good), that do not seem to shrink. A solid silver incense bowl burns *incense of meditation*. Eight more blocks lie on the edge of the altar.

Atop the altar sits a 1,000-sided emerald of deep green with a light green fire burning in its center. The gem is the size of a man's head. A small gold plaque in front of the gem says:

"Reasons against this gem's removal I am not allowed to give. Nevertheless, if you are pure of heart and motive, ye shall leave it where it is. Take ye the candles and the incense if ye must, but leave all else as is. Goyner the Archmage, Head of the White Order of Law."

Five rounds after the good PCs entered the tower, those outside sticking around see a horde of bone devils (52), barbed devils (65), Styx devils (78), erinyes (39), pit fiends (52), manticores (26), beholders (6), blue dragons (13), green dragons (13), rakhshas (26) riding the manticores, and orcs (1,300). All are arranged in squads of 13. They are being led by Geryon, flanked by 13 minotaurs, and Asmodeus, riding on a nightmare.

When first observed, they are on the shore of the Styx, advancing across the bridge as well as across the ice. In this area, the ice is miles deep, so it cannot be broken by mere mortal spells or weapons. The pure light of the tower makes the area as bright as day, so the armies can definitely be seen.

The blue barrier in the doorway blocks sound and light, so no one inside knows what is going on outside, and vice versa.

It will take the army one turn to arrive at the island. Asmodeus caught wind of Baalzebul's schemes and is now attempting to "pull out all the stops" in getting the gem, or at least to prevent the mortals from getting it.

Seven rounds after the armies of Hell set out across the ice, a mighty

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horn blast will be heard from the opposite shore. The sound is clear and pure, removing fear from the hearts of any, and audible even to those in the tower.

If Perrin is around and still in a state of despair, he suddenly realizes that even the hordes of Hell cannot prevail against good, and his faith is restored. His *holy avenger* flares to life, and his powers are back in full. He summons his mount, but this time, he sticks around for the fight.

If Arlea is still around, her deception is blasted away by the all-purifying music, and she stands revealed as the evil thing she is. If Perrin is around, he gets a free strike unless the party interferes.

The source of the beautiful noise is a vast and wonderous gathering that the glooms of Hell never imagined would ever be found down here. Even the sufferings of the damned seem momentarily lessened.

The host consists of: astral devas (49), monadic devas (56), solars (7), planetars (14), gold dragons (14), silver dragons (14), shedu (63), lamma-su (56), ki-rin (7), warden archons (21), sword archons (21), and 1,400 einheriar. All the hosts are deployed in groups of seven.

They are being lead by Osiris and Tyr, the former riding an androsphinx, the latter riding a pegasus and escorted by 14 valkyries. Tet-Nabu, if here, recognizes the sphinx as his cousin, Zarlam Aram-Haphet.

The hosts of good were tipped off by the three devas back at the World Serpent Inn (remember them?). It just took some time to get the hosts assembled, as well as smoothing over any differences between Osiris and Tyr, who usually do not associate with each other.

The hapless party must try to fend off the armies of evil for two rounds. The good host is travelling far faster and will arrive in the twelfth round after the evil army appeared on its shore.

If the good PCs in the tower have removed the gem, a thunderbolt hits the tower, shattering it around the par-

ty's heads. All the materials become worthless slag. The diabolical army howls in triumph. Their first objective will be to get the gem, if Arlea has not already done so: their second, to kill the party: their third, to fly up through the hole that is even now opening up in the sky 1,000' directly over of the tower ruins. This hole is now a permanent *gate* to the Prime Material plane, and the armies intend on giving its inhabitants a night of hellish gore and plunder.

Each night afterwards, the devils will strike again and again. Random encounters in the PCs' world can be adjusted to reflect the increase of devils.

The DM may run this encounter any way he likes. The first evil troops to land will be the manticores borne rakshasa, wielding +2 *nine lives stealing longswords*.

The battle takes place on the island and in the air above it. The party may be pitted against an equal number of stragglers from the evil army. The rakshasa, the orcs, and the minotaurs will be especially plentiful on the ground.

The outcome is open-ended. If the party helps the hosts, victory is certain. If they just sit back and gawk, the result is uncertain. One option is if the party has, up to this point, played exceptionally well, then let good triumph. On the other hand, if they half-heartedly waltzed through this adventure, not doing much good or role playing, then let evil win.

Should the forces of evil triumph, they spare the party out of sheer malice, taking all their magical items and spell components, then fly up the hole to wreak destruction. The party will be stuck on this island, the results of their actions weighing on their consciences, wracking them with guilt.

Should the hosts of good prevail and the party helped, the gem is restored to its place. The leaders do not fault the party, and send them back to the inn, where Tyr accompanies them and buys them a round of drinks. Perrin declines and goes home, but Tet-Nabu joins the party, and may even consider becoming a

permanent ally.

If good won and the party just sat back and did nothing, judgment will be most harsh. The gem is restored if it was taken. Then, the party is admonished for their stupidity and selfishness in not joining the fight. Each member must fulfill a quest to be dictated by Tyr, who takes an especially dim view of cowards. Furthermore, each member must give up one magical item in sacrifice.

After they have done so, they are transported back to the Prime Material plane, specifically to their homes. They are forbidden from entering the World Serpent Inn for one decade. They each must also find a 9th-level cleric to cast an *atonement* on them. If they fail to do this, they suffer an encounter with a group of devils every night. These devils should be an exact match for the group.

If the good armies lost and the *gate* was opened, then any PCs that manage to escape and return to the Prime Material are visited by their deity. A quest to close the *gate* will be given to the party.

Regardless of the outcome, the party has incurred the enmity of a major devil, namely Baalzebul. Further adventures may require a confrontation to resolve this enmity.

ARCHONS (12)

by Deborah Christian

Terrain: Seven Heavens
 Total Party Levels: 58 (average 9th)
 Total Magic X.P.: 8,000
 Total gp X.P.: 0
 Monster X.P.:

Kill: 12,770 Defeat: 9,580
 Retreat: 3,200

Set Up

* Ephram, a lay brother, has vanished from the monastery of a lawful good sect. His note said he was going to the Seven Heavens "to experience the wondrous archons firsthand". He also "borrowed" an *amulet of the planes* and a *ring of lycanthropy* (see below). The priest is certain that Brother Ephram has done the unthinkable, as he often jested he would; namely, disguised himself as an archon in order to pass among them. The party is asked to bring Ephram back. The priest provides them with the means for planar travel.

* While traveling through the Seven Heavens, the adventurers notice something unusual about a warden archon they encounter.

The Lair

When the party arrives in the Seven Heavens, they find themselves on the beach by the sea of Lunia, the Silver Heaven. Drifting toward them come many softly glowing lights, resembling will-o-the-wisps.

Lantern archons (6): AC 10; MV 12"; HD 1/2; hp 3 each; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/1-3; THAC0 20; SA *continual light*, *infra-* and *ultravision*, *tongues*, *teleportation without error*; SD magical weapon to hit; AL LG.

The lanterns hover close to the party, bobbing and alighting on characters. If any lantern is attacked by a nervous PC, all of these archons attack in return for one round, then *teleport* instantly away.

If left undisturbed, they finish their investigation of the party, then travel towards an inland hill, reaching it in one turn. This is the same destination to which they *teleport* if they have been attacked. Whether or not PCs follow, the

lanterns alert the hound archons to the new arrivals, and the hounds reach the party no more than one turn later.

Hound archons (4): AC 1; MV 15"; HD 9; hp 32; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-8 (fist/fist/bite) or by weapon type; MR 40%; THAC0 12; SA *shape change* into dog or wolf; detect *invisible*, *astral*, and *ethereal* at will; SD +1 weapon to hit; AL LG.

The hound archons are human in form, with dog-like heads and powerful fists. They keep a watch on new arrivals in the beach area, since it is not uncommon for unsavory creatures and travelers to blunder ashore. The hounds are naturally cautious, and question the party about themselves and their reason for being here.

If anyone in the party is clearly evil (by word, action or manner), the entire group is asked to depart immediately, returning to the astral plane through the ocean. If the party refuses to go, three archons stay to guard the group while the fourth *teleports* away to bring a warden. If the party attacks the hounds, three archons fight while the fourth *teleports* away for help.

The hounds do not let a non-good-aligned party leave the area. Instead, they confine the party to their present location, with force if necessary, until wardens arrive. Once hounds are convinced of the party's goodness, or if they are okayed by a warden, the characters are free to go where they wish—although the hounds may follow at a discreet distance, out of curiosity about what the adventurers are doing and where they are going.

Personal adornment is not commonly worn by archons, but some do have rings, armbands, and the like. If PCs can spot the *ring of lycanthropy*, they will find Brother Ephram. In fact, two of the hound archons wear rings, but if asked to show them more closely, their reactions depend on their response to the party, as described above. If the characters mention their search for Brother Ephram, wardens are summoned.

Warden archons (2): AC -1; MV 12"; HD 10; hp 70 each; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/18/2-12; MR 50%; THAC0 9; SA all divination spells; SD +2 weapon to hit; AL LG.

If PCs are fighting hounds when wardens arrive, the wardens join the fight. Otherwise, they determine PC align-

ments with *divination* spells. Non-good-aligned characters are told to go, and will be cast out forcefully if necessary. If the party is looking for Ephram and explains this, they remain under hound guard while the wardens investigate their claim, beginning with *detect illusion* spells on those around them.

Ephram (werebear form): AC 2; MV 9"; HD 7+3; hp 45; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8; THAC0 13; AL LG. Ephram is disguised as a warden archon, and looks like a bear with human hands, but his statistics are those of a werebear. He is the only warden wearing a ring; the *amulet of the planes* is obscured by the shape-changing dweomer, and allows him to imitate the archons' *teleportation* ability. PCs looking for Ephram recognize his ring; PCs who know nothing of the man should make a saving throw against their Intelligence. If successful, they notice the bear carved on the ring. Magic-users and clerics recognize it as a *ring of lycanthropy*.

If the hounds summon wardens, Ephram joins them. If wardens are not summoned, Ephram visits the characters to ask questions about his monastery without explaining his interest. If Ephram is attacked by the PCs, wardens come to defend him. The man answers questions truthfully; if his "fellow" wardens or PCs ask about his true nature, he admits his deception. Chastised, he returns meekly back home.

Ring of lycanthropy: XP 2,000; 10,000 gp. Complete or partial change to werebear, once per week until willed to stop. Holds 20 charges.

DM Note: The party for this adventure may be of any level if they do not plan on fighting the archons. Good-aligned parties should get half the full experience for cooperating and accomplishing their mission without violence.

BABAU (3)

by Deborah Christian

Terrain: Pandemonium
 Total Party Levels: 48 (average 8th)
 Total Magic X.P.: 1,500
 Total gp X.P.: 2,600
 Monster X.P.:

Kill: 9,000 Defeat: 6,750
 Retreat: 2,250

Set Up

* The party has acquired a map, perhaps from the spined devil encounter elsewhere in this book, which shows the location of a gate to the Prime Material plane. It is in the tunnels of Phlegethon on the plane of Pandemonium.

* While on the Plane of Pandemonium, the party wanders into the caverns and tunnels of Phlegethon.

* Adventurers stumble across a planar gate on the Prime Material plane. The portal delivers them into the plane of Pandemonium, where the exit is guarded by babau demons.

The Lair

A planar gate guarded by babau demons is located at the end of a relatively narrow side tunnel in Phlegethon. The mouth of the passage is partially obscured by stalactites and stalagmites of glistening black rock. Wind shrieks through the stoney teeth and howls into the tunnel, drawn by the pressure differential created by the gate. For all its noise, the wind here has no greater chance of plucking up lightweight objects than elsewhere on this plane.

The Illusion

One hundred yards down the length of the tunnel, the passageway narrows and the wind blows with greater force. At this point there is a 10% chance for objects weighing less than 100 pounds to be snatched up by the wind and blown down the tunnel. Characters approaching this juncture see a massive, minotaur-like figure crouched in the passageway, illuminated by a sullen red light given off by its body.

This is an *illusion* in the form of Baphomet, the demon lord. Any creatures attempting to pass it are attacked by it, including any living object blown down the passageway. The *illusion* is meant to frighten off the more ignorant demons who might wander into this tunnel. Such creatures are not likely to question why Baphomet glows with red light, nor what, exactly, he is doing crouched in this tunnel. Party members are unlikely to recognize the form of Baphomet, but if they do, the above questions may occur to them as well. In such a case,

their chances of disbelieving the *illusion* are improved by 75%. If they perceive only a minotaur-like demon, they encounter an *illusion* with the statistics given below. They must fight the phantasm to get past it. If characters truly believe the creature is Baphomet, they fight an *illusion* with the statistics of the demon lord as given on page 36 of the *Monster Manual II*.

Minotaur demon (*illusion*): AC (MS)1; MV 15" within 30-foot stretch of tunnel; HD 10; hp 60; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-10/3-18; MR 40%; THAC0 10; SA *petrification* breath as a gorgon once per turn; SD +1 weapon to hit, demonic abilities. The *illusion* fades if destroyed, but reappears undamaged after one hour.

Ambush

The tunnel beyond the *illusion* is 30 feet wide. One hundred feet farther along, two babau demons guard the tunnel. Since gravity here is outward from the center of the passageway, they stand on opposite sides of the way. These demons are extremely difficult to detect in the poor sighting conditions of Phlegethon. The first babau encountered fights; the actions of the second may vary. If the party is obviously more powerful than the babau demons, the second one runs off for reinforcements. If the adventurers have approached more or less on one side of the tunnel, the second babau takes advantage of this to attack by surprise. It does so by leaping strongly towards the center of the tunnel. As the gravity changes there, the babau then "falls" to the other side of the passage, in effect leaping upon its chosen opponent from above. The demon drifts downwind a bit in the process, but the creatures are practiced in this technique and land on the selected victim on a "to hit" roll of 6 or better.

Babau (2): AC -3; MV 15"; HD 7+14; hp 50 each; #AT 1 or 3; Dmg by weapon +7 or 2-5/2-5/2-8; MR 50%; THAC0 13; SA strength 19, cause *darkness* 5' radius, abilities equal to 9th-level thief, gaze functions as *ray of enfeeblement*, spell-like abilities, once per round: *fear* by touch, *levitate* (as 10th-level MU), *fly* (as 11th-level MU), *dispel magic* (as 12th-level MU), *polymorph self*, *heat metal* (as 14th-level druid), *gate* in another babau (25% success); SD reddish slime on

body in combat, resulting in half damage from cutting, stabbing and similar attacks; cold iron inflicts +2 points of damage per hit; AL CE; barbed spear, 1-6+1 damage, plus strength bonus.

If the adventurers are not easily slain, the second babau breaks off after two rounds of combat and goes for help. The reinforcing babau has the same statistics as given above. As the new arrival joins the fray, the one that brought it stands back to spell-cast. It uses *heat metal* and *dispel magic* to best advantage, then joins the melee, casting *fear* as its first attack.

Babau fight to the death, and pursue retreating characters completely out of the tunnel. If one babau is slain, they all retreat. The encounter continues before the gate.

Gate

A small chamber 40 feet wide opens at the end of the tunnel. The wormhole is a gray foggy spot in the wall opposite the tunnel. Wind blows into the portal. Characters emerging from the gate surprise the single babau on guard duty here. At the DM's option, this can be a one-way portal. In a corner are bits of treasure collected from previous intruders; 4,000 ep, 6 chrysoprase gems (100 gp each), and a scroll of *protection from elementals*.

BERBALANG AND BASILISK

by John Nephew

Plane: Astral or Prime Material
Total Party Levels: 24 (avg. 4th)

Total Magic X.P.: 1,100

Total gp X.P.: 3,210

Monster X.P.:

Kill: 1,307 Defeat: 980

Retreat: 327

Set Up

* Traveling along the edge of civilization, the characters find the village of Traldorf. Every full moon a terrible, winged creature comes from the forest to slay and devour a villager; and, it being the full moon again, the *berbalang* is expected to return this night for its

morbid ritual. The village leader, whose own young son was lost a month before, pleads with the PCs, begging them to remain and slay it.

* Characters encounter the astral projection of the *berbalang*.

* Using a color pool to view some part of the Prime Plane from the Astral, the PC(s) see the basilisk's location rather than the one desired.

* Rumors in a local tavern refer to a basilisk, beneath a hill in the forest, which guards a great treasure and a sleeping demon.

The Lair

Since *berbalangs* spend most of their lives on the Astral plane, with their physical bodies in a trance, they have an incredibly long lifespan. The one described here is easily a millennium old, and most of that time has been in its present lair. It only recently discovered the nearby human village of Traldorf, which has provided an excellent source of victims for its monthly feedings.

Another recent development (to the *berbalang's* perspective on time), and a fortuitous one, was the coming of the basilisk to the cavern where the *berbalang's* body is kept in a trance. The *berbalang* knows enough to carefully avoid the gaze of the beast, but intruders (especially from the Prime Material Plane) might not be aware of its presence. Thanks to the basilisk's gaze extending into the Astral and Ethereal planes, the *berbalang* has a very secure location for hiding the body.

The action in the lair will depend on what the Set Up was. In the first two cases described, the characters will first face the projection (physical or astral) of the *berbalang*, which functions as if it were the real thing. If the projection is hit (the DM should not allow it to be slain at once, regardless of what the dice indicate), it turns and flees to its lair. Characters may pursue it.

Berbalang (1): AC 6; HD 1 + 1; hp 9; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6; THAC0 18; SA astral and physical projections; AL CE.

In the third and fourth Set Up suggestions, the characters find the lair itself before they encounter the *berbalang*.

The lair is a natural cave beneath a wooded hill. The entrance is an opening

four feet wide and two feet high, hidden behind bushes. There is a slightly worn area in the grass (quickly noted by a ranger or barbarian) where the basilisk passes to go hunting.

The Cave

The entrance passage grows wider and winds down into the hill, opening into a roughly elliptical cave, fifty feet long, thirty feet wide, and twenty feet high at its highest point. Stalactites and stalagmites are found here and there. To the northeast of the room is an elevated outcropping of rock, rising about twelve feet and nearly touching the ceiling on one corner. (The inside of this rock has been sculpted out—see below.) There are strangely-shaped large stones in addition to the stalactites and stalagmites—statues made by the basilisk. Most are small animals that wandered into the cave; there are also a bear, two wolves, an orc, a goblin, and a human hunter.

Action in this room will depend on how the character party gains ingress and, again, what Set Up was used. First off, the basilisk will fight intruders from the Prime Material, Astral, and Ethereal planes; this should more than distract characters pursuing the *berbalang's* projection and allow it to animate its real body. Characters who remain off the Prime Material can only be attacked with the creature's gaze weapon and in most cases cannot return the attack.

Basilisk (1): AC 4; HD 6 + 1; hp 28; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; THAC0 13; SA petrifying gaze (extends into Astral color pools and the Border Ethereal); AL N.

If the *berbalang* was not previously encountered, it will, at the time of the party's arrival, have recently returned from the month's astral voyage. It will be altering its trance to produce a material projection, and this projection will emerge to attack the party four rounds after melee with the basilisk begins. Unlike projections elsewhere, a projection here will fight to its death. The system shock of the material projection being slain will kill the actual *berbalang* 75% of the time. In such a case, the body in the elevated outcropping (below) will be found dead.

Elevated Outcropping

This formation is hollowed out on the inside, and there is found the *berbalang's* body (normally entranced, but now either animated or dead, depending on what happened in the rest of the cave) and its treasure. The steep walls may be scaled by normal or magical means (thieves' ability, *spider climb*, potion of *climbing* or *flying*, etc.).

If the *berbalang* is still alive, it will emerge from its bed if characters are climbing to attack it. Otherwise it will hope the party will leave it undisturbed. (If the characters slew the physical projection earlier, they might be very surprised to find a carbon-copy.)

The combined treasure of the monsters, found in the outcropping, consists of 1,257 cp, 687 ep, 362 pp, 8 gems (base 100 gp value), a silver tiara (worth 250 gp), a flask containing *oil of ethereality*, and a clerical scroll with the spells *create water*, *cure light wounds*, and *negative plane protection*.

DAO(4)

by Thomas M. Kane

Terrain: Elemental Plane of Earth

Total Party Levels: 25

Total Magic X.P.: see below

Total gp X.P.: 30,150

Monster X.P.:

Kill: 8,356 Defeat: 6,267

Retreat: 2,089

Set Up

* The PCs learn of a foolish dao named "Rockhead" who trades precious gems for lead. If they want to buy lead for trading, assume that it costs one gold coin for every hundred gp weight.

* While adventuring in an area which might lead to this lair, the PCs discover an abandoned crate holding 5,000 gp encumbrance of lead, marked "For Rockhead. Receive on Delivery, 2,500 Gold Coins."

The Lair

No matter what Rockhead pays for his lead, he can always sell it back for a profit. A vein of pure uranium-235 surrounds this lair. Travelers in this radioac-

tive cave must protect themselves with leaden shields or die, as they learn *after* the lead has been sold. This lair is a circular, air-filled, tunnel, 10' high by 10' wide, with an entry cave which connects it to other areas. Rockhead himself lives in a bulge which he has shielded with lead, but the rest of the tunnel loops for three miles through radioactive soil, until it returns to the entrance, and then the lair again.

When PCs arrive, an obsequious dao servant greets them and leads the party directly to Rockhead's lair. The area looks like a round cave, 30' in radius, with an exit on either side. Rockhead appears to be the only occupant. This dao buys lead with foolish delight, eagerly fingering the metal, and tossing PCs 1-3 gems per 200 gp weight of lead. He keeps 100 topazes in his sleeve, worth 100 gp each. Behind the walls of this chamber are 5,000 gp weight of assorted lead plates, a set of metalworking tools worth 100 gp, 200 more topazes worth 100 gp each, and a five-foot thick lead shield which surrounds the whole lair. Rockhead can reach this treasure cache with his *passwall* ability.

While PCs sell their lead, the porter and two *invisible* dao creep into the tunnel to an area between the lair and the cave exit. They each plug the passage with a *wall of stone*, then use *rock to mud* on the cave floor. Now, characters have to circumnavigate the whole tunnel to return to the entry cave and leave.

Dao (4): AC 3; MV 9"/15" (6") (MC:B), move in elemental earth as if ethereal; HD 8+3; hp 33 each, 67 for Rockhead; #AT 1; Dmg 3-18; THACO 12; SA *change self, detect good, detect magic, passwall, spectral force, wall of stone, rock to mud* (x3), *dig* (x6); SD *misdirection, gaseous form, change self*, immune to earth-based damage; AL NE.

Radioactive Earth

When the PCs try to leave, they discover the mudpit and dead end. Rockhead grins at them, then soothingly describes his lair's circular nature. He explains that they need only walk around the lair to escape—but an "evil" radiates from the dirt in the tunnel, which must be blocked with heavy metals. Rockhead completes his speech by saying, "Only your lead—I mean, *my* lead—can save

you." PCs find two dead pech slaves in the tunnel loop. The corpses are bald, and bits of fallen hair dot their clothing. While the PCs are exploring the tunnel, Rockhead hides the lead he bought from them behind his walls, with the other treasure.

The radiation in this vein forces everyone to save vs. death magic once per turn. Even characters who leave the tunnel by magically passing through earth suffer radiation poisoning, since the lair lies at the center of a uranium vein, and the deposit is five miles in radius. Failing the first save means nothing, but after a character fails two saves, he experiences nausea which halves Strength, Dexterity, and hit points. Also, the victim's hair starts to fall out, halving Comeliness. If a third saving throw fails, the victim loses 1-10 hp and will suffer that damage again every day, until dead or magically cured. Any victim that fails four saves dies instantly. *Cure wounds* spells will restore lost hit points, but only a *heal* or *regenerate* spell can cure radiation sickness. After three weeks, radiation survivors start healing naturally, recovering one point of each damaged statistic per day.

Objects which become soiled with dirt from this vein become permanently radioactive. Living beings can wash the radiation away, but, while dirty, a contaminated character transfers radioactive dust to everything he touches. Since radiation can only be detected by its effects, PCs should be very suspicious of anything they carried during this encounter. For every week that a victim spends within 1' of a contaminated item, he must make another saving throw against radiation, as described above. Although this contamination may force PCs to discard treasured items, devious characters might find uses for contaminated objects. Award characters 200 experience points for successfully using radioactivity, as if they had found a magical item.

Lead blocks radiation, and the PCs could travel through this area safely if they covered themselves with a leaden shelter. Assume that ten gp weight of the soft metal can be hammered into a plate that covers one square foot. Fusing lead plates into a shelter requires one turn per square foot or twice that time if no

tools are available. Characters with a blacksmith proficiency (see the *DSG*) can halve this time period.

The PCs will probably have to return to Rockhead's lair and buy their lead back. This time, Rockhead is cold and business-like. He demands the return of his gems and one human slave. Clever bargainers can persuade him to accept sums of money over 10,000 gp or some powerful magical item. The party can trade...or fight. Once the PCs have left, these dao use *dig* to destroy their *walls of stone*, and let the mud dry, resetting this trap. Who said "Rockhead" meant "stupid"?

EFREET

(BATTLESYSTEM™ rules)

by Thomas M. Kane

Terrain: Elemental Plane of Fire

Total Party Levels: 75

Total Magic X.P.: Variable

Total gp X. P.: 0

Monster X.P.: (see BATTLESYSTEM rules 16.2)

Total: 75,300 per slain efreet unit

Set Up

* Several units of high-level mercenaries ask the PCs to lead them on a raid to the elemental plane of Fire. They have learned of a smithy there where ordinary blades can be given great powers. Someone who could seize the workshop, even for but a few hours, could forge an arsenal of incredible weapons.

* A djinni hires the PCs to form a body of mercenaries and harass this efreeti forge.

The Lair

Even as smelting iron turns it to steel, the incredible fires of the efreet can forge steel into something stronger. Bemeyal, a great ruler of efreet, has built a smithy in a poverty-stricken area of the City of Brass, where slaves and cheap workers are available. This location, however, makes the smithy vulnerable. A raiding party may be able to storm the smithy and enchant many weapons before the efreet militia could penetrate these fetid slums to stop an attack.

Unit	#	Level	AC	HD/Fig	MV	AR	ML	DL	#FIG	Dmg
FM	3	F2	3	20	6"	20	14	14	12	1-10
P	1	F3	8	30	12"	18	9	9	5	1-6
ZR	1	B2	0	20	15"	16	13	12	5	1-6
Level	AC	HD/Fig	MV	AR	ML	DL	#Fig	Dmg		
Efreet	2	20	9/24	20	15	16	5	3-24		

Bemeyal's smithy is a round brass dome, 240 yards in diameter, with four doors around the perimeter, and ten small forges inside. On either side of the room is a furnace, open at one end, ten yards wide by sixty yards long. The areas inside these furnaces can be treated as "hot spots", which inflict double normal heat damage on unprotected PCs, but cure 1-6 points damage per turn for creatures of elemental fire. See BATTLESYSTEM™ rule 14.16 for the effects of this healing. Outside the smithy, streets wind between randomly shaped shanties and tenements. Other efreet live here, but violence is so common in this seedy district that they ignore invaders. This terrain can be simulated with assorted cardboard boxes, and you may use any of the one inch counters from the BATTLESYSTEM box to represent efreet.

The mercenaries that the PCs control have been described in the table above. No commanders have been listed, because the PCs should direct these units. All of them have been given a morale modifier for possessing magical equipment, since, without it, they could never survive on the plane of Fire.

Mercenary Units

FM = Fortune's men. These troops wear plate mail and wield halberds. There are three identical units of this sort.

P = Pepperers. The pepperers are skirmish troops and have all specialized in the longbow. They use this weapon and wear leather armor.

ZR = Zhar's Runners. A group of eager barbarians make up Zhar's Runners, who were named after an ancient chieftain. They wield spears and wear only leather armor, but all have a dexterity of 18, hence their armor class. These characters have the running special ability, which lets them move at double

speed for three days. You may assume that the mercenaries already have protection from fire, or require the PCs to go on a quest for such magic. Should you decide that the mercenaries are already equipped, they have: 20 scrolls of *protection from fire*, two bottles of *oil of elemental fire resistance*, and three *rings of fire resistance 10' radius*.

Once mercenary units come within one hundred and twenty yards of the smithy, the defense begins. Two units of efreet workers try to drive the invaders away. They can heal wounded figures in the furnaces. The two efreet foremen act as commanders, while Bemeyal himself flees, in any direction that seems possible, including "up", to get help. Fifty BATTLESYSTEM game turns later, efreet militia begin arriving, invisibly, at a rate of 1-4 units every turn. Militia units have the same statistics as Bemeyal's workers. All efreet units have the same statistics and can use efreet special abilities (listed with Bemeyal's statistics). The efreet can use *polymorph self* and *gaseous form* to return to their furnaces when wounded, and they will use *walls of fire* to block doorways. Even fire-resistant troops may take damage from these walls, as fire resisters do on the Prime Material plane. Naturally, the efreet will try to use their power to force mercenaries out of the safe areas created by fire-protection items.

Efreet

Efreet leaders (3): AC 2; MV 9"/24"; HD 10; hp 46 each (80 for Bemeyal); #AT 1; Dmg 3-24; THACO 10; CR 16"; SA *produce flame, pyrotechnics, enlarge, polymorph self, wall of fire, illusion*; SD *invisibility, gaseous form*, attacks based on normal fire do no damage, magical fire attacks are at -1 on "to hit" and damage dice; AL LE.

When the mercenaries control Bemeyal's furnaces, they can create one +1

weapon with ten worker-hours worth of work. By working three times this long, ten people can make the weapon +2, but this is the maximum possible bonus. These effects are not magical: they involve a special hardening of the steel. For purposes of this adventure, assume that the PCs can forge as many blades as they have workers and time for. Award PCs who acquire powerful weapons experience as if they found magical blades of that power.

With an army of workers, the PCs may make many powerful blades—but the mercenaries want them, too. PCs may take one weapon each. If they hoard more, their troops may revolt. Each unit checks discipline once for every extra weapon a PC takes, and if morale fails, the unit attacks its own leader. The mercenaries will also be extremely reluctant to abandon this forge. When PCs order them to go, each unit must make a discipline check at a +3 penalty. If this fails, the troops insist on forging more weapons, thus giving the efreet militias more time to arrive. So the PCs have two problems, getting in...and getting out.

FARASTU (TARRY) DEMODAND (1)

by Rick Swan

Terrain: Mountains
Total Party Levels: 20 (average 4th)
Total Magic X. P.: 1,400
Total gp X.P.: 8,898
Monster X.P.:
Kill: 4,408 Defeat: 3,306
Retreat: 1,102

Set Up

* Journeying through the mountains, you are approached for help by a frightened merchant. The merchant sent his team of mules ahead of him to cross a stone bridge. Halfway across, they fell and seemed to vanish before they hit the bottom. He is terrified that evil forces are at work and begs you to investigate.

* Senguine, a renowned magic-user, decided two days ago to inspect a stone bridge crossing a deep canyon that has long been rumored to be haunted. If the community could be convinced the bridge was safe, it could be used as a

short cut by travelers and merchants. He never returned. You are asked by city authorities to investigate.

The Lair

A hundred years ago, an ambitious magic-user named Loriford decided to build a stone bridge over a deep canyon between two high mountains. Linking the mountains would provide quick passage for merchants; he planned to charge a toll and become wealthy. Since building a bridge of this type was beyond his abilities, Loriford conjured up a farastu to help him, promising the farastu he could have the first 10 souls to cross the bridge. The farastu agreed. When the bridge was completed, Loriford sent 10 ducks waddling across the bridge to fulfill his part of the bargain. The farastu was not amused and killed Loriford.

The farastu's shator ruler was not amused either. To punish the farastu for his humiliation at the hands of a mortal, the shator ordered him to construct a bridge linking two of the worlds of Cathrys on the plane of Tarterus. A thick tar platform was laid between the worlds as a base for the bridge. The farastu was exiled to living in a dome on the platform while he finished the bridge.

Slippery Passage

The stone bridge is located in an isolated region between two mountain ranges. A winding path leads up the mountain to the bridge. The stone bridge is 10 feet wide and stretches 200 yards over a canyon that appears to be bottomless. PCs staring into the canyon can see nothing but darkness.

The middle 100 yards of the stone bridge act as if coated with an *oil of slipperiness*, thanks to a treatment by the farastu. The canyon below contains a vast conduit which leads to the plane of Tarterus. Any person or animal crossing the bridge and reaching the middle 100 yards has a 95% chance of slipping and falling in. Once a victim falls 100 feet, the conduit acts like a vacuum to suck him in. Similarly, any character approaching from below will be sucked into the conduit when he gets within 50 feet of it. The force of the conduit vacuum is irresistible by all normal means.

The Bridge of Bones

Anyone sucked through the conduit passes into Tarterus. Once there, the victim plummets about 100 yards through the air and lands directly on the bridge under construction by the farastu. The bridge is 500 miles long and is about 50 feet wide. Its surface is a sticky tar, similar to the substance naturally secreted by a farastu. When completed, the bridge will be entirely covered with the bones of victims who fall through the conduit. Right now, about 20 miles are covered with the bones and remains of humans and animals who've had the misfortune of crossing the stone bridge on the Prime Material plane. The farastu has a long way to go, but he has an eternity to finish it.

PCs sucked into the conduit fall onto the tarry surface. Falling PCs take 1d6 points of damage when they strike the hot tar and are stuck tight for 1d6 segments. Whether they free themselves or not, one round after they hit the surface, three fire mephits swoop in.

Fire mephits (3): AC 5; MV 12"/24"; HD 3+1; hp 17, 19, 21; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/1-3; THAC0 16; SA 15-foot flame jet (2-9 points of damage, half if saving throw is made), 5-foot square blanket of flame (4 points of damage, no saving throw allowed), touch causes 1 point of heat damage, *heat metal*, *magic missiles* (2), *gate* in another mephit (once per hour, 25% chance); AL LE.

The fire mephits are directed to kill new arrivals, a job they truly love. Once killed, the bones are put in place on the bridge by the farastu. The fire mephits attack the PCs with their flame breath, hovering just out of reach. When they have breathed three times, they attack with their claws. (If the PCs manage to avoid falling on the bridge by *flying* or by some other method, or if the PCs figure out a way to get here without being sucked into the conduit, the mephits still attack when they see them, chasing them as necessary.)

About 50 yards away, the farastu is at home in his iron dome. He ignores the battle as long as it looks as though the mephits are holding their own, but if things are going badly for them, he lumbers out of the dome and angrily flies over to join the attack.

Farastu: AC -1; MV 15"/30"; HD 11;

hp 55; #AT 3; Dmg 2-7/2-7/3-12; THAC0 10; SA *detect good*, *detect invisibility*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic* (twice per day), *ESP*, *fascinate*, *fog cloud* (three times per day), *gaseous form*, *invisibility*, *tongues*, *weakness*, all once per round unless indicated otherwise; SD tar-like skin sticks opponents and objects for 1-6 segments (25% chance opponent loses object, farastu gets +4 on next attack or opponent forfeits next attack), harmed by +1 weapons, immune to acid and poison, cold and fire causes half damage, can summon* 1-2 fellow demodands when in Tarterus (25% chance); MR 20%; AL CE.

* Note: Because this farastu is in exile, no others will come if summoned.

The farastu has no choice but to fight to the death. If he doesn't finish his bridge, his shator will kill him anyway. He attacks with his teeth and claws, using *fog cloud* and *gaseous form* to confuse the PCs, and attempting to stick them to his skin when possible.

If the mephits and farastu are destroyed, the PCs may search his dome lair, but will find nothing; all of his treasure was confiscated long ago by the shator. However, they may search the bones on the bridge. They find a total of 90 gp, 160 sp, a ruby pendant (worth 5,000 gp), a *sword +1*, and a *ring of feather falling*. They also find Sengine, barely alive. Sengine was a magic-user who attempted to investigate the mysteries of the stone bridge. City authorities will pay a reward of 3,000 gp for his safe return. Sengine can also answer any questions the PCs have about the bridge and what's happened.

Hovering about 200 feet in the air near the dome of the farastu is a silver conduit which leads back to the PCs' home Prime Material plane. It was through this conduit that the farastu journeyed to the Prime Material plane 100 years ago. PCs with a potion of *flying* or who can *fly* magically can get themselves and their companions through the conduit. Otherwise, if the PCs wait patiently, in a few hours the conduit drifts under the bridge, allowing the PCs to leap through and return home.

GITHYANKI (4)

by Rick Swan

Terrain: Mountains
 Total Party Levels: 20 (average 4th)
 Total Magic X.P.: 11,000
 Total gp X.P.: 10,500
 Monster X.P.:
 Kill: 3,474 Defeat: 2,606
 Retreat: 869

Set Up

* While hiking through the mountains, you meet a traveler who breathlessly tells you he spotted a dragon's egg in a cavern just ahead. You know of a collector who has a standing offer of a handsome reward for a dragon's egg.

* The local merchants guild says that traders no longer visit the city because of rumors of dragons in the mountains, fueled by the recent discovery of a dragon's egg in a mountain cave. They request your aid in investigating the truth of these rumors.

The Lair

An opening in a tall stone mountain range leads to a vast cavern nearly 100 yards in diameter. There are many rocky cliffs along the cavern walls, and the floor and ceiling are covered with massive stalagmites and stalactites. Just inside the cavern opening is a cliff that rises about 30 feet from the floor. A huge dragon's egg sits in plain sight on this cliff. About 50 feet farther in is another opening, this one about 20 feet in diameter. This opening leads to the subterranean lair of four githyanki fighters who occasionally make raids into the outlands in search of mind flayers and humans to destroy.

The humans in the area are unaware of the githyanki, but the mind flayers are. The githyanki recently succeeded in wiping out an entire mind flayer outpost, with the exception of one lone survivor. The survivor knows the location of the githyanki lair, but wisely has refrained from attacking them on their home ground. Unfortunately for him, he has been unable to lure them out.

Recently, the mind flayer stumbled across the infertile and abandoned egg

of a red dragon which gave him an inspired idea. Drawing upon his great intellect, the mind flayer created a conduit inside the egg from this Prime Material plane to his home in the Astral plane. Knowing the githyanki's great affinity for red dragons, the mind flayer has left the egg in plain sight of the lair. When the githyanki bring the egg into their lair, the mind flayer will thrust himself through the conduit and attack the githyanki by surprise.

The githyanki have spotted the egg. They suspect a trap, but they can't quite figure out what it could be. They want the egg badly and need someone expendable to check it out for them. That's where the PCs come in.

Discovery

As soon as the PCs approach the opening to the cavern, they spot the egg sitting on a cliff inside. Even a cursory examination verifies that it is indeed the egg of a red dragon. The thick shell is intact; it would take a sledge hammer to break it open. This is a very unlikely place for a dragon's egg, as there are no other signs of dragons anywhere around.

Hidden in the rocks above and keeping an eye on things is a githyanki fighter.

Githyanki: AC 0 (*splinted mail* +4); MV 12"; F3; hp 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10 (two-handed sword); THAC0 16; AL LE.

Like all of his kind, the githyanki despises humans and all humanoid races, but since he's been charged with luring guinea pigs to examine the egg, he intends to do his best to contain his feelings. When he sees the PCs, he comes down from his hiding place, greeting them cheerfully, and holding his arms wide to demonstrate friendship.

The githyanki attempts innocuous conversation with the PCs, asking them what they think about the egg and if they have any ideas where it came from. If the PCs say anything obvious, such as how unusual it is for an egg like this to be here, the githyanki's temper flares and he snarls, "Don't you think I know that, you stupid, filthy—" He cuts himself off, then smiles at them, apologizing for his rudeness. He eventually gets around to telling them that a dragon's egg has spe-

cial holy significance for his race; if he brings one back, his place in the afterlife is assured. (This is all nonsense, of course.) If the PCs would help carry it to his cave, he would reward them generously. To demonstrate his sincerity, he offers them two black pearls, worth 500 gp each. "There's plenty more where that came from," he says. If the PCs hesitate, the githyanki loses his temper again, but just as quickly recovers. "Forgive me," he says sheepishly, "I'm overly excited about this discovery."

If the PCs attack the githyanki, he pleads for mercy, defending himself only if the going gets rough. If things get really rough, he summons the rest of his partners (see statistics below), who try to convince the PCs of their sincerity, fighting only if necessary. If the PCs take the egg, the frustrated mind flayer attacks them at the first opportunity; if the PCs explore the githyanki lair, the githyanki project back to this plane and fight to the death.

If the PCs agree, the githyanki asks them to carry the egg, saying that he'd help, but his back is bad. As the PCs carry the egg, the githyanki watches nervously, obviously relieved when no traps are sprung.

The Trojan Egg

The githyanki leads them to the lair, a smaller cavern about 100 feet across. The cavern contains an elaborate castle made of stone; the githyanki constructed it to look like their homes in the Astral plane.

When the party enters, they are joined by three other githyanki. These githyanki are also smiling and thank the PCs for their help. The githyanki intend to kill them as soon as they're sure the egg is safe.

Githyanki (2): AC 0 (*plate mail* +4); MV 12"; F5; hp 34 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10 (+1 *two-handed sword*); THAC0 15; AL LE.

Githyanki leader: F6; hp 41; THAC0 13; all other statistics as above.

No sooner do the other githyanki appear than the egg begins to vibrate and crack. A moment later, it splits open and a mind flayer leaps out of the conduit inside.

Mind flayer: AC 5; MV 12"; HD 8+4; hp 52; #AT 4; Dmg 2 each; THAC0 12;

SA *psionic blast*; MR 90%; AL LE.

The startled githyanki panic, having no idea where the mind flayer came from or how many more there are. The githyanki shield themselves behind the PCs, then project themselves back to the Astral plane. The mind flayer is furious at the PCs' interference and attacks them, fighting to the death if necessary to avenge himself.

If the mind flayer is defeated, the PCs may search the castle to find 10 more black pearls (500 gp each), a miniature gold statue of the castle (worth 2,000 gp), a *ring of regeneration*, and a *rod of smiting*. However, five rounds after the battle is over, the githyanki return from the Astral plane to retrieve their treasure; if the PCs are still there, the githyanki will fight them to the death or until the PCs retreat.

The conduit in the egg dissipates into the earth along with the yolk once the shell is broken. However, the broken shell pieces are worth up to 2,500 gp to a collector.

GITHZERAI

by John Terra

Terrain: Limbo

Total Party Levels: 56 (average 7th)

Total Magic X.P.: 27,000

Total gp X.P.: 4,125

Monster X.P.: Variable

Set Up

* Thanks to an aberration in a plane traveling spell or device, the party lands in the chaos of a storm on Limbo. The weather prevents concentration needed for psionics, spells, or magical item activation. Desperate for shelter, the party sees this tower.

* A *geas* placed on the party by an evil wizard allied with githyanki requires them to go to this tower to find a missing *silver sword*.

The Lair

This is a githzerai outpost. If the party approaches the tower without concealment, the guards see them 150' away, challenge them and alert the rest of the tower.

The tower is a large cube, but the size appears to fluctuate, so accurate measurement is impossible. The tower has four levels, each 22' high. Access to the ground level is by a 10'-wide silver door that is *wizard locked* at 7th-level ability and has an *alarm* cast upon it. Access to upper levels is by a ladder in the middle of the room leading up to a trap door. The roof has a trap door that can be bolted from the inside and *wizard locked*.

If the party marches up, they are met by the captain, warlock, sergeant, zerth, and five fighters. They demand the party disarm. The two warriors on the parapets have ballista trained on the party. The "warheads" are glowing with a black light.

If the party agrees, they are escorted into the ground level. If not, the ballista operators let fly with one arrow every other round and melee starts. The defenders attempt to capture the party.

Parties that go peacefully are told that they are not really welcome here. They will be allowed to rest for four hours from the chaos outside, but then they must be on their way. If asked politely, water and a greyish paste are provided. The latter is food, tastes like chicken, and is very nourishing.

Level 1: This one big room contains a long table with two dozen chairs. A hearth is located opposite the door. The floor is covered in animal skins, and is comfortable.

Level 2: This room has nine 10'-wide stone cells along its perimeter. This is where the party is taken if they are captured. Three cells are occupied. The doors are locked and *wizard locked*, and are made of silver.

One contains four mind flayers another has a githyanki warrior. The last contains three green slaadi. All prisoners wear odd *silver necklaces* and are manacled to the wall. The slaadi ask for release, promising a service in exchange.

A sergeant, a zerth, and three fighters guard this floor. The zerth holds all the keys.

Level 3: This floor contains the 16 beds of the sergeants, zerths, and fighters. A curtained-off section hides the semi-private areas for the two warlocks. Swords and daggers line the walls in racks.

The warlocks share a set of spell

books. Their area also has a locked chest with 300 pp. Jars along the walls contain spell components.

The zerths each have their small spell books tucked in a chest under their beds. A sergeant, a zerth, and a warlock can always be found here, with the possibility of 1-4 fighters.

Level 4: This level is split into three rooms and a small corridor that contains the ladder. The left room in the supreme leader's. The door is locked and *wizard locked*.

The leader is usually found here, and will take a dim view of the party's intrusion. There is an alarm gong here, as well as his spell books and components.

A locked and *wizard locked* chest is trapped with a poison needle. It contains 250 pp, 2,000 gp, four beryls worth 500 gp each, and a potion of *storm giant strength*.

The room to the right is locked and belongs to the captain. He is rarely here. It contains a locked chest with 100 pp, 1,000 gp and an *obsidian steed*. A scroll stuck to the outside bottom of the chest is for *protection from demons*.

The center room is also locked, and is barren except for a simple mat. Sitting cross-legged on it is a githzerai monk in a trance.

The monk is actually keeping the place together by exerting his intelligence. He is unaware of the party's presence. If he is harmed, he loses his concentration and the place collapses into chaos. He has no treasure.

Roof: Contains four ballistae, one on each corner. The bolts have *Nystul's aura* cast on them, to look more dangerous than they are. There are always three fighters on guard here.

More details of typical githzerai lairs can be found in the *FIEND FOLIO*® tome.

Supreme Leader Geratjh: AC 4 (*ring of protection* +4 and 16 Dex); MV 12"; F4/MU7; hp 43; #AT 1; Dmg 3-10 (+2 *silver long sword*); THACO 18; SA spell use, psionics; MR 50%; AL CN; XP 900.

Geratjh is the harsh leader of this complex. He is calculating, and has taken prisoners in order to bargain for power. He has a *wand of fire* (34 charges). Under his bed is the Githyanki warrior's *silver sword*, a +3 *two-handed*

sword.

Captain Gurth: AC 4 (*leather* + 4); MV 9"; F6; hp 40; #AT 1; Dmg 3-10 (*silver long sword* + 2); THAC0 16; MR 50%; AL CN; XP 600.

Gurth is second in command and hates his leader. He knows that he is a better fighter than his so-called superior.

Warlocks (2): AC 8; MV 12"; MU5; hp 20 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5 (*daggers* + 1); SA spell use; MR 50%; AL CN; XP 305 each. These warlocks carry *wands of magic missiles*.

Sergeants (3): AC 5 (chain armor); MV 9"; F5; hp 30 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-9 (*long swords* + 1); THAC0 16; MR 50%; AL CN; XP 280 each.

Zerths (3): AC 5 (chain armor); MV 9"; F3/MU3; hp 17 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (*long sword*); THAC0 18; SA spells; MR 50%; AL CN; XP 165 each.

Fighters (10): AC 5 (chain armor); MV 9"; F2; hp 15 each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; THAC0 20; MR 50%; AL CN; XP 58 each.

Silver necklaces: These are rare items of githzerai magic. They nullify inherent powers, psionics and spells when placed on a victim. XP 500. Sale value: 4,500 gp.

Note that like the githyanki and their *silver swords*, the githzerai will launch recovery raids for the *necklaces*.

GREY SLAAD

by John Nephew

Plane: Limbo
 Total Party Levels: 66 (avg. 11th)
 Total Magic X.P.: 14,000
 Total gp X.P.: 10,000
 Monster X.P.:
 Kill: 10,994 Defeat: 8,246
 Retreat: 3,311

Set Up

* Journeying through (or lost in) Limbo, the characters discover the lair.

* A powerful wizard (or similar being) hires the PCs to acquire the symbol of the grey slaad Zdronvas. (Though the characters may only receive "Defeat" monster X.P., the reward in money and magic from their employer would easily make up for the difference.)

The Lair

Floating amidst the swirling, convoluted, ever-changing chaos-stuff of Limbo, the lair of Zdronvas might seem to be a sanctuary of order and sanity. It is a circular garden, 600 yards diameter, divided into six regions by stone paths. The whole appears much like a color wheel, with each region having flowers and foliage of the primary and secondary colors.

The paths radiate from the center of the garden, where there is a hexagonal building. Each of its six faces has a door. Upon entering any door, the characters will find themselves in the maze.

The Maze

A map of the maze would be useless because it is perpetually changing. Beyond the doors to the maze is a hallway. After 6d6 yards, the hallway comes to a T-shaped branching. Taking either way leads to an identical intersection, again after 6d6 yards. This process could go on forever. Even if the characters backtrack, they will only face more intersections, and corridors which may be different lengths than those taken when the party first passed that way. Nothing short of a *wish* will return the party to the maze's entrance.

As the characters travel the maze, random events may occur; check once per turn. An event occurs on a roll of 6 on 1d6. Roll 1d8 to determine the nature of the event (DMs are encouraged to expand on this list):

1. A horde of 100 blind, bright orange mice, squeaking loudly, drops from a hole in the ceiling and scurries away.
2. Loud music (rock, jazz, classical, country—DM's choice) begins to blare from nowhere. It stops abruptly after 1d10 rounds.
3. A *cloudburst* spell takes effect over the characters' heads.
4. From the substance of a wall near the party emerge 13 bugbears, which proceed to assault the party. Apart from being 1.5 feet high, aquamarine in color, armed with teaspoons, and having magic resistance, they may be treated as normal bugbears (AC 5; HD 3 + 1; hp 15 each; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; THAC0 16; SA surprise on 1-3; MR 25%; AL CE). They carry no treasure or items of value.

5. The floor of the passageway turns into a muddy bog for 3d10 yards. Various harmless, fluorescent, pin-striped, and plaid snakes, rats, lizards, and frogs slither and crawl in the muck. Curiously, though apparently filled with rotting matter, the swampy floor smells not unlike cheap cologne.

6. Three monkeys come running down the corridor, squealing with excitement; the last two are carrying a strange, metal machine (a typewriter), and the other carries a pile of papers. As they run by the party, the top sheet of paper flies off into the hands of a player character: it reads "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark." If the monkeys are attacked, they dissolve into haze.

7. Wildflowers suddenly sprout from the characters' ears. They can be easily removed.

8. The ceiling begins to bubble and boil, and splatters hot ooze on those beneath it. Characters under the boiling ceiling (which extends 2d10 yards in each direction) suffer 1-4 points of damage per round as the bubbling ooze burns them and then dissolves into the air. The boiling subsides after 2d4 rounds.

Escape from the maze is not a matter of *where* the characters go, but *how* they go. The imposition of order is what defeats the chaos of the maze. In practical terms, this is simply any pattern of movement carried out six times (e.g., six left turns, or left-right-left six times). For this reason the DM must keep track of the turns taken by the party until a pattern emerges (or, preferably, is intentionally created) and is repeated five times.

By the second repetition, Zdronvas will fear the characters are on their way to success. To thwart them, he'll come (walking through corridor wall which turns to gelatin for his passage) and attack until wounded. He will then escape as he came. If the characters continue the pattern, the slaad will continue to harass them.

Zdronvas, Grey Slaad: AC 1; MV 12"; HD 10 + 6; hp 74; #AT 3 or 2; Dmg 2-16/4-10/4-10 or 2 sword attacks; THAC0 10; SA once per round *fear*, *darkness*, *know alignment*, *infravision 60'*, *illusion*, *flame strike*, *wind walk*, *shape change* (slaad/man), *invisibility*, *ball of lightning* (damage 8d6 + 6); once per day *symbol of*

pain or fear, power word: blind, gate 1-3 grey slaadi (60% chance of success); SD immune to cold, disintegration; MR 55%; AL CN. In frog form, the slaad fights with claws and bite; in human form, appearing as a comely female, the slaad wields a sword of sharpness.

After the fifth repetition is carried through, the characters will be in a corridor leading directly to the Innermost Chamber.

Innermost Chamber

This appears as a plain, domed, gray room. There are five exits besides the one through which the players came; each is a one-way gate to another place in Limbo or another plane: Astral, Glad-sheim, Pandemonium, or Prime Material (via wormhole).

If Zdronvas is still alive, he will make his stand here. If defeat looks inevitable, he'll run through a random gateway to escape.

There are two piles of treasure. The larger one is actually chaos material which, if taken to another plane, turns into a random hostile monster. The second pile contains 5,000 gp, 1,000 pp, and a wand of conjuration.

ILDRISS (ELEMENTAL GRUE) (6)

by Deborah Christian

Terrain: Elemental Plane of Air
 Total Party Levels: 24 (average 4th)
 Total Magic X.P.: 1,300
 Total gp X.P.: 500
 Monster X.P.:
 Kill: 2,200 Defeat: 1,665
 Retreat: 555

Set Up

* An ildriss has recently been raiding the World Serpent Inn, snatching ale mugs and dishware, then disappearing through the door to the plane of Elemental Air. The elemental grue lashes out at patrons in its way, or who don't readily surrender their ale mugs. Mitchifer, proprietor of the inn, asks the party to investigate the nuisance and put a stop to the disturbances. He suggests they wait until the ildriss's next raid, and follow it

through the gate to the plane of Air.

* As the party travels through the plane of Elemental Air, an ildriss flies swiftly through their midst, grabbing an item or items which will prompt the party to follow it: a belt pouch, weapon, loose pack, etc. The ildriss flits away, heading directly toward an elemental pocket of earth in the distance.

The Lair

Pursuit

The creature's destination, a free-floating pocket of elemental earth, can be seen in the distance. The ildriss's form is visible on the plane of Air and can be followed without difficulty. Even though the elemental is likely to outpace party members, characters moving at a rate of 12" can reach the earth pocket in two turns.

If the ildriss is aware that it is being followed, it turns about in midflight and changes in order to run off its pursuers.

Ildriss (1): AC 2; MV 3" as rolling fog, 24" otherwise; HD 4; hp 25; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; THAC0 15; SA twirls in a misty form, striking with three fog-like tentacles which carry small particles causing abrasive wounds; attacks first in any round; surprises on 4 in 6; SD +2 weapon to hit; immune to air-based spells; air-based spells fail to function within 50' and effects are dispelled; AL NE.

Unless successfully attacked at a distance, the ildriss flies into and through the party at top speed, attacking as it does so. If the party fails to scatter during or after this attack, the ildriss gives this tactic up and flees to the earth pocket. If characters have scattered, the ildriss continues to attack, singling out individuals and striking as it flies by. If characters retreat, the elemental leaves them alone and departs. Otherwise, it flees for the earth pocket after losing half its hit points, or if it's injured before attacking the party.

The Elemental Pocket of Earth

The pocket of earth is an obloid 150 feet long and 50 feet wide. Half-built spires dot its surface, and natural caverns riddle the rock. The largest and most complete spire tops a hall made of glass and gold. The misty shapes of several ildriss

can be glimpsed in and around the hall; in the air 200 feet from the pocket hangs an electric-blue light in the form of a hook.

Characters knowledgeable about the outer planes may recognize the hook as the planar end of a *conjure elemental* spell. If all party members are ignorant of the hook's meaning, the DM should allow a magic-user to make an Intelligence check. If successful, the form's nature is recognized. Any characters touching the hook must save vs. spell or be affected by the *conjure* spell as explained on page 5 of the *Manual of the Planes*.

The wizard Felian of Everith caused this place to be built, intending to use the pocket and its buildings as a stop-over during his planar travels. The magic-user has compelled the ildriss and other elementals to aid in his abode's construction. Only the ildriss are there now, supplying the hall with its finishing touches. They cease work immediately to repel intruders who approach within 200 feet of the earth pocket. If their companion, whom the party has followed, is still alive, it aids the group.

Ildriss (5): hp 25 each. Other statistics as above.

The ildriss are of average intelligence, and fearful of the wizard who has enslaved them. They carry out their orders to protect his property and keep it secure, and do not communicate with interlopers. If they are pushed back by the party, the elementals take advantage of spires on the rock to dodge some characters and sneak up on others. There are three 100-foot-tall spires in the melee area; this number can be changed at the DM's option. If all of the ildriss are wounded, or if half lose half their hit points, the entire group falls back to the hall.

The Hall

The gold-and-glass hall is 50 feet long, 30 feet wide and 20 feet high. It is intended as shelter from the constant winds of this plane, and therefore has no open windows except near the top of the spire, and only one entrance. The ildriss have supplied the hall in preparation for Felian's expected arrival. They do their best to repel intruders from this place,

but if any three ildriss are killed, the remaining three attempt to escape. If prevented from leaving through the entrance portal, or from fleeing up the spire, they are cornered and fight to the death. If the adventurers are defeated, the ildriss do not pursue. If the ildriss are defeated and the hall plundered, Felian may wish to have revenge on the thieves. That is for the DM to decide.

In the hall are mugs and tableware stolen from the World Serpent Inn, mismatched furnishings, and odds and ends of clothing and jewelry. Items of interest to the player characters include a sapphire necklace (500 gp), a potion of *gaseous form*, and a *brooch of shielding*.

KUEI (1)

by Ray Winninger

Terrain: Desert

Total Party Levels: 60 (average 7th)

Total Magic X.P.: 0

Total gp X.P.: 0

Monster X.P.:

Kill: 977 Defeat: 521

Retreat: 303

Set Up

* The so-called "Sea of Dust" is a vast desert that separates the territories of two powerful rival clans. Passage across the desert is extremely hazardous. There is a well-known oasis almost exactly halfway across the desert, between the two rival territories. The size of the desert is such that it is almost impossible to cross without stopping at the oasis.

Approximately seventy-five years ago, the two clans separated by the Sea of Dust entered into a bloody war which lasted the better part of a decade. Though most of the main battles were fought in a third territory bordering the desert, both sides frequently sent raiding parties out onto the desert steppes as well.

The Lair

Many years ago, during the war, a pair of samurai were detached from their army and isolated in the desert. The samurai were sent out on a mission to poison the

midway oasis so that the rival raiding army could not use it to refresh its troops. One of the samurai was of the Nakatomi clan (the owners of the territory bordering the desert), and the other was of the allied Soga. During their mission, the samurai had their waterskin torn apart in a battle with a giant scorpion, leaving them with but a single bottle of water to last them all the way to the oasis. Just before the pair reached the desert's center, it became apparent that there was not going to be enough water for the both of them to survive. At this point (perhaps partially due to the strain of having gone without water for days under the harsh desert heat), the Soga samurai went insane and killed his Nakatomi ally so that he could have the entire bottle to himself, allowing the Soga to reach the oasis and eventually escape the desert alive. (Even if the desire still remained, he could not poison the oasis because only the Nakatomi samurai knew how to mix the proper poison out of the roots and berries found around the water hole.)

Because the Nakatomi samurai died due to the Soga's dishonorable action, he became a kuei spirit, and was permanently tied to the Prime Material plane until he could complete his unfulfilled mission.

As the party members are traveling through the desert, they come upon a dusty skeleton partially buried in the sand. In its hand, the skeleton is clutching an ancient parchment. This reads, in the tongue of Kara-tur, "Buntaro-san and Shoji-san, you are to proceed to the central oasis located deep within the Sea of Dust, and foul its waters such that Lord Ichi's massive raiding party will be unable to refresh itself. Bring honor to your clans and ancestors.—Uji." The parchment also bears a date (the current year minus 75). This is the skeleton of the Nakatomi samurai who was betrayed at this spot more than three decades ago.

If any of the party members disturbs the skeleton or the parchment in any way, he will become the target of a *possession* attempt by the kuei. If the attempt is successful, the kuei will not reveal its presence to the rest of the party for the time being. If the attempt is unsuccessful, the spirit attempts to pos-

sess each of the other party members in turn, until it has succeeded.

Kuei: AC -4; MV 18"; HD 6; hp 32; #AT 1; Dmg 1-12; THAC0 13; SA see *Oriental Adventures*, p. 124.

As the party continues to travel through the desert with one of its members unknowingly under the domination of the kuei, the *possessed* character discreetly begins drinking the party's water supply at an abnormally rapid rate. You may wish to give each of the other members of the party Wisdom checks to see if they notice their comrade's unusual consumption. The *possessed* character is drinking the water because the kuei is trying to satisfy the unbearable thirst that was its last memory prior to death. Unless one or more of the PCs notices this threat in time or the group is carrying an extraordinary amount of water or takes some other precaution, one or more of the party members are certain to run out of water five or six days before the group reaches the oasis or the desert's edge. If this happens, use the rules found in the *Wilderness Survival Guide* or the following simple system: for each day of travel in the desert without water a character must make a Constitution check. Failure indicates that the character instantly takes 1d6 damage from the intense heat.

The Oasis

It is probable that the party will be heading toward the oasis when they meet up with the kuei. If so, the creature does not reveal its presence until the group arrives at its destination. If not, the kuei uses its *possessed* victim to try to convince the other PCs to head for the oasis. If the other party members are not convinced, the spirit's *possessed* victim bolts away and heads for the oasis himself.

Once the kuei reaches the oasis, its *possessed* victim begins to mix a poison out of crushed berries and roots, which it then dumps into the watering hole. While mixing the poison, the kuei tries to be very discreet, meaning that the other PCs will notice only if they are keeping close tabs on their comrade's actions (or, perhaps, if they pass Wisdom checks). The poison is such that anyone looking at the water after the kuei has

added the poison can automatically recognize that the water is unsafe to drink. Anyone drinking the water must save vs. poison or die.

Once the kuei has poisoned the oasis it will have performed its mission, releasing it from the Prime Material plane with a great flash (its *possessed* victim will remain unconscious for 1d3 hours after the kuei departs). If, however, there is a member of the Soga clan in the party (substitute clan names from your own campaign if you wish), the spirit remains long enough to attempt to kill the Soga(s) to exact vengeance for his clan brother's actions seventy-five years ago.

Treasure

There are no real items of value to be found. If, however, the players recognize the kuei's threat in time and successfully deal with the creature, you may wish to reward them by placing a few valuable trinkets around the oasis.

MARID (1)

by Bill Slavicsek

Terrain: Elemental Plane of Earth
 Total Party Levels: 48 (average 8th)
 Total Magic X.P.: 12,250
 Total gp X.P.: 80,842
 Monster X.P.:

Kill: 10,000 Defeat: 6,500

Retreat: 2,400

Set Up

* While traveling the elemental plane of Earth, the PCs happen upon a large water pocket filled with wonders that demand exploration.

* A dao from the elemental plane of Earth enters the World Serpent Inn to hire a group of adventurers to rid his domain of a geniekind who has moved in.

* There is said to be a place upon the elemental plane of Earth where a coral castle floats in majestic glory, filled with treasures and wonders beyond imagining. What's more, one's fondest wish can be granted if one can defeat its ruler.

The Lair

Padisha Alahad wanted to rule over his marid brothers. But his chaotic evil tendencies and his disregard for his people's independent nature led to a war that rocked the elemental plane of Water. Alahad lost, and as punishment he was banished from his home, stripped of his titles and lands.

Now he resides in a water pocket upon the elemental plane of Earth, plotting his plots and planning his plans. He schemes of a triumphant return to his own plane when the time is right and his powers have reached their fervent peak. Until then, Alahad is content to shape this plane to his image, to battle its occupants as he hones his skills at war. The marid especially enjoys tormenting the minor dao lord who ruled this area unchallenged until Alahad moved in.

The Coral Path

Upon entering the water pocket, adventurers see a watery kingdom filled with phosphorescent currents, shell and coral sculptures, and all manner of sea life. Additionally, a path of coral leads to a castle of the same material. The vibrant reds, yellows, pinks, and purples of the sea growth glow, illuminating the watery depths in magical light.

The coral is actually the first defense of Alahad's fortress. No matter what route the PCs take, the path and castle are always in front of them. As PCs walk along the path, the sharp coral cuts for 1d6 points of damage. Then, without warning, the path twists and entwines the travelers, causing 6d6 points of damage for any who fail to save vs. petrification. While those caught by the coral attempt to free themselves (a Strength check), the path's guardians attack. Twelve *ixitxachitl* rise out of the surrounding coral to battle trapped adventurers.

Ixitxachitl (12): AC 6; MV 12"; HD 1+1; hp 7; #AT 1; Dmg 3-12; THACO 18; SA *cause light wounds, protection from good*; AL CE.

The Castle

Alahad's home is a chaotic wonderland, decorated with a hint of evil. The coral halls and corridors form a living aquari-

um where sea life of every description thrives. Sea shell mosaics cover walls, floors, and ceilings, depicting the powers and glories of the marid's dastardly existence. Each room is filled with a different colored water, creating exotic seascapes from different planes. Some have waters of rainbow hues that change color as the currents flow by.

The first sign of occupation the PCs encounter is a majestic bedroom. Couches of kelp and seaweed float here beside a bed made from a giant shell. Four young women, actually nereids, tumble and lounge upon the living furniture. They are Alahad's harem, but cannot resist using their charms on any males that happen by.

Nereids (4): AC 10; MV 12"; HD 4; hp 24; #AT nil; Dmg nil; SA spit, *control water*; SD kiss, mesmerize men; AL C. Alahad owns these nereids' shawls, thus controls them utterly. They are shy, flighty, but love to work their spells on men. Men are incapable of causing them harm, but will watch their flirtatious antics with growing desire. Regardless of spells or devices used to breathe in this realm, a nereid's kiss causes instant drowning if a save vs. breath weapon at -2 fails. If it succeeds, the PC finds ecstasy. But getting that close alerts the harem's protector—a water elemental.

Water elemental: AC 2; MV 18"; HD 8; hp 58; #AT 1; Dmg 5-30; THACO 12; SA nil; SD +2 weapon to hit; AL N.

The Marid

"Born of the ocean, currents as muscles, pearls as teeth." Of this is a marid made, and Alahad is no exception. Strong, handsome, and utterly crazy, Alahad sees intruders as playthings to use, abuse, and ultimately destroy.

Alahad the marid: AC -2; MV 24"; HD 13; hp 102; #AT 1; Dmg 8-32; THACO 9; MR 25%; AL CE. Twice per day Alahad can *detect evil/good, detect invisibility, detect magic, become invisible, assume liquid form, polymorph self, purify water*; seven times per day he can *assume gaseous form, lower water, part water, create a wall of fog, bestow water breathing for 1 day*; he can always *create water, water walk*; once per year he can *alter reality*.

Alahad has two pet sea lions constantly at his side.

Sea lions (2): AC 5 (head)/3 (body); MV 18"; HD 6; hp 60; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-12; THAC0 13; AL N.

This marid ignores lesser beings unless they enter his feast hall at an inopportune time. The PCs should barge into the hall (unknowingly) just as Alahad's meal is served. Then the contests begin. Alahad loves contests of strength, eating, drinking, magic, and riddles. He is a champion tale-teller, weaving stories that emphasize his power and majesty. All through his lofty speeches, Alahad belittles the PCs. He calls them creeks, stagnant puddles, and other marid insults.

It is a capital offense to offend a marid, and Alahad is easily offended. Did the male PCs look at his brides? Ignore his brides? Kill his servants? Insult his chaotic decorations? Any of these acts offend the egotistical and crazed Alahad. (Female PCs, at least the pretty ones, are likely harem candidates.)

Treasure

Alahad's treasure can be found throughout the castle. He has a fortune consisting of 80,842 gp, a *ring of djinni summoning* and a *ring of protection +2* (which he wears), a *cubic gate*, and a *scimitar +3*.

MODRONS (4)

by John Terra

Terrain: Astral Plane
Total Party Levels: 60 (average 10)
Total Magic X.P.: 9,650
Total gp X.P.: 8,300
Monster X.P.:
Kill: 17,032 Defeat: 12,774
Retreat: 4,258

Set Up

* The party encounters a 20-sided rock 150' in diameter. Someone remembers a rumor of four riches guarded inside such a rock (actually, it's four *wretches!*).

* The party is sent by some shedu to search for their missing brother rumored to be in an odd rock. A reward of 3,000 gp and a treasure map is offered.

The Lair

This is a jail guarded by nonatons. Four beings are jailed for breaking the strict laws of Nirvana.

Touching a side of the odd rock causes 8d6 points of shock damage; a save vs. spell halves this. Give the party a cumulative 5% chance per attempt to find the entrance, disguised by *illusion* to resemble a wall.

Touching the correct side breaks the *illusion*, but reveals a *symbol* of fear. If the entire party succumbs to fear, they have only a 10% chance of finding the jail again.

The entrance leads into a tunnel 30' wide and high and 90' long, and ends in a wall of shimmering yellow. The yellow barrier is designed to allow only lawful beings to enter. Others making an attempt must save vs. magic or be *paralyzed* for 1d4 turns.

As soon as any member of the party successfully crosses the barrier, they yellow wall vanishes, as it can confine only eight beings at once. The entire party can now see a perfectly spherical room 70' in diameter, with four alert nonatons on guard duty.

Bound in glowing platinum chains are a shedu, an opinicus, a githyanki and a succubus, the latter *shape changed* into an attractive young woman. The latter two plea for release. Due to their positions, spells cannot be used to pinpoint whether any of the prisoners are evil.

The modrons politely but firmly tell the party to leave, this being none of their affair. By Primus' order, no visitors are allowed.

One modron holds a scroll, which contains the spell to recreate the yellow wall thrice more. It is in common and can be cast by anyone.

If asked politely and a reaction vs. the speaker's Charisma is positive, the modrons explain that this is a jail for those who break a law in Nirvana, which is inexcusable on a plane devoted to the principle of perfect law.

The chains nullify the prisoners' powers. All have been sentenced to 500 years, though none will age during their terms.

The "girl" bursts into tears and says that those in chains are the true modrons. The apparent modrons are

really slaad who broke out, but had to wait for an outsider to drop the barrier. The slaad supposedly polymorphed the "true" modrons to their present forms.

She also says that the alleged shedu and opinicus are *charmed* always to lie. The real modrons strongly deny this and tell the party to leave.

The shedu and the opinicus agree with the succubus, saying that they are *polymorphed* modrons and that the woman is telling the truth. With any luck, the party will see that the shedu is giving them a vital clue. He's playing the succubus' game, so if the party believes her, they will know that the prisoners are not modrons.

The githyanki for his part declares that there is a chest of treasure for the party if they free them. Sure enough, in an open iron chest, the hilt of a sword, a few bottles, rings, and the tip of a wand jut out from a pile of gems and gold coins.

The shedu will gauge whether or not the party believes the succubus. If so, make all his statements contrary. If not, let him speak straight. He wants to show them that he is a lawful being, and though he does not agree with the spirit of the law, he will obey the letter of it and serve his sentence.

If the party refuses to go, the modrons attack. There will be severe alignment problems if a lawful character joins in against them.

If even one prisoner is freed, the chains fall off all the prisoners. The succubus will kiss her rescuer at least once before the shedu and opinicus react. A pitched battle between good and evil will certainly break out.

Nonatons (4): AC 0; MV 18"/18"; HD 11 + 11; hp 55 each; #AT 9; Dmg 1-6 (x9); THAC0 9; SA spell use; SD +2 weapon to hit; MR 20%; AL LN; XP 4,258 each.

Haramin the shedu: AC 4; MV 12"/24"; HD 9 + 9; hp 49 each; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; THAC0 10; SA/SD psionics; AL LG; XP 2,958.

Fuddle the opinicus: AC -2; MV 21"/30"; HD 7 + 7; hp 42; #AT 4; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6/1-6; THAC0 12; SA clerical spell use, glowing gaze; SD never surprised; AL CG; XP 1,275

Tara the succubus: AC 0; MV 12"/18"; HD 6; hp 40; #AT 2; Dmg 1-3/1-3; THAC0 13; SA energy drain, spell-like powers; SD +1 weapon to hit; MR 70%;

AI CE; XP 590.

Vithar the githyanki: AC 0 (+4 *splint*); MV 9"; HD 8; hp 45; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-10 (+3); THAC0 14; AL LE; XP 1,425. This Githyanki is an 8th-level fighter.

Treasure: 4300 gp, 13 100-gp rubies, 22 500-gp emeralds, a *silver sword* +3 conjuring to the githyanki, a *wand of conjuration* (34 charges), an *elixir of life*, a *pearl of wisdom*, and a *peript of proof vs. poison* (+3). A raid will be launched by the githyanki to recover the *silver sword* if taken.

Tara will attempt to *gate* in help, as will the modrons. Vithar will lunge for his sword and attempt to kill any spellcasters he sees. Tara will try to kiss PCs to drain them. Fuddle and Haramin will defend the PCs. The modrons concentrate first on defeating Tara and Vithar.

Should the evil creatures be killed or subdued, the shedu voluntarily resumes his term, though Fuddle giggles mischievously and attempts to flee the place. The modrons may make the party chase him, which could lead to all sorts of new adventures.

Heartless DMs may wish to penalize the party by giving negative XP values for creatures that get away.

The modrons may even imprison the PCs for 1d4 centuries for their interference!

PLANETAR

by Ray Winninger

Terrain: Jungle (Seven Heavens)

Total Party Levels: 110 (average 19th)

Total Magic X.P.: 10,000

Total gp X.P.: 0

Monster X.P.:

Kill: 65,040 Defeat: 42,000

Retreat: 14,003

Set Up

* In an isolated section of Chronias, the seventh heaven, lies a vast jungle which is home to Vishnu and Surya (the Indian deities of light and the sun) and their followers. Vishnu and Surya each have colossal palaces hidden deep within the jungle.

Unlike any other mythos, the Indian deities are each a collection of individual aspects rather than a complete unified

entity (Vishnu, for instance, is the deity of light, truth, knowledge, justice, and mercy). Each of the gods and goddesses can display many different personalities, depending upon which of their particular aspects is dominant at the time they are encountered (Vishnu can be fiery and hounded while he is the god of justice, meek and forgiving when he is the god of mercy). Likewise, many of the deities have special followers that represent or cooperate with one or more of their individual aspects. The deities' various aspects are often called avatars, and the gods are capable of allowing several of their avatars to exist at once as separate beings.

The Lair

Sattiyamasagraha, a planetar and one of Vishnu's powerful servants, resides in an elaborate stone shrine on the fringe of the jungle. Sattiyamasagraha serves Vishnu's aspect as the god of knowledge. Vishnu has charged him with the task of constantly keeping watch over the multiverse and recording as many of its secrets as possible. The planetar observes the various planes and demi-planes with the aid of the *pearl of the infinite reaches*, a powerful magical item which was placed in his keeping by Vishnu. As he collects knowledge, Sattiyamasagraha records it by making bas-relief inscriptions upon the infinite walls of his shrine.

The Shrine

From the outside, Sattiyamasagraha's shrine appears to be a huge octagon sculpted out of a single massive hunk of jade. Each side of the octagon appears to be approximately thirty feet across, and the entire structure is topped off by a grand pyramidal roof of ivory and rare woods. Access to the shrine is provided by a single door, molded in solid gold (due to its weight, this door is extremely difficult to open—treat it as though it were *wizard locked*). On the door are several raised reliefs depicting Vishnu in his five aspects (god of truth, light, mercy, justice, and knowledge). A sage or cleric worshipping the Indian deities will easily recognize the nature of the reliefs.

The first thing that anyone entering the shrine notices is that the structure is many times larger on the inside than it appeared from the outside. In fact, the

inside of Sattiyamasagraha's shrine lies on a tiny demi-plane slightly removed from the Seven Heavens, and has an infinite interior area. The interior walls appear to be constructed of sandstone, and running all along the walls are exquisite bas-relief inscriptions.

The infinitely long winding corridors of the shrine make movement within the structure confusing and difficult. The layout of the corridors is so confusing that any party moving about in the shrine will tend to walk around in circles endlessly until the party leader is able to pass an intelligence check, in which case the group can move to a new area. Another successful Intelligence check is required to move out of this area into another, and so on. There are an infinite number of such areas within the shrine. Every time the party enters a new area, roll 1d12. A roll of 1 indicates that the party has stumbled into Sattiyamasagraha's grand chamber.

Sattiyamasagraha, the planetar: AC -7; MV 15" /48" //24"; HD 16+; hp 144; #AT 3; Dmg by weapon +7; THAC0 1; SA see *MM2*, pp. 101-102.

In the grand chamber, the planetar sits and views the other planes and dimensions by staring into the *pearl of the infinite reaches*. Each time he learns a new fact or discovers something of interest, he retreats into the chamber and carves a bas-relief depicting the knowledge into the wall (taking about three hours).

If and when the party members confront him in his chamber, Sattiyamasagraha will ask them if they have brought him any new knowledge. If so (DM's discretion), he permits them to stay and wander around the complex. If not, he attempts to forcibly remove them. If the party members manage to slay the planetar, his corpse will be re-animated immediately by Vishnu as an avatar of the deity's aspect as god of justice (see the notes on avatars on page 75 of *Legends and Lore*). Treat the corpse as though it had double the planetar's hit points and all of the creature's normal abilities. The avatar will not rest until justice has been served and the party is destroyed.

Treasure

There is no monetary treasure in Sattiyamasagraha's lair, but clever PCs will be able to recover much of great value.

Carved into the wall are reliefs depicting a good portion of all the knowledge in the multiverse. The reliefs are laid out in a certain set pattern, so that anyone seeking the answer to a specific question who can pass an Intelligence check can find the way directly to the proper inscriptions within the shrine. Note that the inscriptions are all in a strange hieroglyphic language and cannot be interpreted without *comprehend languages* or a similar spell. Anyone passing an Intelligence ability check can also duplicate the results of a *contact other plane*, *legend lore*, or *augury* spell by finding and reading the proper inscriptions. Satyamasagraha might also be persuaded to swap pieces of knowledge with the PCs on a one-for-one basis.

If the PCs manage to slay the planetar, they can recover his *pearl of the infinite reaches*. Anyone gazing into the *pearl* (six inches in diameter) who is able to pass a Wisdom check can view a random location within the multiverse for 1d6 hours.

P'OH (6) AND GENERAL OX (1)

by Thomas M. Kane

Terrain: Nirvana
 Total Party Levels: 30
 Total Magic X. P.: Variable
 Total gp X. P.: 5,000
 Monster X. P.: (see below)
 Kill: 2,430 Defeat: 1,823
 Retreat: 608

Set Up

* Shukenja can no longer cast *reward* spells—it seems that the spirits have no more gifts to give. The famous Denki temple offers 1000 ch'ien to adventurers who will visit the Celestial Bureaucracy's workshops on Nirvana and restore their efficiency.

* While the PCs are pursuing a p'oh, they learn that it has taken refuge in a workshop on Nirvana.

The Lair

Dairika Ox, General of the Animal Kingdom, captured a band of p'oh and one common oni, but he did not want to kill

the wretched creatures. It seemed more lawful to reform them. So the general took them to his factory on Nirvana, where gifts from the gods are made, and ordered the spirits to redeem themselves with diligent labor. General Ox appointed the common oni foreman, because of the creature's lawful alignment, and made the other prisoners toil under him. The evil spirits, of course, hated to work. So they sabotaged the workshop in a way that lets them deny it.

During a rest period, one p'oh entered the machinery, removed a vital gear, and began cleaning it. After some time, the foreman noticed. He ordered the p'oh to shut the machine's trap door at once and stop tinkering with things. The p'oh obeyed. Naturally, he never replaced the gear. After the rest, the crew found that their machines would not operate, and the p'oh explained this plot to the oni, warning the foreman that he would look like either a fool or a conspirator if the story was ever revealed. The gullible oni committed *harikari* in humiliation. Thus, the p'oh can claim that he was ordered not to replace the gear, and a *detect lie* spell will not contradict him. The p'oh can claim that he would never disobey the wishes of the dead. Without the stolen gear, this workshop can no longer draw power from Nirvana's wheels and has to be operated with a treadmill. General Ox himself consented to run on the mill, to set a good example. This lesser source of power makes the factory run much slower, giving the p'oh time to loaf and laugh at General Ox.

The workshop looks like a bewildering array of gears, forges, and wooden superstructure to PCs. A series of bamboo rollers pushes products past each worker, like a modern assembly line. There are six workstations, and at each one, a p'oh hammers, pinches or otherwise adjusts an intricate framework. Every hour, one random magical item, rolled from the table on pages 131-133 of OA, is created and instantly *teleported* to one of the many shukenja who have cast a *reward* spell. If anyone attempts to steal these items, all rewards vanish, and the thief suffers an ancient *curse*. Soft couches have been placed at certain points between workstations. A banner hangs over each one, which instructs the p'oh to "Work and Rest In Harmony."

P'oh (6): AC 4; MV 6"; HD 5; hp 25

each; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; THAC0 15; SA drain one point of constitution per hit, create drought; SD +1 weapon to hit; AL CE.

General Ox runs a treadmill deep inside the machinery, isolated from the workshop. He keeps his armor and mace in a vast armor chest beside the treadmill. If the PCs tell General Ox that production has not been adequate, he becomes quite upset and asks a character to whip him, so that he will turn the treadmill faster.

General Ox (1): AC -8/-1 without armor; MV 18"/21" (MC:A); HD 36; hp 183; #AT 2; Dmg 2-12/2-20; SA *ESP*, *comprehend languages*, *tongues*, *detect magic*, *know history*, spells of 29th-level *wu jen*, *cloud trapeze* for 1,000 people (1/day), +4 on "to hit", *mace* +5 which casts one *meteor swarm* per day, *summon* 10d4 gozu oni; SD *regenerate* 5 hp/round, +5 weapon to hit, *astral protection*, *etherealness*, *shape change*, *teleport* without error; MR 80%; AL LN.

Investigators can find the following bits of evidence:

1. All couches are warm with body heat, since the workers spend most of their time lounging there.

2. A trap door which leads into the machinery has dry cracked areas on it, which match one p'oh's claws.

3. This same p'oh has the missing gear hidden in his headband.

4. A white banner on one wall commemorates the death of a common oni, who had been foreman but committed suicide after the machine was sabotaged.

While the PCs investigate, they notice that one p'oh is doing two jobs, dashing back and forth between both workstations. If questioned, he claims to enjoy working so much that he begged to work two posts. Actually, one of his comrades is *invisibly* destroying evidence; he will eliminate one clue every 1-6 turns. This creature's *invisibility* power works on Nirvana because it is an innate ability, not a magical spell.

When the PCs realize what has happened, they face another problem...to tactfully convince General Ox that he has been tricked. Unless the PCs can politely prove what the p'oh have done, General Ox may chase the adventurers away. However, if the PCs can prove the workers guilty, General Ox will assign

them to capture the rebellious spirits. Award the party as much experience as they would get for killing the p'oh if they solve the mystery, and give them one honor point each. Double that experience if they also capture the spirits. Once the p'oh have been subdued, General Ox will replace the gear, and when he has found new workers, each PC receives an especially useful reward. DMs may choose these gifts to suit their campaigns. *Weapons +1* are recommended.

SPINED DEVIL (1)

by Deborah Christian

Terrain: Nine Hells or Hades

Total Party Levels: 36 (average 6th)

Total Magic X.P.: 0

Total gp X.P.: 1,000

Monster X.P.:

Kill: 3,520 Defeat: 2,640

Retreat: 880

Set Up

* While traveling through the Nine Hells or Hades, the party sees an odd sight. Flying towards them is a spined devil, pursued at a distance by several others. The devil sees the adventurers and veers closer, nearing quickly.

The Lair

The Courier

A spined devil sometimes called Slow-Wing is a courier for Berecus, one of Tiamat's lesser lieutenants. Slow-Wing has fallen steadily into disgrace, his untimely deliveries of messages a growing irritation to his master. Berecus has decided to teach Slow-Wing a lesson, and has dispatched several other spined devils to pound some motivation into the surly courier.

Forewarned by the sudden approach of devils formerly unfriendly to him, the ever-suspicious Slow-Wing has resolved to flee to Gehenna as he had long planned. Pursued by spined devils, the courier heads for the plane of exiles, the message pouch and all. Sighting the party, Slow-Wing decides impulsively to use them to protect himself and delay or repel his pursuers.

Slow-Wing (spined devil): AC 3; MV 6"/18" (MC: C); HD 3+3; hp 20; #AT 1 and/or 2; Dmg 1-8 (military fork) and/or 1-4/1-4 (talon rake); MR 25%; THACO 16; SA up to 12 spines can be loosed when flying over an opponent, each inflicting damage as a dart on a successful hit and causing flammable materials to burn; in melee, from 1-4 spines can wound an opponent if the devil chooses to hurl itself upon an antagonist; hits are automatic, no other attack is possible; spells, once per round: *affect normal fires, change self, command, produce flame, scare, summon* once per day barbed devil (5% chance); SD spines burst into flames when pulled loose; AL LE.

As the spined devil nears the party, he makes no threatening motions. He stops within hailing range and asks the party to escort him to the border of Gehenna, less than an hour's travel away. He promises rich reward if the adventurers keep him safe from the devils that pursue him, now visible 500 yards behind. The devil and the party members have only three rounds in which to negotiate before the pursuers close.

If the party is at least willing to listen to Slow-Wing, the devil is quite convincing. He pleads, begs, and bargains in whatever manner is most flattering to the party and most likely to win their agreement. He promises them great riches, claiming to know where valuables are cached on the Gehenna border. If this offer is insufficient to win the party's aid, Slow-Wing offers as his final bargaining chip a map that he carries. It shows the location of a gate which leads to the Prime Material plane. In fact, the devil knows of no cache of riches, but the map is real and is in his message pouch. He is extremely reluctant to part with it before making his way to safety, but does so if it seems the only way to win the party's aid.

If there is still indecision, Slow-Wing implores the party leader, saying "Help!" This is actually the spell *command*, and is Slow-Wing's last effort before he continues his flight. This is not very obvious spell-casting, and the DM should make the character's saving throw secretly so players are not alerted to the event.

No Deal

If the party refuses to deal with the spined devil, or if characters attacked Slow-Wing when he talked to them, the devil continues his flight. If time allows, he casts *scare* at the party, then flies overhead, angrily releasing a flurry of spines and attempting to rake in passing any target that seems vulnerable.

Half of the ten pursuing spined devils continue after their quarry, while the other half pause to interrogate the party about what just passed with Slow-Wing.

Spined devils (10); statistics as given above. The five who remain to question the party are brusque and bullying. They use *command* and *charm person* to elicit information. If these devils are answered, they leave to continue pursuit. However, if the party has obvious valuables or doesn't look very fearsome, the devils may return after they've punished Slow-Wing. They will *teleport* to this location, appearing unexpectedly in their midst if the party is still here in an hour.

If attacked, or if they have seen Slow-Wing attacked, the devils fight by *scaring* and hunting down panicked victims. Failing this, they use spine attacks (as missiles) from the air before engaging in melee.

If these spined devils fail to join their companions within the hour, the other five devils *teleport* to this location at the end of that time. Once evidence of slain devils is found, they track down and fight the party with the tactics described above.

Escort to the Border

If the PCs agree to help Slow-Wing, they are attacked by the ten pursuing spined devils with the tactics described above. In addition, they may *teleport* unexpectedly to take advantage of their mobility and surprise, appearing in the midst of the party, behind them, and so on. As these devils close, Slow-Wing cowers in the middle of the party of adventurers, attempting to take shelter behind their numbers. Half of the devils try to grab Slow-Wing and fly off with him. The other five devils act to distract the group. The spined devils will not fatally injure Slow-Wing, although they have nothing against killing adventurers.

If the party gets Slow-Wing to the bor-

der, the spined devil attempts to fly away without giving them the map. If the party acquires his pouch, they find within it the map to the planar gate, a 1,000 gp value (see also the babau lair in this book).

ULTRODAEMON (2)

by Thomas M. Kane

Terrain: Lower Planes (Khalas)

Total Party Levels: 50

Total Magic X.P.: 7,750

Total gp X.P.: 8,800

Monster X.P.

Kill: 22,138 Defeat: 16,603

Retreat: 5,535

Set Up

* After a PC has flagrantly violated some alignment code, the party meets an old hermit who stares at them and says, "Fools! If you deny the gods, who will protect you?" Then one of these ultrodaemons summons the PCs to Khalas, the first layer of Gehenna.

* While PCs are exploring the Lower Planes, they wander into the domain of these daemons.

The Lair

Two ultrodaemons, Nacrue and Envor, live on a ledge which juts from Gehenna's unending cliff, where they amuse themselves by trapping creatures from other planes and gambling on which victims can survive longest. The PCs are their latest prisoners. Secretly divide the party into two equal groups: one for Nacrue and one for Envor. These daemons play their "game" by waiting until all the members of one team die, and then whichever daemon selected the surviving team gets to keep the party's treasure. Envor plays only out of lust for riches, while Nacrue cares nothing about loot—he simply loves to compete and win. Each daemon has a stack of prizes from previous games. Nacrue owns three fire opals worth 1000 gp each, 500 pp, and one scroll of *protection from demons*. Envor's stack includes 600 pp, a scroll of *protection from devils*, a *mace of disruption* from the Prime Material Plane, and a *ring of fire resistance*.

/15" (MC:C); HD 14 + 28; hp 105, 119; #AT 2; Dmg 2-8/2-8; THAC0 8; SA *hold person* gaze, *fear* touch, *charm person* or *monster*, *ESP*, *clairvoyance*, *clairaudience*, *illusion*, *suggestion*, *mislead*, *magic jar*, *telekinetic* 6,000 gp weight, *summon*, *wall of fire* (1/day), *symbol* (1/day), *blade barrier* (1/day); SD 110%; MR to first-level spells, 105% to second-level spells, 100% to third-level spells, etc., affected by certain attack forms: acid (half damage), cold (half), electricity (full), magical fire (half), gas (full), *magic missile* (full), enchanted iron and silver (full), poison and paralysis (none); AL NE.

When the PCs arrive, they find themselves on a precipitous cascade of warm, oily water, lighted from above by a red glare. Characters may climb up or down, at 12' per round, or twice that speed for thieves. Climbers must roll against their Climbing Rating every time they move 100' to avoid slipping. The CR is 80% for most characters, or equal to the climb walls skill for a thief. To stop from slipping, characters must drop whatever they hold and roll against their CR again, with a chance of success equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ their chance of climbing. If this roll also fails, the climber tumbles downslope at 600' per round. After tumbling 20', the victim suffers 1-6 points damage for every additional ten feet fallen.

In combat on this slope, the higher fighter gains a +1 and the lower suffers a -1 on "to hit" rolls. Wherever a character suffers damage in battle, he must roll against his climbing rating or tumble. The WSG contains more information on climbing techniques and proficiencies.

The waterfall soaks everything the PCs carry, damaging unprotected scrolls and other items. Any character that drinks of this flow must save vs. spells or pass into a coma for 1d10 turns, treated as the spell *feign death*. Nacrue and Envor live 3,000' below the PCs, on a mile-long ledge. Characters that approach the daemons will hear them whispering, boasting about "their team", and reminiscing about previous gambles. Any character that falls to this ledge suffers 1-6 points of impact damage for every 10' fallen. If the victim survives, Nacrue uses *fear* to chase him or her back upslope. The waterfall is only 500' wide, and dry stone lies on either

side of it, where characters may climb twice as fast, with no chance of falling, except in combat.

When PCs discover the relative safety of the dry cliff, Nacrue summons six steam mephits to enliven his "game". These creatures fly past the PCs, firing their hot rainstorms and breath weapons. One wears earplugs and carries a *chime of hunger*, which he rings at the party. This specially enchanted *chime* compels victims to drink as well as eat. Once each mephit has taken damage, they all fly down to Nacrue and demand a platinum piece from each PC. Then the mephits leave, calling the PCs names such as "chesspawns" and "poker chips". Each mephit carries ten platinum pieces of pay from previous "games".

Steam mephits (6): AC 7; MV 12"/24" (MC:B); HD 3 + 3; hp 17 each; #AT 2; Dmg 1-4/1-4; THAC0 16; SA breathe every 2 rounds for 1-3 points of damage and 50% chance of stunning for one round, boiling rainstorm for 2-12 points damage (1/day), *contaminate water*; SD touch causes one point damage and 50% chance of stunning for one round; AL LE.

After the mephits have left or been defeated, Envor begins to yearn for some magical item a PC carries. He decides to cheat. Envor leaves Nacrue, swoops down amid the party, and separates his "team" from Nacrue's, using his *hold person* gaze, *suggestions*, and *fear*. Then he draws a *symbol* of hopelessness among Nacrue's PCs, and orders his own team to "strike while the iron is hot". After this, Envor returns to his ledge, and his companion begins to suspect what has happened. Nacrue flies to the characters and uses *illusion* to make Envor's team look like a group of mephits, hoping that his PCs will attack them.

This cheating may destroy the party or save it. The PCs might easily provoke the monsters into fighting each other, or, even better, they could secretly collude with one daemon and arrange a bargain in which they make one monster seem to win, in return for being *teleported* home. A strong party might even fight the daemons and take their treasure. Since neither daemon will jeopardize his chances of winning by attacking his own "team", no PC need fight more than one enemy.

Ultrodaemons (2): AC -5; MV 15"/15"/

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