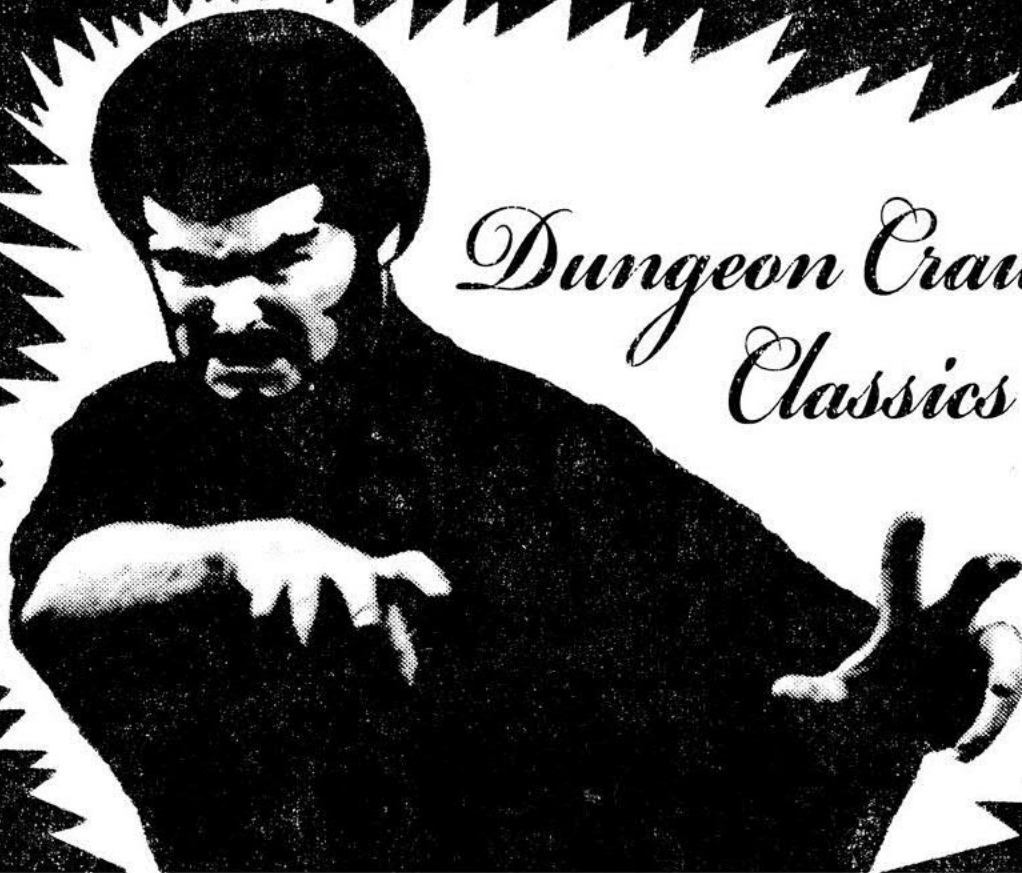


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

IMPRISONED IN THE GOD-SKULL

#98: A LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE
BY MICHAEL CURTIS





Dungeon Crawl Classics

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IMPRISONED IN THE GOD-SKULL

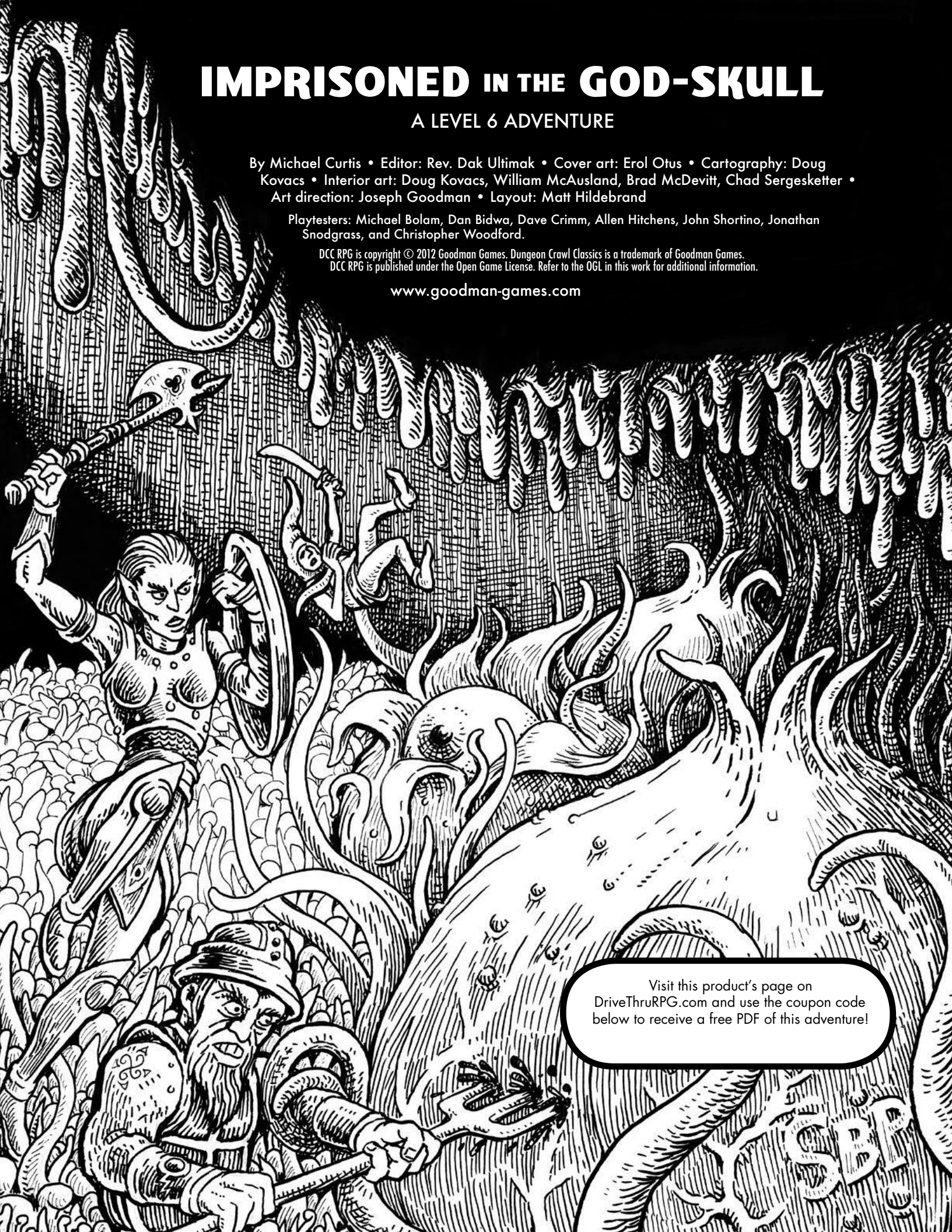
A LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION



Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. *Dungeon Crawl Classics* adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

Imprisoned in the God-Skull is a *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG adventure that takes the party from the confines of their earthly home to an ancient prison drifting in the Void of Stars high above it. Within the confines of this divine cranium, an antediluvian horror lies imprisoned, watched over by a staff of maggoty keepers. As if this situation wasn't thrilling enough, the adventurers arrive in time to discover a new threat—one born in the cold hell of night—has come to the God-Skull, intent on conquest!

Imprisoned in the God-Skull is intended for a group of six to eight 6th-level PCs and will challenge even these mighty heroes. Potent new magical treasures, terrible horrors, and world-threatening calamities await the adventurers in orbit above their humble world...

BACKGROUND



In ages long past, when magic was new and the world yet raw and savage, a terrible sorcerer-king arose in the brutal kingdoms on Men. This tyrant, Ubrul the Destroyer, delved into the depths of sorcery, caring nothing for what the arcane forces did to his mortal form. He became a terrible, twisted thing, a monstrosity that no longer resembled humanity at all. So voracious was Ubrul's desire for sorcerous power was that he was willing to destroy the very world he inhabited to claim magical might for his own.

A plea went up to the heavens from the mortals who lived in fear of Ubrul and the Scions of Law intervened. Ubrul needed to be confined lest the Cosmic Balance fall forever in Chaos' favor. The god now known as Njoat the Martyr saw that Ubrul was too powerful to be destroyed outright, as the battle between gods and unholy sorcerer would devastate the world they sought to save. Instead, Njoat made the ultimate sacrifice, slaying itself so that its dying divine power would entrap Ubrul in a prison fashioned from its godly form. The Scions saluted Njoat's devotion to Law and, in the act of self-destruction, Ubrul the Destroyer was encaged within the divine skull of Njoat.

The Scions set the God-Skull in the Void of Stars above the material world to drift forever out of the reach of mortals. Curiously, as the celestial skull began to decay, new life spontaneously arose from the rotting god flesh. These maggot-like creatures demonstrated great intelligence and devotion to the flesh that birthed them. The Scions appointed these creatures, whom they called the Keepers, to dwell within the God-Skull and keep watch over the prison.

Eons passed and the God-Skull remained unknown to Men. But its secrecy was broken when it was discovered by the Lama Dawa. The Lama, a mystic adept, was traveling the Void of

Stars in his astral body when he chanced upon the God-Skull. His curiosity piqued, the Lama Dawa projected himself within it and encountered the Keepers. A shared curiosity of each other's unusual physical forms and a mutual devotion to the forces of Law resulted in an unusual friendship between the Keepers and the Lama. Eventually, after many conversations and sharing of wisdom, the Lama proposes that the Keepers allow his monks to visit the God-Skull and better meditate upon their place in the cosmos, undisturbed by worldly matters. The Keepers agreed.

The monks of the Lama Dawa's monastery created a walking labyrinth within their sanctuary that allowed initiates as yet unversed in the art of astral projection to reach the God-Skull and the Keepers created cells and meditation spaces within the divine cranium for their use. The arrangement suited both parties and all was well. Meanwhile, Ubrul continued to fester within his cell, swearing vengeance on all his enemies should he ever escape.

In addition to serving as Ubrul's prison and the meditation cells of the monks, the God-Skull would serve a third function: a vault for objects best secured against the possession of those unwise enough to use them. In their search for higher wisdom, the Lama's monks encountered a number of powerful magical items that the Lama and his successors deemed better locked away rather than tempt others to claim them. The God-Skull was deemed best suited to secure the artifacts and a vault was set aside within the orbiting cranium for this purpose.

And so things continued until recently when yet a third party discovered the God-Skull, a most unexpected and uninvited guest.

From out of the depths of the Void of Stars came the Wormwood, a gnarled mass of otherworldly vegetation. The Wormwood was not only a mass of alien plant life: other creatures traveled within it, a protean species who called themselves the Thruul used the Wormwood to seek out new vistas and life forms to mimic. The Wormwood arrived with a crash, slamming into the God-Skull and boring into it with writhing ebony tendrils. The collision sent shockwaves through the prison and the explosive force was transmitted to the world below, erupting from the labyrinth within the monastery. The convulsive force rocked the monastic sanctuary, killing most of its inhabitants, including the current Lama.

The Thruul rushed into the God-Skull, devouring and mimicking the physical forms of the monks, and birthing new shapes to occupy the divine prison. Drawn by the powerful magical auras within the vault, the Thruul breached it and equipped themselves with forbidden artifacts. Some of the Keepers survived, hiding themselves away in a secret chamber and debating what to do. All the while, the Thruul are preparing themselves for yet another conquest—the glittering blue-green world they can see below the God-Skull.

And, still secure in his cell, Ubrul senses his incarceration may soon be ended...



STARTING THE ADVENTURE



imprisoned in the God-Skull is intended to be an interlude within an ongoing campaign. Higher level PCs likely have multiple plots they're pursuing, numerous enemies they've made in the adventuring careers, and larger goals than when they were just beginning their exploits.

The best way to introduce the God-Skull and the dangers and treasures it contains is to make it necessary for the party to seek out the Dawa monks while dealing with another problem in their lives. If an evil demonic army is massing on the borders of their favorite kingdom, their research uncovers that the Dawa monks possess an artifact said to defend against demon magic, for example, or a rival sorcerer's true name is encoded within moldering scrolls in the monastery's library. Once they arrive at the monastery, now blasted by the concussion of the Wormwood's collision with the God-Skull, they'll be rapidly drawn into the adventure.

Higher level characters who've somehow become as powerful as they are without entangling themselves in large problems can be introduced to the adventure through other means. Greedy or magical power-mad seeking PCs may know the legends that the Dawa monks possess a number of mighty magical objects in their keeping. Adventurers serving a patron, be it mortal like an emperor or magical like a demon, might be sent to the monastery to seek out a piece of ancient wisdom or steal a relic.

If the judge intends to run *The God-Skull* as a one-shot adventure, the following premise can be used to start the module:

Your party, having acquired much renown throughout the realm for your daring deeds and many triumphs over terrible foes, is tasked with traveling to the Dawa Monastery in the lofty Peaks of Pashoon by King Phulmek III of the Kingdom of Fryn. It is said that the monks of that mountainous sanctuary once treated the king's grandfather, curing him of a malignant sickness that threatened his life. The king's son now lies stricken with the same sickness and the monarch is desperate that you acquire either the medicine to treat this disease or convince one of the monks to come back to the kingdom with you and serve as royal physician. A fortune in jewels, land, and titles all await you back in Fryn if you are successful. After gathering your supplies and preparing for the journey, you depart the Kingdom of Fryn on your long journey to the distant Peaks of Pashoon and the sanctuary of the mystical Dawa monks who dwell there.

WHAT THE CHARACTERS KNOW



As higher-level PCs, it can be assumed the party has heard many stories, read hoary tomes, delved into their temples' archives, and traded underworld tales over the course of their careers. At the start of the adventure (or in sessions leading up to it if playing as part of a campaign), give each PC one or more pieces of information about the God-Skull or the Dawa monks based on their ability scores and class as shown below. Each PC automatically knows these tidbits of lore without the need to seek out sages and scholars.

Each rumor or bit of lore can be determined randomly or chosen based on the character's class or occupation. A legend appropriate to a particular class or occupation is marked with that classes' name in parentheses. These are only guidelines, how-

ever, and any character may have learned one or more of these rumors. Each PC knows a number of legends equal to 1 plus his Intelligence or Personality modifier (judge's choice), with a minimum of 1 legend per character.

LEGENDS AND RUMORS

(Roll d12 or choose as desired)

1. The Dawa monks are a mystical sect said to possess vast mental powers earned from a lifetime of study and self-improvement. They are devout servants of Law and are known to have claimed several artifacts the forces of Chaos would love to possess and secreted them away somewhere. (Clerics, Wizards, Elves)
2. The Dawa Monastery is said to house several priceless relics the monks hid away from "less enlightened" creatures. Rumor is they're in an impenetrable vault somewhere. (Thieves)
3. The greatest criminal masterminds once pooled their resources to hire a warlock to divine the location of the vault. The sorcerer's efforts revealed that the vault lies not within the monastery but somewhere high above the world, cloaked in blackness and unreachable by man. (Thieves, Wizards)
4. The Dawa monks are formidable warriors, totally devoted to developing their bodies to perfection. Some warriors from the outside world have trekked far to the Dawa Monastery seeking instruction. Most were turned away, but those who were accepted by the monks, never returned to the outside world. (Warriors, Dwarves, Elves)
5. In the ancient days when magic was raw and boundless, a sorcerer-king known as Ubrul the Destroyer arose and threatened the world. The gods of Law intervened and entrapped the much-corrupted sorcerer-king, removing him from the world entirely. (Wizards, Elves)
6. The Dawa monks are said to have hoarded away a number of magical artifacts to purportedly protect the world from them. Many argue that magic is merely a tool and that no one—especially religious mystics—should keep worthy wizards from using tools as they are intended. (Wizards, Elves)
7. Centuries ago, the Dawa monks hired dwarven masons to construct a knotted pathway of rare stones within their monastery. The monks claimed that walking this pathway, which they called the Labyrinth of Rising, helped the walker "rise to a higher state." (Clerics, Dwarves)
8. The dwarven clans once fashioned a crown of iron and mithril for an ancient king. Known as the Crown of Nine Spires, the coronet was further enchanted by the king's wizards. Their magical meddling ruined good dwarf work for it is said the Crown of Nine Spires acquired a dreadful curse and drove the king mad. The Dawa monks are believed to be in possession of the Crown, hiding it away for safety. (Dwarves, Elves)
9. Long ago, a human sorcerer known as Ubrul delved too deeply into the art of magic and became terrible in both power and appearance. Ubrul threatened to tip the Cosmic Balance irrevocably towards Chaos and the Scions of

Law intervened. Ubrul was removed from the world and imprisoned within the skull of Njoat, the martyred god of Law. (Elves, Clerics, Wizards)

10. On rare occasions, motes of lights appear in the sky, traveling erratically through the Void of Stars. These “roving stars” are said to originate in a deep, dark portion of the Void of Stars called the Cold Hell of Night. They herald terrible events. (Astrologer, Elven Navigator)
11. The Dawa monks are said to have wonderful green thumbs,

capable of growing greenery in the most inhospitable places. Their monastery, despite being located in the snowy mountains, is rumored to have a verdant garden of flowers and medicinal herbs. (Halflings, Warriors, Elves, Clerics)

12. Every halfling knows the story of Marmaduke Twofoot, the great halfling burglar. Marmaduke once stole a scepter from the very hand of the Tyrant of Woe, a terrible potentate that ruled three centuries ago. That rod, the Scepter of Sorcery, was handed over to the Dawa monks by Marmaduke after it began to plague him with unnerving visions. (Thieves, Halflings)

CHAPTER ONE: THE DAWA MONASTERY

The Dawa Monastery lies high in the snowy mountains of the Peaks of Pashoon (or wherever else the judge wishes to place it). The journey to the monastery can be as involved or as narrative as the judge wishes. The party can arrive there by whatever means they have at their disposal, including magical items, flying mounts, or planar step spells. For simplicity's sake, the following assumes the party arrives by normal riding mounts or on foot. Adjust the description accordingly if other transportation methods are involved.

Read or paraphrase the following as they arrive:

Your journey has been long and arduous. Beset by all manner of troubles, you've endured searing deserts, stormy seas, bandits and pirates, lost supplies, frigid blizzards, and now a winding track that ascends into the world's highest mountains, the Peaks of Pashoon. This serpentine trail, sometimes no wider than a large man's shoulders, leads you into the sky-touching mountains. Snow-laden peaks look down upon you like menacing gods who occasionally unleash avalanches capable of burying entire caravans. Vertigo-inducing drops that plummet thousands of feet to the valleys below follow alongside the narrow trail, a constant reminder that death is literally a footstep away.



Rounding a final bend, the Dawa Monastery comes into view. High walls surround an enclosed courtyard, a narrow stone bridge crossing a deep crevasse serving as its sole visible entrance. Overlooking the walls is the monastery's façade, seemingly carved into the mountain itself. But all is not well. Gaping holes edged with cracked and teetering stones pierce the courtyard walls and the monastery's façade is shattered and partially collapsed. Frozen bodies clad in green robes litter the snow-covered courtyard.

The damage and death is a result of the mystic aftershock of the Wormwood's collision with the God-Skull. The concussive blast traveled down the mystical channels connecting the monastery and the prison, blasting the sanctuary. Have the PC with the highest Intelligence make a DC 10 check. If successful, she recalls hearing a thunderous blast the night before, but assumed it was merely the regular storms that plague the Peaks. Now, given the destruction present, she's not so sure.

THE MONASTERY

The grounds, walls, and façade of the monastery are all carved from the greenish granite of the surrounding mountain side. Cracks, broken flagstones, collapsed arches and outbuildings, are evident everywhere and only a dusting of snow covers all the surfaces, evidence that this damage occurred relatively recently.

Area 1-1—The Courtyard: *Across the 5' wide 40' long natural stone bridge, the bodies of a dozen dead monks, all showing signs of violent death, lie on the snow-dusted stones of the courtyard. A once-green garden fills the western end of the courtyard, its colorful flowers now rapidly withering under a thin cover of ice and snow. Somewhere, a stone shifts, sending a clattering echoing through the space.*

The monks all show signs of broken bones and internal injuries. However, some of them have bloodless bite wounds as if something dined on their flesh after their deaths.

A small band of mountain yetis were attracted by the feast of flesh and arrived shortly before the PCs did. The creatures heard the party approach and is hiding inside the shattered monastery (area 1-3). They spring an ambush once most of the party has entered the courtyard, hurling stones then leaping on the characters with teeth and claws. Read the following:

Suddenly, a small boulder sails past you, exploding into fragments as it strikes the courtyard wall. Looking up, you see a band of hairy humanoid creatures emerging from the ruined monastery. Easily 8' tall and covered in white fur, you notice all have bloodstained bear-like claws and sharp tusks.

Pashoon Yetis (4): Init +2; Atk bite +3 melee (1d6+2) or slam +2 melee (1d10+2); AC 13; HD 4d8+3; hp 25; MV 30' or climb 10'; Act 1d20; SP +10 bonus to hide checks in snowy terrain; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N.

The yetis fight until two are killed, the survivors attempting to flee back into the snow-covered mountains.

Area 1-2—Dying Garden: *Miraculously, a thriving garden recently grew at this end of the courtyard. Ringed with colorful stone bricks, the garden is filled with once-verdant plants and colorful blossoms that are swiftly dying in the frigid mountain air. The smell of rich earth and fading blooms hangs about the garden.*

LHAKPA

Lhakpa is a human male somewhere between 30 and 60 years of age. He looks older, but has the vigor of a younger man. His head is bald, his eyes are dark, and his skin is brown. Lhakpa is dressed in a dirt-stained green robe and wears yak-hide sandals on his feet. When first discovered, he has numerous wounds including broken bones and internal injuries. He is in great pain and can only moan and screams in agony if moved. If healed of at least 10 hit points, he rouses fully and can converse with the party.

Lhakpa's Story

The party can question the gardener and he recounts the following information:

- He was tending the garden when a sudden explosive blast erupted from within the monastery, collapsing stone and breaking bodies. Lhakpa was hurled into the garden by the blast and knocked unconscious.
- Lhakpa must check on the Lama. His sanctum is inside the monastery and if he's injured, he must be helped.
- Lhakpa has no idea what might have caused the blast as there's nothing within the monastery that could explode. After saying this, he pauses and then says, as if to himself, "Could it have been the Labyrinth of Rising?"
- If pressed about the monks having magical items in their possession and whether that could be responsible, he shakes his head and says, "No, impossible. Those are safe-kept within the God-Skull." His mouth then slams shut as if he realized he said too much. If pressed for more information, he ignores the requests, stating that the Lama's well-being must be seen to immediately. If the party has questions, the Lama is the one to ask.

Lhakpa may or may not accompany the party to the God-Skull depending on how he is treated, his suspicions about the party's motives, or simply whether the judge wishes to add a NPC to the group. If the judge wants to leave him behind, Lhakpa turns down any requests to accompany the party, stating with sadness that he must see to the final repose of his fellow monks and master before they succumb to further depredations by scavengers like the yeti.

If Lhakpa goes with the party to the God-Skull, use these stats for the gardener.

Lhakpa, Dawa Monk: Init +2; Atk staff +3 melee (1d6+3) or open hand or kick +2 melee (1d5+2); AC 14; HD 3d10+3; hp 5 (current)/ 20 (max); MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP open hand or kick attack crits on 19+ (use crit table III); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; AL L.

The MONASTERY



SBP



The garden was maintained by the monks, protected from the elements by the mystical aura of the monastery. This aura has failed with the deaths of so many of its occupants and the garden will be fully dead in an hour. If the PCs came to the monastery to collect medicine for the king's son (if using the one-shot introduction to the adventure), it is clear that any medicinal herbs grown here are now dead. The medicine won't be found here.

As the party inspects the garden or if they go to enter the monastery proper without checking the garden, they hear a pained groan come from among the garden plants. Any character investigating the cry discovers an injured monk lying underneath the plant life, barely conscious. This is Lhakpa, the monastery's head gardener.

Area 1-3—The Monastery Sanctum: *A corridor lies beyond the partially collapsed archway set into the mountainous façade. The passage runs a short distance before opening into a much larger space. Several collapsed side passages once led to other sections of the monastery, but are now blocked with fallen rubble.*

The mountain winds whirl through this grand chamber, whistling through open windows set high into the southern wall. Tattered tapestries, once depicting intricately woven interlocking symbols, flutter in the breeze, shredded by destructive power. A high, blasted dais, rises 10' from the floor in the center of the chamber. Atop it is an unmoving figure dressed in green robes.

An open archway, cracked and half-fallen, stands in the wall beyond the dais, leading to a winding set of stairs descending out of view.

This chamber was where the monastery's Lama dispensed wisdom and saw to the needs of his brethren. A flight of steps behind the dais reaches its top and the body lying upon it. Anyone scaling the dais sees the following:

The figure atop the dais is human in form, but its face is anything but. A broad, bovine nose dominates its visage, with large flared nostrils over a narrow mouth. Two of its eyes stare blankly at the ceiling. A third eye pierces its brow and lies closed forever. The corpse's head is bald and its skin is the color of tallow. It is dressed in the same simple green robes you've observed on the other monks.

The Lama, his mortal form transformed by a lifetime of mastery of esoteric arts, is no more. Anyone moving his body notices it is broken from the blast.

Lhakpa becomes overcome with grief when he discovers the Lama's fate and weeps openly over the demise of his master, his brothers and sisters, and his monastery. Amidst his sadness, he answers any questions the party might have about the monastery, the magical items in the monks' keeping, the source of the blast, the Labyrinth of Rising, and the God-Skull itself.

Lhakpa doesn't know everything, so use the following to answer any questions from the PCs

Magical items: "Yes, we monks took possession of several items deemed by wiser minds to be unsuitable for the greedy or evil to lay hands upon. We secured them in a safe vault far from the world."

Source of the Blast: "I do not know for certain, but it came from within the monastery. There is nothing here capable of exploding or imbued with power of that magnitude—except possibly the Labyrinth of Rising."

Labyrinth of Rising: "It is a walking path we monks had constructed according to the sacred shapes of our order. It helps focus the mind and grants the power to lift both mind and body. We who have not yet mastered the higher teachings use it to travel to a special meditation area far away from the chaos of the world. I'm no master, but if anything was to go wrong with



the Labyrinth or within that elevated sanctum it is tied to, it could have created the force that killed my master and my fellow monks. It lies below this chamber."

"Special meditation area?": "The founder of this order, the Lama Dawa, discovered a secret creation of the Scions of Law long ago. This location was said to be fashioned from the skull of a dead Scion who gave its life to thwart an ancient evil and was set high above the world in the Void of Stars. The Lama found it while his astral form traveled far from his body. The Lama and the Keepers of that place, called the God-Skull, came to an accord that allowed the Lama and his followers access to the remote sanctuary. We've used it ever since to view the world from afar and better understand our place in the multiverse."

The God-Skull and the Keepers: "I know little about the God-Skull beyond what I've seen myself. There are meditation spaces and cells on the second level of the sanctuary and a wonderful garden I help maintain there. The Keepers are pleasant if simple creatures, but their appearance is worm-like and unsettling to unenlightened minds."

"An ancient evil": "I know nothing about it aside from that it is connected with the God-Skull's creation and the Keepers are charged with standing guard over it."

Magical Item Vault: "As you suspect, it is within the God-Skull, which is why I fear something has happened within the lofty sanctuary. While I do not know what is interred within the vault, I worry that someone may have gotten their hands upon those objects and is responsible for the destruction we see around us."

"Where can we find X?": The party likely came to the monastery in search of some object depending on how the judge incorporated the adventure. This could be a magical object, a bit of knowledge, medicine, etc. If asked about the thing they seek, Lhakpa says, "That is an object of great importance and it was placed within the God-Skull for safekeeping. You will find it there. Seek it in the [Vault, Library, Medicinal Garden, etc.] within that sanctuary."

If the party doesn't suggest it themselves, Lhakpa requests them to come with him and investigate the Labyrinth of Rising. The stairs beyond the broken archway lead to the Labyrinth below.

Area 1-4—The Labyrinth of Rising: *The winding stairs descend to a vast space, one now littered with rubble. The walls show signs of terrible damage, webbed with cracks and showing signs of possible collapse. Within the heart of the chamber, strangely untouched by damage, is a circular design formed by spiraling pathways of glossy ebony stones set into the floor. Although chunks of fallen ceiling cover portion of the design, the floor itself seems to have escaped the destruction.*

The exquisite dwarven craftsmanship along with the mystical power imbued within the Labyrinth of Rising protected it from the shockwave. If the rubble is cleared away, the Labyrinth can be walked to reach the God-Skull.

Lhakpa, upon seeing the damage or being told of it, is adamant that the party should travel to the God-Skull and investigate conditions there. He may or may not accompany them (see sidebar above) at the judge's discretion.

If present, Lhakpa says that to use the Labyrinth, one must walk its spiraling pattern without leaving the path. When the walker reaches the end of the Labyrinth, they will be within the God-Skull.

Anyone walking the Labyrinth's path finds their gaze drawn down to the pathway's ebony stones. Their mirror-like surface makes it appear as if the walker is traveling through a deep darkness. As the walker proceeds further, motes of light like

stars appear within the darkness and the traveler is unable to look away. Before they know it, they've reached the end of the Labyrinth's path and are able to look around them once more. They find themselves in area 2-1 of the God-Skull.

Anyone watching another walk the Labyrinth witnesses them grow more and more transparent as they follow the path, vanishing completely from sight when they reach the midway point.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GOD-SKULL

The God-Skull's interior is fashioned from an ivory hued material resembling masterfully smoothed stone. It is in truth a mixture of divine matter and a secretion the Keepers produce. Light seems to flow from the very walls, floor, and ceilings of most areas within the God-Skull, removing the need for other illumination. Dark spaces are noted in the text.

The air within the God-Skull is fresh and clean, kept breathable by a mixture of the lingering divine radiance within the cranium and the plants in the entrance garden. PCs can only enter the God-Skull via areas 2-1, 3-5, 3-13, and through magic such as planar step. Caution should be taken if using *planar step*, as a wizard unfamiliar with the interior of the God-Skull can easily find himself transported to the airless Void of Stars outside of the prison instead!

LEVEL ONE

Area 2-1—Entrance Labyrinth: *The floor of this large chamber contains a spiraling, black pathway identical to the Labyrinth of Rising within the Dawa Monastery. The walls, floor, and ceiling are ivory in color, bringing to mind polished bone of great beauty. A broad, short flight of stairs lead to a higher level of the chamber 3' above the Labyrinth patterned floor. There, verdant greenery can be seen in a large garden.*

The Labyrinth of Rising's mate is embedded in the lower floor of this two-tiered chamber. It works identically to that in the monastery. People wishing to return to the monastery need only walk its pattern again.

There is no obvious sign of damage in this area or elsewhere inside the God-Skull. The divine matter that comprises the prison is highly resilient and it shrugged off the force of the blast with little harm, channeling it instead down the mystical corridor connecting prison and monastery.

Area 2-2—Entrance Garden: *The higher level of the chamber contains a large garden filled with thriving plants and sweet-smelling blossoms. Some of the plants grow 6' or more in height and the garden itself measures 10' by 30'. A broad walkway surrounds the garden, and a pair of ivory-colored benches provide places to sit and take in the plants' beauty. An open corridor is visible in the wall beyond the garden.*

As the party steps onto this upper level, four green-robed monks emerge from around the garden as if to welcome them. If Lhakpa is with the party, he greets them warmly, happy to find them unharmed. This is far from the truth, however.

The four monks are actually Thruul devourers who've consumed the monks' minds and bodies and appear (mostly) human. Anyone glimpsing the backs of the monks notice their bodies from head to heel are lumpy, malformed, and resemble great strands of fish roe.

The monks advance with beatific smiles on their faces, then their bodies burst into ravenous maws as they attack the party.

Thruul Devourers (4): Init +4; Atk bite +6 melee (1d12+3) or crush +8 melee (2d4+3); AC 14; HD 6d8+4; hp 30 each; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP consume body and mind (see below), grapple (if two crush attacks strike a single target, it is held by the devourer's great pseudopods; a DC 15 Strength check breaks the grapple), immune to sleep effects; SV Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +4; AL C.

In their native form, Thruul devourers resemble 5' tall piles of globular matter similar in appearance to fish roe or strands of frog eggs. They're highly protean and can assume the shape of anything they devour, a feat they accomplish by splitting their bodies in half to form 5' wide, vertical mouths. Devourers can also produce two 10' long pseudopods capable of crushing and entangling creatures they wish to consume.

A devourer who rolls a natural 19 or 20 on a bite attack has gripped its target in its mouth and begins draining 1d4 Stamina and Personality each per round, beginning with the round the attack succeeds on. The target is rendered incapacitated as its life and mind are consumed by the devourer. A DC 15 Willpower save breaks this incapacitation and allows the target to fight back, but at a -2d penalty for as long as it remains within the devourer's mouth. The incapacitated victim can attempt a new Willpower save each round to break out of it torpor. A bitten PC capable of action or an ally can free the victim from the devourer's maw with a DC 15 Strength check.

The devourer's bite is more formidable against a grappled enemy. The devourer grips a grappled opponent and begins draining it on a natural 16 or higher.

Any target whose Stamina and Personality are reduced to zero is slain and the devourer absorbs all the target's memories (but not powers like spellcasting, thieves' skills, and similar talents) and can alter its form to mimic the consumed creature after 1d4 hours. This process takes 30 minutes to fully complete. A devourer can return to its natural shape instantly whenever it chooses, but re-assuming a consumed appearance takes another 3 turns to complete.

The devourers attempt to consume the minds and bodies of at least one PC so that they might learn more about the world below the God-Skull. If the fight goes against the alien creatures, the last survivor flees to area 2-6 to warn the devourer lord of the intruders.

Area 2-3—Porter's Station: *A simple room containing a small table and chair, a plain cot with a blanket, and a cloth wall-hanging depicting spiraling geometric designs stands beyond the door. The room appears empty, but the floor is stained with congealing blood. Scraps of gore-stained green cloth lie amidst the blood.*



A porter monk dwelled here and greeted arrivals to the God-Skull. He was recently devoured, his seeming assumed by one of the creatures encountered in area 2-2. A DC 12 Intelligence check (former hunters, healers, and similar professions enjoy a +1d bonus to their roll) determines the blood is relatively fresh, spilled within the last six hours or less.

Behind the wall-hanging is a small niche in the bony wall. It contains a pair of keyrings. These keys open various locked doors within the monk's section of the God-Skull. Doors unlocked by these keys are noted in the text.

Area 2-4—Storeroom: This room's door is locked [DC 10 pick locks check or keys from 2-3 to open].

A trio of wooden tables are placed against the walls of this cramped room. Crates, small barrels, sacks, and bolts of green cloth are piled atop or placed underneath each of them. A strange creature lies huddled at the far end of the room. The thing is a grub-like creature measuring 4' long. Six spindly vestigial appendages emerge from its segmented olive-green flesh. It lacks any facial features aside from a circular mouth filled with rasping teeth. Numerous wounds weeping clear fluid cover it's body and it shies away from you in terror.

The creature is one of the Keepers named Helper Second Full Hope. It was injured when the Thruul attacked the prison and managed to escape here when its flight to the panic room (area 4-2) was cut off by the invaders. It is dying from its wounds and fears the PCs are invaders come to finish it off.

Lhakpa, if present, identifies Helper Second Full Hope as one of the Keepers and rushes to its side, seemingly unperturbed by its unearthly appearance. The monk tries to offer aid, but only clerical healing can save the injured Keeper from death.

Lhakpa asks Helper Second Full Hope what happened and the creature answers in a high, trembling voice:

There was a terrible crash from the third level, where I was working. A shudder seemed to run through the walls of the sanctuary. Some of the monks rushed up there to see if they could assist and I crawled to join them. We saw horrors.

KEYS AND LOCKS

There are a handful of locked doors in the God-Skull that require either keys or pick locks checks to bypass. The following chart is provided for the judge's quick reference, allowing her to pair the appropriate found key with its associated lock(s).

Table 1-1: Locks and Keys in the God-Skull Prison

Locked Doors	Key to Open Door Found In...
2-4—Storeroom	2-3 (key ring)
2-8—Armory and Sparring Chamber	2-3 (key ring)
4-1—Landing and Locked Door	3-1a & 3-6 (gleaming ivory key)
4-2—Panic Room	3-1a & 3-6 (gleaming ivory key)

Thick, black tendrils, veined and ghastly, had broken through the wall and filled the corridor. Some of my brethren were investigating the tendrils when things entered the hall, slithering down the corridor. They slew my brethren and ate them as I watched, paralyzed with horror.

The monks fought the invaders, but their soft bodies seemed to absorb their blows. One of the creatures became a terrible, giant mouth and swept a monk into it, seeming to swallow the poor woman's very essence and appearance. The monks were losing the battle when I fled, seeking to hide in the panic room the Keepers maintain. I was too late and I became cut off from the others. Then I was attacked by more terrible creatures, lizard-like beasts with long necks and tearing teeth. I escaped them and hid here. I don't know what became of the rest of the Keepers or the monks, or where the invaders might now be.

Helper Second Full Hope dies shortly after telling its story unless cured within three rounds. If it is saved, Helper Second Full Hope is grateful, but its encounter with the Thruul has left it shaken and it fears confronting them again. Helper Second Full Hope wants to be reunited with its fellow Keepers and suggests the party find the panic room and see if there are any survivors there. Helper Second Full Hope prefers to hide here, but a DC 14 Personality test along with inspiring words convinces it to accompany the group to area 4-2. Even if Helper Second Full Hope remains behind, it describes how to locate the panic room to the party, telling them they must either bypass the hidden lock or locate one of the keys that will open the door (Helper Second Full Hope doesn't have one, being a lower status Keeper).

Helper Second Full Hope: Init -1; Atk punch -2 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 2d6; hp 1 (currently) 7 (max); MV 15'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +8; AL L.

The storeroom contains simple foods (rice, dried vegetables, legumes, salt, etc.), ordinary supplies such as candles, soap, thread, leather strips, and a dozen bolts of green cloth the monk's use for their robes.

Area 2-5—Kitchen: An ordinary kitchen is found beyond the door. A small bed of coals provides heat to the three pots bubbling over it. A table covered with cooking utensils and a half-prepared meal stands against one wall. Splayed out near a door is an eerie creature. It resembles a two-legged lizard with a long neck. The head atop its neck resembles that of a grotesque child with a deformed cranium. Its mouth appears twice the size it should be.

Some monks were preparing a meal when the Wormwood struck and were surprised by the abrupt assault. A devourer lord and its pack of alien hounds, called gegaar, attacked them in mid-meal preparation and the monks performed a fighting withdrawal into area 2-6, killing one of the gegaar as they fled. The monks perished in the next room.

Helper Second Full Hope, if present, says that the creature was one of those accompanying the invaders when they attacked the sanctuary and was responsible for its wounds. It warns they possess a terrible, bone-chilling howl.

The kitchen contains normal foodstuff, utensils, and other unsurprising tools and contents, none of which have any value. The pots over the coals contain boiling rice, a vegetable stew, and a strong herbal tea.

Area 2-6—Dining Hall: This chamber was clearly once a communal dining area, but it's now an abattoir. The ravaged bodies of six humans dressed in green robes lie scattered about the floor. Weird creatures, their lower bodies vaguely lizard-like, but with long necks



crowned with heads resembling hydrocephalic infants, dine upon the corpses. A living male monk watches over the feast. The observer wears a kilt-like dress of boiled leather with a broad girdle over his green robes. He leans upon a bladed staff.

The monk is actually a Thruul devourer lord. Devourer lords are devourers who've consumed a number of their brethren, gaining power and intelligence from this cannibalistic consumption. They are more powerful than regular devourers, but otherwise possess the same abilities and natural appearance. This devourer lord was one of the invaders who claimed an item from the Vault (area 3-8). It wears the War-dress of Numrik (see Appendix A). Its alien physiology makes it immune to the item's drawbacks while granting it all its powers.

If the party is spotted, the devourer lord immediately attacks, siccing the lizard gegaar on them.

Devourer Lord: Init +4; Atk bladed staff +10 melee (1d10+4) or bite +8 melee (1d12+4) or crush +10 melee (2d6+4) or tongue lick (see area 2-2 description above); AC 15 (19 with *magic shield*); HD 10d8+5; hp 60; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP consume body and mind (see below), grapple (if two crush attacks strike a single target, it is held by the devourer's great pseudopods; a DC 15 Strength check breaks the grapple), tongue lick (+8 to hit, 10' range; 2d6 damage, destroys non-magical weapons/armor on a natural 18+ if item's owner fails a DC 15 Ref save) cast *magic shield* 2/day with spell check of 20-23, immune to sleep effects; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

Gegaar (6): Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d10+1); AC 12; HD 3d8+2; hp 15 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP howl (30' long, 10' wide cone does 3d6 dmg; DC 13 Fort save for ½ damage, but non-magical armor-wearers suffer a -1d penalty to the save); SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +2; AL C.



The alien infant/lizard creatures are gegaar, a pet race the Thruul encountered on one of their many excursions to other worlds. Possessing a dog-like intellect and faithfulness to their masters, the gegaar can howl every other round, producing a blast of chilling cold that sucks the warmth from all within its cone-shaped blast.

In combat, the devourer lord lets the gegaar harry his enemies, using the long reach of his tongue and bladed staff to attack from behind them. It employs the war-dress' *magic shield* on the first round of battle to further defend it against ranged attacks and *magic missiles*. The devourer lord only resorts to using its bite and life drain if the party is reduced to only one or two members and it feels it can safely consume one of the PCs while its pets handle the surviving adventurers.

The gegaar fight fearlessly to defend their master. The devourer lord will attempt to flee if reduced to 10 or less hit points, seeking to alert its allies on Level Two of the PCs' presence.

The room contains three long, low tables with seating pillows arranged around them. A collection of plain wooden bowls and utensils rest atop each table. The six corpses are a mixture of men and woman, and all have been partially devoured. Aside from their robes and sandals, they carry no items of interest or value.

The party can easily claim the *War-dress of Numrik* as booty if the devourer lord is slain, but its powers are not all beneficial and there's a price to be paid for ownership.

Area 2-7—Ramp: *A circular chamber is before you, bare and unoccupied. A 6' wide ramp spirals along the wall on the right-hand side of the room, leading to higher levels within the God-Skull.*

The ramp connects to all levels of the God-Skull, pausing at landings on Levels two, three, and four. There is 60' distance between each level of the God-Skull, with level four located 180' above the floor of this room.

The landings to levels two, three, and four have open archways leading directly onto the level, but level four has a secure door inhibiting access to that level. See area 4-1 for further details.

LEVEL TWO

Area 2-8—Armory and Sparring Chamber: This room's door is locked [DC 10 pick locks check or keys from 2-3 to open].

The floor of this open chamber is covered with woven mats decorated with geometric designs. A rack of curious weapons including bladed staves, curved knives, short spears, and angled clubs is affixed to the wall opposite the entrance. There appears to be about a dozen of the unusual armaments present, but gaps in the rack suggest many more are missing. The room looks unoccupied.

The monks sparred here to keep their bodies as fit as their minds and to hone their skills. When the Wormwood struck the God-Skull, the monks grabbed their weapons and rushed to the scene, locking the door to the armory behind them. The Thruul have yet to explore this chamber.

The rack holds three *bhuj* (treat as short swords), 2 *bichuwa* (as daggers), a pair of *bagh nakh* (also as daggers but unable to be thrown), three *otta* (as clubs), a quarterstaff, and two spears.



Any earthly creature sipping the water must make a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or be affected by the altering crystals. Roll on the table below if the saving throw is failed.

Table 1-2: Modified Water Consumption Table

Roll 1d6	Water Consumption Consequences
1	The drinker's skin undergoes a transformation, painfully changing into the globular texture and coloration of the Thruul's plasmatic flesh. This change permanently reduces the drinker's Stamina by -2 and inflicts 2d6 damage.
2	A random appendage (leg or arm) becomes jellified and falls off. The drinker must make a successful DC 10 Fortitude save or die outright from shock. If the save succeeds, they still lose the afflicted limb.
3	Drinker's tongue turns to liquid and drains from his mouth. He loses the ability to speak or cast spells until a lay on hands with 4 dice of healing is applied to him.
4	The drinker gains 10 temporary hit points as his flesh stitches itself closed after suffering injury, knitting together with colorful crystalline material. These hit points are the first lost when taking damage and remain until all are removed by wounds or 24 hours pass, whichever occurs first.
5	The drinker's flesh becomes embedded with the crystals in an inert state. His or her skin gains a pebbly texture and they suffer a -1 Personality loss, but their base AC becomes 12 instead of 10.
6	The consumer's body is altered, allowing it to exist in the inhospitable conditions within the Void of Stars. It is possible the drinker never becomes exposed to the Void, leaving them to believe drinking the water had no effect. However, should his or her exploits ever take them outside the God-Skull, they'll be prepared.

The bottom of the rack is tall, measuring 8" in height. It contains a secret compartment that can be located with either a DC 15 Intelligence check or by lifting the rightmost spear from the rack. Within the compartment is a scroll, faded with age and of delicate condition. It contains a number of fighting techniques perfected by the Dawa monks down the ages. If read by a warrior or dwarf, and the methodology is practiced for three months with no interruptions, the warrior or dwarf can either choose a second "lucky weapon" using the same modifier as their original lucky weapon (their Luck modifier at 1st level) or improve the modifier of their current lucky weapon by +2. In some cases, this may actually make a formerly useless or unlucky weapon lucky!

If Lhakpa is present when the party discovers the scroll, they politely and apologetically request the characters hand it over to him as it contains "the wisdom of our order and is not intended for those who've yet to prove themselves worthy of such knowledge." If the party refuses, he won't press the matter, but the decision will have consequences at the end of the adventure.

Area 2-9—Cistern: *The smell of water fills this room. Half of the room contains a lid-covered basin with an open access door set into the cover. A number of buckets and ewers stand on a long table next to the basin. A few drying puddles of water are noticeable on the floor near the cistern.*

The lid covers a 10' long by 8' wide by 10' deep cistern. The monks had to fetch water from the Dawa Monastery on a regular basis to keep it filled. Two or more people working together can remove the lid entirely, exposing the basin and its waters.

Anyone peering into the cistern through the open access door can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence check to notice there appears to be something beneath the cistern's waters. If the lid is removed, the contents of the cistern are automatically noticed.

Several dainty crystalline pillars are growing from the floor of the cistern, seemingly to spontaneously accrete. The pillars are multicolored and are formed of minute, spindly crystals in hues of purple, pink, green, and yellow. None have yet to break the water's surface, but the tallest is less than 1' under the water.

These crystalline growths transform the water making it more palatable for the Thruul's metabolism. They can survive perfectly on ordinary water, but prefer the altered form.

Touching the crystals directly with exposed flesh is even more hazardous. Any earthly creature coming into direct contact with the growing crystals must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or watch in horror as the crystal burrow directly into his or her flesh, attracted by the water content of their bodies and the iron in their blood.

The crystals rapidly expand throughout the victim's body, inflicting 1 HD of damage (a warrior suffers 1d12 damage, a wizard 1d4, etc.) and causing 1 point of Stamina and Agility loss (2 ability points total) each round. This growth continues for 2d5 rounds minus the creature's Luck modifier or until the growth is ceased with a *remove curse* spell with a spell check of 22+.

A creature who dies from the crystalline growth becomes a twisted, petrified thing with delicate crystal spires protruding from its eye-sockets, ears, nose, and mouth. Colorful, but quite dead.

Area 2-10—Men's Dormitory: *This room is utterly dark, lacking the inherent illumination encountered elsewhere. Then, in the gloom, a trio of white semi-circles appear about 6' above the floor. You realize with horror that these are gleaming, mocking smiles set into the faces of pitch black creatures nearly invisible in the gloom. Suddenly, a dazzling display of psychedelic colors erupts as the creatures' bodies ripple with vibrant colors and they launch themselves at you!*

The creatures are void wraiths, weird dwellers in the Void of Stars that often hitch rides on cosmic bodies to travel to new worlds with their endless hunger. These three followed in the Wormwood's wake and infiltrated the God-Skull without the Thruul's knowledge. They've taken up residence here for the moment, covering the walls, floor, and ceiling with gore to darken the chamber to the blackness they prefer.

Void Wraiths (3): Init +4; Atk bite +5 melee (2d4+2 and DC 13 Fort save or -1 temporary Agility loss) or touch (1d8 plus slow); AC 13; HD 3d10+2; hp 22 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP immune to cold and heat damage; slow (touched targets must make a DC 12 Fort save or suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to attack rolls, Ref saves, and spell checks for 1 turn); SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3; AL C.

Void wraiths appear as spectre-like creatures comprised of utter darkness. Only their white teeth show when they cruelly smile before attacking. Their ebon bodies absorb energy as they travel the Void, and this stored power erupts into coruscating displays of color when they become excited, turning them into psychedelic ghosts with tearing teeth and hands as cold as space. Despite their names, void wraiths are living creatures and are not un-dead.

If the room is illuminated, it is as follows:

This room was clearly a dormitory. Ten simple sleeping mats with folded blankets at their feet are positioned around the room and an equal number of wicker storage chests are placed beside each bed. Beyond that, however, the chamber is a horror show. Mangled human bodies wearing the remains of green robes are strewn about the room. The gore from these mutilated corpses has been smeared across the entire room's floor, walls, and ceiling, turning the space into a rust-colored abattoir. The reek of death is overwhelming.

There are six bodies in the room, all ravaged to the point where they barely resemble humanity. No weapons are present, suggesting the monks were taken by surprise before they could respond to the collision.

The sleeping mats and blankets are blood-soaked. The wicker chests hold an assortment of green robes, yak-leather sandals, personal items such as razors, cleaning cloths, soap, and other grooming supplies, and the occasional pendant depicting interlocked geometric patterns. One pendant is fashioned from silver and worth 10 gp.

Area 2-11—Women's Dormitory: *Ten plain sleeping mats with folded blankets atop them line the floor of this simple chamber. Each bed has a small wicker chest beside it. Two banners decorated with woven geometric patterns hang on each wall. The room appears empty.*

The female monks resided here during their studies. A close examination of the sleeping mats suggests four have been not been used recently (only six female monks were training in the God-Skull). As in area 2-10, the wicker chests hold meager personal belongings.

In one chest is a small painting of an elderly couple with gold foil embossed frame. It is worth 20 gp. Inside another chest is a scroll depicting a number of physical exercises and meditation techniques. Anyone studying the scroll and practicing the described exercises can make a DC 15 Luck check at the end of a three month period. If successful, the creature gains a +1 bonus to either Strength, Stamina, or Agility (student's choice). This training cannot raise an ability score above 18 and a creature can only benefit from the exercises once. If the Luck check fails, the student cannot fully comprehend the techniques and will never be able to benefit from the scroll's teachings. As with the





scroll in area 2-8, Lhakpa requests the party hand the document over to them as it contains secret wisdom of the order. Failure to do so will have later consequences, as will compliance.

Area 2-12—Meditation Cell Entrances: As the party approaches these rooms, read the following:

A pair of doors is set into the wall along the corridor at this point. As you approach, one opens as a small group of creatures emerges. One appears human, albeit covered in drying blood and wearing an iron and gold gown with seven points atop her bald head. With her a half-dozen squat creatures resembling a cross between small apes and ebony black tumbleweeds. Vine-like leashes lead from the tumbleweed things' bodies to the woman's left hand. In her right hand is a black serrated blade seemingly made of wood. The apish creatures begin howling a high-pitched whine as they spot you and leap in your direction.

The "woman" is another devourer lord intent on clearing out the God-Skull with a pack of servitors. Like the creature's fellow beings, she has claimed one of the objects from the God-Skull's vault, granting her terrible power. She wears the Crown of Nine Spires. She cannot use the Crown's power to allow her animalistic pets to re-roll combat dice, but can use its power on herself.

Devourer Lord: Init +4; Atk thorn blade +7 melee (2d5+2, see below) or bite +8 melee (1d12+4) or crush +10 melee (2d6+4); AC 15; HD 10d8+5; hp 60; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP consume body and mind (see area 2-2 description above), grapple (if two crush attacks strike a single target, it is held by the devourer's great pseudopods; a DC 15 Strength check breaks the grapple), re-roll combat dice once per round (see Appendix A), searing rays (2d6 damage and catch fire to up to two targets within 60'; DC 12 Reflex check reduces damage to ½ and avoids catching fire), immune to sleep effects; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

The devourer lord wields a thorn blade, a serrated weapon fashioned from the alien foliage of the Wormwood. The thorn blade is tempered by exposure to the cosmic rays of the Void and is as strong as steel. Its blade is searing cold and anyone struck by it must make a DC 10 Fortitude save or suffer 1 point of temporary Agility damage from the icy, cosmic blade. Additionally, a thorn blade is considered a magical weapon against creatures of non-terrestrial origin.

The tumbleweed creatures are Wormwood sprouts, animalistic growths capable of mobility and obeying simple commands with dog-like intelligence. They attack in pairs, with one sprout attempting to bowl over a target, while the second one tries to implant itself in the prone target.

Wormwood Sprout (6): Init +1; Atk briar rake +5 melee (2d10 minus target's AC; minimum 1 point) or overbear +5 melee (1d10 plus DC 13 Strength check or be knocked prone) or boring roots +2/+6 vs. prone target (1d6 cumulative damage); AC 10; HD 2d12; hp 10 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP implant roots (tendrils bore into target causing cumulative 1d6 damage per round; killing the sprout stops the damage), takes ½ damage from cold and heat; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will -1; AL N.

Wormwood sprouts have boring roots that burrow into a victim's flesh like drills. The deeper into the flesh the roots bore, the more injuries they cause. As such, a target being attacked with the roots suffers a cumulative 1d6 damage each round (1d6 the first round struck, 2d6 the following round, 3d6 on the third round, etc.). Once a sprout has struck a target with its roots, the attack automatically succeeds each round until the sprout is killed.

Sprouts are covered with briars they use to rake their foes. Armor protects against the briars, and the victim's AC is subtracted from the total damage dice score when determining the number of hp lost on a successful briar attack.

A NOTE ABOUT WORMWOOD

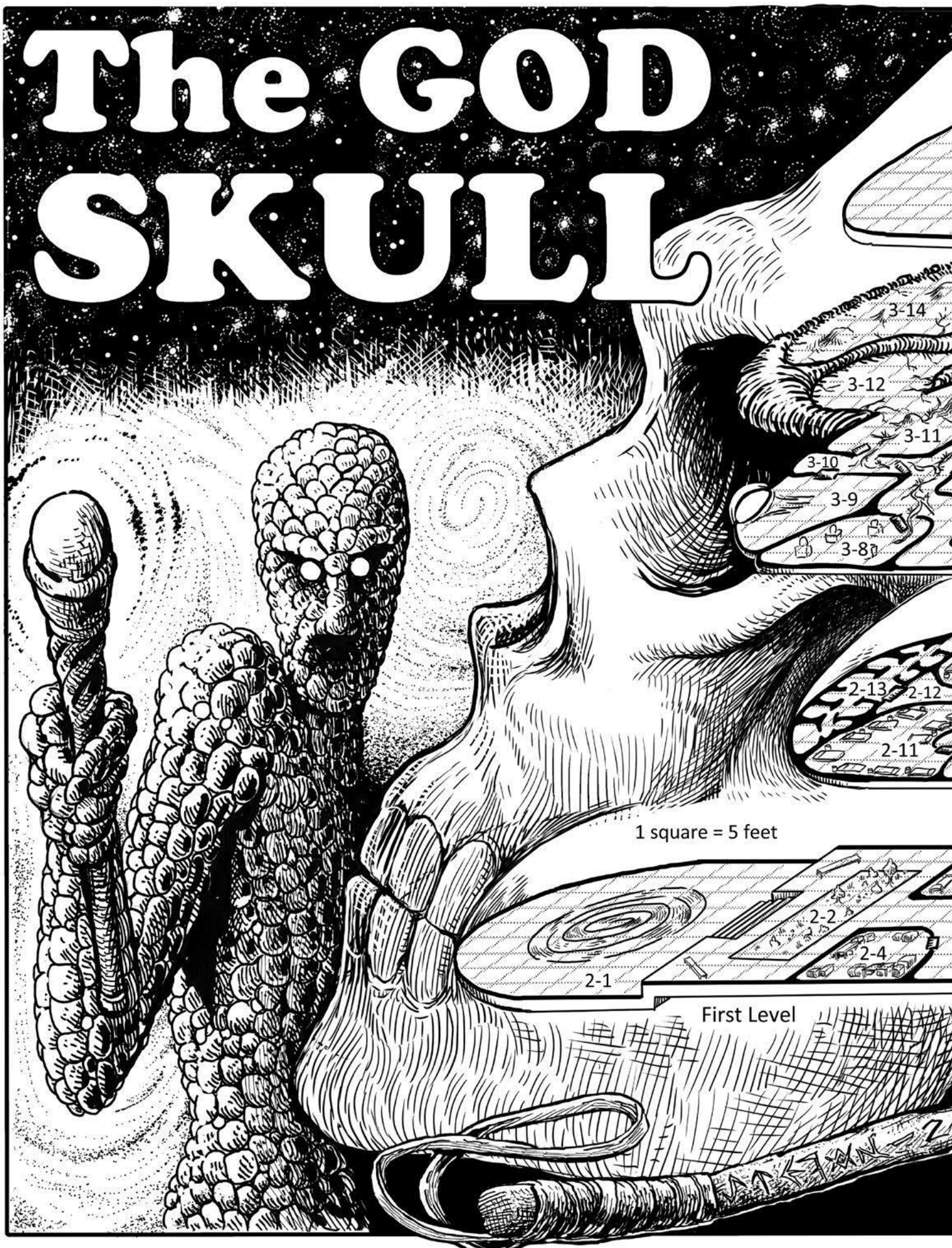
Wormwood is an alien form of vegetation, somewhat closer to fungi than earthly wood, but otherwise unlike anything the adventurers have ever encountered before. Anything spawned by or created from the verdant vegetation remains connected to the central Wormwood mass.

This otherworldly connection means that everything of Wormwood is still alive. As such, spells that affect non-living objects made from wood, such as wood wyrding, have no effect on Wormwood creatures and objects like the construct-suits in area 3-9. Magic that explicitly affects living wood has a base 50% chance of failing outright regardless of spell check result when used against creatures spawned from the Wormwood mass. If the magic overcomes this base chance, it takes affect normally as per its description.

Area 2-13—Meditation Cells: *A number of hanging curtains run along the length of this corridor. Most are open, revealing a small cubbies with a woven mat on the floor, a single unlit candle, and a geometric design painted on one wall of the space. There is a pleasant odor in the air, a mixture of jasmine and honeysuckle.*

The Dawa monks used these cubbies to meditate, focusing on the geometric mandalas on the walls to clear their minds and crystallize their thoughts. The candles are aromatic and the source of the pleasant odor. There is nothing of interest or value here.

The GOD SKULL





Fourth Level

4-4

4-3

plinth

2-7

4-1

prison

Ramp down
to 4-2

3-13

Third Level

3-5

3-4

3-3

2-7

3-1

3-2

4-2

Ramp up
to level 4

2-10

2-9

Second Level

2-7

2-8

2-3

2-6

2-7

2-5

SBP

LEVEL THREE

Area 3-1—Stair Landing: *A curving passageway can be seen through an open archway in the stairwell wall. It curves off to the left and right, vanishing from sight. Several long ebony creepers, each swelling to the diameter of a man's arm and covered with veiny protrusions lie upon the ivory floor to the right. They too run beyond the extent of your vision.*

This landing leads to the Keepers' general quarters and chambers. The creepers are just a few of the countless tendrils covering the Wormwood which have broken into the God-Skull, seeking energy to feed.

The tendrils, while fast-growing (they can grow up to 2' a round when ambient energy allows), are not animate and lie unmoving on the floor. However, anyone walking among the tendrils, such as proceeding down the corridor towards area 3-5, must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or become lethargic as the Wormwood vines leech away their essential life energy. A creature who successfully saves is immune from the vines' leeching power for a number of rounds equal to their Willpower save modifier (minimum 1 round). After this time they must make new saves if still within the 5' of any living vines.

A lethargic creature's speed is reduced to half and they lose 1d5 hit points each round they are within 5' of the vines. The lethargic creature also loses the ability to make rational decisions and will continue on the last course of action decided upon before failing the save (e.g. continuing to walk down the corridor, attack the vines, cast a spell and continuing to do so each round even if the spell check fails, miming the somatic gestures and speaking the words without result, etc.)

Lethargic creatures can be pulled away from the tendrils' draining effect by moving them at least 10' away from the vines, but rescuers may need to make Fortitude saves as well. The tendrils can also be driven off by attacking them, but care is needed. A lethargic PC recovers from his torpid state after being outside of the vines' influence for 1d3+1 rounds.

The tendrils are AC 10, have 10 hp each, and a +0 saving throw modifier. There are ten tendrils present in the corridor. Reducing one to zero hp causes it to retreat back towards the Wormwood at a rate of 10' per round, for up to 1d4+1 rounds. The tendrils stop retreating after this time if no further damage is suffered, slowly growing back after a delay of 1 hour.

The tendrils are immune to cold and heat, and in fact thrive on exposure to it. A tendril suffering damage of either of these energy types immediately experiences a growth spurt of 10' per die of damage (a 6d6 fireball causes a 60' growth into areas not currently containing the tendrils). This will likely bring other PCs within 5' of the vines, possibly forcing new Fortitude saves.

Area 3-1a—Dead Keeper: *A curious and slightly nauseating creature lies on the corridor floor at this point. The thing is a grub-like creature measuring 4' long. Six spindly vestigial appendages emerge from its segmented olive-green flesh. It lacks any facial features aside from a circular mouth filled with rasping teeth. It is naked except for a simple woven belt with attached pouch around its segmented middle.*

This is one of the God-Skull's Keepers, caught by the onslaught of tendrils and invaders soon after the Wormwood collision. It is dead, a victim of the tendrils' draining power. The pouch on its belt contains a small chunk of manna (see area 3-2) and a gleaming ivory key. The key unlocks to door to Level 4 (area

4-1) and the secret door to the panic room (area 4-2). If Helper Second Full Hope is with the party, it mourns the death of its kin, but also identifies the key as being for the panic room (area 4-2).

Area 3-2—Manna Chamber: *The walls of this bone-white chamber are curved, giving you the sense of something grown rather than built. In the middle of the room, a bumpy growth of spongy, wrinkled matter rises from the floor. It is sizable, measuring roughly 10' in diameter and rising 6' off the ground. A number of 4', scoop-like protrusions grow from the floor of the room, looking like strange chairs for narrow bodies.*

A portion of Njoat's divine body remains within the God-Skull. This substance not only spontaneously generated the Keepers, but now also nourishes them and their prisoner. The spongy matter is this divine foodstuff. It constantly regrows and provides divine sustenance in the form of manna.

The manna is spongy to the touch and handfuls are easily torn off. If squeezed, the manna produces a clear fluid slightly less viscous than honey and sweet tasting. A single meal of manna and manna liquid provides sustenance for 12 hours. Any manna removed grows back in 12 hours.

The manna is divine in nature and not intended for the consumption of earthly bodies. Lingering aspects of the godhead remain in the foodstuff. Any non-Keeper who consumes the manna must make a special Luck check. Consult the following table to determine the results of eating manna.

Table 1-3: Manna Consumption Chart

Luck check is	Result
A natural 1	The eater gains a spark of divine insight into the nature of the multiverse. They gain a permanent point of Intelligence.
Successful	Meal is tasty and refreshing, giving the eater a sense of peace but no other special effects.
Failed	The eater's body tolerates the meal and gains sustenance from it, but spends the next 12 hours feeling a mixture of both guilt and nausea. Clerics gain +1 divine disapproval but other classes are unaffected aside from the unease.
A natural 20	Horrible truths about the gods are briefly glimpsed by the eater. They permanently lose 1 point of both Intelligence and Personality. These points can only be restored if the eater's memories of the journey to the God Skull Prison are somehow permanently erased.

The scoop-like protrusions from the floor are indeed chairs the Keepers sit in when consuming their manna ration, discussing their days and the wonders of the Scions of Law.

Area 3-3—Keeper Dormitory: *The interior of this room is dominated by a hole-ridden ivory-colored protrusion resembling some great uneven mass of cheese. Each of the many holes visible on the surface of this 20' diameter and 15' tall mass is about 2' in diameter and slick with glistening gel. The floor is covered with trails of dried slime leading to and from the holed pile.*

The Keepers sleep and recuperate within this strange nest, slithering into the holes to sleep and enjoy a divine connection



with the spiritual domain. The holes are lined with a slick mucus that the Keepers produce while resting, which serves as a type of blanket.

The holes are too small for larger/broader humanoids such as humans and dwarves to enter, but halflings and slim elves can squeeze into the hollow spaces. These holes all interconnect in a vast, twisting labyrinth of tunnels and tubes, each slick with gel.

Any living creature entering the nest must make a DC 14 Willpower save or immediately be incapacitated by a sensation of bliss. They have no desire to do anything but enjoy the serenity of being in touch with the divine. This bliss lasts for six hours or until the creature is removed. Others trying to pull an affected creature from the pod must also make a Willpower save but with a +1d bonus to the roll. If failed, they too become affected by the divine bliss.

Area 3-4—Manna Processing: *A complex organic device largely fills this room. Large bladder-like sacks connected to segmented tubes resembling intestines that terminate in meaty growths create the appearance of a machine made from bodily organs. Near one end of the machine is a woven basket containing a few scraps of gray, spongy matter.*

The divine manna from area 3-2 is considered too sacred to be consumed by Ubrul without being processed. The maggot-like creatures have created this organic processing unit to de-sanctify the divine foodstuff into a more mundane ration. Raw manna is fed into the machine at one end and the refined version is excreted at the other.

Anyone poking or prodding the machine must make a Luck check. If failed, they activate the machine which chugs and churns, with sacks inflating and deflating, and creating a cacophony of loud bodily noises. After several moments, there is

a plopping sound and one of the meaty growths swells a little larger. The growth can be opened along a wet slit, revealing 1d7 fist-sized chunks of gritty, white matter. This is the refined manna. Refined manna can be consumed safely by earthly creatures, who gain 12 hours sustenance from it without the need to make a Luck check as described in area 3-2.

The woven basket contains 12 handfuls of unprocessed manna (see 3-2 for the consequences of consuming this manna).

Area 3-5—Midden and Waste Disposal: *This chamber is odiferous, filled with the scent of turned meat, curdled milk, and less pleasant odors. Several shallow trays piled high with garbage and organic waste lie near the far wall of the room. In the wall, about three feet above the floor, is a translucent circle, like the nictitating membrane of an animal. Darkness appears to fill the space beyond the translucent tissue.*

Waste, both organic and otherwise, created by the God-Skull's residents is collected here for eventual disposal. The translucent tissue set into the wall is a permeable membrane that keeps the cold of the Void out, while allowing material to be pushed through it. The circle measures 3' in diameter and any creature with a Strength of 6 or greater can push objects—or even itself—through the membrane and outside the God-Skull. See sidebar for conditions outside in the Void of Stars.

The room contains mostly trash, offal, and bodily waste. There are six trays heaped with this matter destined for disposal through the membrane.

Area 3-6—Shrine of the Scions: *One wall of this long narrow chamber is dominated by a circular symbol 10' in diameter. Made from the same ivory-colored material as the rest of the room, the symbol depicts an upwards pointing arrow superimposed over an eye. A raised font before it holds chunks of gray spongy matter floating in clear liquid. The floor of the chamber is littered with a dozen or so grub-like bodies, each roughly 4' length and of olive-green coloration. Open wounds seeping a white liquid show they all died of violence.*

Some of the Keepers sought sanctuary in this shrine to the Scions of Law when the Thruul attacked, but were slain when discovered.

There are eleven Keeper corpses present, each with numerous wounds. The milky liquid seeping from their segmented bodies is their alien blood. Five of the bodies wear woven belts with pouches around their middles. Three contain keys that open the door at area 4-1 and the secret door to area 4-2. Two hold crumbs of manna, and one also has a silver medallion without chain depicting the same arrow and eye symbol as hangs on the wall.

A DC 13 Intelligence check (clerics gain +1d on their rolls) identifies the symbol as being a mixture of the Arrow of Law, sign of the Scions of Law, and the Watchful Eye of Njoat. Succeeding in this roll also allows the character to recall the story of Njoat and its sacrifice to imprison Ubrul if the party doesn't already know the tale.

The gray matter in the font is sanctified manna, its divine nature further amplified by the holy aura of the shrine. There are four pieces of holy manna present. This supercharged manna has special properties.

First, it grants any Lawful cleric a +1d bonus to turn unholy checks if used as a holy symbol. After each use, the cleric must make a Luck check. If failed, the manna melts away, its divine

nature expended. Any lawful cleric touching the manna can feel its holy aura and identify this property automatically.

Secondly, if a Lawful cleric consumes the manna, he immediately gains 1d8+1 divine disfavor for eating the sacred substance.

Thirdly, any Chaotic creature touching the manna suffers 1d3 damage. If they somehow consume the sacred offering, they suffer 6d6 damage! Other alignment creatures can handle the manna without harm and—aside for clerics as noted above—can even consume it as normal manna as detailed in area 3-2.

Area 3-7—Library: *Strange, organic-looking blobs of hardened white material run in rows down the length of this large room. Numerous holes containing rolled scrolls line each of the blobs, forming bizarre library shelves. There must be several hundred scrolls or more present in the quiet chamber.*

The Dawa monks entrusted copies of their accumulated wisdom to the Keepers to protect in case anything happened to the monastery. The Keepers stored those scrolls in this chamber, placing them within shelves made from a hardened resin the prison guardians can excrete. There are more than 800 scrolls present, carefully organized by the Keepers.

If the PCs are seeking a particular scroll or piece of lore, have the party member with the worst Luck make a Luck check. If successful, they can locate the appropriate scroll after 1d6 turns of searching. If the check fails, the time is wasted and the scroll is not found. Additionally, their search attracts 1d4 devourers with 1d6 gegaar (see areas 2-2 and 2-6 for stats).

The Keepers can automatically locate a desired scroll, but in order to do that, the Thruul and the Wormwood must first be dealt with.

If a PC pulls a scroll randomly, they discover it to be the writings of a long-dead Dawa monk contemplating the order of the multiverse, esoteric breathing exercises, cryptic teachings to ponder, or other fascinating but ultimately useless information.

Area 3-8—The Vault: Read the following when the party comes into view of area 3-8 from the hallway outside:

A mass of black vines partially fill the corridor before an ajar door. The tendrils are as thick as a man's thigh and covered with vein-like protrusions and growths. Star-shaped leaves grow along the vines' lengths. It appears as if the vines grew through the door, forcing it open with their combined girth.

The Wormwood vegetation was attracted to the combined magical energy of the enchanted objects held within the God-Skull's vault. Between their ability to absorb energy and their combined, fast growing might, the vault door buckled and the Wormwood vines infiltrated the room. The Thruul found the vault shortly thereafter and plundered it.

The tendrils have the same properties as the vines in area 3-1 and must be dealt with before the party can inspect the entrance and the room beyond.

Approaching the door, the PCs see it was clearly a formidable one:

The door is made from the ivory-colored material of the sanctuary, but reinforced with steel bands and plating. Three locks are set into its surface and a number of glyphs and sigils are inscribed into the door's face. Despite the door's apparent strength, it is clear that the tendrils broke through the door, pushing it ajar.

The room beyond is largely empty. Four raised pedestals fashioned from the ivory matter stand in two rows down the center of the chamber.

Atop each is an elongated oval some 6' in length and 2' in diameter. Three of the ovals are made from a gelatinous material the color of faded cornflowers, while the fourth is of a golden-yellow hue. Tears in the tops of the ovals show whatever was once inside them has been removed.

The sigils on the door are wards against Chaos and warnings to leave the Vault's contents undisturbed. A DC 10 Intelligence check deciphers them.

Each of the pill-shaped gelatinous capsules are filled with a blue gel. This gel and the rigid plasma capsules contained the powerful magical items hidden away by the Dawa monks and safeguarded by the Keepers. The capsules and gel are organic containers excreted by the Keepers to dampen the forces of Chaos contained within the objects. A fourth powerful magical item was also kept safe here, but unlike the others was not cursed. This item was the shattered axe (see 3-14 and Appendix A) and it was contained in the golden capsule.

Nothing of value remains in the vault, but its looted state should clue the party into the fact that their enemies have powerful magic in their possession and that one is unlike the others.

Area 3-9—Left Observation Chamber: *The ceiling at the far end of this chamber slopes downward to form a half-dome. The wall at this end of the room bears a 20' diameter silver disk set into it, like a great mirror of burnished steel. Several long tubes, each 1' around and bearing dimpled depressions in their ends, are connected to the disk and lie coiled neatly at its base. A pair of the tubes run to a 7' tall vaguely humanoid creature with flesh like strands of fish's eggs. Its arms are inserted into the tubes and a brass scepter lies at its feet. A trio of large figures covered entirely in armor fashioned from wood and flowering vines stands nearby.*

The creature is a Thruul Void witch, a sorcerer of that alien species. It is currently using this room's special property to gaze upon the world far below the God-Skull. The wooden-armored figures are its bodyguards, Thruul warriors encased in Wormwood battle constructs. Unless the party was being exceptionally cautious and stealthy, one of the bodyguards notices the party as they enter and alerts his master and fellows. Combat ensues.

Thruulian Battle Construct-Suit Bodyguards (3): Init +5; Atk spear spur +8 melee (2d6+2) or thorn quarrel burst +4 ranged (80' range; 2d4 damage; attacks to all targets in a 10' cube); AC 16; HD 6d10+6; hp 45 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP takes ½ damage from cold and fire attacks, immune to sleep, *ray of enfeeblement* effect (1/3 rounds, 30' range, DC 15 Will save or temporarily lose 1d6 Strength); SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +6; AL C.

The Thruul warriors wear semi-living suits of armor fashioned from the Wormwood. The vegetation's natural energy absorbing properties partially protects them from cold and heat, and grants them superior saving throws. The suit can also produce a blast of raw void energy that has the effect of a *ray of enfeeblement* spell. This void blast can be used once every three rounds and the suit emits a rising howl as it recharges.

The suit's main weapons are a spur of Wormwood with a spiked point. The armor's wearer can adjust the length of the spear, making it as short as 5' and as long as 15'. The suit can also produce a blast of 1' long thorns that pepper a 10' cube area, attacking all within that space. There is no limit to the number of thorns the suit can produce.

The Wormwood suits can be broken open once their wearers are slain. If this is done, a 5' long, slug-like body with fish roe flesh is discovered in a cavity inside the armor's torso. The

VOID, NOT SPACE

It should be noted that nowhere in this adventure does the author call what lies beyond the God-Skull "outer space." The Void of Stars is not the realistic vacuum of space, but some other fantastical emptiness between worlds. The judge is free to attribute whatever qualities he wishes to the Void of Stars to best fit the campaign setting, but this adventure treats the Void of Stars as a cold place where life can exist for short periods of time. Gravity still functions, with large bodies drawing smaller objects to them. A PC can walk along the outside of the God-Skull or Wormwood as if on solid ground and will suffer damage if they fall from a distance onto them. This gravity field extends up to 30' from the object. Beyond that is the abyss of the Void.

Air accumulates around large objects, especially the Wormwood and its organic composition. This allows earthly creatures to exist for a time while within this bubble of atmosphere. However, this air grows stale quickly if breathed and living creatures only have 10 rounds before they must start making Fortitude saves to avoid suffocation damage. The initial DC for the save is 8, increasing by 2 on each subsequent round. Once a creature fails its first save, it takes 1d6 damage each round until it returns to friendly climate conditions or perishes.

A creature trapped in the Void of Stars drifts without the benefit of gravity and is exposed to its cold, airless conditions. Not only must they make Fortitude saves as detailed above, but also suffer 1d5 points of cold damage each round in the frigid Void. Some creatures born in the Void of Stars are naturally acclimated to these conditions, as are those who sample from the transformed waters of the Thruul (see area 2-9).

Wormwood construct suits only function for the Thruul and there is no way for the party members to operate them with their terrestrial, humanoid bodies.

Void Witch: Init +2; Atk thorn lash +3 melee (2d4+1) or spell, AC 14 (18 with *magic shield*); HD 4d6+6; hp 40; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (spell check uses 1d12+12, *force manipulation*, *magic missile*, *magic shield*, *ESP*, *spider web*, and *lightning bolt*; adds an additional +4 to spell checks for *magic missile*, *ESP*, and *spider web*, immune to sleep effects); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; AL C.

The Void witch uses its magic against intruders and can also produce a 10' long, greenish-black thorny vine from its chest. It flails the flesh from enemies with this appendage when not casting spells. The scepter at its feet is the *scepter of sorcery*, freshly liberated from the God-Skull's vault (see Appendix A for more details).

NOTE: As Thruul don't experience corruption as terrestrial wizards do, the void witch cannot use the *scepter's* ability to willingly suffer corruption to achieve a critical success on a spell check. The other benefits of the *scepter* are factored into the stat block above.

The silvered disk and the tubes are a scrying device. The disk covers the eye socket of the God-Skull, protecting it from the

harsh climate of the Void of Stars, but anyone inserting their bare hands into the ends of the six pairs of tubes receives a mental vision as if looking out the eye of the dead god's skull.

Below them is their home, a (likely) blue-green jewel in blackness. Nearer, however, they see massive, tree trunk-sized vines crawling across the ivory exterior of the God-Skull. These vines run back towards a massive ball of entangled vegetation clinging to the right-hand side of the God-Skull, apparently impacted over the opposite eye socket. Mist seems to hang about the gigantic mass of black, veined vines and a wispy tail trails behind the 100' in diameter tendril mass. This is the Wormwood, of course, embedded in the God-Skull's right eye socket (see area 3-11 for more).

Area 3-10—Nasal Corridor: *A long corridor with doors on either side of it extends forward. The door at the bottom of the passage and that set into the right-hand wall are both ajar and hang askew as if broken open with battering rams.*

Unless the Wormwood vines have been driven back to area 3-11, the floor of this corridor is partially obscured by the ebony-green tendrils.

Area 3-11—Right Observation Chamber: *The ceiling at one end of this room slopes down, once forming a half-domed wall. That wall is now cracked and broken, as if struck with immense force. Protruding from the rifts and fractures are writhing masses of ebony-green tendrils. A broad, almost door-sized break in the wall shows a dark, vegetation lined depression, like a living cave beyond it. The floor of the room is colonized by three dense growths of vines, heaped as high as the chest of a large man. From these growths, dozens of vines extend towards the interior of the God-Skull. The air here is warm and humid, and thin mists gather along the floor.*

This is the impact site of the Wormwood object. It broke the cranium of the God-Skull and forced its matter and occupants inside the prison. The celestial body's living composition has effectively sealed this chamber from the Void of Stars outside the prison, plugging up the breach it made with itself.

The three growths present here are, in a sense, the roots of the vines that infiltrated the God-Skull. Destroying them causes the invading tendrils to quickly die off. Unfortunately, destroying them also alerts the living Wormwood body that danger is afoot and it and its inhabitants prepare to deal with the attackers.

If the party has caused the tendrils to retreat this far by doing damage to them as described in area 3-1, they no longer have the power to make nearby creatures lethargic (no Fort saves necessary). If the party has somehow pushed passed the vines, however, and they wind through the halls, then all within range of the tendrils must save as normal or be affected. This could prove devastating as they combat the roots in this chamber.

Wormwood Vine Roots (3): Init +0; Atk emotional whip +5 missile attack (2d4+2 plus possible Personality loss); AC 10; HD 4d12+3; hp 40 each; MV 0'; Act 1d20; SP emotional whip attack targets opponent's mind (target's AC is equal to its Personality score); Personality drain (for each 10 points of damage suffered by the emotional whip attack, a target temporarily loses 1 point of Personality), immune to cold and heat damage, cold and fire attacks restore hit points equal to potential damage inflicted and hp can exceed maximum; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +10; AL N.

The Wormwood vines roots attack using its alien telepathy to inflict overwhelming and often unearthly emotional surges in its targets, causing them to suffer pain and physical damage



as their minds reel in response. For every 10 points of damage suffered, whether from a single or multiple attacks, the target temporarily loses 1 point of Personality. Additionally, since the attacks are mental in nature, a target of the vine roots power uses its current Personality as its base AC. This value can be affected by magical spells such as magic shield, but is unaffected by Agility bonuses.

When a Wormwood vine cluster is destroyed, it quickly turns ash gray and begins to flake away, swiftly disappearing aside from some stray dust. Its connecting vine tendrils are likewise affected. If all three root clusters are destroyed, the God-Skull is cleared of the vines and, at least, their threat is overcome.

Destroying the vine roots clears the way to enter the Wormwood, but also alerts the occupants of areas 3-14 that something is amiss. Nullifying the roots, such as via a sleep spell or similar means, doesn't alarm the creatures within the Wormwood and a stealthy party might gain surprise over them.

Area 3-12—Wormwood Entrance: *The entire exposed surface of this humid, warm chamber is comprised of masses of alien vegetation entwined together like slumbering snakes. Unlike the other tendrils seen elsewhere, these vines are massive, many almost the size of tree trunks. Smaller vines dangle from the larger ones like strange seaweed gently swaying in invisible currents. Intermixed among the vines are numerous bones, corpses, and other mortal remains, transforming the chamber into a verdant ossuary. The freshest corpses are dressed in scraps of green robes.*

The Wormwood mass is still recovering from the impact with the God-Skull, and the vines here are inert. They can be safely passed through without danger. Many of the bodies and the newer bones found here appear to be partially dissolved and drained of marrow. Those that still bear recognizable features look human and are indeed a dozen Dawa monks fed to the Wormwood by the Thruul. Many of the older bones are clearly inhuman. Even a cursory search spots strange skulls with four eye sockets, cranial ridges, alien growths, horns, or other details identifying them as alien in origin. These are former meals of the Wormwood, devoured on far flung realms throughout the Void of Stars.

If the party fought the vine roots in 3-11, the Wormwood drones from 3-14 are waiting here to ambush them should the party try and enter the Wormwood mass proper. Otherwise, this room is empty of danger or treasure.

Area 3-13—Semi-Sealed Breach: *The air in this room is thin and the mist that hangs in the air swirls about, driven by moving air currents. The vine wall along one side of the chamber looks sunken and the vines are of a less vibrant coloration. Exits lead out of this small chamber at either end. From the one leading deeper into the vegetable mass, a purple-black light, like the glow of an invisible sun, is faintly discernible.*

When the Wormwood struck, the impact torn part of its mass, creating a rift leading directly into the Void of Stars. The living matter of the celestial body regrew over the damaged spot, but the repair is incomplete. The seal is tight enough that it has slowed the loss of air and heat to the Void, but is still fragile.

Anyone investigating the depressed part of the wall feels the air is colder there and that the drafts seem to be blowing through the vegetation. In addition, the vines are thinner as if younger than the surrounding walls. Pressing against the depressed vine wall and succeeding in a DC 12 Strength check allows



the investigator to pass through the seal and exit the Wormwood, stepping into the Void of Stars. PCs on the outside of the Wormwood, having arrived there perchance by the exiting the God-Skull at area 3-5, can enter the Wormwood through this breach with a similar DC 12 Strength check.

As noted in the sidebar on p. 21, the Void is survivable for short durations and both the Wormwood body and the God-Skull exert a gravitational pull, preventing any creature that stays within 30' of them from drifting off into the Void.

This imperfectly sealed breach can serve as a way to circumvent the Vines and other defenders, allowing a stealthy party to launch a swift and direct attack against the Ebon Minds in area 3-14.

Area 3-14—The Ebon Minds: *This chamber is fetid and warm giving you the sense you're inside some tremendous beast. The room is lit by a purple-black glow emanating from three mounded shapes that protrude from the greenery in the floor, walls, and ceiling. Waving cilia, like dark rotted eels, waggle from the mounded growths. One of the mounds opens, revealing a tremendous yellow eye, rheumy and striated with black veins. Mixed among the vines comprising the floor are glittering treasures and ancient bones. A feeling of great pressure assails you, as if you stand in the midst of a storm about to break.*

If they haven't been attracted by the fight in area 3-11, the following are also present:

Five misshapen things, with seven appendages in haphazard arrangement and lopsided heads covered with protrusions, scuttle about the room. Their bodies seem to be a terrible hybrid of rotting vegetable and flesh and a faint, almost fishy stench, hangs about them.



This is the dark nucleus around which the Wormwood formed, a trio of thought forms birthed in some black nebula deep in the Void of Stars who banded together to seek out life to transform and consume. Gathering alien plant life to it like seaweed covering a sunken ship, the Ebon Minds set out across the Void, pillaging and consuming worlds until nothing was left. Then, sated for a time, they took a few survivors as servants and set out into the black Void once more. Having collided with the God-Skull and learning of its connection to the world below, it is only a matter of time before the Ebon Minds launch a new invasion of consumption and transformation on the PCs' home world.

There is no negotiation with the Ebon Minds. They cannot be comprehended by earthly minds. Any attempt to directly communicate with them fails. If the party employs supernatural techniques such as a comprehend languages spell, telepathy, or similar means, the creature attempting the communication must make a DC 25 Willpower save or go insane. Only a remove curse with a spell check of 25+ or similar magic will restore their sanity.

If the Ebon Minds' servants, the five hideous hybrids known as Wormwood drones, are present, they hurl themselves at the party, giving their lives to defend their masters. While they fight, the Ebon Minds use their considerable power to blast the PCs from afar.

Wormwood Drones (5): Init +4; Atk claws +7 melee (1d12+1) or spiked tail +5 melee (1d6+1 plus DC 12 Fort save or be poisoned); AC 15; HD 6d10; hp 40 each; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP immune to sleep and mind-control, poison (victim takes 1d3 Stamina damage and 1d6 hp damage on failed save or 1d4 damage

on successful save), grappler (+10 to grapple checks), can attack opponent when grappling with it, gaining a +6 bonus to attack rolls and an extra action die against that opponent only; SV Fort +6, Ref +10, Will -2; AL C.

The Wormwood drones were once an insectile race on one of the worlds conquered by the Ebon Minds. They vaguely resemble crustaceans-like creatures encrusted and infected with the Wormwood's dark vegetable matter. Their multiple limbs and spike-tipped tail make them excellent grapplers and fearsome fighters in close quarters. The drones possess an animal intellect naturally, but the Ebon Minds grant them increased intelligence. If the Ebon Minds are destroyed, they revert to their animal state and likely flee from conflict unless cornered.

Ebon Minds (3): Init +2; Atk vine slam +10 melee (3d6) or mental blast (special) or gaze (special); AC 13; HD 10d10; hp 60 each; MV none; Act 2d20; SP immune to cold and heat damage (fire attacks restore hit points equal to damage inflicted and hp can exceed maximum), mental blast (range 300', a single target must make a DC 14 Will save or take 4d4 damage), gaze (a single target must make a DC 14 Fort save or sprout vegetation from its flesh. This rapidly growing plant life causes 1 temporary Stamina loss each round. A target reduced to zero Stamina is slain and becomes infected by the Wormwood. He raises as a Wormwood drone in 24 hours. Lay on hands that heals 3 dice or more slays the vegetable growth and stops the infection); SV Fort +15, Ref -5, Will +20; AL C.

The Ebon Minds have complete control over the Wormwood and can cause thick vines to erupt from its vegetable body to strike targets anywhere inside it. This is its primary attack. It

also uses its gaze and mental blast to weaken opponents. Any PC purposely avoiding an Ebon Mind's gaze gains a +1d to his saving throw vs. the gaze effect, but suffers a -1d penalty to all attack and spell checks against that same target. An Ebon Mind is immune to its own gaze.

If all three of the Ebon Minds are destroyed, the Wormwood quickly loses cohesion as the mental power that holds it together collapses. The vines begin to wither and break up, exposing the interior of the alien body to the Void. Anyone inside the Wormwood four rounds after the Ebon Minds are destroyed must make a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid falling through the gaps in the decaying vegetation and tumbling into the Void of Stars. The DC increases by 4 each round thereafter until the Wormwood is fled or the DC reaches 26, at which point it falls into tatters completely. If the Wormwood falls to pieces, it no longer generates gravity or atmosphere, and all creatures within it are subject to the full effects of the Void of Stars as detailed in the sidebar above.

LEVEL FOUR

Area 4-1—Landing and Locked Door: *The winding ramp terminates high about the ground here. A landing platform roughly 50' square marks its terminus. On the left-hand side of the platform, a tremendous 20' tall door of ivory-colored material stands. Bands of silvery steel and plates of the same are embedded in the door, strengthening it further. A lock is set in the door about 3' above the floor. The keyhole is shaped like an upturned arrow.*

The door is formidable, but opens easily with the proper keys found in either 3-1a or 3-6. It can also be picked with a DC 18 pick locks check or broken down with a DC 25 Strength check. A knock spell with a spell check of 22+ can also breach the closed portal.

Area 4-2—Panic Room: The entrance to this secret chamber is located on Level Three. Only by careful searching or assisting Helper Second Full Hope in area 2-4 can the party discover the hidden door. The alien invaders of the God-Skull have yet to locate it. Searching the wall containing the door along with a DC 20 Intelligence check discerns that a portion of the bony wall slides aside to reveal a tiny keyhole. Inserting either the key found in area 3-1a or 3-6, a DC 18 pick locks check, or a knock spell, opens the door. Beyond is the following:

The air in this large, low-ceilinged chamber is rank with fear. Before you is a small crowd of loathsome, maggoty creatures. Their segmented bodies undulate away from you as you enter the room, as they try frantically to escape your presence. High-pitched squeals and wails erupt. The creatures appear terrified. A winding ramp at the back of the chamber leads upwards into the gloom.

These are the surviving Keepers, who fled to this secret chamber when it became clear the Thruul were winning the fight to claim the God-Skull. Only eight survive of the original jailers and they are convinced the PCs are here to kill them.

If Lhakpa or Helper Second Full Hope is with the party, they can allay the hiding Keepers' fears. Without these allies present, the party must demonstrate good intentions and succeed on a DC 12 Personality check to calm down the Keepers and get them to reveal what they know. The survivors recount the events of the last several hours: the Wormwood impact, the spread of the tendrils throughout the God-Skull, the devastating effectiveness of the alien creatures that roam the God-Skull. The Keepers reveal they fled here and have given up the prison

The treasures and bones laid before the Ebon Minds are gifts given to them by the Wormwood's passengers as tribute. These are choice bits of plunder from other conquered worlds. The treasure include a jade and gold statue of a world with two moons (300 gp value), six small plaques made from diamond, threaded together with platinum wire, and inscribed with alien language (1,000 gp value), a lump of hard unearthly stone encrusted with jewels (750 gp value), and a gold and onyx idol of a three-headed insect creature with an mantis' body and tentacle legs (500 gp value). Amongst the treasures is also a curious weapon: a battle axe with a broken head inscribed with strange runes and a metal handle, warped almost like that of a scythe. This is the *shattered axe*, stolen from the Vault presented as tribute (see Appendix A for full details on the axe). Grabbing any single treasure takes 1 round, which could be an issue as the Wormwood falls apart.

as lost. The creatures believe it is only a matter of time before the invaders continue their incursion down to the world below and threaten those lands as well.

Troublingly, the Keepers tell the party that their leader, Pale High First True, has declared that the only thing that might stop the invaders and save the lives of the surviving Keepers is Ubrul, himself. Despite some protests, Pale High First True has gone to negotiate with the ancient imprisoned sorcerer-king, hoping to strike a deal with him to arrange his aid in repelling the raiders. Some of the Keepers support this plan, but about a third of the group predicts great catastrophe.

Allow the PCs the chance to decide how they wish to proceed. If they desire to speak with Pale High First True, they are directed up the ramp leading to Level 4, and told they will find him there...with Ubrul. If the group decides to press on and confront more of the Thruul invaders, the Keepers don't dissuade them, but neither will they join them. The maggoty creatures aren't warriors and know their fate should they leave the panic room. If the party somehow coerces the Keepers to join them or engages them in combat, they have the following stats:

Keepers (8): Init -1; Atk punch +0 melee (1d3); AC 11; HD 2d6; hp 7 each; MV 15'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +8; AL L.

The survivors offer the group sanctuary in the secret chamber if they desire. However, should the group accept the offer, it's only a matter of time before the Thruul discover the secret room. After an hour rest here, the door to Level Three is broken opens and a party of four devourers with three gegaar invades, having sensed the hiding Keepers and PCs' life force. Use stats found in area 2-2 and 2-6 for the Thruul attackers.

Area 4-3—Cranium Cavern: *An immense space stretches out before you, its verges lost in the gloom. Unlike the rest of the sanctuary, this chamber appears unworked and resembles a massive cavern rather than bone-colored room. Stalactites dangle above like misshapen dribbles of candle wax and stalagmites rise from the cavern floor. A gleaming green light shines brilliantly from a curious structure at one end of the cave. Dominating the cavern is a high, angled pillar of blue-gray material. This object is easily the size of a castle's tower, its upper end vanishing into the gloom overhead. Curious,*

asymmetrical windows pierce the pillars surface and a small plinth stands facing it. Large, mysterious runes are carved into the sides of the pillar. Something moves both atop the plinth and within the pillar itself, but the distance makes it difficult to determine what it might be.

The cranium of the God-Skull has been left untouched by the Keepers and is in a petrified state, leading to its stony appearance. The large pillar is the Prison of Ubrul the Destroyer, but the distance makes it difficult to discern details aside from those described above.

If the PCs approach the Prison of Ubrul, see Dealing with the Destroyer section below.

Area 4-4—The Glowing Pagoda: *A curiously tiered tower fashioned from the cranial stone stands here. Large open windows ring the tower's second tier, emitting an electrical yellow-green radiance. An angled roof crowned with a 10' diameter stone sphere tops the structure. A single open door at ground level provides access, but the interior is obscured by the shining light streaming from the doorway.*

Any lawful creature approaching the pagoda feels a sense of overwhelming peace and rightness with the multiverse. Chaotic creatures must make a DC 10 Willpower save or take 1 point of temporary Stamina damage from exposure to the structure innate order. Inside, the PCs find the following:

The interior of the strange building is comprised of a single open room. A white outcrop rises from the floor to a height of 15'. Stairs hewn from the stone spiral their way to the top of the outcrop. Hanging 3' in the air above the small spire is an amulet attached to a gleaming chain,

glowing with an incandescent radiance of nearly blinding intensity.

The amulet is protected by its divine aura. It cannot be removed from its position atop the spire unless the aura is dismissed. Any creature touching the amulet while the aura surrounds it suffers damage. This damage is determined using the cleric's *lay on hands* table from the DCC RPG rulebook, p. 31. The judge makes a spell check by rolling 1d20+12 to the result and consulting the table. For this purpose, Chaotic characters as "Same," Neutral PCs as "Adjacent," and Lawful characters as "Opposite" (Lawful PCs will suffer the least possible damage, for example). The number of dice indicates the damage the PC suffers, rolling his class' hit dice as normal to determine the number of hit points lost. Only Pale High First True can lower the aura and allow the amulet to be removed without causing harm, but the Chaotic will always suffer damage if handling it.

This is the Amulet of Njoat, a powerful artifact crafted by that Scion's now-defunct priesthood. When the Scion sacrificed himself to form the prison, the priesthood entrusted their most precious artifact, one contacting a fragment of his power, within the God-Skull for safe-keeping. The Keepers have thus far left the Amulet within its sacred house, but, if things look bleak (Ubrul turning on them or joining forces with the Ebon Minds, for example), Pale High First True offers it to the party's cleric if he or she is an adherent of a Lawful or at least a "good" deity. The Keepers may also award the party the Amulet as a reward for defeating the Thruul and/or Ubrul if they demonstrate themselves worthy of bearing the last relic of Njoat (see Appendix A for full details on the Amulet).

EVENT: DEALING WITH THE DESTROYER

If the party comes to the Prison of Ubrul seeking Pale High First True or by sheer happenstance, they can impact the head jailer's decision to negotiate with the corrupted wizard-king for his assistance in driving out the Thruul. Releasing the Destroyer might solve the immediate problem of the Wormwood incursion, but lead to more dangerous consequences thereafter. Ultimately, let the party decide how things play out—one way or the other.

THE KEEPER'S PLEA

As the party approaches to the Prison, they get a better look at what lies within. Read the following:

Atop the plinth facing the pillar is a large grub-like creature. Its segmented, olive green body has six vestigial limbs that flail weakly about. It lacks any facial features aside from a circular mouth that almost covers one end of its maggoty body. A curious iron crown rests atop its bulbous head. The creature is addressing the pillar, its voice garbled and guttural.

Inside the pillar, visible only through the asymmetrical windows and a large open doorway at the base, is a nightmarish creature. You glimpse tremendous yellow eyes glaring out the windows, fearsome pincer-like claws extending from maroon flesh covered with white pustules. A terrible snout filled with sword-sized teeth and ending in writhing tendrils protrudes from the open doorway, and a dangling protuberance resembling a human brain the size of a barrel extends from a window. This monster is far too large to fit through any of the pillar's openings, begging the question of how it became lodged inside to begin with.

"Ubrul," the grub-like creature says, "I will release you, but not unless you swear the Utter Oath of Obeisance to the Scions. In return, you pledge to destroy that which threatens us and renounce any vendetta against the Scions, your jailers, and the world below. Promise that and to depart this place forever, and your freedom is mine to give."

"Fool," the Thing within the pillar rumbles in reply. "To the Twelve Hells with you and your Oath. I swear no vows to lesser creatures and will be thrice-damned again before I bend knee to your precious Scions! If you crave my assistance, you will free me with no promises on my future actions."

The Thing — Ubrul it seems — suddenly turns one of his baleful eyes in your direction. "Your invaders seem little more than run-of-the-mill tramps, Keeper. Are these your dreaded foes come to slay us both?"

The Keeper wriggles around on its limbs and seems to sense you. "Who are you?!"

The Keeper, Pale High First True, recognizes Lhakpa if present, otherwise it expects an explanation for why the party is here in the God-Skull. If the party has somehow destroyed the Wormwood and slain or driven off the Thruul, the Pale High First True is ecstatic and asks the party to accompany it back down to Level Three to hear the full story. It chuckles at Ubrul in its cell, saying, *"Perhaps your mighty assistance wasn't required after all."*

If the God-Skull is still under attack, the Pale High First True explains it was faced with a terrible decision: allow the invaders to overrun the prison and continue on to the world below or free Ubrul so that the mighty sorcerer might drive off the



THE GROWTH OF UBRUL'S POWER

If released, Ubrul the Destroyer rapidly regains his power, increasing his stat block. This table is provided for the judge to track the changes to certain aspects of the formerly imprisoned sorcerer-king should the party battle him.

Table 1-4: Changes to Ubrul's Stat Block

Round #	Hit Points (Maximum)	AC	Spell Check Modifier	Action Dice	Round Tracker (Check Off At End of Round)
1-3	60	8	1d6+12	1d20 plus free spell	☐
4	70	10	1d6+14	2d20 plus free spell	☐
5	80	12	1d6+16	3d20 plus free spell	☐
6	90	14	1d6+18	3d20 plus free spell	☐
7	100	16	1d6+20	4d20 plus free spell	☐
8	110	18	1d6+22	5d20 plus free spell	☐
9+	120	20	1d6+24	6d20 plus free spell	☐

invaders. Neither option is desirable, but the creature doesn't know what else to do. Keepers are poor at making decisions when it comes to things beyond their usual ordered existences.

Ubrul, on the other hand, will never barter freedom of action for his bodily freedom. If he is to be paroled, it will be so that he might seek revenge on the Scions who imprisoned him and whomever else he bears ill-will towards. While unwilling to bargain with Pale High First True, the party's arrival changes things.

The great wizard-king sees the party's presence as an opportunity to be exploited. Ubrul attempts to sway the party to his side. He does this verbally to most of the group, arguing that he can easily destroy the invaders with his power, but will do so only if freed without enforced oaths or promises. He states he has served his sentence without complaint, but since the Scions have not stepped in to defend their servants or protect their "sacred prison house," it appears the forces of Law have forgotten both Ubrul and those made to keep watch over him.

Pale High First True is against the idea, but can be swayed. It and its kind are good at following orders and it gladly accepts any defined course of action that removes any obligations of making choices on its own.

SECRET DISCUSSIONS

If there is a wizard or an elf present, Ubrul contacts them telepathically, offering to become the patron of the spellcaster if he or she helps get him released free of any obligations. Ubrul tries to use logic that the wizard might agree with such as "My sole crime was practicing the magical arts. Would you wish to be imprisoned for eons for your magical aptitude? And who's to say that someday the Scions of Law might also deem you a threat and lock you away next to me in this prison?" He offers to teach them new spells and reveal the location of magical hoards he hid away millennia ago when he still walked the earth. All they have to do is argue in favor of his release.

The judge can conduct this secret discussion either by passing notes, taking the player(s) aside, or even do it openly at the table if he trusts the rest of the players to role-play their characters' lack of knowledge of the discussion properly.

FREEING UBRUL

If the decision is made to free Ubrul, read the following:

With Ubrul's freedom agreed to, Pale High First True turns towards the towering pillar. It bends its wormy head toward the column and the curious iron crown atop its head glows with an incandescent white light. A rumbling thunder echoes through the cranial cavern and, when the light fades, you see that the pillar has tumbled to pieces the size of boulders. In the midst of the rubble stands Ubrul the Destroyer revealed: His body is like a tremendous tumor swollen with hate and vile power. His maw is that of a giant crocodile, filled with teeth and a prehensile tongue. Two tree trunk legs support his massive form, which towers nearly 30' above you. Flipper-like hands that end in terrible talons extend outwards on rubbery arms as thick as barrels.

"FREE! FREE AT LAST!" the corrupted thing howls, his voice seeming to threaten to bring down the cavern's roof. Ubrul turns his eyes, glowing malevolently in the shadows, upon you, contemplating his next move...

Releasing the vengeance-minded, entirely corrupted, and powerful wizard from its prison without any constraints is a poor decision, but role-players are famous for making them so it's possible this very event might occur. How it plays out is left to the judge.

The most likely scenario is that Ubrul immediately attacks both Pale High First True and the party as soon as he is freed, caring nothing for the fate of the God-Skull, its inhabitants, and the world below. He holds back nothing, but it takes some time for him to regain his sorcerous power. If the party acts fast enough, they might be able to take him down before he wipes the prison with them. Use the following stats for the newly-freed Ubrul:

Ubrul the Destroyer: Init +3; Atk bite +6 melee (1d10+2) or claws +4 melee (2d8+2); AC 8 (base); HD 10d12; hp 60 (base) 120 (max); MV 30'; Act 1d20 plus spell; SP suffers ½ damage from non-magical weapons, casts 1 free spell each round, spells (rolls 1d6+12 for spell checks, spells *choking cloud*, *color spray*, *detect magic*, *flaming hands*, *magic missile*, *magic shield*, *spider climb*, *detect invisible*, *ESP*, *fire resistance*, *levitate*, *scorching ray*, *spider web*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*, *planar step*); SV Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +10; AL C.

Ubrul is in a weakened state after his long imprisonment, giving the party a chance at defeating him. His stat block represents this diminished condition, but he is by no means a push-over and regains his power quickly after he is freed. Starting from the fourth round of combat onward, Ubrul gains the following modifiers to its stats until he reaches full strength: +10 hp, +1 AC, +2 to spell checks, and an additional 1d20 action die which can be used for either attacks or to cast spells. This increase continues until Ubrul reaches his full potential on round 9. See the sidebar for a complete breakdown of his power growth over the course of combat.

Ubrul fights to kill, but does not fight to the death. If reduced to 15 or less hit points, he attempts to flee the battle by either by blasting through the wall of the God-Skull and *flying* deep into the Void of Stars or by employing his *planar step* spell.

The second possible scenario is that Ubrul at first appears to keep his end of the bargain and seeks out the Thruul invaders and the Wormwood. He does this by blasting a hole in the wall of the cranial cavern and entering the Void of Stars directly. Ubrul flies to the Wormwood and smashes his way through the alien vegetation until he arrives at area 3-14. However, once there, he makes contact with the Ebon Minds to determine their agenda. After 10 minutes of telepathic communication between the wizard-king and the alien intellects, a truce is reached! Ubrul allows them to continue their campaign of invasion. He then turns his attention to the Keepers and the party, intending to wipe them out as above. The party has to now contend with both a full strength Ubrul the Destroyer and the Ebon Minds and their lackeys in order to save their home world. Ubrul heads directly towards their location. He may spare any wizard or elf

whom he telepathically contacted earlier. Allow them to make a DC 15 Personality check. If the check succeeds, Ubrul holds up his end of their bargain for now, and intends to use them as patsies and underlings as he seeks his revenge on the Scions.

The third possible scenario, if the judge is feeling kind, is that Ubrul immediately departs the God-Skull upon being freed, blasting a hole in the cavern wall. Before he departs, he utters the final pronouncement:

Foolish vermin! Ubrul leaves you to live or die as you might. I have more pressing concerns than saving my prison house and jailers. Let the world below burn and perish. I have the throats of gods to slit. And as my prison has shown me so well, even the Scions can die!

Ubrul then departs, heading off into the Void of Stars to begin his campaign of revenge against the Scions of Law. The party must deal with the Ebon Minds and the Thruul themselves. Any Lawful PC immediately loses 2 points of Luck for freeing Ubrul and allowing him to upset the Cosmic Balance once more. Chaotic PCs each gain 1 point of Luck for their temerity and brashness.

LEAVING UBRUL IMPRISONED

Should the party ultimately argue that Ubrul remain imprisoned, the wizard-king rages within his Prison.

The Prison of Ubrul shakes as the titan trapped within it hurls his massive body at the walls of the cell. Despite the thunderous impact, the column shows no sign of giving way.

"Vermin! Worms! Filth! You'll regret this! I, Ubrul, will make you rue this day. Your suffering will be an endless torment and your entreaties will be my playthings! A thousand curses upon you and may you live long enough so that I shall have the pleasure of ending your miserable lives!

If the party has pledged to handle the invaders themselves and not yet entered area 4-4, Pale High First True leads them to the glowing pagoda if he deems them worthy, saying he has something that may aid them against their enemies. There he presents them with the Amulet of Njoat, telling them of its properties.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

This scenario ends successfully for the party if the Thruul invaders and the Ebon Minds of the Wormwood are destroyed and Ubrul is imprisoned or defeated. Accomplishing both thwarts the Thruul invasion and keeps Ubrul the Destroyer from embarking on a multiversal campaign of revenge.

If both of these conditions are achieved, the Keepers are grateful for the party's assistance. Pale High First True (if still alive) praises them and offers them free ownership of the Amulet of Njoat if the party desires it. It informs the group that they are welcome to return to the God-Skull anytime they desire and feast with the Keepers and rest there from their toils. The group receives 2 points of Luck each for their role in defending the God-Skull.

A party that came to the lamasery in search of information or medicine will find the object of their search within the God-Skull and, having defeated the Wormwood threat, can collect it. Returning to the lamasery is a simple matter of walking the Labyrinth of Rising again. If Lhakpa has survived the adven-

ture, his attitude towards the party depends on their actions. If they discovered the scrolls of wisdom in areas 2-8 and 2-11 and gave them to the monk when asked, Lhakpa is impressed with their wisdom and respect as well as their combat prowess. A party that refused to give the monk the scrolls is viewed less favorably.

If the PCs impress Lhakpa, he invites the party to reside at the monastery for as long as they wish while he repairs it. He informs them that they will always be welcome here and, that once the monastery has reopened and has a new High Lama, the heroes are free to utilize it as a safe haven for personal contemplation and physical training. As a final gift, he gives the party the scrolls of wisdom from those areas 2-8 and 2-11 as rewards, even if they failed to discover them during the adventure.

A party that kept the scrolls receives no such offer. Upon returning to the monastery, Lhakpa provides them with food and water for their journey and bids them on their way. His thanks are sincere, but terse, and it is clear he is offended. His final words

to them are, "Perhaps those scrolls you took from my order's rightful possession will teach you some of the wisdom and charity you lack. If that day ever comes, you'll be welcome here. In the meantime, may you find all you deserve in the outside world." Lhakpa vanishes into the monastery to begin its rebirth.

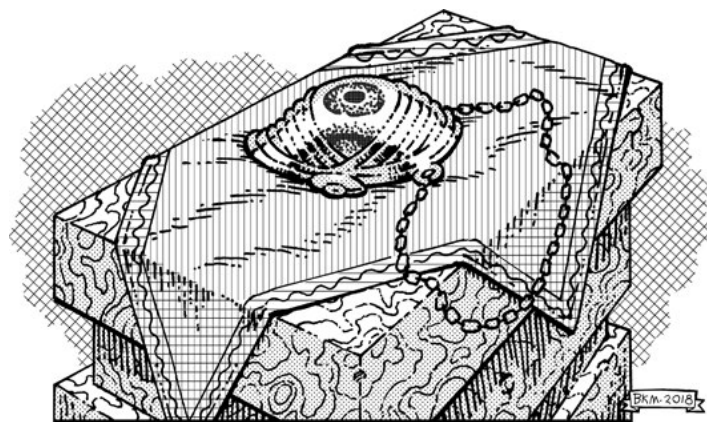
If the party fails to stop the Thuulian threat, the interlopers from the Void of Stars begin a campaign of conquest. The Wormwood grows down through the Labyrinth of Rising to establish a foothold in the ruined monastery. Then its tendrils reach out across the mountains. The Thruul descend upon the world, assimilating all life they find into new and terrible forms, using these a shock troops for their conquest of the world. Any surviving PCs might find themselves leading counter-attacks against the invaders or fleeing as far from the incursion site as possible. If the entire party perishes, a new campaign focused on driving out the Thruul and the Wormwood infection might become necessary.

Ubrul the Destroyer could return to plague the party in the future assuming he wasn't slain in the course of the adventure. If he was freed to engage in his vendetta against the Scions of Law, the party may soon find themselves visited by one of the Scions' servants or swept away to the Plane of Law to meet personally with the gods of Law. Needless to say they aren't pleased with the PCs' role in freeing Ubrul and task them to rectify their actions. If Ubrul remained imprisoned in the God-Skull, he might eventually escape and add the PCs' names to his revenge list, having never forgotten or forgiven them for failing to secure his release.

Regardless of how the events of *Imprisoned in the God-Skull* play out, there will be countless opportunities for future adventures and exciting exploits in the players' future. Such is always the case in the countless worlds of *Dungeon Crawl Classics*!

APPENDIX A: NEW MAGICAL ITEMS

The God-Skull is the resting place of five potent magical items. Three of the items bear terrible drawbacks that afflict their owners and they radiate evil if detected for. The remaining two are untainted by evil and make potent rewards for the party that defeats the combined dangers of both the Thruul and Ubrul the Destroyer.



AMULET OF NJOAT

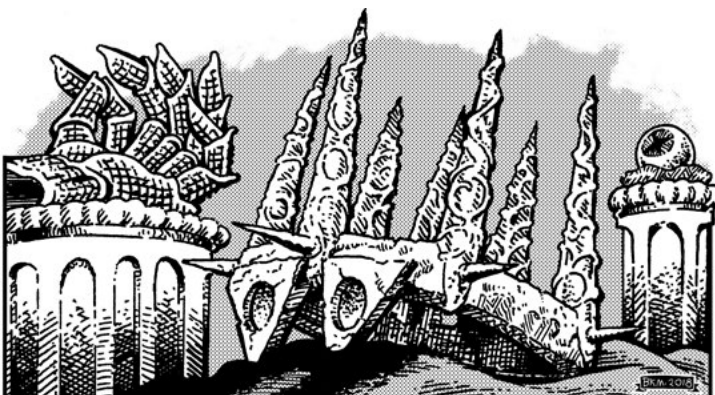
This palm-sized amulet is made from gold and hangs from a mithril chain. The amulet depicts the Ever-Open Eye of Njoat, the Watcher of Law, and was once worn by its high priest. When Njoat sacrificed its life to contain Ubrul, its priesthood was abolished and the amulet left entrusted within their former god's divine remains. The amulet retains the last spark of Njoat's godly power and it can be used by a Lawful cleric or a priest who worships a "good" deity (judge's discretion).

The amulet has three powers. First, it allows the wearer to employ the 2nd-level wizard spell *ESP* as if it were a clerical spell. The cleric makes his spell check as normal, never gaining corruption of causing the spell to misfire, but instead gaining divine disapproval as normal on a failed spell check.

Secondly, the amulet grants the cleric a +2 bonus to spell checks when casting *detect evil*, *detect magic*, and *second sight*.

Lastly, the cleric can call upon the last spark of Njoat's power to ask for divine intervention. The amulet provides a +15 bonus to the cleric's spell check for divine aid, but this power can only be used once. After this time, the spark is lost, but the amulet continues to provide the two benefits listed above. The divine intervention must be appropriate for a Lawful or good deity to provide (judge's decision) otherwise the cleric does not receive the +15 bonus.

While the divine spark remains encased in the amulet, any Chaotic creature touching the amulet suffers 1d10 damage.



THE CROWN OF NINE SPIRES

This object is a crown fashioned from a steel band that encircles the crown with seven golden spikes affixed to it. Each of the red gold points has beautiful filigree work, but the gold has become pitted as if affected by some impossible corrosion. A pair of inverted triangles extend downward from the crown's band, positioned to overlap the wearer's eyes. Within the center of the triangles, a pane of white glass has been laid, closer resembling the cataracts of an old man rather than clear windows.

Power: The Crown provides the wearer with keen tactical knowledge, allowing them to immediately analyze any combative situation from the merest tavern brawl to clashes of armies with keen acumen. Once per round, the Crown's wearer

can shout orders to another, allowing the ordered individual to reroll any combat-related die roll (attack, damage, mighty deed, and even saving throws if the judge deems appropriate) and take either result. The Crown's owner can yell these commands outside of initiative order, but cannot order another if incapacitated or silenced.

The wearer of the Crown can reroll his own combat dice once per round as he chooses, but can only modify one part of an attack (if he rerolls his attack die, he cannot reroll his damage die and vice-versa.)

The white glass lenses of the Crown grant the wearer a +2d bonus on all saving throws against gaze attacks. Lastly, the wearer can cause two rays of searing heat to fire from the lenses, striking targets up to 60' away. Up to two targets can be affected at once and any creature subject to the ray attack suffers 2d6 damage and catches fire, suffering an addition 1d6 damage until the fire is extinguished. A DC 12 Reflex save halves the damage and prevents the target from catching fire.

Drawbacks: Upon donning the Crown of the Nine Spires for the first time, two steel spikes magically erupt from the circular band and drive themselves into the wearer's head (thus totaling nine spires in all). These spike immediately cause the wearer to lose 2 points of Intelligence which cannot be restored so long as the Crown is worn. The Crown cannot be removed physically once the spikes are inserted into the wearer's head while the wearer lives. Only a *dispel magic* spell with a spell check of 27+ can cause the Crown to become temporarily inert, retracting the spikes and allowing the object to be removed.

The Crown also drives the wearer mad over a prolonged period, turning them into a megalomaniacal madman bent on conquest. The wearer goes insane over a number of weeks equal to their Personality score. Only removing the Crown prevents the madness from claiming the wearer. Once the wearer goes utterly mad, he becomes an NPC intent on conquering the land and/or world and will likely become the party's nemesis, using all his knowledge of the group against them in true insane mastermind fashion.



THE WAR-DRESS OF NUMRIK

This enchanted article of clothing resembled a calf-length kilt made from overlapping straps of boiled leather. A broad leather girdle adorned with a demonic face with gaping, screaming mouth fashioned from tarnished silver supports the dress. The war-dress magically resizes itself to fit any humanoid-shaped wearer and can be worn by any sex.

Power: The wearer of the dress can create a magic shield around themselves twice per day as if casting the spell with a spell check of 20-23. The wearer also receives a +2 bonus to all attack roles with melee weapons.

The wearer's tongue undergoes a twisted change when the garment is first worn. The tongue gains a horrible elasticity and turns black. Open sores develop on the ebony flesh and the wearer always has a foul taste in their mouth.

As a benefit to this change, the wearer can cause their tongue to extend up 10' and lick an opponent for 2d6 damage. This damage is acidic in nature and on a roll of 18+, the tongue licks its target's weapon or armor, causing the objects wearer/bearer to make a DC 15 Reflex save or see the object destroyed by acid. Magical arms and armor are unaffected by this acidic attack, but the target still suffers damage.

Drawbacks: Once donned, the wearer cannot remove the war-dress unless a *dispel magic* with a spell check of 27+ is cast upon the garment. The wearer also permanently loses 2 points of Personality from the physical transformation of its tongue.

The wearer of the war-dress also develops a ravenous appetite and must consume a number of intelligent living creatures every 13 days equal to its HD/level. Animals are insufficient to feed this gnawing hunger. If the wearer fails to consume the required number of creatures, the war-dresses girdle cinches tighter, causing a permanent loss of 1 Stamina point. This ability loss cannot be healed or restored so long as the war-dress is worn.



SCEPTER OF SORCERY

This rod of ruling office measures 2' in length and is fashioned from verdigris-encrusted brass. A pair of spikes flanking a hexagon stud crown the scepter, while a long spike protrudes from its opposite end. Wrappings of tanned flesh cover the middle of the scepter. Tattoos are visible in the flesh wrappings.

Power: The bearer of this scepter can reroll any spell check once per day, taking whichever result she desires. In addition, the scepter's bearer can choose a number of spells equal to her Intelligence modifier +1 and permanently double her spell check bonus for those spells as long as she owns the Scepter of Sorcery. She does not need to be touching the rod to enjoy this bonus, but it must be within 100' of her and she must know its location.

The Scepter also allows the bearer to willingly accept corruption to amplify her magic. The rod's bearer can choose to acquire a random Greater Corruption trait to gain a critical success on a

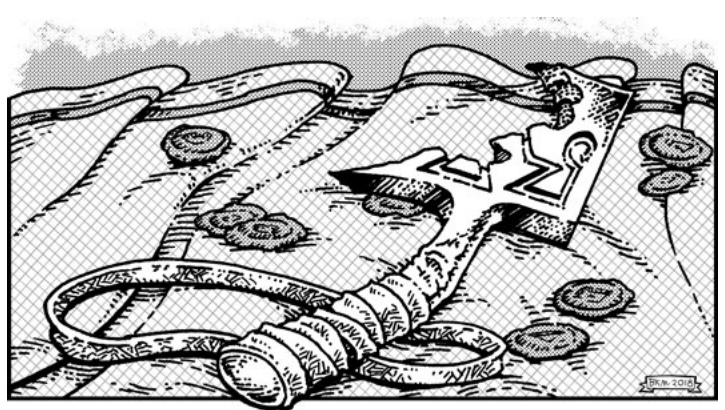
spell check (effectively rolling a natural 20 on the spell check with all normal applicable benefits). This automatic corruption can be invoked 13 times per year and the spell check must still be rolled. On a result of a natural 1, the Scepter drains the life force of the caster, forcing them to make a DC 25 Fortitude save or die. If the save is successful, the caster still suffers 2d6+2 temporary ability damage to her Stamina, which may yet kill her.

Drawbacks: The Scepter has a terrible appetite which eats away at the bearer's physical body. After owning the Scepter for 1 month, the caster discovers that she must always spell-burn 1 point when casting any spell. This spellburn is in addition to whatever the spell itself might require. After two weeks, this cost increases to 2 points, and continues to accumulate one point on each subsequent week. Only by divesting herself of the Scepter can she cast spells as normal once more. Getting rid of the Scepter doesn't end its drawback and can be done freely. Once the Scepter is thrown away, the former owner can break its power by being subject to a remove curse spell with a spell check of 27+.

SHATTERED AXE

This curious weapon is a battle axe forged entirely from meteoric iron. A cracked leather band is wrapped around the axe's haft, providing a firm grip. The handle of the weapon is bent, resembling more the curve of a scythe than an axe. The head of the axe is broken, with the blade snapped off, leaving a jagged edge close to the haft. Strange runes are inscribed on the remaining part of the axe head. At first glance, the weapon appears to be a discarded, broken weapon, but it harbors a strong enchantment.

The shattered axe was once whole and enchanted to defeat a demon of Chaos. When the warrior wielding the weapon struck



the vile creature, the killing blow was so fierce that it bent the haft and broke the blade from the head. Despite this damage, the weapon remains a formidable armament and was placed in the Vault of the God-Skull to both counter-act the chaotic energies of the other artifacts stored there and for safe-keeping.

When wielded in battle, a ghostly blue, translucent bit appears on the axe head, completing the weapon with a cutting edge. This magical edge makes the weapon a +2 battle axe. In addition, the weapon was crafted to defeat otherworldly creatures and has a bane against both the un-dead and summoned creatures (any creature, magical or non-magical, summoned by a spell or magical item is affected). These banes manifest as an additional +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage against these types of creatures.

The axe can also be amplified by the wielder's own personal power. By incurring 1 point of temporary Personality damage, the wielder can make a second attack roll using his lowest action die during the combat round. The ability damage is suffered regardless if the attack succeeds or misses. This power can be employed once per day per the owner's level.

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