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THE HUNT FOR THE HOWLING GOD

DCC EMPIRE OF THE EAST #1:
A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE
BY JULIAN BERNICK



DKB

2022

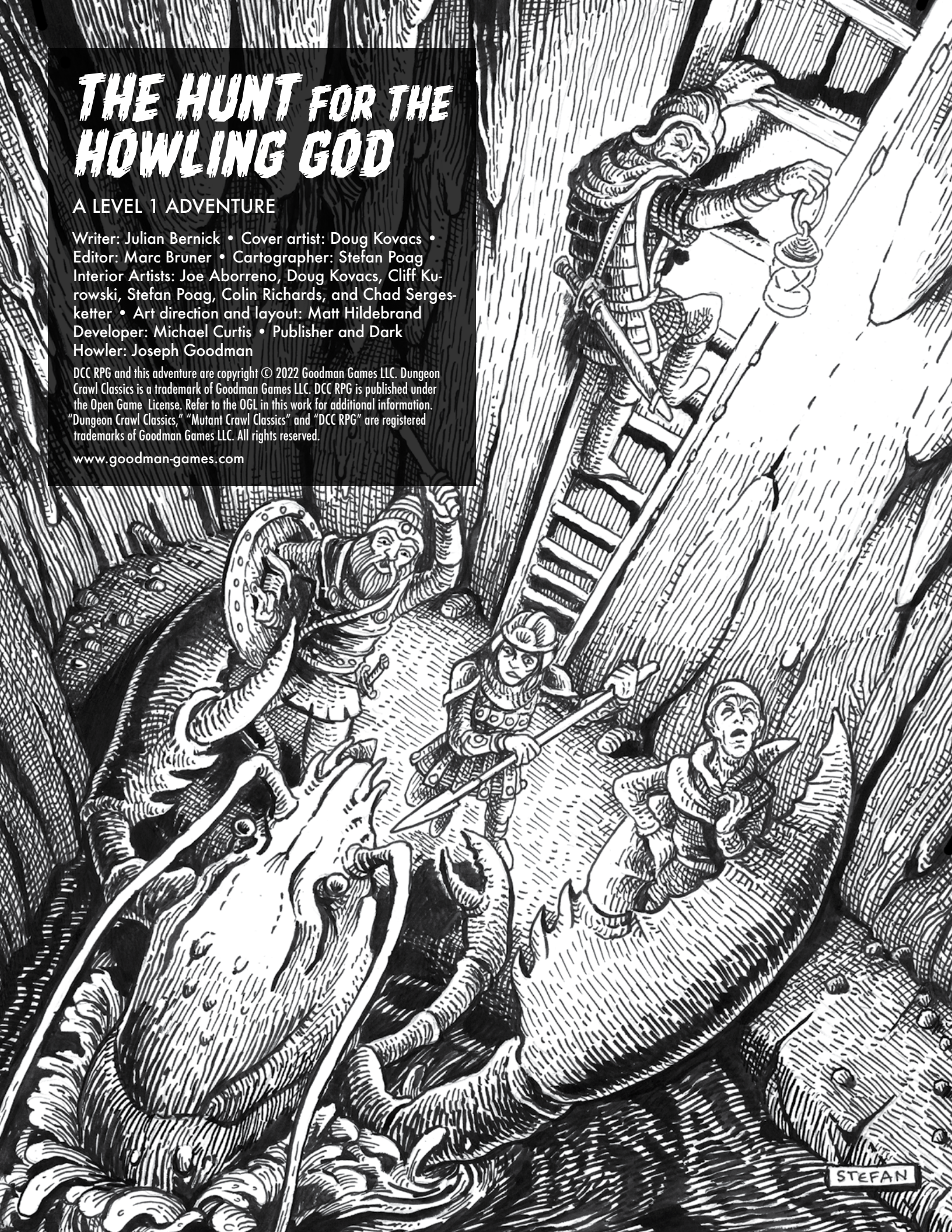
THE HUNT FOR THE HOWLING GOD

A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION



The Hunt for the Howling God is a DCC Empire of the East adventure for five to eight 1st- or 2nd-level characters. Smaller groups should be 2nd-level, while the larger groups can be a mix of levels and even 1st-level PCs supported by zeros (probably escaped prisoners). Judges may also wish to adjust the encounters slightly according to the level and number of PCs.

This adventure starts with a jailbreak, sets up a mission, and then poses a choice to the PCs as to how they want to get overland in order to fulfill the mission. Thus, the adventure can be run as a shorter convention game by omitting the middle section, or as a longer multi-session adventure by letting the PCs fully explore this part of the Western shore.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



The PCs are members of the Free Folk, the rebels fighting the Empire of the East. Their leaders have received word that a spy has learned of the location of a precious artifact called "The Howling God" somewhere on the Western shore. However, this spy has been captured and is being held in the remote Southern Forest Prison. The PCs have infiltrated the prison, learned the spy's secret and now they must escape. A disgruntled guard of the Eastern forces is their accomplice.

PART 1: JAILBREAK!

In order to infiltrate the Southern Forest Prison, you have allowed yourselves to be captured and brought within its walls so that you can find Reiger, a Free Folk spy known to have information on an artifact hidden somewhere in this region. The Southern Forest Prison is a remote outpost used to interrogate prisoners away from population centers since it is theoretically secure from the infiltrations or rescue attempts of the Free Folk.

Now you are imprisoned in one of four cells, of course without any of your gear or weapons. There are twelve other prisoners locked in the other cells. In total, you count fifteen Empire soldiers, along with a lieutenant and captain in the prison, as well as a roost of leatherwings on the roof, used for communication with the captain's superiors.

The PCs begin the adventure as prisoners, and have been placed in one of four cells with the prison's other inmates in Area A-1. Though Reiger was also imprisoned as a member of the Free Folk, the Empire's jailers did not know that he had information about a potentially war-changing artifact. Before the characters arrived, Reiger had been badly tortured, but managed to pass his message to Old Buckets before he expired, and the traitor has shared it with the PCs. Give the players **Handout A**.

Old Buckets is a limping, muttering veteran who has been bullied and assigned the most degrading menial tasks for years. The other guards little suspect that he is a paid spy for the Free Folk.

PLAYTESTERS

Con of the North 2022 Team 1: opeyion fall, Nathan Groon, Jason Hobbs, Heather Lidholm, Kim Martineau, Mark Solino; **Con of the North 2022 Team 2:** Stephanie Groon, David Lowery, Heidi Pennertz, William Walters, Carter Weber; **South Minneapolis Freedom Squad:** Matt Farah, Trevor Hartman, Tim Mulry, Ryan Regnier, Matt Young; **Steeby's Free Folk:** Judge Dan Steeby, Anna Horvath, Mikey Skelton Squin; **Romance of the Cyclops Con:** Neil Clabough, Jordan Harris, Randall Harris, Gary McBride, Jason Menard; **Hank's Heroes:** Judge Hank, Jesse Bendjinn, Erika Ginnis, David M Jacobs, Kimberly Mumford, John Roadarmel, Ravenmoon Spicer; **The Lords of Longfellow:** Judge Darren Campbell, Grimaldi, Bruce Rusk, Lord Yod. Special thanks to Mathieu Sirois for feedback and to Admiral Michael Curtis for sub-aquatic inspiration.

The spy, Reiger, will advise the PCs to seek out the wizard Clay in order to find an installation of the ancients. Hidden in the long-forgotten complex is a secret cove containing an ancient submarine. This precious relic of the ancients is ripe for the taking if the PCs can brave the hazards surrounding it and defeat its unwitting mutant guardian!

At the time arranged for the character's escape, Old Buckets waits until the two duty guards leave the main prison room temporarily, then unlocks only the PCs' cell door and immediately shuffles out. The PCs have three rounds to act before the two guards return.

Judges should check the guards' morale during encounters with the characters (see p. 94 of DCC RPG Core rules). If they outnumber the PCs they can see, the guards are confident and will likely not back down (DC 5 morale check). If the guards are facing a mass of desperate prisoners and awful magic, they may crumble quickly (DC 15 morale check). If and when the captain and lieutenant appear, or when the reinforcements arrive from Area A-3, the guards' morale will boost again.

The guards are typically wearing only leather armor around the prison. When the scene begins, four guards are dicing in the mess (Area A-2), five (the night shift) are sleeping in the barracks (Area A-3), and four are out hunting, leaving two who should be on guard duty, but are temporarily called into the mess to watch a climactic dice game. The five sleeping guards in the barracks are not wearing armor and need two rounds to ready and arm themselves.

Once he has passed the PCs Reiger's message, Old Buckets returns later to free them:

Old Buckets hobbles up to each cell while the guards watch from their table, bored and mildly annoyed. The scarred, bulging-eyed

man empties the slop-pots of each cell and then re-locks them, but stops in front of yours, winks in at you, and simply mimes the action of locking your cell. Then he limps out of the room and moments later, the soldiers steal out to watch the dice game in the mess hall, leaving you alone with an unlocked door. Only one thing is certain: you don't have much time to plan your escape!

Area A-1 - Prison Room: *The prison room is a spartan affair with a simple table and two chairs, as well as a bell-pull that sounds the alarm bell on the ceiling on the northern wall. A tall oil lamp burns in the northwest corner of the room, giving off a dim, smoky light.*

Any guards who detect a hint of prisoners' escape will immediately go for the bell-pull to notify all their peers. The alarm bell, fixed on the roof, is very loud and can be heard anywhere within prison building.

The chairs can be broken apart to fashion 1d3 makeshift clubs (1d4 damage) with a DC 15 Strength check, but the loud noise will of course alert the guards in the next room.

Freeing the other prisoners requires a DC 15 Pick Lock check, but attempting this with no thieves' tools is at -3d to the check, or a DC 22 Strength check to overcome the metal doors and deadbolt locks.

There are four prisoners in each of the remaining cells, who can be replacement characters if needed; otherwise, survivors will arm themselves and go their separate ways back to their former lives. If called upon to join combat, consider them as zero-level NPCs, and give them morale checks as needed.

Prisoners (12): Init +0; Atk unarmed +0 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 1d4; hp 2 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

Area A-2 - Entry and Mess Hall: *This room contains a woodstove, a few pots and pans for simple food preparation, and five tables and with four chairs each. A heavy wooden door with an iron bar leads outside, while more conventional wooden doors lead to the left and right, neither with any sort of lock.*

This room is where the guards generally socialize and spend their off-duty time and take their meals. In addition to the five tables, there is a wood stove and a simple food preparation area.

The two guards who should be on duty in Area A-1 stepped out to witness a climactic game of dice, meaning that there are a total of six guards here at the moment, all dressed in leather armor. One of the two guards, Aanri, has a key ring with keys that open all the prison cells. On the table where the game is being played are two pairs of dice and a total of 137 sp.

Eastern guards (6): Init +0; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or short bow +1 missile fire (1d6, range 50/100/150'); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

Area A-3 - Barracks: *This room is lit by two tall lamps in the northeastern and southwestern corners. It is filled with twelve bunks. The southern wall has cubby slots in which many seem to have some personal effects tucked away.*

There are usually five guards resting or sleeping in the barracks. Sounds of fighting in Area A-2 will have a cumulative 20% chance per round of waking them, starting with the first round of combat.

Eastern guards (5): Init +0; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or short bow +1 missile fire (1d6, range 50/100/150'); AC 15 (AC 10 if not wearing armor); HD 1d8; hp 3 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

This room has 14 beds and on the south wall, 20 deep cubbies for personal effects, including 352 sp, a whittled carving of a dolphin with a woman's head, an old tin whistle, six pairs of dice, two packs of playing cards, one severed muskrat's paw on a brass chain, a jar of honey, a round of cheese, knitting supplies, pipes and pipeweed, several warm hats and any other bric-a-brac the judge would like to invent.

On a rack near the entrance to the stables are six spare tunics that are the standard issue uniforms for the foot soldiers of the Eastern army, as well as 16 suits of chain mail armor.

Area A-4 - Stables: *The smell instantly identifies this place as a stables, and you see fourteen stalls, eight of which appear to be filled with riding beasts. There is a barred double door in the north end of the room.*

The riding beasts here are well maintained and serviceable mounts. Riding gear is piled on a shelf on the southern wall along with tack and harness and gear to hitch the riding beasts to a covered wagon located around the corner outside the stables used for hauling goods and prisoners on periodic trips to the nearest outpost. There is nothing else here of interest, unless it serves the judge's purpose.

Old Buckets is hiding in the stables, behind his favorite riding beast, Grulo. He is a hunched, scarred man who has been tortured for years by the cruel guardsmen of the Southern Forest Prison, and he hates them almost as much as he fears them. He is a skilled locksmith and makes 1d24+2 checks with locks and mechanisms of any sort. Despite his infamous limp, if desperate, he can move normally for up to three rounds. Unless all the soldiers (including the officers) are killed, he will cringe in the stables and never admit to working for the Free Folk.

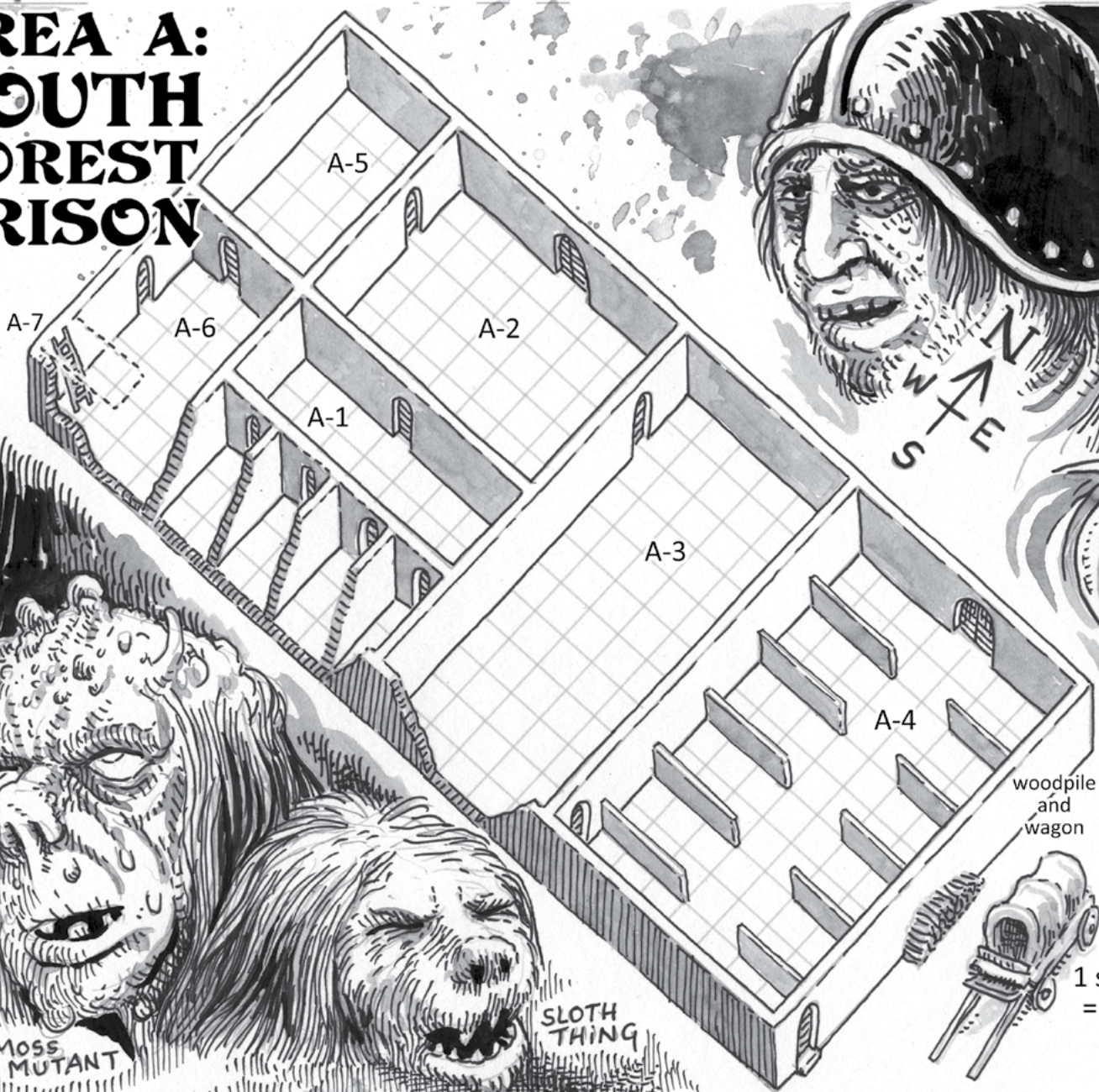
Riding beasts (8): Init +1; Atk hoof +2 melee (1d4+2); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 14 each; MV 60'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1; AL N.

Old Buckets: Init +1; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 12; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP can move up to 30' in a round for three rounds due to desperation; 1d24+2 on lock/mechanisms check; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Area A-5 - Lieutenant's Quarters: *A cabinet stands against the north wall, while a single bed and table show that this room is an officer's quarters. Another door is set into the southern wall, this one bearing a lock.*

The lieutenant will be here in his quarters, wearing only the equivalent of padded armor. Sounds of minor combat (one PC fighting one or two guards) will draw him to look into Area A-2. The sounds of four or more combatants will spur

AREA A: SOUTH FOREST PRISON



AREA B-1: THE MOSS MUTANT

1 square
= 5 feet



AREA B-2: THE HORROR IN THE HILL

1 square
= 5 feet



him to don his chain mail and then charge into combat with his battleaxe after three rounds.

Lieutenant Harbinot: Init +0; Atk battleaxe +2 melee (1d10+2); AC 15 (AC 11 if not wearing armor); HD 2d10; hp 15; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL L.

Harbinot is a dark-haired, handsome man who is popular with the men and has often bragged about his prowess with the battleaxe.

There is a locked sturdy wooden cabinet here that contains the effects of all the prisoners (including the NPCs). Breaking it open requires a DC 20 Strength check. Harbinot carries the key on his person at all times.

Under the bed is a footlocker with his effects: 212 sp, a decorative solid silver knife worth 200 sp, a lock of a woman's hair in a small kidskin pouch, and two sets of well-made civilian clothes. There are also 12 letters tied with a ribbon from Oklia, the daughter of the satrap Ergyn, possession of which might put Oklia in a very uncomfortable spot in future campaigns.

On a desk against the western wall is a logbook of the soldiers who have come and gone from the prison, with various infractions detailed and penalties meted out, as well as a ledger for basic supplies.

Area A-6 - Captain's Quarters: *This tidy room has a single bed, a desk, a wardrobe and, in the southeast corner, a ladder leading upward to a trapdoor in the ceiling. A sturdy door with heavy iron bar is on the western wall.*

The captain is in his quarters resting at the time that Old Buckets frees the prisoners. If alerted by sounds of combat or the alarm bell, he will go first up to the leatherwing roost above his quarters and command one of them to return to the nearest outpost for reinforcements.

The captain will take four rounds to don his chain mail and also load his heavy crossbow, entering combat if the outcome is still in doubt, or waiting to ambush the PCs in his quarters if the PCs have already beaten the other guards.

Captain Kail: Init +0; Atk crossbow +3 missile fire (1d6+1, range 80/160/240') or longsword +3 melee (1d8+1); AC 15 (AC 10 if not wearing armor); HD 2d10; hp 14; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL L.

Captain Kail is a stocky bearded man regarded with fear by his troops. Even by the standards of the East, he is particularly mirthless, convinced that he was passed over by the satrap Ergyn for multiple promotions. He is determined to take that out on his men via exacting discipline. In combat, Kail fights to the death.

The captain has a heavy wooden desk in which he keeps a log of all prisoners who have transferred through this outpost, and notes on their various interrogations, potentially useful to the Free Folk leadership. Alone in the bottom drawer is the Cap of Groans (see below). There are three books on military discipline and protocols of the East; if all

three are read (one day's time to read each one), they will confer +1d on Personality checks or infiltration checks in dealing with guards and leaders of the East.

Under his spartan bed in a small chest is his personal treasury of 353 sp in a leather pouch and the prison's treasury of 134 gp. This wooden box is locked and trapped with a poison needle. Opening this without DC 15 Find and Remove Trap checks results in the opener being poisoned for 3d4 damage (DC 10 Fort save for half). The captain has a key to the chest that he carries on his person at all times.

The ladder climbs up 10' feet to a trapdoor that can be slid aside to access the leatherwing roost; it is barred from the inside as the captain values his privacy and does not entirely trust the reptilian minions.

Cap of Groans - This leather-strapped metal helmet fastens onto the head of a victim. When bound or immobilized and wearing the cap, the victim is half-blinded by painfully bright lights and can only see within 10'. Any interrogators are seen as looming skeletal creatures only vaguely reminiscent of their true forms. After being subjected to this treatment for 3 rounds, the victim must make a DC 15 Will save each round to not yield up the true answer to any question they are asked.

Area A-7 - Leatherwing Roost: *The smell of straw and feces and rotting meat assails your nostrils as you peer into this dark, low-ceilinged chamber. In the far western wall, you see a metal grill opening onto the early evening sky.*

When Old Buckets frees the PCs, there are two leatherwings in the roost. If the alarm is heard, Captain Kail sends one of the leatherwings to the nearest outpost for reinforcements (2 days distant), while the other waits to gather intelligence on the events in the prison.

The metal grill has a simple but heavy metal clasp that can secure it against the Silent Ones, who attack at night.

Leatherwing (2): Init +5; Atk claw +5 melee (1d6) or bite +5 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 5d8; hp 20 each; MV 20' or fly 40'; Act 1d20+1d14+1d10; SP night blind (suffer -2 AC, -10 to all actions and saves in daylight); SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +5; AL C.

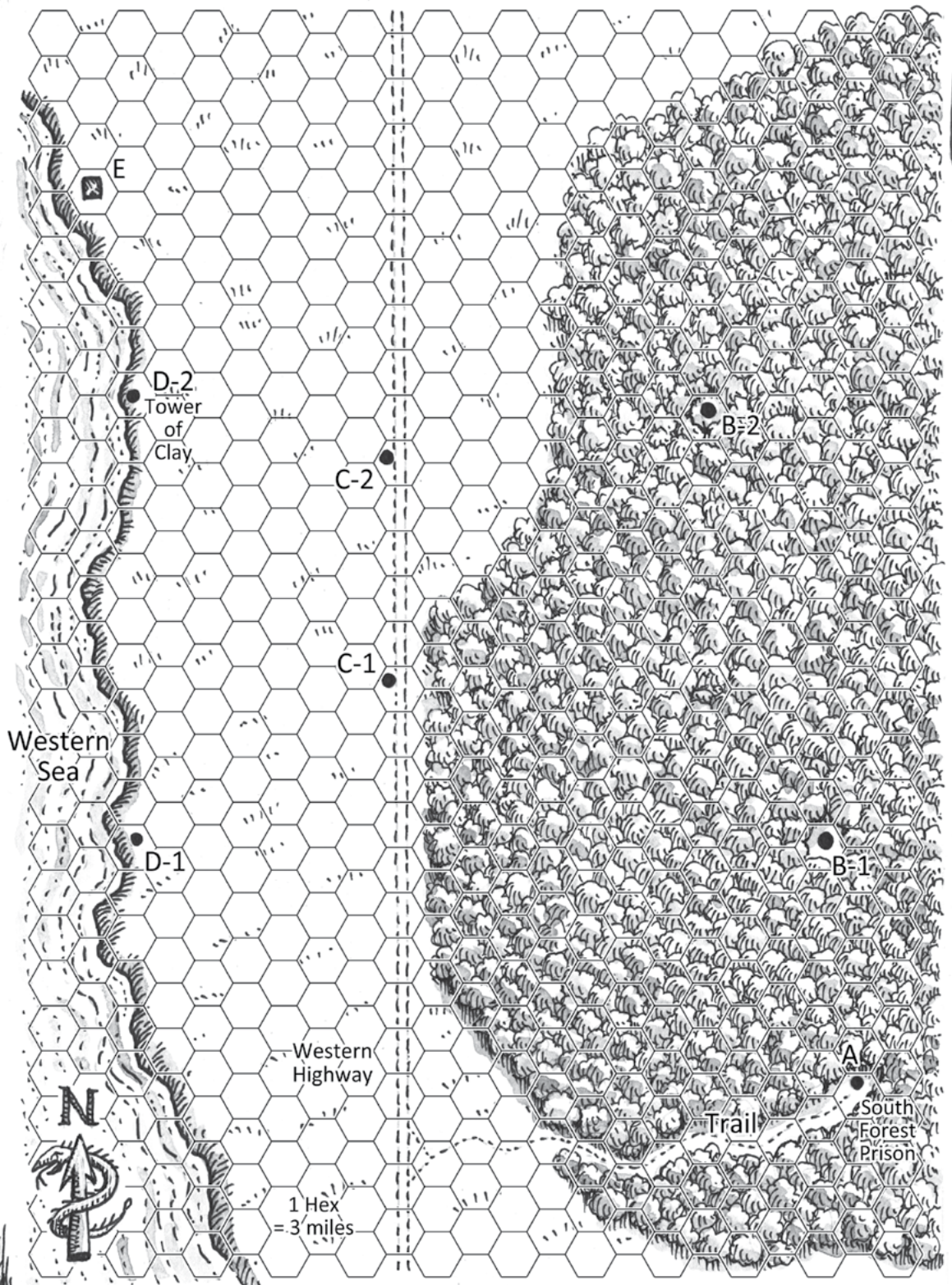
OUTSIDE THE PRISON

An outhouse, serviced by Old Buckets, is about 20 paces to the southeast of the prison.

There is also a party of four soldiers out foraging and hunting about half a mile from the prison, wearing only their leather armor. If the alarm bell is sounded or if there is loud combat or noise outside the prison, the hunting party arrives to aid the remaining guards after 1 turn.

Eastern guards (4): Init +0; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or short bow +1 missile fire (1d6, range 50/100/150'); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

OVERLAND MAP



PART 2: THE JOURNEY



The second part of the adventure has the PCs traveling overland to find Reiger's landmark – the Tower of Clay. Share **Handout B** with the players and let them pick their way across the western shores however they want to go.

Travel times to the Tower of Clay on foot are five days through the forest, three days on the road (including time to and from the road), and four days along the coast (estimating 15-20 miles a day on foot, depending on the terrain). Travel by riding beast is possible only on the road or (more slowly) on the shore, cutting that journey to 2-3 days, if riding hard.

Judge's note: For a faster all-in-one session, judges may want to use 1-2 encounters only, based on the chosen path, and then bring the PCs directly to the Tower of Clay. For a longer session, the PCs can explore whatever they want and of course the judge may introduce their own intrigues, banditry and homebrewed monsters. If the PCs are in dire shape, the judge may also consider some Silent People (see p. 47 of the DCC Empire of the East rules) arriving to aid them with healing draughts that do 1 HD of healing per PC.

ROUTE 1: THROUGH THE FOREST

The PCs should encounter the following in order, while possibly followed by the foraging party from the prison and any survivors and leatherwings the judge wants to use for pursuit.

Area B-1 - The Moss Mutant: *As you make your way through the unnaturally still forest, the going is ponderously slow. The foliage is thick, the trails are barely discernible in the dense overgrowth. Even during the day, the thick canopy of oak, elm and birch block out the sun with an almost nightlike gloom. This makes it all the more eerie when you see some odd white shapes and lights at the base of a nearby tree: strange markings glow at the base of it, flashing silently and, as you observe them, increasing the frequency of their unearthly flickering. As you stare, you hear a small singsong voice saying faintly, "hello... hello..."*

The white shards are bones. Anyone looking at the strange moving runes find that they do not represent any language or symbols they know. Nonetheless, the pattern of glowing marks is intensely hypnotic; those within 10' of them are required to make a DC 12 Will save or fall stunned at the base of the tree. While they are stunned, an eerie muck-green simulacrum of the victim's face grows into the moss along the massive oak. It too starts chirping out, "hello... hello..." Moments later, the tree-dead in the tree-branches swing down and attack anyone within 60' of the trunk!

From above, wild men descend on you, attempting to rip you with their hands and bite you with their teeth! Some bear the tattered uniforms of the East, some appear to have been locals or bandits, all of them rotting and foul-smelling, and sprouting horrible vines from their eyes, nose and mouth. The soldiers strike mindlessly

and lifelessly at you, and to your horror, you see that they are attached from above to the branches of one central tree.

These horrible creatures are part of the moss infection and attack mindlessly until destroyed. The tree waits until at least one victim is within 10' of the trunk to attack.

Tree-dead (8): Init +1; Atk unarmed +1 melee (1d3+1); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 2 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP cannot move more than 60' away from tree, die if severed from their branches, immune to mental attacks; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will NA; AL N.

The tree-dead, dependent on their connections via branch to the moss-infected tree, immediately become lifeless if the branches that connect them to the tree are severed. With a successful Mighty Deed, a warrior may chop through multiple branches, figuring this as one branch for every three points of damage inflicted by the warrior. Others trying to target a branch sever it automatically on a successful hit with a slashing weapon or upon 3 hit points or more from a blunt weapon. The tree-dead may not venture more than 60' from the tree's trunk. Any corpses within range are grabbed and raised into the upper branches to become tree-dead in 1d3 turns.

Moss mutant: Init +5; Atk none; AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 15; MV N/A; Act N/A; SP half damage from non-magical weapons; immune to mind-affecting spells; SV Fort +5, Ref N/A, Will N/A; AL N.

The 3' wide radiant moss-band circling the base of the tree has no discernible sentience. Non-magical weapons only inflict half damage to it. Fire attacks do normal damage, but the damp mucky area prevents the moss horror from catching fire as a result of fire-based attacks. The brainless, unmoving moss is immune to mind-affecting attacks and is unable to dodge or move for anything requiring a Reflex save.

If the moss is destroyed, the victims are freed the next round with no memory of what has transpired, but their faces are covered with the odd markings of the moss horror for 1d6 days, and one randomly determined symbol will mark each former victim forever. If the moss is not destroyed and victims remain alive in the brain-dulled service of the moss, they are eventually infected with the host's essence, growing long strings of green growths and exhaling cloud of spores. They will seek only to find large trees on which to spread their infectious growths, spawning further moss horrors. After infecting the new tree, the victim dies and litters the base of the newly infected tree with their bones.

Area B-2 - The Horror in the Hill: *The dense foliage of the forest gives way into a clearing up ahead, and within is a large mound of packed dirt in the distance. This semi-regularly shaped mound must be 20' at its apex. At its base, you see some smaller, similarly shaped mounds about 6' high.*

If the PCs do not investigate the mound, nothing immediately happens, but after a turn, baby sloth-things erupt from their small mounds and attack the party from the rear. If the



PCs do investigate the mound, the sloth-things emerge and attack them in the next round or immediately if the dirt itself is disturbed. If the PCs slay more than one of the babies with anything but total silence, the sound will trigger the sloth-thing mother to leave its mound-burrow and confront the PCs.

Sloth-thing: Init +3; Atk nose appendage +5 melee (2d4 plus vacuum); AC 14; HD 3d12; hp 24; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP vacuum (if engulfed in nose-hose, victims suffer 1d6 damage unless they make DC 15 Strength check to escape, check goes down -1d each round); SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; AL N.

The sloth-thing is a huge (10' high at the shoulder) lumbering sloth-like creature with large staring eyes, striped fur, long tails, fearsome claws and a long rubbery tubular snout. The large mother sloth-thing will actually seek to vacuum PCs up into its snout where they will be mashed up by its powerful teeth for 1d6 points of damage per round. Cutting free of the appendage requires a DC 15 Strength check, whether within or without.

Sloth-thing babies (6): Init +3; Atk claws +2 melee (1d5) or nose appendage +2 melee (2d4 plus special); AC 14; HD 1d12; hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP knockdown (when hit by claws, the target must make a Fort save vs. the sloth-thing's attack roll to remain standing, sloth-thing strikes knocked over targets with +1d to attacks with its nose appendage), 1 in 20 chance of plucking the target's eye out after successful attack with nose appendage; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; AL N.

The young creatures are almost as large as wolves and will attack with their claws, knocking PCs over and then sucking out pieces of flesh with their exposed suckers. On a successful strike with its sucking appendage, there is a 1 in 20 chance that the target has lost an eye!

In the sloth-thing's dirt mound are many bones, scat, and a few remnants of armor and weapons, all ruined. Scattered amongst the rest of the debris are also 87 sp along with a broken spear, both the 2' long tip and the 6' long haft in good condition. The spear's tip is engraved with tracteries of powerful anti-demon magics, and if both halves of the spear can be united via *mending* spell or other magical means, the spear is a powerful weapon: +1 to hit and damage all foes, and +2d on attacks and damage rolls against demons. Most importantly, a lawful wielder may drain their own lifeforce to do extra damage to a demon. For every hit point a character sacrifices after hitting a demon with the spear, they can add +1d4 damage to the total damage. After any combat in which this power is used, the PC must make a DC 8 Fort save or lose one hit point permanently.

ROUTE 2: ON THE ROAD

Area C-1 - The Village of Two-Goats: For two days you have journeyed along the road, looking up with dread for leatherwings circling in the sky. On the morning of the second day, you spot a small village of hovels and wooden buildings off to the west of the main road. As you discuss amongst yourselves whether to stop or pass by as quietly as possible, you hear a shout from the

village and a woman runs out toward the road – a simple peasant woman in a homespun dress, bleeding from a cut on the forehead. “Help us, please! The bandits! The bandits!”

The woman is Myda, a mother of four who will beg the PCs to help vanquish the bandits attacking the village.

The bandits are currently in the communal town hall building. The two and a half story tower at the top of the building has an ancient bronze gong; Myda is happy to tell the PCs that the bell has a magical power to paralyze everyone within its hearing. There are eight cut-throat bandits occupying the hall holding 10 of the village children as hostages, including Myda’s children, Bek, Liso, Ged and Ion. Another bandit stands lookout in the gong-tower. Myda continues:

The bandits say they’re searching for a thief named Henzel. This blond mustachioed rogue briefly stayed in the village, but then rang the gong and stole the village’s star-stones! And now he’s brought this curse of vengeful bandits, whose demand to turn over Henzel we can’t even satisfy! You must help!

The bandits are led by Osbie, a rough-hewn giant of a man with a loud laugh and a large brown beard. The bandits mostly rob imperials and do not usually target the locals and the Free Folk, but in this case Osbie is out for blood because Henzel the thief joined their rough fellowship, learned their secrets, then snuck off in the middle of the night with Osbie’s leadership token - a hawk’s head statuette as big as a thumb and carved of an unknown metal.

The bandits in the hall are broken into two groups of four:

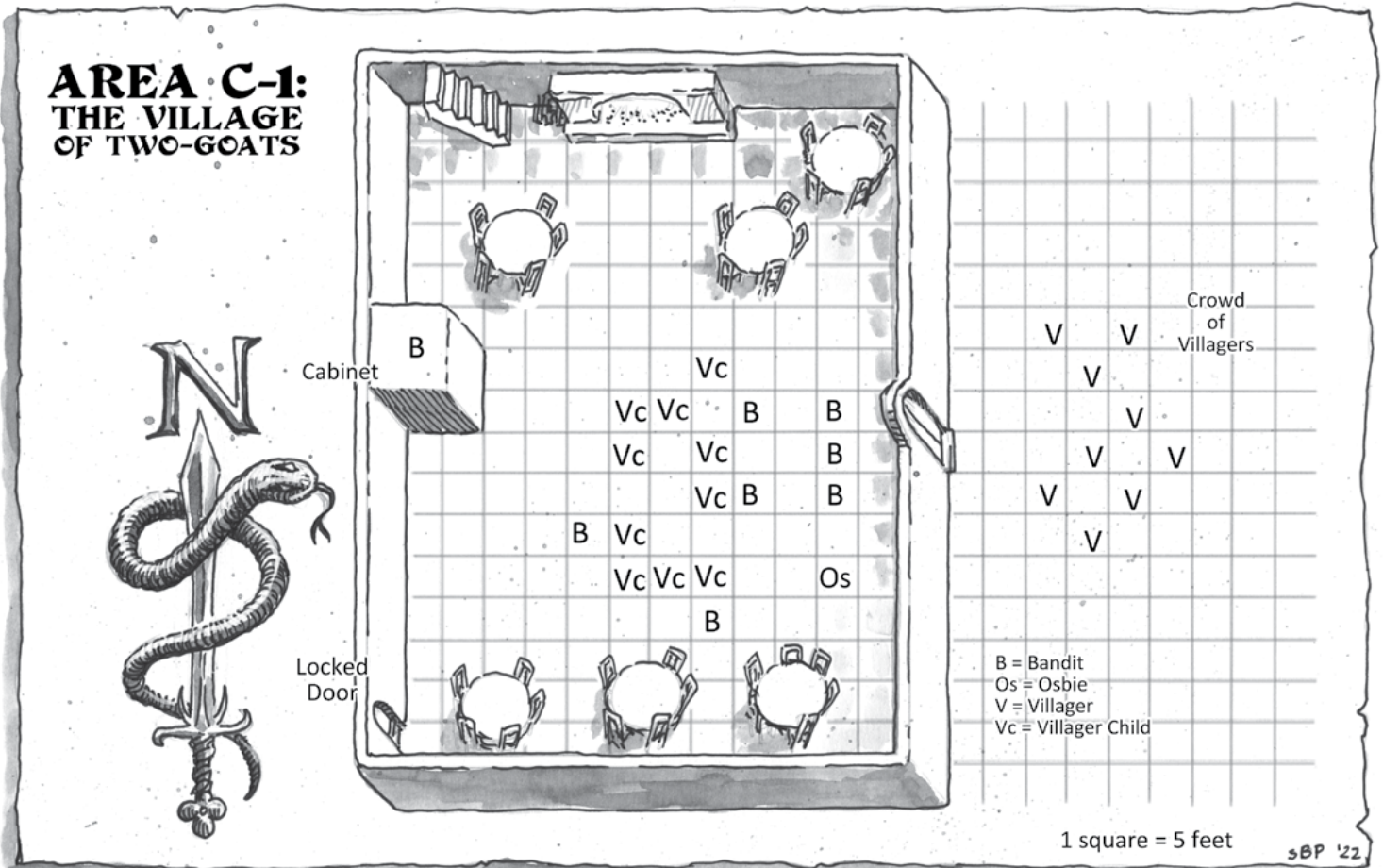
one group guards the hostages while the other group defends the hall. If the PCs mount a frontal assault, roll initiative for each group, and if the hostage guards win, roll a Luck check for the lowest current Luck in the party. If failed, the guards begin to kill the hostages, one hostage per guard per round. If made, the bandits guarding the children cannot bring themselves to kill the innocents and they join the attack on the PCs. The gigantic Osbie fights amongst the hall-guards.

The rope attached to the gong is housed in a gilded cabinet on the western wall. If the gong is rung, all who hear must make a DC 12 Will save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds. (On holidays and other special occasions, a villager sits up in the belfry of the gong-tower and rings the gong multiple times, while the villagers meditate in joyful silence.) Those who have taken precautions and stopped up their ears must still roll, but will fail only on a natural 1.

From outside the town hall, it is a DC 15 Agility or Climb Sheer Surfaces check to climb the two story building. Climbing up without the guard noticing requires a DC 15 Sneak Silently check as well.

Bandits (8): Init +1; Atk short sword, axe, or mace +1 melee (1d6) or shortbow +1 missile fire (1d6, range 50/100/150’); AC 12; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.

Osbie: Init +2; Atk pole-axe +2 melee (1d10+2); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 15; MV 25’; Act 1d20; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.



Bandits who escape the village melt into the surrounding terrain in two rounds and cannot be followed.

Should the bandits be overcome and the hostages saved, the villagers will host the PCs with genuine delight, providing up to 200 sp in gratuity and any services, food, and lodging within their humble means, though they will not willingly part with the village gong, a part of their heritage. (The gong also weighs over 500 pounds!) The villagers also have specially made herbal poultices that will heal each PC for 1 HD if worn overnight on a given wound.

The villagers, though generally too timid to fight the bandits, are quietly hostile to the Empire and could be a source of replacement characters.

They certainly describe Henzel at great length, and Myda mentions that she saw a mark of the pitchfork that is branded on thieves in some parts of the Empire on his right back shoulder. After charming all the villagers with many stories of exploits amongst the Free Folk (all lies), Henzel stole the precious star-stones (see Area C-2) from the village treasury and snuck away in the dark of night. He appeared to be headed north.

Area C-2 - The Imperial Troops: A half-day's travel north of the village of Two-Goats, the PCs will encounter six road-weary Eastern soldiers, captained by a man with long blond hair and a drooping mustache.

PCs who listened to Myda in Area C-1 will recognize the captain as matching the description of Henzel the thief! Henzel has told the troops that he is the sole surviving officer of an Eastern squad and he has joined their ranks in hope of security and safe passage north; but since then, they have been commanded by leatherwings to scour the road for a dangerous force of escaped prisoners (the PCs, of course). If they spot the PCs, they immediately investigate or attack, depending on how the PCs present themselves.

To determine who has the advantage, the judge can have the lead character or scout make a Luck check to determine which side spots the other first. Henzel's troop will set an ambush if they have the upper hand, and Henzel will backstab whomever looks most powerful or most in charge.

Eastern guards (6): Init +0; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or shortbow +1 missile fire (1d6, range 50/100/150'); AC 15; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

Each of the guards carries 2d6 days of rations and 3d30 sp.

Henzel the thief: Init +0; Atk longsword +1 melee (1d8) or shortbow +1 missile fire (1d6, range 50/100/150'); AC 12; HD 4d6; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP thief skills at +8 to checks; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +2; AL C.

Henzel carries 3 gems worth a total of 90 gp and the village's 5 star-stones. The star-stones, sacred to the villagers who had them since time immemorial, are actually a super-concentrated form of fuel and can be used to power the robots in Area E-4 of the installation. On their own, each is about an inch in diameter and a perfect sphere, glowing with an

unwavering blue light. If thrown or crushed, each star-stone explodes for 10d6 damage to everything within a 10' radius and 3d6 to everything within a 30' radius.

ROUTE 3: ALONG THE SHORE

Only one unique encounter is provided below, but judges may place the village and Henzel encounters along the shore for longer play, or since the rocky western shores are more open, the judge may have Muks and the Eastern party catch them on the western cliffs before they reach the Tower of Clay (see Hot Pursuit! below).

Encounter D-1 - The Mirage Beast: *The rocky cliffs overlooking the western shore are barren of life and dry as a bone. Thus, you are relieved to see a series of rocky pools surrounded by lush green growth next to an outcrop of gray stone flecked with white and quartz. Plump innocent fish can be seen in the clean cool water as well as succulent eels wriggling about in the shallow ponds. Most remarkably, a wizened man in a plain brown robe sits cross-legged on a rocky outcrop, his beard blanketing his waist. He turns at you and gives a silent smile.*

Most of the mirage beasts live in the desert and prey on travelers there, but this one has found plenty of prey on the arid cliffs of the western shore. As soon as one or more PCs approaches, it will attack. The man is just as much part of the illusions as the fish or pool; the man's image neither speaks nor responds to any other signs the PCs make, giving only a high pitched wordless keening—the nearest approximation of speech the mirage beast can mimic.

Mirage beast Init +5; Atk tendrils +3 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 35; MV N/A; Act 5d20; SP entangling grip (on a hit, DC 15 Strength check to break free of each tendril that has hit a victim. After two failures, the victim is dragged into the maw-pool of the beast, thereafter taking 2d12 damage per round), immune to mind-affecting spells; SV Fort +5, Ref N/A, Will N/A; AL N.

The mirage beast is a bizarre mutant that preys on anything that approaches. Its only attack is the entangling grip of its five tendrils – if the mirage beast hits successfully, the victim is allowed a DC 15 Strength check to break free of each tendril that has hit them on their next action. If failed, and not otherwise rescued, victims are dragged into the pool and receive one more chance in the shallows. If that check is failed, the victim is drawn down toward the maw of the beast, therein taking 2d12 damage per round as the mirage beast devours them. Victims who die this way disappear into the maw and cannot be recovered. The only damage that the mutant takes is to its tendrils, which can take 7 points of damage each—the fish, eels and rocks are illusory and no more vulnerable than a person's hair.

HOT PURSUIT!

Assuming at least one leatherwing escapes the prison in the adventure's first chapter, the nearest Satrap assigns a force to apprehend them under the dreaded Captain Muks, assisted by the wizard known as the Hopeless One.

Due to the difficulty of tracking, this pursuit party will not

enter the forest, but will travel the road or follow the PCs onto the western shore. This force can be used to prod the PCs along (*you see to the South a cloud of dust raised by up to 20 Eastern soldiers...*) or can be introduced to liven things up if the PCs have avoided most combat before reaching the Tower of Clay.

Captain Muks: Init +5; Atk longsword +deed die+1 melee (1d8+deed die+1); AC 15 (chain mail); HD 4d12; hp 25; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP d6 deed die; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +4; AL L.

Captain Muks is a bald lanky man who hates the Free Folk, whom he blames for the death of his wife and children after they were murdered by his commanding officer as the price of his failure in apprehending a rogue wizard long ago. Laconic and single-minded, he is feared and respected by his men, but not loved.

Eastern guards (10): Init +0; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or shortbow +1 missile fire (1d6, range 50/100/150'); AC 15; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L.

The Hopeless One: Init +0; Atk staff +1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 7d4; hp 15; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP spells (+7 spell check): *animal summoning, evocation, soothe creature, mending, forget, harrowing interrogation, bind familiar, summon demon, bind demon*; SV Fort +2; Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.

The Hopeless One is a woman who has eschewed the intrigues of various Satraps and Som the Dead in order to explore the wider world and find artifacts, hidden tomes, and more demon-lore. Stout, middle-aged and with gray-brown hair, she is fatalistic and trusts no one.

Ytrall, the Hopeless One's Demon (type I demon): Init +4; Atk bite +4 melee (1d7+1) or claw +4 melee (1d8); AC 12; HD 5d12; hp 20; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP demon traits, mortals seeing Ytrall for the first time (within 30') must make a DC 15 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds, shape change into any creature; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; AL C.

Ytrall is bound to the Hopeless One in a pact to serve for years and has only minimal resentment for her as he is generally well-treated and prized for his power; he often takes the shape of a large wolf-hound with luminous purple eyes, accompanying her like a faithful hunting dog.

Area D-2 - The Tower of Clay: *This lone, lichen crusted stone tower sits on the cliffs overlooking the western shore, battered by fierce winds. Crows and sea-birds scream at each other on the gently arching stone roof three stories above you. Besides three shuttered windows on the top floor, an iron-bound door on the ground floor faces east and appears to be the only access.*

When the PCs announce themselves, the eastern window opens and a shrunken woman with unkempt gray hair asks



their business. If met with rudeness, she flings the contents of a chamber pot on them. If approached with courtesy, she tells them she will fetch Clay for them, then she hauls her creaking bones down to the front door, unbars it and announces that she is Clay the Wizard.

Clay is skeptical of the Free Folk due to rivalries and grudges of decades long past. However, she hates the East and will gladly help the PCs if they do not appear to be murderous vagrants and can answer the following riddle:

*Who can make a storm of steel,
And rid us of what's good and true,
And steals the corn and burns the fields,
But lives on earth as demons do?*

Acceptable answers include "the Emperor", "The Empire", etc. Assuming they succeed, she offers them shelter for one night along with a cold meal of fresh clams and seaweed. Then, skimming a crust of pink goo off of a clay pitcher, she pours out several clay cups and offers each PC a healing potion for up to 2 HD of healing (as level permits). The PCs can opt to save all or half of their potion, and if on good terms, she will provide them a stoppered bottle for each.

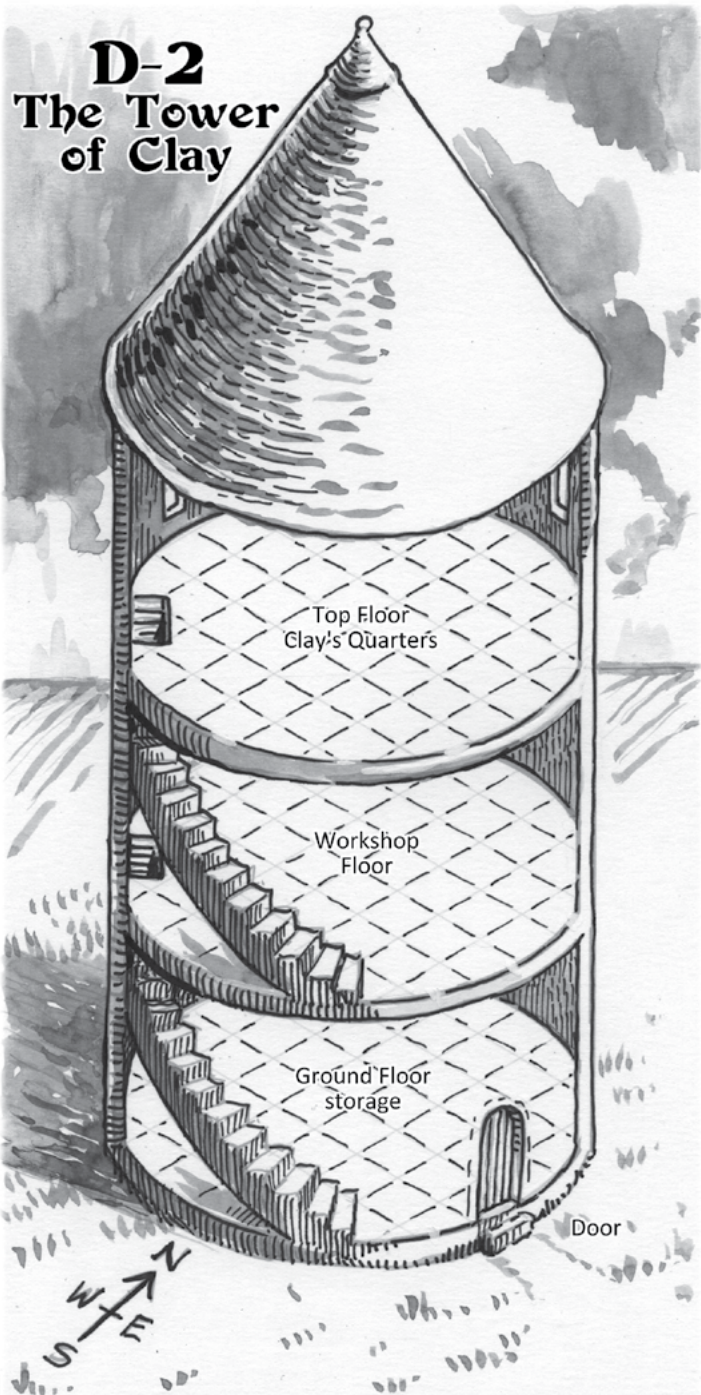
Judge's Note: In playtests the riddle was challenging but always solvable. If the PCs do not get the answer, Clay will probably still give them the directions to the installation and may even host them if she is convinced of their anti-Imperial outlook and *if* they are on their best behavior. If not, they will have to waste time trying to find it based on Reiger's directions - and are more likely to encounter Muks and his pursuing force.

Packed in the workroom where she invites the PCs to spend the night are 38 bottles and clay jugs filled with all sorts of exotic foams, creams and ointments. One of these bottles gives a light rattle occasionally; if the PCs investigate, they will free Clay's water elemental, making the wizard very angry. There are 5 potions scattered here (consult *make potion* spell, p. 223 of DCC RPG Core book for potion effects): *water breathing*, *invisibility*, *levitation*, *longevity*, and *jellyfish poison* (see p. 446 of DCC RPG Core book).

Clay the Wizard: Init +0; Atk staff +2 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 8d4; hp 25; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP spells (+9 spell check): *charm person*, *mending*, *evocation*, *soothe creature*, *read languages*, *forget*, *harrowing interrogation*, *levitation*, *summon demon*, *bind demon*, *transmogrify*; SV Fort +2; Ref +2, Will +4; AL N.

Elemental, water: Init +6; Atk slam +10 melee (2d6); AC 16; HD 8d8; hp 30; MV 40' or swim 80'; Act 1d20; SP engulf and drown, vulnerable to fire and heat, elemental traits; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +8; AL N.

Clay knows very well where the installation is hidden, just a day's journey to the north, and can give them directions, though careful scouting will eventually find the large metal door set in the ground at Area E.



If the PCs have found the demon-bane spear in Area B-2, Clay is happy to study and use her mending power on it for them, assuming she is convinced they hate the Empire. She also gives the PCs a riddle that might aid their quest, but offers no further assistance:

*Down to the home by the bright salt sea,
Forget the sky if you listen to me,
Forget the leaves on the blossoming tree,
Seek out the heart's blood, wet and free.*

The riddle indicates that the PCs should seek the door with the red stripe at Area E-5 and forego the rest.

PART 3: THE HOWLING GOD

AREA E - THE INSTALLATION



The exact use of this ancient military base is long forgotten and it is largely destroyed. There is no working electricity inside, so PCs will have to bring their own light (unless they manage to turn on the consoles in Area E-5). Ceilings are 20' tall and the walls are dull gray plastic over sheets of steel. The floor is concrete, though some of the original long-rotted carpet can be seen in various corners. The air is chill, salty and damp.

In addition to the obvious entrance door, there is a natural cave that has eroded through the western cliff wall and breached the installation about 30' down the cliff face. This person-sized cave mouth can be found by careful inspection from the cliff and leads directly to Area E-3. Climbing down the cliff wall requires a DC 12 Climb Sheer Surfaces check, which is +2d with the use of ropes and other practical forethought.

If the PCs have not yet destroyed Muks and his troops, they should see them approaching from the east, riding hard and kicking up clouds of dust with a demonic wolf bounding out in front of them (see Hot Pursuit! above).

Area E-1 - Installation Entrance: *Nestled amongst the rocks and the barely surviving scrub of the cliff-top, a large metal door is set into the ground. Various holes and the remnants of large posts show where the ancients may have had outbuildings and stables for their mechanical riding and load beasts.*

This metal door has a magnetic lock which requires a DC 16 Pick Lock check to overcome. The solid metal doors can also be smashed open with 75 points of damage from a blunt weapon or object, or broken open with a DC 30 Strength check.

Once inside, if the PCs have not destroyed the door and lock, it can be re-sealed with a DC 15 Pick Lock check.

Area E-2 - Exit and Storage: *Peering downward into the gloom, the dark room below you smells of wet and salt. The light from above shows a large empty space littered with worthless looking debris with a door barely visible on the western wall. An old metal ladder hangs from the ceiling.*

The metal ladder is fixed to the ceiling and extends straight downward to a point 3' above the floor. This room contains only the remnants of rotted furniture, walls and other worthless debris.

The steady damp mist that blows in from the breach on the western stair has corroded the floor so that those landing anywhere on the floor will trigger its collapse. Allow a DC 15 Reflex save to jump to a safer spot near the walls, otherwise the PCs fall down 20' to the next level (Area E-4), taking 2d6 damage, breaking a bone on any result of a '6'. A thief can spot the corrosion on the floor on a DC 15 Find Trap check. The door on the western wall is open (thus the corrosion).

Area E-3 - Stairwell: *This plain concrete stairwell accesses the next two floors down. The first landing leads to a metal door with a handle but no lock. On the western wall is a fissure that obviously leads to a cave of some kind, at the end of which can be glimpsed the cloudy sky doubtless leading to the cliff face. Salty mist continually issues in from this fissure.*

The door is a metal door with a broken lock and leads to Area E-4. There is a gray stripe at the top left hand corner.

Area E-4 - Robot room: *This large dark room is filled with crates large and small, stacked in seemingly random piles. On the far side of this room are four large crates, easily big enough for three big men to step into, and next to this is a big barrel shape set on two trunks. This hulking form is vaguely humanoid and two blue lights glitter from the large dome atop its bulk. Beyond that is the glint of a shiny metal door.*

The shape at the far end is a security robot that has laid in a state of malfunction for many centuries. If touched, spoken to or jostled in another way, it attacks.

If the PCs have not collapsed the ceiling (coming down from Area E-2), there is some leaking water and dripping occasionally coming from the ceiling. If Muks and his men are on their trail, they will very likely trigger that hazard and may well have a chance of landing atop the PCs. Should this be the case, the unfortunates above will land on the PC with the lowest Luck score unless they make a DC 12 Ref save.

Robot (MilG-7): Init +2; Atk slam +5 melee (2d4); AC 17; HD 5d8; hp 35; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP 3 tear gas grenades (15' radius, DC 12 Fort save or be -2d on all attacks for 2d4 rounds); SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +5; AL N.

This 8' tall metal titan is a security robot possessing two metal tentacles with pincers, giving it two powerful slam attacks. It can also drop a tear gas grenade if it is getting the worst of a combat. It is large, slow and bulky and weighs 1 ton.

The other nearest four crates contain similar robots, all in perfect condition but lacking their needed power-sources. The star-stones that the village in Area C-1 has held for countless generations (until stolen by Henzel the thief, now with the Imperial troops at Area C-2) can be used to power the robots. If the PCs have the star-stones and make a DC 18 Intelligence check (see p. 66 of the DCC Empire of the East rules), they can power up the robots by loading the star-stones through a slot in the back of their "heads". Failure indicates the star-stone is inert and it dissipates with no further effect, but the PC may try a new stone. A natural 1 indicates that the robot malfunctions and attacks everyone in range of its optical sensors.

The other crates contain all sorts of items (the judge may also choose to introduce any additional artifacts or items they like):

1. 5 rifles, one of which is still usable (DC 15 Intelligence check to master, 1d10 damage with a range of 50/200/300').



2. Rifle ammunition: 10 magazines of 15 bullets each.
3. 3 television sets – worthless as there is no broadcast and no power sources.
4. Complete mechanical engineering toolset. Careful study of this big metal box confers +1d on anyone making Intelligence checks as the user will have absorbed some of the basic principles of engineering on artifacts.
5. A set of engineering manuals for trucks, jeeps, submarines, helicopters. These can be of extreme value to those mastering djinn (see p. 45 of DCC Empire of the East).
6. 10 sets of modern body armor (+5 AC, -2 check penalty, d8 fumble die).
7. 2 huge clunky rectangular plastic machines of mysterious design (mainframe computer hardware).
8. Various spare parts for the jeeps and trucks that used to be housed above.
9. Five pistols with 10 magazines of 8 bullets each (DC 15 Intelligence check to master, 1d8 damage with a range of 50/100/150'). If inspecting, the PC should make a Luck check to see if they still work.

The door beyond the robots is marked with a black stripe on the left side of the door and there is no visible lock (in fact, the magna-lock is disabled).

Area E-5 – The Laboratory: *The first thing that meets your eyes in this room are five huge tanks each at least 15' tall, that appear to be made of glass. Within each of the four nearest tanks floats a huge sea-beast: a squid, a crab, a pallid shark, and a sting-ray. They seem long dead and unmoving, floating in a dingy semi-clear substance. The fifth tank, furthest from the door, is empty, and the glass appears to be broken. Panels with dials and strange gem-like buttons surround you in this room. Six chairs on wheels are long abandoned. Two large metal cabinets sit against the opposite wall.*

The tanks are DC 30 Strength check to break, or 100 points of damage. Breaking the first four tanks yields only a long-dead, foul-smelling sea-beast and hundreds of gallons of poisonous goo (if ingested, DC 18 Fort save or take 1d4 points of damage for 2d3 rounds in violent retching and seizures).

The last tank formerly contained the giant lobster in Area E-8. As it broke through the tank-wall long ago, security measures kicked in and evacuated it through a valve in the tank's bottom, which deposited it down in the underground pool below.

Mastering the consoles: A DC 20 Intelligence check enables a PC to understand the mechanisms, power them up, but not activate while a DC 22 allows mastery of this device and even lets the PC bring the giant lobster back up (in which case it immediately attacks!) or evacuate it back down. The cabinets are full of logs and diagrams of the vacuum tank

chambers. If studied, they give any PC attempting mastery of the console +1d on their Intelligence check. Simply prying the valve open requires a pry bar or similar instrument (easily found in Area E-4) and a DC 15 Strength check. The chute beneath is smooth, moist (DC 20 to climb with no rope), and the lights and noise from the submarine below in Area E-8 will be clearly noted.

If the lobster is brought up, it will immediately charge out of the tank – the PC who brought it up must make a DC 18 Reflex save to return it to its watery home fast enough to prevent it from escaping the tank and attacking. Clever (or lucky PCs) may drop the dead sea-carcasses down into the pool in Area E-8, thus distracting the lobster with foul but distracting food, 1 turn per corpse. During its time consuming the dead, it will not attack characters venturing toward the submarine.

Needless to say, when the vacuum mechanism is activated, any PC standing on the 10' wide circular valve within the opened tank would be sucked down to Area E-8 unless they make a DC 15 Reflex save to jump free.

Area E-6 – The Stairway Terminates: *The stairwell bottoms out at three doors. All are identically fashioned of metal and each one carries a stripe at its top left-hand corner. One door with a blue stripe is set on the northern wall, one with a red stripe is set on the southern wall, and one with a green stripe is set on the eastern wall.*

The doors correspond to the second riddle given by Clay. Careful inspection (or a DC 8 Find Trap check) of the blue-striped door to the north reveals its cold to the touch and slightly bowed toward the PCs (as there is a huge well of water pressed against it). The eastern door is utterly quiet, while faint sounds of murmuring can be heard from the southern door if the listener makes a DC 10 Intelligence check.

Opening the blue door will instantly flood the chamber up to Area E-3, with the water pressure doing an immediate 2d6 damage to everyone in Area E-5. PCs will need to make DC 10 Strength checks to swim, or failing that, make a DC 14 Stamina check or begin to drown. Once drowning, the creature loses 1d6 points of Stamina per round, dying once they reach 0 Stamina.

Area E-7 – The Demon Quarters: *A hallway opens up into a dusty and dark space. Even though it's dry in here, there's an unnatural chill to the air and there's a darker shadow in the darkness moving your way, approaching faster and faster and then manifesting in a large maw of glittering orange teeth – going right for your face!*

This wing of the installation contains six small living quarters (plus lavatory), with two bunks in each bedroom and a central room for mess and meetings. The ceiling is only 10' tall. It is empty of anything but jumpsuits with a strange blue and white insignia that has long since failed to have any meaning (though the judge can populate this area with any other plot hooks, artifacts or treasures that they like).

The demon Skotadi was summoned many years ago by

a wizard of the East but slew his summoner and escaped bondage immediately, eventually finding this dark forgotten hole to skulk in. It is not intelligent or ambitious but flies into a rage if the PCs disturb it by opening the door to Area E-6.

Skotadi (Type I demon): Init +4; Atk bite +6 melee (1d6 plus 1d4 cold damage) or claw +8 melee (1d8 plus 1d4 cold damage); AC 16; HD 3d12; hp 35; MV 60'; Act 2d20; SP demon traits, mortals seeing Skotadi for the first time must make a DC 15 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds; SV Fort +5, Ref +10, Will +8; AL C.

In the quarters are various mundane items of the ancients that might prove plenty beneficial to the PCs and the Free Folk:

1. 35 dried and condensed ration packs in foil.
2. 20 clear bottles of potable water.
3. 20 glass bottles of alcoholic spirits (wine, whiskey, etc.).
4. Bandages, rubbing alcohol, et al. With these supplies, wounds can be bandaged and cleaned for an immediate 1 hp of healing.

Area E-8A – The Underground Ledge: *Cool moist air greets you as a stairway winds downward and into darkness. You hear the lapping of water, but then suddenly see bright lights coruscating from below and hear words blaring out in a monotone unfamiliar language, along with an shrill alien howl that increases then decreases in volume. Then after a few minutes, the lights and the strange noises are gone.*

Assuming they descend the stair, describe Area E-8.

A narrow natural ledge runs along the left side this chamber to a 20' wide opening. Black water fills the chamber and laps at the wall just 3-4 feet below the ledge. Beyond this opening, you see another flooded chamber in which a large metal object emerges from the black water, strobing red and yellow lights in all directions, blaring words in an unknown language from a horn on its top. On the top of this bizarre metal beast is a closed hatch.

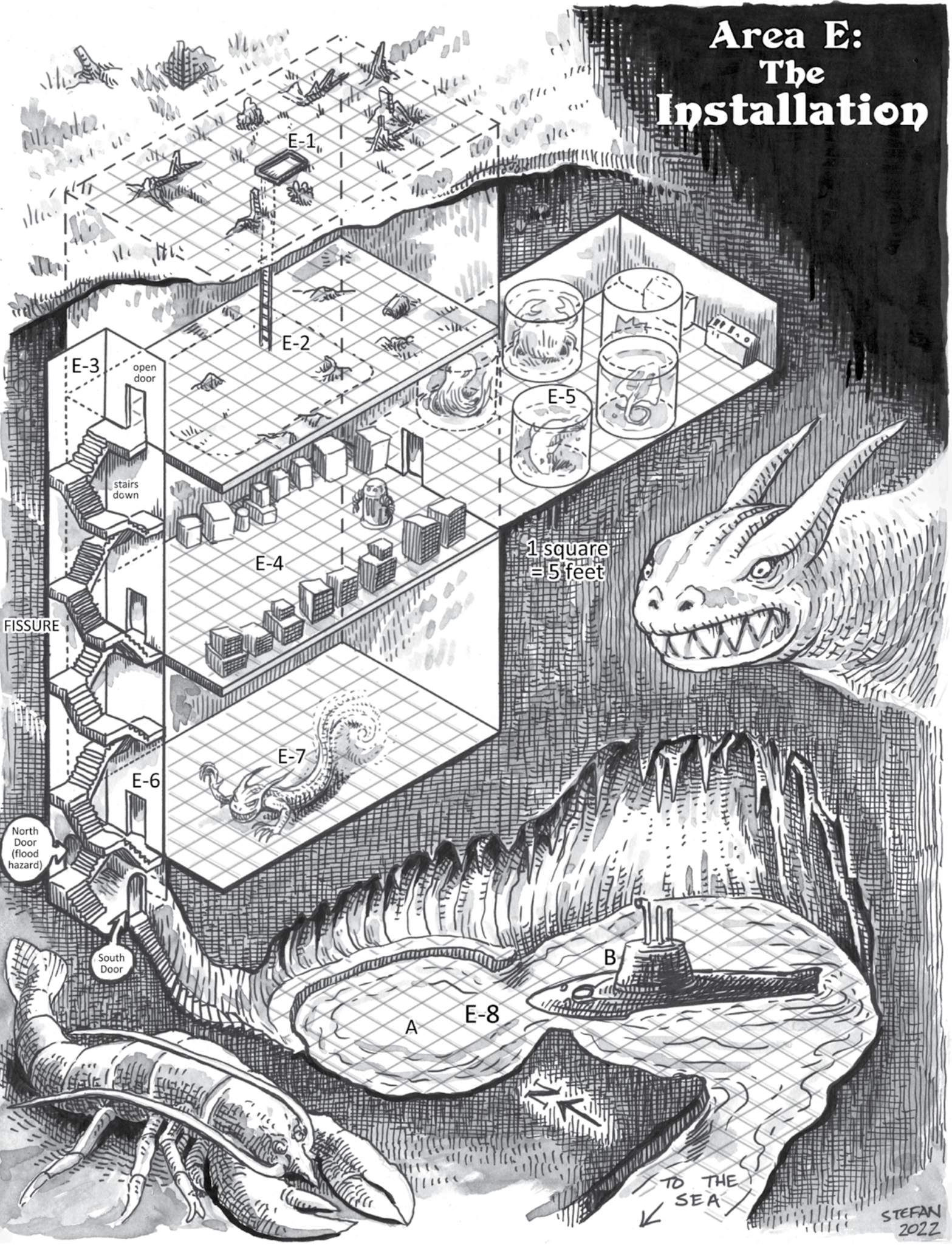
The metal stairway goes down about 60' and terminates in an open chamber filled with water. The submarine is submerging and surfacing repeatedly in some sort of malfunctioning fugue state, which accounts for the periodic strobing and shrill howling. The longer the PCs spend traversing to the ledge, the more they will notice the regular three minute intervals and perhaps even hear the sloshing of the water as it submerges.

The strange submersible is, of course, "The Howling God" that Reiger told the PCs of.

PCs will doubtless start to approach the thing on the ledge and encounter double hazards: first the ledge is wet and slippery and requires a DC 12 Agility check to traverse it. (After seeing how slippery it is, thieves can add their Climb Sheer Surfaces bonus for this check.)

More concerning by far, there is a giant mutant lobster submerged within this chamber. The lights and noise have

Area E: The Installation



E-1

E-2

E-3

open door

stairs down

E-4

E-5

1 square
= 5 feet

FISSURE

E-7

E-6

North Door
(flood hazard)

South Door

A

E-8

B

TO THE SEA

STEFAN
2022

worked it into a murderous frenzy and it will erupt from the water and attack any PCs traversing the area that it has made its own.

As the first of you cross halfway along the slippery ledge, the black water erupts and a hulking carapaced monster rises from the murk, attacking with two huge pincers!

Before attacking the lobster, those standing on the ledge must decide to fight cautiously with a -2d penalty to attacks or all-out with no penalty. If fighting all-out, a fumble will plunge the PC straight into the water.

Giant lobster: Init +5; Atk cutter claw +5 melee (2d6) and crusher claw +5 melee (1d7); AC 17; HD 10d8; hp 45; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP if crusher claw hits, the target must make a DC 20 Strength check or be dragged off the ledge down into the water; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +5; AL N.

The lobster is a near-mindless entity, and though it hungers for meaty sustenance, it should have a morale check if it is taking heavy damage with no reward.

Once it successfully grips a PCs, it will take the PC off the ledge (failing a DC 20 Strength check save) and go down 30' under the water to feast on its new prey. The PC must break out with a DC 15 Strength check or start to drown; once drowning, a character loses 1d6 points of Stamina per round, dying once they reach 0 Stamina.

Optional note: At the judge's discretion, the water has been contaminated by a small but steady radioactive leak for centuries (the installation's power core). PCs spending time in the water must make a DC 15 Fort save or be afflicted with rad-sickness, losing 1d4 points of Stamina permanently, losing their hair, and being afflicted with a treacherous cough. Eclectic judges not worried about hewing to close to Sabrehagen's canon might want to roll them both a defect and a mental mutation from *Mutant Crawl Classics RPG*.

Area E-8B - The Submarine: The submarine surfaces in the same place each time, the hull about 10' away from the eastern end of the ledge. Leaping onto the submarine's

surface requires a DC 15 Agility skill check to both make the leap and then land on the wet surface without skidding into the water. Once on the surface of the submarine, a PC will have two rounds to try to enter the sub before it submerges again. They may enter via the hatch, requiring a DC 20 Pick Lock check or a DC 30 Strength check.

Inside, the submarine is a cramped but comfortable space with room for eight passengers. A console near the center of the submarine has multiple panels with glowing lights, levers and dials. Mastering the submarine requires a DC 22 Intelligence check (see the rules for using technology on p. 66 of *DCC Empire of the East*), but any PC who has studied the submarine manual in Area E-4 for at least an hour will be +2d on the check.

The submarine is a precious artifact that can be used to launch attacks on any port city or Eastern encampment in the range of its missiles. In addition, it can transport people with almost total secrecy between any two points connected by water. The power source is nuclear and will persist for several more generations, but has a small chance of meltdown since it has not been scrupulously maintained.

Nuclear powered mini-submarine ("The Howling God"): DC 24; missile atk (10d12) ranged 5000/10000/30000' or torpedoes atk (10d12) ranged 5000/10000/25000'; MV 30 mph; missile and torpedo damage both within 100' radius; carries a commander, helmsman, gunner, and up to five other personnel; runs indefinitely with 1% chance of meltdown each month used, and has 8 missiles and 6 torpedoes. A user who has mastered the submarine while the lobster still lives may use the torpedoes to target and attack the lobster, but it will likely affect any creatures in the water or held in its claws (and possibly those on the ledge!).

Beyond the sub is an underwater tunnel exit that leads out into the western sea. For shorter sessions, skip to Concluding the Adventure to wrap things up. But if the PCs have the time and inclination to experiment with their hard-won artifact, go on to Appendix A!

APPENDIX A: BATTLE OF THE HOWLING GOD!

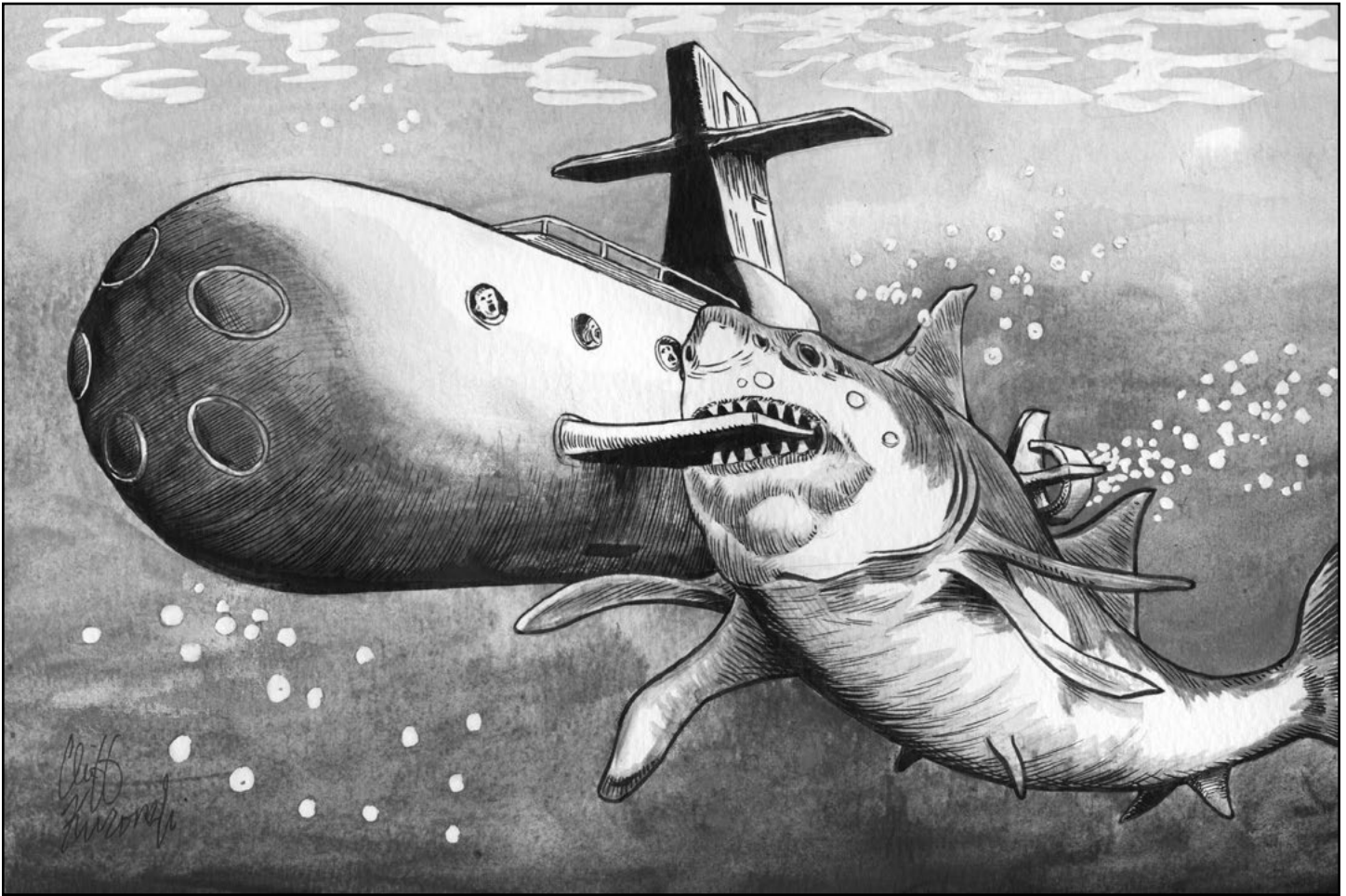


What fun is it to get a submarine without having a naval submarine combat? This is the question we asked ourselves at DCC Empire of the East. Without further ado, we bring you a wrap-up combat for if and when your players gain possession of The Howling God!

Sea combat in DCC Empire of the East: A comprehensive naval combat system between submersibles and traditional naval vessels is not in the scope of this product. To that end, judges should make the game flow and keep combat as true to "normal DCC rules" as possible. Judges are empowered to keep tension high and let PCs do cool stuff with their hard-won submarine, hereby referred to as "*The Howling God*." Statistical blocks are provided for all vessels and the

shark demon as if they were standard DCC monsters. Beginning with initiative, combat should be run in the standard way, rolling initiative for each entity, rolling attacks, damage and so forth upon the hulls of the crafts, noting special attacks for each. For obvious reasons, hulls have hundreds of hit points, missiles do tremendous damage and so on; but otherwise, there is no difference in adjudicating this combat. When a vessel's hit points go to zero or lower, it is sunk.

Criticals and fumbles: On a critical, compute the damage normally and then roll 1d3+1 and multiply the damage by that amount. On a fumble, roll 1d6: (1) the pathetic shot emboldens opponents who receive a +1 on their attacks next round; (2-3) the firing mechanism fails and it takes one



round to self-correct, lose next attack; (4-5) the ordinance detonates near the vessel for 2d10 damage; (6) catastrophic failure! The firing vessel takes 5d10 damage from its own malfunctioning guns.

At least three PCs are required to operate the submarine. One will be the commander and presumably is the one who has already mastered the submarine with the technology check in Area E-8B.

By the time that they arrive at Marinnol, the commander can have taught the other PCs the basics of using the submarine. With this time and coaching, it will only require a DC 15 artifact check to master the submarine's guns and piloting.

Before undertaking the combat, make sure the PCs have resolved the various roles:

One PC will command the submarine - that person has the best sense of all vessels around *The Howling God*, and will have to make command decisions for the crew. Only the commander must make the initial Will save when first seeing Szeshreen. The commander is plugged into the sensors and sonar of the submarine and may sense the general locations of all vessels and creatures as well as the environment in all directions for up to 20 miles.

One PC will be the helm officer and be in charge of steering and maneuvering the submarine, which will become of paramount importance in combat with Szeshreen. This PC

must make a DC 10 Agility check in order to turn the submarine each round, flee opponents, etc.

One PC will be in charge of the submarine's weapons, firing torpedoes/or and missiles. (This PC may choose to spend Luck and should roll the attack rolls.)

Spellcasting aboard *The Howling God*: There are two portholes that allow wizards to cast spells at targets that they can see (where line of sight is required). They may also engage in (very risky) psychic combat with Szeshreen or Sand.

Assuming the PCs follow Reiger's directive to return *The Howling God* to the secret cove north of Marinnol, the Emperor has learned of their plan via his diviners and laid a trap for them. Lacking confidence in his admirals, the Emperor also assigned the brilliant engineer-wizard Sand to construct a ship of entirely new design to ambush the PCs and their new toy. With the aid of a Djinn, Sand has constructed the Empire's first ironclad, the *Ominor*. And finally, the half-mad wizard has summoned an aquatic demon beyond his wildest ambition, a monstrous sea-borne predator.

You have traveled for three days to the north, hugging the shoreline as you seek Marinnol Bay. Rounding the cliff, the commander suddenly picks up two other presences in the sea nearby. One is a huge ship, larger than the Emperor's biggest warship, moving with a speed that should be impossible. Its sides are armored with steel plates. But worse, nearby underwater there floats a monstrous shadowy form glittering with sickly green light all over its

scaly surface. Only as it starts to shoot toward you to attack, can you make out its shark-like resemblance – but this is like no shark you have ever seen before!

The Ominor: Init +3; Atk cannon +10 missile fire (10d6, range 4000/8000/12000') and torpedoes +10 missile fire (5d6, range 2000/5000/10000'); AC 25; HD 10d24; hp 200; MV 1200'; Act 1d20; SP; SV Fort +20, Ref +3, Will N/A.

The *Ominor* is a novel vessel, an ironclad steam-powered ship. Its construction was possible only with the aid of a djinn. It's an impressive sight from above the water, larger than a standard medieval warship and clearly moving faster than sails would permit. It was built by the wizard Sand, a terribly burnt man who wears white robes and hobbles about in constant agony. Sand's wounds are the result of a decades-old alchemical accident.

Sand: Init +0; Atk dagger +0 melee (1d4); AC 11 (padded armor); HD 7d4; hp20; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP spells (+7 spell check): *reduce (reversal of enlarge), mending, charm person, soothe creature, read languages, forget, detect demon, levitation, summon demon, bind demon*; SV Fort +2; Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.

The *Ominor* is an exotic ship the likes of which few men in the Empire have ever seen. It poses little threat to *The Howling God* while it is submerged, but it is a tempting target as it was built at tremendous expense and its destruction would be a huge loss of prestige for Sand, its Captain Tremland, and the Imperial Navy as a whole.

The *Ominor* is armed with the Empire's first torpedoes. Only one of these can be fired per round, using Sand's sense of the demon's sights beneath the waves. Although a torpedo hit on *The Howling God* may also injure Szeshreen if within 100', Sand will choose to make this sacrifice in hopes of disabling this powerful weapon of the Free Folk.

The real threat to the PCs aboard *The Howling God* is the demon Szeshreen. Sand has spellburned immensely to summon a powerful aquatic demon that can attack *The Howling God* on its own terms (under the waves). This creature, a three-finned gigantic shark-monster is capable of both ramming and biting hard enough to damage the hull of the submarine. Szeshreen is thirty feet long, almost three tons of death.

Szeshreen (type IV demon): Init +4; Atk bite +12 melee (3d10) or ram +10 melee (4d10); AC 25; HD 8d12; hp 100; MV 600' swim; Act 2d20; SP demon traits, mortals seeing Szeshreen for the first time must make a DC 15 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds, on a successful bite, Szeshreen may make a bite attack at +1d next round if he does not move; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +12; AL C.

The demon shark is black but its fishscale skin glitters with tiny points of sickly green light. Its teeth are so powerful that a successful attack allows it to attack at +1d on the next round. The demon can move at a rate of 600' for 3 rounds, but after that, it drops back to 300' per round.

Note that if the submarine retreats and the helm officer makes their move check on a given round, Szeshreen does


not get to have a free attack when the sub leaves its "melee" zone.

The Howling God (submarine): Init (as per commander); Atk missile +10 missile fire (10d12, range 5000/10000/30000') or torpedo +10 missile fire (10d12, range 5000/10000/25000'); AC 25; HD 20d20; hp 200; MV 500'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +15, Ref +12, Will N/A.

The commander of *The Howling God* may notice Szeshreen at a distance of up to 2000'. Szeshreen will close that distance within three rounds, so the PCs have two rounds to target the demon-shark before it reaches the submarine. After Szeshreen attacks *The Howling God*, torpedo strikes will also damage the submarine itself (assuming the shark-demon is within 100').

The demon's presence roils the ethers around *The Howling God* significantly. Any wizard present can make a DC 10 Intelligence check to sense that a powerful sorcerer (Sand) is present on the ironclad ship, and reason that this wizard must be controlling the huge shark-demon, perhaps leading to the tactic of targeting the *Ominor* in order to break the control of the demon. Destruction of the *Ominor* will break Sand's control of Szeshreen and the demon will depart the mortal plane immediately.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

 illagers gather on the docks of Marinnol Bay and stare in amazement as the sub surfaces and the hatch opens. Slowly they walk to the docks, slack-jawed and begin to applaud your arrival, marveling at the strange contraption of the ancients. Amara, the leader of the Free Folk here steps forward, beaming, and welcomes you to a refuge in which you can rest, heal and debrief, while being feasted with a true heroes' welcome.

Should the PCs survive and deliver the submarine to Marinnol Bay, they are welcomed as heroes. This small outpost is so far from the Empire that it operates semi-openly as a Free Folk redoubt and the party may rest and recharge here. The leader of the outpost, Amara, will no doubt offer them more adventure soon, either as the captains of their new vessel or back overland as an experienced strike team. *The Howling God* may be used to launch attacks, to ferry cargo secretly or for espionage. The PCs of course may need to adventure further to find more ammunition or even seek the power that will summon a djinn to replicate it. Whatever the future holds, the only sure thing is that freedom beckons and adventure awaits!



If you can escape this place, travel 3-4 days to the northwest and seek the tower of Clay the wizard. If you travel north through the forest, beware the monsters and spirits of those woods. Even the Empire leaves it alone. If you travel up the western highway to the north, your journey will be easier and faster but there will be little cover to protect you from leatherwings. The barren western shore is quiet but the East's forces may find you there as well. Once you find Clay, the place you seek is near, less than a day's travel to the north. Find the steel door, go deep and seek the Howling God and return it to Marinnol Bay to the far north. Make haste and good luck. I go to my death soon.

R

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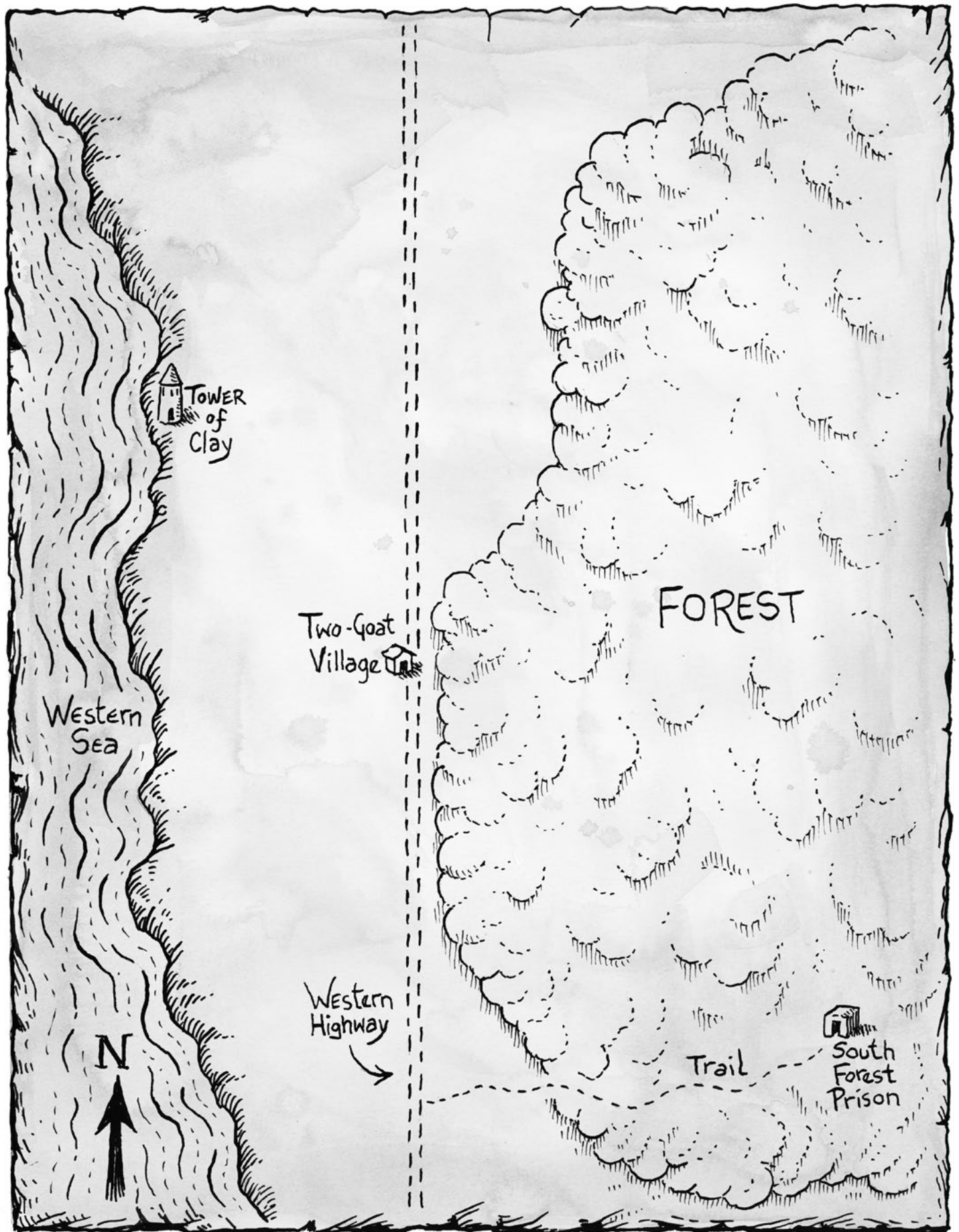
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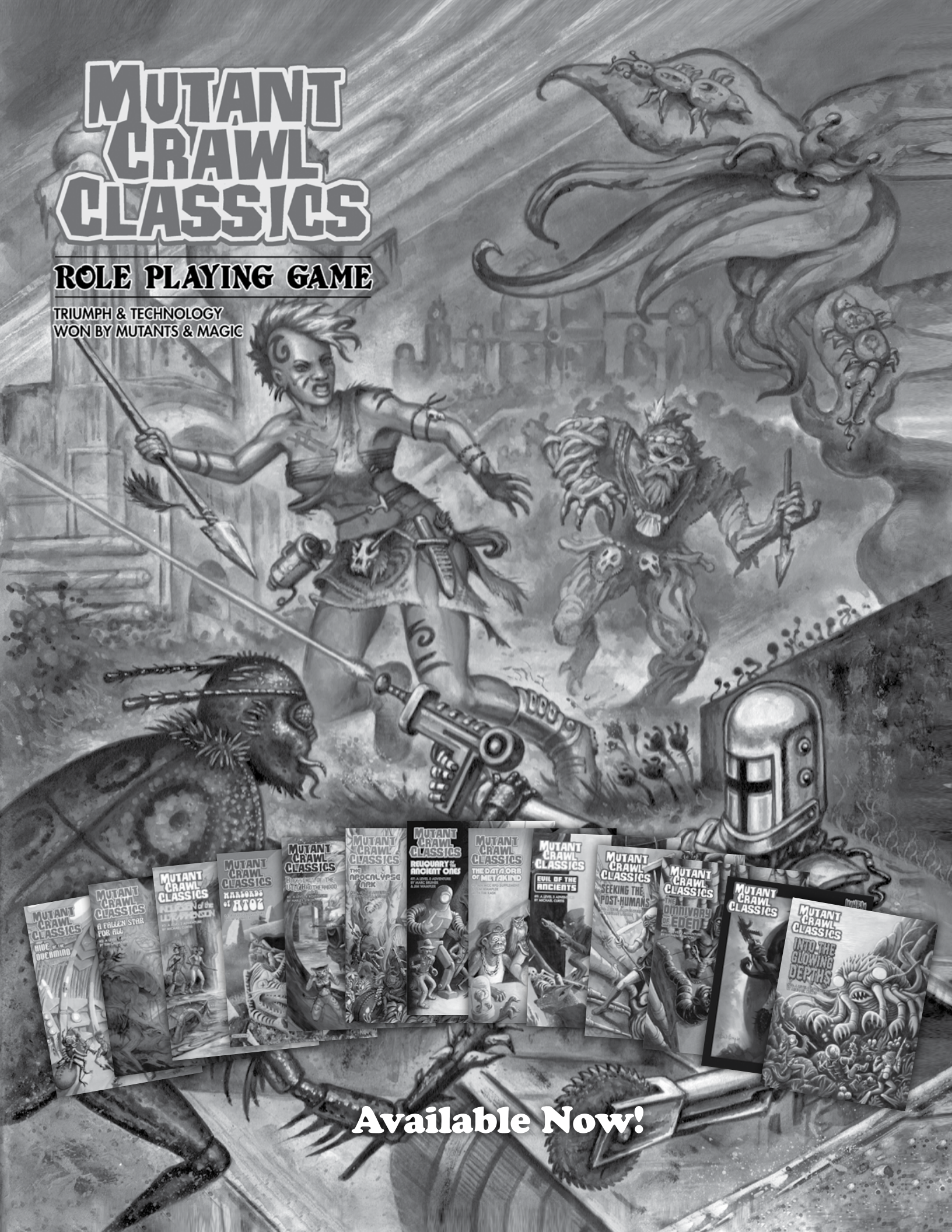
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