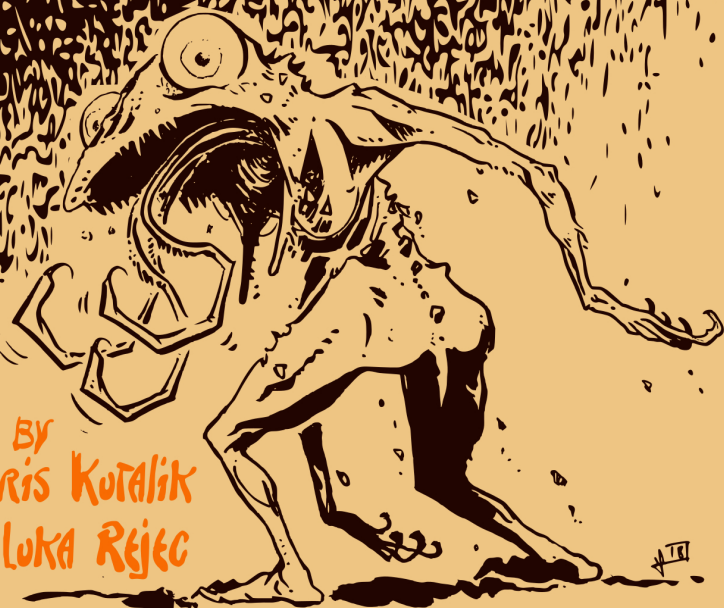


WHAT HO, FROG DEMONS!



FURTHER ADVENTURES
IN GREATER MARLINHO
CANTON

BY
CHRIS KOTALIK
AND LUKA REJEC



171

What Ho, Frog Demons!

Further Adventures in Greater Marlinko Canton

To Sammy and Isaac.

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ABBREVIATIONS

LL—Labyrinth Lord (Goblinoid Games)

AEC—Advanced Edition Compendium (Goblinoid Games)

SUD—Slumbering Ursine Dunes (Hydra Cooperative)

FDM—Fever Dreaming Marlinko (Hydra Cooperative)

HCC—Hill Cantons Cosmology (Hydra Cooperative)

WHFD—What Ho—What Ho, Frog Demons! (Hydra Cooperative)

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Introduction!

Welcome to *What Ho, Frog Demons!*

What Ho is the fourth mini-sandbox adventure in the *Slumbering Ursine Dunes* series. Labyrinth Lords may use it in several ways: 1) as a straight-up extension of the campaign world implied in the previous modules, 2) as two small sites (2–4 sessions' worth of adventuring) to discretely cut and mangle into a home campaign, 3) as a small standalone borderlands region with the serial numbers filed off, or 4) as whatever they darn well please.

My previous publication, *Fever-Dreaming Marlinko*, was an experiment in reforming the city setting book: sloughing off the tedious bits and cranking up the most adventurable qualities. *What Ho, Frog Demons* is a similar experiment: an attempt to crank up a regional setting book and slough off the excess into a more directly adventurable state. This unholy hybrid is built on the notion that long campaigns need boundless diversity in the kinds of adventuring the players tackle. To that end, the book is divided into four main parts:

- 1 **Marlinko Canton.** A broad overview and hexcrawl of the region supported by a subsystem of encounter and site charts (with some additional lifting in the Village Generator and Rural Carousing subsystems in the Appendices).
- 2 **The Frog Demon Temple.** The first adventure site, a particularly lethal dungeon tied to the local rising threat of frog demons from the Hot Hell is a “Saturday Night Special” site for the region: an intentionally small dungeon used for some quick, flavorful adventuring between big ticket tentpole sites (such as the Dunes and the Misty Isles).
- 3 **Beets for the Beet God.** The second adventure site. A time-bounded escalating survival-horror/satirical situation, designed to present a palate-cleansing scenario between different crawls (that can potentially balloon into a region-changing event).
- 4 **Appendices.** Being a Gen Xer who grew up with Gygaxian baroque supplementary commentary, these are pretty extensive. I’ve included a long bestiary, a random frog demon generator, and a village generator and rural carousing system (fleshed out by the copacetic weirdness of co-author and illustrator Luka Rejec). Use these tables to help establish the feel of Marlinko Canton.

Most of the sites are intended and playtested for a party of 4–7 characters of 2nd–4th level. Attention, though: the Frog Demon Temple, is designed to be a meatgrinder challenge for characters of that level. A two-bit *Tomb of Horrors*, if you will.

The previous modules in the *Slumbering Ursine Dunes* series are occasionally referenced throughout this work. They are as follows:

- 1 *Slumbering Ursine Dunes* (SUD)—the original Slavic myth-inspired seaside mini-sandbox with an acid fantasy twist.
- 2 *Fever-Dreaming Marlinko* (FDM)—part supplement, part full-blown adventure, this is the stand-alone urban companion to the Slavic acid fantasy weirdness of the Dunes.
- 3 *Misty Isles of the Eld* (MIE) – a hellish pocket plane that has brutally displaced a bucolic paradise. This is the third stand-alone sequel to the original two books.

Welcome to Greater Marlinko

Marlinko Canton is affectionately known as “Bloody Fucking Marlinko” by its neighbors. It is both the largest of the Hill Cantons and far and away the least densely populated. Much of its cedar-covered, ferrous, red-soiled hillscape lies wholly inside the Weird and any country backroad can take a sudden strange turn. Indeed, the traveller may encounter the palpable electric shockwall and cessation of birdsong that marks the mythic wilds half a dozen times in a single digestive afternoon stroll.

As such, human settlements cluster tightly and nervously together in the Ostrod river basin. A fertile region, its rich soils are biannually renewed by the super-nutrients of the Blood Rains—a supernatural weather pattern brought on by Habeka the Celestial Lady’s whipping of our dear Sun Lord with her silver chains.

Don’t be fooled by the bucolic, whitewashed and blackwood-trimmed villages with their smiling peasants in floral-embroidered tunics and bluff, red-faced country boyars. The superficial rural easiness masks a life as strange and dream-cast as any in their big city capital, Marlinko.

Indeed, each village tries to outdo the next with localized eccentric mini-contradas, all self-consciously aping the demigod centered ancient traditions of their urban neighbor—some tiny hamlets sporting as many as six or seven! Who cannot marvel at an entire “contrada” of two rundown cottages and a barn dedicated to the entirely-fictitious godling She Who Lurks Around a Corner?

The tidy blood-apricot orchards and wide barley fields ... but Hot Hell, I come not to bore you with such mundanities; let’s get to the news, hooks, hexcrawl, encounters and random sites!

Marlinko Canton News and Hooks

Adventurers seeking information on the wilderness surrounding the Slumbering Ursine Dunes, the Misty Isles, and Marlinko city proper should be free to make rolls on the following charts. These charts give a range of hooks, rumors, and total bullshit to get your PCs out of the sites in the other books and into the Weird-infested backcountry of greater Marlinko Canton. Alternately a LL wishing to provide their players with a direct hook into one of the adventures included in this book should make free rolls or simply pick appropriate entries.



Rumors, Hearsay, and Gossip of the Rankest Sort

Not all rumors are of the same caliber. The table below is the kind of thing one might hear in a tavern bathhouse, narcotics den, or other place where adventuring riff raff congregate. False components of rumors are *italicized*.

ROLL D12

- 1 “You didn’t ask, but hold on, I’m-a gonna tell you anyways.” Roll on the Marlinko city rumor table (*FDM* p. 21) or treat at as empty prattle (“no rumor”).
- 2 Boy, does the Great Deodand have a deal for you. If you head up the Inflexible Highway and turn left at the mountains to listen to his short pitch on scenic “timeshare” cottages *he will dole out a fabulous prize*. (Patently and Dangerously False)
- 3 Dead horrors and heedless tactical advice await the unwary in the tomb warrens beneath **Lumaš**, the Tower of Bone (p. 14). (True)
- 4 Ootla travel south to big house. BIG voice come from shed, scare Ootla. Ootla say Root, root of all Evil. Grunh. (Heard from Cave Dwarf public bath attendant; Opaque but True, and a reference to the **Beets for the Beet God**, p. 51)
- 5 Frog demon meat tastes like chicken. (Actually True)
- 6 Some say that Jaromil, the old smith and familial patriarch of Kugelberg just outside Slumbering Ursine Dunes, *is a living aspect of the almighty puissant Sun Lord Himself*. He hides a great magic chariot fabulously adorned in gold in his barn. (Heresy, though the last part is True.)
- 7 *Goatherds in the hills north of Marlinko have noticed a “totally unremarkable and hitherto unfound small valley choked with green tube-like plants and slender clusters of rusting iron pagodas.”* Surely the slivovce (potent plum brandy) is flowing early and freely in that Canton this time of year. (That last bit is True at least).
- 8 It is whispered that the ever-industrious Hurloj Kladio, Master of the Guild of Accipitrarians, Ankle Beaters, and Drovers, has a secret hobby as a hruz-hruz dealer. Ask him; he will hook you up, yo. (True, and will lead to a Hook to **Beets for the Beet God**, p. 51).
- 9 That old goat Jaromil over in Kugelberg is having an entirely inappropriate penpal romance with a teen-aged servant, Svetlana, in Ctyri Ctvrt manor. (Trashy but True, and a Hook to **Beets for the Beet God**, p. 51).
- 10 A great, dark maze-thicket of sorcery-mangled oaks lies up in the backhills. Though its existence is blamed on an addled priest of the old Pahr gods, its true origin lies in the dark, juvenile thoughts of a game-obsessed boy. (Meta-True [*and a shameless bit of pandering on the author’s part. -Ed.*])
- 11 Beware the flying *monks* of the Ancient Mountain-Hall of the Hyperboreans, for they will swoop down on you at the worst of moments. (Mostly True, but it’s monkeys, dammit!)
- 12 “Actually, I heard from no less a person than...” Roll on the Weighty Conversation table below.

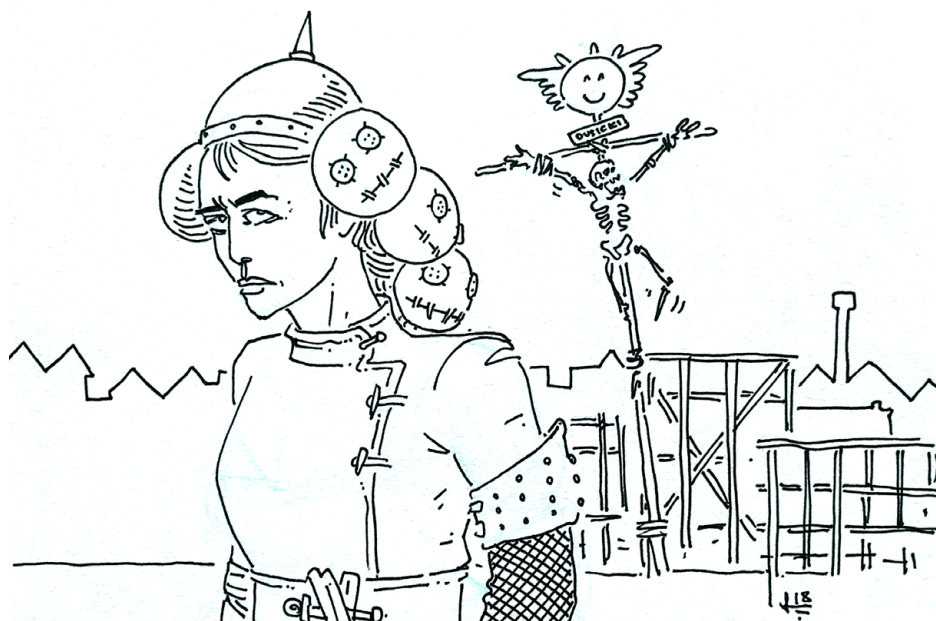
Weighty Conversation

Interactions with major named NPCs or more thorough inquiries into happenings around Marlinko city proper warrant rolls below. Most of the information below is substantively true.

ROLL D6

- 1 The un-Sun Lordly menace of frog demon worship seems to be creeping back into the swollen margins of Marlinko life. **Small placards** bearing the Early Vulgar Hyperborean inscription “TVMVKP, the Warty Lord Whose Princely Blather-Coif Trumpets the Final Turn of the World-Dialectic” followed by the even more menacing “Make Marlinko Anuran Again” have been found throughout sleepy Yare Domesman contrada. City officials have vowed to round up the “usual suspects.”
- 2 **Ropucha Rigygtzenacht**, Surveyor Lord of Canton Departments Both Hilly and Forested, has gone missing shortly after the announcement of an official inspection and tour of both Marlinko and Ostrovo cantons. In the Cantons he is, of course, more famously known as “The Garrulous Grease Toad,” a nickname attributed to him for both his bulbous and oily countenance, and the famously eccentric apologia *Feuer und Flammen: A Corelands Defense of The Absolute Necessity of Frog Demons*. Locals are doubly shocked at the news; it has, after all, been almost 76 years since an Overking-appointed high official has actually set foot in the borderlands—let alone promptly disappearing a few short days into the tour. A connection between this incident and the nearby Frog Demon Temple has been ruled out by local authorities as “too shockingly obvious,” though a 2,000 gp bounty has been issued for his return.
- 3 The self-styled **Son of Mulmak**, proponent of the heretical theory of pan-dungeonism and best-selling author of *A Brief Relation of the World-Dungeon Unitary, As it Was Delivered to the Folk of Marlinko* is gathering together a field work expedition for the Frog Demon Temple with the explicit goal of “proving that a subterranean spiderweb of byzantine tunnels and treasure-house sub-basements connects all to All.” Undoubtedly the all-loving Sun Lord will strike him down and all who follow him in his hubris, yet his offer of a 100 gp advance and 500 gp upon complete mapping of said underground structure for each so-called “player character” is by all accounts very generous.



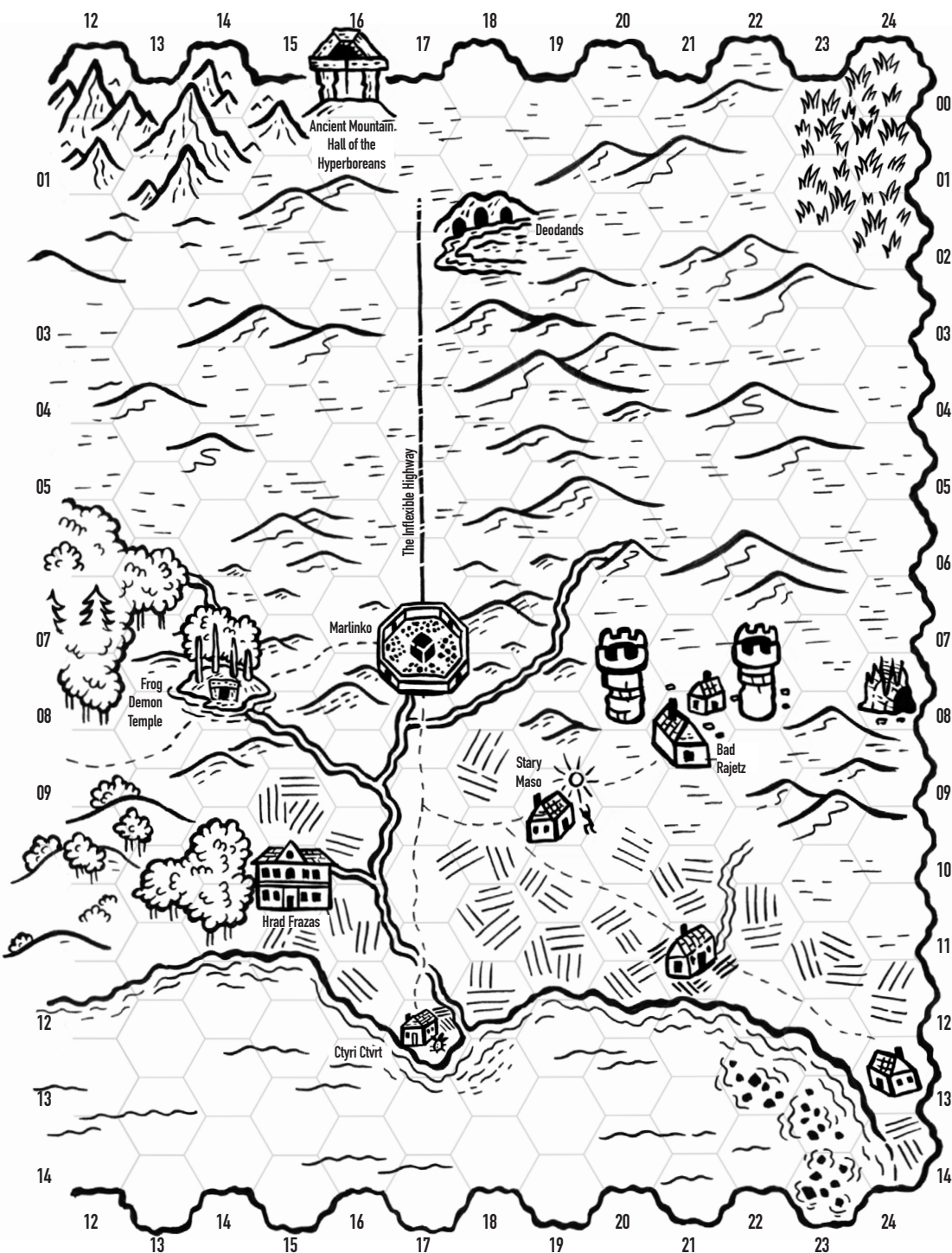


- 4 Marlinko Canton celebrates a peculiar version of Dušičky (or Li'l Souls Day, honoring the ancestral dead). Husk zombies, tower-wights, zombastadons, and other examples of the corporeal undead are rounded up and herded into town and village plazas for undead-baiting family entertainment. Sadly, stocks this year are running low and the **Cantonal Wraithwrangler** is said to be offering 60 gp per “hit die” (the ancient Hyperborean measurement of monstrous potency) of creatures captured and returned to Marlinko. The cold silent tombs under the Tower of **Lumaš** (Hex 03.05, p. 14) should provide a fertile hunting ground. Mancatchers, weighted nets, and lassos will be provided free of charge.
- 5 **Pelgrane trappers** in the hills north of Marlinko speak of a bizarre encounter with what appears to be a mutant variation of the sweet-tongued (yet terrifying) deodand. Arrows were fired at a lavender-skinned humanoid in a plain harness who had apparently consumed one of their party members (albeit one not well-beloved, due to his pugilistic and tedious theories about aesthetics). The creature was able to freeze the trappers for a full minute with a cerebral monologue before it made its escape, stating: “I am but a humble creature of thought belonging to the great tribe of **Zenodands**. Consider yon arrows that you loosed at me. What is the nature of their flight? Surely they failed to strike at me, because all objects, when they occupy an equal space, are at rest. But yet, when they are in motion, they are still occupying such a space at any moment. Therefore, those flying arrows must be motionless and perforce failed to strike me.”
- 6 **Fraza**, Marlinko’s freakishly honest (and horrendously racist) curio dealer (*FDM* p. 20), is on the hunt for the famed Staff of the Ragyi, an artifact forged by the greatest of Marlinko mage-hustlers ages ago. According to Fraza: “I will pay you 4,000 gold for retrieval of said staff whole, magically-functioning, and in no way altered, splintered, copied or otherwise adapted in form by you or a third party. It is well under the actual value of the item—especially when factored in with the extreme and likely fatal risk of obtaining the staff from the nearby Frog Demon Temple—but the slope of your skull offends my eye and I fear the enrichment and social advancement of people of your background.”

The Bloomin' Marlinko Hexcrawl



Encounters and Random Sites that may be found in the area follow the hex descriptions on p. 20 and relate the more gameable meat of exploring the area. Scale is 2 cantonal miles per hex.



Hexes of Interest

02.13-03.13 THE MISTY ISLES

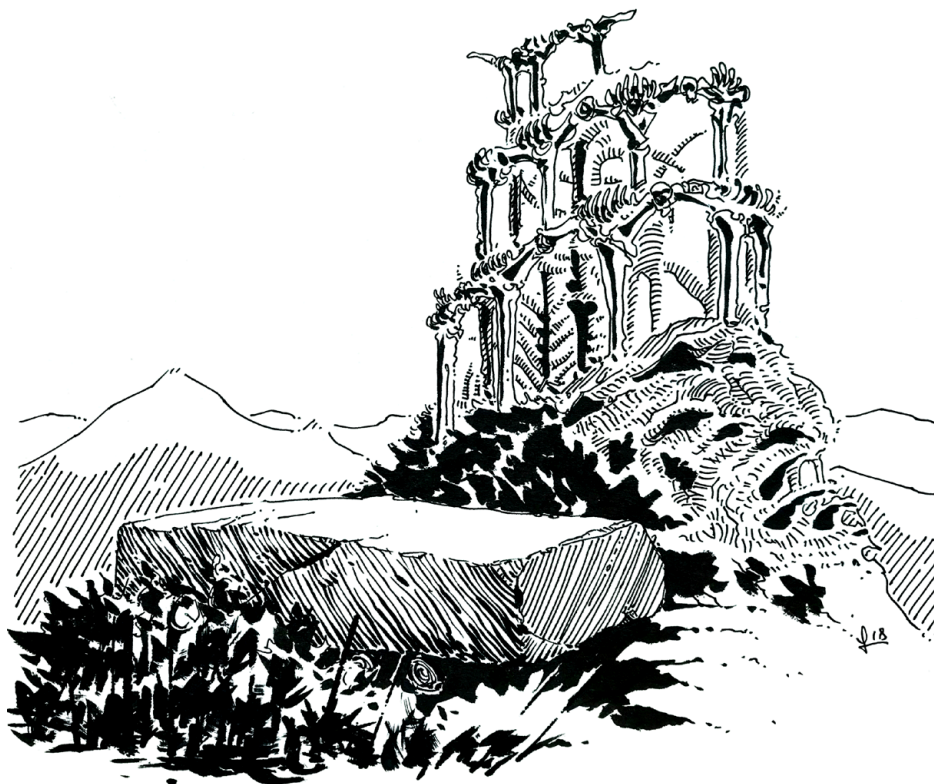
Deep, never-lifting fog covers these isles. Many say they are a pastoral paradise where winged-sheep cheese bushes and apricot pastry-trees grow along gentle banks of plum-brandied rivers and rock-candy boulders. This is, of course, complete bullshit. The area has been upended by the intrusion of the cold, hard pocket universe of the *Misty Isles of the Eld* (see product of the same name).

03.05 LUMAŠ

A tall freestanding bone tower monument rises here, its soaring arches in memory of that sweetest joy: organized slaughter of co-religionists on the field of battle. A massive granite slab sits on rollers below the tower, cutting off the chill tomb warren haunts below. Harmless spirits float up and down otherwise dead silent halls, eternally bickering and second-guessing various tactical what-ifs in that time-lost battle in spooky ghost voices.

“A refused right flank, followed by an echelon advance with the chitin-plated cataphracts and the bec de corbin phalanx from Blayr’s Iridescent Legion of Critics ... bwaaa.”

“Nay, bwaaa, concentrated fire from the slug-bladder onagers would make short shrift of such an overplayed formation, uhhhh.”



THE IN-GAME ORIGINS OF LUMAŠ

In the original Hill Cantons campaign, Lumaš was built around a section of *Stonehell Dungeon* (Michael Curtis, 2009). If you do not wish to use *Stonehell*, consider using something like Dyson Logos's "Lost Ossuary" map (available at <https://rpgcharacters.wordpress.com/2017/07/27/release-the-kraken-on-the-lost-ossuary/>).

Undead found in Lumaš include the **standard skeletons** and (innocuous) **armchair-tactician ghosts**, but also a **fallen boyar commander** (with bristling moustache even in undeath) and **chitin-armored cataphracts of the Palatine**. Slug-bladder onager crews are also present, but the slug bladders having tragically decayed over the years (and the onagers smashed by the glaive-guisairmes of Pahvol's Urbane Cohort); now they are simply forlorn standard skeletons.

Undead Boyar Commander: AC: 3 decaying plate, Hp: 31, HD: 5+1, Attk: 1 (weapon or claw), longsword d8+1, claw d4 and disease, save vs poison or contract *mummy rot*, SA *mummy rot* (*LL* p. 89), terrifying visage (save vs paralysis or unable to act while boyar-commander in sight, unless attacked directly), SD immune to nonmagical weapons, XP: 860, see also *LL* p. 89 (mummy)

Chitin Cataphracts of the Palatine: AC: 3 spectral chitin, Hp: 16, HD: 4, Attk: 1, ghostly bone sarissa d10, SA level drain, SD immune to nonmagical weapons, half damage from silver, XP: 300, see also *LL* p. 102-103 (wraith)

Regardless of which map you use, make sure one of Lumaš's central dungeon chambers includes a **map of the battlefield formed from dungeon detritus**. Here, the various undead spirits continue to refight the conflict in board-game form: rocks and bone chips marking formations, and bone dice (painstakingly hewn from some of the combatants) to randomize results. Each iteration of the battle is invariably inconclusive and merely revives the bickering.

Parties who wish to commandeer one of the sides in the wargame can attempt to do so—a single PC general may roll under INT on 5d6 to try and pull a brilliant tactical gambit (or a dedicated Labyrinth Lord may run a wargame session, perhaps using Hydra Cooperative's superlative *By This Axe*). If the general succeeds, the undead in Lumaš become entirely quiescent for 2d6 turns, retiring to either crow about their success or bemoan their defeat. They'll resume their normal behaviors the next day, but all underneath the Tower of Bone will salute sharply and say 'General!', remaining at parade attention while the victorious PC general is present for inspection.

04.11-07.11 SLUMBERING URSINE DUNES

Soaring blood red sand dunes ring a **small, bounded mythical wilderness** locked into an eternal late spring. The hulking bear-godling Medved watches over the Dunes with his warbear retinue and centaur toll collectors. See *Slumbering Ursine Dunes* for a full writeup.

06.08 KUGELBERG

Former hero and current crank Jaromil “the Old Smith” lives here with his family in this thriving little thorpe. *SUD* p. 12.

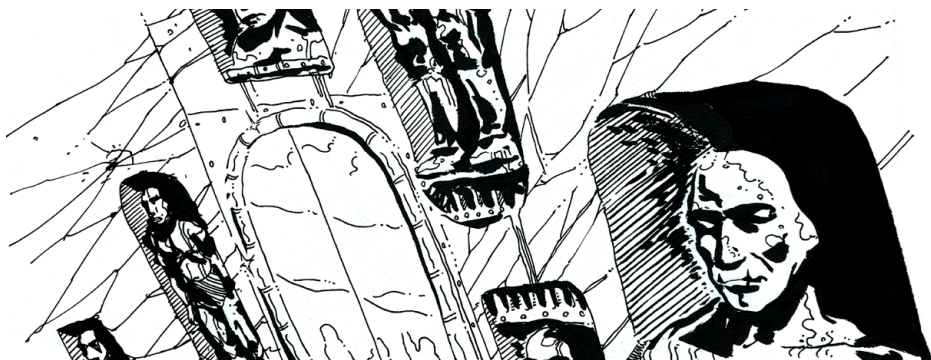
06.00 TOMB OF THE GREAT DEODAND

Soaring niches cut into the red-streaked cliff face hold a company of massive, muscle-bound and fang-toothed statues of black cast iron, bound with rusted chains to deep pitons driven into the living rock. Gleaming bronze doors lead into a **terribly gaudy rhinestone-encrusted mausoleum**, containing the long-fallen king of the tribe of the deodands in hex 18.02.

When the mausoleum is opened, the gleaming and translucent **Ghost of the Great Deodand** is discovered pacing feverishly in a regal ruby-adorned jacket and shimmering flared pants ensemble, muttering about “ungrateful youngsters who’d offer a gold sun up to a two-gold-bit demigod.”

Ghost of the Great Deodand: AC: 0 ghostly flesh, Hp: 56, HD: 9, Attk: 1, bite 2d6 and level drain, SA *Invisibility* (*LL* p. 32), *Darkness Globe* (*AEC* p. 60), and *Dimension Door* (*AEC* p. 6) 1x/day, SD can only be hit by magical/silver weapons, Xp: 4,500

Treasure: **Cursed, ruby-adorned jacket** (worth 2,000 gp but cursed with “a great and regal weight”, weighs 220 lb when worn, -2 to attacks, always encumbered, can be unequipped with *Remove Curse* or running a real estate con game that bilks a mark out of at least 1,000 gp). Tiny silver box containing **three diamond tipped titanium toothpicks** (800 gp each).



14.08 THE FROG DEMON TEMPLE

A wide, soggy bowl of a valley in the rocky, cedar-sprinkled hills holds a fetid, reed-choked bog. A low, narrow, earthen causeway runs straight over the swamp to a **round mound packed with soaring, gloomy cedars**. Among the somber trees squats the greatly feared “Menstrual Hall.”

This is the entrance to **Adventure Site 1: Frog-Demon Temple** (p. 33).

15.10 HRAD FRAZAS

A fortified country estate of the Frazas, a **villainous banking family** (a redundant distinction). Currently displaying the fabulously expensive, yet poorly executed and gauche Tapestry of Xvikz worth a whopping 15,000 gp (*FDM* p. 40).

THE INFLEXIBLE HIGHWAY

An old Hyperborean **stone highway** stretches north and south, straight as an immovable divine ruler, just over the ridge from Marlinko. Its engineers stubbornly refused to route it around ridges or cut notches to reduce the gradient, so the road can be a grind to walk (despite its magnificently un-shitty paving).



16.00 ANCIENT MOUNTAIN HALL OF THE HYPERBOREANS

High on a cliff-walled, artificially-flattened mountain top proudly rises the campiest of Hyperborean **faux-barbarian ruin-camps**: an overwrought meadhall in cold grey slate and supported by gleaming cyclopean pillars. Poured concrete feast tables front a dramatic, raised Wagnerian throne. Gaudy mosaics complete the impeccably moody hall.

Oaths mutually sworn over drinks in the meadhall are magically binding, serving as a *Quest* (*AEC* p. 37) on all participants. Once an oath has been sworn, ghostly **Hyperboreans** appear around both parties, nodding sagely in absurd winged helmets, shouting “Hoi!” and brandishing swords in an Oath of the Horatii-esque fashion before disappearing. The magic of the Mountain Hall does not pay heed to whether the oaths were sworn under duress, or knowingly. This sort of earnest and unironic commitment feels unnatural to the canny and cynical denizens of the canton, and most attempt to avoid bringing up the subject.

Attempts to scale the rope ladders to the hall have a 30% chance of attracting 1d6 **flying monkeys** attired in Phrygian caps and sparkling white hussar uniforms, who will bombard the hapless climbers with rocks. Many buxom shepherds and wise rustics in the area can testify that dropping food and/or books of poetry will placate them just enough so that they don't attack.

Flying Monkeys: AC: 5 hide, Hp: 3, HD: 1/2, Attk: 1, hefty rock 1d6, SA flight, XP: 6

17.07 MARLINKO

Marlinko (or Marlank if you are using the Nemec exonym) is a bustling, smallish, and **deeply odd city** of 7,000 and the council seat of the Marlinko Canton. Life there follows a strange dream-logic, even by the low standards of the rest of the borderlands. It's all in *Fever-Dreaming Marlinko*; why are you even reading this?

17.12 CTYRI CTVRT

A pleasant hamlet of whitewashed and black-trimmed buildings saddled with a tongue-twisted name that translates to "The Quartered Fourth." A **local boyar has unearthed a 500-stone beet** in his tenant farmer's field just outside of town. Most strange of all is the twisted face-like blemish near the giant beet's crown. A local shepherd claims to have heard a booming voice emanate from the storage hut where it is currently housed. See **Adventure Site 2: Beets for the Beet God**, p. XX.



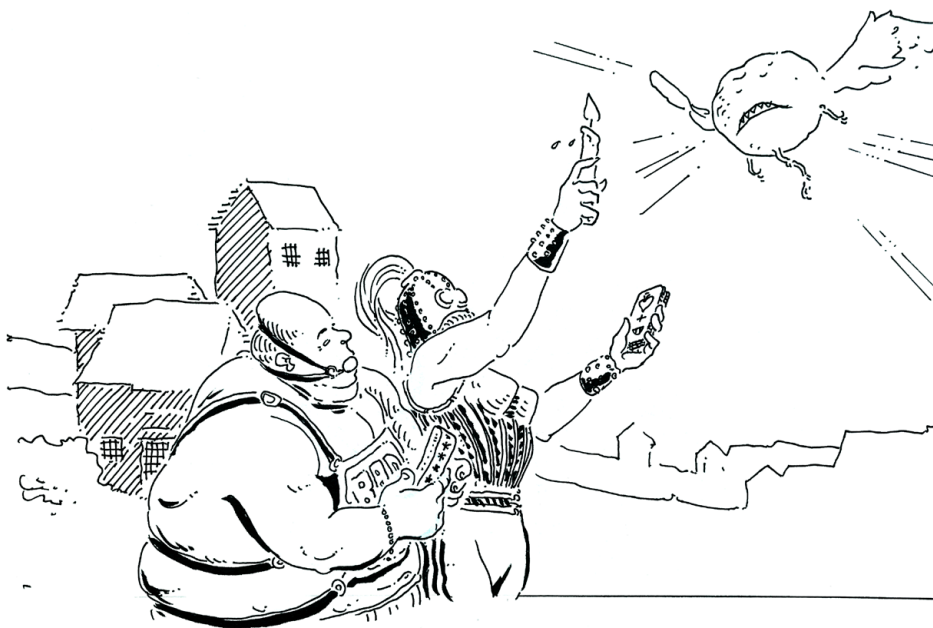
18.02 HERE BE DEODANDS.

Not terribly far from the best, most obvious and most comfortable place for unlikely travellers to camp is a series of small caves in the bank of a short creek. Living in tidy, glittering, sequin-walled caves is a **lair of 20-200 deodands** (100% "in liar"). A wise traveler refuses their late night entreaties to "cut a sweet real estate deal."

Deodands: AC: 6 hide, Hp: 20, HD: 4, Attk: 3 (claw/claw/bite), 2 claws 1d4, bite 1d8, XP: 135

19.09 STARY MASO

This oddly-named village (“Old Meat” in the local Pahr dialect) has a **remarkable tolerance for adventurers**, especially given several incidents in which said itinerant ruffians sired new illegitimate local residents. The residents take on a lugubrious and fatalistic outlook—whatever the Sun Lord wills shall come to pass, even if it is personal embarrassment or humiliation at the hands of heavily armed itinerant vagabonds (it often is.)



21.08 BAD RAJETZ

A desolate hinterland trade town of 700, renowned for its leather goods (especially fetishwear) and its tenacious endogamy. The place is infested with **diabolists**, **demon-lovers**, **crowdfunders**, and **Old Pahr heretics**. Vast limestone caverns with great, swooping fungi-bats and fire-breathing lizards lurking in the shadowy depths are rumored to exist inside an entirely improbable Undervillage. Beware of your sister-cousins—they will kill you soon as look at you.

In the original Hill Cantons campaign, Bad Rajetz was a four-way factional standoff between the listed groups, built over a dungeon that linked all their temples (and contained multiple dimensional gates). Think Robert E. Howard’s *Red Nails*, but with a strong backwoods twist (and of course, keeping all violence out of the sight of outsiders). Regardless of how much the factions might hate each other, they adamantly refuse to discuss their conflicts with foreign interlopers from the Big City (regardless of where PCs may actually be from).

A Big Ole Heap of d12 Marlinko Canton Encounters

CANTON ENCOUNTER TABLE: THE WEIRD

Roll d12 twice daily when traveling in “The Weird” (anywhere more than two hexes from a settlement or area marked with fields).

d12	1: Road Riff-Raff and Other Personages	2–5: Creatures Fell and Less Fell	6–7: Sites of the Weird	8–12: No Encounter
1	Radko the Ruffler	Deodands	Blood Apricot Orchard	Light rain
2	Fomo the Skald	Zenodands	Lady Vanda’s Manor	Sunny
3	Poor Tomas the Ubra-man	Pelgranes	Eld Crash Site	Gentle breeze
4	Rejeka the Clean-Lined	Bukavac	The Horned Oracle	Many mushrooms
5	Petr, Prigger of Prancers	Norkers	Travel Hostel of the Crow-Footed Witch	Overcast
6	Preved!	Frog Demonettes	War Bear Hill Fort	Thick moss
7	Zela the Afflicted	Giant Hawk	Rooster Bard Hootenany	Fog
8	“Whipjack” Wahlo	Vodnik	Alkonost Nest (Coastal Hex only)	Hot
9	Hetwoman Maryanka Knout-Cutter	Robo-Dwarfs	Domovoy Cottage	Verdant pines
10	Frazalina	Kudük	Old Pahr Shrine	Cold
11	Zim Byi	Were-Worms	Statue Ruins	Muddy
12	Multiple Characters	Mundane Critters	Tree Maze of the Twisted Druid	Glistening dew



Road Riff-Raff and Other Personages

Only the criminal, the cracked, and the terminally eccentric of humanity are to be found wandering the roads leading through the Weird. Note: this chart could do double duty as a chart for NPCs encountered in Marlinko's seedier urban and rural establishments.

1 RADKO THE RUFFLER.

0-level combatant, AC: 8 tattered uniform surcoat and leather jack, Hp: 5, sabre 1d8.. Approaches a PC fighter and **claims to have been a veteran** in the Kozak Wars, now looking for honest work or a donation to get him through a hard time. If hired on, he will split at the first opportunity, stealing an item of value from the party.

2 FOMO THE SKALD

0-level combatant, AC: 9 traveler's clothes, Hp: 4, dagger 1d4. **Rooster-headed balladeer**, traveling about the canton, spreading news and slightly off-key song lyrics. If they speak with Fomo, PCs may roll on the "Weighty Conversation" rumor table. He will also update the PCs on the progress of the Beet Spawn Infection Index (p. 56).

3 POOR TOMAS THE UBRA-MAN

2nd-level mountebank, AC: 8 leather jack, Hp: 5. Feigns anxiety disorder, claims it prevents him from fulfilling seed money for a wilderness expedition and is now financially destitute. Carries an Ubra-stick, a white-painted staff that signifies a former patient/indentured servant of the Ubra work camp for the mentally ill. Will ask for specific amounts of alms money (5 gold and 2 silver), offering rumors and gossip (true and useful at first but increasingly more fanciful and far-fetched as he runs out of info). Will pretend to have a panic-induced heart attack if ever confronted.

4 REJEKA THE CLEAN-LINED

3rd-level white wizard (HCC2 p. 9), AC: 9 traveler's clothes, Hp: 12, staff 1d6.

. Master **cartographer and covert wizard**, Rejeka is travelling the canton, mapping out the countryside ("Just adding a few sketches in the margin," he notes cryptically). Rejeka will assist the party if they seem to be lost, and will helpfully mention the nearest Weird Site (p. 26) to the party as a passing aside. He is accompanied by his bodyguard, who goes only by the name "**Pointyhelmet**." 1st-level fighter, AC: 5 half-plate and goffy helmet, Hp: 8, sword 1d8.

5 PETR, PRIGGER OF PRANCERS

2nd-level thief, AC: 8 leather jack, Hp: 10, lasso, sabre 1d8. A wee, bow-legged, skilled horse thief, Petr will approach the party either to offload stolen horses (giving deep discounts of 40-50% off the listed horse price) or to steal from them.

6 PREVED!

2nd-level war bear (HCC2 p. 9), AC: 6 hide, Hp: 12, Bohemian ear spoon 1d10+1, bagpipes. **Preved!** will offer to PCs that "for 40 shiny golds and two fish, I run with you tonight." The two fish are non-negotiable. The soldier bear has an uncomfortable tendency to pop in unannounced on intimate moments of the humans around him while bellowing his name at the top of his lungs (hence the exclamation mark). If this occurs during the night, roll an additional encounter check.

7 ZELA THE AFFLICTED

0-level woman-at-arms, AC: 5 half-plate, Hp: 2, spear 1d6, sword 1d8, large container of tallow soap. High strung and fidgety with deep black bags under her eyes, she will offer her services as a hireling. While earnest in trying to pull her weight, she will panic when asked to individually take on even a half-dangerous task. In such a case, she will discreetly soap up her face and feign an epileptic seizure.

8 “WHIPJACK” WAHLO

0-level man-at-arms, AC: 7 studded leather, Hp: 5, trident 1d6+1. Broad-shouldered, black-skinned (literally) and barely speaking the local tongue, **Wahlo is a shipwrecked sailor** from the Scarlet Sultanate. He is quite anxious about his “papers” (forged by the infamous Janos the Jarksman) and being picked up by the local authorities—and is sadly ignorant of the Overking’s law granting free right of passage to distressed mariners. Manipulative PCs could wheedle him into serving at a pittance of the hireling rate. A patron who informs him of his legal rights and undue worry will gain his boundless loyalty and gratitude.

9 HETWOMAN MARYANKA KNOT-CUTTER

3rd-level fighter, AC: 7 studded leather, Hp: 18, sabre 1d8, a fancier horse than yours. The **wily old Kozak hetwoman** and her band of 3d6 **riders** (0-level combatants, AC: 7 studded leather, Hp: 6, sabres (1d8)) have ridden over the High Tarkas and are searching for new horses for Marlinko’s famous Black Horse Fair. They’re willing to pay top coin for good horses, and won’t ask too many questions.



10 FRAZALINA

0-level combatant, AC: 9 traveler’s clothes, Hp: 4. Daughter of Fraza the curio dealer in Marlinko. Thin, **spindly-necked and sharper-nosed**, **Frazalina** is uncannily similar to her old man in both appearance and aspect. Like her father, she is also freakishly honest—and a complete racist. She is likely to offer a commission for appropriating rare MacGuffins in local murderholes. She is in terrible company on this chart (but to be fair, is terrible company herself).

11 ZIM BYI

1st-level thief, AC: 8 leather jack, Hp: 5, rapier 1d6. An **immaculately-coiffured dandy** with a self-evidently fake Scarlet Sultanate name and pronounced northern drawl. He is accompanied by two thuggish “business associates” (0-level combatants, AC: 5 half-plate, Hp: 5, polearms 1d10) and a chained coffle of what he calls “temporarily embarrassed millionaires.” He offers to sell said sad folk’s indentured contracts to the party for a fixed price of 500 gp (3.4 years remaining on all for 11 hands; “I will throw the children in for free,” he adds with a well-practiced sneer).

12 MULTIPLE CHARACTERS

1d3+1 of these characters are traveling together (roll appropriately above).

Creatures Fell and Less Fell

I DEODANDS

1d3 **ebon-skinned manlings** skulking around in bushes, gullies, tree groves, and other such areas providing lots of cover. Hiding and remaining unseen, the **deodands** will attempt to lure characters into striking distance with comically exaggerated offers of “cottage timeshare deals,” “shiny baubles,” and other improbable mercantile endeavors.

Deodands: AC: 6, Hp: 21, HD: 4, Attk: 3 (claw/claw/bite), claws 1d4 (x2), bite 1d8, XP: 135



2 ZENODANDS

1d3 **vicious purple-skinned** (but otherwise similar to Deodands) **creatures** are concealed in the terrain. Instead of attempting to lure victims in as above, the **Zenodands** will engage the party (preferably unseen) with non-nonsensical pseudo-philosophy and sophistry. Unlike their cousins, parties returning similar banter will only be viciously attacked 40% of the time.

Zenodands: AC: 6, Hp: 21, HD: 4, Attk: 3 (claw/claw/bite), claws 1d4 (x2), bite 1d8, XP: 135

3 PELGRANES

1d4 **mandibled flying predators** are lazily swooping overhead. Classic over-thinkers, the pelgranes will circle for 1d6 rounds, weighing various tactics, before plunging in for a head-on attack.

Pelgranes: AC: 5, Hp: 16, HD: 3, Attk: 1, bite 1d8, SD fly 120', XP: 65

4 BUKAVAC

This **six-legged horror** is travelling to seek out the nearest suitable large body of water after its prior home was befouled by leather industry byproducts from Bad Rajetz. While it is implacable in its determination to devour two-legged and four-legged beings, it will nevertheless respond affably to badinage, games of chance, and strangely, logic problems. However, these shall only occupy it for 1d8 rounds before, with a horrible caterwauling cry, it leaps to the attack, seeking to pound its prey into a wretched pulp.

Bukavac: AC: 4, Hp: 54, HD: 12, Attk: 2 (bite) or 1 (trample-jump), bite 2d12, trample-jump 4d6, SA: invisible until attack (4x/day), jump 30', XP: 2800



5 NORKERS

A band of 2d6 bewildered, walrus-tusked, **grotty-skinned humanoids** have wandered into the Cantons from an extra-dimensional gate. There is a 3 in 6 chance that the lost and confused creatures will not attack, but will instead ask for directions: “pleashhh tell usssh the way to the Pomarjjjjz?” On a 4-6, however, they will succumb to their anger issues and attack.

Norkers: AC: 6 hide armor, Hp: 6, HD: 1+1, Attk: 1 (weapon), bearded axe 1d8, XP: 15

6 FROG-DEMONETTES/ŽÁBA’DABEL NYMPHS

Maintaining a deathtrap of a temple is logistically challenging work. A group of 1d6 of these **demons** is out chopping and planing wood, skinning critters, and doing complicated surveys with fiendishly and unnecessarily complicated devices. There is a 2 in 6 chance that they will attempt to stealthily test one of their booby traps in front of the party’s path (roll on the **Hasty Booby Trap** table, p. 37). Otherwise they keep to their operations, only attacking if disturbed.

Frog-Demonettes: AC: 5, Hp: 9, HD: 2, Attk: 2 (claw or weapon), barbed steel dart 1d4+1, claws 1d4, XP: 29

7 GIANT HAWK

1d3 massive, pastel-colored **raptors** are circling here. Poignantly not wrapped up in the option paralysis of pelgranes, they simply live for the moment and attack on sight.

Giant Hawks: AC: 6, Hp: 14, HD: 3+3, Attk: 1 (bite), bite 1d6, SD fly 180’, XP: 110

8 VODNIK

The party encounters a small, murky, yet clean-smelling/tasting body of water not marked on the map. The pond is haunted by 1d3 **vodniks** who will attempt to lure the party to their watery doom. Hahahaha.

Vodnik: AC: 4, Hp: 20, HD: 4, Attk: 1 (special), grab 1d6, save vs paralysis or be dragged underwater, XP: 190, *SUD* p. 51–52

9 ROBO-DWARFS

A termination party of 1d12 **robo-dwarfs** is tromping through the wilderness, attempting to slay all living creatures regardless of their power range.

Robo-Dwarfs: AC: 3, Hp: 5, HD: 1+1, Attk: 1 (weapon), spite-powered chainsaw 1d8+1, XP: 21

10 KUDŮK

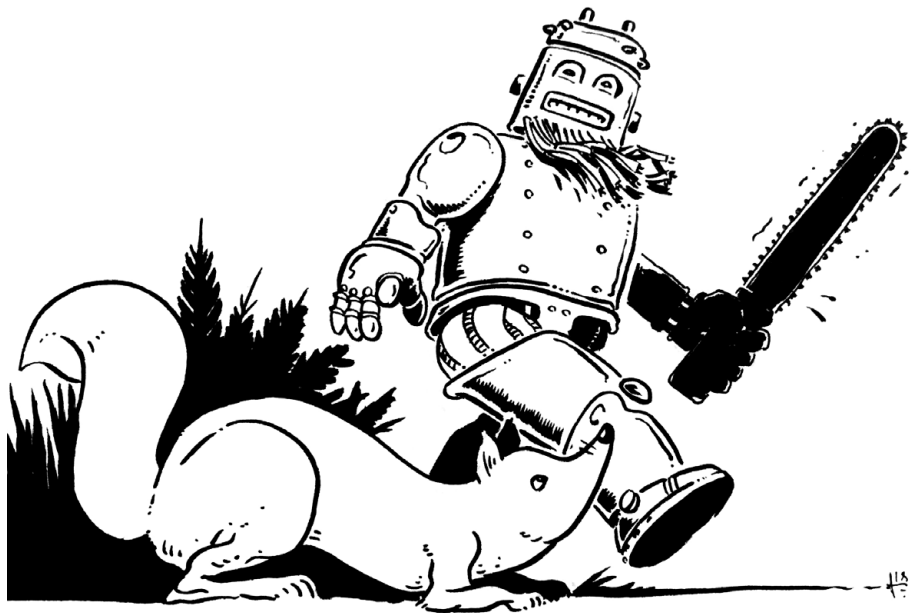
A wandering band of these 3d6 diminutive **quarterlings** are scouting the area for a new colony. They will be friendly unless the party contains a war bear (in which case they will succumb to the sectarian strife that has moved them for ages).

Kuduk: AC: 6, Hp: 3, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), rock spear 1d4, XP: 10

11 WERE-WORMS

1d4 of these **shapeshifters** appear either (1-4) as strikingly beautiful/handsome humans (albeit with rotted teeth), (5-6) or in worm form, buried under the earth and ready to strike. Either way, they are going to try to kill you.

Were-Worms: AC: 3, Hp: 20, HD: 4, Attk: 1 (bite), bite 2d6, XP: 550



12 MUNDANE CRITTERS

One of the striking features of travel through the Weird is the lack of common animals involved in the typical activity of maintaining their niche in an ecology. But animals do stray for a time and the everydayness of this encounter should be played up. Here is a tranquilly grazing herd of **deer**, a nesting flock of **songbirds** singing, there some adorable **ferrets** ferreting, etc.

Weird Sites in Marlinko Canton

If rolled, the site is discovered by the party in their current hex. The LL marks the encounter on their map and crosses it off the chart below, rerolling if they generate the same result.

1 BLOOD-APRICOT ORCHARD

In tidy, neat rows behind an encircling man-sized whitewashed stone wall sit five acres of meticulously pruned **fruit trees**. Marring the tidiness are melon sized, overripe apricots, many split open to reveal a deep scarlet fleshy interior. The metallic smell of fresh blood clashes with the sweet odor of fruit. Despite appearances, the fruit is quite delicious and has a mildly euphoric effect that heals 1d3 Hp. Characters can eat up to a third of their CON's worth of fruit before experiencing an hour of (on a d6): 1-3 diarrhea, 4-6 logorrhea. Whatever the outcome, they will never again be able to consume the fruit without vomiting.

2 LADY VANDA'S MANOR

This is a small, sturdy, elaborately-gabled manse with a wrap-around porch and multiple balconies. It sits among plum orchards and goat pastures. The plump, matronly, polyandric **Lady Vanda** and 23 anxiety-ridden **husbands** maintain her country estate here deep in the wilds.



She will welcome the party to dinner in which the top six of her husbands will be allowed to sit at the long table while the less-favored serve and cater the meal. Vanda will flirt openly with any male character of 13 or higher CHA, proposing to marry them at the end of the evening (and promising a weekly stipend of 50 gp, plus a fresh new velvet doublet, lacy frills optional). If accepted, the fickle noblewoman will keep the PC around as a first-class husband until tiring of them (20% chance per week), whereafter she will revoke their stipend and attempt to force them into servitude. Vanda maintains the security of her estate by seasonally sacrificing her least-favorite husband to an especially-lazy local **gorgon**—naturally producing a continuous jockeying for position amongst her spouses.

Lady Vanda: 3rd-level magic-user, AC: 9 fancy clothes, Hp: 9, Attk: 1 (weapon), discipline rod 1d4, SA *Sleep* (LL p. 39), *Charm Person* (LL p. 28), *ESP* (LL p. 31), XP: 65

Husband, Generic: 0-level noncombatant, AC: 9 fancy clothes, Hp: 4, Attk: 1 (weapon), duelling rapier 1d6, pruning hook 1d4, XP: 10

Gorgon: AC: 2, Hp: 32, HD: 8, Attk: 1 (gore or breath attack), gore 2d6, SA charge for double damage, breath attack (10'x60' line, save vs petrify or turn to stone), XP: 1,060, LL p. 79

3 ELD CRASH SITE

A 40-foot-long phallus-shaped gleaming metal Eld airship has crashed here and made a considerable impact crater. Seven **Eld crewmen** are clustered around a gagged and dying **dirt-gnome** (complete with pointy red cap). They are sucking soul-fuel from the poor creature's forehead with a small portable metal emergency resupply box (complete with lamprey-headed hose and milky-liquid glass jug reservoir).

The airship contains several racks of Eldish melee weapons (+1 damage from their fearsome barbs), silver mesh armor (AC 5, but will need modification for non-Eld), and utterly enigmatic sci-fi devices combining Cronenbergian biotech with '70s glam aesthetics. To operate the airship's controls, one must be able to comprehend Eldish *and* roll under their INT on a brutal 6d6. If refuelled with the poor dirt-gnome's soul-juice, the airship has enough juice to travel 1d4+1 hexes before ignominiously crashing again for good.

Eld: AC: 5 silver mesh, Hp: 9, HD: 2, Attk: 1 (weapon), barbed short sword d6+1, XP: 47, *SUD* p. 44

4 THE HORNED ORACLE

Ozbej the Gighgacksian, a talented ventriloquist (beyond spell use) has set up an elaborate camp around a portable wagon-shrine. Upright in the straw-laid cart is a weathered six-foot, abstract-featured, vaguely-humanoid statue with a round, grotesquely proportioned mouth and single horn. Ozbej solemnly intones the oracular properties of the statue, charging a "mere 52 gp" for a single question. Using his 'powers' (detectable by characters WIS 16 or higher 50% of the time), the scoundrel will answer questions with people-pleasing fabrications. Hidden under an odd assortment of 2d4 polearms in his wagon is a chest containing 360 electrum pieces.

Ozbej: AC: 7 robes + Dex, Hp: 7, HD 3rd level magic-user, Attk: 1 (weapon), staff 1d6, SA *Sleep* (LL p. 39), *Ventriloquism* (LL p. 41), *Rope Trick* (AEC p. 75), XP: 65

5 TRAVEL HOSTEL OF THE CROW-FOOTED WITCH

Gorana the Umbral, a stunningly beautiful, yet crow-footed hill-witch runs a deeply unlikely six-roomed hostel for creatures of the Weird. For the price of 5 gp per guest per night, the party can stay unmolested as long as their money holds out. Roll three encounters from the Creatures Fell & Less Fell chart (p. 20) for the other guests. A powerful spell prevents violence of any kind within the walls of the hostel and creatures of all sorts mingle and chat (even those typically lacking sentience and language).

Gorana the Umbral: AC: 9 robes, Hp: 12, HD: 5th level MU, Attk: 1 (weapon), staff 1d6, SA: *Charm Person* (LL p. 28), *Sleep* (LL p. 39), *Arcane Lock* (LL p. 27), *Continual Light* (LL p. 29), *Dispel Magic* (LL p. 30), XP: 350

6 WAR BEAR HILL FORT

A platoon of 40 **war bears**, led by **Snout-Captain Nová Lák**, garrisons a hill fort which, per standard field regulations, is composed of a cleared earth-ramparted ridge and interior underground warrens. The war bears are friendly, allowing the party to stay for a single night inside the quarter-warrens. There is a 50% chance of hiring 1-2 warbears to accompany the party as per the usual hireling rules.

War Bears: AC: 6, Hp: 14, HD: 2+2, Attk:1 (weapon), polearm 1d10+1, XP: 35, *SUD* p. 49

7 ROOSTER-BARD HOOTENANNY

Logs have been rolled around a roaring fire here to serve as benches. Sweet bassy and baritone voices can be heard singing long before stumbling on to the site as seven **rooster-headed humanoids** strum instruments and sing competing murder ballads at each other. They are quite harmless but will only engage in short snippets of conversation before returning to song. It is impossible to rest in the hex with all the racket.



8 ALKONOST NEST (COASTAL HEX ONLY)

Four **alkonosts** have made a driftwood roost along a sea facing dune face. The creatures are deep in the midst of their hatching rituals here: laying massive three-foot, gaily painted eggs and rolling them into the sea with a resounding, supernatural crash. The alkonosts have extraordinary sight and hearing, but are preoccupied with their ritual. A thief making a successful Move Silently check can sneak up to the roost and even steal a single egg without interference. Each additional attempt to steal eggs has a 3 in 6 chance of being detected per egg. There are currently three eggs in the nest; the alkonosts will roll an egg each turn after the party enters the point. The alkonosts will begin to sing their magical song on sight of any intruders (p. 93) but will only use their wing attacks if the party is caught stealing the eggs [worth 600 gp each].

Alkonosts: AC: 5, Hp: 25, HD: 5, Attk: 3 (wing/wing/song), wings 1d6 x2, special amnesia song, XP: 650



9 DOMOVOY COTTAGE

A small, prim little cottage sits here among trimmed hedges. A sleeping loft with sturdy 10-foot ladder sits in the back of the cottage. Visible in the sunlight peeking its way through cracks in the slat roof is a pile of four lavishly painted porcelain plates (worth 40 gp apiece) and a silver gravy urn (worth 150 gp). Directly in front of the loot but invisible is a **Domovoy**, a small hirsute house spirit with a long bearded old man face and monkey-like body armed with a silver serving fork (d4 damage, worth 20 gp). The Domovoy resents any intrusion into the house, and fights a Home Alone-esque guerrilla conflict against any uncouth interlopers. This starts with minor incidents (pulling apart a chair that a PC has sat down upon), but quickly escalates to rigging deadfall traps with buckets, tripwires, and the like. Initial traps merely humiliate, but soon escalate to dealing 1d4 or 1d6 damage.

If the PCs begin going after the house's treasure, the Domovoy immediately escalates to potentially lethal force, screaming occasional heavily-accented imprecations. A party can calm the Domovoy down by properly respecting guest conventions (knocking, tidying up the house, etc.) despite any attacks they are suffering. If the Domovoy is dispatched or pacified, the cottage can be used by the party without encounter checks.

Domovoy: AC 3, Hp 8, HD 1, Attk: 1, 1d4 serving fork, SD *Invisibility* (LL p. 60) at will, XP: 16, treat as pixie (LL p. 91)



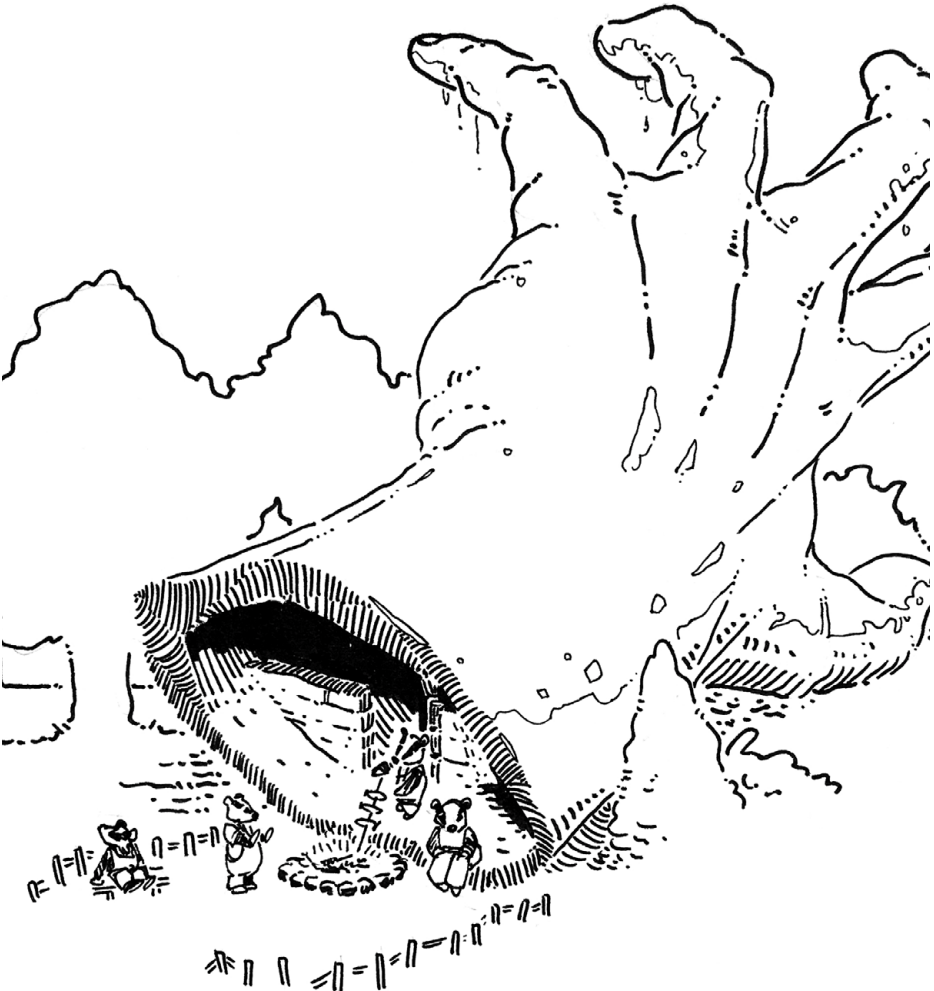
10 OLD PAHR SHRINE

An old, rectangular wooden pillar with copies of the same bearded face carved into all four sides (dedicated to **Svat the Four-Faced**, a bearded, mostly-forgotten pagan god) is set at a crooked angle in front of a simple stone offering table. Dried flower garlands sit at the base mixed in with shriveled-up dumplings. Camp can be made here and the site is free of normal encounter checks.

11 STATUE RUINS

A single massive verdigris-encrusted bronze arm of a statue lays here. Four **talking badgers** have made a den inside the hollowed out arm. The rest of the statue is nowhere to be seen.

Talking Badgers: AC: 6, Hp: 8, HD: 2, Attk: 1, bite 1d4, XP: 20





12 TREE MAZE OF THE TWISTED DRUID

A deep dark wild forest maze of perverted trees surrounds a twisted old pecan tree with blackened gnarled bark. The tree talks to the druid and tells him to do things. Dark things. Or so they say. **Stumpy the Entrance Gnome**, a wizened little creature whose legs and left arm have been chopped off and cauterized with tar, greets any who enter the entrance of the maze with a booming, “Who dares brave the PERILS of the TREE MAZE of the TWISTED druid?”

Stumpy the Entrance Gnome: AC: 10, Hp: 1, HD: 1, Attk: frankly no, XP: 4

Deep within the maze, after twenty different and annoying locations, is the Inner Grove, where the true master of the maze, **Tumbo the Tree Demon**, and possibly his servant, the **Twisted Druid**, are to be found.

Tumbo the Tree Demon, AC: 1 black iron-hard bark, Hp: 83, HD: 15, Attk: four ham-sized tree trunks 1d10+2. and throws Magic Exploding Pecans 2d6 in 10-foot radius. Can use *Suggestion* (AEC p. 78) twice a day. Fire pisses him off, he takes double damage but gets a +2 to attack for the round. XP: over 9,000

Twisted Druid, 7th level, AC: 3 +3 leather and wicker shield, Hp: 42, Attk: Vorpall Scimitar 1d6, SA: *Animal Companion* (AEC p. 41), *Detect Magic* (LL p. 30), *Entangle* x2 (AEC p. 43), *Charm Person or Mammal* x2 (AEC p. 41), *Feign Death* (AEC p. 43, he will use this when he gets to 5 hit points hahaha), *Fire Trap* (AEC p. 63), *Protection from Fire* (AEC p. 46), *Call Lightning* x3 (AEC p. 41), *Summon Animal I* (AEC p. 48, use on first round)

Treasure hoard: 1 million copper pieces, 3 electrum pieces, +2 jo stick, 400 magic pecans, not-exploding, tastes like shit but each one fills up your stomach so that you don’t have to eat for three days. They can be sold to a piebaker for 5 gold each.

[Editor’s Note: the author has self-indulgently, and frankly, lazily, included a dungeon that he designed while 12 years old as this entry, along with an execrable and deleted apologia. Brave and tolerant souls can download this adventure for free at DriveThruRPG (<https://goo.gl/8HA8s9>); otherwise, re-rolling or introducing a site of your own is recommended.]



Adventure Site 1: Frog Demon Temple

JEVO AND I

“Nasty business with the Lord-Surveyor, Jevo, what?”

“If you say, Pan Vosvr.”

“I mean look at the face of it, old chum. Man writes an apologia titled *A Corelands Defense of The Absolute Necessity of Frog Demons*. I mean that is just asking for it, isn't it? One doesn't just casually stroll into a salon, stating ‘You know, the Žába'dabel [frog demons], there is a warty race worth putting on a show about,’ and not expect to get stuck in.”

“Quite right, sir.”

“Still, disappearing outright on the first high official visit to the borderlands in 76 years, that's a rum show; and in Marlinko of all places, with a temple so near. A frog demon temple of all things. Perfectly dreadful. One must do something about that kind of *msvavo* [Pahr slang roughly meaning “outrage/tragedy/funny bit”]. Now, Jevo, I know you have a bit of a thing when it comes to my embossed half-plate, but I must have it for this adventure, what.”

“The one with the leering satyr face and protruding man-breasts, Pan Vosvr?”

“You will come around to it, Jevo.”

“I don't believe I will, sir.”

A few hours walk west of Marlinko sits a soggy bowl of a valley. Rocky, brush choked hills give out on a badly drained, mile-wide circular basin. Dead center in that basin, hemmed in by a reedy, half-drowned plain, is another near-perfect circle: a hundred-yard mound tightly packed with soaring, morose cedars. Inside this dark grove, surrounded by the ethereal croaks of thousands of froggy voices, sits the dank Menstrual Retreat Hall of the Benevolent Society of Hempecklers and Giggers.

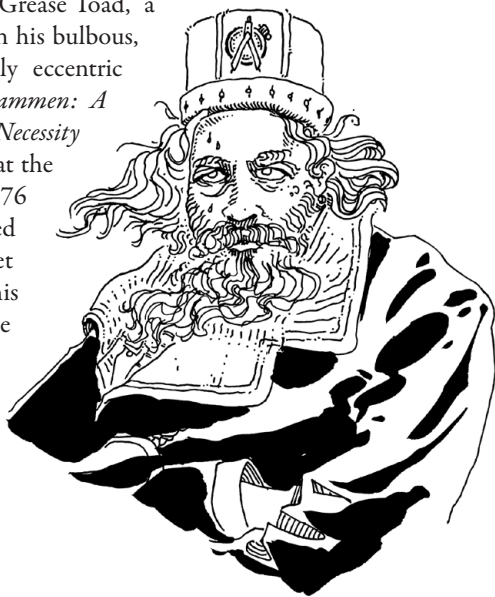
But no local calls it that. They know better. It is, was, and always will be the **Frog Demon Temple**.

A narrow, earthen-banked causeway cuts north arrow-straight from the trade road that (prudently) skirts the marshy basin. Two low, ugly frog statues, weathered abstract by wind and flood, squat just so at the start of the way. A rustically charming mix of feces and blood is lovingly smeared over the statues for a faux glazed look. Carefully retouched and rechiseled on each frog base is an inscription in slovenly Early-Vulgar Hyperborean. On the right it reads “TVMKP, the Warty Lord Whose Princely Blather-Coif Trumpets the Final Turn of the World-Dialectic,” and on the left “K RK, the Jowly Throat that Swallows the World.”

Approaching the mound along **the causeway is relatively safe, and no wandering monster checks are required**. Slogging through the marsh, however, merits outdoor swamp wandering monster checks at the normal rate.

THE GARRULOUS GREASE TOAD’S SIZEABLE BOUNTY

Ropucha Rigygzenacht, Surveyor-Lord of Canton Departments Both Hilly and Forested, has announced that he will be conducting an official inspection and tour of both Marlinko and Ostrovo cantons. In the Cantons he is, of course, more famously known as “The Garrulous Grease Toad,” a nickname attributed to him for both his bulbous, oily countenance and the famously eccentric apologia he penned, *Feuer und Flammen: A Corelands Defense of The Absolute Necessity of Frog Demons*. Locals are shocked at the news; it has, after all, been almost 76 years since an Overking-appointed cantonal high official has actually set foot in the borderlands. Beyond his official duties, the grandee is said to be offering “sizable bounties for items of magic” including 5,000 gold pieces for a “certain staff” (details available upon inquiry).



First Appearances

Past the causeway, tall cedars with wide-splayed roots huddle together against the aggressive fern choked undergrowth. A narrow, muddy path winds into the grove. As the last party member steps past the tree line, a persistent auditory illusion snaps into place. From all angles, a rising chorus of unseen frogs bellows and croaks, cycling up and down continuously. Careful listeners will hear—under the orchestral croaking—the names of all player characters being sung repeatedly by a soft, raspy voice.

Encircling the temple proper—30 yards down the muddy path—is a moss covered wall of pale green, cyclopean stone blocks breached by erosion at each cardinal point. A single, massive cedar sits dead center in this ring. Its wide splayed roots tumble down and around a 20-foot square stone structure. A weathered redwood door covered in warty round carvings sits in the structure's center. This is the entrance to Room 1 (the Stairs of Death, p. 51). A verdigris-encrusted copper font leans crookedly to the right of the door, its urn filled with clotted menstrual blood.



Interior Conditions in the Temple

The underground temple is uncomfortably warm, cloyingly humid, and dimly lit by rancid catfish-oil rush lamps. The deep smell of mildew hangs everywhere, punctuated here by the sharp tang of fermented fish offal and there by the musk of stale tobacco. The temple's walls are whitewashed. Humidity streaks the plaster and splotches of mold swirl in odd, almost meaningfully disturbing patterns. Dried mud studded with cedar needles and small animal bones sprawls in long patches on the crude, blue-toned mosaic floors.

Wandering Critters in the Temple

There is a 1 in 6 chance per turn of encountering one of these nasty sorts within the Temple.

d10	Trouble in the Temple
1	Hazardous/Annoying Environment (optional) (see below)
2	Hasty Booby Trap (p. 37)
3	1d4+1 Frog Demonettes (p. 37)
4–5	2d6 Human Cultists, Dilettante (p. 37)
6–7	1d8 Human Cultists, Hardcore (p. 38)
8	1d2 Frog Demon, Oorhi (p. 38)
9	1 Frog Demon, Krastacha (p. 38)
10	Cursed Black Hobbit (p. 38)

I D8 HAZARDOUS AND ANNOYING ENVIRONMENT

Poor maintenance, a boggy environment, and the sauna-like influence of the Hot Hell create a nasty and potentially dangerous problem for the party. A friendly (soft) referee might skip this table, treating this result as “Hasty Booby Trap” instead.

- 1 **Slippery Floor.** Slime, ectoplasm, moss, frog egg masses, or beautifully arranged intestines form an impressionist masterpiece. Regardless, PCs must roll 3d6 under DEX to stay upright in combat, or when blithely running through the mess.
- 2 **Bioluminescence.** Ghostly ferns, flickering cave anemones, floating glimmer mold spores, or even lime green frog demon excreta. The dim light is enough to both see rough outlines and to make hiding more difficult.
- 3 **Loose Wall.** Pernicious water damage, cedar roots, or anachronistic pipes rising from the Hot Hell make for a weak wall that could collapse under sustained attack, detailed searches for secret doors, or a *Fireball* blast.
- 4 **Sticky Floor.** Mud, quicksand, masses of blood, maggots, and expanded slime matter. Running, jumping, or pirouetting here is hard and messy work, and characters must roll 3d6 under STR to recover a dropped item quickly.
- 5 **Unstable Ceiling.** You thought a loose wall was dangerous? The whole decorative plaster ceiling here is soaked through with water and blind amphibious bugs, just waiting to fall down if poked.
- 6 **Toxic Mess.** Those sharp bones scattered around, that crap coating the walls, those spore-thick comfortable chairs? Yup. Toxic. Don’t disturb them and you’ll be fine. Characters exposed to the toxin must roll 3d6 under CON to shake off the effects; failure yields a -2 penalty to all attacks and saves for the rest of the day.
- 7 **Cold Mess.** the water is unusually cold after the sauna-heat of the temple (-1 to all attack rolls for 1 hour).
- 8 **Hot Mess.** steaming hot, exertion in heavy clothes or armor will not end well (-1 to all saves for one hour).

2 D8 HASTY BOOBY TRAPS

A temporary booby trap has recently been set by a hardworking crew of Frog Demonettes (p. 97) 10–60 feet in front of the party.

- 1 **Foot Pit.** A narrow, 3-foot leg catching pit. An observant character actively watching the floor will spot 50% of the time. Sharp, sturdy nails and bamboo spikes point down in two consecutive rings. A wandering murderhobo can carefully extract their trapped leg without damage in 1d3 turns, but wandering monsters now have a 2 in 6 chance to appear per turn. Ripping free of the trap immediately deals 1d4 damage.
- 2 **Even Nastier Foot Pit.** The same as a regular Foot Pit, but with the addition of punji sticks at the bottom, which inflict 1d3 damage on the heedless hero.
- 3 **Door Surprise.** The demonettes have set up a simple lever and pulley system on a nearby door. When the door opens, a spiked plank swings down at head level toward the opener, dealing 1d6 damage (save vs paralysis to evade completely). Black Hobbits (or other sufficiently diminutive PCs) should be safe from this one, and don't need to roll a save under normal circumstances.
- 4 **Sapling Whip.** An innocent-looking sapling lies casually in the floor muck, which disguises the counterweights and double spikes attached to the upper tip. A pressure plate in front of the trap releases the sapling, whipping the spiked end at the distracted delver. 1d6 damage.
- 5 **Spiked Panel.** The muck hides a pivoting floor panel with concealed six-inch barbs. Stepping on the panel whips the barbs into the shins with full force, dealing a painful 1d4+1 damage.
- 6 **Bamboo Shooter.** A magically elastic band (worth 60 gp) keeps a steel arrow under tension inside a slightly arched bamboo tube at floor level. A step trigger in front of the tube releases the arrow for 1d6 damage.
- 7 **Dud or Unfinished Trap.**
- 8 **Double Trap.** Roll d7 twice.

3 FROG DEMONETTES/ŽÁBA'DABEL NYMPHS

The group is busy laying a new booby trap. They are very intent on their work and have a 2 in 6 chance of being surprised. They will attack if disturbed.

Frog Demonettes: AC: 5, Hp: 9, HD: 2, Attk: 2 (weapon or claws), barbed steel darts 1d4+1, claws 1d4, XP: 29



4–5 HUMAN CULTISTS, DILETTANTE

Cultists in short teal tunics, swamp moss headdresses, and wicker frog masks are scattering mud, urinating in corners, and otherwise maintaining the terrible, squalid conditions of the temple. They will only attack a party they outnumber by two to one, and will break and cry for Meltvmpa the Mother Toad if the battle turns on them.

Dilettante Cultists: 0-level combatants, AC: 9 ragged tunics, Hp: 2, Attk: 1 (weapon), carved club or dagger 1d4, XP: 10

6-7 HUMAN CULTISTS, **HARDCORE**

Adorned like above, but the real deal. They are fucking crazy.

So-Serious Cultists: AC: 7 ragged tunics, Hp: 7, HD: 1+1, Attk: 1 (weapon), giggling spear 1d6, SA +2 to attack when frenzied, SD no morale checks, XP: 21, treat as Berserker (*LL* p. 87)

8 **FROG DEMON/ŽÁBA'DABEL, OORHI**

Roll or Pick p. 99 for special powers and hit dice.

Oorhi Frog Demon: AC: 3, Hp: 20/25/30, HD: 4/5/6, Attk: 3 (2 claws, bite), claws d4, bite d10, SA: special powers, SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 245/650/1070

9 **FROG DEMON/ŽÁBA'DABEL, KRASTACHA**

Roll or Pick p. 99 for special powers and hit dice.

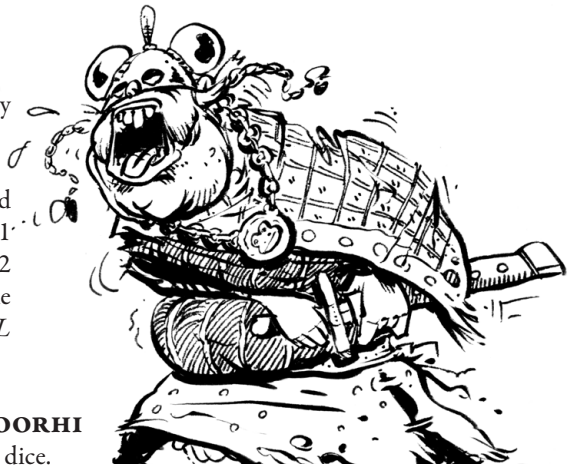
Krastacha Frog Demon: AC: 3, Hp: 25/30/35, HD: 5/6/7, Attk: 3 (2 claws, bite), claws d4, bite d10, SA: special powers, SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 650/1070/1490

10 **CHOLLY SCYTHESEEDS, CURSED BLACK HOBBIT**

After donning a woefully cursed helmet, this diminutive Black Hobbit began roving the land in search of a place to wreak his darkest fantasies of violence. The awful fetid heart of the Frog Demon Temple seemed like a sound spot to enact such dire plans (plus it got him away from all those irritating Chaos Party membership drives). Rather than attacking on sight, Cholly will wait until PCs are involved in something distracting before sneaking in from the sides and attempting to target the most vulnerable members of the group, either with standard weapons or his four bombs (hand-sized stereotypical black spherical bombs with sizzling fuse).

Cholly wears a gleaming helmet with two grotesquely-oversized horns spiraling upwards. The helmet is actually a particularly annoying minor frog-demon, so reviled in demondom for his frequent and tediously predictable rage-quits, that he has been permanently bound into the item-form known as the **Birse-Helm of Mnuch's Extreme Vexation**. The helmet provides infravision out to 60' while worn, and allows the wearer to deal an additional 1d6 damage on a charge. Unfortunately, it also causes a deep and furious insecurity in its wearer. Any suggestion or attempt to remove the helmet will cause the wearer to respond with a (quite literal) homicidal rage for 1-8 rounds. The helmet may only be removed with *Remove Curse* or the death of the wearer.

Cholly Scytheseds: 4th-level black hobbit (HCC2 p. 5), AC: 0 splint mail and Dex, Hp: 18, Attk: 1 (weapon), shortsword d6, crossbow d6, SA infravision, 1d6 additional charge damage, 4 bombs (1d8+1 dmg in 5' radius), XP: 190



Sample Frog Demons

YEGUYA (OORHI)

Slim and slippery as an eel, mottled red and silver, with bloodshot eyes like warts covering its back and limbs. Yeguya is a shapeshifter and can transform into a rock-gnome, halfling, or dog once a day.

AC: 2, Hp: 17, HD: 4, Attk: 3 (2 claws, eyebite), 2 claws 1d4, eyebite 1d6 and save vs. rod/staff/wand to avoid blindness, SD takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, cannot be surprised or flanked, difficult to grapple or hold, XP: 355

SLUZAVA (OORHI)

Oily and glutinous, the orange frog demon slides along almost like a puddle, eyes and mouths seeming to open within it at random. A confusing cacophony of screams echo from it, sounded forth by an elastic, barbed tongue.

AC: 5 (soft), Hp: 23, HD 6, Attk: 2, elastic barbed tongue 10' reach 1d8, bite 1d8, SA: screams 50' radius (save vs charm to avoid *Confusion* [LL p. 28]), SD can change shape and size into any vaguely orange-hued human sized sentient race, XP: 1320

GÓBA (KRASTACHA)

Bloated and squat like a toadstool, with a great hooked mouth twisting around its head and neck, hiding three great prehensile radular tongues covered in serrations and spiny growths.

AC: 4 (soft flesh), Hp: 21, HD:5, Attk 4, 3 entangling thorny projectile tongues 1d4, rippling mouth 1d10+2, SD can only be damaged by magical or silver weapon, SW double damage from acid and fire, XP: 650

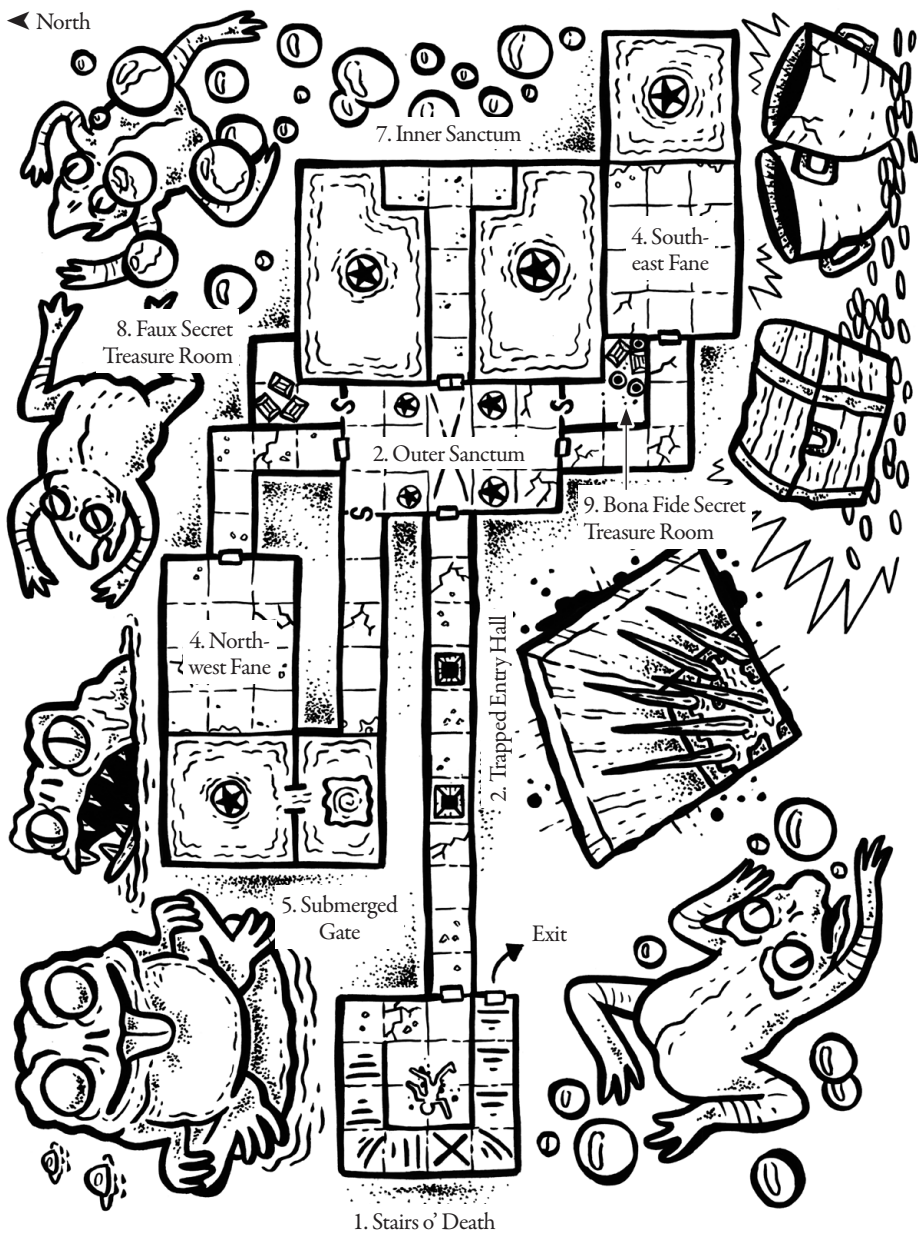
SHTÒRKO (KRASTACHA)

Thick, heavy, and stumpy, the verdigris thing has only rudimentary eyes and mouth, but great oversized legs. It launches itself like a bullet, shedding its legs and erupting in a thrashing bush of entangling, jointed limbs on impact.

HD 6, Hp: 21, AC 3, Attk: 3, 2 claws 1d2, bite 1d4 OR thrashing jump 1d12 on impact and 40' range, SA bush of limbs 10' radius 1d6 (save vs breath weapon to avoid being *entangled* [AEC p. 43]), XP: 1070

"I have discovered a truly marvelous batrachiary, which this volume is too narrow to contain..." For additional frog demons in this vein, and an expanded Frog Demon Generator, consult the web supplement *Hell Frog Heaven*, by Luka Rejec, available at DriveThruRPG (<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/browse/pub/7124/Hydra-Cooperative>).

Map of the Frog Demon Temple

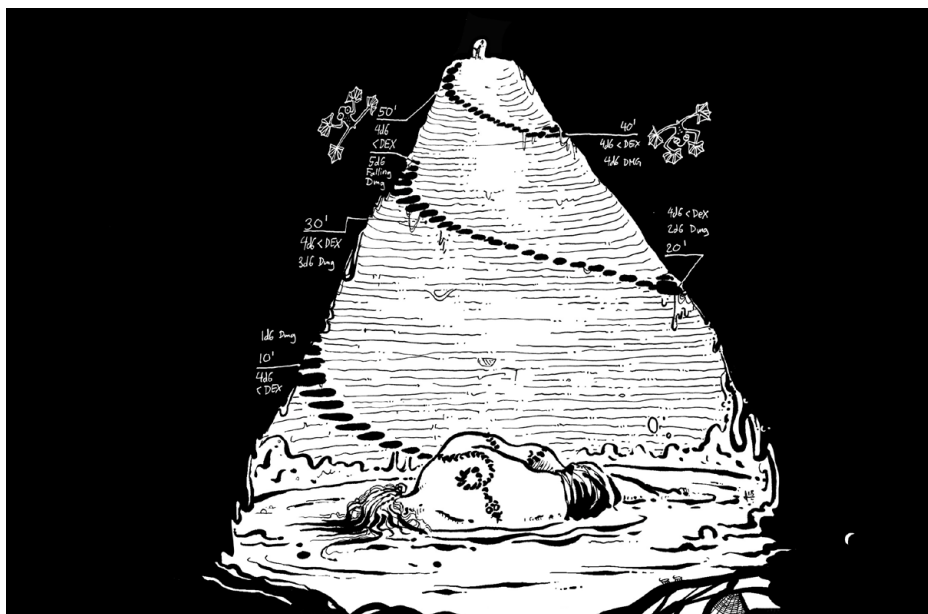


Temple Locations (Site Key)

I STAIRS O' DEATH

The entrance into the dungeon is a large, open stairwell. The 4-foot-wide stone staircase clings to the streaked, whitewashed walls around a dizzying open interior well that plunges 60 feet to the main level of the dungeon. The steps are slippery with condensation and muck, and worse, are **trapped**. At exactly 50 feet up, a step is marked with a small, discreet flying frog symbol. The *next* step is **rigged to swing down if stepped on**. Careless characters may be saved by pure reflexes (roll 4d6 under their DEX), otherwise they plummet down and take 5d6 falling damage. An identical trap repeats at 40 feet for 4d6 falling damage, 30 feet for 3d6, 20 feet for 2d6 and 10 feet for 1d6. Canny players might check and feel smart about themselves; foolish ones might die.

The bloated, **broken body** of a man sprawls far beneath the stair trap. A long green viper is tattooed across his arm and chest. His possessions have long since been stripped from him with the exception of a plain gold hoop earring (worth 30 gp). Jostling the body in any way will burst the bulging skin, releasing noxious (but natural) corpse gas.



2 TRAPPED ENTRY HALL

Two bog-standard (pun somewhat intended) covered 15-foot pits with urine-soaked punji stakes (2d6 damage, save vs poison or infection sets in, dealing 1d3 damage each day until *Cure Light Wounds* or other magic healing is used) are installed 20' apart in this corridor. The covered panels will swing closed and lock after being sprung. Party members who are not trapped below can force the panels with an Open Doors check.



3 OUTER SANCTUM

Four squat three-foot-tall red marble frog statues sit in a square formation, facing inwards (at the points of the “X” on the map). The wide slit mouths of the four statues are exactly two feet off the ground, and have small, conically cut diamonds (worth 500 gp each) instead of tongues.

Approaching within five feet of the ‘X’ marked on the map or jostling the diamonds **activates** *The Horizontal Division of a Space*, a trap (and conceptual art piece). **Searing energy beams** extend from the statue mouths, creating a **razor-thin plane of energy** across the entire shaded area on the map, which inflicts 2d6 damage (save vs paralysis to drop prone beneath the plane). Slain characters are neatly cut in half (*Resident Evil*-style). The beams project for 1d4 turns. Any critics travelling with the party are suitably impressed by the artistic merits of the installation.

4 NORTHWEST FANE

The eastern half of this room is dry and contains a cluster of reed prayer mats and small devotional bowls of foul, stinking fish guts.

The western half is consumed by a stagnant 20-foot-deep pool of night-black water. A narrow, circular platform of polished black marble is barely visible above the water line. At the water’s edge is a small, chiseled plaque which reads “Mighty Ryxientxsv: Arise, Ye Who Readies the Maternal Spawnqueen of all Broods.” A small row of apparent serial numbers has been hastily filed off.

Resting on the platform is an ugly, squat, gleaming, **one-foot-tall gold idol of an upright frog** (3,000 gp value, weighing 100 lbs thanks to a depleted uranium core) with a distended belly and suggestively spread legs. The idol is under a permanent enchantment (*Bufo’s Slippery Toad*) that protects it from lassoes, nets, and other capture by inanimate objects (the object humorously slips itself off after very obviously striking home). It can be readily grabbed with a hand or any other bare organic appendage. When the idol is moved, the platform burbles and begins sinking at four feet per round, reaching the bottom of the pool in five rounds.

Five giant frogs have been trained to lie submerged in the pool and ambush characters who enter the fetid waters.

Giant Frogs: AC: 7, Hp: 15, HD: 3, Attk: 1 (bite or tongue attack), bite 2d4, SA tongue attack to seize and swallow target, causing 1d6 damage per round to those consumed (see *AEC* p. 126), SD 4 in 6 chance to surprise, XP: 65, *AEC* p. 126.

5 SUBMERGED GATE

Still water fills this room, except for the faint rippling of a whirlpool at the center. On the dry platform jutting past the secret door are eight large wicker baskets filled with grapefruit-sized, artisanal hand-rolled balls of quinoa, watercress, grubs and artfully chopped human limbs. This is food for the frogs in Room 4, the Northwest Fane.

At the bottom of the gentle whirlpool (10 feet down) is a **submerged shaft which is a gate to another dimension, the Hot Hell**. Swimming down said shaft creates an instant, eerie sensation of swimming upwards until the water breaks after 30 feet into **Special Area A, the Hot Hell Sinkhole** (p. 50).



6 SOUTHEAST FANE

The Southeast Fane is identical to Room 4 (above), except that the idol is a gold-painted fake made of coarse black pumice so light it floats. It is worth a mere 20 gp. It is enchanted with *Bufo's Slippery Toad*, just like the original in Room 4 (p. 42). The Labyrinth Lord may elect to be a total dick and add a monster frog or three (as in Room 4) to the water.



7 INNER SANCTUM

Verdigris-encrusted bronze double doors open onto a smooth, black marble causeway which leads between two brackish, dark pools to a devotional platform at the eastern end of this room. A **figure sits on the platform** (a frog demon pretending to be a man, see below). In both pools sit two narrow black stone pedestals identical to the pedestal in Room 4, also sporting **golden frog idols** identical in value and protective enchantment to the original (really just go read the p. 42 description). The only noticeable differences are the stylized phalluses jutting from below their distended bellies.

The **north pool pedestal is trapped**. Unlike Room 4's sinking pillar, this pedestal **springs straight up** if the pressure plate on top of the pedestal is triggered (by five or more pounds of additional weight). A roll of 4d6 under their DEX must be made to avoid being catapulted and smashed against the ceiling for 3d6 damage. There is a small indentation for the idol in the ceiling, easily visible to anyone who bothers to look up.

The south pool pedestal is not trapped.

Painted along the eastern wall at the platform (in surprisingly fresh looking plaster) is a **mural depicting three gnarled, long-limbed, tall, demonic frogs** standing high on their bowlegs, each holding a dainty musical instrument. Faint traces of dried blood can be seen all over the platform by an observant character.

At the dead center of the eastern platform **sits a cross-legged**, oily, cherub-cheeked and quite rotund **aristocrat** in ermine robes (200 gp value) and wearing a heavy gold chain of office (1,000 gp value). He is tracing the room in his sketchbook. The creature (in reality an illusion cloaked **Oorhi frog demon**) will engage the party in pleasantries, claiming to be **Ropucha Rigygztzenacht**, Surveyor-Lord of Canton Departments, and demanding that the party lead him back to Marlinko or the closest hamlet. Of course, he awaits the moment when he can trick the party to its DOOM (mwahaha). Unfortunately for the demonic doppelganger, he is of a particularly anal-retentive bent, and is forced to obsessively correct any statements uttered in his presence with a retort beginning with "well, actually..." This includes statements that might expose him as a Frog Demon.

Touching the mural, attacking faux-Ropucha, or grabbing one or both of the idols will begin to **animate the three Krastacha frog demons** held in stasis inside the mural, a process that takes three rounds. On the first round, a hellish blues melody is heard. On the second round the frog demon images began to sway and swing, appearing to play their instruments (clearly out of synch with the melody, which is now growing louder). On the third round, the melody rises to a crescendo, the plaster melts and reforms into frog-demon bodies, and they step forward. Oh shit.



Faux-Ropucha the Frog Demon: AC: 3, Hp: 20, HD: 4, Attk: 3 (2 claws and bite), claws d4, bite d10, SA: *Aura of Bureaucratic Propriety* (every round, all creatures next to Faux-Ropucha must save vs. petrification or feel an unnatural compulsion to explain exactly what they are about to do, in triplicate. If this takes more than 6 real-time seconds, they lose their action), SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 245

Frog Demon Musician ‘Lemon,’ Krastacha. AC: 3, Hp: 25, HD: 5, Attk: 3 (2 claws, bite) or 1 (brass banjo), claws d4, bite d10, banjo d12, SA: *Speed Freak* (when Lemon takes damage, it or one of its allies may immediately move or attack), SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 650

Frog Demon Musician ‘Turnikov,’ Krastacha. AC: 3, Hp: 22, HD: 5, Attk: 3 (2 claws, bite) or 1 (silver saxophone), claws d4, bite d10, saxophone d12, SA: *Silver Machine* (on a claw hit, injects confusion demonettes; save vs poison or dance 10’ in a random direction and take a -1 penalty to physical activities for 1 day), SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 650

Frog Demon Musician ‘Cowbell,’ Krastacha. AC: 3, Hp: 28, HD: 5, Attk: 3 (2 claws, bite) or 1 (deathlovin’ drums), claws d4, bite d10, drums d12, SA: *Don’t Fear the Reaper* (all within hearing range must save vs. spell or lose their fear of death for the next ten minutes, refusing to retreat in combat), SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 650

8 FAUX SECRET TREASURE ROOM

Large clay urns with archaic gold coins spilling forth and two long humidity-warped wooden chests are crammed into the far end of this room. **Treasure!** The coins are actually lead painted with a cheap veneer of gold paint (an attentive delver will notice that the coins are about two-thirds of the weight they should be).

Touching either of the chests sets off a screaming *Magic Mouth* (AEC p. 52) that has a 4 in 6 chance of attracting wandering monsters. Inside the chests are an assortment of common hand weapons—a slightly bent short sword, a flimsy looking rapier, a warped warhammer—with the hilts covered in cheap glitter, along with a smoky glass ball, a costume necklace, and two clay figurines of tigers. All of this is worthless *Detect Magic* bait.

9 BONA FIDE SECRET TREASURE ROOM

Entering the door will tip a bucket filled with petrified gorgon paddies and slug acid (save vs paralysis or take d8 damage) onto the unwary (or roll on the Hasty Booby Trap table on p. 37). Six hours after the PCs visit this room, Frog Demonettes will install a new (randomly determined) trap at a different point in this room, and continue to do so following every future visit.

Three well kept steel-bound locked chests lie in the center of this chamber. Inside the chests are 7,200 silver pieces, a silver ruby adorned brooch with the inscription “Eliska, seriously, fuck off” (worth 500 gp), a set of thin gold frog prongs in a walnut case (worth 400 gp), and the *Staff of the Ragygi*.

STAFF OF THE RAGYGI

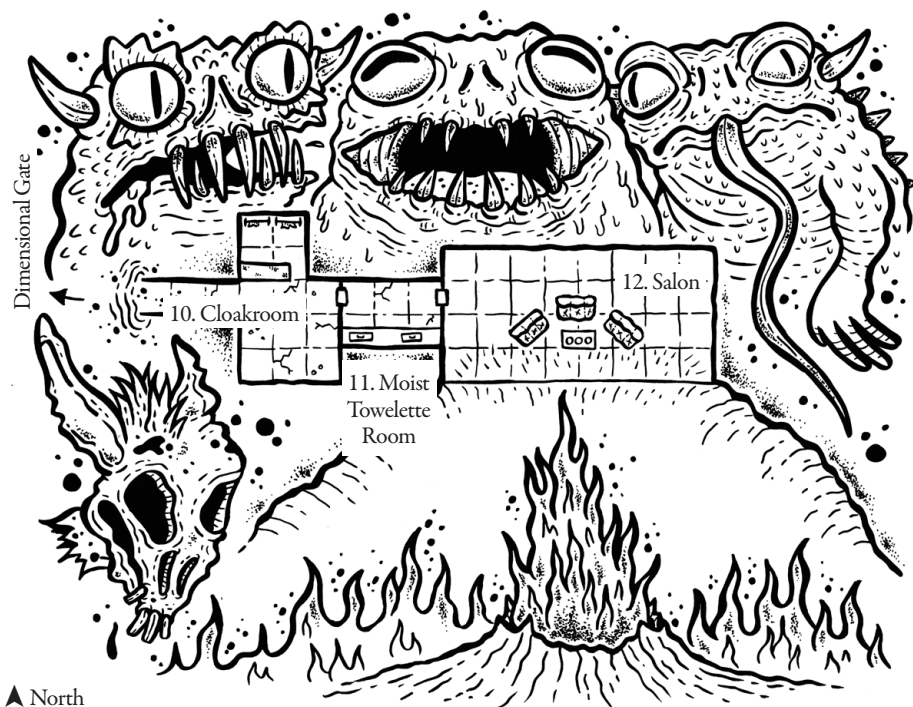
Usable only by illusionists and mountebanks (or magic users of a devious mindset in other rulesets). The staff is approximately 7’3” long, carved of finely whorled redwood with inlays of soft gold and black obsidian, with a comfortable velvet grip. It has a hidden compartment that holds two toothpicks, a moustache comb, and a pair of clippers.

Powers:

- 1 Grants the ability to cast *False Gold* (AEC p. 62) and *Nystul’s Magical Kickstarter* (treat as *Magic Aura*, AEC p. 69) once a day.
- 2 Grants the user an additional 1st level and 2nd level spell slot while held (releasing the staff erases the spells from memory and they must be re-memorized as usual).
- 3 Strikes as a +1 weapon (1d6+1) and, oddly, can be used to backstab.



Sublevel: Salacious Salon of Sxiploi



10 CLOAKROOM

Behind a azure-tiled counter sits **Blixr**, a **sickly, thin frog demonette** with flaccid citrine yellow skin and a loose fitting (but immaculate) white uniform fronted with golden braid. In a terse, heavily accented croak, she asks for cloaks or other outerwear. She produces an obsidian token from a slit in her wan neck in exchange for the article of clothing. A delicate cape made from ocular-bat wing membranes (worth 150 gp) and a heavy ermine coat with thick shoulder pads and inexplicable rows of cast iron barbs (worth 500 gp) hang on a rack behind her. The demonette will attack if the cloak rack is disturbed, or if anyone attempts to actually redeem the token and retrieve their clothing.

Blixr: AC: 5, Hp: 5, HD: 2, Attk: 2 (2 claws), claws 1d4, XP: 29

11 MOIST TOWELETTE ROOM

Two large white steel covered buffet trays sit here on a gleaming marble counter. Two cans of magic sterno (low open flame burns for 24 hours before running out) sit below the trays warming neatly folded **moist towelettes**. A small sign scrawled in menstrual blood states “take one and only one and refresh.”

Taking more than one has no consequences.

12 SALON

The salon is decorated in the clean, crisp lines of Late Hell Modernist style: bare, polished rock floors; light, thin metal gas burners on the walls for illumination; and a long airy window on the southern wall emitting red light. Through the glass panel (which overlooks the Hot Hell), a massive pillar of fire can be seen arching up from a plain of volcanic glass littered with styrofoam cups. Artfully arranged on a low, ebony coffee table are **three tiny, delicate bowls** containing decorative ebon black, pale green, and blood red **pearls** (worth 2,000 gold pieces each) and a platter of giant fly maggots wrapped in lammasu bacon.



Lounging on low, sleek hobbit-skin couches are **three articulate Oorhi frog demons: Kanvmp, Hiltrnoc and Wasescltz**. They are debating and discussing the political dimensions of soul-juice derivative markets (they disagree on the degree of regulation of said financial instruments) and Hot Hell literary trends with their host, **Sxiploi**, a long-dead severed donkey head resting on a velvet cushion. The demons will react to apparent sharp points by the mute and long deceased head. The debate is punctuated frequently by droll, cutting gossip about local Marlinko human notables.

The demons will not immediately attack but will demand that party members participate in their conversation. Failure to provide more than two real-time minutes of interesting conversation (or attempts to steal the table bowls or otherwise be a boor) will bore the demons enough to fight. Otherwise, they will let the party come and go with no fuss.

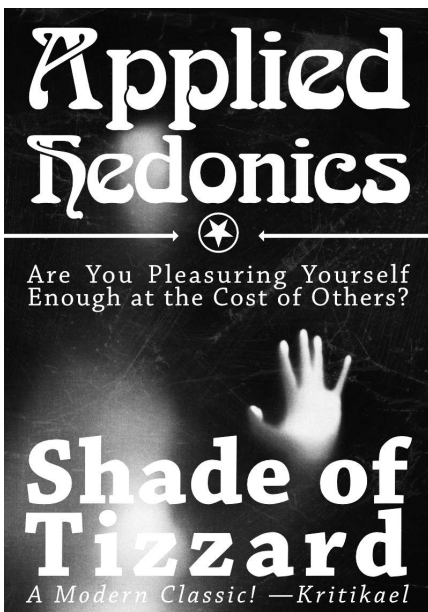
Kanvmp: AC: 3, Hp: 21, HD: 5, Attk: 3 (2 claws, bite), claws d4, tongue d10, SA: stretchy arms and tongue with 10' reach, successful tongue attack pulls target into mouth for d8 additional damage per round (save vs. paralysis to escape), SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 650

Hiltrnoc: AC: 3, Hp: 29, HD: 6, Attk: 4 (2 claws, bite, tongue), claws d4, bite d10, tongue d6, SA: tongue attack heals it for hp equal to damage dealt, SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, can shift into any purplish-hued race, except war bears, SW: takes double damage from war bears, XP: 1070

Wasescltz: AC: 3, Hp: 26, HD: 6, Attk: 3 (2 claws, bite), claws d4, bite d10, SA: six crab limbs explode out of Wasescltz's flesh and each attacks for d6, the demon takes 6 hp damage when they erupt, SD: takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 1070

d10 Bestsellers of the Hot Hell

- 1 *Applied Hedonics: Are You Pleasuring Yourself Enough at the Cost of Others?* Written by the Shade of Tizzard. A rising newcomer to the Hot Hell literary scene, the author rings the warning bell on creeping weal in the City Whose Brass Towers Stand Beyond.
- 2 *The Paleo-Soul Diet: A Homecoming to Primal Demonic Gastronomy.* The case for the return to simple Cave Dwarf spirit essence-cuisine. Channel your inner Zombastadon.
- 3 *Capital in the XXIII Aeon.* Everyone claims to have read this 2,358 page exploration of demonic political economy.
- 4 *Three Word Title: A Guide to the Naming of Products Auteur and Ludic.* A short, focused primer on snappy literary titles.
- 5 *The Iron Doom Crawling Red Monolith of the Cursed Pod-God Maze.* Controversial childhood memoir of bestselling author Roohaznarf the Uncheckable Flame that Consumes All. Told entirely through random die-drop charts, the title and accounts of charming life events reset at the conclusion of the book.
- 6 *The Five People You Meet in the Sun Lord's Orb.* A horror novella exploring the terrors of cloying human religious sentimentality.
- 7 *Black Hobbit Lives Matter Not.* A dry yet informative oral history of halfling agitators in the world of Žem.
- 8 *My Turn Again.* A political autobiography of Zzatz, the eternal tyrant of the Seamless Machine. Rumored to be written by shadowy wraith-writer Mo'laliik.
- 9 *The Tome That Cannot Be Spoken Of.* Contents of which cannot be relayed or even ideated for fear of the soul-rendering consequences.
- 10 *The Penultimate Tome That Cannot Be Spoken Of.* There is a rather slim volume—one that I am not specifically referencing in anyway either on my tongue or deep in my stolen soul, nor am I ideating as a physical object or as literary concept—that may or may not be the prequel of another book. Perfect as a gift for that special someone in your life of Unspeakable Evil.



Special Area A: Hell Sinkhole

The shaft from “below” in Room 5 enters into the waters of a vast underground cenote choked with purple algae. The sky, glimpsed far above, seems almost molten, and crackles with scarlet energies. The air here is oppressive, hot and humid. Massive jagged steel ferns and razorvines cling to sheer mauve limestone walls that soar 140 feet above.

Scaling the walls allows entry into the greater environs of the Hot Hell or an appropriately shitty plane or pocket dimension of the Labyrinth Lord’s choice.

The water bloated **corpse of Ropucha Rigygtzenacht** (for real this time) floats face down here, his ermine garments (worth 200 gp despite their miserable conditions) straining from the swollen flesh. Wrapped tight in his fist is the **Toe Ring of Vastri the Hopping Prophet**.

TOE-RING OF VASTRI THE HOPPING PROPHET

A wide titanium ring with misshapen golden bumps affixed. The ring must be worn around the big toe to activate its magical abilities.

Powers:

- 1 *Cause Severe Dampness* (once per day, one-mile radius, one hour duration): Foggy conditions extinguish normal fires, limit visibility to 60 yards, and dampen bowstrings, halving effective range and incurring -2 to attacks.
- 2 *Inflict Excrescence* (once per day): Causes huge hard knobby warts to cover a target creature’s face, -2 to CHA (no save). Can only be removed with *Cure Serious Wounds* or *Cure Disease*.
- 3 *Batrachian Invocation* (once per day): Summons a single out-of-shape frog demonette to serve the wielder of the Toe Ring until midnight, at which time the creature will be whisked away, back to the Hot Hell.

Frog Demonette: AC: 5, Hp: 9, HD: 2, Attk: 2 (weapon or claws), barbed steel darts 1d4+1, claws 1d4, SD trap construction, XP: 29

Adventure Inspirations

War With the Newts, Karel Čapek
The Tale of Satampira Zeiros, Clark Ashton Smith
The Miscellaneum of Cinder, Jeff Rients

Adventure Site 2: Beets for the Beef God



At First Glance

Trundling up the deeply rutted market road from Marlinko Canton's port town **Bystrica** (really just an oversized village with some wharfs) toward **Ctyri Ctvrt** (pronounced styr-ZHE Shta-VERT) manor, the traveler beholds a scene famed in the Cantons for its pure monotony and boredom. Impossibly massive eroded fields of rye, wheat, peas, and beets roll horizon to horizon along gently sloping hills, unbroken by hedges, tree lines, and boundary walls. The land seems empty, work crews of peasants only far-off specks dwarfed by the never-ending brown rows of tilled soil.

Pulling up to the manor house proper gives little relief. A tiny cluster of impeccably whitewashed black trimmed peasant cottages huddles south of the main gate. The manor house is utterly typical and conventional for the region: a semi-fortified square of similarly whitewashed and trimmed buildings, but larger, with a second story of shuttered windows jutting out of the north wing.

The only thing out of place in this postcard-perfect beet-land agricultural exhibit is the burned out, black-toothed shell of a tiny domed chapel to the Sun Lord—and the uncomfortable brooding stillness in the air. No children play in the streets. No peasants or craftsmen work the land or the anvil. The gates of the manor house (rarely closed in these parts) and the doors of the cottages are shut tight. Even the clucking of chickens and rooting of pigs seems muted and the usual sweet-scented winds blowing off the Persimmon Sea barely stir.



Running This Adventure

This adventure is on a timer and the Labyrinth Lord should familiarize themselves with the moving pieces before running it. As time goes on and **Smerc** (the eponymous Beet God and the presumed main antagonist of the party) infects more of the local citizenry, the danger level of both the site and the infestation as a whole go up. This escalation is modeled in the Beet Spawn Infection Index (p. 56), which ranges from Class Alpha (initial stages) to Class Omega (nigh-ruinous). Take special note that many NPCs and rooms will change depending on how the Index moves.

There are two parts to the adventure: a **pointcrawl** of the [formerly] bucolic surroundings of Ctyri Ctvrt (p. 59), and the **manor** itself (p. 79), whence the Beet God's plan unfurls from the holiest of root cellars. You may skip the pointcrawl and dive right into the manor for a shorter game, or even reskin the hamlet (sans infection) as a generic Hill Cantons wonderland.

Adventure Hooks

This is a horror scenario—even if satirical of genre conventions—and the Labyrinth Lord should use tantalizing hooks to get the players to the manor. A Class Gamma infection represents a major recognizable threat with the hithertofores unsuspecting Rada of Marlinko or other local notable offering a 2,000 gp bounty to the party in exchange for finding and eliminating the source of the threat in the manor house. Here are some suggestions for when the Index is fielding the more subtle Class Alpha or Beta infections:

GRABBING THEIR CURIOSITY

From *News of the Day* in Marlinko (*FDM* p. 23), “Sub-boyar Ritek son of Ritek claims to have unearthed a 500-stone beet from his tenant farmer’s field in the southlands hamlet of Ctyri Ctvrt. Most strange of all is the twisted, face-like blemish near the giant beet’s crown. A local shepherd claims to have heard a booming voice emanating from the root cellar where the beet was taken two nights ago.” Note that Ctyri Ctvrt is a mere six miles south of Marlinko.

THE ANGRY DEALER

As a relaxing side hobby, Hurloj Kladio, ruthless head of Marlinko’s Guild of Accipitraries, Drovers, and Ankle-Beaters (*FDM* p. 20), dabbles in dealing *bruz* (an addictive hallucinogen made from mollusk paste, *FDM* p. 54) to his social betters in the landed gentry. Against his better judgment, Hurloj has been selling the manor lord Ritek parcels of the paste on credit. Deeply irritated by the failure of the besieged boyar to pay his monthly debt of 280 gold pieces, Hurloj asks the party to break Ritek’s left arm. Hurloj mentions that the party can keep the debt if extracted and throws in an extra 50 gold. It’s the principle of the thing.

LOVEGRAM

Jaromir the doddering Old Smith (*SUD* p. 3) is conducting an unlikely (yet utterly sincere) penpal romance with Svetlana, Ritek’s servant (who he does not know is freshly dead). He asks the party to deliver, FedEx style, a thick bundle of flowery and deeply euphemistic love letters to her in exchange for a vial of potent tears from a chronically melancholic angel (1 dose, heals 3d6 Hp upon ingestion).

What in the Hot Hell Happened Here?



It began with a fat priest boyar.

The owner of the manor is one **Ritek son of Ritek**, a middle-aged boyar famed for his utter lack of distinction. He is also secretly an evil priest of the Anti-World Turtle of the Anti-Cantons. He lived with his lover, the marsh-witch **Maliska**, and her constant admonitions about self-care and the importance of faster social advancement in the fell ranks of evil high priests.

“You look fat in that gore-inflected robe—and did you talk to Ha-Vul about your idea to poison the souls of lesser mammals yet?”

“Deep-set eyes might look mysterious, but not when they’re set in so much pig lard!”

“Did you remember to send the gilt-and-gore-edged invitations to the latest moonlight coven coffee and cake soirée to the Lumpeks, the Neprespans, and those neophyte Novaks?”

One Dark Moon Ago...



Just over a month ago, Ritek slew Maliska in a final midlife crisis moment of rage. After a darkly humorous misadventure involving a teak bathtub, substandard lye, 30 pounds of goat cream cheese, and a decorative owlbearskin rug, he buried her remains in the prize-winning beet field just east of the manor.

The misogynistic malevolence of that act—and the sheer supernatural tenacity of Maliska’s post-mortem rage and frustration—tore a rent in the Veil between the worlds to a justifiably obscure section of the Hot Hell, where demonic tuber lords make endless war on equally demonic flowery vine princes. **Smerc** (pronounced SH-mer-za), a lesser light on the demon tuber scene, saw great opportunity in the new world and projected his essence into a rather promising beet growing out of Maliska’s buried heart. Overnight, the beet swelled to unholy proportions.

... 30 days ago

In the morn, drawn to the flickering indigo aura and flesh-like crown of the root vegetable, the village foreman **Bogdan the Horn-Goat**, attempted to [redacted] the massive beet to the shock and dismay of the assembled group of peasants. *[Editor’s Note: again the author belabored a graphic and highly inappropriate act with a description of a second and viler sentence.]* Though the thoroughly nauseated crew pulled him off within several horrified seconds, Smerc, the demon pushing his way into the material world through the beet had managed to infect the exposed member.

Thus Bogdan became **Beetnik Zero**.

That night, the increasingly erratic and irritable Bogdan snuck out of his quarters and returned to the field, wheelbarrow and shovel in hand. Commands boomed from the horrific tuber’s leafy lips. Monotonously chanting “yes, root-master,” Bogdan unearthed the now man-sized beet, and moved it into the prodigious root cellar of the manor house.

From there Smerc began his painfully incremental plan of patient person-to-person infection.

Beef Spawn Infection Index

Unless the party intervenes, Smerc will systematically infect the local area. This is modeled similarly to the Chaos Index in *Slumbering Ursine Dunes* and its sequels, but unlike those indices, the infection index only moves up with time and the inaction of the party.

Destroying Smerc destroys the infection and the attendant threat levels of this index. Within 1d4 turns of his downfall all infected characters will begin spitting up copious amounts of what looks like chunky, deep purple borscht—far more than could be physically contained in a humanoid body. Most will die from the shock, but levelled characters may attempt a save vs poison. Survivors are left with a pathological fear of edible tubers, and an unexpected upside—a permanent and hefty +3 to saves vs. poison.

I CLASS ALPHA: MANOR MADNESS

At the adventure start, only Bogdan the foreman and Cenik the gatekeeper (p. 83) are fully dominated by Smerc. All other domestic servants in the manor are either in second stage psychosis or slain. In the cottages the villagers are uninfected (with the exception of Hinek).

2-4 CLASS BETA: THE HAMLET IS MINE!

All domestic servants and the villagers near the manor are directly dominated beetniks—with the exception of the manor children (who now have all fled the area to sad, exploited street lives in Marlinko). A baker's dozen of residents of Bystrica, the nearby town, who have regular business with the manor will be in psychotic second-stage infections and three of Ritek's cult members (0-level combatants) in town are totally dominated. The infected Bystrica residents have been led back to town and are involved in a number of random, violent episodes there.

5-7 CLASS GAMMA: AND YOUR LITTLE TOWN, TOO

Roughly a third of Bystrica has been killed or has fled the chaos and rioting. The Overking has sent in around 40 armed and gilded lancers, but after surprising losses on their first day, they are now barricading themselves in the guild halls. The remaining citizens are infected, going from psychotic behavior to full domination by the time the index hits 7. Extra guards will have been posted around the manor as noted in the room key.

8-9 CLASS DELTA: SHIT'S GETTING REAL

The Overking's men have fled and are sealing off the roads into Bystrica. The four hundred remaining town residents are in full thrall of the Beet God. Under his command, they are busy building an elaborate gold-painted and carved wagon with a soil bed to transport Smerc, and gathering weapons of war to prepare for an invasion of the surrounding region.

10+ CLASS OMEGA: THE END OF THINGS ... WELL, NO

The simple answer is things never get to this stage—or at least not in this published work. In the Hill Cantons, the Rada of Marlinko and Overkingdom are (barely) competent enough to recognize the direness of the threat. The Black Army cordons off the entire region with regular patrols and then systematically puts to the sabre all infected residents, burning the villages and the manor—though leaving the Beet God himself alive and quite well in his root cellar lair. He waits patiently for his day, a day none too soon when two full moons are seen in a month... a day when He shall rise again and take a servant...

Alternately, a Labyrinth Lord that feels a wicked, wicked desire to take a wrecking ball to their setting could let the infection spread to increasingly larger and larger sections of the country. There is a certain pleasure in that kind of thing.

Beef Spawn Index Movers

The Index starts at 1, when the first hook for the adventure is presented to the PCs, and can rise to 10 and more. Killing Smerc ends the entire infection process, permanently setting the index to zero, otherwise it cannot drop below 1.

- Each **week elapsed** since the scenario started, index +1.
- Each **leveled PC or NPC infected**, index +1.
- Rebuilding / **reconsecrating the temple** of the Sun Lord in the hamlet of Ctyri Ctvrt (p. 78), index -2.
- **Ritek is infected**, index +2.
- **Ritek is killed**, chaotic psychic wave. Roll a d6; there is a 4 in 6 chance that his death partially mollifies Maliska's angry spirit, preventing the infection index from moving upward for 1d3 weeks. On a roll of 5-6, however, Maliska's spirit is even more irritated that the still-feckless Ritek has now joined her in the afterlife, and the index moves up by 1d4 points.



So You Got Yourself Infected?

A PC or hireling may be infected by Smerc's tendrils during this adventure. Only *Cure Disease* or *Wish*—or the destruction of Smerc—will eliminate the corruption. All other magics and curative measures will have no noticeable effect.

0 hours, initial infection: A small purple blemish appears at the touch of Smerc's tendrils or the softer, flesh-like section of his crowned head (the infection site must be a physically exposed area; in game terms, one of his tendrils scored a hit in combat).

A hearty soul sometimes provides immunity to demonic beet-infection. Characters with WIS 14+ may save vs poison; a character that succeeds is immune to not only the infection, but also all of Smerc's special powers of domination.

1d6 rounds after infection: the patient becomes dazed and their eyes glaze over. He or she sits down whenever possible, can only mutter and mumble, and takes a -4 penalty to all combat rolls and saving throws. The infected point of contact looks like an ordinary, if ugly, purple-red bruise.

1d4 hours after infection: the bruise-like infection spreads and puffs up into a bulging, plum-sized, purple-tinged boil. The infection manifests in different ways in different people (roll d6):

- 1 **Under Total Control.** The afflicted patient falls under the complete mental domination of Smerc, sharing a telepathic link to the demon up to a two-mile radius from the manor and violently resisting being taken beyond this command radius. The patient displays no other physical symptoms and may be used as a fifth columnist or mole by Smerc as listed in the next stage of infection (though the patient will not yet exhibit the physical symptoms of the next stage).
- 2–4 **Goes Psycho.** The patient loses their mind completely and becomes homicidal, trying to kill all non-infected people around them until the disease progresses into direct domination.
- 5–6 **Gets Really Fucking Irritable.** The patient becomes deeply annoyed with everything and everyone. Pavol's gaudy mail shirt, the damn weather, the under-boiled vegetables, whatever. They constantly voice their extreme displeasure even if the party is attempting stealth. The character will further exhibit a strong, stubborn reluctance to leave the manor.

1d3 days after infection: the skin becomes purplish and cutting it reveals a purple-red beet-like underskin. The boil remains plum-sized. Patients hack up slimy, canned-beet-like globules in periodic coughing fits.

More troublingly, the patient is under the complete mental control of Smerc, sharing a telepathic link to the demon within a two-mile radius of the manor. Dominated individuals, aka. beetniks, violently resist removal from the command radius, but otherwise pretend to be normal.

Ctyri Crt: the Fields

This mini-pointcrawl is an expansion of the Beet God adventure site, adding encounters, color, and even tuber-demon slaying items. You can run a tighter adventure by skipping ahead to **page 79** and the manor itself.

When you run this pointcrawl, keep in mind that it covers a very small area, little more than a mile across. There are clear paths between most areas, and characters moving from one area to another along a path should take just one turn (10 rounds) to move there. If characters move between areas through bushes or over rough ground, they must roll 4d6 under their DEX to move at normal rate, or it will take two turns. However, if they are familiar with a shortcut (by learning it from some wise locals, for example), they always move through the brambles and briars in a single turn. During daytime, what happens in adjacent areas is usually obvious, and noise easily carries over an area or two. If this sounds like the manor grounds and fields could become a Benny Hill-esque chase scene of beetniks lumbering after fleeing heroes, then you are correct.

This pointcrawl only varies over the two lowest Beet Spawn infection classes, but also includes the situation before the infection set in (class zero):

CLASS ZERO (BORING HAMLET)—INFECTION INDEX AT 0

This is the hamlet before the Demonic Beet God Smerc appears. Useful for a generic hamlet, especially in combination with the Bucolic Village Generator (page 111).

CLASS ALPHA (MANOR MADNESS)—INFECTION INDEX AT 1

Over the first week only two serfs, Bogdan the foreman and Cenik the gatekeeper, are fully dominated. Other domestic servants are infected or slain, while the field serfs are mostly ok.

CLASS BETA (THE HAMLET IS MINE)—INFECTION INDEX AT 2-4

The hamlet and manor are now the direct domain of the mighty beet god, a perilous zone for adventurers. The chaos is now spreading to the port town of Bystrica.

Random Encounters in the Hamlet and Surroundings

If you feel like the party is not running into enough vegetable encounters, these should help. There is a 1 in 6 chance of an encounter happening every turn in the hamlet. Treat results of 2 as tracks or clues to the encounters. During the day, roll 2d6 for the encounter type, at night roll 1d12. Certain parties may end up slaughtering all the creatures associated with a given encounter. If you roll an encounter with that creature again, nothing happens and that is that.

There is a 1 in 6 chance of encounters	
2d6 or	every turn. In case of encounter, roll 2d6
1d12	during the day and 1d12 at night.
1	Great Pig (see below)
2	Wild Bear (p. 61)
3	Boyers and Beets (p. 61)
4–5	Knights (p. 62)
6–8	Peasants (p. 62)
9–10	Cows (p. 62)
11	Curs (p. 63)
12	Hero (p. 63)

I GREAT PIG

Ritek's prize pig, **Debelinko**, has the right to root and roam all around the estate, and even beyond. Freiherrs in the surrounding hamlets all scare their children with tales of this beast of a pig, and how he likes to eat small children with his acorns. There is only one Debelinko and he is only seen at night. If he is slain, subsequent encounters will be with his tragic ghost.



Class Zero: Debelinko is rooting around, happily eating truffles, and looks quite harmless—aside from weighing 666 pounds and having curved tusks like scimitars.

Debelinko: AC: 7, Hp: 22, HD: 4, Attk: 1 (gore), gore 1d8+1, SA charge for double damage, and target must save vs. petrification or be knocked down, XP: 135

Class Alpha: Debelinko has been infected and is now psychotic—screaming, squealing, and charging on sight.

Class Beta: Smerc has taken a liking to the big porker, and turned him into his Big Pig Beet.

Big Pig Beet Debelinko: AC: 5, Hp: 26, HD: 5, Attk: 1 (gore), gore 1d10+2, SA charge for double damage, and target must save vs. petrification or be knocked down, SD half damage unless from silver or magical weapons, SW double damage from fire, XP: 500

2 WILD BEAR

Class Zero: 1d4 **black bears** snuffling and truffling around, keen for some picnic baskets. They only attack if provoked or surprised at close quarters. For some annoying reason, Ritek will not hunt them. Is he a werebear? No, he is not. There are a total of 4 bears in the area.

Black Bears: AC: 7, Hp: 15, HD: 3+3, Attk: 3 (2 claws, bite), claws 1d4, bite 1d6, XP: 80, *LL* p. 64

Class Alpha: only a pile of smelly droppings to step into; the bears are gone.

Class Beta: 1d6 **Soldier Bear investigators**. Only attack if provoked. They are cautious, but might be convinced to help against Smerc. There are a total of 7 soldier-bears in the squad scouting the area (the number encountered will fluctuate).

Soldier-Bears: AC: 6, Hp: 12, HD: 2+2, Attk: 1 (weapon), polearm 1d10+1, XP: 35, *SUD* p. 49

3 BOYARS AND BEETS

Class Zero: 2d6 **merry boyar boys** in furry costumes celebrating some obscure rustic festival that involves catching innocent bystanders and spraying them with red beet juice.

Boyar Boys: o-level, AC: 8 leather, Hp: 5, Attk: 1 (weapon), dagger 1d4, XP: 0

Class Alpha: 1d4 mewling, slithering tuberous **beet-godlings**, offspring of the beet god. A pathetic sight, but infectious. There are only 4 beet-godlings.

Beet-Godlings: AC: 9, Hp: 2, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (tendrils), 3-foot tendrils d2 plus infection (p. 58), SD only hit by silver or magical weapons, SW triple damage from fire, XP: 13

Class Beta: The **Onionator**, a sanctified anti-beet plant daemon. It came from an alternate future to start the beginning of the end, landed in a farmer's yard, naked and without armor, and was immediately set upon by a group of hogs and is now near death. The Onionator is formed from layers of vegetable matter over a magical endoskeleton. There is only one Onionator; replace any subsequent results with beet-godlings (if any remain).

Onionator: AC: 9, Hp: 15, HD: 3, Attk: 1 (punch or weapon), punch 1d6+1, SA tear gas attack, targets within 10' must save vs breath weapon or suffer blindness and nausea, XP: 65



4–5 KNIGHTS

Class Zero: 1d6 **poncy knights** have wandered off the main road and come to see the charming manor house and its grounds. They are quite likely beset by a gaggle of curious local children.

Poncy Knights: 2nd-level fighters or thieves, AC: 6 chain, Hp: 12 or 9, Attk: 1 (weapon), dagger 1d4, XP: 20

Class Alpha: 1d4 **psychotic hedge knights** ranting about beets. There are six such knights total.

Hedge Knights: 2nd-level fighters, AC: 6 chain, Hp: 12, Attk: 1 (weapon), hoes or 10' poles 1d6+1, XP: 20

Class Beta: 1d4+1 **tuber knights** on patrol, waddling. There are 9 such knights in total.

Tuber Knights: 2nd-level fighters, AC: 6 chain, Hp: 12, Attk: 1 (weapon), bardiche 1d10+1, XP: 20

6–8 PEASANTS

Class Zero: 2d6 **peasants** doing peasant things with ducks, geese, rakes, bushels, or baskets. They sing work songs that sound like Old Pahr mockeries, but their dull faces assure the onlooker that no, certainly, they could have no sense of humour.

Class Alpha: 2d6 **infected peasants** who are really fucking irritable. They complain about the boyars, the buoys, the bays, the people of Bystrica, and so forth. They also stubbornly refuse to leave the vicinity of the manor. There are 40 such peasants in total.

Class Beta: 2d6 **dominated peasants** on the prowl. There are 30 such peasants in total (10 of the infected succumbed to an unexpected beet allergy).

Peasants: 0-level, Hp: 4, AC: 9 flowery smocks, Attk: 1 (weapon), axes or pitchforks d6, XP: 5

9–10 COWS

Class Zero: 1d6+1 very bucolic cows looking like cows. They are cowlike.

Class Alpha: 1d6 creepy, totally controlled, and **purple-stained cows**, with knowing eyes gathered around the corpse of a brutally massacred bull. They will shadow the party, trying to act innocent and failing. There are 12 such cows.

Purple Cows: AC: 9, Hp: 12, HD: 3, Attk: 1 (horns), horns 1d6, XP: 50

Class Beta: 1d6 bright **purple tuber cows**. They are covered in nodules and tubers, but are—thankfully—not infectious. There are a total of 8 such cows.

Purple Tuber-Cows: AC: 8, Hp: 15, HD: 3+3, Attk: 2 (horns, assault tendrils), horns 1d6, 10' assault tendrils 1d6, XP: 100

11 CURS

Class Zero: 1d6+2 **curs**. Ritek's prize hounds, Svetli and Temni, have spawned a brood of more than a dozen dogs. More like wolves, really. They're shaggy, mean, and very lean. The peasants throw rocks and sticks to keep them away, but their packs never go too far away. Only attack if provoked. There are 14 curs.

Curs: AC: 8, Hp: 5, HD: 1+1, Attk: 1 (bite or trip), bite 1d4 or trip, XP: 15

Class Alpha: 1d6+2 **infected curs**. The dogs were already really irritable before. They're just more so now that they are infected. There are 12 infected curs total.

Infected Curs: AC: 8, Hp: 5, HD: 1+1, Attk: 1 (bite or trip), bite 1d4 or trip, XP: 15

Class Beta: The beet god Smerc has consolidated the curs into a single pack, the 10 **hounds of beet-dalos**. The animating beet within them can reanimate a hound reduced to 0 hp as a cur-revenant. Cur-revenancy only occurs once, thankfully.

Hounds of Beet-dalos: AC: 7, Hp: 6, HD: 1+2, Attk: 1 (bite or trip), bite 1d6+1 or trip XP: 21

Cur-Revenant: AC: 10, Hp: 4, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (bite or trip), bite 1d6 or trip. XP: 10

12 HERO

Class Zero: A piper is visiting the hamlet, charming the folk with their magic flute and leading away all the lemmings. Some of the older folk scratch their heads in puzzlement. After the piper, replace this result with rascally urchins and milk maids.

Class Alpha: **Lubenica**, heroic cleric of the Pumpkin God, has been corrupted by the Beet infection and is now an agent of Smerc. Lubenica tries to join the party. On subsequent rolls, if Lubenica is dead or with the party, replace her with other undercover peasant agents of Smerc who will also try to tag along until a suitably hilarious opportunity to turn on the party.

Lubenica: 2nd-level cleric, AC: 8 leather, Hp: 5, Attk: 1 (weapon), shovel 1d6, SA *Cure Light Wounds* (LL p. 21), *Charm Person* (LL p. 28), XP: 29

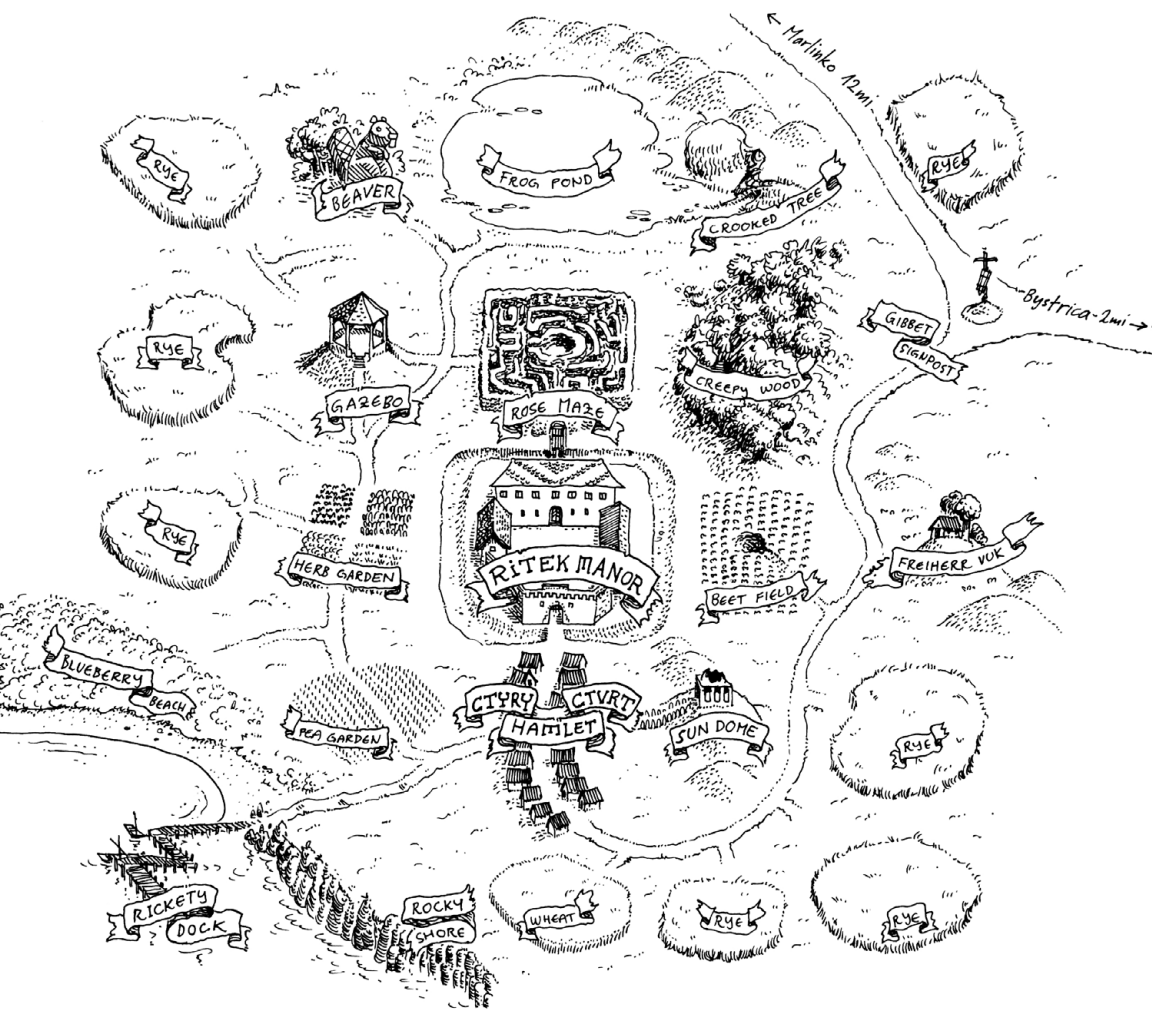
Class Beta: **Nuk**, a barbaric warrior from some sort of Vulgar Hyperborean tribe is here to chew bubble gum and take down evil. Unfortunately, he is about to discover he has a phobia of tubers. Still, Nuk could be helpful in the right circumstances, right? On subsequent rolls, if Nuk is with the party or dead, replace this result with a random keen but clueless militia soldier who is surprisingly terrible at thieving.

Nuk: 6th-level fighter, AC: 3 plated furs, Hp: 37, Attk: 2 (twin battleaxes), battleaxe 1d8+1, XP: 320

Militia Member: 1st-level thief, AC: 7 studded leather, Hp: 4, Attk: 1 (weapon), bow d6, mace d6, SA: 2x damage on sneak attack, XP: 10

Map of the Fields Around Ctyri Ctvrt

Grab the map and have a hard look. All the areas are labelled and listed in alphabetical order.



Beaver	p. 65	Freiherr Vuk's Shack. .	p. 69	Rose Maze	p. 73
Beet Field	p. 65	Frog Pond.....	p. 70	Rickety Dock.....	p. 74
Blueberry Beach	p. 66	Gazebo	p. 71	Rocky Shore.....	p. 74
Creepy Wood	p. 66	Gibbet Signpost	p. 71	Rye Fields	p. 75-77
Crooked Tree.....	p. 67	Pea Garden.....	p. 72	Sun Dome	p. 78
Ctyri Ctvrt Hamlet ..	p. 68	Ritek Manor	p. 72	Wheat Field.....	p. 78

The Bucolic Pointercrawl

BEAVER

Visible from a distance, the great wooden Beaver dominates the skyline. It was a gift from a mighty beaver chief to an ancestor of Ritek, and a great brass plaque announces so proudly. By the terms of that gift, the beavers continue to come each year, to renew the great wooden Beaver. It is impressive, in a sort of rude and elegant style.

Class Zero: a small group of beaver scouts is here, learning about Ritek the Helpful, who destroyed the evil loggers and chased away the dirty charcoal makers.



Class Alpha: several drunken serfs are here, acting like they're off their heads. In fact, they are uninfected. Just very drunk, daft, and here to steal Ritek's prize pig.

Class Beta: a **giant beaver envoy** named Bobi has come here because he has seen the ancient signal of their pact with the Ritek light the *round-ball-that-shows-pictures*.

Bobi Beaver: AC: 6, Hp: 12, HD: 4, Attk: 1 (bite, tail, or weapon), bite 1d8 and save vs wands or sunders wooden weapon, tail slap 1d8 and save vs paralysis or knocked prone, auto-reloading crossbow 1d6, XP: 190

BEET FIELD

Great, prizewinning, globular, red, shining beets line this incredible field. Truly, the most amazing beet field there ever was. A wonder such as one might never have expected in this dull place.

Class Zero: A truly great and incredible beet grows in the heart of the field, its flickering indigo aura visible in the pale light of night. Peaceful, lascivious, mind-controlling vibes come off the beet. By moonlight, **Maliska's ghost** (p. 89) is encountered here, but says nothing.

Class Alpha: A great crater lies in the heart of the beet field. Something heavy and ponderous was dragged out. Inside the crater some very much destroyed human remains may be found (Maliska's, in point of fact). Anyone touching them summons **Maliska's ghost** (p. 89).

Class Beta: Four noisy **beetles of astounding and tuberous proportion** guard the place of the incarnation of the Lord of Lumps, the Tyrant of Tubers. Maliska's ghost is not here now, avoiding the racket the beetles make.

Tuber-beetles: AC: 5, Hp: 12, HD: 3, Attk: 2 (mandibles or spray), cruel mandibles 1d8, spray of beet juice of *Command* (AEC p. 32) from hairy gland on abdomen, 15' range, XP: 65

BLUEBERRY BEACH

A silky grey sand beach, studded with chunks of coal and the rare stub of amber, runs along the Persimmon Sea. Above the tide line blueberry bushes grow in profusion around and under a copse of mournful pines. Each turn of searching, a character may roll 4d6 under their INT to collect 1d6 x 50 gp worth of amber. There is a total of 400 gp worth of amber pieces lying on the beach.

Class Zero: The beach is quite desolate, save at sunset when the **boyar Ritek** wanders along the shore, sighing like a tea kettle and bemoaning his sad fate. The peasants avoid Ritek's "private beach."

Mournful Ritek: 5th-level cleric, AC: 8 fine furs and leather, Hp: 25, Attk: 1 (weapon), two-handed mace d8, SA *Cause Light Wounds* (x2) (LL p. 21), *Curse* (LL p. 25), *Darkness Globe* (AEC p. 50), *Silence 15' Radius* (LL p. 26), *Hold Person* (LL p. 23), XP: 350

Class Alpha: A mist lies upon the beach, obscuring the sea. The blueberries are ripe now, and a lucky character (rolling 4d6 under their CHA) might find a whole handful of magical berries (heal 1 Hp each) left by some beaver druid.

Class Beta: Three **infected sailors** patrol the beach, on the lookout for Ritek.

Sailors: 1st-level fighters, AC: 8 leather, Hp: 8, Attk: 1 (weapon), thrown harpoon d8, cutlass d8+1, XP: 10

CREEPY WOOD

Artfully sculpted and grown to look natural, this creepy wood is actually a Sanctuary Wood of the Anti-World Turtle of the Anti-Cantons. All the trees look evil and malevolent, creepers pluck and snatch at passers-by, and roots suddenly stretch out to trip the unwary (every careless creature moving through the wood must roll 3d6 under DEX every round to avoid falling down). If a creature falls down, a dry, dusty turtle laugh echoes through the wood.

Class Zero: the wood is empty, save for a couple of snickering turtles talking about "stock options" and "south sea trading companies." If interrupted, they stop talking and pretend to be ordinary dog-turtles. If pressed further, they turn into a mist and float away. Spooooooky.

Class Alpha: the wood is filled with grumbling crows and magpies, discussing what to do now. They suddenly shut up and refuse to speak if they see humans, but can be tempted to reveal what they know with gifts worth at least 50gp. They know that a big beet was pulled out of the ground, and that people and animals are being taken to the east house to be made purple. And once they are purple, they start smelling like tubers.

Class Beta: **Freiherr Vuk** the weredog is hiding here, injured in a fight with some beetniks. He looks terrified, and is waiting for a moonlit night to run away in dog form.

Injured Black-Eared Vuk: 1st-level fighter, AC: 5 chain shirt, Hp: 1, Attk: 1 (bite or weapon), sword d8, bite d6+1, can only be killed by silver or magic weapons, XP: 27

CROOKED TREE

The crooked willow tree hanging over the **Frog Pond** looks oddly intelligent, in a slow, wise sort of way. It feels peaceful and malevolent at the same time, and it would rob anybody staying under it blind—if they just stayed still for two days. The roots and shoots might sneak off with some biscuits.

Class Zero: Anyone sleeping a full night under the Crooked Tree is affected by a *Bane* spell (*LL* p. 20).

Class Alpha: Whoever hugs the tree or tries to draw a boon out of it will receive a *cursed* platinum piece. Once placed in a pouch or pocket, its weight increases to 50 pounds and it refuses to leave. Damned bad penny!

Class Beta: If someone waits around here, a squirrel approaches them. As it approaches, ghostly ectoplasm effervesces off the squirrel, forming into **Maliska's ghost** (p. 89). She looks very annoyed and is quite blunt: "This is going all too far! Are you here to lift my vengeance or faff around? What, are you daft? What are you waiting for? Do you want the demon to eat your world? Take. Care. Of. That. Pig. Ritek. He's the source of all this evil! He murdered me! He caused this! Kill him, slowly...and I will help you stop the demon." Of course, she won't help. She doesn't think Smerc is that powerful anyway (and, more importantly, doesn't really care).





CTYRI CTVRT HAMLET

Fourteen tidy and near-identical peasant cottages cluster closely together along the road. Though reasonably well-maintained, a close inspection will reveal that most are bare of furnishings and haven't been occupied for years. The individual cottages are detailed in the Hamlet description (page 81). The beetniks are thickest here and in the manor, and this is where the PCs actually have a chance to thwart the Beet God.

Class Zero: Lazy and shifty-looking types people the hamlet: squinting *bruz* addicts with colorful headscarves, bendy-limbed “farmers,” sway-hipped “milk maids,” overgrown “children,” and several pigs that a gap-toothed fellow named Mishko claims can talk (they can't, but they would make good sausages).

Class Alpha: The hamlet is creepily quiet. Most of the doors lie open, revealing ransacked belongings. If the party decides to investigate the “empty” cottages: the third house, made of crumbly bricks, is occupied by **three infected, psychotic pigs**. The fourth house has, hidden in a small sack stuffed in the rafters, a package of *bruz* worth 40 gp and a love letter to a swan elf maiden peach creature named Iridescent Maiden of Stars. The love letter has many grammatical errors and may be the result of a very strange trip.

Psychotic Pigs: AC: 9, Hp: 3, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (gore), gore d4, XP: 10

Class Beta: A procession of six pitchfork and **torch-wielding beetniks** marches through the hamlet every hour, on the hour, behind a banner of a beet-red circle rising from a field of golden brown over a cerulean background. The rest of the time, the hamlet is still. Doors sag and shutters bang sadly, while pots of porridge gently putrefy. If the party decides to investigate the “empty” cottages: the straw roof of the first house has been blown away by a strong gust; the plank siding of the second house has been knocked down by something large and bulky; the third house, of crumbly brick, is now home to an infected and very **well-fed wolf**. The fourth house is occupied by a **beetnik** out of their mind on *bruz*.

Beetnik: AC: 9, Hp: 3, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), pitchforks d6, XP: 10

Infected Well-fed Wolf: AC: 7, Hp: 10, HD: 2, Attk: 1 (bite), bitey teeth d8, XP: 20

FREIHERR VUK'S SHACK

The jolly slump-sided wooden shack of the boorish yeoman freiherr farmer, **Black-Eared Vuk**, stands on a little hill under two shaggy oak trees. Inside, surprisingly well-hidden under a rug that ties the room together, are: two jade eggs (100 gp each), a fine cigar of *Protection from Evil* (smoking it works as the spell, two charges, worth 150 gp), two cut crystal champagne cups (20 gp each, fragile), and a smelly sock filled with 247 gp.

Class Zero: Vuk is here, drunk and in a foul mood, cursing the boyar, his foul luck, the disgusting attorneys, the small plot of land he inherited, the vultures after his savings, and the moon. Unknown to most, **Vuk is a weredog**, and turns into an offensive mongrel mix of dachshund, fox terrier, and wolf when the moon is full.

Black-Eared Vuk: 1st-level fighter, AC: 5 chain shirt, Hp: 5, Attk: 1 (bite or weapon), sword d8, bite d6+1, can only be killed by silver or magic weapons, XP: 27

Class Alpha: The door is barricaded with a heavy dresser and **Vuk** is obviously terrified of something, whining about the odd smells, the booming thunder in the night, and how the boyar owes him 453 gp (a lie).

Class Beta: The shack is abandoned, the door smashed in. Somebody tried to set fire to it with a pile of limp beans. They failed.
The treasures are still here, still well-hidden.



FROG POND

This beautiful pond completes the Pahr geomantic perfection of this estate, and the rattling frogs create a beautiful music that all must enjoy. The rather creepy blood- and feces-smeared marble altar placed in waist deep water detracts only slightly from the ambiance. Fancy carp swirl around it. In the altar is a small dry compartment with a small demon-summoning candle.

Class Zero: The frogs send up a glorious, sleep depriving chorus, and ignore most people. Peasants avoid the pond and talk of odd, slimy humanoids. Scary sounds. Croaking screams. Odd rituals. Definitely nothing to do with the Riteks, though.

Class Alpha: A **drowned cobbler** from Bystrica named Chevleka lies draped over the altar. Obviously a failed sacrifice. She was an inveterate scribbler and kept a *very* detailed journal. It is now a bit soggy, but still readable, and reveals her concern at the odd behaviour and the purple lumps she spotted on several of the Ctyri Ctvrt peasants. It ends with, "... oh, here comes one of the lumpen ones now. That plum-like bruise on the left cheek is rather unsightly. She seems to have a sharp spear. Confirmed rather sharp. They are making me walk north now. I'll put my journal away for t..."

Class Beta: A **corpsefire** is glowing over the altar (and the rotting remains of Chevleka). Speaking some suitably pompous words like, "I summon thee, O great one," and spilling a little blood (a fish or chicken will do), summons the **Frog Demon Gnily** into the world. It was already interested, wondering what the Beet demon was up to, and would like to learn what the summoner knows. Unless royally annoyed, Gnily is not hostile, and will even offer to reanimate Chevleka as an ally for the party if it likes the information it receives (the reanimated Chevleka returns as an undying revenant).

If returned to life, Chevleka will attempt to continue updating her journal, but the updates are merely nonsensical scrawls of gibberish.

Gnily first appears as a soggy halfling, but in its true form it is thin and bony, with green-grey flesh like ragged clumps of rotting bogweed, its mouth a cavern of stench and decay. Each of Gnily's eyes is stalked, and turns itself inside-out into another biting appendage, one necrotic, the other dormiferous. Gnily can only be surprised on a 1 and wounds inflicted on the demon stink horribly. It can shift into any human-sized sentient race except elves (which it particularly detests).

Undying Revenant Chevleka: AC: 8, Hp: 10, HD: 2, Attk: 1 (bite or weapon), bite 1d4, SD regenerate 1 hp per round; if reduced to 0 Hp, returns to unlife after d10 rounds (gaining 1 Hp per round), unless physically destroyed, XP: 38

Gnily (Oorh frog-demon): AC: 4 ragged flesh, Hp: 14, HD: 4, Attk: 5 (2 claws, bite, 2 eyestalks), claws 1d4, stinking bite 1d8 (save vs poison or nauseated for 1d4+1 rounds), eye-stalk 1d4 (10' range; save vs poison or take 1 damage an hour until magically healed), eye-stalk 1d4 (10' range; save vs poison or *Sleep*, LL p. 39), takes half damage except from magical or silver weapons, XP: 410

GAZEBO

A wonderful, kitschy Pahr imitation of a fine Cantonal gazebo. The gazebo looks like it was expensive to build and meant for memorable receptions and social gatherings. It looks like it was rarely used. There is a magical globe (worth 500 gp) built into the apex of the rafters that unleashes a *Continual Light* (LL p. 29) when the words, “Shine a light,” are spoken. It switches to *Continual Darkness* when someone says, “Hello darkness, my old friend.”

Class Zero: dry leaves pile up in the corners, like songs written that voices never shared. There is an aura of wisdom here, but it was never shared, nobody dared disturb the sound of silence. The globe is currently shining.

Class Alpha: six young peasants are gathered here, standing silently around a dead cow. The cow is covered in tuberous growths. The peasants are infected, and over the next day, one after another, they will succumb to the infection. The globe is currently shining.

Infected Peasants: AC: 9, Hp: 4, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), machetes d6, XP: 10

Class Beta: the gazebo is filled with darkness and the ruined corpse of a cow is all that remains in sight. Six infected peasants are hiding in the rafters, waiting like ripe beet-fruits to drop upon unsuspecting visitors. Yes. Gross. The globe is currently creating darkness.

GIBBET SIGNPOST

The empty, rusted gibbet creaks lustily in the smallest gust. A wide, muddy road leads northwest to marvelous **Marlinko** (12 miles) and east to beautiful **Bystrica** (2 miles). To the southeast, a deeply rutted path pretending to be a road winds about to the manor.

Class Zero: two humorously oversized ox-carts hauling turnips to Marlinko and glazed peas to Bystrica are stuck, facing each other. Neither po-faced drover wishes to turn aside, for eye-patch wearing **Yoba** believes that driving left around a gibbet brings bad luck, while flaxen-haired **Luba** believes that driving right around it brings bad luck. In fact, driving left around this specific gibbet will inflict a *Curse of Major Gastric Distress* that lasts for 2d6 hours.

Class Alpha: the road is eerily quiet. Or would be, if it were not for **Mugi**, the red-nosed wine merchant, whipping and cursing his two donkeys, Riga and Bruja, to make haste as he flees the manor. “It’s a madhouse! A madhouse!” he shouts.

Class Beta: a sign scrawled in suspiciously bright, green paint reads, “Dead inside! Stay away!”



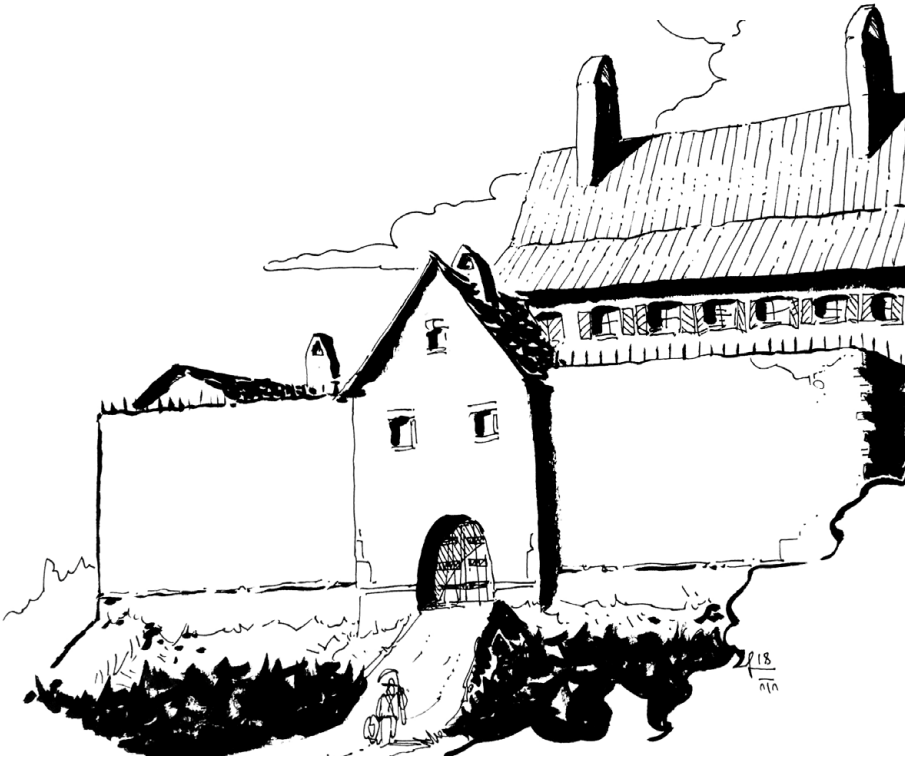
PEA GARDEN

Pea plants clamber and crawl over their poles in rampant profusion, a bountiful harvest that anybody would be proud of.

Class Zero: Two doddering **peasants** are hanging little straw-and-pea charms on hickory posts to encourage the peas to grow better.

Class Alpha: Left alone, the peas have overgrown their lot and their frames, creating mounded piles of greenery, vines and shoots reaching for the path.

Class Beta: The **enchanting peas** have entirely covered the path in a tangle of grasping, sucking, sun-loving greenery. Soft whispers of pea-ful thoughts echo from the charms and the infected avoid the field. The three charms block the beet-god's mind control, creating a blind spot. On the other hand, the pea charms also randomly cast *Sleep* (LL p. 39) on creatures entering the kingdom of the pea (3 times per day). The field cannot really be reasoned with; it keeps remembering some sort of old battle with a princess.



RITEK MANOR

The dull as bricks, semi-fortified square of whitewashed manor house oozes a self-satisfied country boyar air and stolidity utterly expected in such a dull place. The only entrance is through the southern gatehouse, but there is a cozy footpath leading around its outer walls. Around the path is a bramble-choked ditch pretending to be a moat, with wide stolid wooden causeways connecting it to the Hamlet south and the Rose Maze north. The manor is the heart of the infection and the most detailed site in the adventure (p. 79).

ROSE MAZE

This desultory rose maze has a hint of ozone and wonder about it, provided no doubt by the illusions woven into the rose flowers by Maliska. Ritek always hated the place, regularly getting lost inside for hours on end. The maze is, indeed, quite rough. Every turn, characters may roll 4d6 under their INT in order to find an escape. Anyone rolling three identical numbers on the INT check finds Maliska's ornamental garden of healing herbs. The pots include instructions for creating an *Unguent of Cure Disease* (worth 300 gp, acts as the spell, *LL* p. 21) from the herbs. There are enough herbs for 1d3 unguents.

Class Zero: The roses seem sad and droopy, and the **ghosts** of Maliska's carefree watercolor painting days linger among the narrow paths. Some of them might suggest that magic fish can be found in the second boat by the Rickety Dock. This is a lie. But the ghosts will try to be convincing.

Class Alpha: The beet god does not understand mazes, and once his followers wander into the maze, they tend to stay there. A posse of **four psychotic peasants** is running around, waving sharpened implements and screaming.

Psychotic Peasants: AC: 9, Hp: 5, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), pruning hook d6, XP: 10

Class Beta: Stuck in a hell of bushes, the **24 infected tuber-faced peasants** have tapped into the roses for sustenance, tendrils binding them into the bushy walls of the maze. The first turn someone enters the maze, they are still dreaming vegetable dreams. On the second turn 1d6 of them emerge eerily from the plants, to entangle and chop at the interloper. On the third turn another 2d6 emerge. On the fourth, all the remaining tuber-faces appear.

Tuber-Peasants: AC: 8, Hp: 9, HD: 2, Attk: 1 (entangling roots or weapon), sickle d6, entangling roots take 4 Hp slashing damage to release, XP: 38



RICKETY DOCK

The dock stretches ridiculously far into the Persimmon sea, surprisingly tough for such an old, worm-riddled structure. Two skiffs bob along the dock, one old and worn named *Onegin's Mare*, the other sparkling and sea-gull bedecked, named the *Hart of Darkness*. The wood of the dock is bound in mermaid oaths, which keeps it sturdy and stable, but the salty oath-strings are inimical to Smerc's earthy heart and his servants avoid it.

Class Zero: two fishwives, green-eyed **Miryana**, and rough-voiced **Olga**, are hard at work on the dock, while their husbands scrub and work on the *Hart of Darkness*. Long-nosed **Onegin** is passed out in his skiff, as usual. There is a silver torc in Onegin's lockbox, which can summon a helpful wind once per day. The wind is a stiff breeze and blows in all directions from a point within 60' of the torc. It lasts for 1d4+1 hours. Onegin likes to use it humorously after eating bean porridge.

Class Alpha: the fishers have fled and **one psychotic merchant** from far-off lands, touched by Smerc, is ranting and raving at the end of the dock. Only **Onegin** is still in his skiff, hiding and terrified. He is immune to the infection, but paralyzed by fear.

Psychotic Merchant: 2nd-level thief, AC: 5 studded leather and Dex, Hp: 10, Attk: 1 (weapon), venom-dripping blade d8 (save vs. poison or movement speed reduced by half), SA: backstab for 2x damage, XP: 38

Class Beta: **Six more tubby peasants** have joined the psychotic merchant. Onegin has been living off raw fish, huddled under a tarp in his boat, and praying for salvation. If the children from the Wheat Field (p. 74) are alive and have both their blessed axes, they will mount a successful surprise raid, cutting down 1d6 of the tubby peasants en route to Onegin. They will give him courage and then sail off together. If the party has hindered the children, they will be captured and Onegin will wail in despair.

Tubby Peasants: AC: 9, Hp: 7, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), sharpened shovels d6, XP: 10

ROCKY SHORE

Blunt sandstone bluffs tumble down to the sweet-smelling Persimmon Sea.

Class Zero: **Two young peasants** are here, obviously up to something inappropriate and uncouth.

Class Alpha: Nobody is here, but someone has crudely carved "Allos + Svetlyana" into a rock.

Class Beta: **A peasant with a tuber** growing from his eyesocket is trying to claw at a **mournful ghost**. The ghost is Svetlana's and though it cannot remember its death, it would be very happy if someone would bury its body here, on the cliffs where she composed her love letters to Jaromil. She will be horrified if she finds out someone tried to eat her. She was actually completely true to Jaromil, her pen-pal lover, and the carving was Alos's lovelorn solitary work.

Peasant: AC: 9, Hp: 7, HD 1 Attk: 1 (weapon), flail d6, XP: 10

RYE FIELD

There are seven fields of rye around the manor, sparkling brown gold just waiting to be harvested and turned into ergot bread. Roll 2d6 to determine the type of field the characters enter.

2 Polevik field

Class Zero: The rye is full grown and exceptionally tall. Magic oozes from the stalks and a sense of supernal peace pervades it. The field is haunted by **1d4+1 poleviks** who attack anyone fool enough to camp and sleep in or around the field. Rye harvested from the elds, if ground and baked properly, makes loaves of bread that heal 1–2 Hp per stomach filling portion.

Poleviks: AC: 3, Hp: 8, HD: 2, Attk: 2 (weapon) or 1 (disease touch), twin sickles 1d6, SA disease touch (save vs. spells or contract yeast infection, deadly in 1d6+1 weeks), XP: 47, *SUD* p. 48

Class Alpha: The rye is sharp and dangerous looking, the leaves like small blades, the stalks like thin pikes. Walking through the field deals 1d4 damage to soft human skin. The field's **poleviks** are on high alert and will try to chase off “the demon’s allies”—in their minds, most mortals.

Poleviks: AC: 3, Hp: 8, HD: 2, Attk: 2 (weapon) or 1 (disease touch), twin sickles 1d6, SA disease touch (save vs. spells or contract yeast infection, deadly in 1d6+1 weeks), XP: 47, *SUD* p. 48

Class Beta: The field is burnt and charred, chunks of beet-flesh and odd supernatural ash lie in an interesting, impressionistic spatter pattern.

3 Whiskey field:

Class Zero: A few **drunken peasants** sleep and snore lustily in the field, a jug of fine moonshine whiskey beside them.

Class Alpha: Two youngsters, tow-headed **Pita** and red-faced **Potica**, are hiding here from the infected adults. They have drunk the leftover whiskey and are feeling quite ill.

Class Beta: A **dominated trap-youth** is hiding in the field, wrapped in a scarf and clutching a bundle of rags. Inside the bundle is an infectious little **juniper beet**.

Trap-Youth: AC: 9, Hp: 3, HD: 1, Attk: 0, SA loud inhuman screech, XP: 6

Juniper Beet: AC: 9, Hp: 4, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (slap), infectious slap 1d2 and infection (see p. 58), XP: 13

4–5 Ergot field

Class Zero: The field looks perfectly ordinary. Oh, look, some jolly **hallucinating peasants!** Perhaps those purple spores have something to do with it? Making an effort to ingest the spores has the effect of a *Confusion* (LL p. 28) spell and lasts for 1d6 hours.

Class Alpha: The victim of a *bruz* overdose lies alone, untended in the field, ants and flies crawling over her. She has a pouch with five rye cookies infected with ergot (effect as *Confusion*, LL p. 28), 70 pieces of silver, and a letter addressed to a Brunda Swinovna in Bystrica detailing a recipe for making *bruz* hit harder. Brunda will pay 30 pieces of gold for this recipe.

Class Beta: Somber, empty, still. A rat- and dog-chewed skeleton lies in the middle of the field, surrounded by 70 pieces of silver and a cold aura.

6–8 Plain rye field

Class Zero: There are spots and patches of the field that have been matted by peasants sneaking off to get a hit of *bruz*.

Class Alpha: The field lies. Empty. Still. Ominous. The rye stalks clatter and sigh in the sea breeze.

Class Beta: An odd scarecrow stands in the middle of the field. Wait. That's no scarecrow! It's a weather-beaten, **purple-mottled peasant!** The eyes of Smerc, they are everywhere!

Purple Peasant: AC: 9, Hp: 4, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), scythe d6, SA loud vegetable scream summons 1d4 more beetniks, XP: 13

More Beetniks: AC: 9, Hp: 6, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), flail d6, XP: 10

9–10 Field of fancy rye

Class Zero: Ropes mark off the field, along with marks warning against trespassing. The rye seems very fancy and important.

Class Alpha: Despite the ropes and signs, several **sheep** are munching the rye and relaxing in the field.

Class Beta: Several sheep carcasses are arranged in strange arcane disorder, while in the middle of the field a careful search will reveal a **magical field-fairy sickle** (worth 1,000 gp) that can be wielded as a short sword (d6 damage), can harvest the toughest stalks, and can even collect the soul of a creature of the fields. Each creature sacrificed with the sickle creates a charge inside the sickle, up to a maximum of five. A charge can be used to speak to a rodent, a small bird, a bee hive, or a draft ox. Additionally, 1d4 charges can be used to cripple a target hit by the sickle, harvesting its bones and sinews like they were stalks of rye, reducing its movement speed in half until magical healing is applied.

11 Seven seas of rye

Class Zero: the field is empty, save for a stick with a bottle on it. Inside the bottle is a scroll of *Charm Person* (LL p. 28). In an asshole move, the scroll is cursed and whoever examines it is *Charmed*, as per the spell, by the first person or creature they look at.

Class Alpha: a beautiful **maiden**, possessed by Smerc with a large purple welt under her bosom, dances through the field like a madwoman. She is quite oblivious, but will attack if alerted. The bottle is still here.

Maiden Beetnik: AC: 9, Hp: 6, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), knife d4, XP: 10

Class Beta: a **fisherman**, stolidly infected, stands watch. His catch, held limply in his left hand, is rotting and stinking horribly. The flies drawn by the dead fish blind him and he notices nearly nothing. The bottle remains.

Fisherman Beetnik: AC: 8 leather, Hp: 3, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (weapon), gutting hook d6+1, XP: 10

12 Heroic rye

Class Zero: A lugubrious **sandestin** of middling stature is hiding here from its master. It can teach one second-level spell in exchange for 1d4 x 100 gp. It wants the gold to carry out a ritual to unbind itself from a wizard with no hair.

Class Alpha: The rye acquires a heroic, almost supernal glow. Sandestin essence remains scattered about, the creature destroyed by a curse cast by its aggrieved master. Resting here for at least an hour lets a character absorb the essence, gaining a single-use first-level spell (probably *Magic Missile* or *Locate Object* (both LL p. 34)) to cast once.

Class Beta: A flustered **warbear** named **Zora** has come to investigate goings on, and accidentally inhaled the entire sandestin, permanently gaining the ability to cast one *Phantasmal Force* per day. Zora is confused, but she may be convinced to join the party.

Zora: AC: 6, Hp: 15, HD: 2+2, polearm d10+1, immaculate orange uniform, SA *Phantasmal Force* 1x/day (LL p. 36), XP: 47



SUN DOME

A fine example of unimaginative Pahr architecture, the local Sun Dome rises on twelve stumpy pillars, representing the months. These pillars support a plastered dome representing the sun. It sits on a small rise, a pathetic hedge-lined path linking it to the hamlet.

Class Zero: Oddly, it seems abandoned. The words “Puissant? More like pussy” are scrawled rather sacrilegiously on the door in Vulgar Hyperborean.

Class Alpha: The dome is cracked and fallen, and flakes of fine ash float off the charred remains. A circular totem of the Sun Lord is nailed upside down behind one of the jutting blackened columns.

Class Beta: Three great carved beets have been set up like a mock altar, upon which a **beet priest** sacrifices the lesser tubers: potatoes, carrots, turnips, and parsnips. **Four prettily appointed infected young singers** sing to encourage the priest. Of course, the priest has prepared *Charm Person* (LL p. 28).

Beet Priest: 1st-level cleric, AC: 6 chain, Hp: 7, Attk: 1 (weapon), sharpened shovel d6, SA *Charm Person* (LL p. 28), XP: 21

Singers: AC: 9, Hp: 2, HD: 1, Attk: 1 (growths), tuberous growths d4, XP: 10

WHEAT FIELD

Ripe and golden, the wheat shimmers under a bright blue sky. Ahh, the borderland.

Class Zero: A **child** is playing with a kite here. The child looks oddly knowing, and when she turns her face, you see that it is a crone, not a child. Then the kite lifts her into the sky and she disappears in a glittering laugh. What might this omen of the goddess Morana mean?

Class Alpha: **Four children** are hiding here: golden-haired **Maya**, blue-eared **Petya**, long-footed **Biba**, and sharp-toothed **Vilko**. They are tired, but determined to escape. They have two swords and two axes that a polevik has blessed against tubers (they are +2 against tubers and worth 100 gp each). When night falls they will head down to the docks and steal the first boat, old Onegin's skiff (p. 74). If someone were to take their axes, their plan would fail and they would be infected.

Class Beta: Nothing remains but trampled wheat, children's smocks and an **unholy hybrid** of pig, tuber, and peasant on the lookout for trespassers. Though it can't watch too well, as its head is only four feet off the ground.

Tuber Abomination: AC: 9, Hp: 18, HD: 4, Attk: 2 (tendrils and tusk), tendrils d4 and infection (p. 58), tusks d6+1, XP: 135

Ctyri Ctvrt: the Hamlet and Manor

The hamlet extends south of the manor. Fourteen tidy and near-identical peasant cottages cluster closely together along the road. Though reasonably well-maintained, a close inspection will reveal that most are bare of furnishings and haven't been occupied for years. The old feudal obligations of the Hill Cantons disintegrated more than a century ago and Ritek, annoyed with the prying, conservative nature and the po-faced ways of the local peasantry, found it easier to run them off the land and hire seasonal workers from town to tend the crops.

Only the last three cottages before the manor are occupied, though their residents are spooked and hiding inside with the doors barred. The residents are all unrelated, even the children. Ritek rescued this oddball group of misfits from various awkward and criminal life stations, and they now double as both the working skeleton farm crew and the flock of his cult. Though nominally evil and believers in the strict railroad view of life and devilry held by Anti-Cantonal worship, they are for the most part only lazily and hypocritically Evil. The insecure Ritek has been loathe to really lay down the law about being more woeful and they mostly stick around only because of their *bruz* addiction.

The Manorhouse is a squarish compound built over the centuries in four distinct sections: the gatehouse in the south, the new, two-story corps de logis in the north, the old manor serving as west wing, and a utilitarian east wing.

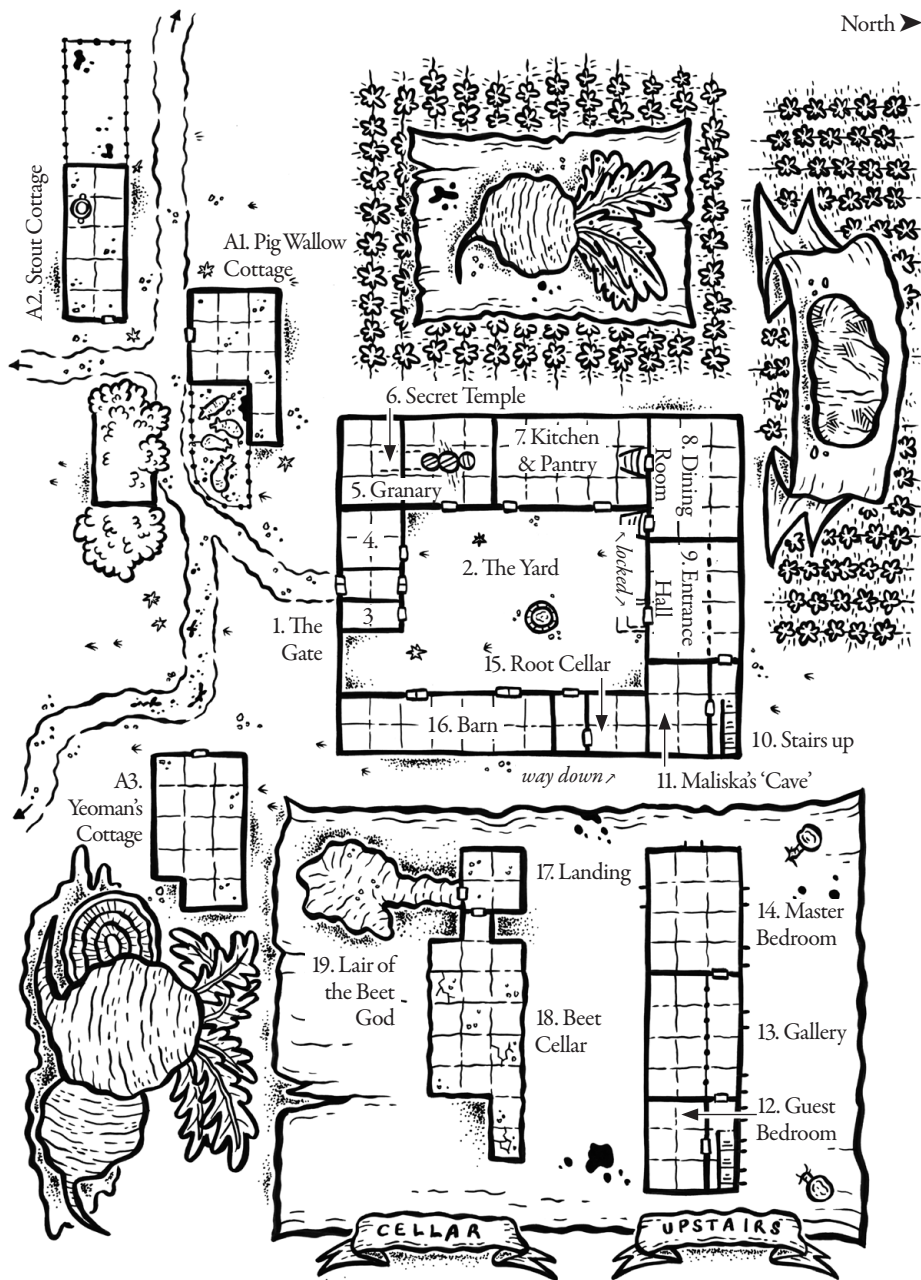
A CLASSLESS HAMLET

Before Maliska's death and the Beet Demon invasion from the Hot Hell, the manor is a cold and hellish stew of frustrated ambition (Maliska), repressed desires (Ritek), bucolic clichés (Bogdan) and rampant *bruz* addiction (the hamleteers). Imagine a Jane Austen novel with more pig rustling, sausage juggling and bad puns, and you're not too far off. Why you should want to put your players through this is beyond us, but if you do, here are a few hooks:

- 1 **Belle of the Ball:** The Lumpeks (a nearby boyar family) are holding a coven cake soirée and Maliska needs the débutante Nezvesta Neprespan's new dress ruined.
- 2 **Pig Dreams:** The Novaks (another boyar family) have acquired a new prize pig and Ritek wants to acquire its 'mojo' for his grand piebald sow, Oinkerbelle.
- 3 **People's Revolution:** The old inhabitants of the hamlet, kicked out by Ritek months ago, have convinced the rowdies and vagabonds of the Chaos Party to support their claim to their hovels. Now they've marched into Ctyri Ctvrt, calling for a popular revolution and the ouster of the bog-ridden boyars.
- 4 **Green George's Wedding:** The peasants are celebrating a quaint local tradition by marrying a crudely carved log to the wife stone, but the wife stone is nowhere to be seen! A neighboring village has stolen it, and somebody must go there, brave their pagan feast, and recover the holy wife stone without bloodshed.
- 5 **Green George's Funeral:** Three days after the log's wedding it must be burnt in a sacred rite in the woods, but the Weird is particularly strong and the sacred glades need to be cleared of deodands so that the holy log can be properly sacrificed.

Map of the Hamlet and Manor

North ➤



The Hamlet

AI PEASANT COTTAGE WITH DELUXE PIG WALLOW

A “family” of six lives here in a roomy yeoman’s cottage and are currently barricaded inside. A large pig wallow hosts a large number of pigs with vaguely worried expressions.

“**Dad**” **Dagmar** [0-level, AC: 7 studded leather, Hp: 5, Attk: 1 (weapon), axe d8], the hook-nosed, beanpole-built “dad” in his late 20s (and escaped convict-jockey from Marlinko’s Black Race), greets anyone knocking or trying to open the door with a rather nasty-looking battle axe.

“**Wife**” **Ulgegend** [0-level, AC: 9, Hp: 2, Attk: 1 (weapon), dagger or rolling pin d4], always hovering behind “dad” is his stern-faced 45-year-old “wife”.

“**Grandpa**” **Ugg** [1st-level feral dwarf (*HCC2* p. 6), AC: 6 hides, Hp: 8, Attk: 1 (weapon), stone axe d6], a feral dwarf barely pretending to be a hunched old man.

“**Oldest Son**” **Alos** [1st-level thief, AC: 7 leather, Hp: 6, Attk: 1 (weapon), short sword d6], a fresh-faced strapping lad, towering a foot over his alleged parents, protects the two tween daughters.

“**The Tween Daughters**” **Lonka** and **Rusina** [0-level, AC: 9 flowery dresses, Hp: 1 each, beetball bat and pan d3], neither of them speaks the local language.

Class Alpha: all of the adults are really “jonesing” now, as they’re two days out from their last *bruz* hit. They care way more about their fix than the lord of the manor, whatsisname, or the strange goings on inside.

Class Beta: the adults have passed through their cold turkey phase and are borderline relieved to meet outsiders. They recently fended off an attack by the infected and relate the tale of Bogdan’s infection, a booming voice of command coming from the manorhouse’s root cellar, and the barricading of master Ritek in the north wing. They will not leave the cottage under most circumstance. The children have already run off and the pigs have all been hung by the infected.

Class Gamma or higher: a disheveled Alos, immune to infection, has slain the other three (infected) adults in the cottage in self-defense. He will freely accompany the party if asked. Alos is now nearly level two and will level up (with an audible *ding!*) if he survives one more combat.



A2 STOUT CHEERY COTTAGE

A gaily-painted floral scene frames the austere whitewash of this cottage. The rank stench hints at rotten deeds. Gygaxianly hidden under stones supporting a cooking cauldron are 243 sp and a suit of splint mail.

Class Alpha or Beta: the doors are shut and the rank stench of death surrounds the cottage. Hanging from the rafters are the bodies of the four former residents and, tragically, their much beloved seven prize hogs. “All pigs must DIE” and “death in Yoon Suin” are scrawled in beet juice on the neat white walls.

Class Gamma or higher: when the doors are opened, the stale stench of decay and clouds of flies escape suddenly. Inside every surface crawls with maggots, especially the eleven aforementioned corpses hanging from the rafters.

A3 LARGE YEOMAN’S HOUSE

The large, **extended** ‘clan’ of the octagenarian (infected and absent) gatesman Cenik lives in this rambling house. Someone has decorated it with numerous crocheted extracts from the *Book of Appropriate Quotes for Romantically Involved Ladies, 2nd Expanded Edition*. The gatesman is absent.

The Three Blue Sisters, Ludka, Jarka and Farka [1st-level fighters, AC: 7 leather, Hp: 6 each, Attk: 1 (weapon), boar spears d8 or atlats d6], three tall, round-faced, blue-skinned women in their early twenties, protect a motley crew of their 14 supposed children. They are not really sisters from Ostrovo, but actually from different clans in the tribal northlands. They are also not the old gatesman’s wives, as they would have outsiders believe, but are in fact lovers.

The Fourteen Supposed Children [0-level, AC: 9, Hp: 1 each, Attk: 1 (weapon), sticks/stones d3] they really are children, just not the sisters’.

Class Alpha: much as in A1, the adults are jonesing for a *bruz* hit and rattled by events.

Class Beta or higher: the children have run off and the **sisters** are in the direct thrall of Smerc. They are hunting around the house and surrounding area for their run-off children. Though wild-eyed (and now with deep-purple-hued skin) and talking in monotones, they attempt to affect normalcy and try and coax the party to come help them “find the lost children, who love so much to play in the root cellar.”



The Manor Gatehouse

Simple but stout, the granite and limestone gatehouse greets visitors from the south. A 20-foot-high whitewashed and parapeted wall with a narrow fighting platform runs east from the gatehouse. Rickety ladders lead up to the platform and the flat gatehouse roof from the rear.

I THE GATE

Thick oak doors hang here, barred from within. A barrel-arched tunnel runs through the gatehouse to the muddy courtyard beyond. There are murder holes driven into the ceiling for roof-top defenders.

Knocking or other noise rouses **Cinek**, the infected (and dominated) gatekeeper who is lying in the entrance tunnel, muttering something about the potatoes of “dim, distant Harn.”

Cinek is elderly, hunched, and stinks vaguely of urine. An attentive visitor can just make out a plum-sized indigo-hued boil at the base of his neck.



Gatekeeper Cinek: 0-level combatant, AC: 7 leather, Hp: 3, Attk: 1 (weapon), rusty sabre d8, XP: 6

Class Alpha or Beta: **Cinek** greets the party stiffly and formally in a monotone voice. He doggedly encourages the party to “meet the master of the house”—in reality, this means taking the party to meet the Beet God in Room 17 (Smerc’s Lair, p. 92) to infect them. If visitors try to enter other parts of the manor, he lets them pass, then attacks them from behind with a rebel yell.

Class Gamma or higher: **three infected town watchmen** are hidden on the open roof and surprise (4 in 6 chance) anyone who doesn’t look up, pouring burning pitch down on intruders for 2d6 damage on everyone inside the passageway. If **Cinek** is still alive, he stands at the edge of the tunnel and stiffly monologues to distract visitors and keep them in the tunnel to receive the burning pitch. The watchmen also scream warnings to the infected guards in the yard (location 2, p. 84).

The Three Watchmen: 0-level combatants, AC: 5 half-plate, Hp: 5, Attk: 1 (weapon), light crossbow d6, long sword d8, burning pitch 2d6, XP: 6

The Courtyard

Past the barrel-arched gate tunnel is the manor's courtyard, which presents an ethnographic study in stolid and unimaginative Marlinko country boyar architecture.

North is the new-looking handsome main building, two stories high and painted with rose-hued geometric folk patterns (p. 88). The second floor has actual windows, though shuttered. The current west wing (p. 86) of the manor looks old, sagging noticeably despite fresh whitewash. The east wing (p. 91) is spare, unadorned, and plain looking.

2 THE YARD

A small well stands in the middle of the yard. Its painted roof depicts pigs suggestively harvesting blood apricots and pickling beets. It is perfectly ordinary, the water drinkable.

Class Alpha: the courtyard is desolate. A couple of squirrels are playing with hazelnuts.

Class Beta: **three infected** mill in front of the east wing. Former swineherds, they are determined to chase visitors away from the farm building (p. 90) or, failing that, direct them towards the north building. They will allow visitors to approach the door if they are escorted by Cinek, the Gateman.

Three Swineherd Beetniks: 0-level combatants, AC: 8 leather, Hp: 4, Attk: 1 (weapon), cleavers d6, hooks d4 and trip, XP: 6

Class Gamma or higher: a **large group of hat-wearing beetniks** stand in front of the east wing (p. XX), armed with a motley assortment of pikes, crossbows, and swords. The crude hats are made from the heads of farm animals. **Six purple-hats** (pikes), **four blue-hats** (crossbow and beet-bombs), and **two ultramarine-hats** (shortswords) are drilling here. Furthermore, **two infected dwarves** with white hats are manhandling a small beet cannon (not actually useful within the courtyard). If the **former swineherds** are still alive, they are also here. They are marching around in oddly martial formation, and are keen to suggest to visitors that there is nothing to see here.

Six Purple-hats: 0-level combatants, AC: 8 leather, Hp: 3, Attk: 1 (weapon), pike d6, XP: 6

Four Blue-hats: 0-level combatants, AC: 7 studded leather, Hp: 6, Attk: 1 (weapon), light crossbow d6, 2 magic beet bombs d8, XP: 7

Two Ultramarine-hats: 1st-level thieves, AC: 7 leather, Hp: 6, Attk: 1 (weapon), short sword d6, XP: 10

Two White-hat Dwarves: 1st-level feral dwarves (*HCC2* p. 6), AC: 5 half-plate, Hp: 8, Attk: 1 (weapon), warhammers d6, XP: 10



3 **STOREROOM**

An utterly typical storeroom packed with utterly typical and dull agricultural instruments and supplies such as hoes, potato sacks, seed bags, work gloves, leather thongs, leather thigh-gaiters, donkey saddles, small wooden boxes, curious ball-gag-like-implements, etc.

4 **FOREMAN'S QUARTERS AND STORES**

A hay pallet sits among untidy stacks of mundane manor supplies in wooden boxes. Hidden under a small wooden box near the pallet, Bogdan the foreman has amassed a smallish fortune of pilfered swag: 68 grubby gold coins, 231 sp, two worthless pewter candlesticks, a collection of ornate but unbalanced throwing knives and a pair of marsh-witch underpants.

The West Wing: The Old Manorhouse

The current west wing of the manor is the original manor house building. Despite fresh whitewash, it looks its age, sagging noticeably to the south. It has a small memorial plaque dedicated 306 years ago to “a lovely young maiden, the dear Lady Szara”.

5 GRANARY

Stacked rows of large urns full of rye and wheat line the shelves in neat rows. Dead center are three large wooden ale barrels (or butts) surrounded by slight scuff marks on the floor. Pushing aside the middle butt reveals the concealed trapdoor to a ladder and crawl tunnel to the Secret Chapel in Room 6.

6 SECRET CHAPEL OF THE ANTI-WORLD TURTLE

Crawling up the ladder and through the trapdoor reveals a secret ritual room. A muted light shines from a wide copper brazier and turtle shell ritual assembly in the middle of the room. Next to it is a short onyx and particle board column, weighing 150 lbs and worth 500 gp. **Man-sized figures** (actually corn husk dolls) lurk in the shadows of the north wall and heads (actually blank-faced porcelain masks) hang from the rafters.

The wide (and cumbersome) copper brazier magically emanates a perpetual muted light (20-foot radius) but no heat, and is worth 700 gp if sold. The 3-foot-long turtle shell is fixed upside-down above the heated area with thin steel struts. The interior of the shell is polished and covered in Classical Hyperborean curses invoking the clearing of the way for the Anti-World Turtle and the destruction of all human agency along the Great Adventure Path That Has Always Been. Ugly bloodstains rim the bottom around a rotted human placenta.

An observant spellcasting character will also notice a protective magic glyph amongst the curses. Disturbing the basin or the column without offering at least a token prayer to the Anti-World Turtle produces an electrical arc from the glyph that strikes everyone the room for 1d8 damage. It fires again every time someone touches the turtle without the appropriate prayer or offering.

Next to the brazier on the stumpy onyx column is a wicked-looking sacrificial magic dagger with turtle-hide hilt (+2 against amphibians only). A lead folk spell tablet (non-magical but worth 100 gp as a curiosity) also sits on the column. The inscription reads:

“I, servant of Turtle N., shall arise, unblessing myself, and I shall go myself into the open rye field under the bright moons, under the crowding starry dome, past the grave of the bones of the giants, and just as the bones of the giants do not bend or break so may my member not bend or break against woman’s flesh and parts and memorial bones. And I, servant of Turtle N., shall take my red elm stick and go into the open field, tossing up its head and looking into the sky and moons and Great Bear and strike the three-year-old bull on its horn.”

7 KITCHEN AND PANTRY

A large kitchen with two massive stone ovens and their chimneys takes up the northern half of this room, while rows of shelves of foodstuffs fill the southern half.

Class Alpha: the first row of shelves has been knocked down and coarse rye flour is spilled all over the center of the room, frothed up and mixed with spilled blood into a grisly pinkish paste. The festering mess of **two hacked-up humans** sit dead center (pun intended) in the paste. Quiet parties hear panicked heavy breathing from behind the further of the two chimneys.

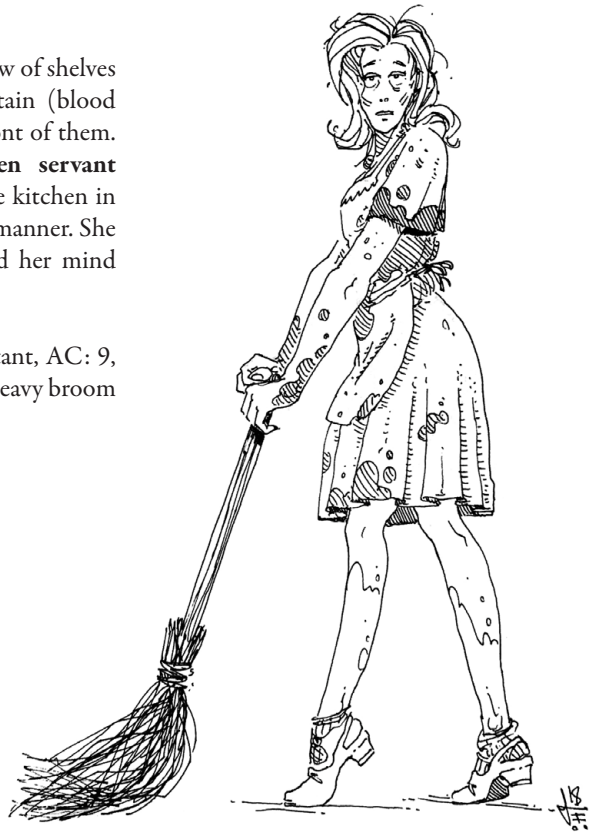
Flaka, a terrified (but uninfected) kitchen servant is hiding here. She has spread blood and beetle juice over her apron and smudged soot around her eyes to look as if she is in the psychotic throes of infection. She fears both the infected (though she has only heard the booming voice of the Beet God) and Ritek, whom she stabbed in a panic last night when he snuck into the kitchen looking for food. She will threaten the party with a knife, but will only attack in self-defense.

Flaka: 0-level non-combatant, AC: 9,
Hp: 2, Attk: 1 (weapon), kitchen knife
d4, XP: 0

Class Beta or higher: the first row of shelves is empty and there is a dark stain (blood and rye flour) on the floor in front of them.

Flaka, a semi-catatonic **kitchen servant faking infection**, is sweeping the kitchen in an awkward, Stepford Wife-like manner. She heard the Beet God's words and her mind snapped shut in fear.

Flaka: 0-level non-combatant, AC: 9,
Hp: 2, Attk: 1 (weapon), heavy broom
d3, XP: 0



North, Corps de Logis: The New Manorhouse

Built 49 years ago by the famed masonry studio of Gradek and Hradek, at least according to the chiseled masons' mark above the entrance, the handsome new wing of the manor rises two proud stories high, with freshly whitewashed and painted ochre bands of geometric folk patterns. It is the only structure on the estate with actual glass windows, though only on the second floor and shuttered.

8 DINING ROOM

The solid, black-painted side door from the courtyard is locked, while the door to the kitchens (Room 6) is barricaded with dining room chairs. The barricade can be cleared with two successful Open Door checks, but the noise will bring Ritek down from Room 13 to investigate.

A long red pine table carved with folksy floral decorations runs through the middle of the room between high, uncomfortable chairs. Half of the chairs are stacked against the southern door to the kitchen as a barricade. A large marble fireplace with kitschy peasant-scene porcelain statuettes (somehow worth 500 gp) are spread along the mantle. Ugly pewter dinnerware is set along the length of the table.

9 ENTRANCE HALL

Marble stairs lead up from the courtyard to the main door, a large locked black teak affair. There is a noticeable fruity stench of death emanating from behind the door. Large paintings of the the ancestral boyars of the manor, Ritek's all, glower down from the walls. The hall rises open to the second floor, exposing a lattice of beams and the upstairs gallery.

Class Alpha or Beta: even after unlocking, the **bloated corpse** of the (formerly) lovely Svetlana (Jaromil's penpal love interest) keeps it from opening fully. A pile of dry brown vomit next to her marks Ritek's failed attempt at cannibalism.

Class Gamma or higher: Piles of maggots and clouds of flies swarm from the severely decomposed **corpse of Svetlana** that slumps beneath the door.

If the party is here from the "Lovegram" hook (p. 9) and Jaromil finds out about Svetlana's death, he is deeply saddened about it for three days and then conveniently conflates it in his memories with other past (and much less horrific) partings.

10 STAIRS UP

Stairs run up at the end of the passageway.

Class Alpha or Beta: A manservant's bloody (and bloating) **corpse** lies face down on the ground, this one with a large infection boil still clearly visible on his back.

Class Gamma or higher: A pile of maggots and flies obscures one more stinking **corpse**.

II MALISKA'S WOMAN-CAVE

This room contains a painfully stereotypical witch collection of dried herb smudges, hanging animal parts, and grimy jars of magical components. An unused potter's wheel, dusty crochet hooks, withered holly wreaths, and other neglected attempts at craft hobbies have been stuffed in numerous small decorative boxes and cases against the eastern wall.

A fine selection of amateur-grade aquarelle pigments and brushes frames a pile of crudely painted **sketches on yellowing paper**. Flipping through them causes the reader to develop a growing sense of existential dread and a nagging, anxious doubt about petty life matters. "Did I forget to take the stewpot off the campfire?" "Was the party secretly laughing at me when I blew that Open Doors check?" The sketches are gloomy, unartful scrawls of vaguely bipedal creatures with elongated skulls, a low bunker-like building with a silo, and a tall pagoda-like structure (sites from the *Misty Isles of the Eld*, recognizable to characters who have traveled there).

The last painting in the pile is a cartoonish self-portrait of Maliska the marsh-witch, smeared almost beyond recognition with a mix of dried blood and borscht. When someone **handles the paper** or looks at the portrait, a light draft rustles the pages and whispers, "Maliskaaa..." Repeating the name (or fiddling intensely with the pages, such as use of *Identify*) **summons the ghost** of the murdered marsh-witch. She leaves her shallow grave in the nearby beet field and floats through the north wall in 1d4 rounds.

MALISKA'S GHOST

Maliska is just a spirit projection, not actually undead in the classic "going-to-fight-you" gaming sense. The party could also encounter her ghost in the vicinity of her grave in the great crater whence Smerc's tuberous body was levered (p. 67).

Maliska's ghost is soft and slightly translucent, indistinct and blurry with hot-pink sparkles. She speaks in an incongruously low, haranguing tone. Greeting the party with a derisive snort she will methodically say: "I, the one slain by the hand of Ritek, grant but questions three. Please. Don't. Fuck. It. Up."

She answers direct questions about the Manor and recent events succinctly, but attempts to exploit the format and steer the party into revenge on Ritek. Though she does not equivocate about Smerc being a demon, she suggests that Ritek (and, melodramatically, her murder) is the true source of the manor's evil.

Once she has answered the third question, she says, "Free me of my vengeance and ye shall receive a great boon under the crooked willow tree," then floats away. There is no boon—she's such a liar.

12 GUEST BEDROOM

Four unused, small single beds are here, along with four lockers filled with bed linens, night caps, and spent fire-beetle-gland mattress warmers.

13 GALLERY

An open gallery with a solid larch bannister runs the length of the entrance hall. Biscuit crumbs are scattered near the bannister.

14 MASTER BEDROOM

Ritek, the terrified, beady-eyed but otherwise mild and typical-looking plate-wearing master of the manor is holed up inside, unless noise brings him downstairs. A massive bed, tacky tapestries, a large work desk, and chests complete the room.

Smerc is letting Ritek starve to death in his self-imposed siege. Ritek does not know this.

Though outfitted for war, he will immediately recognize the party as outsiders and his craven little mind will try and turn this to his advantage. Ritek is aware of the Beet God's location and infectious power.

Weak-looking Party: playing the aggrieved, plain-old-guy victim, Ritek attempts to convince them to escort him off the estate for 1,500 gp. Ritek doesn't have that much cash on hand and will, of course, turn on them at a good moment once off the scene.

Powerful Party: Ritek lays it on thick about the mad, bad demonic Beet. He emphasizes how Ctvri Crt [sic] and Bystrica will be forever grateful to heroes who defeat the deadly Beet, but especially how he will reward them with 1,500 gp. He doesn't have that much cash, but that's a detail for later.

Investigating the room: The massive poster bed sits against the west wall, which is lined by tacky, but expensive, new tapestries depicting pigs in human clothes going about daily business in a town scene (worth 600 gp, but encumbering). The large work desk filled with ledgers stands against the north wall, two large locked metal chests flush besides it. Crumpled used paper *hruz* drug packets litter the floor alongside discarded hardtack pouches.

The first locked chest near the desk is empty and reeks of shrimp. The second is filled with 830 gp and erotic woodcuts of cuckolding scenes (worth 100 gp to a collector of perverse artforms).

Class Alpha or Beta: Ritek's armor is becoming a little loose, but he still has a goodly measure of padding.

Ritek: 5th-level cleric, AC: 3 plate, Hp: 25, Attk: 1 (weapon), two-handed mace d8, SA *Cause Light Wounds* (x2) (LL p. 21), *Curse* (LL p. 25), *Darkness Globe* (AEC p. 50), *Silence 15' Radius* (LL p. 26), *Hold Person* (LL p. 23), XP: 350

Class Gamma or higher: Ritek is thin-faced and weak with hunger. He has only 10 Hp.

East Wing: The Farm Building

The east wing of the manor house is all utilitarian function and is spare and unadorned in its plain whitewash. Entry from the courtyard is blocked by peasants and watchmen (p. 84) at infection classes Beta and Gamma (or higher).

15 ROOT CELLAR

The wide, unadorned outer doors open onto a short corridor. The interior door has been taken off its hinges and is propped against the wall. Piles of shriveled potatoes, parsnips, and radishes have been pushed to the side and a large object was clearly dragged along the packed dirt floor to a large hole. A crude pulley system has been erected over the hole to the landing (Room 17).

On closer examination, the hole used to be a trapdoor, but that has been removed and the old ladder shaft massively enlarged.

16 BARN

This long large barn is filled with livestock stalls. Hay pallets take up the southern portion, the usual sleeping quarters of most of the manors' servants. All of the **livestock has been slaughtered** in their pens, the smaller animals hung by nooses from the rafters.

Class Alpha or Beta: the slaughtered remains of the livestock are bloating dangerously with digestive gases. Some might even be explosive!

Class Gamma or higher: piles of **maggots** and other, grosser, **larvae** crawl about the barn and **flies** the size of cherries swarm in the stinking air. The smaller hanged animals have mostly fallen apart. A search through the mess may (20%) reveal a small, golden goose egg (worth 66 gp) that has dropped out of one of the bird **corpses**.

17 LANDING

Empty of anything but parsnips ...

Class Alpha or Beta: ... and the occasional turnip ...

Class Gamma or higher: ...and filled wall to wall with a mob of **25 infected town residents**.

Town Residents: 0-level combatants, AC: 9, Hp: 3, Attk: 1 (weapon), crude spears d6, XP: 10

18 BEET CELLAR

Long, thick strands of beets have been arranged into weird arcane patterns throughout this massive, low-hanging cellar.



19 LAIR OF THE BEET GOD

A wide, freshly-installed bare pine door opens onto a short passage dug through rocky soil to an excavated sanctum.

The massive, tumescent, soil-crusting beet body of **Smerc**, with his bulging petulant child face and two 10-foot long tendrils, is nestled in the rich black soil. He calls to the party in his bassy, bombastic voice as soon as they open the door to “come forth and receive faaaaaabulous prizes!”

If the **party walks into tendril range**, he will begin a long, utterly pompous screed about the need to worship his existence (in his egomania, a quick-acting party has exactly 20 real time seconds to try and surprise him, with a 4 in 6 chance of doing so). After he finishes his screed, Smerc will naturally attempt to infect the party with his flailing tendrils.

If the **party stands off or retreats**, he casts *Suggestion* to get a party member into striking range (doing this twice). He can unroot himself, climb up out of the hole in a round, and push his bulky body with his tendrils if really pressed. His body is poorly balanced and a wily party that manages to tip him (say with a lever) will cause him to topple back comically, and force him to spend a round righting himself before attacking again.

As soon as combat begins, Smerc will begin **telepathically summoning infected peasant mooks** (currently wandering the outlying fields) to assist. Once combat starts, mooks will drop down from the structure above and attack the party from behind; 1d4 mooks appear on rounds 4, 8, and 12 of combat.

Smerc the Beet God: AC: 5, Hp: 62, HD: 10, Attk: 2 (tendrils), 10-foot tendrils d4 plus infection (see p. 58), SA *Suggestion* (twice a day) (*AEC* p. 78), SD only hit by silver or magical weapons, SW x2 damage from fire, MV: 20', XP: 3,800

Beetnik Mooks: 0-level combatants, AC: 9, Hp: 3, Attk: 1 (weapon), sharpened pitchforks d6, XP: 10

Slaying Smerc releases the infected (p. XX). After death, the beet body begins to quiver and shudder for two rounds, before dramatically exploding. Flying beet chunks cause d4 damage to all within 20 feet; the only thing remaining from Smerc is a fist-sized, pale green, raw **gemstone** smelling oddly of cardamon and brimstone. The stone allows the possessor to cast *ESP* once a day, but only if their bare feet are covered in loose soil. It can be sold for 5,000 gp to a mage with a love of demonic agronomy.

Adventure Inspirations

The Mandrakes by Clark Ashton Smith

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1978)

The Age of Anxiety's obsession with zombies

Appendix A:

Bestiary and Frog

Demon Generator

Alkonost

No. Enc.:	1 (3–10)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	450' (150')
Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	5
Attacks:	3 (2 wings, 1 song)
Damage:	1d6/1d6/special
Save:	F5
Morale:	9
Hoard Class:	V
XP:	650

The alkonost is a giant bird with the head of a woman and a haunting, heart-piercing song. They congregate in groups of three to ten near the seaside.

When an alkonost lays a clutch of eggs, she will let them remain in the nest for a few days before rolling them into the preternaturally calm sea, where they will rapidly sink to the depths before rising to the surface and hatching in seven days. At that time, the vagaries of weather that the alkonost had been holding back will rush in, and each new alkonost hatches to the accompaniment of roiling clouds, pelting rain, and the clamor of thunder and lightning. If denied the touch of the sea within seven days of being laid, the egg will never hatch.

The alkonost is normally a pacific being, but her song can be hazardous. Those hearing the song of an alkonost must save vs. spells every two rounds of exposure. The first time they fail a save, they forget their immediate purpose and begin listening raptly. The second time they fail a save, they forget their long-term goals; at the third failed save they forget the last year of their lives; at the fourth, they forget their name; at the fifth, they forget the faces of their parents. Every turn that a listener is removed from the presence of the song, they remember one facet of what they had lost.



Bukavac

No. Enc.:	1
Alignment:	Chaotic (Evil)
Movement:	90' (30), jump 30'
Armor Class:	4
Hit Dice:	12
Attacks:	2 (bite) or 1 (trample-jump)
Damage:	2d12 (bite), 4d6 (trample-jump)
Save:	F12
Morale:	8
Hoard Class:	XVIII
XP:	2800

The bukavac is a singularly hirsute hexapodal monster that habitually resides beneath the surface of lakes and rivers. The creature's charmingly shaggy exterior, endearingly gnarled horns, and curiously large eyes belie the terror of its six threshing feet and near-ravenous taste for the flesh of bipedal sophonts.

The bukavac attacks by jumping above its chosen target and, bizarrely hanging in midair, pounding them to a pulp with its six feet. The resulting red ruin is then scooped up by its long tongue. This jump is invariably accompanied by the joyous hell-scream of "BWAAAAHHH!" – theoretically charming, if it were not for the carnage that near-invariably follows.

The bukavac also possesses minor teleportation powers, and is able to *teleport* away from danger once per day. Intelligent and capable of speech, it is often willing to parlay with its prey (if detected before its initial attack).



ADALFUNS AND THE BUKAVAC

From The Chant of Adalfuns, the 37th Aspect of our Sun Lord Puissant

And so it came to pass that Adalfuns entered the Hill Cantons, in search of the Horned Oracle. Crossing the River Trvna on the road to Ostrovo, he was startled to hear a great stirring of the water behind. Glancing over his magnificently broad shoulder he saw the hairy, horned mass of the bukavac hovering mid-air.

"What ho, bukavac?" Adalfuns cried. "Why do you make ready to leap upon my rippled and ample back?"

"I lack sustenance and wish to dine upon the delectable substance called man-fat," answered the bukavac in a reasonable tone.

"Surely my toned and muscular form would provide poor and gamey fare to your refined, if monstrous, palate."

"Ah, but that is where we differ, oh man-flesh on the foot," answered the bukavac. "I have found delight in the prodigious marbling of a well-seasoned fighting man."

"In that case, I will happily share in my man-fat, but for a contest of logical conundrums. If you win, you crush beneath your mass and consume the entirety of my body. If I win, I shall lop off my right arm and present it to you. In either case, your avaricious belly finds nourishment."

"While I take exception to the libelous characterization of my abdomen, I agree to such a contest."

As Adalfuns began his exposition, his dextrous hands sought out unseen contents from his magic backpack, where the items sought were always on top of everything else.

"Baromil wears a scarlet doublet on Sunlorday," Adalfuns began, "while Jirimil wears a black one on Blackgoatday and Alena wears a woolen wimple twice a week. Timosz is wearing a burgonet. What day of the week is it?"

"That makes entirely no sense," said the bukavac in an exasperated tone. "I shall make ready to leap upon your ample back."

"Oh no, wait! There is a second part," responded Adalfuns, as he rapidly whittled behind his back. "A blood apricot-laden cart leaves Heimotbuch traveling at four cantonal potato-leagues an hour, while another such laden cart leaves Muth travelling at two potato-leagues per hour. Where and when do the two carts meet?"

"But again..."

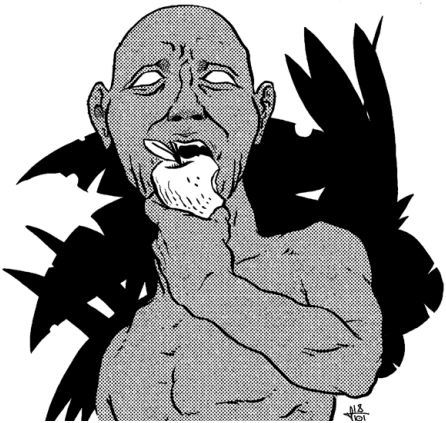
Before the thoroughly confused and enraged bukavac could ready his banter, Adalfuns took the ten-foot-long sharpened stick from behind his back and promptly thrust it into the gleaming red eye of the great beast.

"Sweet fuck!" said the bukavac in tremendous pain. "You have blinded and cheated me!"

"But that was exactly the point," quipped Adalfuns, in a line that sounded good on his tongue at the time, but upon subsequent reflection appeared cheap and breezy. Thereupon, whistling a saucy tune, he hitched up his pack and made his way to Ostrovo for a steaming pile of halushky.

Deodand

No. Enc.:	1 (1-3)
Alignment:	Chaotic (Evil)
Movement:	90' (30')
Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	4
Attacks:	3 (2 claws, 1 bite)
Damage:	1d4/1d4/1d8
Save:	F4
Morale:	7
Hoard Class:	V (XIV)
XP:	135



Deodands are intelligent, man-eating humanoids rumored to be borne of a sorcerous experiment that combined a human with a wolverine and basilisk. Deodands appear as handsome, muscular men with dull charcoal-black skin, long sharp fangs, and slitted golden or white eyes. The typical deodand prefers to wear a leather harness with bits of velvet or other rich fabrics attached. There is a 30% chance that the harness is adorned with ornamental gems worth 100–400 gp.

The solitary deodand prefers to ambush his prey by stealth and will hide in shadows and move silently at a 60% chance. If unobserved, he has a 4 in 6 chance of surprising an unwitting party.

Though vicious and unrelenting in his desire to eat other humanoids, the deodand is also particularly interested in maintaining his own skin. If obviously overpowered or reduced to less than 1/3 hit points he will beg and plead for his life, often offering to guide a party. Adventurers should remain vigilant, however, if they take the creature up on any offer, as the deodand may attempt to subtly lead them into danger.

“The deodands are like incompetent con artists. They run very obvious (humorously so) scams to try and lure humans into being eaten. I imagine the Great Deodand is the living embodiment of his species.” - Chris Kotalik

Attribution: the deodand is a creature invented by Jack Vance in his Dying Earth novels (*The Dying Earth*, *The Eyes of the Overworld*, *Cugel's Saga*, and *Rhialto the Magnificent*). They appear here by permission of the Jack Vance estate. Also, you should really read Vance's work if you like the Hill Cantons—their picaresque creativity is a major influence.

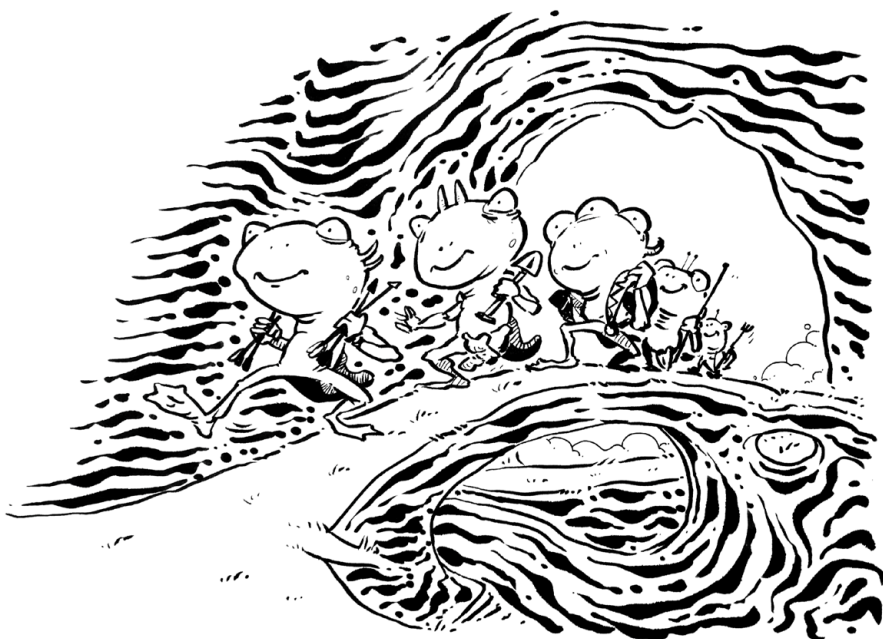
Frog Demonettes/Žába'dabel Nymphs

No. Enc.:	1d6 (3d6)
Alignment:	Chaotic (Evil)
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	5
Hit Dice:	2
Attacks:	2 (claws or barbed steel darts)
Damage:	1d4 or 1d4+1
Save:	D2
Morale:	9
Hoard Class:	XI
XP:	29

Like many extra-dimensional xenofoms, the Žába'dabel as a demonic race both mirror and defy natural ecology. Frog Demonettes, the lowest of the three basic types—one hesitates to call them life-cycle stages as they seem to lack rhyme or reason, alternately evolving or devolving at seemingly random intervals of their millennium-long lives—are a uniformly female-appearing race of man-sized, lithe, pastel-skinned bipeds with short stubby tails.

Though the Frog Demonette is not as intellectually well-rounded as the larger, more mutated Oorhi, they are quite cunning and love tinkering. This dovetails nicely with their typical caste role as trap setters, sanitation maintenance specialists, and unionized builders of the grotesque baroque floats that grace the annual Benighted Parade of Weltschmerz in Peklo, their home dimension.

Frog Demonettes can cast *Mending* (AEC p. 70) and *Jarring Hand* (AEC p. 68) spells once a day—admittedly powers that will likely see little use in combat with PCs.



Frog Demons/Žába'dabel,

Oorhi

No. Enc.:	1d6 (3d8)
Alignment:	Chaotic (Evil)
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	3
Hit Dice:	4/5/6
Attacks:	3 (2 claws, bite)
Damage:	1d4/1d4/1d10
Save:	F4/F5/F6
Morale:	10
Hoard Class:	XIV
XP:	245/650/1070



Standing seven feet tall, the male-appearing Oorhi vary much more in body type (roll or pick once from the Mutation chart on p. 99) than their diminutive cousins. They are the most intelligent and neurotically uptight examples of their race.

Oorhi take half damage from all weaponry that is not silver or magical, though spells (naturally) and fire/burning oil do normal damage. There is a 25% chance that any one individual Oorhi has the power to shift into the form of any human-sized sentient race.

Frog Demons/Žába'dabel,

Krastacha

No. Enc.:	1d6 (3d8)
Alignment:	Chaotic (Evil)
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	3
Hit Dice:	5/6/7
Attacks:	3 (2 claws, bite)
Damage:	1d4/1d4/1d10
Save:	F5/F6/F7
Morale:	11
Hoard Class:	XIV
XP:	650/1070/1490



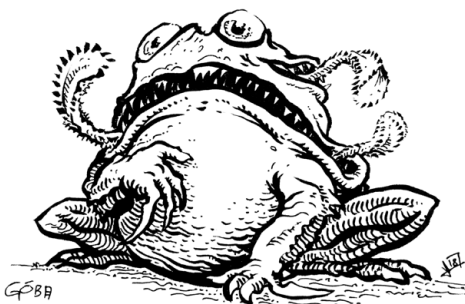
The heavyweight champions of the Žába'dabel are the Krastachas. Massive and often hideously mutated (roll or pick 1d3 on the Mutation chart on p. 99), they are quite bestial and thick-headed.

Krastacha take half damage from all weaponry that is not silver or magical, though spells (naturally) and fire/burning oil do normal damage. They suffer from a peculiar weakness: belly tickling. This unlikely act (attack as per touch) forces them to make a save vs spells or spend 1d3 rounds rolling on their back in furious, helpless laughter.

D20 MUTATION CHART

Oorhi roll or pick one adaptive mutation, Krastachas roll or pick 1d3 mutations (ignoring or re-rolling nonsensical combinations).

- 1 **Shriveled Back Legs.** Movement reduced to 60' per turn as it wearily drags itself with its front legs.
- 2 **Overmuscled Forelimbs.** +2 to hit/damage with claw attacks.
- 3 **Pinhead.** -2 damage with bite. Looks ridiculous, especially with a hat.
- 4 **Unusually Wide Mouth.** +2 damage with bite attack.
- 5 **Two Headed.** Can make an additional bite attack per round (the frog demon will not use its claws).
- 6 **Three Headed.** Can make two extra bite attacks per round (the frog demon will not use its claws).
- 7 **Razor Tongue.** +3 to hit with bite attack.
- 8 **Face Tongue.** Frog demon will only speak through the face that appears at the end of its tongue.
- 9 **Baby or Child Face.** Just kind of freaky.
- 10 **Mucous Skin.** Secretes a gummy substance from pores. 2 in 6 chance that any weapon or other item that makes contact with the demon sticks to the body for 1d12 rounds.
- 11 **Antlers or Horns.** Frog Demon can substitute one of its attacks for a gouge with antlers/horns at 2d6 damage.
- 12 **Extra Eyes (1d8).** Surprised only on a 1.
- 13 **Eye Stalks.** Surprised only on a 1. Rear attacks against this demon are only at +1.
- 14 **Transparent Skin.** The demon's skin is translucent, showing internal organs. -2 penalty to AC.
- 15 **Blood Squirt Eyes.** A focused squirt of acidic blood against a single opponent; save vs breath weapons or be blinded for 1d6 rounds.
- 16 **Egg Pouch.** Bulging sac of translucent eggs. No effect.
- 17 **Burrowing.** Frog Demon can burrow through soil at 60 feet per round.
- 18 **Ripped.** Frog Demon is a hit dice higher than the baseline for its type.
- 19 **Stocky.** Frog Demon is a hit dice higher than the baseline for its type. -30' to movement.
- 20 **Big Mutha.** This big ass Frog Demon has maximum hit dice for its type. -30' to movement.



Kuduk

No. Enc.:	3d6 (5d8)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	90' (30')
Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	1
Attacks:	1 (weapon or hurling rock)
Damage:	1d4+1 (rock) or weapon
Save:	H1
Morale:	9
Hoard Class:	II (XII)
XP:	10



The wee peoples of Žēm suffer daily humiliations at the hands of a callous (yet eminently and objectively fair) humanity. Banned from the corelands of civilization, the smaller folk are forced to the margins of borderlands life living on in urban environs as, at best, the butt of the southlands hobbit-wrangling sport-circuit. Rurally a greater, if desperately poor, separate existence has been carved out by Overking writ in the shtetls (ghettoized villages) in the frigid Marches of Nur.

There, stirred on by undoubtedly by the silver-tongued lies of Black Hobbit agitators—and the occasional pogrom by bigoted Soldier-Bears—some younger buck halflings will occasionally escape into the wilds of the Weird. Not quite hardy enough yet to make it in “maroon” communities of their own, these halflings will seek out the cave shelters of Feral Dwarfs. Several centuries of such intermixings has produced a now-increasingly hardy (and socially-constructed) race of dwarf-hobbit love-children, the Kudûki.

The average Kudûk combines many of the physical features of both parents, appearing alternately to outsiders as either short-bearded, linebacker-built hobbits of exceptionally dour countenance or as rosy-cheeked cherubic Harpo-esque dwarfs.

Though most Kudûki will be found dressed in fierce-looking leathers and furs (though tastefully cut), recent drives by Kudûk nationalists have produced a unique fashion trend introducing over-sized, triple-horned bronze helmets, thick metallic belts, and light cloth chitons or tunics to the usual mix of clothing.

Internally, the Kudûk mind is often one of extreme identity confusion, bouncing around from a bipolar cycling of luxury-loving complacency and temperate gluttony to a sudden obsession with the process and fruits of mining. Kudûk lairs as such will often resemble an underground jumble of crude leather pillow-stuffed salons and country-styled kitchenettes next to wholly industrial areas such as ore smelters and mine shafts.



Because of their marginal and semi-outlaw status, quarterlings will often look on outsiders from a purely predatory viewpoint: at best as valuable trade sources to cheat around the edges (placing a chubby little thumb on the scales here and there to jack up a price) or at worst severely drubbing and robbing if they outnumber a party (drawing the slippery ethical line at cold-blooded murder).

Kudûk enjoy the somewhat diminished abilities and drawbacks of both groups of wee folk: 30' infravision, hiding outdoors or in natural caves at 45%, +1 to initiative if in all Kudûk party, +1 to hit when throwing rocks, and a 1 in 6 chance of detecting construction-based traps (but a 1-2 chance for secret doors). They may not use two-handed weapons.

When encountered in groups of 18 or more they will be accompanied by a 4 hit dice leader who has a 40% chance of being batshit insane.

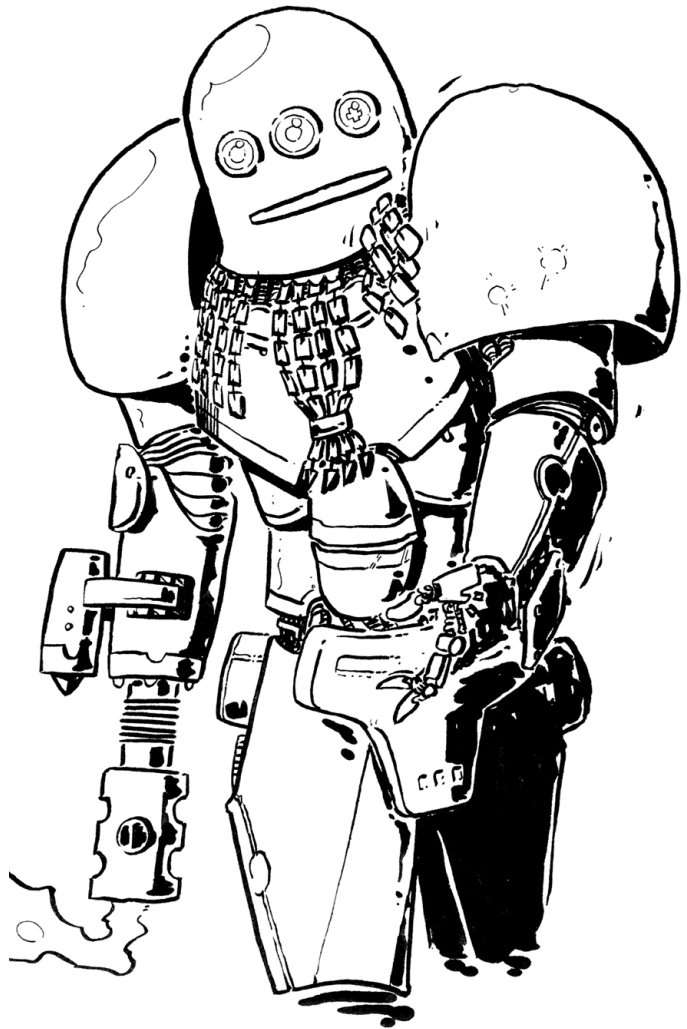
Robo-Dwarf

No. Enc.:	1d6 (3d4)
Alignment:	Neutral or Chaotic (Evil)
Movement:	60' (20')
Armor Class:	3 (or 8 buck naked)
Hit Dice:	1+1
Attacks:	1 (weapon)
Damage:	Weapon
Save:	D1
Morale:	10
XP:	25
XP:	10

Strange tales are told in these hills of the appearance of squat constructs from beyond the Weird. Said to be made of equal parts living animate stone, whirling mechanical gears, and living tissue, these so-called Robo-Dwarves are the freakish creation of an irresponsible higher power.

Some blame the baleful White God, others an extra-dimensional ur-dwarf called Xhom. It matters little.

Rogue Robo-Dwarves will on occasion be encountered as NPC monsters in the wild and underground. Robo-Dwarf war cries of binary numbers and dusty primrose smell strike fear into the organic pump chambers of humans and other bipedal life-forms. When encountered in groups of more than five, a 2 HD leader with a single charge Baton of Poison Gas (20-foot radius, save vs poison or die, one charge, Robo-Dwarves immune) will be present.



Vodník

No. Enc.:	1-2
Alignment:	Chaotic (Evil)
Movement:	120' (40')
Armor Class:	4
Hit Dice:	4
Attacks:	1
Damage:	1d6 + special (see below)
Save:	F4
Morale:	10
Hoard Class:	XX
XP:	190

It is said among the Old Pahr people that a pessimist is someone who thinks that things couldn't be worse—and that an optimist believes that they can! Pushing aside the old wives' tale that a surfeit of strong drink drives men to melancholy, learned men attribute this pervading cultural gloom to the surfeit of malevolent spirits and faeries in the popular mythology.

A particularly nasty example of the inimical Pahr spirit is the vodník, a male water spirit of a sour and murderous nature. Vodníks often lurk at the edges of lakes and rivers waiting for lone or small groups of village folk.

Vodníks dwell invisibly in the water before they strike, but rise in the form of a translucent serpent when they do. Each attack does 1d6 damage, but worse is that the spirit serpent will attempt to drag the victim down to a watery doom. Those hit by a vodník must save vs paralysis or be dragged into the water.

Once the vodník has a victim under water it will shift into its true form, a pot-bellied old man covered in fine scales, and concentrate on drowning the hapless victim. It will drown a person in 1d6+1 rounds—a process that can only be stopped with the creature's death.

The vodník will only take one Hp of damage from piercing or slashing weapons, but takes full damage as normal from bludgeoning attacks. Fire magic will have no effect on the monster. Electrical magic will double in intensity. Casting *Purify Food and Water* on the creature will kill it outright.

The vodník will become strangely mellow (read non-murderous) for 1d6 turns after the witching hour, often appearing on rocks or floating on the water smoking a carved pipe. Fishermen often leave offerings of pipe weed to placate local vodníks.



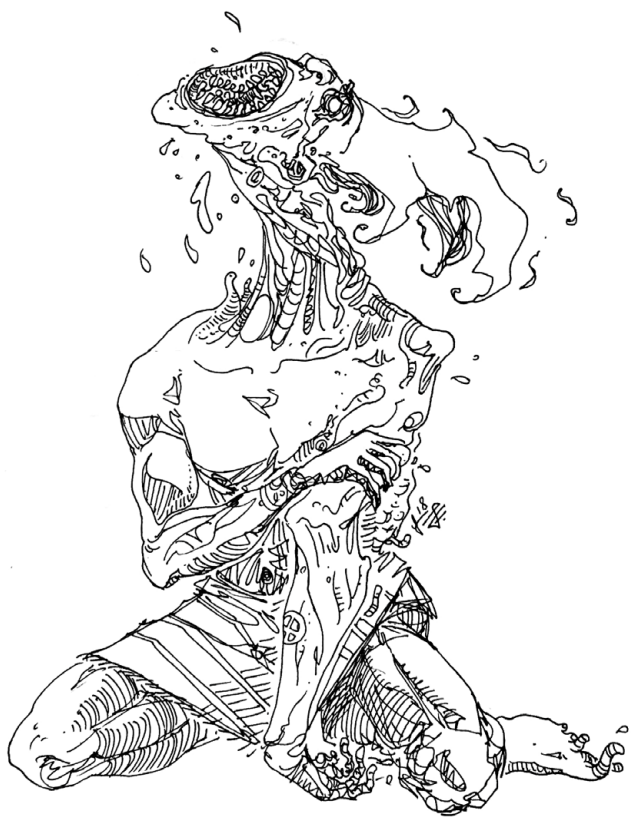
Wereworm

No. Enc.:	1d4 (1d4)
Alignment:	Chaotic (Evil)
Movement:	120' (above land), 60' (burrowing)
Armor Class:	3
Hit Dice:	4
Attacks:	1 (bite)
Damage:	2d6
Save:	F5
Morale:	8
Hoard Class:	XX
XP:	550

Thought only to be myth even by the most rigorous of borderlands sages, Wereworms do—sadly for humankind—eke out a twisted (no pun intended) existence on the edges of civilization. In human form they appear to be perfectly normal specimens with the notable exceptions of their mouths, which seem uncomfortably circular and matched with a fetid, corrupted smell and look.

In worm form the creatures will appear to be 7–8 feet long miniature versions of the dreaded Mauve Worm (a mutation of the more common, and equally dreadful, Purple Worm). Their gaping mouths cause considerable damage. In such form they will frequently be found burrowing underground in hopes of setting up an ambush.

Wereworms are subject to the same advantages (only magic/silver weapons can effect them, disease etc) and disadvantages (wolvesbane, lingering doubt about body image, etc) as other lycanthropes in *Labyrinth Lord*.



Appendix B:

Bucolic Village

Generator

All hexes within one hex distance from marked farmlands and settlements have several villages. The following chart will help you provide some local color to these bumpkin sites. Roll once on the Village Names charts and subcharts and once on the Village Quirks chart for the full effect. Roll for additional details on the Rustic Dwellings and Stupid Drunken Misadventures charts.

VILLAGE NAME GENERATOR

Roll a d10 and then choose how weird you want your names (or roll a d6).

d10	1–2: Ordinary Names	3–4: Crapsack Names	5: Old Pahr Pagan Names	6: Really Inappropriate Names
1	Dolny Vrh (lower peak)	Mastno Selo (greasy hamlet)	Bukov Gaj (beech grove)	Zlata Žila (the hemorrhoid)
2	Velko Maslo (big butter)	Žolta Žila (rancid vein)	Hrastovo (the oak's)	Dolga Driska (long diarrhea)
3	Stary Bob (old bean)	Huda Južina (angry lunch)	Slapnik (waterfall place)	Pofukana Vas (fucked village)
4	Novi Svet (new world)	Velika Nedelja (big sunday)	Gabrje (hornbeam place)	Jebeo Selo (fucking village)
5	Krasna Grapa (beautiful gorge)	Zadnjica (buttock)	Brezje (birch place)	Drekovo Govno (shitty cowpat)
6	Spodny Log (lower wood)	Kislalica (sour faces)	Borova Borovnica (pine tree's blueberry)	Svinsky (dirty pig's)
7	Smutny Nafuk (down blow?)	Butnskala (headknockrock)	Ajdova Ajda (troll's buckwheat)	Kurčevgrad (cockup castle/town)
8	Vysoky Laz (high pass)	Žuževzizek (Bug's tit)	Lipov Bog (linden god)	Druga Beda (other misery)
9	Daleky Hrast (far oak)	Slepe Butale (blind idiots)	Zeleni Jurij (the sacrificial king-for-a-day's place)	Gnila Rupa (rotten hole)
10	Debely Sluj (fat cave)	Zmajska Temnica (dragon's dungeon)	Slivino (the plums)	Zadnyi Ritek (last bottom/ass)

Village Quirks

Roll d20

- 1 **Horrific Storytellers.** All of them. They subject every visitor to endless, pointless stories. From the boorish rural boyars to the village priest, from young coots to distracted farmwives. Endless.
- 2 **Rude Beyond Measure.** These dour folk never smile. The innkeep acts like he does you a king's favor when he accepts your coin. A muttered word somewhere between "yes," "no," and "fuck off" is the best they can manage.
- 3 **Poor and Benighted.** The stubble-faced, blister-knuckled yokels have no shoes. Nor socks, even. There are even farm hands without feet. Doors? You wish! Every noon they pray the day would not end, yet it ends, and they curse Ha-Vul the Devil's grandmother.
- 4 **Deeply Xenophobic.** The old men make gestures against the evil eye when they see strangers and mutter in their unintelligible gibberish dialect. The only understandable word they hawk out is "nemci," before making rude gestures suggesting rapid departure.
- 5 **Rob You Soon as Look at You.** They're all smiles and fun and games and twirly mustaches, with their plum and pear and cherry and apple brandy, but then you find yourself in that muddy ravine trussed up like a hog with your horse missing and your coach turned into bee hives.
- 6 **Kill You Soon as Look at You.** Evil eye? These boyarniks are all tall, hulking, blond and wide-mouthed. They're fingering harvest sickles and eyeing hoary pictograms of man-bears and moons and bees and outlanders drowned in honey for the Big Mother Bee.
- 7 **The Old Ways, Terrible Secret.** Flower-decked maids and youths fête visitors like kings, particularly comely ones, and tell them they need a new village knyaz. They call the visitor George and the maidens of the boyars and the priests come calling, with garlands of green ivy. They need a king for a day, to club on the bridge of the Ha-Vul's second cousin and ensure the frost will not kill the plum blooms and ruin the plum brandy harvest.
- 8 **The Old Ways, Quaintly and Benignly.** Evil-looking crones and toothless pops chuckle as they paint straw dolls and weave wicker garlands to hang off the old trees. There's a huge may-tree-pole and even a village fire department with large drying racks for pig skins. It's all in good fun, for the winter sausage festival.
- 9 **The Old Ways, Just Fucking Weird.** Sad-faced men and bright-cheeked wives paint bluebirds and vampires and pig designs on sandals. Every sunset and every sunrise the men are strapped to holy cows and spanked with the sandals. The villagers are adamant that this keeps the vampire pigs away.
- 10 **The Old Ways, Just Fucking Strange.** Smiling, black-eyed children dance around ever-burning flames and sing cute songs about birds and bees, life and death. Every day at four in the afternoon they draw and quarter a cute woodland animal, then share it and eat it raw. The adults just smile and nod, "children will be children."
- 11 **The Old Ways, Just Fucking Odd.** In the middle of the village there is a hill, covered in in wooden idols of the Birdmanwoman. Indeed, the whole hill is mulched wooden idols. Every idol is garlanded with Birdmanwoman rosaries. And flowers. Nobody talks about the hill. Five carpenters spend most of their time making Birdmanwoman idols. The whole village spends its time sacrificing plums and prunes and pears and peaches to the Birdmanwoman idols. For some reason the orchards are bountiful. Strangers rooting around or digging in the hill produce a sigh, but no other reaction. Destroying

- the hill provokes no reaction. They'll just make more idols, slowly rebuilding the hill. There is nothing of value inside the hill. Just lots and lots of rotting wooden idols.
- 12 **Plump Happy Peasants.** Every boyar and boar-wife is plump and self-satisfied, pronouncing the self-evident rightness of their ways. They're not sure what their ways are, except that they involve dumplings, dull work, drinking and as little art, culture, philosophy, or funny new ideas as possible. The happy local peasants, indeed, have a pseudo-magical ability to render annoying strangers first invisible then ethereal if they express views contrary to their worldview. Both effects eventually wear off if the strangers leave the plump and happy village.
- 13 **Idyllic and Shockingly So.** The whitewash is fresh and each house painted around its edges with fresh bright geometric bands. The chickens are lustrous, the eggs big and protein-rich, and the milk creamier than the creamy thighs of the Lepa Vida from the village five hills over that the lusty tow-headed youths pine over.
- 14 **Desperado Den.** Bandits use the village as a base of operation. Some of them occasionally refer to themselves as partisans, freedom-fighters, old-believers, blue-guards, white-guards, red-guards, new-believers, re-believers, or some other faction. The villagers provide them with potatoes and vodka in exchange for a measure of peace.
- 15 **Ghosts in the Well.** There are two wells in the village. One is large, opulent, marble and oak affair, haunted by ghosts and odd dreams. The other, smaller one is kept pure by a pet vodyanoi. Local lumberworkers and masons offer sacrifices of bread and beans to the water spirit.
- 16 **Monsters in the Barn.** The red-eyed villagers glance nervously at the great red barn, surrounded by crumbling grey rocks and ivy. They mutter about "active radios" and "the event" and "black grass stalks." There are certainly not monsters with deadly blue auras in the big barn. There are almost certainly no decayed Eld energy pylons in the ruins of the old pig farm.
- 17 **That Old Ruin?** The villagers fall silent and a wary hesitation informs their movements. No, there are no bloodsuckers there. No, no, there never were. They certainly don't have an unusually large supply of all-wooden hornbeam pitchforks and long-handled torches for a small village such as this.
- 18 **A Pious Flock.** The loud, demonstrative and long-bearded priest aggressively expounds on the importance of pious contributions to the outsized, domed temple of the Sun Lord that dominates the village like a squat, amphibian shepherd.
- 19 **Dull.** A sleepy place, but distinctively and aggressively so. The food is filling, the wine is winsome. Every day spent here, all ability scores move one point towards average, even as lost Hp rapidly recover by an average amount. Indeed, would not every jaded adventurer want to recover here, own a few cows and help with the ritual pig-slaughter?
- 20 **Incredibly Cheery.** The village is sloppy with floral patterns, sunflowers, rapeseed patches, communal kitchens, social swimming pool, collective council and culture club, and a very progressive agenda of social superiority through work. The boyars certainly did not go missing, they chose to assimilate themselves into wider society for the greater good.

d8 Rusfic Dwellings and their “Characters”

- 1 Whimsically-whittled wooden **shack**. Jara Gospodà, a **boyar down on his luck** dreaming he is a carpenter, or a carpenter dreaming he is a boyar? There are faces carved in the walls and children say they sing to them sweet songs of candy in the dolmen stones.
- 2 Sturdy stone **stable converted into two homes**. Dolga Petra, a flamboyant, flame-haired, and fire-tongued **battleaxe of a lady** who collects books and flowers, obviously a witch. The books are all variously incorrect almanacs about events of a single year in a rather dull village at a crossroads of the metaverse. Is this a planar portal in a library of near-identical combination horoscopes and agricultural calendars?
- 3 Distasteful **brick house** with bay windows. Debely Bine, an **innkeeper** obsessed with finding the golden spoon his dead daughter took to her doom in the local magic pond. That smell, could it be? No. It is not. As part of a ritual to recover the magic spoon, Bine had a warbear ritually sacrificed to the Flatulent Spirit Beneath the Floorboards. No daughters were actually hurt.
- 4 Whitewashed and flower and pine tree painted **cottage**. Babi Juga, an old and **kindly witch**, bakes pies and cookies and is beloved of the local children for fighting off kuduks and deodands and zenodads. There are spirits grim and angry trapped in the paintings, kept locked up by the witch with the help of a ridiculously obvious and shiny golden sun-and-pork symbol on her kitchen wall.
- 5 Lovely massive-timbered and half-shingled combination **thunder shrine and pork-slaughter house** dedicated to the two most important godlings of this village: Perun Hitrostrél and Pujs Dobrojed. Once a week a prize porker is ritually sacrificed, the blood collected and then sprinkled over all the less-attractive virgins of the village to increase their attractiveness, or at least activate their latent magical powers. Boris Dobrobor, a muddle-headed **boyar-priest-banker**, oversees the floral arrangements of the Pig-and-Lightning cult and is hopelessly in love with Marlinko trader Ivan Srborok. The holy pig hook is made of pure adamantium. Seriously. Who'd have thought? Well, there you have it. It'd totally work against golems or demons.
- 6 Polished **stone tomb** of a heroic kozak queen. Vida Daljnovidà is a **child blessed** with the far-seeing eye by the pork-blood-ritual and she rambles of the “coming tuberous revolution” or some similarly useless nonsense. The great wooden club of the giant-slayer, with original bronze nail! It might be a bit massive, and only vaguely magical, but it'd certainly fetch a pretty silver penny at the Temple to All-Pahr Gods on the Feral Shore.
- 7 Mildly-distinguished **manor** with clock tower. Urni Svarislav is a quick-witted quarterling **tinker** who has nearly completely assimilated into dull village life, with his ability to create monotonous and sturdy, if inaccurate, clocks and calendars for the local boyars. There is a precise polévík with a grudge, playing a poltergeist against the local clock-obsessed kulaks.
- 8 **Big farm** in the local bigger-is-better style. Rizka Dolgouda is the **wife of the local big boss**, a low-born but very canny farmer-merchant-banker. She is desperate to cement her status in village society with extravagant furs, jewels and a magical thing she calls an “outdoor lounging and swimming giant bathtub, as seen in the palaces of overseas.” In a great barn, oddly labelled “Gara-aga,” there is a brand-new reprogrammed agricultural robo-dwarf, still wrapped and never used because the kulak cannot read the instruction manual.

d20 Fun Time Misadventures in Marlinko Villages

There is a 20% chance on entry into any Marlinko village that mayhem (but mostly innocent mayhem) along the lines of the following is happening.

- 1 Unruly youths attempting to use a donkey to pull a large pig up by its feet over a bucket for bleeding and disembowelling are having a very difficult time. Will trade sausages for help.
- 2 Misguided band of brothers tying a sleigh to a feisty bull for a “rodeo chariot” event.
- 3 Festival involving pipe weed, a mud hole, book-throwing, and copious amounts of toasting. There is broken glass in the mud. Why is everyone barefoot? Are they crazy?
- 4 Heavily-overladen wagon full of hay and virgins boasting of imaginary achievements with the “lady of the woods” blocking the narrow track.
- 5 Young men’s pilgrimage from one inappropriately-named village to another, on foot, through the Weird, armed with barrels of beer and chutzpah.
- 6 Relay footrace around a small muddy lake involving a crate of mead as the baton.
- 7 Festival celebrating the filling of blood sausages and the distilling of pear brandy. It’s hot, it’s stinky, it’s manly.
- 8 Aftermath of painful incident involving a dangerous nettle patch, poison ivy, a beehive, and a bravely undressed local youth choir.
- 9 Local village theatre competition with cross-dressing cabaret singer failing basic singing and style.
- 10 Two halves of a youth group celebrating the potato holiday with nettle wine and dandelion brandy losing each other on a local woody knoll.
- 11 Drunken celebration following graduation from the local magisterial college concludes with mistimed incendiaries and much merriment.
- 12 Youths running downhill through thick woods swiftly to prove their bravery. Totally not being pursued by a scared herd of cattle.
- 13 Brave villagers celebrating the first day of fishing with brandy and sausages and scaring fish by accidentally toppling off boulders into the river, tangling lines, and tearing trousers.
- 14 Villagers holding midwinter midnight midlake sausage and sour cabbage cooking festival.
- 15 Youths practicing fighting half-ogres in the woods by throwing sticks and stones.
- 16 Heavily-laden cart full of blindly drunk youths fleeing a hungry bear, tossing off boots and chairs to distract the creature.
- 17 Incident involving probably not very poisonous mushrooms and a delicious omelette.
- 18 Group of enthusiastic (if inept) villagers playing a game of Apartments and Accountants, while barbecuing livers and fava beans.
- 19 Celebratory group throwing tightly bound “Green Juraj” off a bridge into a gorge, whooping and singing.
- 20 Carnival procession of villagers dressed in woolen costumes, feathered masks, and big wooden clogs.

Carousing in the Countryside

Carousing in the bucolic semi-wilderness (i.e. in a village) is easy and reliably stupid. Carousing is only possible on a holy day or a temple day or a godling day, as determined by local rustic custom or innovation. Carousing takes a day, costs 20 gp and nets 5d20 XP.

A carousing PC then rolls 3d6 under their CHA. On a success, they roll a 1d6 on the carousing table; on a fail, they roll a 1d8+4. Before checking their CHA, a PC may declare that they wish to spend their way out of trouble for an additional 40 gp. In this case they automatically succeed and roll a 1d6.

CAROUSING OUTCOMES

1d6 or 1d8+4

- 1 **Toast of the Hamlet.** The PC has regaled the yokels with their epic achievements, and henceforth is considered “a good sort.” They are also poisoned for 1d3 days (-2 on all rolls).
- 2 **Lover of the Canton Queen** (or King). The virility of the PC results in a romantic entanglement. Options, such as (1) fertility rites, (2) fir-titilating incidents, (3) wicker wonders, (4) crossbow weddings, (5) hirsute offsprings, (6) hilarious bush-hunting hijinks are available.
- 3 **Godling’s Good Guy.** Anointed in an obscure drinking ritual, the local godling takes a shine to the PC, marking them out with (1) a shiny patch of skin, (2) an occult tattoo, (3) a cute animated idol, pocket sized, (4) sly winks from the innkeep’s son, (5) a fear of humorously shaped vegetables, (6) a magic-looking helmet.
- 4 **Peachy Fuzzy Humpty Dory.** The PC is anointed the king and queen of drink for their massive constitution, and gains a +2 bonus to future saves against the ill-effects of alcoholic beverages. Rolling the same result twice times indicates the onset of alcohol addiction.
- 5 **The Toad of the Town.** Following a severe case of beer goggles, the PC is (1) subject to severe satire, (2) mocked most mercilessly, (3) abused abjectly at the abattoir, (4) cowed when crossing the cow field, (5) ignored and treated as invisible, (6) beloved of the local beggar druid for reasons unknown.
- 6 **Beloved of the Bears.** Waking up in the bushes, far from the village, the PC is covered in loving scratches, marks, matted fur, odd bones, and several fetishes. Local (1) bears, (2) deer, (3) owls, (4) beavers, (5) frogs, (6) rabbits are now very positively inclined towards the hero.



- 7 **Burner of Barns.** The big boyar's barn has burned down and (1) nobody knows who did it, (2) everybody knows it was dark magic, (3) many suspect the PC, (4) all are convinced it was the PC.
- 8 **Shatterer of Shrines.** They say a cult is a religion without official sanction. The village shrine was most certainly not a heretical demon shrine, and (1) this is true, so it must have been a devil, (2) this is false and nobody knows who did this, (3) this question is null but why are there sacred relics in the PC's bags, (4) the priestess saw who did it, (5) the priest was killed and his skin was found draped on the PC's horse, (6) there is now a devilish mark on the PC, so, you know, it's obvious what happened.
- 9 **Theft of Treasures.** The village (1) jewels, (2) pigs, (3) bees, (4) brides, (5) wooden souvenirs, (6) cash is/are missing. All the evidence points to the PC. 50% chance that the PC actually has access to the treasure.
- 10 **Goldilocks Gridlock.** After a debauched time, the PC wakes in (1) a strange bed, (2) a strange porridge bowl, (3) a strange barrow, (4) a broken chair, (5) the arms of the miller's spouse, (6) the middle of a scene of violent and destructive carnage.
- 11 **'Orrible Ostracism.** The PC is (1) kicked out of town and dislocates a shoulder on the way (lasts 1d4+1 days), (2) thrown out onto the offal pit, right on top of a decapitated donkey, (3) sent away with a very stern letter saying terrible things about the PC spleen, (4) garlanded in garlic and kidney beans and one squirming toad and sent out in a raucous ceremony, (5) run out of town in a shower of potsherds (taking 1d6 damage if very unlucky), (6) chased off in their underwear by the village vymen.
- 12 **Accidental Axe Assault.** Results in (1) a dead cow, (2) a dead henchman, (3) a dead holy tree, (4) a dead yokel, (5) a dead child, (6) a dead boyar.

