

# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

## THE CHAINED COFFIN COMPANION

BY MICHAEL CURTIS





# THE CHAINED COFFIN COMPANION

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## THE MAGIC OF THE MOUNTAINS



The Shudder Mountains are a peculiar place, a region steeped in superstition and unique magical practices seldom seen outside the mountain hollows. The following supplemental material addresses the strange magic and curious mystical customs one finds in the Shudders, providing a firm foundation for the judge running a campaign set in the Shudder Mountains to build upon. Although intended for a Shudder Mountain campaign, this material can be easily inserted in other DCC RPG games.

### SPOILS



When the moon of Luhsaal was destroyed, the magical backlash of the catastrophe poured down from the heavens, guided by the mystical gateways and sorcerous ties that connected the Hsaal to their native world. The maelstrom of eldritch energy washed over the Hsaal, incinerating them where they stood. With the sorcerer-kings' deaths, the magical power held in check by each Hsaal was also unleashed, contributing to the tidal wave of sorcery pouring across the landscape of the Shudder Mountains. Most of this supernatural energy would dissipate over time, being reabsorbed by ley lines, spilling back across dimensional boundaries, or consumed by odd entities that feed on magical power. A portion of this inundation of energy, however, remained behind, drawn to locations possessing either a natural or artificial affinity for sorcery. In places such as secluded forest glades, crystalline caverns, ancient serpent-men religious sites, or Hsaalian outposts, magical forces pooled like spilled quicksilver on an alchemist's table.

Much as water does when separated from the flowing stream, these reservoirs of sorcerous power stagnated, their energy and potential turning in upon itself. The curdled energy became unstable, even more unpredictable than magical power typically is. In time, those who discovered these sites began calling them "spoils" for the power there had gone sour.

Spoils exist across the Shudder Mountains, displaying no rhyme or reason for their appearance other than existing in places that perhaps once held mystical importance or magical significance. They can be found in serpent-men ru-

ins and in untouched forests, under the earth or atop high mountain peaks. As a rule, Shudfolk avoid spoils and the dangers they can possess, teaching each generation to keep their distance from such tainted sites with folktales about "haunted glens," "Hell spots," or "bad hollows." However, those Shudfolk who make their living brewing witch liquor for sale outside the Shudders actively seek new spoils and fiercely defend their still sites from trespassers.

There are two forms of spoils in the Shudder Mountains. The first is the common spoil which affects creatures and objects exposed to its power at a slow rate. The second are "hot spots" of tainted magic known as "burn spoils" by the locals. These malignant sites of power are places that cause physical and supernatural alterations in subjects exposed to its power for even a brief time and are by far the most dangerous type of spoil.

Spoils vary in appearance, but the most common form is a writhing patch of black fire that nevertheless illuminates its surroundings. Less typical appearances include pools of rippling green water that seems to vibrate to unheard sounds, crystalline growths with alien visages entrapped within their depths, and groves of twisted trees alive with fluttering shadows. Spoils of both types average from small pockets of radiant magic to vast pools of tainted energy measuring between 20' to 200' in diameter (2d10x10').

Common spoils require exposure to its power for 1d5+3 days before its energy take effect on those subjected to its taint. Even a brief period spent during a 24 hour period counts as a day of exposure when determining if a creature is affected by a spoil's power. At the end of the determined time, living creatures must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be affected by the spoil. The exact changes a spoil produces in subjects bathed in its radiance vary from location to location, and the judge is encouraged to create specific effects for each spoil in his campaign. The above table can be used to randomly determine a spoil's properties and as inspiration for other preternatural effects.

The time a creature spends exposed to a spoil is cumulative. A subject could visit a spoil on four different days over the course of a month and suddenly be affected on the fourth day. However, spoil exposure fades after a prolonged period away from the curdled energy pool. For each full month

**Table 1-1: Spoil Effect on Living Subjects**

1d10	Spoil's Effect
1	Imparts a random form of corruption. Roll 1d6: 1-3) use Table 5-3: Minor Corruption ( <i>DCC RPG</i> p. 116) to determine effect; 4-5) use Table 5-4: Major Corruption ( <i>DCC RPG</i> p. 118) to determine effect; 6) use Table 5-5: Greater Corruption ( <i>DCC RPG</i> p. 119) to determine effect.
2	Causes a sorcerous wasting disease similar to <i>mummy rot</i> .
3	Imparts the ability to cast a random 1 <sup>st</sup> -level spell once per day. Subject uses a d16 to determine the spellcheck of this incantation.
4	Drains magical power, turning enchanted objects mundane or stealing spells from a caster's mind
5	Permanently transforms the subject into a monster, either one chosen randomly from the <i>DCC RPG</i> rulebook or other source, or a unique creature of the judge's creation.
6	Drives the subject insane, warping his mind with malicious thoughts to commit unspeakable crimes.
7	Creates a communication conduit between the subject and an entity outside the physical world. The party at the other end of this conduit may be pleased to speak with the subject, perhaps even agreeing to act as the affected soul's patron or be angered by such brazen contact and seek the individual's destruction.
8	Cloaks the subject in a permanent mystical field that amplifies his prowess or protects him from harm. Subject gains a +1 bonus to a randomly determined ability, spell, saving throw, natural armor class, or other characteristic of the judge's choosing.
9	Slays the subject outright then revives him as an un-dead creature 1d4 days later unless the body is destroyed.
10	Sends the subject to another time and/or place. Possible destinations include the dim past during the height of either the Hsaal or serpent-men's dominance, the Court of Chaos, the time pad in the Vault of Zepes Null-Eleven, or a certain purple planet...

**Table 1-2: Spoil Effect on Inanimate Subjects**

1d6	Spoil's Effect
1	The object's substance changes. Wood become stone, metal becomes lifeless flesh or bone, glass become water, etc.
2	The object becomes ethereal, slipping in between planar boundaries at random.
3	The object becomes animated as per the <i>breathe life</i> spell. Determine spell check result using d10+15 for common spoils and d10+20 for burn spoils.
4	The object becomes fused with the environment surrounding the spoil, embedding itself in stone, wood, soil, or even the unlucky soul holding it!
5	The object explodes inflicting 4d6 (8d6 if burn spoil) damage to everything in a 20' diameter.
6	The object becomes charged with magical power. This effect may make the object useful in crafting potent magical items or a force of entropy that causes widespread chaos wherever it goes.

a creature remains outside a spoil's area of effect, one day of exposure is nullified.

Once a creature is affected by a spoil, he gains a +1 die bonus to subsequent saving throws against that spoil's effects. In some cases (judge's prerogative) a spoil might affect a creature once and the subject is forever after immune to its power.

Burn spoils are more dangerous than common spoils, searing those exposed to its radiating energy in addition to causing physical changes. Any living creature exposed to a burn spoil for more than one minute must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or suffer 2d6 points of damage and be affected by the burn spoil's trasmutative power. The judge can use the table above to determine the burn spoil's effect

or create a unique power of his own devising.

Nonliving creatures (but not including un-dead) and objects are subject to a spoil's power, but exposure affects these targets in a different manner than living creatures. Inanimate objects do not get a saving throw against the spoil's power. The following table includes some possible effects for inanimate objects exposed to a spoil.

The sole exception to inanimate objects exposed to a spoil is witch liquor (see below). The eclectic components that comprise the various witch liquor recipes found in the Shudder Mountain cause a spoil's radiating power to manifest in other ways. These alternate effects are detailed in the witch liquor entry.

## THAT OLD TIME RELIGION

**R**eligious practices in the Shudder Mountains differ from those found in the flatlands. The Shudfolk, unlike many other human cultures, are monotheistic, revering a single deity they address as the Sovereign. According to the Shudfolk, the Sovereign was the first deity, the Great King who created the world and all things in it, including the other gods and goddesses venerated outside of the Shudders. This belief means the Shudfolk are (reasonably) tolerant of other religions, secure in their knowledge that these “lesser gods,” as they consider them, are creations of the Sovereign and should be respected as such. A courteous cleric of another faith will find a warm welcome by the Shudfolk, provided he keeps his evangelizing to a minimum and shows equal religious tolerance towards his hosts.

The central tenet of the Sovereign faith holds that the Great King instills a bright light within the soul of each human (the faith is less specific about demi-humans) upon their birth. It is the sacred duty of all humanity to nurture and feed this soulful illumination during life, amplifying it with good deeds, kindness, charity, and faithful worship. Upon a person’s death, he finds himself in the eternal darkness of the afterlife and only those who kept his divine light lit with good deeds and a pious life can find his way to the Sovereign’s Kingdom, where he will reside in peace and pleasure for eternity. An individual who fails to nurture his divine light in life discovers himself lost in the endless darkness and cold that exists beyond death, potentially becoming a restless spirit or prey for other horrors in the eternal night.

Temples dedicated to the Sovereign in the Shudder Mountains are simple affairs, largely constructed of wood and painted either bright white or yellow to symbolize the Sovereign-granted light within all the congregants. Fire and sunlight are commonly used in religious ceremonies dedicated to the Sovereign. The symbol of the Sovereign is a circle, representing the god’s all-encompassing arms that hold the universe. Shudfolk regularly wear the Sovereign’s Circle around their necks or pinned to clothes, and Shudfolk always fashion their Sovereign’s Circle from the best material they have access to. A rich Shudfolk trader’s Sovereign’s Circle would be made of gold, while a poor farmer would possess one carved from the most pleasant-seeming wood he could find or trade for.

The clergy of the Sovereign, like the Shudfolk themselves, is independent, lacking a strict hierarchy. Each temple is led by one or (more rarely) two priests who attend to the spiritual needs of its congregation. Temples in close proximity to one another occasionally cooperate to observe important holidays, but geographical distance and difficulty of travel throughout the Shudders generally results in a series of self-contained religious districts centered on a single community with the local priest overseeing it.

Sovereign clerics hold the title of “Braar” (males) or “Shuyr” (females), words that translate roughly as “revered prince” or “revered princess” in the forgotten language of the Hsaal

(the origin of these titles is unknown to the Shudfolk). Sovereign priests are Lawful (like their deity) and rely on rustic weapons such as clubs and staves to defend themselves. A 1<sup>st</sup>-level cleric of the Sovereign begins play with the spells *blessing*, *food of the gods*, *holy sanctuary*, and *word of command*. Common higher level spells of Sovereign clerics include *banish*, *cure paralysis*, *divine symbol*, *neutralize poison or disease*, *restore vitality*, *snake charm*, *bolt from the blue*, *exorcise*, *remove cure*, *spiritual weapon*, *sanctify*, *righteous fire*, and *weather control*. Sovereign clerics may never cast *darkness* as it is an affront to the divine light granted by the Great King, and eschew *binding*, *animate dead*, and *speak with dead* as being too close to the practice of witchcraft.

Aside from the clerics of the Sovereign, the faith has a small number of lay priests. These lay priests are not full clerics (as the character class) but something more than simple congregants. Lay priests, due to their devout veneration of the Sovereign, are granted a few clerical abilities, but with much less power than full priests. A lay priest of the Sovereign can *lay on hands* and *turn unholy* as a cleric, but uses a d16 action die (modified by Personality) when attempting these miracles. Some lay priests can also cast a single spell (granted by the judge in the role of the Sovereign) which also uses a d16 to cast. A failed spell check by a lay priest increases his range of disapproval by 2 points rather than 1, and a wise lay priest knows not to press his deity’s patience should his asked-for miracles fail to manifest.

Only individuals of extreme piety can become lay priests. The exact qualifications to achieve this holy state are left to the judge to adjudicate, but regardless of what stipulations the judge chooses to apply, a lay priest cannot possess another character class. The level of faith needed to become a lay priest prevents an individual from pursuing a second PC class. A lay priest who becomes a cleric gains all the benefits of that class, but loses his lay priest abilities. A lay priest who fails to maintain the appropriate level of piety (judge’s discretion) is stripped of his miraculous powers.

## CURSES

**C**urses are a constant fear in the Shudder Mountains. The Shudfolk know that any witch or conjure-man is capable of laying a curse on those who cross them, and have developed a number of superstitions to help defend themselves against becoming accursed (see Folk Magic below). A judge preparing to run a campaign set in the Shudder Mountains should review Appendix C (pp. 438-439 of the *DCC RPG* rulebook).

Witches and conjure-men in the Shudder Mountains can issue a curse as an attack action, requiring the victim to make a DC 16 Will save to resist. These witch curses are covered in Appendix C and below. In addition, conjure-men and witches who have one of The Three (Anector, Haade and Modeca) as a patron gain access to the 2<sup>nd</sup> level cleric spell *curse* as a 2<sup>nd</sup> level wizard spell. As with other clerical spells cast as wizard magic, a result of a natural 1 results in a 50% chance of patron taint or misfire, rolling on either the patron taint or generic table as appropriate.

Although victims of the *curse* spell can suffer Luck and other statistic penalties as per the spell's description, witches often cause a *curse* to manifest in less direct but potentially more devastating ways, usually in a manner that affects the victim's livelihood. The following chart gives alternate results of a *curse* based on the caster's spell check. The judge is free to modify this table or use it as inspiration for new ideas.

## Alternate Curse Manifestations

Spell check	Result
20-21	A farmer's cow produces no milk for the duration.
22-25	The tools of the subject's trade turn against him, breaking or even injuring him when used.
26-29	A family's crop is blighted; a farmstead's well goes dry.
30-31	A village spring dries up; a plague of vermin invades the village; all the community's livestock becomes barren.
32-33	As above but the misfortune affects a larger community.
34+	A single victim is doomed. The <i>curse</i> has no immediate effect, but the victim will die at a random time as determined by the judge. This doom may come as a result of a natural accident or supernatural event. Only breaking the curse by meeting the spell's condition can save the victim.

The magically-inclined are not the only ones able to impart a curse in the backwoods. On rare occasions, even those Shudfolk without the slightest bit of magical knowledge have cursed their foes when greatly wronged. A mother whose only child died because of another's carelessness, a bride-to-be who lost her fiancé to some cruel man's whims, or a devout soul who watched his temple burned to the ground by heretics, have succeeded in laying a mighty curse on those responsible. Flatlanders traveling in the Shudders are cautioned to treat the Shudfolk with respect and courtesy. For a non-spellcaster to curse another, he or she must first be greatly wronged by the target's actions (judge's discretion) and make a DC 16 Personality check using a d16 action die. If successful, the victim can make a Will save against the check result to avoid the curse. The judge should choose an appropriate curse from Appendix C or create one of his own devising. A non-spellcaster can only invoke such a curse once in his lifetime.

No chapter on curses would be complete without a new one to add to the judge's repertoire. The following new curse is provided to give the judge an example of the types of curses the PCs might encounter in the Shudder Mountains should they cross the wrong person.



## Curse of Forever Walking

### Moderate Curse

*May you wander the hills forever weary,  
Walk through heat, and mud, and weather always dreary.  
Sleep not two nights in the same restful bed,  
Walk and wander until thou art dead.*

This curse carries a -2 Luck penalty and forces the victim to never remain longer than 24 hours in a single location. If the victim stays in a single place for more than 24 hours, he is afflicted by misfortune and outright danger every hour until he departs. The misfortune can range from the irritating (he loses a prized possession) to the deadly (he contracts a disease). He may also find himself the subject of random monster attacks, hostile mobs, or similar threats to life and limb. This curse can be alleviated by finding a community willing to accept the accursed individual despite being aware of the danger that follows him and building a home amongst those kind souls. This is more difficult than it appears, as the victim must get the full acceptance of every member of the community before the curse abates.

## FOLK MAGIC IN THE HILLS



Although the Shudfolk harbor deep suspicion of any magic-using individual aside from their local Sovereign cleric, they themselves are ironically the product of magical manipulation. During their ancestors' years of servitude to the Hsaal, that lunar race regularly employed magic on their slaves to make them more suitable for their tasks. Traces of this ancient sorcery still flows through the Shudfolks' veins.

It is perhaps this lingering mystical taint that allows the Shudfolk to produce supernatural effects through seemingly non-magical rituals intended to ward off the malicious effects of witchcraft. The Shudfolk, steeped in superstitions, regularly enact minor rites intended for protection, good luck, or to combat the supernatural. Although no Shudfolk would deign to acknowledge these superstitious acts as sorcery, they nevertheless do produce seemingly magical results. For the purpose of classification, these superstitious rites are called *folk magic* or *gramaree*.

## Folk Magic Rites

Most folk magic is handed down orally, passed from one generation to the next, but codices of folk magic lore do exist. These books of folk magic have a number of titles, and knowledgeable Shudfolk can name the most famous (or feared) books: *The Gray Book*, *The Wayward Companion*, and *Little Black Cat*. Each text contains various gramaree rites, herbal recipes, astrological charts showing the proper times to sow and reap crops, and, occasionally, a true magical spell. A number of superstitions have become associated with the books, themselves. Legend has it that *The Gray Book*, for example, cannot be thrown or given away, but if the owner ever wishes to rid himself of the text, he must bury the book and say a funeral prayer over its "grave." Failing to do so results in the book's return, accompanied by unpleasant events that afflict the owner.

Many gramaree rites are performed by the Shudfolk, observed when they feel their path has crossed that of a witch or conjure-man. When performed by those uninitiated into the deeper mastery of the correct methods of enacting the rites, these gestures are simple superstition that have no true power (aside from perhaps making the individual feel a bit safer as a placebo effect). However, those who are schooled in the mastery of the rites create actual preternatural effects.

Theoretically, folk magic can be learned by anyone, but in practice certain restrictions apply. Shudfolk have an easier time understanding the proper means to enact a gramaree ritual due to their mystical blood taint. If a Shudfolk can find a suitable teacher, either a living person or one of the gramaree texts, he undergoes a period of study lasting 1d3 months. Although the rites themselves are simple to perform, they must be enacted with absolutely perfect gestures and mental focus. Learning to focus the mind and repeat the gestures without error takes time. At the end of the study period, the student must make a DC 15 Intelligence check. If successful, he learns the folk magic rite, but failing the check means he cannot master the act and must wait a full year before attempting to learn it again. Non-Shudfolk can learn gramaree with the proper study period, but it is a DC 20 Intelligence check to learn the ritual.

There is a limit to the number of folk magic rites a student can learn. An individual who lacks any additional spellcasting training (all zero-level characters, and PCs of any class other than cleric, wizard, and elf) can master 1 gramaree rite plus 1 per every 2 class levels. Thus a 5<sup>th</sup>-level warrior can know 3 rites (base of one plus one at 2<sup>nd</sup>-level and a third at 4<sup>th</sup>-level). Clerics, wizards, and elves can master 1 folk magic rite plus 1 per every class level. A 5<sup>th</sup>-level wizard could know up to six gramaree rituals—provided he can find a teacher and succeeds in his Intelligence checks.

Lastly, even if a character knows a true gramaree rite, invoking it successfully is not guaranteed. First, performing a true folk magic ritual taxes the body and mind, causing 1 point of temporary Stamina and Intelligence damage. This damage heals normally. Secondly, the individual must make a Personality check with a DC dependent on the rite to succeed. The ability damage is suffered regardless of success. There are no side-effects from failing to invoke a gramaree rite correctly aside from the ability loss. Gramaree never misfires, causes corruption, or divine disfavor.

The following are just a sample of the gramaree rituals known in the Shudder Mountains. The judge is encouraged to add his own creations to the list or modify their effects as desired. Unless otherwise specified, performing a gramaree rite counts as an action.

**Ward against the Evil Eye** (DC 14): With a gesture of crossing the index finger of the right hand over the middle finger and snapping his wrist at the suspected conjure-man, this rite imparts a -2 penalty to the target's next spell check.

**Salt the Trail** (DC 12): By pouring a measure of salt into a spellcaster's footprint, the individual gains +2 to his next saving throw against the target's magic.

**Keep the Ghosts at Bay** (DC 14): By locking the door to a room or home with a key made from silver (10 gp cost to make), the individual can prevent non-corporeal undead from entering. Incorporeal un-dead attempting to enter the protected area must make a DC 14 Will save or they cannot attempt to enter until the following evening. Each time the same key is used to invoke this rite, the Will save DC is reduced by 1.

**Nail the Witch's Shadow** (DC 12): This rite involves driving an iron nail into the shadow of a spellcaster. If the rite succeeds, the target suffers 1d4 damage that cannot be prevented by any means. Obviously the target must be casting a shadow for this rite to work.

## OLD AND ANCIENT SONGS



he Hsaal's arcane knowledge was formidable and the long-gone race mastered myriad ways of weaving sorcery into their arts and sciences. Amongst their greatest achievements was the composing of music that produced magical effects. Although the Hsaal are dead, a few of the melodies that once filled the air of their lunar cities still linger in the Shudder Mountains, preserved in the songs of their former slaves, the Shudfolk.

Although the words have changed down the eons, the music itself retains its power—when performed by those who know the proper means of striking the right chords. A person without the correct instruction can play one of these magical musical compositions—commonly referred to as the Old Songs—without incident. In fact, many of the Old Songs are popular pieces performed around the tavern hearth and in the home with the musician being unaware of the hidden power residing in the song's notes. Only Shudfolk can master an Old Song as the songs' magic is a legacy of their blood. Flatlanders and other outsiders hearing an Old Song, played by either a common musician or one who knows the song's secrets, find the music haunting and strange. The songs of the mountains are written in minor keys (a legacy of the alien musical scale used by the Hsaal) and the music sounds strange and lonesome to ears unacquainted with these songs.

Old Songs function like folk magic, requiring an individual to undergo a period of study to learn how to correctly play

the tune to produce the magic hidden amongst its notes. Once the student learns the song, he can perform it at cost to both his body and mind, losing 1 point of Stamina and Intelligence as if enacting a gramaree ritual. Like with folk magic, the singer must make a Personality check with a DC based on the song's power to correctly invoke its effect.

The criteria for learning an Old Song is slightly different than that needed to study folk magic. A PC wishing to learn how to play one of these magical melodies must meet the following qualifications. First, only Shudfolk can play an Old Song in a manner that invokes its magic. The music and magic of the Hsaal is so intricately tied to the Shudfolks' heritage that only they have the proper blood and ancestral memories necessary to play an Old Song properly. The judge may allow a flatlander to learn an Old Song if he uses the alternate Bard class from *Crawl!* #6 or other sources in his campaign, and the outsider is of that class. Secondly, the student must know how to play a musical instrument. Singing an Old Song a cappella cannot produce the proper notes to unleash a Song's power. Musical instrument proficiency usually requires the character to have either the musician or elven musician occupation. A character without those occupations can learn to play an instrument, but doing so requires time, training and possibly expenses at the judge's discretion. Thirdly, the individual must find a teacher to train under. Old Songs can only be taught by personal instruction. Due to the subtleties of the songs' magic, written forms of the music cannot convey the proper means necessary to invoke the tunes' enchantments.

If the would-be student meets these criteria, the process for learning is identical to folk magic. After 1d3 months of study, the student must make a DC 15 Intelligence check. If successful, he learns to properly play the Old Song. If the check fails, the student lacks the necessary discipline to perform the music correctly and must improve his musical skills over the coming year before attempting to learn the Song again. Old Songs never misfire, cause corruption, or incur divine disfavor, but the temporary ability loss occurs regardless of success.

A character is limited to the number of Old Songs he can know. A PC can learn one Old Song plus his Intelligence modifier. If the judge allows bards in his campaign, a bard PC can learn an additional song for each level he possesses. Old Songs do not count against the limit of folk magic rites an individual may know or vice-versa.

## Old Songs

These are but a few of the Old Songs known in the Shudder Mountains and the judge is encourage to expand the list with his own creations. The DC of the Song's Personality check and the time necessary to perform the song are given in parenthesis after the Song's title.

**"Tomcat Goes A' Prowlin'"** (DC 12; one minute): Playing the song grants either the performer or a listener of his choosing increased stealth. The next *sneak silently, hide in shadows*, or halfling stealth roll is made with a +1d increase.

**"Under Thine Outstretched Hand"** (DC 14; three minutes): This song helps protect the performer and up to 3+Personality modifier others from the attacks of un-dead creatures. All un-dead suffer a -2 penalty to attack the protected individuals for 1 turn.

**"Mr. Death, I Ain't Ready to Go"** (DC 16; five minutes): This long and difficult song helps stave off death's final grasp. When performed successfully, a single target of the musician's choosing can make two Luck checks when rolling over his body, taking whichever result he prefers. Performing this song is especially draining and the performer suffers 2 points of Stamina damage regardless of success. This piece can only be played once per day.

## SACRED STICKS AND FORGOTTEN SIGILS: MAGIC ITEMS IN THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS

**Hex Signs:** These objects come in two forms: small amulets sized for a person to wear as a charm and large placards used to adorn buildings. In either form, a hex sign is a fragment of old stone bearing strange otherworldly carvings (see the spinning wheel handout from *DCC* #83 for examples of the types of sigils found on a hex sign). Hex signs are relics left over from the Hsaal, the stones found lost in overgrown hollows or pried from crumbling ruins. Not every scrap of Hsaal writing contains powers, but those that do protect that which bears them.

A hex sign wards against black magic, protecting either the wearer (in the case of smaller hex signs) or structures (larger signs) from baleful sorcery. Both grant a +2 bonus to all saving throws against spells and magical effects. Small hex signs only protect the individuals wearing the symbol, while large signs grant the bonus to any creature or object located inside the structure bearing the hex sign. A large hex symbol not affixed to a building provides no benefit (a person carrying a large hex sign gains no bonus to saving throws). If a spell directly targets a hex sign—for example, a witch using *lightning bolt* on a hex sign—it benefits from its own protective magic.

**Snake Sticks:** This object appears to be a decorative wooden walking cane measuring 3' in length. The wood is carved with extreme skill into the shape of a rattlesnake, its tail serving as the cane's tip and the serpent's head arched to act as the headpiece. Once per day, a snake stick's power can be called upon by the owner, producing an effect identical to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-level clerical spell *snake charm*. The spell takes effect as if cast with a spell check of 14. If owned by a wizard or elf, this effect can be amplified by spellburning, with each point of spellburn increasing the stick's effective spell check by +1. Thus, a wizard who spellburns 3 points while holding the staff causes it to function as if it cast a *snake charm* spell with a spell check of 17.

Serbok (see *DCC* #77.5), his servants, and serpent-men despise these items and will go to great and lethal lengths to destroy both the snake stick and its owner.



**Sovereign's Circle:** This potent object is a circular holy symbol of the Sovereign, fashioned from old gold. Once the property of an extremely devout cleric of the Great King, this object provides a bonus to turning un-dead. When held by a cleric of the Sovereign, the symbol grants a +4 bonus to turn un-dead attempts. It provides no benefit to *laying on hands*, casting spells, or other clerical class abilities.

**Witch Liquor:** Witch liquor is a strange substance, being not quite a magical elixir but neither is it merely an alcoholic beverage. Witch liquor can be created by anyone who knows one of the correct recipes (and there are many with each version being a closely-guarded secret by the bootlegger who brews it) and locates a spoil (see above) to distill the arcane liquor. When a spoil is found, the bootlegger sets up his still, using his preferred recipe. As the corn mash ferments, the liquor is altered — often in unpredictable ways — by the ambient magical energies of the spoil. The final result is witch liquor.

Witch liquor produces a magical effect when consumed, typically a minor one of little power or practicality (and sometimes embarrassing or even dangerous), but odd enough to reaffirm the drinker has had a brush with the magical world. This perception of “dabbling in sorcery” makes witch liquor highly prized by world-weary pleasure-seekers looking for a new and unique distraction. Witch liquor is in high demand at the banquets and orgies of depraved city-dwellers, and these degenerate souls pay high prices to acquire the unusual whiskey. The majority of the Shudfolk, however, frown on the making of witch liquor and destroy the bootleggers’ stills and inventory whenever discovered. The bootleggers in turn create new ways to hide their wares and smuggle it to the big cities where the witch liquor fetches a premium.

Batches of witch liquor are seldom alike. A bootlegger can brew a batch in the same location, using the same recipe, and discover a completely unknown effect occurs when it is consumed. This gives the judge sizable leeway in creating the effects of witch liquor. The effect of a particular draught of witch liquor lasts for one to four hours, depending on the amount of potable consumed by the drinker. The table below provides a few examples of what witch liquor does to the drinker when consumed.

## 1d6 Witch Liquor Effect

- 1 Drinker sees beyond dimensional boundaries, getting a glimpse at the events and occupants of an alien plane of existence. Not all such visions are pleasant to behold and more than one individual has gone mad with a glimpse.
- 2 Drinker’s sense of touch becomes magnified. Pleasures of the flesh are exquisite, but even the slightest pain becomes excruciating. A moderate injury can even kill the drinker outright from shock.
- 3 Drinker’s flesh breaks out in serpent scales, giving him a sinister appearance. The skin returns to normal once the drink leave his system, but in the meanwhile he’s likely to be mistaken for a serpent-man or dabbler in black magic.
- 4 Drinker exudes ectoplasm from his pores/mouth/ears/other orifice. The plasma-like substance forms strange symbols in the air around the drinker, perhaps portending to events to come.
- 5 Drinker’s aura becomes visible to the naked eye. The colorful nimbus surrounds the partaker, displaying colors related to the drinker’s emotional state. It is difficult for the drinker to conceal falsehoods or otherwise deceive onlookers while the aura is visible.
- 6 Drinker becomes possessed by a minor spirit (ghost, elemental, devil, etc.) who speaks through the drinker’s mouth. Although unable to do more than orate, the spirit may reveal truths the drinker prefers to keep secret.

The above suggestions represent the least dangerous effects witch liquor possibly produces. Both drinking and making witch liquor can be far more hazardous at the judge’s discretion (see “Sour Spring Hollow” for an example of how a drink of witch liquor can make life unpleasant for the consumer). The backwoods are filled with stories of a traveler coming upon a witch liquor bootlegger’s still only to find the brewer massacred by incomprehensible magical forces or to simply have vanished from existence, carried off or utterly consumed by dark powers.





# MODECA



here are infernal forces at work in the backwoods of the Shudder Mountains. A trio of devils are locked in an ongoing game of one-upmanship to gather souls into bondage and increase their standing in the hierarchy of Hell. These devils are Anector, Haade, and Modeca, known collectively as "The Three." Each serves as a patron for a number of witches in the mountains, granting fiendish power in return for eternal bondage. This section provides patron information on Modeca, who appears in *DCC #83: The Chained Coffin* in his guise as "Ol' Blackcloak." Judges can use the following to further detail Anector and Haade in similar fashion.

## MODECA, THE SECOND OF THREE (OL' BLACKCLOAK)



odeca, the Second of the Three, and known locally in the Shudder Mountains as "Ol' Blackcloak" is one of the devilish triumvirate claiming the ancient mountains as part of their worldly domain. Modeca prefers subtly and corruption over brute force, leaving such uncouth pursuits to his two infernal fellows, Haade and Anector. Modeca's sole objective is to bind as many mortal souls into eternal servitude as possible, swelling the numbers obliged to him in Hell. Mortals seeking a *patron bond* with Modeca are required to sign a compact with this devil, swearing their eternal souls to him. Unlike others who contract themselves to Modeca (see *DCC #83 The Chained Coffin* p. 11), these special servants enjoy a prolonged grace period before he claims his due—so long as they endeavor to lure others into infernal bondage. Failing in this matter inevitably causes Modeca to invoke an overlooked loophole in their contracts and claim what is owed to him sooner than expected.

### Invoke Patron check results:

- 12-13 Modeca grants the caster a small fraction of his guile, charm, and presence, raising the character's Personality to 20 (+4 bonus) for 1d6 turns.
- 14-17 Modeca inscribes infernal letters upon the caster's skin, inflicting 1 hp of searing damage. The writing grants the caster a +4 AC bonus for 1d6 turns, fading away when the duration elapses.
- 18-19 Modeca makes the caster *invisible*, allowing him to escape a tough spot. The *invisibility* lasts for 1 turn, breaking if the caster attacks another creature, but requires no concentration on the part of the caster.
- 20-23 Modeca freezes time for all but the caster for one round. During that period, the caster can act normally, but all others are effectively paused in time and space, unable to move or defend themselves. Time returns to normal the following round.
- 24-27 Modeca sends an infernal word, pulled from one of his uncountable contracts, to assist the caster. This word appears in the air before the PC in burning letters reeking of brimstone. The word acts as a *runic alphabet*, *fey* of the judge's choosing with a +20 to its spellcheck. The word appears instantaneously and the caster can choose to "trigger" it against any creature or creatures he can see.
- 28-29 Modeca delivers a blast of hellfire against the caster's enemies. Up to three targets within 50' of the caster suffer 5d6 points of damage (no save).
- 30-31 Modeca sends an Infernal Scrivener (see below) to assist the caster. The demon remains as the caster's assistant for 1 week, but this period of servitude can be extended with successful binding magic, negotiation, infernal contracts or additional *invoke patron* spell checks at the judge's discretion.
- 32+ Modeca freezes time for all but the caster for 2d4 rounds. During that period, the caster can act normally, but all others are effectively paused in time and space, unable to move or defend themselves. Time returns to normal once the duration elapses.

**Infernal Scrivener (type II demon, Modeca):** Init +3; Atk poison pen +6 melee (special); AC 14; HD 6d12; hp 40; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP *darkness* (+8 spell check), poison pen (demonic tarantula venom; 1d4+2 plus DC 16 Fort save or take an additional 2d4+2 damage and -3 Strength loss), infravision, immune to non-magical weapons, half-damage from acid, fire & cold, crit threat range 19-20; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +8; AL C.

The infernal scrivener appears as a ruddy-fleshed human with slightly pointed ears and a devilish beard, dressed in courtly finery. It has impeccable manners and acts as a superb aide-de-camp to its temporary master, serving to the best of its ability its master's whims until the time of servitude ends. Its sole attack is its black iron quill dipped in the infernal venom of devilish spiders. This poison supernaturally replenishes after each attack.



## PATRON TAINT: MODECA

Modeca is a charming and ingratiating devil, but only so long as he is pleased. Failing to stay in Modeca's good graces, either by displaying ineptitude in one's actions or inadequately assisting his goal of ensnaring mortal souls, is likely to cause the devil to reveal his displeasure in the form of supernatural taint.

When a patron taint is indicated, roll 1d6 on the table below. When the caster has acquired all six levels of effect, there is no need to continue rolling any more. On the next patron taint result, Modeca appears to claim his servant's soul, calling the caster's debt due regardless of time remaining in their infernal agreement.

### Roll Result

- 1 The caster's right leg transforms into that of a goat from the knee down. His now-cloven foot and shin is covered with a thick, wooly black hair. Shudfolk observing the goatish limb shun the PC fiercely, knowing his soul is no longer his own. Finding footwear to cover the change becomes a challenge.
- 2 The caster's flesh assumes a crimson hue, giving him an unnatural ruddiness. This new flesh color trumps all other corruption taints altering the caster's natural skin tone. As above, this taint is recognized by the Shudfolk as a sign of infernal servitude and the caster is treated with abhorrence and occasionally outright violence.
- 3 The caster no longer casts a reflection, true proof he no longer possesses a soul of his own. The caster cannot be seen in any reflective surface, be it a looking glass, still water, or polished metal. As with the above taints, Shudfolk easily identify the caster as a servant of Modeca. In other regions, he may be mistaken for a vampire or other supernatural creature, earning him a stake through the heart and decapitation by frightened locals.
- 4 The caster gains a supernatural intolerance of silver. Simply touching the metal inflicts 1d4 points of damage, and silver weapons striking the caster cause double damage. If a silver object is brandished at the caster by a Lawful individual, he must make a DC 10 Will save or flee the presence of the individual for 1 turn.
- 5 The caster's ability to perform magic is hindered unless he convinces others to sell their soul to Modeca. The caster suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to spell checks for each week he fails to provide his patron with a new servant, either willingly or through manipulation. Successfully leading another into Modeca's debt removes the spell-check penalty, but it begins to accrue again if the caster fails to continue to provide his patron with dupes.
- 6 All writing the caster pens twists and writhes, transforming into demonic script. The unnatural transformation of the written word hinders the caster in the creation of magical scrolls, imparting a -4 penalty to *write magic* spellchecks as the taint wars with the spell's magical energies.





# A BACKWOODS BESTIARY: NEW MONSTERS FROM THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS



The Shudder Mountains are home to several species of creatures found nowhere else in the world. Some of these beasts are natural animals that evolved in the unique mountainous environment of the Shudders, while others are the product of the weird magical forces at work in the hills. This section introduces nine new monsters for use in a Shudder Mountain-based campaign and to inspire the judge to create other unusual monsters for the PCs to encounter in those dark hills and hollows.

## THE ABANDONED

**The Abandoned:** Init +2; Atk claws +4 melee (1d6+2); AC 13; HD 5d8; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP infravision, grapple attack (+6); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL L.

The Hsaal protected their mines and the minerals contained therein with a strange race of magically-created wardens. In the wake of the Hsaal's destruction, these sentinels, now known as the Abandoned, continued to watch over their masters' diggings, protecting the forgotten treasures within from those who would plunder them.

The Abandoned are humanoid in appearance, standing up to 8' tall and covered in taught skin with corded muscles visible underneath. Their heads are more batrachian than human, possessing a wide mouth and large incandescent eyes, but no nose. Their hands are both webbed and clawed. The Abandoned are intelligent and have lifespans lasting several millennia.

These sentinels attack with their claws, seeking to grapple intruders and drag the unlucky back to their lairs deep within the mines. Abandoned gain a +6 to their grapple attack rolls due to their size and strength. Although they prefer to take trespassers alive, the Abandoned readily fight to kill if facing powerful foes.

Little is known about what befalls those captured by the Abandoned, but at least one account suggests that abducted enemies are subjected to a magical or scientific transformation that blasts the captured foes' sanity and turns them into feral forms of life better suited for life beneath

the earth. The Abandoned never leave the mines they protect and have been known to let intruders who forfeit the treasure they've plundered depart in peace.

## BEARBONES

**Bearbones:** Init +8; Atk bite +10 melee (2d12+3) or claw +8 melee (2d10+3); AC 20; HD 10d12+3; MV 40'; Act 3d20; SP immune to non-magical weapons, fearsome aura, stealthy (+15 to stealth-related checks), immune to critical hits, suffers ½ damage from cold and fire; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +10; AL C.



Bearbones is a unique monster, a backwoods boogey-man called up by witches to obtain revenge against wrongdoers. As its name suggests, Bearbones resembles a grizzly bear-sized humanoid creature comprised of aged, mud-covered bones of inhuman origin. It stalks its prey on digitigrade legs, moving quietly through the night. Bearbones' eyes burn with blue-green light and its ribcage holds mottled gray organs of indistinct nature that ooze and pulsate as the creature moves about. It attacks with thick, sharp claws and boar-like tusks that jut from its snout.

Any creature coming within 20' of Bearbones must make a DC 15 Will save or be paralyzed with fear. This fright lasts for 2d4 rounds, persisting even if Bearbones attacks the frightened individual. Despite appearances, Bearbones is not un-dead but a conjured creature. It is said that Bearbones is difficult to kill permanently and if reduced to zero hit points, it dissolves away, its bones returning to its hidden grave located somewhere deep in the backwoods. Only by discovering Bearbones' grave and exposing its bones to the sun can the creature ever be truly destroyed.

## BLACK DOG

**Black Dog:** Init +6; Atk none; AC 10; HD 3d10; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP howl (DC 14 Will save or 1d4 Luck loss), immune to non-magical attacks; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +7; AL N.

In the dark of night, travelers sometimes spy a huge dog-

shaped, splotch of shadow moving amidst the gloom. Seen only as a silhouette of darkest black with eerie green glowing eyes against night's shadows, a black dog is an ill omen. Black dogs do not directly attack those they encounter, instead emitting a spine-chilling howl that shakes the hearer's soul for he knows he will soon experience a much worse brush with the supernatural.

Black dogs only appear to persons who are destined to encounter a supernatural menace within the next 24 hours, serving as a harbinger of things to come. A black dog always howls when it appears and those fated to meet what the hound's presence foretells must make a DC 14 Will save or lose 1d4 Luck. This lost Luck cannot be regained (even by thieves and halflings) until the affected individuals encounter and overcomes the subsequent supernatural encounter. If the victims survive the encounter, the lost Luck is immediately restored, but should they fail to triumph, the Luck is lost for good and only restored through normal means at the judge's discretion. For example, the judge knows the party will meet the Bad Lick Beast the following night and foretells the event by having the PCs glimpse a black dog and hear its cry. All fail their saves and lose 2 Luck. The next night the party runs across the Bad Lick Beast and manages to defeat the creature. The PCs immediately regain their lost Luck. Had they failed, forced to flee the encounter for instance, the loss would be permanent barring additional Luck gains later on.

Killing a black dog before it howls not only avoids potential Luck loss, but prevents the foretold supernatural encounter from happening. Black dogs always vanish after howling, disappearing back to whatever otherworldly place they hail from.

Black dogs are seldom encountered randomly, but if they are happened upon by chance, the judge must determine what supernatural hazard the party will experience before 24 hours elapse. The black dog's real threat is the fear it instills, not in the PCs but in the players themselves.

## EARTH HOUND

**Earth Hound:** Init +2; Atk tusks +2 melee (1d5) or bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 11; HD 1d6; MV 30', burrow 10'; Act 1d20; SP keen nose (+10 to detect hidden creatures and can smell dead bodies from 300' away); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N.

Earth hounds are ghoulish creatures that inhabit burying grounds, especially those near water, and consume the dead. Resembling pig-sized quadrupeds with rat-like fur and a canine-shaped head, earth hounds devour freshly buried corpses, tearing through coffin walls with their tusks. They have an incredibly keen sense of smell and can detect a fresh corpse up to 100 yards away, even if the body is buried and contained inside a casket. Although they prefer dead flesh, earth hounds have been known to attack the living if starving or when an unlucky gravedigger unearths one of their burrows.



## GARDINEL

**Gardinel:** Init -3; Atk tongue tendril +8 melee (grapple); AC 10; HD 20d12; MV none; Act 1d20; SP camouflage, digestive juices (DC 15 Fort save each round or suffer 4d8 damage), immune to most mind-affecting spells (see below); SV Fort +16, Ref N.A., Will -5; AL N.

The gardinel is an odd species of plant distantly related to the Venus flytrap and pitcher plant. A carnivorous plant, the gardinel has evolved to grow to great size and mimic the appearance of a constructed building—usually a log cabin or similar rustic structure. It is nearly indistinguishable from a normal house from the outside, bearing a single open “doorway” flanked by a pair of shuttered “windows.” The doorway and windows are in truth the gardinel's mouth and a pair of primitive organs that provide it with sight and smell. A gardinel usually grows in forlorn locations, but a rare strain of the plant has been known to sprout in towns and even large cities.

Unable to move, the gardinel relies on its camouflage to lure prey inside it. Travelers seeking shelter from inclement weather or a safe refuge to overnight in enter through the plant's open mouth and seldom escape once inside. In dire straits, the gardinel can use its tendril-like “tongue” to grab a meal lingering up to 15' from its doorway. The gardinel is +8 to hit on its initial attack with its tongue and enjoys a +16 modifier to maintain its grapple on subsequent rounds due to its size. The interior of a gardinel is a pink-walled space with a sloping floor littered with the skulls and bones of past meals. Once prey is inside the plant, the “door” closes as a flap of tough fiber folds over the entrance and the “room” (actually the gardinel's stomach) floods with acidic digestive juices that inflict 4d8 damage to all inside (DC 15 Fort save to avoid damage for one round). Victims trapped inside a gardinel can either force the fiber covering on the entrance (DC 20 Strength check) or cut their way free with sharp weapons (required a combined 50 points of damage to one section of the stomach wall). Gardinels are immune to most mind-affecting spells unless the magic specifically targets vegetable life.

It is said that not all gardinels are plants, but that some witches can create another magical version of a living cabin through the use of black magic. These witches' gardinels appear as furnished rustic homes, possessing a cunning intellect and capable of serving their mistresses in limited ways.

## HELLBENDER SALAMANDER

**Hellbender Salamander, Giant:** Init -2; Atk bite +3 melee (2d4); AC 14; HD 2d8; MV 20' or swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP camouflage (+10 to hide attempts); SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -2; AL N.

Giant Hellbender Salamanders are 6' long varieties of their much smaller cousin. They dwell among rocks and boulders in fast moving water, dining on fish, turtles, and the occasional mammal that swims past their den. Giant Hellbenders eat smaller prey whole, but will bite larger prey and drag them below the water's surface to drown their victims.

## HIDEBEHIND

**Hidebehind:** Init +3; Atk bite +3 melee (2d4); AC 14; HD 4d8; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP backstab (+5 to attack, crit die 1d20/Table II), difficult to see (+20 to hide checks), instantaneous movement (can teleport up to 60' to remain behind its victim at will, interrupting initiative count if necessary), terrifying appearance (DC 15 Will save or observer flees in horror for 1d6 turns and blocks the hidebehind's appearance from his memory); SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; AL C.

Few have seen a hidebehind and lived, and those that have are reluctant to describe the terrible thing. As its name suggests, a hidebehind stalks its victim from the rear, using its special movement ability to avoid being seen. It attacks with surprise, gaining the benefit of a thief's *backstab* ability as it leaps onto its chosen victim's back. A hidebehind prefers to feast upon the intestines of its victims once it drags its meal back to its lair. Local folklore maintains that hidebehinds find the smell of alcohol abhorrent and will avoid a creature reeking of the stuff, but the veracity of this rumor is unknown.

## OPOSSUM, GIANT

**Opossum, Giant:** Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d6+1; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP feign death; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will -2; AL N.

Giant opossums are identical to their smaller kin in all aspects except for size. These large marsupials grow to the size of hound dogs, with some rare specimens reaching even greater proportions. Giant opossums are seldom aggressive, and when confronted by predators, will "play dead." This unconscious response renders the opossum unmoving for 1d4 hours, during which time animal predators are 90% likely to leave the creature alone. An aggressive giant opossum is likely rabid and its bite inflicts an additional 1d4 damage if the victim fails a DC 10 Fort save.

Some giant opossums display significant intelligence, possessing almost manlike intellects. These varieties are commonly found as familiars or animal servants to Lawful wizards, witches, and other backwoods magic practitioners. Giant opossum familiars can handle objects with their forepaws, manipulating them with the same dexterity as human hands.



## WRIGGLER

**Wiggler:** Init +3; Atk bite +3 melee (1d8) or claws +2 (1d4); AC 12; HD 4d10; MV 30', climb 20' or leap 10'; Act 2d20; SP crit range 19-20, superior hearing, echolocation, blind, heightened reflexes, uncanny climber (can scale walls and ceilings; +10 to bonus to climb-related actions); SV Fort +3, Ref +6 (but see below), Will +2; AL C.

Wrigglers are pale white, man-sized humanoids with blind eyes and tough, leathery skin. Shredding teeth and fangs, and enlarged, bat-like ears complete their terrifying appearance. Wrigglers move with seemingly unnatural skill through the tight tunnels and soaring caves beneath the Shudder Mountains. Although blind (and immune to spells that affect sight), wrigglers perceive their surroundings with superior hearing and by creating chirps similar to a cricket's song to echolocate. Wrigglers have cat-like reflexes and always make their Reflex saves unless bound, unconscious, or similarly restrained from moving.

Wrigglers were the aboriginal humanoids that dwelled in the Shudder Mountains before the coming of the Hsaal. When that ancient race descended from the dark moon, they attempted to enslave the wrigglers' ancestors, but the native clans retreated into the mountains' caverns. Over time, they adapted to their subterranean environment, becoming a super predator troglafauna species. Their uncanny aptitude for climbing and slithering through small tunnels gave them the name "wrigglers" by the few lucky survivors who first encountered them.



# ADDITIONAL RANDOM ENCOUNTERS FOR THE SHUDDER MOUNTAINS

**1)** A crude log cabin stands in a secluded glen along the party's path. With bad weather closing in and the prospect of a wet night in the mountains ahead of them, the cabin offers welcome shelter against the coming rain. Unfortunately for the party, the "cabin" is actually a hungry gardinel awaiting its next meal.

**Gardinel (1):** See page 13.

**2)** The sound of splashing water is heard as the party approaches or travels alongside a winding river. As they reach the river or round a bend, they glimpse a trio of large humanoids in rustic dress immersed in the waters close to the riverbank.

These three figures are Bigginty hill giants "noodling" for giant catfish along the riverbank. The river is 6' deep here, but appears deeper due to the giants' crouched posture. Preferring humanoid to fish, the giants attack the party. Two wade out of the river, while the third pulls rocks from the riverbed to hurl at the PCs.

**Hill Giants (3):** See DCC RPG p. 414.

**3)** An overgrown clearing is chanced upon. Old grave stones stand amongst the high grass and meadow flowers and a falling-down pole fence encircles the field. This forgotten burying ground is home to a pack of ghouls, once conjure-men who dabbled in the dark arts and perished with their souls forever tainted. The ghouls choose the party as their next meal, attacking if the PCs enter the burying ground or tracking them to their evening resting place to strike after dark.

**Ghouls (4):** See DCC RPG p. 414.

**4)** A rickety bridge crosses a rushing, boulder-choked river. Fashioned from fallen logs lashed and nailed together, the bridge has seen better days. If more than one PC crosses the span at a time, each character must make a Luck check or plunge through the decaying timbers into the rapids below. The fall does no damage, but a giant hellbender salamander lurks amongst the rocks and seizes upon the abruptly arriving morsel.

**Hellbender Salamander, Giant:** See page 14.

**5)** A winding trail leads down to the bottom of one of the mountain's many hollows. The dell is overgrown with verdant bushes and ancient trees, turning it into a maze of dense vegetation. Hidden among the greenery is an old cabin now home to a massive hive of yellow jacket wasps. Moving too close to the crumbling structure aggravates the wasps, who emerge in a huge stinging swarm to protect their home.

**Insect swarm (1):** See DCC RPG p. 419.

**6)** A great shadow passes over the party as they tramp through the mountains. Looking up, they spy a tremendous buzzard drifting on the thermals and peering down at them with obvious interest. This is one of the giant vultures that roost atop Carrion Peak seeking its next meal. The buzzard doesn't attack if the PCs look hale and hearty, but a party bearing wounds from a previous encounter is likely to be interpreted by the buzzard as an easy meal.

**Giant buzzard (1):** Stats as Pterodactyl (see DCC RPG p. 424).

**7)** A party member feels the hair on the back of his neck stand on end and experiences a dread sensation of being watched. The ambient noise of insects, birds, and other wildlife goes silent as the sound of rusting leaves or snapping twigs is heard off in the distance. The PC has been chosen by a hidebehind as its next meal. The creature continues to stalk its victim, striking when most likely to succeed.

**Hidebehind (1):** See page 14.

**8)** A trio of dilapidated cabins stand secluded in the backwoods, showing signs of neglect and sudden abandonment. No one is about, but careful investigation reveals blood stains and strange collapsed animal tunnels crisscrossing the yard around the homes. The cabins were abandoned when a pack of earth hounds took up residence in the family burying ground. The creatures, lacking steady meals, began preying upon the living. The pack still lairs in the old graveyard and detects the party's arrival. The earth hounds burrow their way to the party and attacks.

**Earth Hound (6):** See page 13.

**9)** A weatherworn spire of rock rises from the earth in a shadowy grove deep in the backwoods. Weird sigils nearly obliterated by time and the elements decorate its face. It is obvious that the stone is not a natural formation and was fashioned by mortal hands long ago. This crude obelisk was the product of the Hsaal and a few of their ancient spirits still linger about the place. If the party stays here past nightfall or desecrates the stone, the "hants" target them for revenge.

**"Hants" (5):** Init +2; Atk touch +6 melee (1d6+frigid touch) or poltergeist thrown object +4 ranged (1d6); AC 10; HD 2d12; hp 11 each; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP frigid touch (1d6 plus DC 10 Fort save or temporarily lose 1d3 points of Strength, Agility or Stamina, target's choice), immune to non-magical weapons, un-dead traits; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

**10)** A deep pond or slow-moving river is discovered by the party. The glint of gold is visible in the shallows of the waters. PCs inspecting the metallic gleam discover gold dust or even small nuggets washed down from a forgotten delve higher up in the mountains. Unfortunately, the water



is home to a giant catfish who must be dealt with before the party can reap their reward. The gold is worth 20 gp, but more can be found if the original vein is located up in the hills.

**Giant Catfish (1):** Init +2; Atk bite +6 melee (2d8+2) or barbels +4 melee (1d6 + poison); AC 15; HD 8d8+5; hp 41; MV 20' or swim 40'; Act 1d20; SP poison barbels (DC 13 Fort save or take an additional 2d6), SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +2; AL N.

**11)** The party passes by a long-neglected corn field gone to seed. The field was once that of a witch who enchanted her scarecrows with black magic to serve as her guardians. The witch is long-dead (and perhaps her unburied bones reside nearby), but her animated servants still protect the property from intrusion. They view the party as interlopers and emerge from the wild corn rows to defend the dead witch's crops.

**Animated Scarecrows (4):** Init +0; Atk slam +2 melee (1d4) or pitchfork +2 melee (1d8); AC 12; HD 3d8; hp 14 each; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP suffers double damage from fire, immune to mind-affecting magic; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -; AL C.

**12)** The party chances upon a dim grove of conifers, the smell of pine sap hanging thick in the air. Heaps of fallen needles gather in drifts about the forest floor apparently having collected there over decades. One pile is in truth a primeval pitch slime, an oozy monstrosity that evolved in the deep recess of the Shudders, birthed from a mixture of pine sap and fetid magic. Pine needles naturally affix themselves to the slime's sticky body, providing an excellent disguise for the slow-moving monster to ambush prey. Primeval pitch slime burns if set alight, but the slime takes no damage (and inflicts an additional 1d6 fire damage with a successful attack while burning).

**Primeval Pitch Slime (1):** Init (always last); Atk pseudopod +4 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 3d8; hp 14; MV 5', climb 5'; Act 3d20; SP camouflage (+10 to hide attempts), sticky, immune to fire, half damage from slicing and piercing weapons; SV Fort +6, Ref -8, Will -6.; AL C.

**13)** While traveling along a high ridge, the party experiences a sense of unease as their flesh literally tingles. This

skin-crawling effect is caused by a band of man-bats having an energetic discussion close by in their subsonic language. The topic: Should they eat the party now or capture them and return them to their roost? Regardless of their decision, the party is soon under attack by the flying demi-humans who descend from the air and engage the party in battle.

**Man-bats (5):** See DCC RPG p. 421.

**14)** A gap in the stony face of a mountain shows signs of being excavated by mortal hands and not by natural forces. Examining the cavity identifies it as one of the secret and ancient mines left behind by the Hsaal. Hidden treasures may lie within, but if the PCs travel too deep under the mountain or plunder what wealth remains (judge's discretion), they come into conflict with a trio of Abandoned who still defend the mine.

**The Abandoned (3):** See page 12.

**15)** The sound of breaking tree boughs and fleeing animals echo through the forest. Something big is heading towards the party. A tree of no small size crashes to the ground near the PCs revealing an extremely large animated skeleton with burning green sparks for eyes. Birthed from the bones of a dead *something* from long ago, the skeletal creature is intent on destroying all life it encounters. Perhaps if it is defeated, clues to what the creature was and where it came from can be discovered amongst its old bones.

**Skeleton of Unknown Origin (1):** Init +1; Atk claws +7 melee (1d6+7 plus 1d6 cold damage); AC 9; HD 8d6; hp 28; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP un-dead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons, chilling touch; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

**16)** The ground thuds to the beat of huge, tromping footsteps, announcing the arrival of a group of ogres. The brutes carry a slain (and partially-eaten—they couldn't wait) grizzly bear hanging from a large pole born on their broad shoulders. The ogres are recently arrived in the mountains, lairing in a cave not far from where the PCs meet them. The band is looking for employment, hoping to get into the good graces of the Biggintys or some evil conjure-man.

**Ogres (4):** See DCC RPG p. 422.