

KAZARAK



PLUNDERGROUNDS #2

04/2017

CREDITS

Plundergrounds: Kazarak is made for use with *Dungeon World*, a fantasy role-playing game by Sage LaTorra and Adam Koebel. The dungeon starter format is an invention of Marshall Miller. Additional creative input came from Jason Cordova, Jim Jones, Eric Nieudian, and Marshall Miller.

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Plundergrounds is a series of theme-forward zines devoted to *Dungeon World* adventures.

Subscribe at www.patreon.com/rayotus to receive PDF issues in each even month of 2017. Back issues are available at www.jellysaw.com. Demand that I make print copies available, provide feedback, or submit your ideas for future issues to rayotus@gmail.com.

RAY'S PAGE



Kazarak has been knocking around my brain since 2007. I was working on a game/scenario, *Lords of the Last Citadel*, about a handful of dwarf lords fighting against besieging hordes, desperation, and treachery to prevent the fall of their last major underground city and the final repository of dwarven culture. The guts of that design eventually became another game, *Goblintown* (which you can get at my website, www.jellysaw.com). The story, however, is expressed here ... that is if you fast forward 100+ years beyond the city's fall!

The "Appendix N" of inspirational works for *Kazarak* includes:

- ★ *Polaris* (rpg), Ben Lehman. The idea of playing out the final days of a dying city is just one of many great ideas in this 2005 game.
- ★ *A Journey in the Dark & The Bridge of Khazad-Dum* (Moria chapters from *The Fellowship of the Ring*), J.R.R. Tolkien. Nobody does dwarves and their underground cities like Tolkien, deal with it.
- ★ *The Hawk's Flight* (chapter from *The Wizard of Earthsea*), Ursula K. LeGuin. A primordial, evil flagstone and its demonic guardians!
- ★ *Pacific Rim* (movie), Guillermo del Toro. Because ... grappling titans stomping all over a human(dwarf)-sized world.
- ★ Sentient bears from *Shardik* (book), Richard Adams; *The Jungle Book* (book), Rudyard Kipling; and *His Dark Materials* (trilogy), Philip Pullman. Talking bears: so cuddly, so dangerous!

***Kazarak* has a LOT of stuff in it, including multiple Dangers. Don't feel compelled to use it all, especially if you are running it for only a session or two.**

Also, the tone of *Kazarak* can be spooky or metal, or both. Consider playing it with the lights dimmed and alternate between eerie or hard-to-explain incidents, vistas of wonder, and over-the-top fights. Just be sure it all ends in ruin and brag about how you made it sing at the table with a post on Google+ (#plundergrounds) or by email to rayotus@gmail.com!

HILLAR ROCKBOOTS

Solitary, intelligent. Instinct: to preserve dwarf culture. Moves: “you can’t do that with a shield!,” invoke rune: Rock Mind, consult *The Book of Bears*, invoke rune: Healing Hands. Falchion (b[2d6], close, messy), 9 HP, 3 Armor.



Hillar is on a mission to preserve dwarven culture. In her zealous search for artifacts, books, and other bits of lore from her people's past, she has spent countless hours scouring dangerous old tombs and underground sites considered taboo by other dwarves.

In her search, Hillar has mastered a number of ancient techniques:

- ◆ Having discovered and mastered a rune that roughly translates to “Rock Mind,” she can stand as immovable as a boulder against an opposing force or resist magical mental domination effects. Both require serious concentration.
- ◆ With her tattered and stained copy of *The Book of Bears*, Hillar can speak with star bears: the rare and ancient race of sentient bruins that haunt dwarven ruins.
- ◆ Once per day, Hillar can invoke the Healing Hands rune to heal d8+2 hp or cure someone of poison or disease.

Characters may encounter Hillar rummaging around *Kazarak*. She knows where the last of the fabled dwarf-engineered titans is secretly cached and can activate its rune-controls, though doing so would kill her. (The ancients worked in teams to withstand the stress.) She will disclose the location of, and operate the titan only if the Eyrok looses a giant demon.

DW TOOLBOX:

THE RISK DIE



The risk die is a cool way to track items that could break or fail at a critical moment.

Knowing when your character is down to her last arrow is exciting. Ticking off an arrow each time she fires her bow, however, can be tedious. *Dungeon World* solves this by including ammo reduction as an option on a failed Volley roll. But there are more things than arrows worth tracking for dramatic effect. Enter, the risk die.

The risk die originated with *The Black Hack*'s usage die: a die that is rolled when an expendable item is used, and stepped down to the next smallest polyhedral on a low roll. *Macchiato Monsters* calls it a risk die, because you are risking the resource when you use it. *MM* also expands the use of the die to track all kinds of things, like magic charges, morale, or a hireling's loyalty.

To use the risk die in *Dungeon World*:

- ◆ Assign a likely item a risk die from d12 to d4. Record it using notation like: dR12, dR10, dR8, etc.
- ◆ When a character uses the item (never before!), the player rolls the risk die. On a result of 2 or lower, the die is reduced one size. If the die was a dR4, the resource breaks, runs out, or otherwise loses any value.
- ◆ What constitutes a significant use of an item, what its deterioration looks like, and what dR it starts with are up to the players and the fiction.
- ◆ Consider linking any effects of an item to its dR. This trick is featured in *MM* and it plays out quite well at the table. A Wand of Lightning might have a dR10 and a (matching) d10 damage. When you use the wand, a dR10 roll of 2 means the wand does 2 damage and degrades to a dR8 (and d8 damage). You might note this as “dRn effect,” e.g. Wand of Lightning: dR10 damage, or Salmagundi's Soothing Salve: dR6 healing.

Don't overuse the risk die mechanic! Not everything that can “run out” or break needs one. The risk die should always be exciting to roll.

Some items in *Kazarak* were fashioned using lost dwarven lore and cannot be repaired. They are noted with a risk die, e.g. Gauntlets of Power: dR10.

DUNGEON STARTER:

KAZARAK

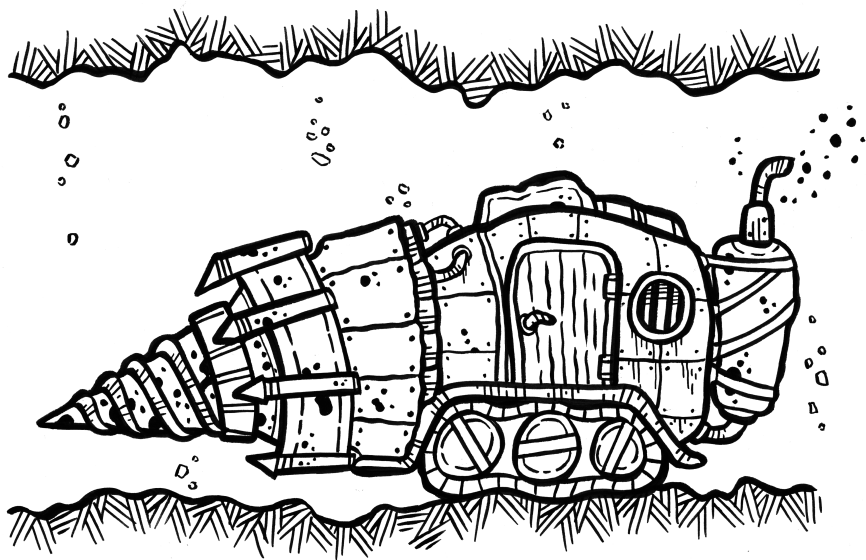
Covered in centuries-old ice, the Greater Talons hide a dark secret. Deep beneath their towering blue peaks lies the fallen citadel of Kazarak: last and greatest of the ancient subterranean city-fortresses of the dwarves.

Kazarak was not conquered by rampaging hordes like so many other dwarven cities. It fell from within, victim to an evil no dwarf will name.

What malevolent force caused a once-proud race to abandon the preeminent seat of their ancient culture? Why won't they speak its name? What treasures still lie forgotten in the ancient vaults? Will it ever be safe to return?

Scattered throughout the land, the dwarves endure, forging soulless, utilitarian objects for coin while they dream of a time when they might regain their former homes and reclaim the glory of their race. Most have given up hope.

Unknown to any dwarf outside of your inner circle, you have uncovered a way into Kazarak. As you stand before its massive gates, carved from living stone, you know that the days upon days you spent searching and the countless hardships you have suffered are about to pay off!



QUESTIONS

- ❖ For what discovery were the dwarves of Kazarak known throughout the civilized lands?
- ❖ Survivors do not speak of Kazarak's fall! What happened to the last dwarf who broke the silence?
- ❖ How is your family history interconnected with Kazarak?
- ❖ What did you vow to bring back from Kazarak and to whom did you make your promise?
- ❖ What were you forced to sacrifice/leave behind before finding the hidden way to Kazarak? Why have others not been able to discover this or another way in? Why will it be tricky to get out by the same route?
- ❖ What changed/awakened when you crossed the citadel's threshold?
- ❖ What stories have you heard of the dwarven titans, mechanical defenders of the ancient cities?

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ Block after block of multi-story, empty-windowed houses arranged with geometric precision stand under a sky of stone.
- ◆ A pentagonal tower looms over everything, its battlements reaching into the cavern ceiling.
- ◆ Out of the dark shuffles a trio of half-starved bears with white "stars" of fur on their foreheads. They stand on their hind legs, paws outstretched, making odd sweeping motions and lurching towards you. (See Star Bears.)
- ◆ Scummy canals are segmented by rusty gates and dotted with abandoned scows, some still loaded with cargo.
- ◆ Rails recessed in the center of the streets are occasionally interrupted by rough bore-holes as big around as a shield. (See Threats: Xorn.)
- ◆ The crushed body of a barrel-shaped creature with strange, trilateral symmetry. (See Threats: Xorn, Danger: Noftabulis.)
- ◆ A cluster of life-like statues: dwarves sculpted in postures of terror or agony. (See Threats: Hyronia the Cruel.)
- ◆ A pallid, cloudy-eyed dwarf with a ring of rag-wrapped keys (to keep them silent) and a beard so long it is coiled around his waist, scurries silently from shadow to shadow. (See Threats: Spectre?)

- ◆ Bas-relief carvings show a dwarf titan standing with outstretched arms over the city, twice as tall as the tallest buildings
- ◆ A ransacked library with thousands of volumes moldering on the shelves.
- ◆ The cluttered workshop of a genius. Prototypes of “impossible” machines lie scattered in various stages of completion. (See Moves: Mole Machine.)
- ◆ A gilded cage houses a tiny skeletal bird that animates and sings loudly as you pass!
- ◆ The happy squeaking of a pod of rust monsters, feeding on a nearby stockpile of iron. (See Threats: Rust Monster.)
- ◆ A temple with walls faceted like an intricate gem, each step within occasions deep, musical groans. In the groans, words (perhaps names) may be heard.
- ◆ A huge column carved with the sleeping faces of Kazarak kings.
- ◆ Open, rune-covered mausoleums “squat” at the center of five-point intersections like spiders in a vast web.
- ◆ An open-walled sarcophagus displays the gold-plated skeleton of a giant bear, arranged amid rune-covered armor and weapons of war. (See Threats: Giant Bear Skeleton.)
- ◆ A curiously stained flagstone in the tower floor doesn't quite match the matrix in which it is laid. (See Danger: The Eyrok.)



THREATS

- **Giant Bear Skeleton:** large, solitary, ancient & noteworthy. Instinct: to rest in peace. Moves: reconstruct from scattered bones, track those who steal its treasures. Claw (d8+5, close), 10 HP, 2 Armor.
- **Derro:** horde, devious, intelligent, organized, *telepathy*. Moves: fill a mind with foreign thoughts, take control of a beast's mind. Pickaxe (d6, close), 3 HP, 2 Armor.
- **Grinder Golems:** group, large, construct, *body of metal*, *slow*. Instinct: to remove obstacles. Moves: follow orders, use built-in tool or adaptation. Grinder Fist (d10+5, messy), 8 HP, 3 Armor.
- **Hyronia** (medusa): solitary, devious, hoarder, *stone gaze*, neutral. Instinct: to collect. Moves: turn a body part to stone with a look, attract someone's eyes, reverse the curse with her blood. Claws (d6, close), 10 HP, 0 Armor.
- **Noftabulis** (human wizard): Solitary, intelligent, magical, lord over others. Instinct: to obtain power at any cost. Moves: attack while pretending to parley, polymorphic ray, teleport within sight. Flaming skull bombs (b[2d8], near), 9 HP, 1 Armor.
- **Rust Monster:** group, *corrosive touch*. Instinct: to decay. Moves: turn metal to rust, gain strength from consuming metal, surprising leap. Corrosive touch (d8, close, ignores armor), 6 HP, 3 Armor.
- **Spectre:** solitary, intelligent, *insubstantial*. Instinct: to drive life from a place. Moves: reveal the past, haunt a creature, bring the environment to life. Withering touch (d10, close), 12 HP, 0 Armor.
- **Star Bears:** group, intelligent, magical. Instinct: to watch over dwarven cities. Moves: speak when spoken to in the ancient tongue, serve as a guide in dwarven ruins, suffocating hug. Claws (d8, close, forceful), 8 HP, 1 Armor.
- **Tower Guardians:** group, construct, stealthy, *true-sight*, *wings*. Instinct: to do the bidding of the Eyrok. Moves: watch from above, blend into stonework, swooping attack. Claw (d8, hand), 7 HP, 4 Armor. (See Items: Guardians' Eyes.)
- **Xorn:** solitary, *burrowing*. Instinct: to eat stone. Moves: tunnel under/through, emit a burst of light and heat, curl into a ball and roll. Maw (d10, close, reach), 8 HP, 2 Armor.

MOVES

★ **When you speak to the spirits of the dead in this place**, roll+CHA.

- ▶ On a 10+ they are “friendly” and will answer several questions you ask (*and one you don't*) about the city or themselves. They are not fully aware and mostly know only what happened in their lifetimes.
- ▶ On a 7-9 they answer a question, maybe even two, before becoming distracted or distraught and fade away.

★ **When you attempt to resist the call of the Eyrok**, roll+INT.

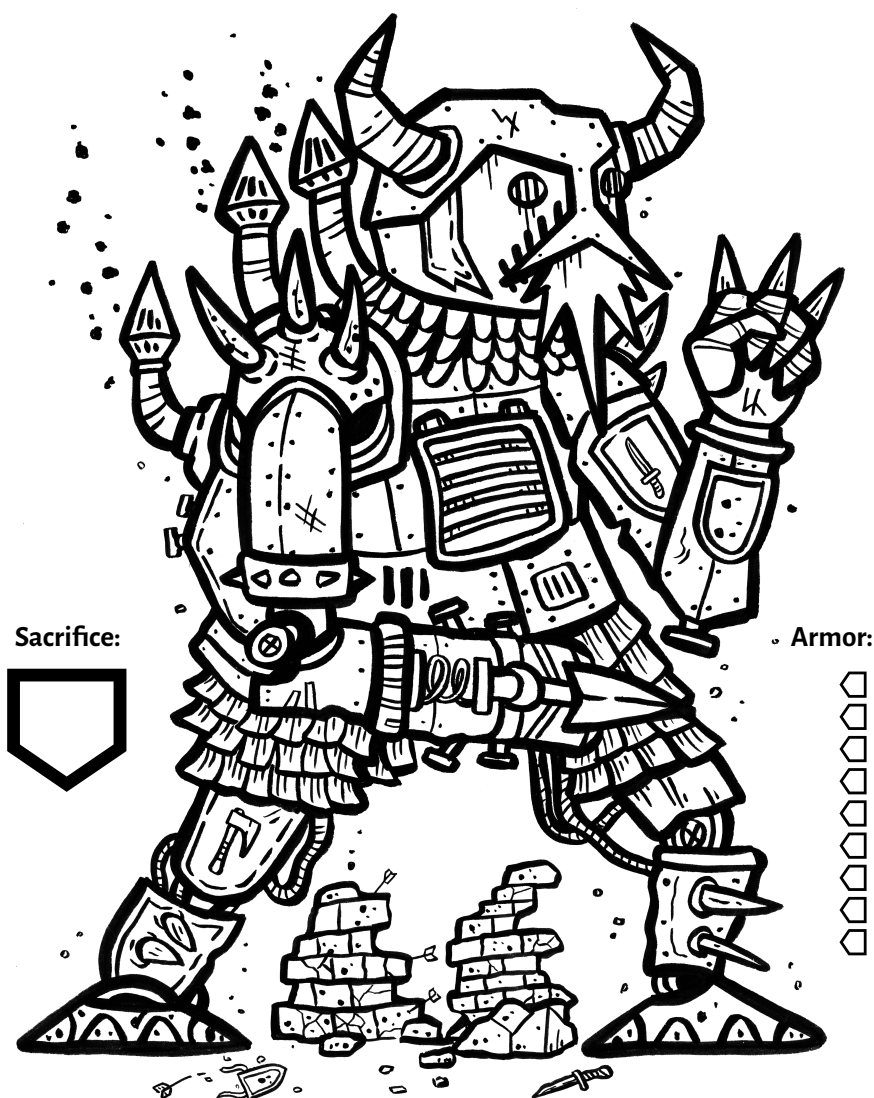
- ▶ On a 12+ you are immune to its evil control, explain why.
- ▶ On a 10+ you have stabbing pains behind your eyes while in its presence, but you can resist its evil control with concentration.
- ▶ On a 7-9 you are stricken blind with pain and must flee the tower to regain your senses and retain control of your mind.

★ **When you try to operate the Mole Machine**, roll+INT.

- ▶ On a 12+, the machine works without a hitch for up to 6 hours *and* the machine reveals a useful or interesting new feature of the GM's choosing: e.g. claw hands, a periscope, or a secret cargo hold.
- ▶ On a 10+ the machine works without a hitch for up to 6 hours.
- ▶ On a 7-9, the machine works for up to 6 hours, but the GM chooses 1.
 - The machine enters an unexpected and/or potentially dangerous space.
 - The power crystal suddenly dims; you must recharge it at a cost!
 - The machine encounters a subterranean creature.

★ **When you try to use/spend your Kazarak treasures without attracting attention**, Defy Danger WIS or be marked as Defilers by the dwarves! Entering Kazarak and revealing its secrets and/or looting its treasures is forbidden, even to dwarves. For outsiders to have done it...

The following pages contain a custom move for when/if Hillar Rockboots sacrifices herself to fight the Eyrok demon in a reactivated dwarf titan. This is just one way in which you might end a *Kazarak* adventure. Should the characters find the titan on their own, the titan's interior spaces are tight, even for dwarves. Also, a trio of dwarves trained in ancient runes is required to operate it. Other crews risk death; the magic that animates the titan is both unstable and toxic in large/prolonged doses.



★ As Hillar and the Eyrok demon battle, roll $2d6 + \text{Sacrifice}$ (starts at 1).

For each point of damage to Hillar's titan, mark out a scale of armor. If the armor fails while the characters are still in the city, they get one last glimpse of the battling giants as the titan goes down and the cavern ceiling collapses, forever burying *Kazarak*. Then they *each* roll Last Breath!



- ▶ **On a 10+**, Hillar buys you some time. Add 1 to Sacrifice. If Sacrifice ≥ 3 , you escape as the cavern collapses behind you, burying Kazarak!
- ▶ **On a 7-9**, Hillar buys you time, at a cost. Add 1 to Sacrifice and the titan takes d6 damage. (You need a 10+ roll to escape, even if Sacrifice ≥ 3 .)
- ▶ **On a 6-**, the titan takes d6 damage *and* a rockfall bars your way. Lose 2 Sacrifice *unless* one character rolls Last Breath vs. being crushed.

ITEMS

❖ **Arkas' Autoarmor.** 3 armor. 3 weight. This golden-hued plate armor is covered in bas-relief images of dwarves at work in a forge. You find it on a humanoid skeleton that looks like it was in the process of removing the armor. When you put it on, the figures animate, moving across the armor and perfectly reshaping it to your form in just a few minutes. If damaged, the figures work to repair the armor while you rest. If you are injured, the figures also “repair” (heal) your wounds. The armor matches (doubles) any healing you get from resting. However, in the process of healing you, it embeds itself into your flesh. When you remove the armor, roll Last Breath.



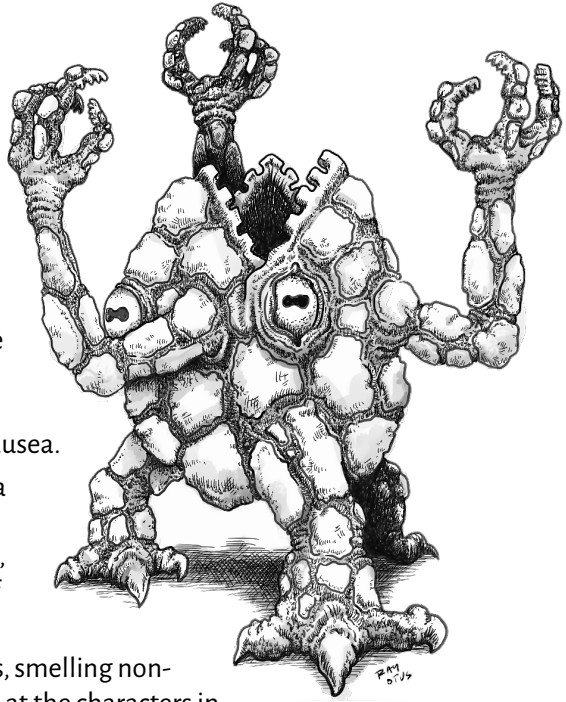
- ❖ **The Book of Bears.** 2 weight, fragile. This huge tattered tome contains the collected wisdom of the dwarves on the subject of star bears, so called because of the patch of white, star-shaped fur on their foreheads. These bears were uplifted by the gods of the dwarves millennia ago, to serve as allies in war and as guardians over their cities. (Some dwarves also believed them to be watchers/informants for the gods.) With some study, the book allows characters to speak with star bears and to better understand their fierce but noble nature.
- ❖ **Collapsible Cargo Haulers.** 3 weight, dR6. These bucket-shaped iron vehicles are big enough for 2 people to ride in, but can be telescoped down into a backpack-sized disc. Using its control rod, a hauler can be moved in any direction on its magic treads. When you try to steer the hauler without first connecting it to rails or guidelines, roll+DEX. On a 10+ it steers perfectly. On a 7-9 your progress is meandering and time-consuming.
- ❖ **The Forge of Arkas Grayborn.** An anvil of pitted green-black metal, the forge may be used by a blacksmith to imbue a weapon with a green-black hue and the tag *unbreakable*. The process takes d6 hours and is noisy.
- ❖ **The Guardians' Eyes.** dR12/6* If you look through the gemstone-eye of a Tower Guardian, you can see through all concealing magic and illusion. When you pry one loose, roll+DEX. On a 10+ you extract it unharmed (dR12). On a 7-9 it is cracked and its power is slowly leaking out (dR6).
- ❖ **Malik's Cylinder.** dR10. This cylindrical object has rotating tumblers that respond to various buttons and sliders at one end. The object may be used to locate gateways between the fire, earth, and prime planes.
- ❖ **Mole Machine.** (See Moves.) The cockpit of this massive tunneling machine can fit 12 dwarves, or 8 human-sized occupants if they bend into uncomfortable positions or strip the interior of chairs. It is powered by a glowing crystal that is noticeably dimmed at one end.
- ❖ **Power Gauntlets.** 1 weight, dR10. These gauntlets store kinetic energy in a magic coil. Take +1 ongoing while engaged in feats of brute strength with your hands. Take -1 ongoing while engaged in any fine, delicate work. When the gauntlets are reduced to dR4 they emit a barely audible whining noise. When they fail, they explode on a dR roll of 1 causing d6 damage to the wearer.

* See The Risk Die

DANGER: THE SLOW DEATH

Kazarak is being slowly but surely consumed by natural forces.

- ☐ Subtle tremors can be felt, at first by only the most sensitive in the party: a vibration in the soles of the feet, an almost subsonic throbbing, and mild nausea.
- ☐ As the characters pass a two-story building, it trembles and collapses, spilling huge chunks of stone into the street.
- ☐ A pack of rust monsters, smelling non-corroded metal, bound at the characters in astounding 20' leaps.
- ☐ Pushed beyond its breaking point by battling titans (See Hillar, Danger: The Eyrok), the city's last supports collapse and the mountain falls in on Kazarak.



THE INHERITORS

Xorn eat stone and expel light and heat, making them an ideal tool for the rough work of starting new mines or tunnels. With the dwarves gone, the xorn have escaped their pens and multiplied. Unchecked they are eating the city stone by stone. Kazarak is already far more fragile than it looks; key supports have been honeycombed with bore holes. And while the xorn feed on the stone of Kazarak, the rust monsters feed on its metal. Once a pest the dwarves easily kept in check, they are now a full-blown infestation.

These creatures, coupled with some still-functioning machines, ghosts, and monstrous squatters, give the city a kind of second, if temporary and highly unstable, life.

DANGER: HYRONIA THE CRUEL

A reclusive medusa has made her home in the city's "gardens."

- ☐ Those wandering in the city will at times hear beautiful singing. Tracking its source is difficult, due to the city's weird echoes and the fact that the singing is rarely sustained.
- ☐ Hyronia becomes aware of the intruders and cleverly plants a map where they will find it. The map depicts the location of the gardens and displays a suggestive "X" over her lair.
- ☐ In her lair, Hyronia appears as a demur beauty in a fetching head scarf. She plays a lyre and sings in a melancholy voice, until the intruders draw near. Then she whips off the scarf and goes to work!
- ☐ Hyronia will let everyone else go (or will she?) if one person will remain behind and "pose" for her.
- ☐ Hyronia artfully arranges her new fossilized trophy/trophies near a tinkling fountain.

GARDENS OF STONE

Kazarak's gardens are a zone filled with columns, abstract and complicated sculptures (some animated), and various boulders shot through with precious ore or gemstones that have been carefully exposed but not removed from their matrices. The gardens are arranged according to elaborate, geometric patterns, often creating optical illusions.

Hyronia loves the gardens and is furnishing them to her taste with her original, life-like statuary.

Her lair is a beautiful pavilion at the center of the gardens, surrounded by reflecting pools and polished bronze mirrors (objects of obvious utility to her in dealing with visitors). She uses the pools for scrying and maintaining her connection with the outside world.

In her ample leisure time, Hyronia is working her way through the pick of the city's library. She has many valuable tomes of ancient history, grimoires, fantastic anatomies, etc. stacked around the pavilion. All are fragile and flammable, so any fight in this location could cause them irreparable harm. If she sees *The Book of Bears*, she will certainly want to add it to her collection!

DANGER: IN THE NAME OF NOFTABULIS

A band of derro are squatting on the city's locked and trapped treasury, awaiting the return of their powerful wizard lord, Noftabulis.

- ☐ Any beasts that wander too near the treasury are mind-controlled and forced to bash themselves to death against a rock wall, then left to rot as a warning/deterrent to others.
- ☐ The derro attempt to put any intelligent intruders in harm's way by planting thoughts in their sleeping minds (when they are most susceptible) like "The way into the treasury is through the tower cellar" or "There is a jewel-encrusted statue in the city gardens."
- ☐ The derro make hit-and-run attacks on the intruders, using mind-controlled xorn, rust-monsters, or other creatures.
- ☐ The derro finally break into the treasure chamber, past all the dwarven safeguards, using a mind-controlled xorn to tunnel in.
- ☐ The wizard Noftabulis, alerted to their success, arrives to claim his treasure and deal with the intruders.

SERVANT OF CHAOS

Noftabulis has bargained with the powers of chaos too often in his quest for power. He has horns, bird-like claws, and a few other, less visible mutations.

His only concerns are wealth and power. He will parley with someone just long enough to get the information he wants, then attack without warning.



DANGER: THE EYROK

A sentient stone embedded in the floor of the tower cellar broods on the enslavement and destruction of all intelligent life.

- ☐ The Eyrok becomes aware of the intruders when they encounter the tower guardians, enter the tower, or first cast a spell in Kazarak. The characters feel as if they are being watched ... because they are.
- ☐ The Eyrok orders the gargoyle-like tower guardians to capture the characters and bring them to the tower.
- ☐ The Eyrok calls any who enter the tower into its service, offering power beyond imagining. It attempts to mind-control any who refuse.
- ☐ The Eyrok transforms a sacrifice (willing or enthralled) into a 30' tall demon that will first eradicate any intelligent life within the city, and then break out to terrorize the land above.

THE OLD POWERS

The Eyrok is one of the old, indestructible powers of the earth: entities of chaos that existed before recorded time and may well witness the world's end. They manifest in various forms, but the Eyrok appears as a pock-marked, rugose stone with a patina of dark stains. Any good-aligned person can sense the stone's evil sentience. It hates all free-thinking, rational life forms, but is patient and has thus far ignored the derro in an attempt to trap/enslave their master. How did it come to be embedded in the flagstones of the tower? Did it play a role in the downfall of Kazarak?

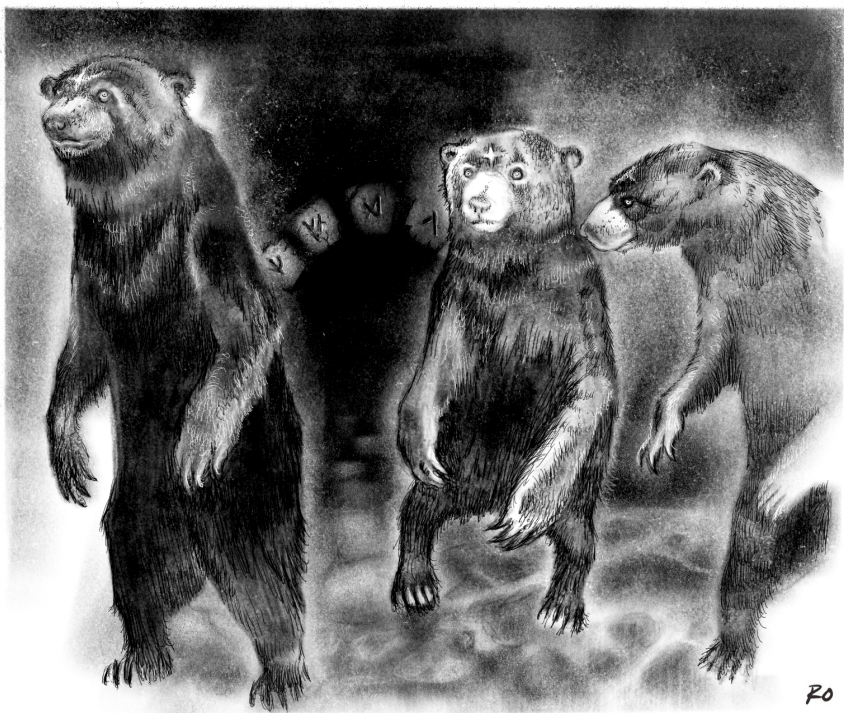


STAR BEARS

Group, intelligent, magical. Instinct: to watch over dwarven cities. Moves: speak when spoken to in the ancient tongue, serve as a guide in dwarven ruins, suffocating hug. Claws (d8, close, forceful), 8 HP, 1 Armor.

When the dwarves retreated from their underground homes, they left behind a small but stable community of magically-awakened subterranean bears living in the caverns and tunnels surrounding the old cities. At one time the bears conversed with dwarves who knew the ancient tongue and even served them as allies in war. Now they are silent observers to the devastation of the dwarf homeland.

Star bears are set apart from other bears by their unusual habitat and the star-shaped markings on their foreheads, a reminder of their magical transformation. They are generally peaceful, but dangerous when provoked.



D8 DWARF TWISTS

Is your group tired of the same old dwarf tropes? Try one of the following twists to make your dwarves interesting and different. The twist might apply to all the dwarves in a world, or only to a specific clan.

1. **Dwarves are ascetics who never touch strong drink or engage in other hedonistic pleasures.** They attempt to always speak truth, avoiding figurative or colorful language. (Goodbye, drunken Scottish dwarves.)
2. **Dwarven smiths put a small bit of their soul into each of their master creations.** Dwarves see such items, when possessed by another race, as “on loan.” They are always looking to recover them.
3. **Dwarves define nudity as not having on armor.**
4. **Dwarf beards are formed of living hair.** When feeling angry or threatened, a dwarf’s hair poofs up. This makes the dwarf appear larger and more intimidating, but it also makes it difficult for dwarves to hide how they feel. They have gotten used to not even bothering.
5. **Dwarves can smell treasure.** The larger the deposit, the easier it is to locate by smell and the further the smell travels. (Credit to the *Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG* for this idea!)
6. **Dwarves are xenophobic.** They distrust *all* other races, not just elves. They will not willingly speak of dwarvish things around other races and they always expect any negotiations or deals with outsiders to go sour.
7. **A significant number of dwarves are skinchangers.** They can assume a bear form and some even hibernate. (Or, instead of a bear, maybe some kind of dire mole or badger?) When in animal form, they have less control over their actions. Other dwarves understand and respect this, but a known skinchanger is often unwelcome in non-dwarf circles.
8. **As dwarves age, they ossify.** They become less flexible, less mobile, and less interested in eating/sleeping. A truly old dwarf may sit for days without even seeming to breathe. Eventually they “pass into stone.” The transition from life to death is imperceptible. Thus the halls of the ancients are places where dwarves speak to “statues” as if they are alive ... because they might be.

DW TOOLBOX:

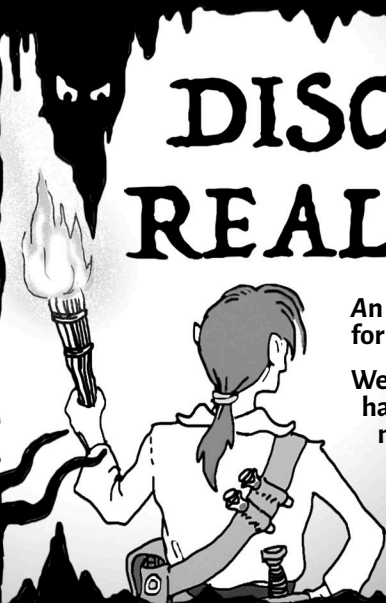
ESTABLISHING Qs

Great sessions are built on the back of great questions. The following spotlight specific playbooks and elicit responses that should establish things in the fiction about the characters and the world they inhabit. Ask all the questions at once or save some for later, but be sure to incorporate the answers into play as soon as possible.

Many of the questions echo those found in John Aegard's excellent: *Dragonslaying on a Timetable: Running Tight 4-Hour Dungeon World One-Shots with Zero Preparation*. Read it at <http://tiny.cc/tight-dw-oneshots>!

- ❖ **Barbarian:** you believe the savage land in which you were “forged” made you and your kin superior to civilized folk, in what way? ❖ What is different about the land or culture around you now, and in what way has it made people weak? ❖ What are you doing about it? Or, if you can't change things, what are you doing to avoid getting soft yourself?
- ❖ **Bard:** for what might people in this place remember you? ❖ What has changed since you were last here? (If you've never been here, how does this place fail to match up to the tales you have heard of it?) ❖ You are bringing an important new song or tale with you, how will you make it heard and what reaction do you hope to get?
- ❖ **Cleric:** who in this place is a friend to you and your faith? How well do you know them? How and when did you meet for the first time, if ever? What was your last parting like? ❖ Who or what here is an enemy to your faith? ❖ Is the threat out in the open and supported by local government, or is it secret and backed by only by shadowy figures?
- ❖ **Druid:** deep within your attuned land you have an unusual house. Of what is it made and what lives in it with you? ❖ How is your home guarded when you are away? ❖ What spirits inhabited your home (or the land under it) before, and why were you forced to exorcise them?
- ❖ **Fighter:** your signature weapon bears a scar from a famous battle or encounter, who/what were you fighting? ❖ Who/what did you lose in that struggle? ❖ The scar is a reminder of how the weapon itself saved your life in battle, what happened?

- ❖ **Paladin:** within your order, you have a rival. What is their name and what are you competing over? ❖ What did they do to get “one up” on you? ❖ Why do you consider them a poison to the order and why can't you say anything about it openly?
- ❖ **Ranger:** what danger did you rescue your animal companion from (or did they rescue you from) at your first meeting? ❖ There is an unusual condition to your friendship; if you break it your companion will abandon you. What is that condition? ❖ Your companion left you once before, why? What changed, or what did it accomplish while away?
- ❖ **Thief:** what did you come here to steal and why haven't you told the others about your plan? ❖ Where does your intelligence say you will find it? Do you have any idea how it is guarded? ❖ What is your source of information and why don't you completely trust it/them?
- ❖ **Wizard:** what is it about this place that reeks of power? What ritual would you love to perform here? ❖ What hard-to-obtain ingredient must you get first? ❖ What disastrous thing happened to your mentor or another famous wizard when they attempted the same ritual years ago?



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THIS ISSUE

- ★ Explore an abandoned subterranean city.
- ★ Meet Hillar Rockboots, dwarf archaeologist.
- ★ Encounter rust monsters, xorn, and derro!
- ★ Fight a petulant wizard, the inhuman mistress of a deadly garden, and a thoroughly evil ... rock?
- ★ Witness a world-ending battle between titans!



IN THE TOOLBOX:

- ★ D8 Dwarf Twists
- ★ The Risk Die
- ★ Establishing Questions

NEXT ISSUE

The Hoard. Stuffy, claustrophobic, irrational ... these are the words running through your mind as you explore tunnel after tunnel of meticulously stacked crap, looking for "the good stuff." It's definitely your turn to find something valuable. Donny literally stumbled over a whole urn of grass-green gems. Leia ripped an obviously magical axe out of the hands of a zombie minotaur. And Grax ... well, he sort of got his face eaten off by a dragon crab ... but then he always was careless!

