

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

Trials of the Toy Makers

2014 HOLIDAY MODULE
A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
BY STEVE BEAN



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INTRODUCTION



his adventure is for 6-8 2nd-level characters. It is helpful for the party to have a cleric and a wizard. The climactic battle is a spell duel with a demigod. Judges should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the spell duel rules (core rule-book, p. 98-103). The party will struggle with this final encounter without a spell caster or two with some of the counter-spells listed in the area 4-14 description.

This adventure is a murder-mystery with a detailed back story and a complex web of clues to what has happened and what the PCs need to do to set things right. Judges should make sure they understand the material and are very familiar with the module before running it.

BACKGROUND

It is winter in a far northern region of semi-arctic steppes. The adventurers could be there headed for another adventure (e.g., *DCC #72: Beyond the Black Gate*) or they might be searching for the gateway into the underworld that is reputed to exist in these lands, hoping to rescue a fallen comrade from the clutches of Death incarnate. In any event, the party happens upon an enclave of semi-nomadic, wild elves called the Makarhu. These proud, fierce people welcome them as guests and the PCs are able to observe an important annual event. Every night for three nights, fey gnomes called Konhengen secretly visit the Makarhu village encampment and leave a gift of a brightly painted miniature model of a common object or animal for one child. Strangely, this year, the gifting abruptly stops about four nights before solstice eve. Never in living memory has the gifting ended any time other than after the night of the solstice has passed. When village children go missing, the PCs are recruited to rescue them – and are then thrust into a larger drama, as well.

THE KONHENGEN'S SACRED MISSION

The Makarhu are unaware that there is a reason other than generosity behind the Konhengen's gift-giving – one with profound mystical importance.

All year long the sun – called Kivas Kota or “fiery eagle” in the Makarhu language – flies through the heavens. Each night it alights in the dark underworld to rest. Over the course of the year the eagle grows increasingly fatigued and rests for longer and longer periods.

Long ago, Tuwonatar – the God of Death – grew to hate the sun as life-giver and because its eternal nature defies him. Every year on the solstice, when the sun takes its longest rest in the underworld, Tuwonatar sends forth an army of spirits to try to trap the sun in the layer of necromantic energy that enshrouds the lands of the dead.

The god Sakanta set his will to opposing Tuwonatar and sought a worthy people on whom to bestow the sacred mission of protecting the sun. He found a noble gnomish race called the Konhengen and placed a geas on them.

To help them with the mission, Sakanta gave them a Sammas: an enchanted version of a portable mill for grinding grain, coffee, etc. The Konhengen use the Sammas for an immense magical working: the mill creates new constellations and enables these constellations to function together as the component parts of a heavenly artifact that can pull the sun out the underworld.

Unsurprisingly, Tuwonatar is constantly trying to sabotage the Konhengen's work. So over the years the gnomes have developed strategies for keeping their artifact designs secret. They select common objects and animals on which to base their manufactured constella-

tions. The fact that these objects do not immediately suggest parts of a magical machine makes it difficult for underworld spies to determine exactly how the artifact will function. The Konhengen intentionally over-design their artifacts and make them unnecessarily complex – this further conceals how exactly an artifact will rescue the sun. To further confound their enemies, the Konhengen create a new design each year and avoid repeated use of the same Sammas-created constellations.

To ensure the success of each design, the Konhengen draw schematics and test the interaction between component parts in sequence with small, working models. They cannot destroy their schematics or models before an artifact is finished, both because the models and drawings help guide the operation of the Sammas but also because the wording of the divine geas prevents them from intentionally damaging anything *integral to the creation of the artifact*. Sakanta deliberately worded the geas this way to prevent the enemy from bending the will of Konhengen and turning them into saboteurs. But this means that the designs and models are at risk of being stolen.

To prevent such thefts, the Konhengen invented a way to encrypt their schematics. Furthermore, after the Konhengen test the interaction between two components, they give any model that is no longer needed to a Makarhu child. Youthful innocence acts as a natural bane against the spirits of the dead and helps deter Tuwonatar's agents. Also, children being what they are, they usually break the models quickly, rendering them less useful as clues to the workings of the heavenly artifact.

This is the real story of how the Makarhu became the recipients of the now-ancient tradition of the gifting.

BUT THIS YEAR...

Tuwonatar has brought a new player into this age-old conflict: Yedreksas, the demonic personification of envy. Tuwonatar spent the past few decades fostering a friendship with Yedreksas. He then directed Yedreksas' innate sense of envy toward the sun and Yedreksas quickly developed a deep resentment of Kivas Kota's beauty and grandeur.

Yedreksas' percolating envy eventually boiled over and he exploded into violent action. He fashioned a battalion of animated constructs and assaulted the Konhengen's island-built aerie. Yedreksas butchered the Konhengen down to the last gnome. They cannot complete their sacred mission – that now falls to the adventurers. The party must enter the aerie, learn what must be done and construct a heavenly artifact to save the sun, otherwise the world will be plunged into eternal darkness!

Appendix A provides additional detail on key figures in this adventure's cosmic back story.

THE LONGEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR...

...May not be long enough! This adventure requires that the judge keep careful track of time. Judges Reference A – Timekeeping Sheet & Desperate Phantoplasms Encounter Table can be reproduced and used as a simple record keeping sheet for tracking in-game time. The adventurers must save the sun before full dawn is due to arrive at 9am on the morning after solstice eve. When the party sets out it will be an hour after midday. The journey to the lake takes an hour. Sunset then begins and the land is fully dark by 3pm. This gives the party about 20 hours from when they set out to rescue the sun.

In playtesting, the players' adventurers have typically spent five hours of game time in the aerie, give or take. This means that a party of adventurers *could* conceivably explore the aerie, figure out what they need to do, return to the village-encampment of the Makarhu to recuperate (if needed) and still have 2-3 hours before dawn to complete the quest.

COMPLETING THIS ADVENTURE

The PCs begin the adventure believing they need only rescue three Makarhu children, but the PCs have a much bigger task: taking on the sacred Konhengen mission of creating a celestial artifact and rescuing the sun. The table, below, presents a timeline of how events unfold before and during the adventure. The table also lays out in one place what the PCs will need to learn, the sub-tasks they will need to accomplish as well as the tools and materials they will need to obtain to build the celestial artifact. The table also shows where in the dungeon the PCs can obtain the requisite knowledge and materials:

Timeline	Events & Tasks Required to Complete the Quest
Ages ago	Tuwonatar, God of Death, develops a hatred of the sun, called Kivas Kota (“fiery eagle” in the Makarhu language). He hatches a plot to imprison the sun on Solstice Eve when it rests in the underworld and the power of Death is greatest. The greater god Sakanta places a geas on the Konhengen to rescue the sun each year. He gives them a powerful artifact called the Sammas – a magical hand mill – to help them.
Every year since	Tuwonatar’s army of spirits has attempted to entrap the sun in the web of necromantic energy that envelops the underworld and the Konhengen have rescued it with a celestial artifact designed and built by them.
A few months ago	Tuwonatar meets and befriends Yedreksas. He focuses Yedreksas’ attention, and his innate sense of obsessive envy, on the sun.
7 nights before the solstice	The PCs become honored guests of the Makarhu. That night, the Konhengen gift the working model of the crossbow component of this year’s artifact design to Sreeth, a Makarhu girl-child.
6 nights before the solstice	The Konhengen gift the working model of the bell component of this year’s artifact design to Oeth, a Makarhu girl-child.
5 nights before the solstice	The Konhengen gift the working model of the mouse component of this year’s artifact design to Thrune, a Makarhu boy-child. The Konhengen have built the bucket component model, have decrypted the bellows schematic and are building the bellows component model to test in combination with the bucket.
Afternoon of the 4 th night before the solstice	The Konhengen decrypt the sailboat schematic in preparation for building the model. Yedreksas, and his battalion of constructs, assault the Konhengen aerie. The gnomes are all murdered and the bellows and sailboat schematic and the bellows model are all destroyed in the violence.
4 nights before the solstice	No gift is delivered to the Makarhu village.
3 nights before the solstice	No gift is delivered to the Makarhu village.

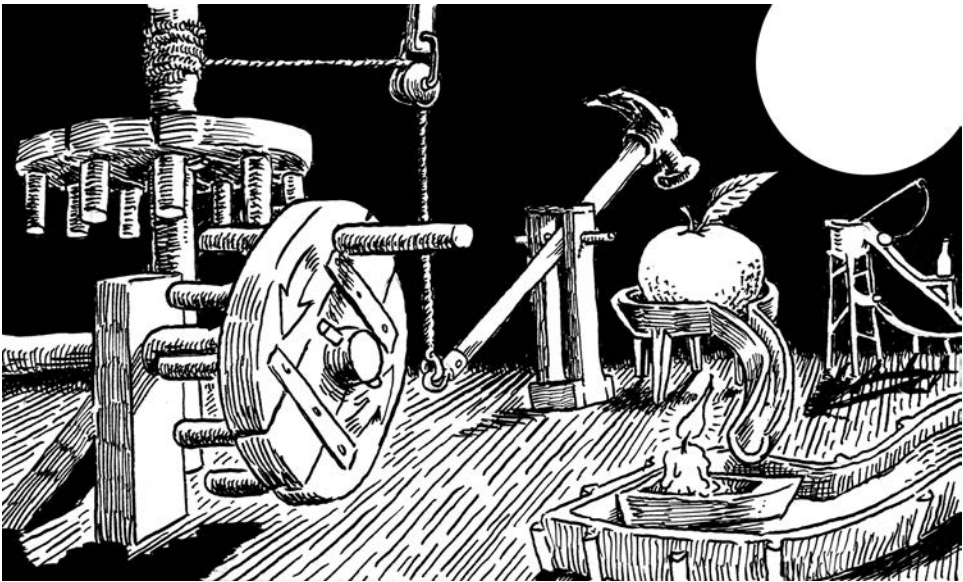
Timeline	Events & Tasks Required to Complete the Quest (continued)
The morning of 2 nights before the solstice	The Makarhu children implore the adults in their village-encampment to investigate what happened to the Konhengen. The Makarhu elders forbid any Makarhu from entering the Taboo Lands where the Konhengen dwell.
2 nights before the solstice	No gift is delivered to the Makarhu village.
Morning before Solstice Eve	Three Makarhu children, Sreeth, Byur and Elba, leave their village before daybreak and enter the Taboo Lands.
Afternoon before Solstice Eve	The parents of the three children secretly ask the PCs to go find the children. The PCs follow the trail of the children northwards through the forest and are ambushed by Scything Topiaries.
2pm+	The PCs discover the Lake of God's Blood and enter the Arched Island Aerie of the Konhengen. Tuwonatar, the God of Death, senses that the PCs have entered the aerie and conducts a ritual to raise the ghosts of the Konhengen and manipulate them into opposing the PCs. At this point, the quest to rescue the sun begins. See below for more information.
3pm-12 mid	Ghosts of the Konhengen raised by Tuwonatar – called Desperate Phantoplasms – fill the aerie in increasing numbers
6pm-12 mid	Resistance to Turn Unholy increases from 1 to 2 HD.
12 mid-9am	The invasion of the aerie by the Desperate Phantoplasms peaks but after midnight their power begins to wane and they are again affected as 1 HD creatures by Turn Unholy
9am	The sun rises... or doesn't! If the PCs are successful they earn a boon from Sakanta and their reward from the Makarhu parents.
After the solstice	If the PCs are unsuccessful, the world is plunged into permanent darkness – until the PCs can complete some other quest to rescue the sun. Even if the PCs are successful, someone has to replace the Konhengen – the search for such a replacement could be a follow-up quest.

TRANSLATING KONHENGEN: A USEFUL SKILL

If your party does not have a spell caster with the spell *Comprehend Languages* or a thief with a very good Read Languages skill bonus then one of the Makarhu parents who is also a sorceress gives the party two scrolls – each one inscribed with the spell *Comprehend Languages*. The witch tells the party “No earthly language is spoken in the Taboo Lands and you may need to parley with its denizens to complete your quest.”

When the quest to rescue the sun begins (at 1:00 PM or after), the PCs need to complete the following tasks, with the clues or indicated items available to help:

Task	Clues, Things Needed, or Help
Learn the true purpose behind the gift-giving.	Credo (Posted on plaques in 14 places in the aerie; Commemorative Ode (area 4-6, Library); ghost of Tramidien, Head Librarian (area 4-6, Library); the litanies of the Desperate Phantoplasms (various sub-locations in area 4, the Konhengen Aerie).
Learn about the need to build a celestial artifact to rescue the sun.	Commemorative Ode (area 4-6, Library); ghost of Tramidien (area 4-6, Library); the litanies of the Desperate Phantoplasms (various sub-locations in area 4, the Konhengen Aerie).
Learn that milling Firmament from the Quarry in the Sammas can create new constellations or cause new or existing constellations to take action.	Telepathic communication with the the Sammas (area 4-14, Sammas Vault); Credo (Plaques in 14 locations in area 4, the Konhengen Aerie); Commemorative Ode (area 4-6, Library); ghost of Tramidien (area 4-6, Library).
Learn how to operate the Sammas: how much Firmament is required, that the operator must focus on a visual or physical representation of what he wants to create, and that others can help the operator succeed at using the Sammas.	Telepathic communication with the Sammas (area 4-14, Sammas Vault); ghost of Trami-dien (area 4-6, Library).



Task	Clues, Things Needed, or Help
Obtain Firmament (1 pint per artifact component one pint per component action in an artifact design).	Area 4-1, Inclinator and area 4-0, Quarry.
Decipher a Konhengen design for a celestial artifact. (See illustrations of this year's and last year's design, on page 40)	Commemorative Ode (area 4-6, Library); Mouse component schematic (area 4-7, Dormitory); Bucket component schematic (area 4-10, Limineria); Anchor component schematic (area 4-13, Atelier); constellations depicted on the celestiopticon's projection lenses (area 4-12, Astrarium); the Makarhu children hiding near area 4-9, Lyceum can identify gifts given this year and last year – all of last year's gifts correspond to things mentioned in the ode.
Or, create their own design.	Materials from area 4-13, Atelier can be used to sketch a new design.
Obtain or create visual foci for all of the components in their celestial artifact's design.	Clue: Mouse, Bucket and Anchor component schematics; Bucket model (area 4-10, Limineria); Crossbow model (area 4-9, Lyceum); celestiopticon projection lenses (area 4-12, Astrarium) or PCs can gather objects or build models using tools and materials in area 4, the Konhengen Aerie.
Use the Sammas to mill Firmament and create and trigger the celestial artifact. (Requires a series of ability checks.)	Clue: Sammas (area 4-14, Sammas Vault) + an artifact design + visual/physical foci of artifact components Firmament.
Fend off Yedreksas when he arrives to stop them. (Highly likely to require successful spell-dueling.)	Clue: Spellcasters, counter spells &... chutzpah! (Spellburn helps a lot too...)

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Area	Type	Encounter
1	C	Scything Topiaries (Construct)
4	C	Desperate Phantoplasms (Kanhengen Ghosts)
4-0	T	Crustulus Deorum
4-1	C	Enraged Giant Slug
4-3	C	Scything Topiaries (Construct)
4-4	C	Hardstave Arachnids (Construct)
4-6	C	Tramidien, a Spiteful Spirit
4-8	T	Unstable Elevator
4-9	C	Bludgeoning Wicker-Bear (Construct); Makarhu children
4-12	T	Malfunctioning Orrery
4-14	C	Yedreksas, Demon of Envy

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

You have been trekking about a semi-arctic region of northern steppes peppered with hills, herds of elk and crystal-clear lakes of ice-cold water. Your party is approached by a group of semi-nomadic, wild elves called the Makarhu. These proud, fierce people have no fear of outsiders and take you back to their village encampment as honored guests. There you bear witness to an annual event of great mystical significance.

Every night for three nights, fey gnomes called Konhengen secretly visit the village encampment and leave a gift of a brightly painted miniature model for one child – first a crossbow, then a bell, then a mouse. Makarhu legend says that only the most virtuous children receive these gifts, explaining why not all children receive them and why different numbers of children receive gifts from year to year.

Then, the fourth night before solstice eve passes but no gift is delivered. Never in living memory has there been an interruption like this in the gifting – whatever the number of gifts given, they have always been delivered on consecutive nights leading up to and including the night of the solstice.

The Makarhu children are distraught. The adults hide their surprise and counsel patience. But then another night passes with no gift. Clearly the gifting has ended with the solstice still two nights away. You learn that the end of the gift-giving has always been heralded by a singularly spectacular display of the aurora borealis, but no “Northern Lights” have appeared in the sky this year.

The Makarhu elders try to put on a “good face,” telling the children that the foreshortened gifting is a sign that they must be especially virtuous in the coming year. But among themselves, these same elders agree that the abrupt end to the gifting this year has ominous overtones.

Several Makarhu children are certain that they were meant to receive gifts. They insist that evil has befallen the Konhengen and implore the adults to investigate. But it is taboo for the Makarhu to enter the lands where the Konhengen are said to dwell and so nothing is done.

The sun rises on the morning before solstice eve with the whole village-encampment alarmed by the discovery that three children headed north into the Taboo Lands just before daybreak. The village elders forbid any Makarhu from further breaking the taboo and give the children up as lost.

But later, several parents approach you discreetly and beg you to find the children. As outsiders they believe you will suffer no harm in breaking taboo and they promise you a reward for the safe return of their children Sreeth, Byur and Elba.

LOGIC PUZZLES: THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO RESCUE THE SUN

Judges should take note of the fact that many of the aides to completing the artifact that PCs will find in the dungeon – such as schematics and designs – have been encrypted by the Konhengen to protect them from enemy theft. These serve as puzzles for the players. However, there are other ways, besides solving the puzzles, for the PCs to accomplish their goals. Most notably, Tramidien, the spirit of spite in area 4-6, the Library, can tell PCs anything they want to know. So players should be encouraged to work on the puzzles only for as long as it is fun. In play-testing, when groups were stumped by a puzzle they **always** had somewhere else in the dungeon they wanted to explore, so the session never bogged down.

The case is similar with the design of the celestial artifact. The PC's artifact does *not* need to be as complicated as a typical Konhengen design – any reasonable attempt at improvising a design should be judged successful. The challenge in the adventure is for the party to figure out *what* they need to do and then resist Yedreksas' attempts to stop them. In playtesting, half the groups used a Konhengen design and half invented their own.

AREAS OF THE MAP

Area 1 – Forest: *You set out northwards, following a narrow deer track marked with the occasional tiny elf footprint. The track leads deep into a dense evergreen forest. The conifers give off a cool, clean smell and their dark green needles stand out vividly against patches of snow.*

Shortly after the party sets out they are ambushed by a four of Yedreksas' magical constructs – Scything Topiaries.

Scything Topiaries are built from the trunks and branches of Holly bushes. They are squat figures 3'-5' tall with broad shoulders, no head and a tripod of tree-trunk legs. Their arms end in bunches of long, tendril-like branches with scores of serrated leaves hardened by magical means into wicked cat o' nine tails. They fight with these two whip-like arms, aiming their slashing leaves at opponents' eyes. The first time a Scything Topiary lands a critical hit it automatically blinds its opponent instead of rolling on the table (Laying on Hands can heal this condition as organ damage). In a forest setting a Scything Topiary is almost perfectly camouflaged, giving it surprise at the start of combat. As constructs they never make morale checks and are immune to Will-affecting spells.

Scything Topiary (4): Init +4; Atk whip +3 melee (1d4); AC 15; HD 3d8; hp 14 each; MV 25'; Act 2d20; SP surprise from camouflage, first critical hit automatically blinds opponent; critical hit threat range of 18-20, immune to will-affecting spells, no morale checks; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +8; AL C.

Area 2 – Lake of God's Blood: *You emerge from the forest near a narrow lake 1/3 of a mile long. A half-dozen islands are scattered across its surface. The largest forms a great stony arch 600' long and almost 200' tall. From this island's apex a small stream of ruby liquid burbles out of a crack and cascades into the lake. The liquid has given the lake water an auburn hue that contrasts darkly with the crystal-clarity of the other lakes and streams you've seen. A bridge crosses a narrow stretch of lake to the southern shore of the arched island.*

The Lake Area Map depicts the lake and its environs.

If the party observes the shores of the lake while there is still daylight they will see groups of Scything Topiaries patrolling the area. For every fifteen minutes the party spends exploring around the lake they will be ambushed by 1d6 Scything Topiaries.

Area 3 – Apex of the Arch: *At the top of the island is a bald cap of granite marred by a roughly triangular crevice 8' long and 6' wide at the base. The eastern edge of the crevice has broken away forming a horizontal, slightly down-sloping rock face. Out of a crack in this, at the edge of this rock face, flows the rivulet of ruby liquid that creates the small waterfall dropping into the lake. Looking down into the crevice you see it is filled with a 3' thick quartz skylight. The transparency of the quartz allows you to see a 30' diameter round chamber below (area 4-14, the Sammas Vault).*

Area 4 – The Konhengen Aerie: *As you approach the largest of the lake's islands you observe that the huge arched outcrop is well-weathered. Enough soil has collected in its seams to support healthy patches of herbs and shrubs. Its grey granite is blanketed with colorful lichens. A small copse of trees carpets the lowest, flatter stretch of its southern slope. A stone and timber bridge, spartan but stoutly crafted, crosses from the western lake shore to the island.*

From the island-end of the bridge PCs can see the shattered remnants of a pair of large double doors opening into a 20' long underground passage leading to area 4-4, the Timber Vault. These doors were previously secret, fashioned to look like part of the rock face. This is the site of Yedreksas' forced entry into the aerie.

The interior of the aerie is carved out of solid rock. Its architectural design and quality of construction shows evidence of grandmaster-level skill. The style is ancient, understated and classical, with stunning lines but very little ornamentation.

The inside spaces of the aerie will feel fairly small to human-sized adventurers. Typical ceiling heights are 6' and typical hallway widths are 10'. Considered from the perspective of the 3' tall Konhengen, however, this is a grand space.

Every public room in the aerie has a paper-thin mithril plaque mounted on the wall (indicated by a "P" on the floor plan maps – there are 14 in total) and engraved with the Konhengens' credo – entitled "Devotion" – written in their runic tongue, Konhengen (DC 12 *read language* or *comprehend language* check to translate). If the party translates the credo, give them Player Handout A – Devotion. Each plaque is worth 35 gp to a metalsmith.

ECTOPLASMIC INVASION

A couple of hours after the party enters the aerie, Tuwonatar raises a host of un-dead called Desperate Phantoplasms to oppose the PCs. These Desperate Phantoplasms are semi-corporeal spirits of the murdered Konhengen and all their ancestors. Tuwonatar has corrupted their spirits, using the imminent failure of the Konhengen's sacred mission to imbue them with doubt and despair. The Desperate Phantoplasms are obsessed with the Sammas and seek to guard it against all non-Konhengen.



The Desperate Phantoplasms fill the aerie over time, increasing in numbers every hour. They then serve as wandering monsters, encountering and attacking the party at times and specific locations determined by the judge. Judge's Reference A – Timekeeping Sheet & Desperate Phantoplasms Encounter Table shows the number of Desperate Phantoplasms that will be encountered on each level of the aerie depending on the time of night. The Desperate Phantoplasms will not enter area 4-14, the Sammas Vault and the Crustulus Deorum repels them, barring them from area 4-0, the Quarry. Note that "killed" phantoplasms slowly re-materialize – any level of the aerie will refill with the number of phantoplasms indicated on the Desperate Phantoplasms Encounter Table three turns after any combat.

Desperate Phantoplasms will be seen rising from the corpses of the murdered Konhengen. They appear as twisted, malformed, spectral Konhengen composed of masses of web-like strands of ectoplasm. Desperate Phantoplasms' silent gliding movement and semi-corporeality grant them surprise if the PCs are not on their guard. An initial attack draws any phantoplasms in other parts of the current level into the fight. Attacks by these subsequent groups are also likely to achieve surprise because of their silent movement and the camouflage effect of their semi-corporeal state.

The halfling-sized phantoplasms attack living beings using grappling (core rulebook, p. 96). They inflict 2 hp of life-drain damage with a successful hit. Anyone taking 4 or more points of damage from phantoplastic attacks in a single round must make a DC 13 Fort save or lose one point of either Personality or Stamina (player's choice, may be healed by *Remove Curse*). The judge can combine multiple phantoplasms into a single attack roll. Each additional phantoplasma beyond the first who attacks the same target adds a cumulative +1 bonus to the grapple roll. A hit from a combined attack does 1 hp of damage plus 1 hp per Desperate Phantasm involved in the combined attack.

Despite their ghostly nature, the phantoplasms' ectoplasmic form does have substance and they can be destroyed by physical means.

The Phantoplasms make continuous moaning sounds. PCs who listen carefully will realize that the moaning is actually low, ghostly, hollow-toned speech. Translating the moaning (DC 12 *comprehend languages* check) reveals the litany being recited on the level of aerie in which the encounter is taking place according to the following list:

Level Litany

- 1 "Tuwonatar has achieved his heart's darkest desire: eternal night is falling..."
- 2 "Woe! Tuwonatar cultivated Yedreksas' spite and has reaped the end of the Konhengen..."
- 3 "The heavenly artifact is not built. We have failed in our sacred mission..."
- 4 "The sun has set in the underworld for the last time... Kivas Kota will not return..."

Desperate Phantoplasms: Init -1; Atk +2 grappling (2 or swarm tactics, see SP); AC 10; HD 2d3; hp 4 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP swarm tactics (see above), immune to piercing weapons and missile weapons, slashing weapons do half damage, susceptible to mind-affecting spells, cannot pass through solid objects, turned as un-dead; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +6; AL N.

Area 4-0 – Firmament Quarry: *This crudely-hewn, roughly circular chamber features a sloped ramp spiraling downward along the room's outer perimeter. Even the untrained eye can see that the ramp follows the smoothed-out courses of previously mined sections of a still-active quarry. The bottom of the quarry is a good 50' from the peak of the fluted ceiling. The material being quarried looks like an unusual white limestone. It has a rough-textured, almost chalky surface that somehow also scintillates with a rainbow sheen reminiscent of oil on water or mother-of-pearl. A 10' puddle of pinkish-gray, milky liquid – a seep – is caked at its edge with a paste the same color as the water.*

Desperate Phantoplasms will not enter the quarry.

This is where the Konhengen mine Firmament – the foundational material of all celestial bodies – to serve as grist for the Sammas to mill into new constellations. In appearance Firmament is suggestive of limestone but it is actually an eggshell material. Its mystic nature is discernible from the fact that it has a prismatic sheen despite there being no obvious source of luminescence on what is otherwise a matte, chalky surface.

The Konhengen accidentally struck an underground seep, letting lake water into the quarry. Normally, this would be a routine mining issue but the water of the lake is mixed with the ichor trickling from the apex of the arch. The ichor and Firmament have mixed to create a unique paste called *Crustulus Deorum*, which has special alchemical properties. Layered between two substances and allowed to dry, it creates a nigh unbreakable bond. It tends to assume properties that are opposed to other substances to which it is introduced. As a result, with skilled application, it can serve almost any purpose, e.g. as an antidote to poison or as a strong solvent. If exposed to heat it is explosive. Igniting one pound of the paste (approximately a tankard full) will produce an explosion that damages anything within 50'.

The magical explosion does 10d6 damage, -1d6 for every 5' distance from the explosive. It can make holes in the walls of buildings, blow stout doors off their frames, etc.

Up to three pounds of *Crustulus Deorum* can be scraped from the rim of the seep at a rate of 1 pound per turn. However, if it is not stored in an airtight container or kept moist it will cure in six turns with potentially interesting adhesive consequences. Also, direct exposure to flame (e.g., a torch or being caught in a Fireball) and... BOOM!

Area 4-1 – Slug-Driven Inclinator: *The passage out of the quarry leads to a 10' high rough-hewn tunnel that slopes upward at an extreme angle – 50 degrees at least! Two pairs of grooves are cut into the stone floor and extend as far up the incline as you can see. On the flat landing before the incline starts the grooves curve to meet each other forming a u-turn. The 6' space in the middle of each pair of grooves is unevenly coated in a thick, clear viscous substance.*

This steep railway is used to haul Firmament up to the storage area. Small mining carts run on grooved tracks, pulled by a domesticated giant slug whose slime trail enables it to ascend the improbably steep track.

The inclinator's ramp is 300' long. Half-dry slug slime makes it possible for the PCs to traverse it on foot, but ascending it is arduous. Halfway along the track is a mining cart with cut blocks of Firmament and four dead Konhengen. They have all been killed by laceration – the work of Scything Topiaries. A 16' long slug is still harnessed to the cart but is enraged by the slaughter it witnessed. It will not allow the party to pass unmolested.

Giant Slug (1): Init -6 [-4 unharnessed]; Atk crush +0 melee [+2 unharnessed] (3d4); AC 16; HD 4d12; hp 26; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP sticky slime (other creatures move at half normal speed in slime trail); SV Fort +3, Ref -8 [-6 unharnessed], Will +0; AL N.

Area 4-2 – Storage Vaults: *Two large rectangular spaces comprise a warehouse. The northern space contains two features: a metal frame – vertical rails on which a 10' square elevator platform would hang and run and a grooved track carved into the floor. A small mining cart is parked alongside the track and leather tack and harness for a huge draft animal hangs from the wall. The tracks lead through two 10' arched openings.*

The southern space contains a metal pen for some kind of huge animal as well as stalls containing all manner of supplies and raw materials: ores, grains, raw fiber, finished cloth, salt, bins and piles of fodder, tanned hides, tools, household implements and myriad other items. A stall filled with coops houses 3' long lizards and a split rail corral confines two-dozen 3' long moles.

There is no set encounter here.

The elevator platform is stuck two levels up (60' above) in area 4-8, leaving a 10' square opening through the ceiling to the level above.

A search of the storage vault yields gnome-sized versions of any equipment from Table 3-4 in the core rulebook (p. 73). There are no weapons or armor. If the party spends 10 minutes searching they find some kind of bulky but high-quality store worth 10d10 gp. (e.g., silk cloth, carved serving dishes, etc.). The moles are livestock providing milk and meat while the lizards provide edible eggs. Two arched tunnel entrances lead to area 4-1, the Slug-Driven Inclinator.

Area 4-3 – Kitchen: *Free-swinging double doors lead into a large kitchen. The space is well equipped with stone ovens, fireplaces containing stewpot tripods, prep tables and even a small brewery. Just off of the main kitchen is a large, well-stocked pantry. It appears that it was mealtime when an attack came. Serving trays have been thrown about the room and their contents lie commingled with the dried blood of those who were slaughtered here. Five gnome corpses litter the space. Two*

bear evidence of strangulation and laceration as the cause of death. Two appear to have force-fed each other the dishes they were preparing until they both suffocated. The fifth was spitted and roasted alive over a now-cold fire.

The Konhengen here who were not incited to murder by Yedreksas' envy-inducing power were slain by the Topiaries. Three of the constructs remain in the room hiding in a pile of cook stove firewood.

Scything Topiaries (3): Init +4; Atk whip +3 melee (1d4); AC 15; HD 3d8; hp 14 each; MV 25'; Act 2d20; SP surprise from camouflage, first critical hit automatically blinds opponent; critical hit threat range of 18-20, immune to will-affecting spells, no morale checks; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +8; AL C.

A rope-operated dumbwaiter services this level and the three levels above it. Its cart is currently positioned in area 4-6, the Library.

Area 4-4 – Timber Curing Vault: *This vaulted chamber is well-equipped to process timber. A milling area with a large, gear-driven circular blade and sawing pits sits clean and ready for use. Sharpened hand-tools are stored on shelves. Two bays hold racks in which milled lumber of all dimensions sits curing. A third bay contains a debris pile of cutoffs, bark and slash. A neatly stacked pile of cut trees sits ready for milling. At the southern end of the vault, a short 15' wide tunnel leads outdoors through a large pair of double doors that have been smashed open. An acrid smell of smoke and sulfur comes from the northern end of the chamber, near a metal frame – rails which a 10' square elevator would traverse.*

Shrapnel from area 4-5, the destroyed Alchemy Lab, damaged the elevator mechanism and the platform is now stuck one floor up (40' above), leaving 10' square openings through the floor to area 4-2, the Storage Vault, below and in the ceiling leading up the elevator shaft to area 4-8, the Elevator Platform on level 3 of the aerie.

A store of freshly-milled, high-quality hardwood green enough to still contain some life energy inspired Yedreksas to invent a new construct. Called Hardstave Arachnids, these new constructs manifested murder throughout the aerie then returned here where they are hiding in one of the lumber racks.

A Hardstave Arachnid looks like a giant spider – 6' across – made from interlocked lengths of milled hardwood. Its abdomen is a bundle of interwoven staves to which its legs – sharpened to wicked points – are attached. The construct uses its two foremost legs for fighting. If these legs are severed, it can fight on with its second rank of legs while still scuttling about on its rearmost four legs. Because Hardstave Arachnids are wooden they are vulnerable to fire, though the fact that they are made from fresh, green lumber means that it requires a large, hot flame to ignite them.

Hardstave Arachnids (4): Init +3; Atk stake +4 melee (1d4); AC 16; HD 3d6; hp 12; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP: severing forelegs doesn't stop attacks, immune to will-based spells, don't make morale checks; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +6; AL C.

Area 4-5 – Alchemy Lab and Temperatorium: *This thick-walled chamber shows evidence of a fiery explosion. It stands open – its heavy doors blown off their hinges, the shattered pieces thrown against the far western wall by the blast. A stained patchwork of soot, burnt sulfur, paint pigment and other unidentifiable substances coat the walls. The floor of the chamber and the area outside of it are littered with broken chunks of furniture, shards of glassware, puddles of paint and – amidst it all – the body parts of stout, child-sized humanoids.*

There is no set encounter here.

These demolished workrooms were once a combination laboratory and paint manufactory. Yedreksas' envy-inducing power ignited a mad competition between two Konhengen alchemists who both rushed headlong into mixing an untried formula. The results were explosively catastrophic for them and for the two paint mixers working next door.

Area 4-6 – Library: *A brass dome tops this 30' tall octagonal chamber – a grand library. Its height accommodates five, 6' tall tiers of book shelves that wrap around seven sides of the octagon. Each tier can be accessed via 5' wide catwalks. Brass railings line the walks and the tiers are interconnected vertically by two circular staircases. The staircase on the north end continues through the domed ceiling to some location above the library. Mahogany bookcases and a few small work tables populate the main floor.*

The library is in shambles. Scores of scrolls, parchments and tablets are torn or broken and scattered everywhere. Three bodies are readily apparent – victims of violence. Two Konhengen lie beside a work table. It appears that they caved in each other's skulls with heavy, metal-bound tomes. A third Konhengen corpse stands erect, lashed to the north staircase by strands of the same holly branches that eviscerated his throat. A haphazard pile of written materials lie strewn at his feet, misted with a fine spray of arterial blood.

The dumbwaiter is open next to the body lashed to the northern circular staircase – this gnome was killed loading valuable books and papers into the cart in an effort to protect them from the assault.

If the party approaches the corpse its eyes pop open, showing torn, empty sockets from which an ectoplasmic mist immediately begins to seep. The corpse hails them in a dissonant, otherworldly voice painful to the ears. It uses several different languages to address the party and will converse fluently with them in whatever language they make a reply.

This was the Head Librarian, Tramidien. With his last breath he cursed the gods for the circumstances of his death and became a spirit filled with bitterness. He is tied to his place of death and cannot be turned. He will not attack the party nor can he be affected by the physical plane.

DEVELOPING AND PLAYTESTING THE TRAMIDIEN ENCOUNTER

This encounter started out, design-wise, as a colorful variation of a curse. It morphed into an information-providing mechanism to ensure the quest could be completed even if the players fail to solve the logic puzzles. Every playtest group made significant use of Tramidien and every encounter with him was deliciously tense. Tramidien really messes with players' heads. At first, they won't know what the "measure of spite" will do and they won't know what the consequences are of failing a "double-deal." These unknowns scared the bejeezus out of playtesters. As a judge expect a lot of Life™ cereal-esque "I'm not going to ask him, YOU ask him" player interactions. It is super-fun to watch players try to decide how many questions to risk asking. It's also sadistically good "judge-fun" to give players a couple of not-very-useful, narrow, highly-literal answers to questions and then feed them one really juicy answer to keep them from walking away from the encounter. The encounter has a similar feel to getting a Ring of Wishes in the "be careful what you ask for" sense.

Tramidien knows the full story of what is going on and can provide the party with any and all information it needs – for a price.

Tramidien seeks to infect the living world with spite. On a one-for-one basis he will give an answer to a question in exchange for a PC accepting a “measure of spite.” Accepting a measure of spite infects and taints a PC’s soul and produces one of the following effects (player’s choice):

- Reduces the PC’s Luck modifier by one (Note this is the modifier, **not** the Luck ability score!)
- Imposes a -1 penalty on to hit rolls (dwarves, halflings, thieves and warriors only).
- Imposes a -1 penalty on spell checks (wizards, elves or clerics only).
- Increases deity disapproval score by 1 (clerics only). This is **not** restored through rest.

These effects can be taken away by the cleric spell *remove curse*.

Tramidien will try to get the better end of every exchange. He cannot lie but will answer questions literally and give as little information as he can while still answering the question. He wants the exchange to go on as long as possible, however, so if he sees PCs doubting value of the exchange he will feed them an especially good answer.

The adventurers can try to double-deal with Tramidien. A PC can choose to roll a DC 13 Will save. If the save is successful, the PC expels the spite after it enters him or her, avoiding any negative effects. However, if the save is failed, Tramidien detects the double dealing and the PC must make a DC 15 Fort save or suffer a permanent minor corruption (reroll results of 10 on the corruption table). Players may not burn luck to alter this corruption roll. Tramidien refuses to treat further with any PC who he catches double-dealing.

Tramidien will only go to his rest when a permanent replacement for the Konhengen takes up their sacred mission.

A search of the pile of materials at the feet of the corpse reveals two items of interest:

- A torn parchment that serves as a key for translating Konhengen runes into the Common Tongue alphabet. (Player Handout B – Runic Translator) This key gives a +4 bonus to a thief’s attempt to translate Konhengen using Read Languages. It also enables non-thief PC’s to make a Read Languages attempt to read Konhengen with no bonuses to the roll.
- A parchment scroll featuring a poem written in Konhengen (DC 12 to translate) about last year’s artifact. Every year, after that year’s artifact has successfully rescued the sun and it is safe to describe its design without fear of Tuwonatar’s agents, one gnome is chosen to write a poem recording and commemorating that year’s effort. If the PCs translate the ode give them Player Handout C – Commemorative Ode. (Appendix B – Commemorative Ode Translation Notes provides the judge with useful context and connotations that the poem does not convey literally but that PC’s should glean from the translation process.)

A thirty minute search of the library earns the party a DC 13 Intelligence check (apply the highest ability modifier from among the searchers). Each additional 15 minutes above 30 spent searching adds a cumulative +1 bonus to the check roll. If the check succeeds, roll 1d6. On a 1-4 the search yields a tome worth 200 gp to a sage (topic determined by judge). A 5-6 yields a slim primer that teaches an elf or wizard a new wizard spell (judge determines spell) after several days of study and/or experimentation.

Area 4-7 – Dormitory: *This cavernous space is suggestive of an underground cliff dwelling. Its three, open-air tiers are lined with apartment living quarters that remind you of an abbey. But unlike monastic cells, these quarters have large windows that look out on broad patio walkways connecting each tier to the main staircase. In the east wall are vertical, full-height seams of translucent quartz crystal that extend through the wall to the outside surface. You can imagine that morning sunlight filters warmly through these seams. Each tier is built higher than the next to give all the cells exposure to this light.*

There is no set encounter here.

The sleeping cells of the dormitory are laid out identically (see map inset) and each houses three gnomes in austere fashion. The two cells closest to the entryway each contain three slain Konhengen. These gnomes appear to have been asleep when they were attacked. They bled out from puncture wounds evident underneath 1" diameter perforations penetrating their bedclothes. Under the pillow of one of the victims is an encrypted schematic of a new constellation – the Mouse – shown in Player Handout D – Encrypted Mouse Schematic. (Appendix C – Solution to Player Handout D shows what the correctly decoded schematic looks like.)

Area 4-8 – Elevator Platform: *Double doors lead into a 10' square elevator shaft. A platform surrounded by a four foot high brass safety railing sits at this level of the complex. A side-mounted windlass and a brake lever appear to control the elevator. The body of a lone Konhengen lies face down in a pool of dried blood, clutching a torn parchment.*

The mechanism that keeps the elevator in place was damaged by the alchemy lab explosion. This can be detected by a DC 15 find traps roll or a DC 15 Intelligence check by a dwarf. If more than 100 pounds of weight are brought to bear on the platform it falls to the bottom of the shaft in area 4-2, the Storage Vault. Because the elevator is slowed by friction from the cables and tracks, PCs on the platform when it crash lands take only 4d6 damage but incur broken bones per the standard falling rules. A successful DC 13 Ref save halves the damage or allows the PC to avoid broken bones (player's choice).

The dead Konhengen was on his way to deliver an after-supper speech when the Hardstave Arachnids found him. He clutches a fragment of parchment on which part of his speech is still readable. (DC 12 *read languages* or *comprehend languages* check to translate from the Konhengen). If the PCs translate it, give them Player Handout E – Scrap of Speech.

DECODING THE SCHEMATICS

The Konhengen use a runic code to encrypt their design schematics. The code is simpler than it might first appear. It is a connect-the-dot puzzle with several different runes in place of "dots" and no numbers indicating the order in which the dots are connected. The runes that are used to create the picture are the ones that correspond to the letters that phonetically spell out the name of object being depicted. For example, Player Handout D – Encrypted Mouse Schematic is the blueprint for a Sammas-made constellation in the form of a mouse. So the sequence of runes on the handout that spell out M-O-U-S are the ones that connect to form the drawing. Because there are no numbers, the rune for "birth" marks the starting point of the contiguous outline and the rune for "death" marks the end point. Letter sequences in the schematic may be written clockwise or may be written counter-clockwise. Solved versions of the schematics are presented in Appendix C.

Area 4-9 – Lyceum: *A large foyer opens into a circular chamber with a square-shaped wing off its north end. In a corner of the foyer sits an 8' high wicker statue of a bear made from ½" woven willow branches. Both the main chamber and the alcove contain solidly-built, well-crafted hardwood tables stained a deep mahogany brown. The enormous table in the main room could easily seat two score of the complex's small inhabitants and many of them are present here in a grisly tableau of death and destruction. Amidst a tangle of overturned chairs, spilled vessels and broken crockery you count 15 bodies. The scene is dressed in splatters of spilled drink and smears of fallen foodstuffs coagulate in patches of dried blood.*

This room functioned as a combination dining space/meeting hall. One of three supper shifts was underway when the assault came. Many of the dead bear lacerations, signature of topiary violence. Other deaths show evidence of the effects of Yedreksas' envy-inducing power. One Konhengen, coveting a choice foodstuff on the plate of another, took said victual from his neighbor. When the victim of the theft protested, the thief beat him to death with a bone-in roast. A Konhengen who collected the honey for the mead was praising its qualities when two other Konhengen overcame with envy held him down and forcefully poured mead down his throat until he drowned.

If the PCs look up, a small patch of night sky and the Pole Star can be seen through a series of 4' round holes that penetrate the ceiling and two floors above. (One of the dead bodies came via this route; see area 4-12.)

Yedreksas animated the bear statue. At its feet sit two heavy cast iron soup pots. The statue will quietly fit the pots to its forepaws then attack, trying to surprise the party.

This Bludgeoning Willow-Bear can forgo its two paw strikes and opt to bull rush instead. Throwing the full force of its body into this attack, the construct gets +2 melee bonus and does 3d3 damage. Opponents of equal size or smaller than the statue must make a DC 12 Ref save or be knocked prone.

Bludgeoning Wicker-Bear: Init 0; Atk forepaw +2 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 4d4; hp 10; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP: bull rush (Atk +2, 3d3 dmg and DC 12 Ref save or be knocked prone), immune to will-based spells, doesn't make morale checks; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +4; AL C.

The three Makarhu children are hiding out of sight at the end of the corridor leading to the dumbwaiter. The two girls, Sreeth and Elba, and one boy, Byur, snuck out before first light with deer-fat candles to protect them from evil spirits. The children hiked to the lake and entered the aerie through the smashed-in doors leading to area 4-4, the Storage Vault. Hard-stave Arachnids chased them into area 4-6, the Library, where Tramidien's ghost frightened them. They climbed into the dumbwaiter shaft and ascended the cables to this spot where they have been hiding ever since.

Sreeth brandishes this year's first gift from the Konhengen – a brightly-painted miniature crossbow they gifted to her. The children can identify the other two models gifted this year: a carved wooden bell and a carved mouse painted pink (All together these gifts comprise the first three components of this year's artifact design – see illustration on page 40). The children can also identify that the gifts from last year that match up with the seven constellations mentioned in the Commemorative Ode (found in area 4-6): ladle, kettle, "a crane" (Winch), a "wagon" (Oxcart), a "snake" (Asp), a candlestick and a crab.

Makarhu Children: Init +1; Atk -1 melee (dmg 1); AC 11; HD ½d8; hp 3; MV 35'; Act 1d16; SP elf racial abilities; SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL N.

The children may need protection from threats. Inform PC warriors and dwarves that they can use their Mighty Deed to try to keep the children from harm. If a warrior-type succeeds at a "protect the children" deed, damage from attacks that would hit the children can be canceled, but half the total damage must be absorbed by the warrior or dwarf. The damage

THE UNDERWORLD IS JUST OVER THE NORTHERN
HORIZON

LAKE
AREA

BORDER OF VARJOMA

BRIDGE

A
E
R
E

3

4

BRIDGE

2

1

PATH

START



42



Cross-section

MAIN SPIRAL STAIR

ELEVATOR

DUMBWAITER

SMALL STAIR

LEVEL 5

LEVEL 4

LEVEL 3

LEVEL 2

LEVEL 1

AERIE CROSS-SECTION

DUMB WAITER

LEVEL 1

PLAQUE

ELEVATOR SHAFT

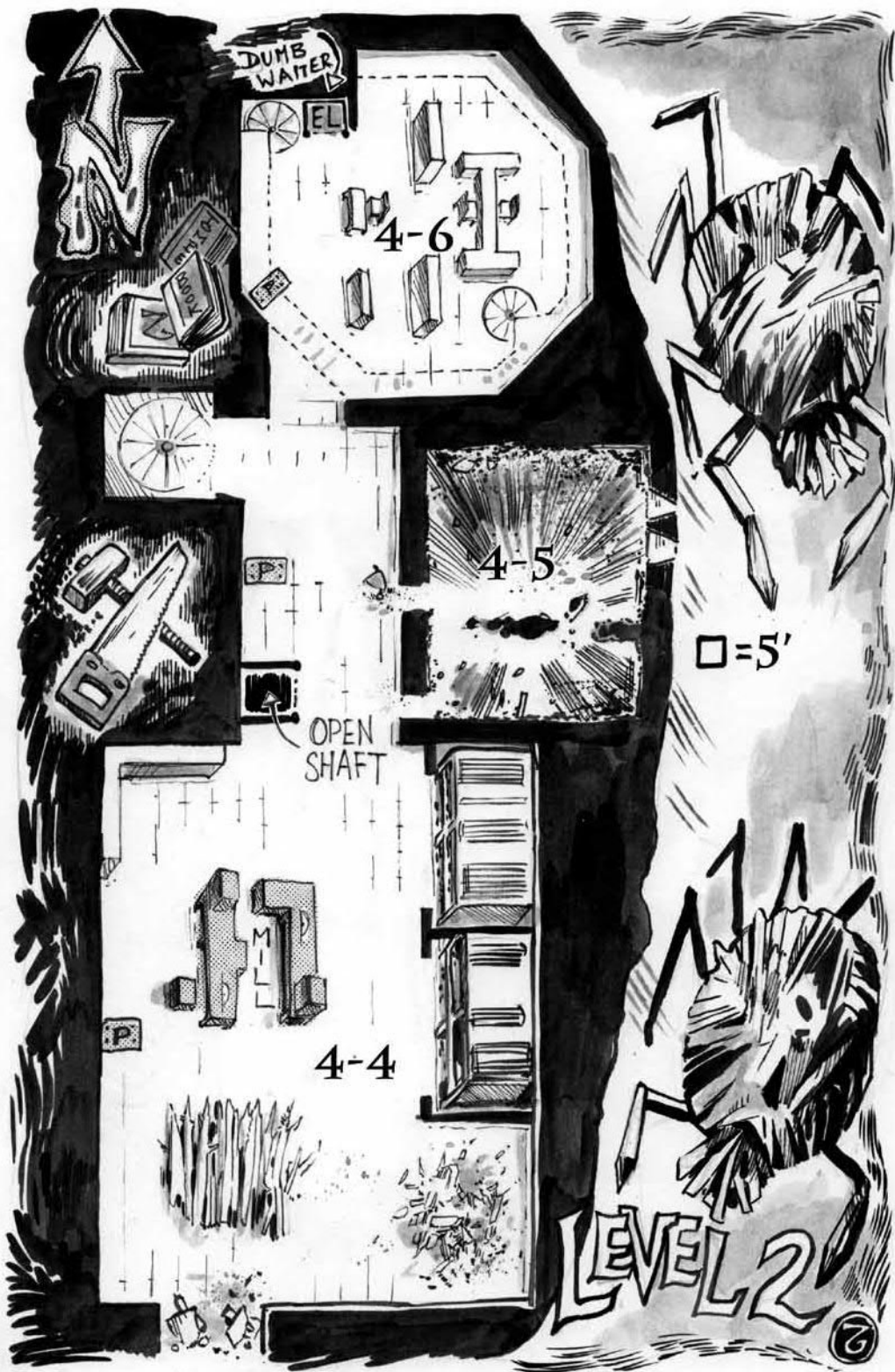
SLUG PEN

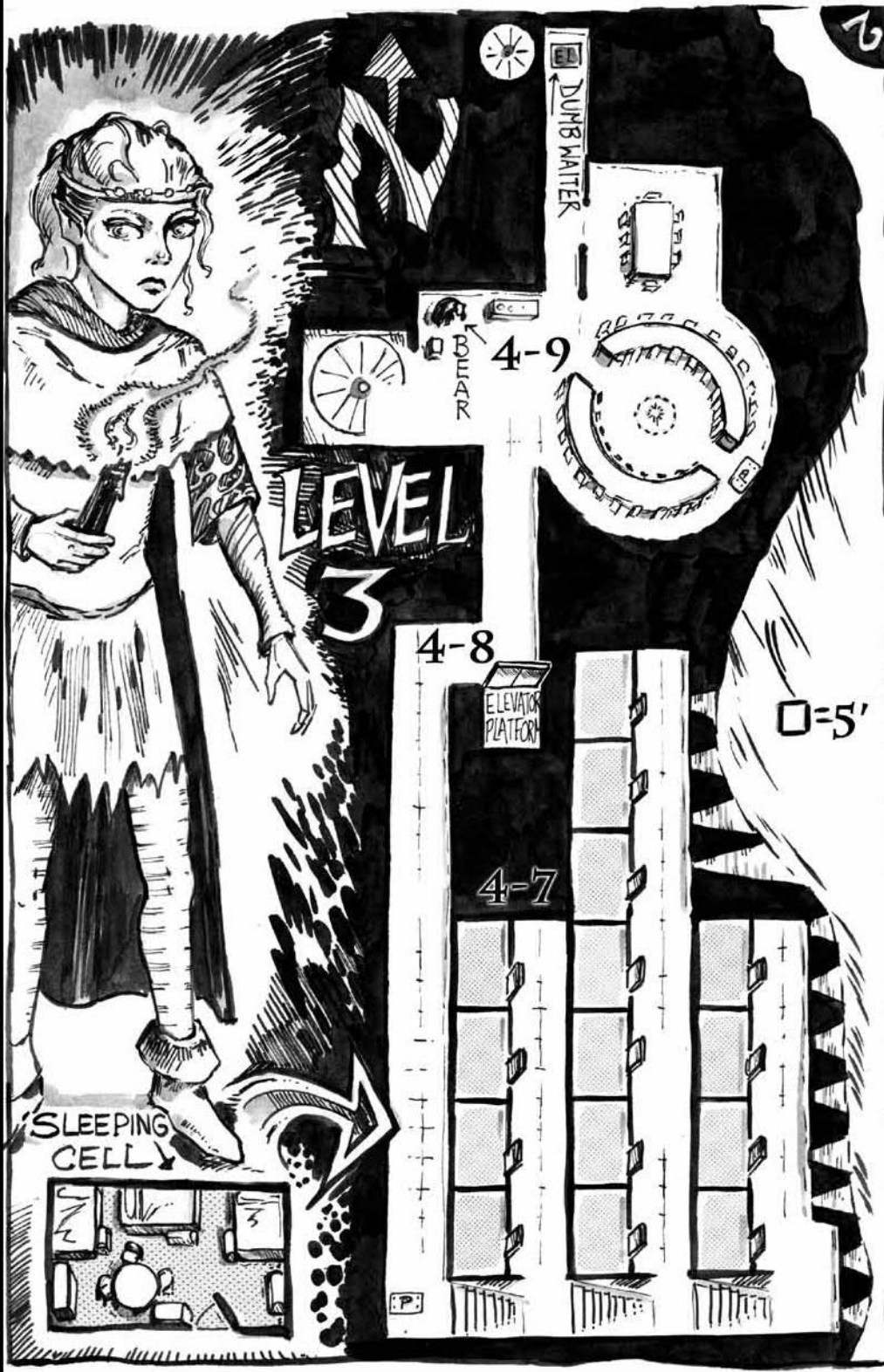
FODDER

COUPS

MOLES

LEVEL 0







canceled is equal to the natural, unmodified value of the to-hit roll on the round the deed succeeded. The warrior-type decides how damage is canceled among the three children. This damage cancellation effect remains in effect for as many rounds as it takes to use up the entire value of the to-hit roll that resulted in the deed's success

Example: A dwarf succeeds at a "protect the children" deed with a natural 12 to-hit roll. That same round, a Scything Topiary hits Sreeth for 4 points of damage. The dwarf cancels the effects of the hit and still has 8 points to use to cancel damage to children in this round or any subsequent rounds, until the entire roll is used up.

Area 4-10 – Limineria: *A dust-protected entry leads into a triangular room with a curved wall forming the long side. That wall is inset with vertical seams of translucent quartz crystal that can let in light from outside. This is a painting studio – the shelves are filled with brushes and paint pots. The room is covered in paint – many pots are overturned or have been flung against the walls. One Konhengen lies sprawled in the approach to the entrance and another is in a kneeling position face down, his head submerged in a large pot of cheery pink tempera.*

There is no set encounter here.

Yedreksas made one Konhengen insanely jealous of his compatriot's skill at pin striping, driving that gnome to drown his rival. The murderer grabbed the model the other Konhengen had just finished painting – a small bucket – but was immediately killed by Scything Topiaries. The model lies under his lacerated body, partly damaged by the violence but still recognizable.

Area 4-11 – Workshop: *This fine wood-working shop contains top-quality hand tools and some small-sized but exceptional machine tools such as a treadle-powered lathe, a drill press and a stone sanding wheel. A storage alcove contains wood, glue and other supplies. The bodies of three Konhengen lie about the shop.*

There is no set encounter here.

All the Konhengen here were killed by multiple, 1" diameter puncture wounds. One of the Konhengen clutches a parchment with the decoded schematic for the model the woodworkers completed most recently – the bucket. (Player Handout F – Decoded Bucket Schematic.) Portions of the schematic are obscured by blood stains.

High-quality hand tools can be collected here and sold for 40 gp to carpenters.

The elevator platform is stuck one level down (40' below) in area 4-8.

Area 4-12 – Astrarium: *A light-protected entryway leads to a midnight blue, circular room with a domed ceiling. The central 35' of space is dominated by a massive orrery, a mechanical model of the heavens that runs on giant clockworks and counterweights. Two ladders lead 8' up to a narrow viewing platform that runs along the entire outer circumference of the chamber. Looking up at the apex of the domed ceiling, you see a 4' hole through which a small patch of the night sky – and the Pole Star – is visible.*

Examination of the room reveals a control station with a clutch lever and a large speed adjustment screw that operates the orrery and an alcove with a large, locked storage cabinet.

Several tools and parts can be found lying about the central space: wrenches, a hammer and a few nuts, bolts and gears. A Konhengen was caught up in Yedreksas' power and overtaken with extreme envy of the beauty and perfection of the heavens. He decided to take his jealousy out on the orrery. He sabotaged it then jumped through the hole and died on the floor of area 4-9, the Lyceum, from a broken neck.

The sabotaged orrery is dangerous. A DC 13 find traps check can detect the damage and a DC 15 remove traps check can repair the problem. If the orrery is activated without being repaired, its gears, orbits and arms spin in a rapid, forceful, jerky, unpredictable manner.

The machinery grabs one PC who is then dragged and thrown about. During that round and every round until freed the PC automatically takes 1d8-1 damage (0-7 points). The judge also rolls a d20 each round to determine if the orrery inflicts a critical hit on the trapped PC. The orrery's critical hit threat range is 18-20. The orrery rolls a d20 crit die on Critical Hit Table I, modified by the trapped PC's luck. The trapped PC gets a DC 13 Ref save against any critical hits. Success lowers the roll on the Critical Hit Table by 1d3 and reduces critical hit damage by the amount of that same d3 roll.

A thief can attempt to free a trapped PC with a DC 13 remove traps check. Any PC can attempt to free the trapped PC by attacking the orrery machinery (AC 14) holding him or her. The trapped PC is freed after the machinery has taken 12 points of damage. If attacks miss the orrery, there is a 50% chance of hitting the trapped PC instead. The attack is rerolled against the trapped PC's armor class ignoring any bonuses for Agility. PCs attacking the orrery risk their weapons getting caught in the machinery if they fumble on a roll of a natural 1 *or* 2.

Once activated, the controls cannot deactivate the sabotaged orrery. Instead a successful DC 15 remove trap check or 30 points of damage is required.

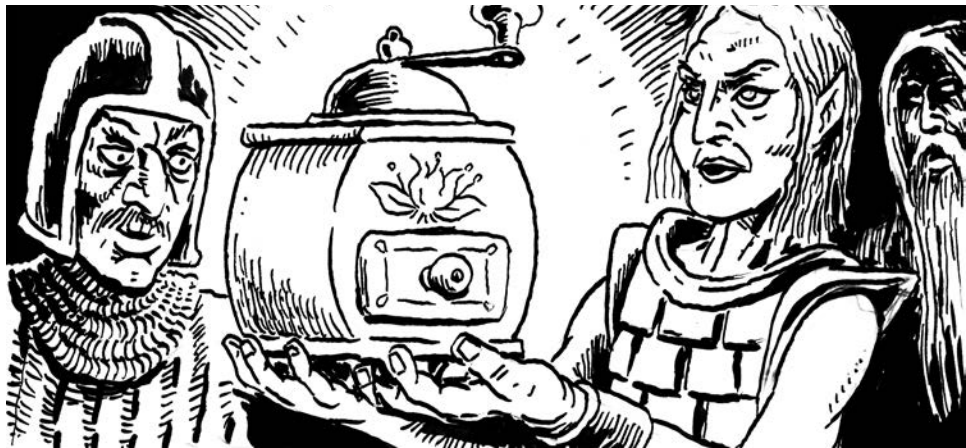
A celestiopticon – a device that projects an image of the constellations on the dome using a magic lamp – comes on when the orrery is activated. It projects an image of this year's nighttime solstice sky. Any PC with knowledge of the stars (e.g., astrologer or navigator occupations) will immediately recognize constellations and take special note of those that are not natural. Other PCs take note of these things with success on a DC 10 Intelligence check. The projection includes all the constellations in the design of this year's artifact, including the four unnatural ones: crossbow, mouse, bucket and sailboat. It shows these in the positions necessary for them to interact with the existing constellations: the Bell, the Bellows and the Anchor. (See illustration on page 40.)

The locked cabinet (DC 15 Strength check or open locks check to open) in the alcove contains three pieces of equipment: an armillary sphere (a physical planet-model with a grid framework of celestial lines of latitude and longitude) worth 200 gp and a torquetum (an instrument used to measure the position of celestial bodies) worth 100 gp. The third item in the cabinet is the celestiopticon's projection lens from last year, made from perforated brass. An examination by a PC knowledgeable about the stars or a DC 10 Intelligence check identifies four "unnatural" constellations: kettle, winch, oxcart and candlestick (mentioned in Player Handout C – Commemorative Ode). The Makarhu children can confirm that these models were received as gifts last year along with a ladle, snake and crab.

Area 4-13 – Atelier: *The outermost wall of this room is gently curved, giving it a somewhat triangular shape. Drafting tables with angled tops sitting along the curved wall identify this room as a drawing studio. Narrow, vertical seams of translucent quartz crystal are set into this wall to let in natural light. Its south wall is lined with a row of special cabinets for flat storage of clean parchment. You see one Konhengen slumped over one drawing table. More than a dozen steel-nibbled ink pens stick out of his back like porcupine quills. A stately document table sits in the center of the room. The forms of two more of the gnomes lie across it, locked in a tight embrace.*

There is no set encounter here.

Yedreksas incited the Konhengen here to murder each other. One stabbed another to death. The remaining two duelled with sharpened quills until they killed each other with simultaneous thrusts to the heart. Rolling the bodies over reveals their fatal wounds, weapons still imbedded. On the drawing table against which the third dead Konhengen slumps is a partially completed, coded schematic of the final component of this year's artifact – the existing constellation called the Anchor (Player Handout G). Appendix C shows what the correctly decoded schematic looks like.



The dumbwaiter cart is two floors down in area 4-6, the Library.

Area 4-14 – Sammas Vault: *A narrow, iron-bound door leads into this circular chamber. A night sky motif is engraved into the walls of the room. The actual sky shows through a roughly triangular 8' by 6' transparent quartz skylight that fills a crevice in the ceiling. Directly under the crevice is a 4' diameter hole in the floor. There are three items in the room. The first is a 3' long stone chest – an ark – with brass handles cast in the shape of winged bears with the back half of eagles. The second is a foot-tall, circular, wrought iron stand. The third is a 5' high, mahogany podium.*

The Desperate Phantoplasms will not enter this room.

A PC with astronomy knowledge will recognize that the engravings accurately portray the positions of the constellations for this time of year. Looking up through the ceiling opening can confirm that the engravings exactly match the current positions of the stars. Though one can never observe them changing, the engravings exactly match the positions of the stars in the sky at the aerie's location at any given moment.

A careful search reveals powder and tiny chips of Firmament on the floor – residue from past artifact-building.

The stand holds the Sammas during rituals. The podium is used for formal speeches and invocations but otherwise has no instrumental role in the rituals.

The ark is not trapped. The ark holds the Sammas – an 18" diameter golden hand mill. Neutral and lawful characters can handle the Sammas without repercussion. Chaotic characters who touch the Sammas receive a jolt of divine energy that does 1d6 damage (This increases by an additional +1d6 each successive time a chaotic individual touches the Sammas).

If a neutral character touches the Sammas it will engage in telepathic communication. (It can choose to speak to lawful characters at the judge's discretion). The Sammas can provide any of the following information:

- For millennia, on the night of the solstice when his power is strongest, Tuwonatar, God of Death, has attempted to trap the sun in the underworld in a web of ectoplasmic energy.
- Tuwonatar acquired a new ally this year: Yedreksas – the "Demon of Envy" - who has attacked and slaughtered the Konhengen.
- The Konhengen were tasked by Sakanta with the sacred mission of rescuing the sun each year.
- While the Sammas is unable to explain exactly how the Konhengen accomplish the rescue, it knows that operating *it* – the Sammas itself – is key to their work.

- It will describe what it mills as: “The shards of the shell of the egg of creation, broken when the universe was new, now caked with the dust of time.”
- It can describe how the Konhengen operate the Sammas. It says: “The Konhengen imagine what they wish me to create. They focus on physical representations of what they want to create in order to maintain the proper intentions and willpower. As I am blind, I cannot say what these references are, but they help the operator form a picture in his or her mind of what I am to call into being.”
- The Sammas can explain that multiple Konhengen link up through physical touch to bolster the will and focus of the primary operator of the mill.

A neutral or lawful character can mill Firmament in the Sammas to create new constellations. Each constellation requires roughly a pint of small chunks of Firmament (see area 4-0). Crustulus Deorum will not work and will, in fact, gum up the mill, requiring three rounds to clean.

While milling, the Sammas’ operator must focus on a physical or visual representation of what he creates. PCs can use drawings or models produced by the Konhengen, the projection lenses from the celestiopticon or the engravings on the walls of the Samma Vault. Alternately, characters with appropriate occupational backgrounds can create foci from scratch, e.g. former coopers, blacksmiths or wainwrights could make models or former scribes or artisans could make sketches.

During each round of milling the operator makes a DC 13 ability check with either Intelligence or Personality (player’s choice). Neutral players receive a +1 bonus to this check and lawful players receive a -1 penalty. Each successful check forms a new constellation in a celestial position of the operator’s choosing or can trigger a constellation to “act” (e.g., firing the crossbow or raising the winch).

Other PCs can assist the primary Sammas operator through a unique type of spellburn imparted by the magical mill itself. A PC who maintains physical contact with the Sammas’ operator can permanently burn points of Personality each round to grant a cumulative +1 per point to the check roll to operate the Sammas. Like spellburn, burning Personality ability points must be done before the Sammas operation check is rolled. Chaotic characters must burn two points of Personality to obtain a +1 bonus. This burn can be magically restored through *restore vitality* (or an equivalent spell). PCs reduced to Personality 2 or less go insane and are incapacitated by mania.

Any time the Sammas is activated, the sky fills with a spectacular aurora borealis.



SHOWDOWN WITH YEDREKSAS

Yedreksas will sense any use of the Sammas and teleport to the vault to intervene. See Appendix A – Gods and Heroes for a physical description of Yedreksas.

A powerful Type V+ demon, Yedreksas has the standard demon abilities and defenses listed in the rulebook (see page 401). Detonating Crustulus Deorum from area 4-0 can harm him. If Yedreksas is reduced to 0 hp he dematerializes. Three turns later he re-materializes in Varjoma and can instantly teleport back to the aerie.

Yedreksas is affected by Will-attacking spells – such as Charm Person or Sleep – but his constant state of obsessive envy filters their effect. Such spells are limited to modifying, dampening or redirecting Yedreksas' own obsessive envy. In this adventure, the focus of his envy is Kivas Kota – the sun. The judge must determine level-appropriate effects that specific Will-affecting spells have on him in this state.

Fortunately for the party, because Yedreksas is half divine, he will not stoop to engaging in melee with “mere mortals.” This spares the PCs from the possibility of a violent “death-by-claw.” If a PC were to be physically struck, Yedreksas' claws also secrete poison that literally makes victims “sick with envy” (1d3 Stamina, Personality, and Agility temporary ability score loss, DC 24 Fort save or ability loss is permanent, healed only via magical means).

Yedreksas has an innate spell-like ability called Inculcate Extreme Envy that is by far his favorite mode of attack. This ability operates using spell casting mechanics. Yedreksas rolls 5d4 for spell checks at Caster Level 6 (+6 to spell checks). Yedreksas cannot spell burn.

Inculcate Extreme Envy is related to the spell *Charm Person*. Yedreksas can only cast it once per round. Refer to the Charm Person spell description only for number of targets affected. Spell effects: targets struck by the spell who fail a Will save become obsessively and compulsively envious; the focus of this envy is chosen by the player but once declared, that PC's actions must be driven by that envy. Judges have the discretion to permanently reduce a PC's personality by 1-3 points during any round in which the player acts in a fashion contrary to the effects of the envy. PCs reduced to Personality 2 or less go insane.

Because Inculcate Envy is an innate ability, Yedreksas can never lose it through a failed check and does not suffer corruption, patron taint or misfire. If Yedreksas fails a spell check he takes a -1 penalty to future spells. Penalties for consecutive failures stack but accumulated penalties expire if Yedreksas refrains from spell casting for three consecutive rounds.

The judge should point out to spell casting characters (and any other PCs possessing an Intelligence or Personality of 14+) that the best possible chance of holding off Yedreksas long enough to complete an artifact is to spell duel with him. Clerics may spellburn in a spell duel with Yedreksas because of the divine nature of this contest.

Yedreksas' Inculcate Extreme Envy can be countered with the following spells:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Wizard: | 1 st Level – <i>charm person, color spray, invoke patron, magic shield, sleep</i> |
| | 2 nd Level – <i>scare</i> |
| | 3 rd Level – <i>binding, dispel magic, transference</i> |
| Cleric: | 1 st Level – <i>blessing, holy sanctuary, word of command</i> |
| | 2 nd Level – <i>binding, lotus stare</i> |
| | 3 rd Level – <i>exorcise, remove curse</i> |

If Yedreksas' Inculcate Extreme Envy ability is turned back on him during a spell duel this has no effect. If the result of the spell duel indicates that Yedreksas' spell is lost, treat that result as “canceled.”

Yedreksas (Type V+ Demon): Init +6; Atk claw +12 melee (3d6+3 plus special); AC 24; HD 18d12; hp 120; MV 60'; Act 2d24; SP demon table special abilities, poison, envy-inducing spell-like ability (Will save or be overcome with obsessive envy) rolls 5d4+6 for spell checks to use envy-inducing ability (failed checks impose a cumulative -1 check penalty; this penalty resets after three consecutive rounds of not casting; spell-like ability cannot be lost, misfire or cause corruption) special resistance to will-based spells; SV Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +8; AL C.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs fail to rescue the sun by the morning after solstice eve, the world is plunged into permanent darkness! (Potentially the start of a whole new campaign theme...)

If they succeed, dawn immediately breaks regardless of the hour of day. Sunrise removes any negative effects of spite accepted from Tramidien's ghost and returns the Desperate Phantoplasms to their rest.

Sakanta's avatar will later appear to successful PCs in a dream. (See Appendix A – Gods and Heroes for a description of Sakanta.) He grants them a boon. This could be divine favor, an enchanted weapon, hidden lore or passage into the underworld along with protective magic. Sakanta restores Personality lost operating the Sammas or resisting Yedreksas' Inculcate Extreme Envy.

If the party rescued the Makarhu children, their grateful parents give the party special fur clothing that insulates against extreme cold and also grants a +1 to saves against any effect from un-dead. One parent is an Elvish sorcerer or sorceress who teaches PC wizards to cast one 2nd-level spell: Ekim's Mystical Mask, Nythuul's Porcupine Coat or Wizard Staff (judge's discretion).

However, the Konhengen have been wiped out, so someone new will have to take their place within the next year. Both neutral and lawful PCs will be motivated to find replacements and doing so would earn the adventurers further boons from Sakanta.

JUDGES REFERENCE A: TIMEKEEPING SHEET & DESPERATE PHANTOPLASMS ENCOUNTER TABLE

A judge can use this sheet to track in-game time during the adventure. It indicates how many Desperate Phantoplasms occupy any particular level of the Konhengen Aerie at a given hour. It also shows the variable resistance of Desperate Phantoplasms to a cleric's Turn Unholy ability, represented as a hit dice (HD) rating specific to time periods. (Their HD rating for all other purposes, e.g. hp, is always 1 HD.)

The time-keeping boxes, "□", represent increments of 1 turn (10 minutes) of game time when filled in completely. A judge call fill in 1/2-boxes to track 5-minute increments.

Notes:

- The number in the box indicates the number of phantoplasms appearing throughout an entire level (floor) of the aerie.
- "Killed" phantoplasms re-materialize. A level in the Konhengen Aerie will be restocked 3 turns after a combat.

Time keeping & milestones		# Of Desperate Phantoplasms Appearing				
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Turn as:
1-2 pm <i>Forest journey</i>	□□□ □□□	None	None	None	None	n/a
2-3 pm <i>Sun sets from 2-3 pm</i>	□□□ □□□	None	None	None	None	n/a
3-4 pm <i>Phantoplasms rise</i>	□□□ □□□	None	6	None	None	1 HD
4-5 pm	□□□ □□□	3	6	None	None	1 HD
5-6 pm	□□□ □□□	6	6+1d3	3	None	1 HD
6-7 pm	□□□ □□□	6+1d3	9	6	6	2 HD
7-8 pm	□□□ □□□	9	9+1d3	6+1d3	6+1d3	2 HD
8-9 pm	□□□ □□□					
9-10 pm	□□□ □□□					
10-11 pm	□□□ □□□					
11 pm-12 mid	□□□ □□□					
12 mid-1 am	□□□ □□□	9+1d3	9+1d3	9	9	1 HD
1-2 am	□□□ □□□					
2-3 am	□□□ □□□					
3-4 am	□□□ □□□					
4-5 am	□□□ □□□					
5-6 am	□□□ □□□					
6-7 am	□□□ □□□					
7-8 am	□□□ □□□					
8-9 am	□□□ □□□					
Sun rise due at 9 am						

APPENDIX A: GODS AND HEROES

Yedreksas is the demonic embodiment of envy and has the power to inculcate extreme envy in others. Yedreksas is the ninth of nine children of a sea serpent god and the mortal – but powerful – Witch-Queen of Varjoma. (The shadowy demi-plane that forms the border between the lands of the Makarhu and the underworld.) The Witch-Queen’s children are known as the “nine afflictions” because each one is the embodiment of a disease, flaw or malignancy that plagues the mortal races. Yedreksas appears as an 8’ tall, extremely lanky humanoid with greyish-white skin and unnaturally long legs, arms, torso, fingers and neck. His hands are extremely large and his thick fingers (the only part of his body that would be not called skinny) end in curved nails almost a foot long. His legs end in cloven elk hooves and 3’ antlers sprout from either side of his head. He wears a primitive bronze mask that constantly changes in size, color and features. The only aspect of his face not hidden by the mask are his over-large, intensely-bright green eyes. He is clad in layers of foul, rotting, improperly-cured animal skins intermixed with rich, sumptuous furs. His only other garment is a seal-skin girdle with a large ivory codpiece sewn on the outside.

Sakanta (which translates both as “bearer of winter” and “winter bear”) is a greater god of the sky, weather, seasons, determination and bounty. Sakanta can take many forms. If his avatar appears at the end of this adventure, it is as a bear-headed, golden-skinned Adonis with a long white beard hanging from his furry under-jaw. The avatar is clothed in a red-dyed, fur-trimmed, deer-skin robe and wears a mithril torque about its upper left arm and a holly wreath around its upper right arm. It carries a golden cudgel in one hand and a copper-colored smith’s hammer in the other. The avatar will appear haloed in lightning.

Kivas Kota is the Makarhu name for the sun. It translates as “fiery eagle” and Kivas Kota is literally an immense, eternal, flaming raptor. The story of Kivas Kota’s cyclical flights across the heavens followed by rests in the underworld is the Makarhu’s version of the universal Phoenix myth.

Tuwonatar is the greater god of death and lord of the underworld. He does not physically appear in this adventure. Tuwonatar’s resentment of the sun has driven his eons-long attempt to capture it on the night of the solstice when the power of death is greatest and the veil between worlds is thinnest. Divine law prohibits Tuwonatar from working personally against the Konhengen as they are Sakanta’s mortal agents. So in accordance with the rules of divine conflict he employs un-dead spirits against the gnomes. His recent alliance with Yedreksas tipped the balance of the conflict in his favor – the fact that Yedreksas is half-mortal means he can act directly against the Konhengen.

Vaniminen is the Makarhu’s greatest hero. They speak of him as a mortal but his level of power and influence on the world is so great that it must have a divine source, proving him a demigod at least. Legend has it that an evil god caused Vaniminen to cut himself with his axe and the resulting blood flow flooded the entire world before it was staunched. Another legend has it that the Jarvi Jumlan Vert or “Lake of God’s Blood” formed over-top and around Vaniminen after he fell asleep in the boat he built to travel to the underworld in search of a fabled bride. He has reputedly slumbered there for an age, recovering from his injury and resting for his great journey. The arched island is said to be Vaniminen’s bent leg, where a trickle of blood can still seeps from his mostly-healed knee. Vaniminen does not appear in this adventure and it is up to the judge to decide whether the legend of the lake is literally true or not and whether the red liquid flowing from the top of the arch has any special properties.

APPENDIX B: TRANSLATION NOTES

This judge's version of the ode commemorating last year's artifact includes translation notes. These notes identify specific terms, concepts and connotations whose meaning would not be clear from a simple read-aloud of the text but which a translator would understand more deeply in context and from the process of translating it. Judges can weave an understanding of the annotations into PC's understanding of the poem.

Commemorative Ode MCMLXVIII

On the eve we pray to winter stars
Great Eagle amber-red
Alights below horizon far
And goes unto its bed

"Forever sleep" is Death's dark dream
But the Bear gives watchful eye
And sacred mill to humble gnome
To rearrange the sky

Grind earth's deep crust to populate
New things in heavens' dome
And bring the Eagle up again
From a snare of death's rich loam:

Little Dipper pours out phlogiston
To fill Kettle never seen
Then Winch brand new loads vessel full
In Ox-cart, virgin'd glean

This heavy weight makes cart springs creak
Rousing Asp with startling goad
He slithers forth, fright'ning the Ox
Who walks ahead, attached to load

Ox soon tires; stops Kettle-Cart
Above new Candlestick
Mars' hot flame positioned so
To light its fresh-trimmed wick

Ere long the heat 'neath Kettle full
Makes ether steam encloud
Mighty Crab - who shows his ire
Waving claws and clacking loud

He runs Below where Eagle lies
Catching wing in claw
And pulls the day once more, again
From a dark and angry maw

Jull Iyyin

Dated last January

*The Roman numerals (1968) represent
Konhengen rune-numbers*

*Winter solstice
The sun, "Kivas Kota," literally "fiery eagle"
The underworld, land of the dead*

*Eternal night; proper noun Death = the name
of "Tuwonatar," a god. "Bear" = Sakanta, a
god; "winter bear" or "bearer of winter."
"And 'Sammās' to the 'Konhengen'"*

*Proper noun "Firmament" translates as
"earth's deep crust."
Loam in context connotes "energy" not
"matter"*

*Phlogiston = ether that fills up the space in
the heavens. (For judge only: Kettle = new,
Sammās-made constellation. Winch and
Oxcart = Sammās-made constellation.)
(For judge only: Asp = existing constellation)*

*(For judge only: Candlestick = a Sammās-
made constellation)*

*(For judge only: Crab = an existing
constellation)*

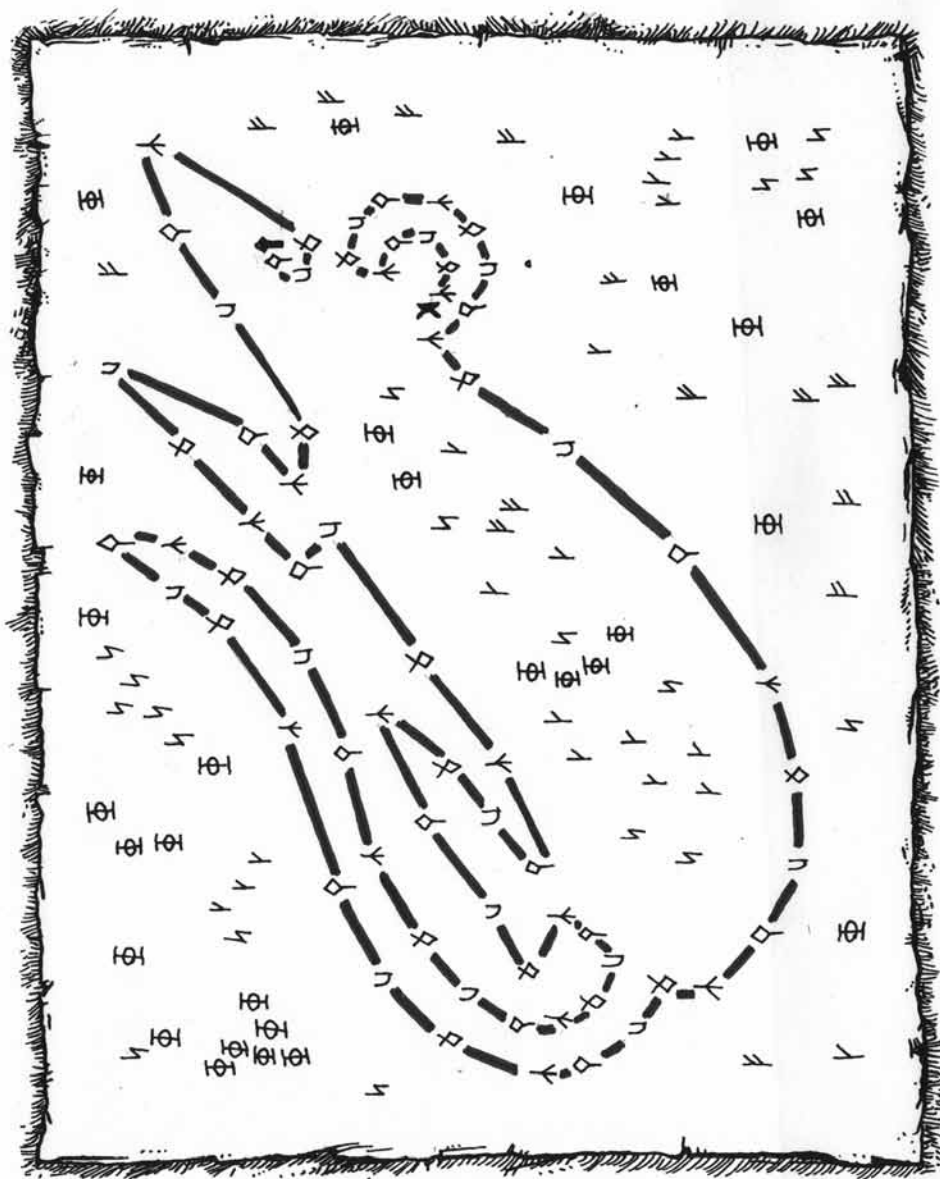
*Jull = "Mechanick," a job title; Iyyin is a
Konhengen name.*

*Understood via the translating of the
Konhengen date into whatever calendaring
system exists in the PCs' world*

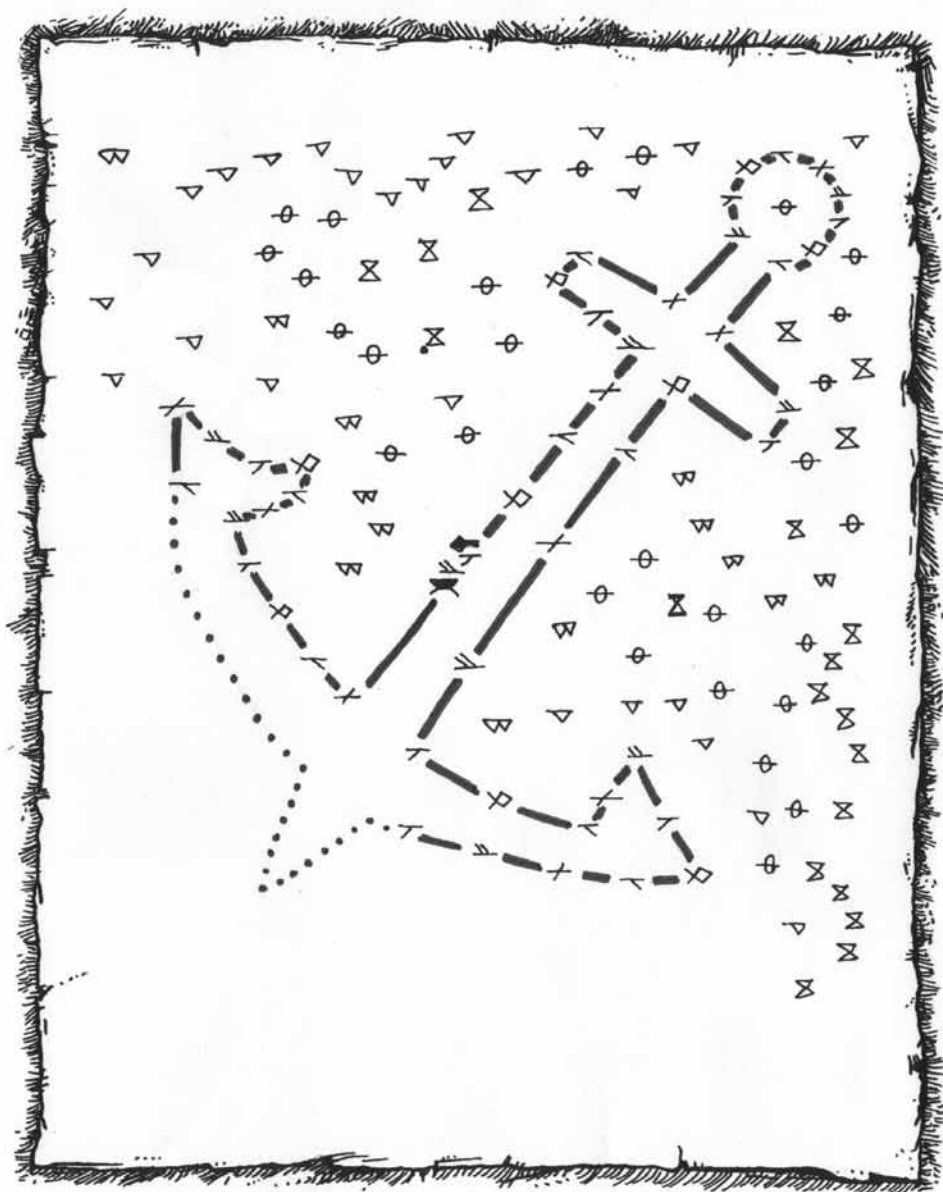
APPENDIX C: SOLUTION TO PLAYER HANDOUT D AND PLAYER HANDOUT G

These two handouts (appearing on pages 36 and 39, referenced in areas 4-7 and 4-13, are "connect the dot" puzzles that form constellations. Here are the solutions for players who need them.

Solution to Handout D



Solution to Handout G



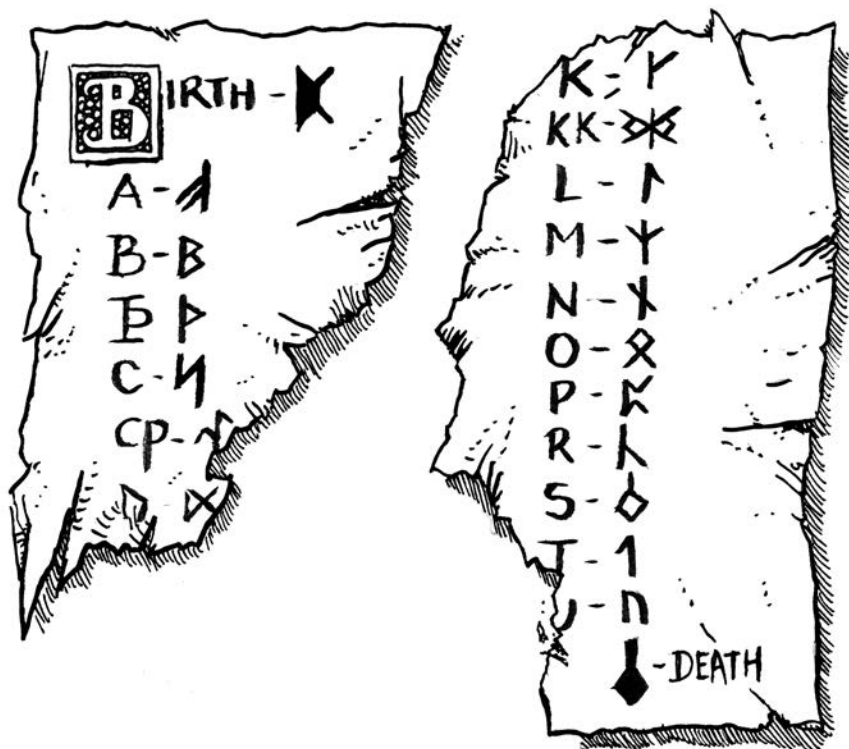
PLAYER HANDOUT A

DEVOTION

*On the eve we pray to winter stars
Great eagle amber-red
Alights below horizon far
And goes unto its bed*

*Forever sleep is Death's dark dream
But the Bear gives watchful eye
And sacred mill to humble gnome
To rearrange the sky*

PLAYER HANDOUT B



PLAYER HANDOUT C

COMMEMORATIVE ODE MCMLXVII

On the eve we pray to winter stars
Great Eagle amber-red
Alights below horizon far
And goes unto its bed

"Forever sleep" is Death's dark dream
But the Bear gives watchful eye
And sacred mill to humble gnome
To rearrange the sky

Grind earth's deep crust to populate
New things in heavens' dome
And bring the Eagle up again
From a snare of death's rich loam:

Little Dipper pours out phlogiston
Fills Kettle never seen
Then Winch brand-new loads vessel full
In Oxcart virgin glean'd

This heavy weight makes cart springs creak
Rousing Asp with startling goad
He slithers forth, fright'ning the Ox
Who walks ahead, attached to load

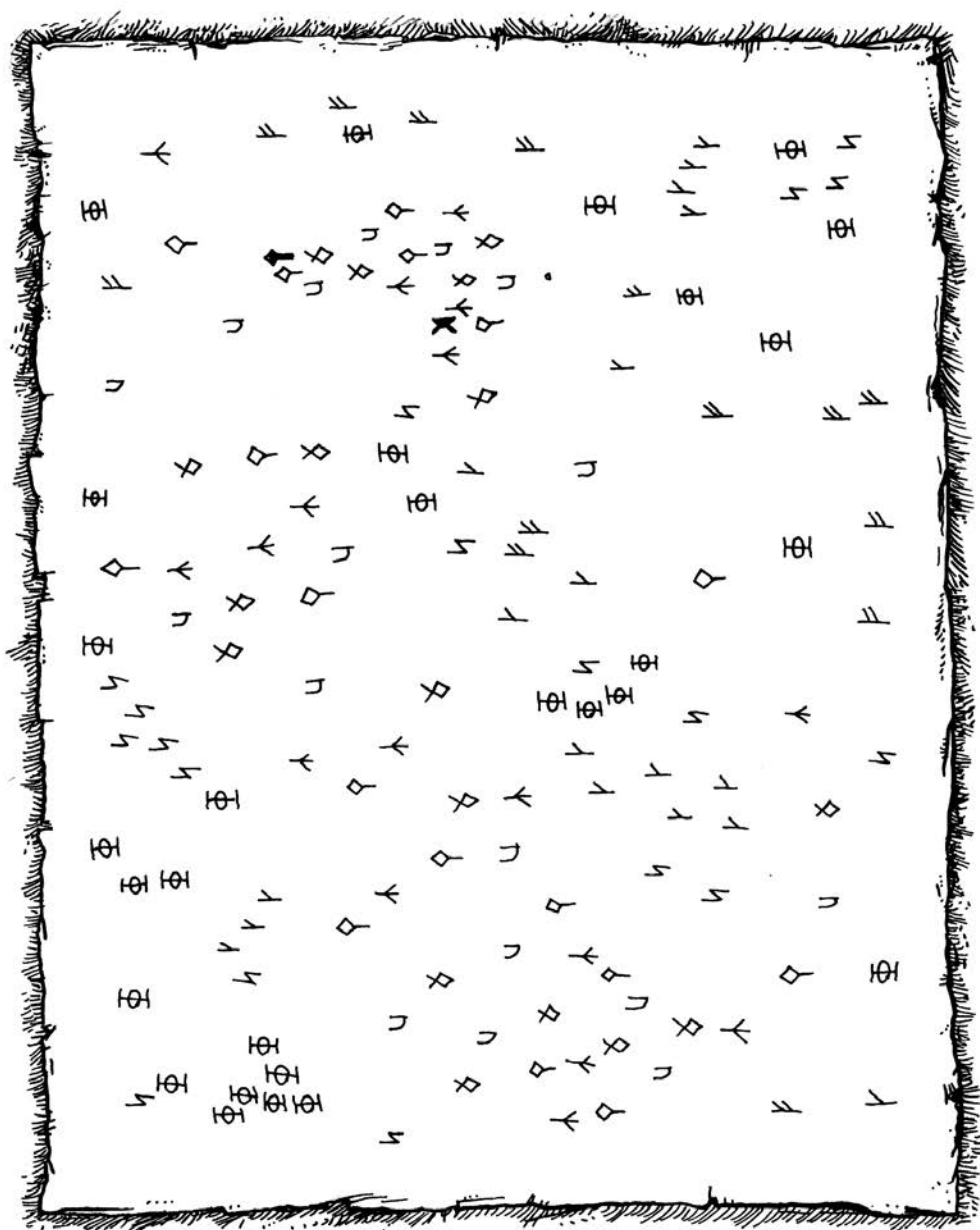
Ox soon tires; stops Kettle-Cart
Above new Candlestick
Mars' hot flame positioned so
To light its fresh-trimmed wick

Ere long the heat 'neath Kettle full
Makes ether steam encloud
Mighty Crab - who shows his ire
Waving claws and clacking loud

He runs Below where Eagle lies
Catching wing in claw
And pulls the day once more, again
From a dark and angry maw

Jull Iyyin
Dated last January

PLAYER HANDOUT D



PLAYER HANDOUT E

and pleasure to be speaking to you.

5 year – and all the many years that we have served Divine Sakanta – we have been disciplined. We have kept our work hidden from the Enemy. The agents of Death cannot decipher our encoded designs. The innocence of the elf children to whom we gift the models that we build to test our components proves itself a potent bane against the minions of Tuwonatar who ever ready to seize upon an opportunity to steal th

Comrade-gnomes, I salute you!

Tonight, we gather here for

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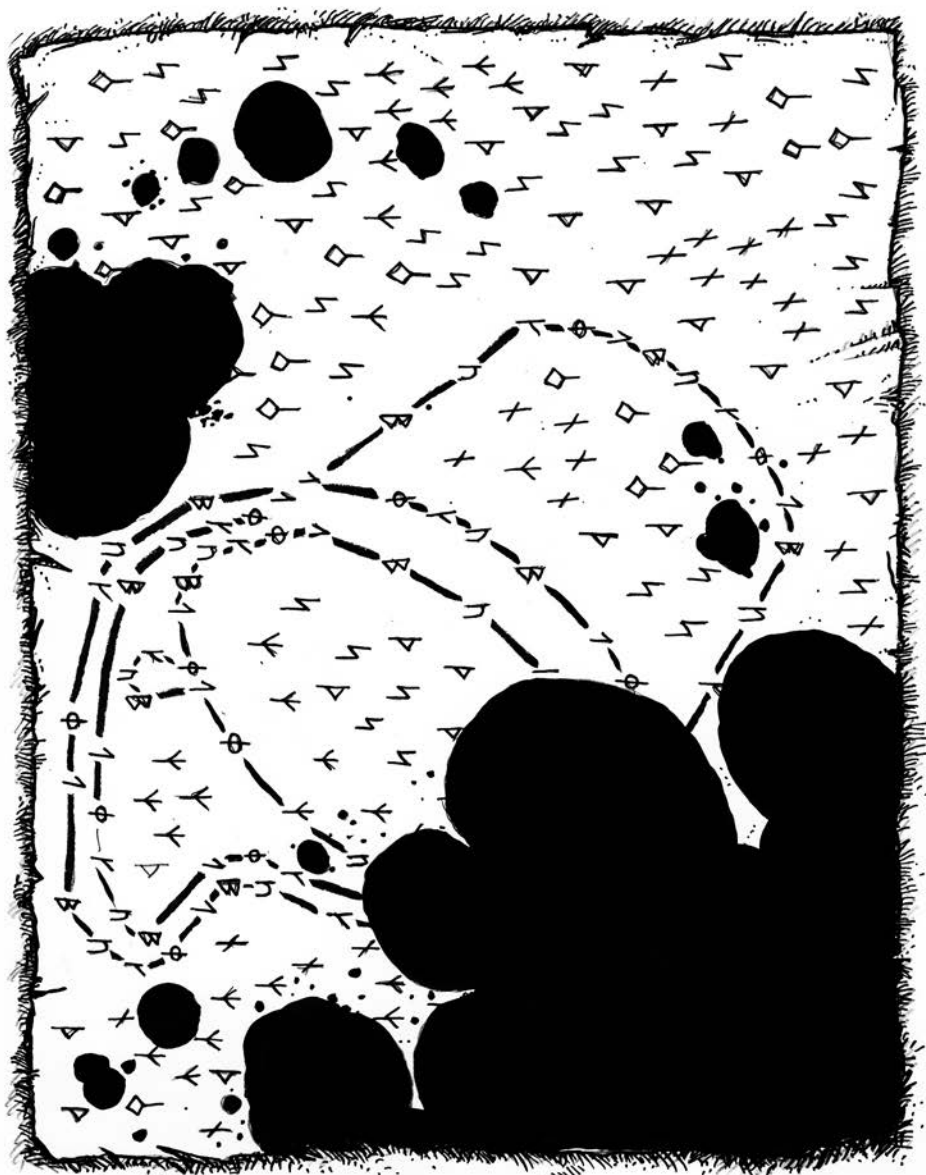
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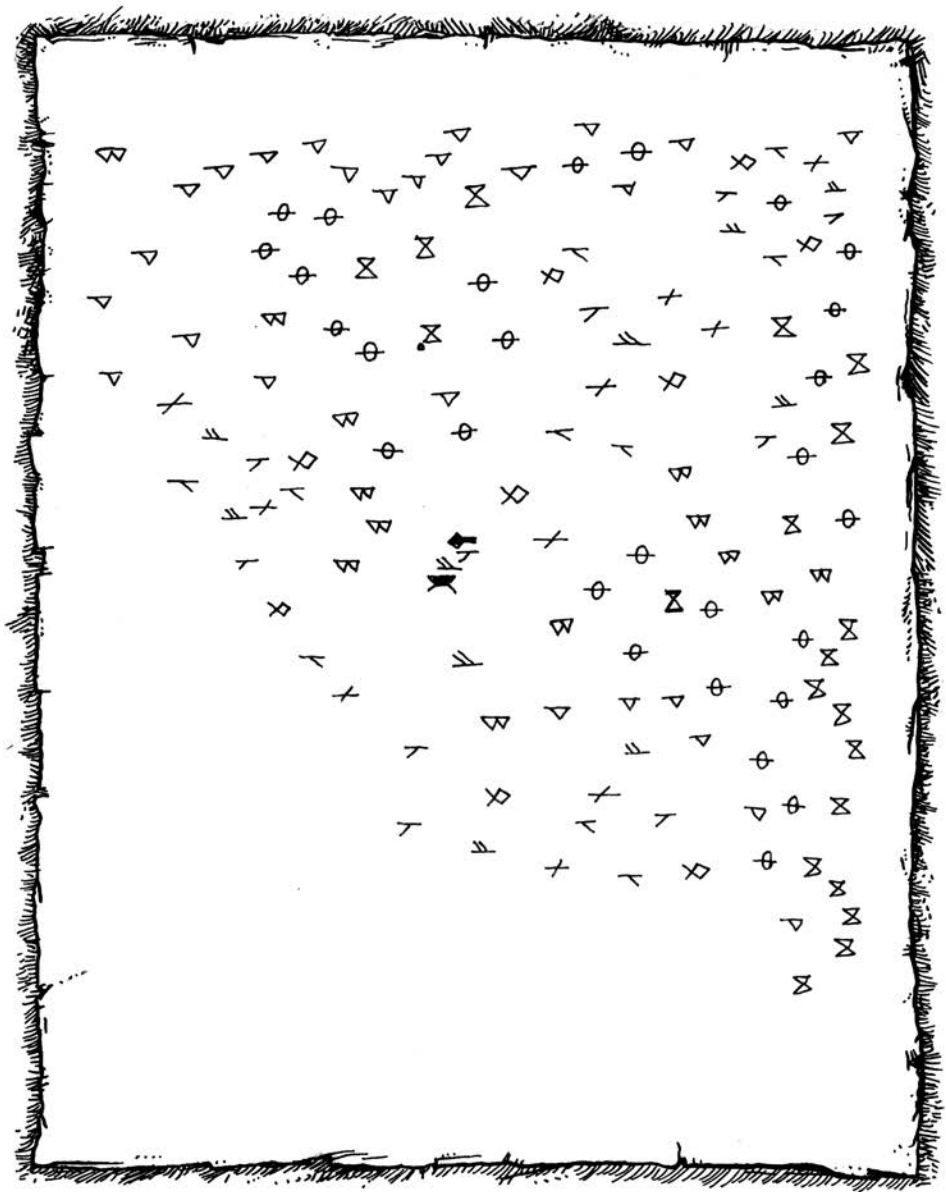
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PLAYER HANDOUT F

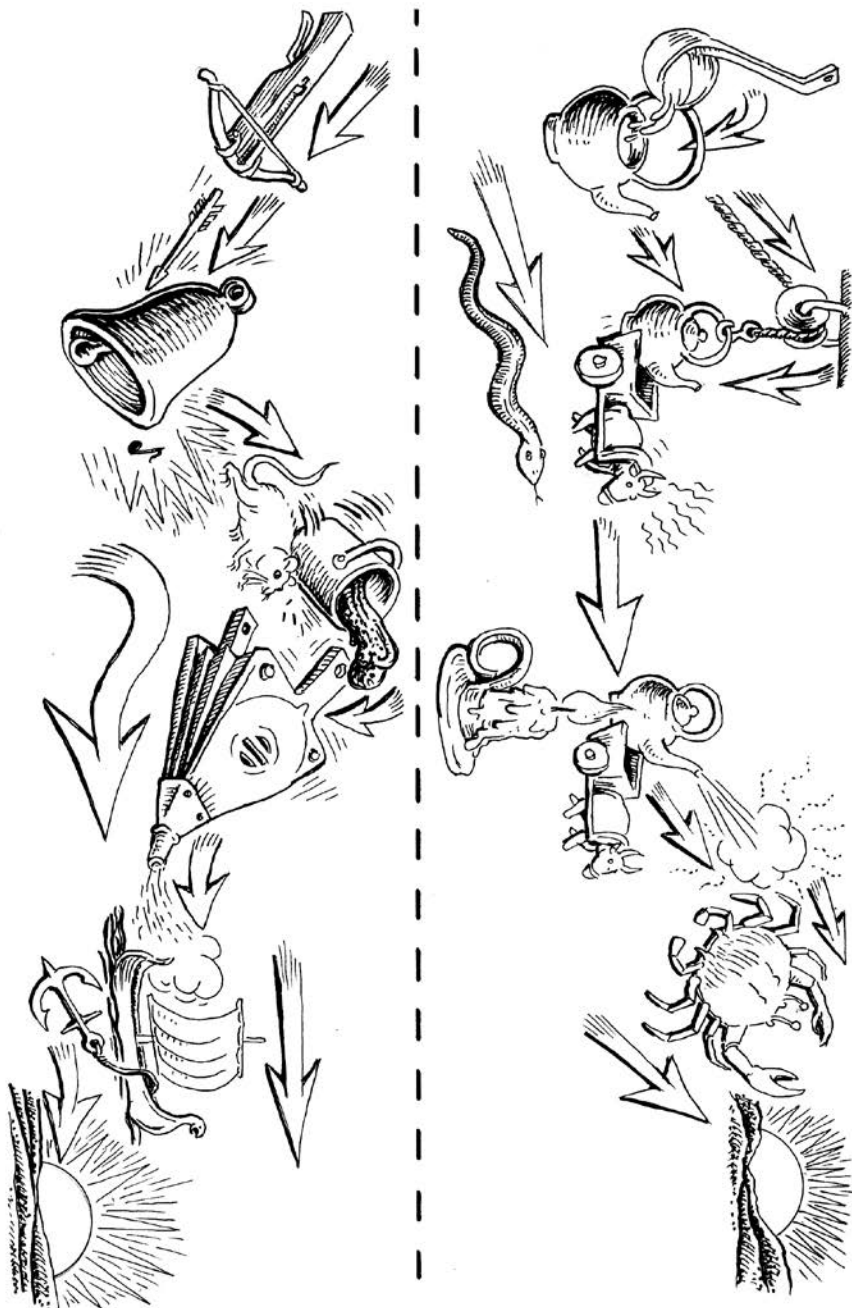


PLAYER HANDOUT G



JUDGE REFERENCE: ARTIFACT DESIGNS

This adventure includes the building of celestial artifacts designed by the Konhengen. As reference for the judge to understand the idea, this page includes a not-to-scale diagram of this year's artifact design (left side) and last year's design (right side). See table on page 7 for a summary of additional details.



DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

Trials of the Toy Makers

2014 HOLIDAY MODULE
A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
BY STEVE BEAN

“Murder! Foul murder!” These are the only words that describe the scene inside the underground complex of the toy-making gnomes called the Konhengen.

Murder is not what you had hoped to find, but you’re not surprised, either. Your introduction to these fabled, reclusive toy-makers had ominous overtones from the outset. First, there was the abrupt and unceremonious end to their nightly gift-giving visits to the village children. Then, three children snuck off into the Taboo Lands, convinced that evil had befallen the Konhengen.

And so you’ve travelled to a great island on the eve of the Winter Solstice to find the missing children. Instead you’ve found mass murder. But you’ve also found evidence of a secret agenda behind the gift-giving of the toy-making gnomes. Now you must unravel the mystery of the gnomes’ true purpose — or the world will suffer consequences on a cosmic scale!



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