



Thick Skull
ADVENTURES

A Level 5 Adventure

Compatible With
**DCC
RPG**



Stronghold of the
WOOD GIANT SHAMAN

STEPHEN NEWTON

Stronghold of the Wood Giant Shaman

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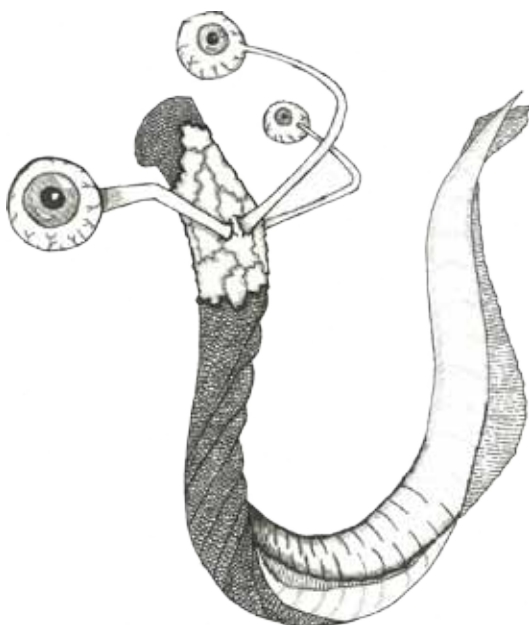
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Introduction

These are not your father's giants...

Wood giants—animalistic evolutionary ancestors of hill giants—have emerged from the forests of the Fulthon Mountains to harry and pillage human villages with impunity. Ferocious and feral, they kidnap the weak to sacrifice in their barbaric rituals. Decades ago, your ancestors—stout and brave adventurers of renown—eliminated a previous giant threat, and thus people expect such heroism from you.

But not is all at it seems, as a chaotic force lurks behind the scenes. And if survival against a stronghold of ferocious giants wasn't challenging enough, the machinations of facing an insane, immortal demon certainly will be...

Stronghold of the Wood Giant Shaman is a DCC RPG adventure designed for 4-6 5th-level characters. It was lovingly written as homage to a beloved classic RPG adventure module; crafted in a similar tone to some older adventures of yore, but spiced up with a distinct DCC RPG flavor.

Playtesting revealed that, given the powerful capabilities of 5th-level PCs, the degree of difficulty of the encounters varied greatly depending on which way the dice rolled. In some situations the PCs had minor difficulty, and in others corpses of once-mighty PCs stacked up quickly. One or two massive strikes from a wood giant can be very punishing indeed!

Judge's Adventure Background

For centuries, wood giants—animalistic, evolutionary ancestors of hill giants—have banded in small tribes within the lowland forests at edge of the Fulthon Mountains. They naturally dislike humans and human-kind, but do not fear them, merely considering those puny races as pests and fodder. Their real enemies are the other tribes of wood and hill giants in the area that frequently attempt to raid their lairs, kill their chieftains and shaman, and absorb the remaining tribesmen into their own.

To gain an advantage over the other giant tribes, the wood giant shaman Goothlik ordered dozens of blood sacrifices of kidnapped human villagers to appease the giant god Yarr Tik the Tall to win His divine favor and grant Goothlik strength over his foes. Goothlik raided nearby settlements, including the village of Dalton's Peak—humans being such easy prey after all—to replenish his supply of human sacrifices. Confident that these blood offerings would win him favor, Goothlik became enraged after being routed in a skirmish with a rival clan of hill giants which decimated his tribe. Goothlik cursed Yarr Tik the Tall, blaspheming that he would one day crush the god and feed him to the accursed demon Veedarkaleesh, a foul entity despised by all giants.

The demon Veedarkaleesh, notorious throughout the Shadow Plane for his malicious mischief—a trait all too common amongst creatures cursed with immortality—heard this insult and decided to make Goothlik pay for his transgression. Veedarkaleesh ambushed Goothlik while the wood giant was ravaging alone, consuming his soul and then peeling the flesh from the giant’s body to wear as his own as a trophy. Veedarkaleesh now takes a brief respite from his eternal melancholy by masquerading as the wood giant shaman in his fresh Goothlik “flesh suit” while the real Goothlik festers as a giant blood golem in the caverns below the stronghold. The golem Goothlik is covered by vampire leeches; this process transfers strength to Veedarkaleesh and keeps his flesh suit moist and supple, enabling Veedarkaleesh to continue his masquerade.

In his Goothlik disguise, Veedarkaleesh capriciously orders the wood giants around to amuse himself: sometimes commanding the tribe to raid the nearby villages, at other times remaining completely silent for hours—much to the confusion of the wood giant tribesmen. He’s completely content to sit back and watch the wood giants fight amongst themselves, while feeding on them when he hungers for blood. As the wood giants continue to go missing, the tribe has become agitated, believing their tribesmen have either defected to, or been kidnapped by, another clan.

Veedarkaleesh—who cares not a whit about the goals of giants, humans, or any other mortal creature—intends to maintain this charade as the “shaman” until he becomes too bored or the vampire leeches have completely harvested the life force from Goothlik’s remains. However, woe to any person who is foolish enough to tamper with the Foul Vial containing Veedarkaleesh’s blood in the Shadow Plane...

Adventure Hooks

Judges are welcome to use any combination of the plot hooks below to get the adventure started or craft one of their own that suits their campaign.

Kidnapped: After centuries of inactivity, the wood giants have once again begun raiding the remote village of Dalton’s Peak. In addition to stealing the villager’s harvests and livestock, the giants have carried off several townspeople as captives. The town has sent a desperate plea for heroes to assist in dealing with this menace. One of the missing captives, Beaula, is the wife of Tenkar, the wealthy and surprisingly popular proprietor of Tenkar’s Tavern who offers 1000 gp for her return (and will negotiate up to 1250 gp if persuaded.)

Atonement: A lawful god of one of the PCs’ clerics is displeased! It is well known that a tribe of wood giants is currently encamped in the area tormenting Her worshippers. This cleric, who has risen in glory via the gifts



of Her divinity, receives a vision detailing the God’s displeasure in Her faithful servant’s failure to not taken it upon himself to not cleanse the land of this scourge. Clerics will understand that unless Her will is promptly satisfied regarding this matter, future requests for divine assistance may not be forthcoming.

Patron Quest-The Shadow Plane: While not necessarily concerned with the giants themselves, many arcane patrons have interest in the Shadow Portal Veedarkaleesh travelled through. Patrons may need their subjects to venture to this foul plane to retrieve Veedarkaleesh’s Foul Vial and/or potentially deposit something—or more nefariously someone—into that harsh landscape.

Author’s Note: During playtesting, I used a blend of these latter two hooks. A party cleric received frequent visions which grew in clarity of the displeased demi-goddess Aristemis showing the cleric that he was being sought to “...go to a plane of darkness and shifting light to retrieve a vial floating in midair filled with liquid most foul. Once retrieved, the vision continues that you must take this vial to a swirling whirlpool in the middle of a raging sea and sacrifice your life by throwing it in. Only then, will Her great scheme be revealed.” I used one full role-playing session having the PCs investigate—using both mortal and divine means—clues that the Foul Vial was “hidden somewhere in the lair of some well-known menacing wood giants.” I’m saving the whirlpool-diving vision for a separate adventure.

Legacy of the Family Name: Centuries ago, a PCs’ ancestor achieved fame and glory after finding the courage to face and defeat a band of hill giants. As word of a new giant scourge spreads, the common folk look to these heroes to live up to their family name to deal with this threat.

Author’s Note: During playtesting, I also used this hook as motivation for having “replacement PCs” show up to help the party after their numbers had been thinned by the giants. “I hear you are the ones who have taken arms against the giant beasts? I carry the sword of my great-great-grandfather who once took arms against the Frost Giants! I will honor his spirit and join your quest!”

“Farkin’ Giants!”: Who needs a reason?! There are wood giants in the area and civilized man cannot stand for such things!

Judge’s Notes

The “Occupation Bonus” check: One of the DCC RPG mechanics this author is particularly fond of is to incorporate the PCs’ original o-level funnel background occupation into the adventure. Certain locations will include an “Occupation Bonus” check including a list of sample occupations. Judges are



encouraged to grant initiative bonuses, skill check bonuses, or saving throw bonuses to PCs with background occupations relevant to a situation.

Monster Descriptions: Most of the new monsters are described more fully in the *New Monsters* appendix. The Wood Giants entry also includes the new Crit Table WG1 to be used when a wood giant lands a critical hit.

What's with the d22? Wood giants are formidable foes, but still weaker than other giant races and therefore use a d22 (as opposed to a d24) as their Action Die. To create a d22 roll, you can roll a d24 ignoring and re-rolling 23s or 24s. Alternatively, you can simultaneously roll a d20 and d6 using the following formula for the d6 result: 1-2 add 0; 3-4 add 1; 5-6 add 2. (The d6 could also be replaced with a d3 -1 roll to be added to the d20.)



About The Stronghold

The wood giants' stronghold is located in the low foothills of the largely uninhabited western region of the Fulthon Mountains. Given the perpetual greasy dark smoke which emanates from the stronghold's great fire pit, not to mention the rather obvious tracks that the giants leave behind, the PCs will have little difficulty finding its whereabouts. A well-worn path leads from the surrounding wooded areas to the double door entrance to the palisade (area A4).

The stronghold consists of a tall triangular palisade surrounding a large open courtyard and several buildings, including a livestock pen, the squatch quarters, an outhouse, and the main compound itself.

Palisade & Bulwarks: The palisade is a 25-foot tall triangular wall which creates a perimeter around the main compound and its supporting structures. It is constructed of large thick logs fastened tightly together with supporting beams and iron nails. The palisade can be climbed on a successful DC 12 Strength, Agility, or *climb sheer surfaces* check.

At each corner of the palisade wall is a semi-circular bulwark where the wood giants typically station a sentry to watch for marauders from rival tribes. Depending on how stealthy (or belligerently) the PCs behave, the likelihood of the giant guards noticing their activity can vary significantly. See area A5 for more details about the bulwarks.

Stronghold Construction: The stronghold is constantly damp from the nearby frosty Nosnra River, so the entire structure is covered with moss making it extremely difficult to burn. One oil flask will burn a 1d3 5-foot area before smoldering out. Magical fire will burn a 1d7 5-foot area.

About Doors: Doors in the compound are constructed of sturdy logs bound with iron nails. Breaking a door down requires a successful DC 12 Strength check; doors can also be hacked down by inflicting 12 hp of damage, or opened by a thief's successful DC 12 *pick locks* check.

Monster Motivations

Wood Giant Motivations: The majority of the wood giants are in a state of agitation. A fortnight ago the tribe was decimated by a rival clan of hill giants. Adding insult to injury, since that battle, two of their members have subsequently gone missing. Additionally, the tribe is also concerned by "Goothlik's" strange behavior of late. Thinking the real threat is a rival band of giants, the wood giants will consider the PCs a mere nuisance until the PCs have demonstrated they are a credible threat.



Squatch Motivations: While the squatches are effectively the slave labor of the wood giants, they nonetheless feel a kinship to their forest-dwelling exploiters. Still, if PCs try to convert a squatch—assuming they can speak squatch—they can succeed with a DC 15 Personality check with +1 Occupational Bonus going to Animal Trainers, Herders, Hunters, or other occupations familiar with animals. A converted squatch will fight with the party for only 1 combat encounter against giants (and never against fellow squatches) before fleeing with its freedom into the forests.

Aroused Giants: Over the centuries, mankind has proven itself to be weak and soft. In the wood giants' lifetime, the “punies” or “runt people” have never posed a consistent threat. Ergo, current giant attitudes dictate that mankind is nothing more than a sometimes dangerous pest that occasionally lashes out but is easily dealt with (similar to how mankind might consider the threat level of an angry raccoon.) Most of the fortifications the wood giants have prepared to protect their stronghold are against the threat of rival wood giant or hill giant tribes.

That said, once the PCs have inflicted any noticeable damage (i.e. killed a giant) they will initiate defensive maneuvers: the younger giants will be sequestered to their chambers (area 1-8), two of the wolves (area B5) will be released from their pens to wander the stronghold courtyard, and two patrols will be dispatched—3 giants and 1 wolf—to hunt for the intruders in and around the stronghold and its surrounding areas.

Giants Don't Respawn: An appendix has been provided with an inventory of the compound's denizens so that judges can track which giants have been dispatched should PCs employ a war of attrition strategy on the stronghold.

Veedarkaleesh's Motivation: The demon Veedarkaleesh is merely passing time on the prime material plane masquerading as Goothlik as a brief respite from his immortal boredom. He will not initially engage the PCs directly—more out of a desire to prolong his ruse as shaman than any fear—instead he will amuse himself barking orders in his broken dialect of wood giant to force his minions into dangerous situations. However, if the PCs have the insolence to remove the Foul Vial from the Shadow Plane, he will quickly summon his demonic minions to set upon the PCs and retrieve it (see Event E1).

Veedarkaleesh and An Unfolding Plot Twist: PCs will likely assume they're merely up against a clan of wood giants (if one can use the term “merely” when talking about taking on a clan of giants), but at some point should surmise that there is something not quite right about the shaman. Opportunities to foreshadow the demonic menace can be provided if the PCs try to listen to the giants speak amongst themselves over their concern about Goothlik's behavior, or by finding the corpses of the slain wood giants in area B3 and area 2-1.



During playtesting, the author had the visage of Veedarkaleesh briefly revealed as the PCs entered The North Hall. Thereafter, brief visions of the demon periodically clouded their rituals when a cleric or wizard called for aid from a deity or patron.

Player Start (Outside Compound)

Read or paraphrase once the players arrive within 2 miles of the stronghold:

Your party is travelling through the bucolic foothills at the edge of the Fulthon Mountains. In other situations, the waving grasses, leafy trees, chirping birds and tranquil ripple of the nearby Nosnra river would provide a calming sense of peace. However, your introspection is suddenly interrupted when you discover gigantic footprints approximately 25 inches in length pressed deep into the soft earth.

As you pause to examine the enormous footprints, you catch a whiff of burning wood—looking through the trees on the horizon, you spot a column of dark smoke rising into the sky.

Suddenly birds take flight from nearby trees, as they are startled by the sound of a long shrill hooting followed shortly by the distinctive rhythmic sound of an axe striking against a tree somewhere out in the distance.

The PCs can easily follow the wood-chopping sound to area A1. The column of smoke can be followed to the stronghold.

Once the PCs are within visual distance of the stronghold, read or paraphrase:

The hillside trees have been thinned here, many felled trees leaving crudely-hacked stumps in their place. You can now see a large compound erected within a wide stump-filled meadow bordered on one side by a swiftly flowing river. The compound is surrounded by a protective triangular palisade made from thick trees reaching 25 feet in height. Semi-circular bulwarks are constructed where the corners of the palisade meet.

On the western wall, an elevated deck has been constructed leading to an observation platform over the river. A forked path leads from a massive set of double doors 20 feet high and 15 feet wide along the southern wall; from here you cannot see where the paths terminate.

OUTSIDE STRONGHOLD WANDERING MONSTERS

If the PCs dawdle outside the perimeter of the compound, there is a possibility (1-in-8 per turn) of encountering a wandering monster. Choose or roll randomly from the table below:

1. **Squatch workers:** 2 squatches from area A6 with tools and a cart on their way to clear more trees.
2. **Wood Giant Patrol:** 2 wood giants walking with a hunting wolf around the area who will use their *hoot of alarm* if they are attacked.

Wood Giants (2):

Init -2; Atk club +10 melee (2d8+6) or hurled stone +6 missile fire (1d8+6, range 100'); AC 16; HD 6d10; hp 42, 35; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*), infravision, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d6.

3. **Wild Game Pit Trap:** Not a wandering monster, *per se*, but the PCs risk stumbling into a pit trap set by the giants to catch pigs and other game. The brush-covered pit is 15' deep and lined with crude spikes at the bottom. DC 15 Reflex save to avoid, or take 3d4 damage.
4. **Barnstink the Squatch:** Barnstink from area B1 is wheeling his dung barrow to dump its contents into the catfish troll pit.

Barnstink the Burly Squatch

Init +2; Atk machete +5 melee (1d8+4) or slam +4 melee (dmg 1d8+4); AC 15; HD 4d8+4; hp 28; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP leg break on 19-20 crit, musk taint; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N; Crit Table M/d10.

5. **Water-Fetching squatches:** Two squatch slaves are filling barrels with water from the Nosnra River.

Squatches (x2) Init +2; Atk +4 wood axe melee (1d10+2) or slam +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 15; HD 4d8+4; hp 31, 26; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP leg break on 19-20 crit, musk taint; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table M/d10.

6. **Aggressive Gicastors:** Two aggressive gicastors have ventured out of the Nosnra River seeking wood for their lodge.

Gicastors (x2)

Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 19, 17; MV 20', swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table M/d8.





AREA A1: WOOD-CHOPPING SQUATCHES

Prako and a few squatches are distracted in their labors and make any opposed check to detect sneaking PCs at -2.

Occupation Bonus: Any woodcutter or elven forester in the party will automatically give the entire party a surprise round.

Assuming the PCs manage to successfully sneak up upon the giants read or paraphrase the following:

You easily follow the source of the wood-chopping sounds until you come across who—or rather what—is making the noise: an enormous dark green humanoid approximately 9 feet tall with an elongated head patrols the ground on his powerful forearms and legs like a gorilla. The giant harries two other ape-like creatures—also 9 feet tall and completely covered with matted brown fur—with a whip as they begrudgingly cut down trees while a third fur-covered brute splits the wood and stacks the logs into a cart. The walking-apes occasionally grumble at the harassment, earning them guttural curses and a crack of the whip from their gigantic “supervisor”.

Young Prako is full of adolescent bravado and, like all giants, has little fear of humans. He will command his squatches to engage the intruders immediately before attacking with his giant whip. If reduced to half of his hit points, he will abandon the squatches and flee back to the compound. He carries his whip and dagger, and wears a bear skin wrap for clothing.

Prako, Young Wood Giant:

Init -3; Atk whip +9 melee (1d8+3 plus DC 14 Ref save or be entangled) or club +9 melee (2d6+4); AC 16; HD 4d10; hp 26; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*), infravision, crit on 19-20; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d4.

Wood-Chopping Squatches (x3):

Init +2; Atk wood axe +4 melee (1d10+2) or slam +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 15; HD 4d8+4; hp 33, 27, 25; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP leg break on 19-20 crit, musk taint; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table M/d10.

AREA A2: THE NOSNRA RIVER & OBSERVATION PLATFORM

The strong current of the Nosnra river has flown swiftly nearby for as long as man has memories. A 30-foot high wooden platform extends from the palisade over the river. From this angle, it appears no one is currently atop the structure.

The platform is used as an observation pier by the wood giants but is currently unmanned. Climbing a support column requires a DC 12 Agility check. At the top of the platform is an 80-foot length of thick rope with a large metal grappling hook at the end which the wood giants use to snag the occasional boat piloted by river captains ignorant of the giant threat. The rope is 4 times thicker than normal and subsequently incredibly heavy to carry—requiring a combined DC 20 Strength check to transport it.

Swimming: The frigid Nosnra River runs swiftly and swimming across it requires great strength: DC 12 Strength check modified by any armor or encumbrance penalties. Failing the swim check results in the PC being carried 1d30 + 20 yards downstream and begins the first round of drowning (1d6 temporary Stamina damage). Each swim check after a failed swim check are made at -1 (cumulative until PC is drowned or makes a save.) It should also be noted that catfish trolls are known to inhabit these waters...

Trapped Platform Door: A walkway extends from the river platform to a door in the stronghold palisade wall. The door leads to the interior of the palisade and is locked from the inside and trapped (thief's pick lock DC 10). Attempting to open the locked door without first disabling the trap will open a 10' trap door on the walkway, dropping anyone standing on the platform 30' to the ground below (DC 12 Reflex save to avoid 3d6 falling damage).

AREA A3: CATFISH TROLL PIT

At the bottom of a 20-foot pit covered in bones and offal, a beast with a broad reptilian head and long leathery whiskers crawls on four stumpy legs snarling up at you with malice. From head to tail, the creature measures approximately 7 feet in length and its gangly frame is covered by a hairless grayish-black skin. Sharp spiked fins line its wiry arms and back. From your vantage point above the creature, it looks like a monstrous catfish with stumpy legs. The creature emits a threatening croak as you approach and stares up at you with unnerving, bulbous eyes.

Near the edge of the pit, a thick coiled rope is tied to a post which has been driven deep into the ground.

The giants have captured a catfish troll from the nearby river. The catfish troll serves two functions for the giants: trash disposal and entertainment. The troll eats virtually anything thrown into the pit, which makes it perfect for waste disposal. In addition, when the clan is feeling bored they will toss a prisoner into the pit taking bets on how long before the victim will be dismembered and eaten. Occasionally, while fortified with “liquid courage”, an emboldened wood giant will dive into the pit and rip apart the catfish troll as a display of strength, leaving the troll to regenerate anew. The giants initially tried chaining the beast, but the troll kept chewing off its own limbs to free itself, so they finally dug a pit deep enough from which the catfish troll could not escape—well, rarely escape, anyway.

The catfish troll is surprisingly spry and has a 1-in-12 chance of escaping *each* round PCs are within 10’ of the perimeter of the pit. Any objects thrown into the pit (tools, corpses of PCs, etc.) are quickly used by the troll as rudimentary tools improving the odds of the catfish troll’s escape. If the rope tied to the pole is thrown into the pit, the troll easily escapes in 2 rounds.

After 1d3 +2 rounds of croaking, Buchlod will come out to investigate what’s agitating the troll. If Buchlod notices the PCs, he will either throw the rope down so the troll can escape and then watch in amusement as the troll attacks the party—for while the troll has no fear, it knows that the PCs are easier prey than the giant. The troll will attack either the smallest member of the party or the PC with the lowest luck, judge’s choice. See area 1-3 for Buchlod’s statistics.

Catfish Troll:

Init (+6 in water, +3 on land); Atk bite +8 melee (2d6+4), claw +6 melee (2d4 plus DC 12 Fort save or 1d4 poison); AC 16; HD 6d8+4; hp 29; MV 20’; Act 3d20; SP poisoned fins, regeneration (1d6 hp per round), immune to critical hits, immune to mind-affecting spells, vulnerable to fire; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +8; AL C; Crit Table M/d14.

AREA A4: PALISADE GATE

A dirt path pounded firm by the trampling of scores of giant feet leads from the meadow towards a gate in the palisade. The gate is 15 feet wide, constructed of sturdy carved logs, and held shut with a large iron latch.

The gate is locked from the inside and requires a DC 18 Strength check to force open. However, given that the lock mechanism is giant-sized, it is relatively easy to pick (thief’s pick lock DC 10).

AREA A5: PALISADE AND BULWARKS

Modify appropriately depending on the direction of the PCs' approach:

At the corner where two of the palisade walls come together, a semi-circular defensive bulwark bulges outwards. Atop the wall, you can see a large lumbering creature pacing idly as it scans the horizon.

There are 3 bulwarks along the palisade but only 2 (area A5a and area A5b) are manned—or dare we say “gianted?”—the first time the PCs approach the stronghold.

The giant sentinels lazily scan the areas outside the stronghold and rarely look into the courtyard. PCs attempting to use stealth while inside the boundaries of the compound are granted +1 bonuses to their sneaking/Agility checks.

The two sentinels are armed with boulders and hurling javelins, and will emit their *hoot of alarm* only if seriously threatened. They will not hesitate to use their *animal summoning* skills, if for no other reason than it makes their jobs easier.

Wood Giant sentinels (Kongtok and Chartik)

Init -2; Atk club +10 melee (2d8+8) or hurled stone +6 missile fire (1d8+6, range 100'); AC 16; HD 6d10; hp 37, 34; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*), infravision, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d6.

AREA A6: SQUATCH SLAVE QUARTERS

For every round spent in the area around the shanty there is a 1-in-6 chance that one of the squatches will emerge from the slave quarters heading towards the stronghold.

A long, poorly-constructed shanty is built against the sturdy inner wall of the palisade. Some moss-covered barrels and a trough of fetid water are haphazardly arranged near the shack. Both a ripe odor and guttural grunts emanate from inside the shanty.

The “living quarters” of the squatches are only slightly more tolerable than that of the prisoners. When not laboring under the whip of the giants, they fill their time eating, arguing, and picking nits out of each other's fur.

The squatches will not immediately attack unless attacked first. They are apprehensive of the PCs, but fear the whip of the wood giants much more than any humanoid. See also: *Squatch Motivations* above.

If combat erupts in or around the quarters, the fighting has a 1-in-8 chance of drawing the attention of one of the giants on the guard bulwarks.

Squatch Slaves (x7)

Init +2; Atk slam +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 15; HD 4d8+4; hp 25, 22, 21, 18, 17, 16, 15; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP leg break on 19-20 crit; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table M/d10.

Stronghold Courtyard

PCs will encounter quite a bit of activity once inside the walls of the palisade. It is not uncommon to find giants, squatches and other animals wandering between buildings or going about their daily tasks.

COURTYARD WANDERING MONSTERS

There is a 1-in-8 chance of a random encounter checked each round while the PCs are within the walls of the courtyard.

- Squatch workers (area A6)
- Young giants (area 1-8)
- Drunk giant (area 1-2)
- Guard giant (area A5-a)
- 2 unpenned wolves (area B5)

AREA B1: LIVESTOCK PEN

As the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following, adjusting accordingly if Barnstink has been previously killed:

The repugnant smell of rotten meat combined with animal filth makes breathing difficult, and dark bloated flies swarm endlessly around you. Grating sounds of miserable animals bleat out wearily from a nearby barn. Moist bits of fur and flesh are strewn about the ground.

A large bloodstained table and butchering block are arranged nearby. A bloodied butcher's knife, hand ax, and bone saw—all appearing to have seen plenty of action—lie on the table.

As you examine the area, a massive grey-furred, ape-like creature wearing a bloodied apron emerges from the pen. In one of his muscular paws he clutches three squirming chickens, and in the other a large machete.

Barnstink the Burly Squatch

Init +2; Atk machete +5 melee (1d8+4) or slam +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 15; HD 4d8+4; hp 28; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP leg break on 19-20 crit, musk taint; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N; Crit Table M/d10.

Barnstink is a simple creature (even for a squatch) who is forced to care for the animals. He is very strong from his labors and will fight with his butchering machete if either he or any of the animals are threatened.

Inside the barn, several different types of livestock (pigs, sheep, chicken, and a few cattle) live in crowded and filthy conditions. Several dead animals are still lying in their pens. The area is deep with feces and the water troughs are thick with scum. In total, the livestock pen houses 23 cows, 18 pigs, 20 sheep and approximately 4 dozen chickens.

The pen also contains a wheel barrow, tools for grooming and butchering animals, and an enormous amount of animal feed.

AREA B2: WOODPILE

At least 4 cords of chopped wood are haphazardly stacked here. Thrust deep into a stump are two giant-sized axes.

The woodpiles are infested with swarms of fist-sized wood spiders which will attack if any of the logs are disturbed. The two-handed axes are used by the squatches for cutting wood and inflict 1d10 damage if used by humanoids.

Occupation Bonus: Rat-catchers, woodcutters and elven foresters will be able to warn the party of the likelihood of wood spiders, granting +2 initiatives to all PCs.

Wood Spider Swarm

Init +3; Atk swarming bite +1 melee (1 hp plus DC 12 Fort or weeping pox); AC 11; HD 4d8; hp 20; MV 20'; Act special; SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space; half damage from non-area attacks; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table M/d8.

Weeping Pox: PCs bitten by a wood spider must make a DC 12 Fort save or undergo a severe allergic reaction. PCs that fail break out with swollen pus-filled nodules that start oozing quickly. The pustules will weep for 1d10 rounds (resulting in 1hp damage each round) or until healed.

AREA B3: THE outhouse

For each round spent near the outhouse, there is a 1-in-12 chance that one of the giants from area 1-3 will approach needing to use the privy. As the PCs approach the outhouse, read or paraphrase the following:



A well-worn path connects the stronghold to a large rectangular shack. The excruciating stench of feces nauseates even the heartiest of your party. Thick and bloated flies the size and color of prunes buzz around the shack, and much to your annoyance, begin landing on you and delivering painful bites.

The prune flies are annoying, filthy, and carry disease. They will not move beyond 10' from the outhouse area and “attack” every other round.

Inside the shack, a giant-sized bench with 3 open seats sits over a pit of waste. Dung crawler's dwell in the pit and will attack any human foolish enough to sit upon or—gods help them—delve into the cesspit.

For those foolhardy enough to actually search the waste below, they will discover the dismembered body of the missing wood giant Othlik—his limbs scattered within the sewage and completely devoid of flesh. Veedarkaleesh snacked on the giant's skin and tasked Fetal-pa to dispose of the corpse.

The pit also contains a few pieces of treasure that have fallen or been dropped by drunken giants: a silver drinking goblet (5 gp) and a “fancy wood-giant dagger” (dmg 1d6, 10 gp). In addition, a gold ring worth 100 gp still adorns Othlik's lifeless hand.

Occupation Bonus: Gongfarmers will be able to warn the party of the likelihood of dung crawlers and the effects of the prune fly (+2 initiative to all PCs) and receive a +2 bonus to Fort checks against those creatures.

Prune fly swarm (endless)

Init +2; Atk swarming bite +1 melee (0 but DC 12 Fort save or retching disease); AC 5; HD special—there is virtually no end to the prune fly swarm; MV 30'; Act special; SP bite all targets within 20' x 20' space. SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table N/A.

Prune Fly Retching Disease: PCs failing the DC12 fort save will contract retching disease, not being able to keep any food or water down, losing 1d3 stamina per day until the PC rolls a save or the disease is magically healed.

Dung Crawlers (x6)

Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6 plus DC 12 Fort save or fecal stench disease); AC 13; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N; Crit Table N/A.

Dung Crawler Fecal Stench Sickness: PCs failing the DC12 Fort save will contract fecal stench sickness. They will become extremely lethargic (resulting in a 5' movement penalty and -1 to Agility modifiers) and their breath and body odor will reek of sewage, resulting in -2 to sneaking and Initiative checks. Effects will last 1d8 days or until magically healed.

AREA B4: OUTDOOR CELLS

Exposed to the elements and covered in filth, several bedraggled and emaciated prisoners are penned here within small cages. They look towards you with quiet desperation as you approach.

A few frightened prisoners which have been captured from Dalton's Peak and other nearby villages are penned here near the wolves. The giants use the prisoners for food, sacrifices, and entertainment—sometimes throwing them into the catfish troll pit or forcing them to fight a squatch. The six cells contain:

- Beaula—the noble wife of Tenkar who will pay handsomely for her safe reward.
- Fichte—a sheep herder who was captured when he let his flock graze too close to wood giant territory.
- Empty cell.
- Ramdor—an emaciated dwarf suffering from the weeping pox disease captured as he fought against the giants at Dalton's Peak. He's been tormented by the smell of gold coming from the corpse in the cell next door. If cured of the disease, Ramdor is willing to join the party as a 2nd-level Dwarf.
- Dead elf (the late Pennybottom) whose belly contains a translucent-blue magic ring of feather fall he swallowed to keep safe once he was captured. The corpse's abdomen will faintly radiate magic and a dwarf (including Ramdor) can smell the gold from within its corpse.
- Mawmin Gramus—an experienced 2nd-level thief who was caught sneaking too close to the compound. If freed and given weapons and promised a share of the loot, he is willing to join the party.

The wolves from area B5 become agitated—pacing and snarling—if anyone except Buchlod enters the area and starts talking to or freeing any of the prisoners. Buchlod will then “sense something is wrong” and check up on the wolves within 1d4 +2 rounds. (See area 1-3 for Buchlod's stats.)

AREA B5: WOLF CAGE

A cage made of sturdy boughs and rope-ties are all that stand between you and a pack of enormous wolves. At the site of your party, the agitated beasts start pacing and baring sharp yellow teeth. The cage is closed with a gate that looks relatively flimsy given the ferocity of the beasts it's meant to contain.

One of the wolves stands apart from the rest of the pack: with jet-black fur and unearthly eyes that look like greasy oil atop water, it stares at [insert “strongest” PC's name here] with malevolent intent.

If anyone gets within 5' of the cage, the animals will frantically throw themselves against the gate with a 1-in-16 chance of actually causing enough damage to the cage to allow the wolves to escape and attack. The hunting wolves will fight as a pack (see below).

The black beast is Veedarkaleesh's pet: a semi-intelligent demon hound. While not as deadly on the prime material plane compared to her native Shadow plane, the creature still has a dangerous necrotic bite which corrupts flesh. The demon hound will fight on her own, attacking the strongest member of the party.

If the PCs spend more than 5 rounds in the area, or if any of the wolves are attacked, Buchlod (see area 1-3) will get "a strange feeling" that something is wrong and come out to investigate within 1d4+2 rounds. If the PCs attempt to attack the wolves while they're still caged, the demon hound will easily open the gate on his initiative round with his powerful jaws, freeing the other wolves to attack the party before making his own attack.

Great Hunting Wolves (x6)

Init +5; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 16, 15, 13, 12, 12, 11; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP pack hunter; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +3; AL N; Crit Table M/d8.

Pack hunter: When in a pack of 3 or more, the wolves focus their attack on who they consider to be the "weakest" party member (PC with the lowest combined Strength + Agility or Luck—judge's choice.) If two or more wolves are successful in making an attack in the same round, the PC must make DC 15 Agility check or be knocked prone.

Demon Hound

Init +6; Atk bite +7 melee (1d10); AC 15; HD 4d8; hp 20; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP fear bite, demon traits, gaseous form, immune to charm effects; Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table DN/d4.

The demon hound is a quick and ferocious beast with 2 attacks per round. PCs bitten by the creature see their flesh turn gray and mottled and must make a DC 13 Will save or be struck with fear (as per *scare* spell using target as spell check roll). The grey skin will remain for 1d8 days even after the wound is healed. When the beast is "killed" she turns to gaseous form, returning to the Shadow plane to be reborn later.

Stronghold Upper Level

The stronghold is a dank and musky collection of poorly-ventilated chambers. Smoke from the ever-burning fires of the North Hall and Kitchen ovens combine with the feral smell of the wood giants themselves to make fresh air a rare commodity inside the walls of the compound.

The walls separating the chambers inside the stronghold are made from sturdy wooden logs split by squatch laborers. The walls are approximately 15 to 18 feet tall and roofed with rough planks.

Read or paraphrase the following the first time the player's enter the upper level of the stronghold interior:

By all the gods in the Great Wheel, you never knew how bad one fort could stink! The overpowering stench of smoke, animal musk, and worse makes taking each breath a difficult chore. The smoke immediately begins to irritate your eyes as they slowly adjust to the darkness.

AREA 1-1: STRONGHOLD FOYER

Abnormally large animal-skin cloaks the size of tapestries hang on the wall along with drinking cups and leather sacks. Stacked against another wall are several large tree boughs which have been shaped into war clubs approximately 6 feet in length; their narrow ends are wrapped with sweat-stained leather strips and the club's wider "business end" are chipped and bloodied from past skirmishes.

A set of double-doors dampens the sound of some low-pitched hoots and grunts.

The items on the wall pegs are all giant-sized and currently amount to: 3 drinking cups, 2 leather skull caps, a fox pelt, and a satchel containing a giant-sized flute.

AREA 1-2: SOUTH HALL

Assuming the characters enter from the foyer (area 1-1):

Before you extends a great hallway approximately 60 feet long and 40 feet wide. The near end of the hallway is mostly dark save for a few torches burning in wall sconces casting dim, flickering light. Also adorning the walls are animal hides along with a half-dozen dried leathery human and elven heads. There is a small door on the southwest wall.

Rows of long tables and benches extend down the hallway. Most of the tables are littered with soiled plates and drinking utensils, save one which is currently being cleaned by an ape-like creature wearing a dirty apron.

Looking north through the smoke you see muscular humanoids ranging from 9 to 11 feet in height standing near a great burning fire pit and sitting around tables arguing amongst themselves in a strange tongue. Even from this distance, the menace of their monstrous size fills you with dread.

Sprawled out on a nearby table, one of the huge creatures lay fast asleep with a phlegmy rope of saliva spilling from his dark green lips and pooling onto the floor below.

A squatch slave is busy cleaning tables on the south hall. If he sees the party, he will scamper away back towards the kitchen, but will not raise an alarm.

The passed-out giant can be approached by a careful PC (DC 5 *sneak silently* for a thief, or DC 10 for other classes.) If awakened, he fights belligerently with a giant-sized knife grabbed from a nearby table.

Marrjik, drunken wood giant

Init -2; Atk knife +5 melee (1d6+6); AC 14; HD 6d10; hp 34; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*) infravision, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +10, Ref +0, Will +1; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d4 (lowered due to his inebriation).

Cleaning Squatch

Init +2; Atk slam +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 15; HD 4d8+4; hp 17; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP leg break on 19-20 crit; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table M/d10.

AREA 1-3: NORTH HALL

Description assumes PCs are carefully approaching from the south and wood giants are not yet “on alert”—adapt accordingly if PCs are entering from a different area or giants are on guard:

A gathering of gigantic boisterous creatures congregate at the north end of the hall. They range in height from 9 to 12 feet tall. Their skin is a mottled shade of forest green, with tan and brown faces, and dark brown or reddish hair. They clothe themselves in a variety of animal pelts and roughly woven fabric. Spiky black hair spouts from elongated, oval-shaped heads. The creatures have pierced their dark purple lips and cheeks with rings of silver and gold. With their long, muscular arms and thick torsos, they appear more apelike in their dimensions than human.

Several of the creatures surround a large table, grunting and hooting at each other in a strange language as they fill their mouths with greasy meats and drink lustily from absurdly large goblets. Others talk in small crowds near the fire.

One creature in particular is noticeably more ominous and menacing than the others. Sitting at the head of the table, his dark red skin glistens moist like that of a toad. His yellow eyes never stop scanning the creatures in the hall; all the while his dark tongue pokes out to apply moisture to his lipless mouth.

The anxious wood giants are preoccupied and arguing amongst themselves. If any of the PCs can get close enough without being detected (don't forget the wood giant's 1-in-6 chance of smelling elves and halflings) and can comprehend the wood giant language, they will learn the cause for concern: two giants, Othlik and Gartik, are missing and the giants are angrily proposing different theories as to their possible fate. For each round the PCs remain unnoticed, roll or choose randomly for a theory that the PCs overhear from the giants:

1. Othlik and Gartik defected to a stronger tribe of wood giants, most likely the scoundrel Smikk Smikk tribe to the west.
2. Their tribe mates were ambushed by hill giants to the north as revenge for a recent raid.
3. They fell into the Nosnra river in a drunken stupor and were eaten by catfish trolls.
4. They blasphemed against Yarr Tik the Tall and have been swallowed into his Earth Pit—and are falling still!
5. The two abandoned the tribe in disgust due to Karkartan's flamboyant new mannerisms.
6. The cowards were recruited by an amphibian sea demon rumored to be lurking deep in the Black Corruption who is gathering an army to wage the "war against the punies".

Note: While all the wood giants secretly think that Shaman Goothlik's recent behavior is also partly to blame, none of them would dare say so in his presence.

If the wood giants are not on alert, they will be surprised and mildly amused by the PCs' presence and try to capture them alive, strip them naked, and then put them in cells so they can later toss them into the catfish troll pit for amusement. There is also a 1-in-4 chance that a captured PC will have his or her legs cut off and put immediately on the fire for dinner before their legless-torso stump is thrown into the cells. If on alert, the giants will have taken up defensive positions in this area. In either case, "Goothlik"/Veedarkaleesh will not join the melee unless directly engaged by the PCs, but will be seen shouting nonsensical commands of aggression urging on the others in the tribe.

Wood Giant Tribesmen (x8)

Init -2; Atk see below; AC 16; HD 6d10; hp see below; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*), infravision, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d6.

- Kartok (hp 42) and Bartik (hp 42) wield war clubs: Atk +10 melee (2d8+6)
- Lotok (hp 40) and Botok (hp 39) each carry 2 hurling javelins: Atk +6 missile fire (1d6+6, range 100') as well as war clubs +10 melee (2d8+6)
- Tar Tar (hp 29) and Loman (hp 35) carry crude hand axes Atk: +10 melee (1d10+6)
- Kotik (hp 35) and Malkar (hp 34) carry 15' long spears: Atk +10 melee (1d8+6); critical hit impales PC to a surface (wall, table, etc.) reducing movement to 0, and inflicting 1d4 hp in damage each subsequent round until spear is removed

Buchlod, the wolf keeper (wood giant)

Init -2; Atk whip see +10 melee (1d8+4 +special); AC 16; HD 7d10; hp 45; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*) infravision, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d6.

Whip Attack: On a successful whip attack, Buchlod inflicts normal damage and simultaneously attempts one of the following:

- **Disarm Opponent:** PC must immediately make an opposed Strength check (Buchlod has +4) or lose his/her weapon.
- **Trip Opponent:** PC must make a DC 12 Agility check or be knocked prone

Woe, Veedarkaleesh! While “in the flesh” of Goothlik, Veedarkaleesh is happy to watch the wood giants and humankind attempt to destroy each other to feed later on their souls and corpses. He will not initiate any attacks at this time, nor will he engage the PCs directly. If he’s attacked and falls below 20 hp, he nonchalantly *plane shifts* away from the battle. (To other creatures this will not be seem obvious... judges should describe that he was somehow lost in the chaos of battle: “He was there a second ago! Where did he go?”) Veedarkaleesh will (most likely) return in his native demon form at a later time to finish off the PCs (see Event E1: The Big Finale).

“By Lavarial’s great sword! In the name of all that is Good and Lawful, what is that!?” Veedarkaleesh’s demon magic allows him to appear as the character/creature who’s skin he’s “wearing”—the fresher the skin, the more convincing the ruse. PCs who lay their eyes on Veedarkaleesh must make a DC 24 Will save; PCs who fail the save will *mostly* see the appearance of a rugged wood giant (i.e., how Goothlik appeared before Veedarkaleesh laid his claws into him); characters who succeed the Will save will see a horrific red 12-foot tall beast with 4 tusks, covered in strips of fetid strips of decaying flesh.

Veedarkaleesh as “Goothlik”

Init +4; Atk hammer +10 melee (2d10); AC 16; HD 8d12; hp 66; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP immune to non-magical weapons, plane shift, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +8; AL C; Crit Table DN/d10. See Event E1 for detailed description of Veedarkaleesh in native demon form.

AREA 1-4: KITCHEN

As you enter the room, you are relieved to find the pervasive stink of the stronghold replaced with the pleasant smell of cooking bread. Towards the back of the chamber, about a dozen loaves of bread can be seen baking in a hearth while 3 large pigs and an animal you don't recognize roast on a spit above a large wood fire. In the center of the room is a large notched and blood-stained rectangular table upon which are several pots, pans, knives, and other cooking instruments.

Four of the ape creatures covered in greasy brown fur scamper about the kitchen skinning animals with large knives before putting them on fire spits.

These camp squatches are not accustomed to seeing humanoids, and while they're certain the humanoids are out of place, they will not be sure how to react. They will growl and bare their teeth like angry dogs but won't attack unless forced to defend themselves.

Squatches (x4)

Init +2; Atk slam +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 15; HD 4d8+4; hp 28, 27, 21, 19; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP leg break on 19-20 crit; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table M/d10.

On the tables are giant-sized utensils that can be used as weapons (cleaver, dmg 1d6; butcher knife, dmg 1d5; meat fork, dmg 1d4; 2 animal-skinning knives, dmg 1d5; meat tenderizing hammer, dmg 1d5).

AREA 1-5: FOOD STORAGE

The cool, clean air of this room offers a brief respite to the pervasive stench of the compound. In fact, a variety of new scents emanate from the contents of this room: sacks overflowing with grain, barrels reeking of alcohol, and several ceramic jugs filled with some sort of pungent liquid line the walls.

On the floor in the center of the room lies a 10'-wide circular wooden hatch.

The sacks contain different grains for cooking and baking (milled wheat, barley, swamp reed, etc.).

The barrels contain an alcoholic “grog” that appeals to the palates of

wood giants and squatches, but far too potent to all but the stoutest of humanoids. If the PCs pause to search the room, they will see large green-haired rats (normal sized, not giant) scurrying in and out from between the sacks and shelves.

Any PCs who rummage through the sacks will be set upon by grain worms.

Grain Worms

Init (always last); Atk burrow +2 melee (1 hp); AC 10; hp 1; MV N/A; Act 1d20; SP burrow; SV Fort +0, Ref -4, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table N/A.

Similar to rot grubs, the grain worm can burrow into flesh. Once bitten, the victim must make DC 14 Fort save or unknowingly become a host for a parasite that can only be expunged via *cure disease*. Judges should track which PCs have been bitten: the first time they fall asleep or take an extended rest 1d10 weevils will wriggle out of the PC's flesh, inflicting 1d3 hp each as they erupt through the skin.

Occupation Bonus: Alchemists, bakers, brewers, herbalists, millers, and similar occupations will be aware of the likely presence of grain worms and receive a +2 bonus to their Init and Fort checks. These PCs also recognize valuable herbs worth 2d16 gp amongst the stores.

Grog: If a PC limits themselves to just a small sip of the grog, they will quickly discern this is some of the foulest stuff they've ever tasted, but otherwise will feel no effect. However, if a cup or more is sampled they must make a Fort check and then consult the table below for results. Each subsequent cup is made at with a cumulative -4 penalty (except Halflings who only receive -1). All effects occur within 1d5 rounds. Intoxication can be immediately cured by a cleric as a 1-die disease.

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 0-3 | Belligerent intoxication and blindness for 1d24 turns (-4 to attacks & saves) followed by 1d4 hours of periodic vomiting. |
| 4-8 | Heavy intoxication for 1d14 turns (-2 to attacks and saves) followed by 1d2 hours of periodic vomiting. |
| 9-11 | Light intoxication for 1d8 turns (-1 to attacks and saves). |
| 12-17: | "Ugh, that stuff is horrible!" PC's appetite is off for 24 hours. Unable to eat and temporary -1 to Stamina. |
| 18+ | Moment of clarity. The grog strips the PC of emotional inhibition, opening their mind to the mysteries of the universe. Judges should be creative as to the benefits this may provide but some ideas include: Wizards gain access to a new spell for potential learning at their next level-up (see <i>DCC RPG rulebook</i> page 124) or determine that whatever is in the grog is the missing ingredient |

for a potion they've been working on (allow Wizard to mix with ingredients on-hand or in storage to create 1 potion). A PC "finally understands what those creatures were trying to say!" and gain a new language. Cleric spells checks are at +1 bonus for 1d6 days (as they proclaim repeatedly, "My faith is restored!"). Halflings and thieves are able to drunkenly describe the secrets of their success restoring 1 Luck point to whomever they choose. Be creative.

Hatch: The hatch opens with a DC 12 Strength check, blasting the PCs with a cold air and revealing frost-covered stairs that leads downward to the ice pit (area 2-1).

AREA 1-6: MALE GIANT'S QUARTERS

Upon entering, you are forced to stifle a gag due to the chamber's overpowering animal stench. Piles of straw mats and furs are heaped haphazardly on the floor and visibly jumping with fleas. Near the bed-mats are wooden chests brightly decorated with yellow and blue pigments. Near one wall are two large hollowed-out logs filled with water.

On the far side of the room, one bed stands apart different from the rest—more like a cot, it is elevated off the floor and is covered with traditional blankets for bedding. A chest painted with the crude face of a female wood giant rests next to the cot.

The concentrated stench of wood giants sleeping in close quarters tests even the stoutest of adventurers. The room consists mostly of furs and straw laid on the floor as beds for the giants. The chests hold their modest possessions including wood-giant sized clothing and 1d3 items, which can be rolled randomly or chosen by judge:

1. dagger
2. drinking cup
3. shiny rocks & beads
4. set of hill giant ears
5. jars of brightly colored pigments
6. set of catfish troll teeth
7. 1d8 sp
8. giant-sized hand-axe (treat as single-bladed battleaxe for humanoids)
9. deer-skin pants
10. bear-skin cloak
11. leather sandals

12. wood giant jewelry (sharpened bones used as nose rings and ear studs)
13. chewing weed
14. small bladder filled with bright pigment

Karkartan's Cot: The elevated cot and chest belong to Karkartan, the wood giant armorer and neophyte shaman who is attempting to differentiate himself from the tribe by taking on the customs of other “more civilized” giant races by sleeping in an actual bed, despite it being incredibly uncomfortable for him to do so. In addition to the clothing and jewelry, his chest also contains a collection of 8 dismembered hill giant hands and a frost giant skull painted with arcane symbols (see below.) He's collected these from his vanquished foes and uses them during his shaman rituals.

Skull of Sholden, Frost Giant Shaman: This enormous skull is the size of a large watermelon and painted with symbols. Possessors of the skull may attempt to *commune with deity* (Yarr Tik the Tall, similar to *invoke patron*). PCs who make such an attempt do so at their own peril as Yarr Tik the Tall will not be pleased if interrupted by a “puny” who does not show appropriate reverence to His majesty.

AREA 1-7: BARKALA'S QUARTERS

The walls of this simple chamber are adorned with animal pelts and colorful beads strung together on elaborate braids. A wash basin and two chests line the near wall.

Two giants sit closely together on a pile of animal-pelt blankets: one appears to be a formidable female, the other queerly dressed in the style of a human commoner.

The female is Barkala who is in command of the compound's squatches. She's as tough as any of the male giants, mean as a badger, and feared by every squatch in the compound. She is never encountered without her bull whip with which she is deadly accurate. She has recently become romantically interested in Karkartan, a neophyte shaman, who has eschewed the natural garb of the wood giant tribe and is now dressing in the “dapper fashion” of hill giants.

Barkala (Female Wood Giant)

Init -2; Atk bull whip +10 melee (1d8 +4 +special) or bludgeon +6 melee (2d4); AC 16; HD 6d10; hp 39; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*), infravision, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d6.



Bull Whip Attack: On a successful whip attack, Barkala inflicts normal damage and simultaneously may attempt one of the following:

Disarm Opponent: PC must immediately make an opposed Strength check (Barkala has +4) or lose his/her weapon.

Entangle Opponent: PC must make a successful DC 12 Agility check or become entangled; if successful, Barkala whistles shrilly which will notify her squatches to break off from any melee and attack the entangled character on the next round.

Karkartan (Dapper Wood Giant Shaman)

Init -2; Atk: magic battle axe +11 melee (1d10+6) or spell; AC 16; HD 6d10; hp 43; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*), *conjure clay elemental*, *lay on hands*, *turn unholy*, *infravision*, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d6.

As a neophyte wood giant shaman to the giant god Yarr Tik the Tall, Karkartan also has the following abilities: *lay on hands*, *turn unholy*, and *conjure clay elemental*.

Conjure Clay Elemental: once per day, Karkartan can conjure a clay elemental straight from the ground for 1d5 turns:

Clay Elemental

Init +4; Atk slam +10 melee; AC 18; HD 6d8; hp 33; MV 20; Act 1d20; SP immune to non-magical weapons; SV Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +8; AL N; Crit Table M/d14.

Slightly weaker than an earth elemental, the clay elemental resembles an 8-foot tall humanoid mass of stone and soft earth.

He Who Extinguishes the Flame: Karkartan's prized possession is a magical giant-sized battleaxe obtained as a "blood prize" from a frost giant he slew while raiding a nearby hill giant stading. He is never found without it. The axe's name is an unpronounceable Frost Giant expression which translates to "He Who Extinguishes the Flame". It provides +1 to attack/damage bonuses against normal creatures and +2 to fire-based creatures (fire giants, salamanders, fire elementals, etc.). Additionally, twice per week, the wielder can invoke the spirit of the axe to cast *control ice* as per the spell (+4 to spell check). Judges who permit larger races in their campaign (half-orcs, half-ogres, etc.) might consider allowing this weapon to be used by those PCs, otherwise the judge may devise a dangerous quest for how the magical properties of the axe can be transferred into a more appropriately sized weapon or device.

The first chest contains Barkala's neatly folded clothing, 3 belts, and a pair of leather sandals. The second chest contains her personal effects: a small mirror, wine skin, 2 drinking cups, a human-sized short-sword, and 6 pairs of catfish troll teeth (which she's collected from her time in the pit). The chest also contains 3 giant pearls the size of baseballs worth 300 gp each.

AREA 1-8: FEMALE & CHILDREN GIANT'S QUARTERS

If the complex is on alert, the female giants will be guarding the children in a corner and will have their weapons drawn. If not on alert, the giant females and children will be playing together in the room.

Tanned skins of different breeds of animal—bear, gicastor, giant pig, and lizardman—are gathered in numerous small piles to create sleeping areas for the wood giants that dwell here.

There are 4 female wood giants in the room and 3 children (1 male, 3 female.) If the stronghold is not on alert and the PCs are noticed, the females will try to "shoo" PCs out the room poking at them with clubs and spears and threatening them aggressively but not actually attacking. If the PCs attack the females, 3 of the females will attack (all the while using their *hoot of alarm*), and the remaining female will gather and guard the children. The children will not attack unless 2 of the females are killed.

Female Wood Giants (x4)

Init -2; Atk club +10 melee (2d8+6), spear +10 melee (1d8+6 + critical hit impales PC to a surface [wall, table, etc.] reducing movement to 0 and inflicting 1d4 hp in damage each subsequent round until spear is removed); AC 16; HD 6d10; hp 41, 34, 32, 25; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*), wood giant howl, infravision, +6 opposed Str checks, crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d6.

Maternal Rage: If any of the children are killed, there is a 1-in-3 chance of each female (roll separately for each female) to enter a grief-fueled maternal rage. When this happens, the raging giant female fights with the following stats: 1 free attack, and 2 attacks per round (2d20 + d3) for 1d3+1 rounds.

Child Wood Giants (x3)

Init -2; Atk club +8 melee (2d6); AC 14; HD 3d10; hp 17, 13, 8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision, +3 opposed Str checks, crit on 19-20; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d3.

AREA 1-9: ARMORY

Judging by the number of weapons you see around you, this room appears to be the compound armory. The walls are lined with 15-foot long spears, clubs the

size of small trees, slings, and even a few humanoid-sized swords and javelins which the giants must have collected during their raids. While there is no armor, per se, there are leather helmets hanging on pegs along the wall—some with bits of hair and skull fragments still inside.

Built into one wall is a large wooden double-door storage bureau.

Trapped bureau: The bureau is a trap placed here by Karkartan to catch and punish the tribe's nosy giants. Opening either door will trigger the trap, flinging both doors open and springing two platforms of scything spear tips (think a combination of mouse-trap and reverse iron-maiden). The trap can be detected and disabled by thieves (DC 15) with failure springing the trap. Anyone standing within 8' of the doors when either is opened must make a DC 15 Agility check or be struck for 2d8 piercing damage. Aside from 2 usable long swords, the bureau is empty.

Also available in the armory are 3 spears, 2 javelins, 5 slings, 2 short swords, 3 long swords, and 8 giant-sized clubs.

AREA 1-10: STORAGE

Crude tools such as wooden hammers with stone heads, nails of rough iron, saws, and other building materials are scattered on a large table. Wooden planks and shovels are stacked nearby. Some human-sized items are also stacked in a pile: belts, sacks, boots, some rope, and soiled linens. A fine prize in the form of a 11-foot pole leans against one wall.

This area is devoid of traps or monsters, but there is a fine 11-foot pole!

AREA 1-11: TROPHY ROOM & JAYSHARLA

A gruesome sight awaits you as you enter this room. Suspended by spears and poles is a menagerie of decaying creatures and humanoids arranged in threatening poses. The macabre diorama includes corpses with the skin still attached, as well as heads and skulls arranged to accentuate their formidable teeth, fangs, and tusks. Some of the more common beasts, like fearsome gicastors, degenerate opossumen, and menacing crab fiends are easy to recognize, while other specimens are more alien. You shudder at barrel-sized heads pinned to the wall with spikes driven through their sneering mouths, the head of a giant snake that must have been as large as a horse, the bones and carapace of a large creature that resembled a tick, and the body of a half-woman, half-fish monstrosity. Across the back wall are the carefully arranged skeletal bones of what must have been an 80'-long fanged centipede—the sign below it written in rough common proclaims it as "The Hoardling."

The more pressing concern, however, is the creature with orange skin covered in brown and red spots which begins snarling aggressively at you



as you enter. The cheetah-woman has the body of an athletic human female but bears bat-like wings which flutter restlessly. As you cautiously watch her movement, you notice she is pacing within a small area encircled by a silver chain laid on the floor. She carefully looks you over, sizing up the strength of your party.

This chamber originally served as Goothlik's trophy room of foes and creatures he'd vanquished in battle or while hunting. Veedarkaleesh has recently added his own piece to the collection by conjuring and imprisoning the minor demon Jaysharla to "show them how it's done!" and torment at his leisure.

Behold Jaysharla: Jaysharla's soul has lived for centuries serving the goddess Hecate and she acutely understands the banal desires of humanoid-kind. Her current goal is to escape the enchantment that imprisons her on this plane (Ockwig's Holy Chain). She believes the following about human-kind:

- They're greedy for gold and power.
- They're eager to display their (pitiful) strength in combat or magic.
- They harbor delusional thoughts, believing they make a difference to rid the world of either chaos or law.

She will not threaten the party (at first, anyway). Initially, she will respond to basic questions with short answers or questions of her own allowing the PCs to do more talking and reveal their motives. She will claim her name is unpronounceable in humanoid-speak but sounds something like "Teek-yaya" (a complete lie) and was ambushed and brought here by the wood giants (another lie, but she wants to lull the PCs into the false belief that wood giants have the wits or strength to entrap her). She will claim she must stay in the circle for a fortnight or until she has performed a magic favor for the giants which she is stubbornly refusing to do (lies... lies... lies...)

Once she feels she understands the PC's motivations (from their answers as well as her abilities to read minds—Judges are encouraged to metagame), she will make false offers as to how she could assist the party:

- If the party is greedy for gold? She promises to escort them to the giant shaman's trove in the underground caverns and where he keeps his magic "Rod of the Shaman, capable of casting at least half a dozen spells, with predictable results! But beware! It is guarded by 3 powerful Swamp Hags!"
- Greedy to show their strength? She will boast that had she not been ambushed by the giants while feeding, she could have easily defeated them. She will challenge one PC—but only one to keep it fair!—to enter the circle with her for a non-lethal combat without magic. First person to be rendered immobile wins! She will continue, "If you win, I will perform

the magic favor for you, if I win, one of you will become my servant for a fortnight.” (See below for what happens if a PC enters the circle.)

- Greedy to show power? She will tell a spellcaster that his power is weak compared to her own, and will challenge him to spell duel, and even allow the other spellcaster to launch the first spell against her. (She knows that any offensive spell cast into the circle will break the charm and free her.)
- Greedy to make a difference in the balance of Law vs. Chaos? She promises to offer her physical form to a lawful patron of the PC’s choice. This will “Damn my chaos spirit for 6 moons and no doubt be worth 6 moons of favor to your lawful patron.”

If the player’s refuse to interact with her, she will reference the PCs by name and threaten: “I will see you, [PC] in 2 weeks...” The judge should be creative in determining the appropriate response to a demon scorned in his/her own campaign.

While Jaysharla is bound within the intact circle of the chain, she cannot harm the party physically or with magic, nor can she directly touch the chain herself. However, if a PC moves into the circle or casts a ranged spell against her, it immediately breaks her magical bonds of imprisonment and she will be free to move and attack. Ultimately she just wants to be freed of her bonds and return to her demonic plane to serve Hecate. Her goal is to somehow cajole the PCs through charm or trickery to break the bonds of the chain by either untying the knot in the chain or tricking a PC to enter the circle, ensuring her release.

If a PC enters the circle without untying the chain, she will be free to attack. She will first use her *Hecate’s demonic seduction* followed by savagely dismembering her opponents and using their amputated limbs as crude tongs to untie the chain herself. She will follow PCs into Goothlik’s Bedroom (area 1-12), but not out into the main hall. If the PCs flee or the fight is turning against her she will attempt to use her *planar step* to return back to her native dimension. Note: Jaysharla’s Will save vs. *binding* is +8 as she was originally bound by Veedarkaleesh.

Jaysharla (Type II Demon, minor demon of Hecate)

Init +4; Atk +8 claw melee (2d5) or spell; AC 17; HD 7d10; hp 35; MV 30', fly 50'; Act 2d20; SP spells (+6 spell check: *Hecate’s demonic seduction*, *chill touch*, *planar step*), demon traits (beautiful, *ESP* as per spell), crit on 19-20; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5; AL C; Crit Table DN/d8.

Hecate's demonic seduction (+6 SP), Will save vs. spell check negates.

- < 11 No effect.
- 12-15 Intrigued. One target chosen by Jaysharla is mildly infatuated with her. The infatuated PC will not attack Jaysharla for 1 hour and will try to convince his allies not to attack either.
- 16-17 Infatuation: One target chosen by Jaysharla will become infatuated with her for 2d12 hours. In addition to trying to convince his allies to not attack, he/she will also defend Jaysharla from attacks including attacking former party members who attack Jaysharla.
- 18-21 1d4 targets chosen by Jaysharla are intrigued as per above or 2 targets are infatuated as per above.
- 22+ 1d4 targets are infatuated as per above.

Goothlik's Trophy Collection: The morbid room contains the humanoid skulls of 8 humans, 3 dwarves, 12 halflings (stacked 4 on a spear like some sort of skull kabob), 16 elves, 3 half-orcs, and 4 opossumen. Also displayed are more horrifying creatures that most men pray they will never encounter outside of the world of nightmares. (Frawgs, blood lions, and worse!) The PCs can collect 3d8 exotic skulls, worth 1d14 x10 gp each to the discerning collector. The following weapons can be collected: 4 spears, 1 longbow, 4 daggers, and a handaxe still buried into the skull of a human.

Ockwig's Holy Chain: The magical chain used to bind Jaysharla is constructed from the reconstituted plate armor of Ockwig the Holy—an ancient lawful paladin of renown, slain centuries ago while battling a horde of bone devils. The chain is 10 feet long and appears exquisitely crafted with large links of silver. Lawful PCs who meditate while holding the chain for 1d7 hours receive divine insight from the now-deified lawful demi-god Saint Ockwig: once per week it proves the caster a +1 bonus to casting *banish*, *binding*, *detect evil*, and *protection from evil* spells. Attached to the ends of the chain are weights enabling it to be used as a magical +1 weapon inflicting 1d4 damage (q.v. kusari fundo) although becoming proficient with such an exotic weapon may require a new quest created by the judge to locate an expert with such a weapon.

AREA 1-12: GOOTHLIK'S CHAMBER

While it would be hard to describe this room as lavish by your humanoid-centric point of view, its prominent use of gaudy colors leads you to believe it is pleasing to the eye of the wood giants. The walls are adorned with animal pelts, necklaces of colorful beads, and sea shells with intricate patterns. Three rough clay pots contain fragrant plants and colorful mushrooms.

Similarly, unlike other areas of the compound, in this room the floor is completely covered with animal skin rugs. A large chest and pile of pelts used for bedding take up one corner.

Characters searching the pelts will realize they have not been slept in for several days.

Sleeping Mushrooms: PCs with the appropriate background professions that use organic materials (apothecary, brewers, farmers, etc.) will recognize that some of the potted mushrooms, when burned, are known to put others to sleep. See *New Magic* for details.

The chest contains some of Goothlik's effects: a belt, several pieces of gold jewelry (ear, lip, and nose rings worth 100 gp), and an ornate giant-sized dagger which can be used as a short sword worth 300 gp.

Moving the large chest reveals a panel concealing a tunnel leading to area 2-2.

Stronghold Caverns

AREA 2-1: ICE PIT

Once the PCs explore the hatch:

Opening the wooden hatch in the food storage area reveals a sturdy ladder descending into an earthen pit 20 feet wide and 20 feet deep. The cold air of this chamber stings your lungs, causing eldritch frost-swirls to escape your mouth with each breath. A layer of permafrost clings to the walls and dagger-like icicles hang threateningly from the top of the chamber near the hatch. The rough earthen walls of the pit have been packed high with piles of dirty snow and ice.

Also packed along the cavern walls are large limbs and haunches of sea life and big game animal—elk, horse, troglodyte, cave bear, gar, and large mutant crabs—their pelts, claws, and meat all coated with a thin layer of ice crystals.

Oddly out of place, the left arm of a wood giant, blue and lifeless, juts out from underneath the carcass of a large gicastor. As you slowly adjust to the cold, you hear something moving... It sounds a bit like hooves crunching through snow.

This shallow cavern is used as cold storage for the giants, packed with ice and snow during the winter to keep the meat fresh. Unfortunately for the PCs, Veedarkaleesh has given sanctuary to a pair of ice devils he keeps as amusing pets. The ice devils resemble 4'-long beetles with scorpion-tail-like stingers.

Ice Devil (x2)

Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6) or tail strike +3 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 3d8; hp 19, 17; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP radiates cold, *bone-chilling cold* on critical hit, vulnerable to fire, vulnerable to critical hits, crit on 19-20; Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C; Crit Table DN/d4.

PCs within 5' of the ice devil must make a DC 12 Fort save or suffer 1d3 hp of cold damage. On a critical hit of 19-20 the ice devils infect the PCs with *bone-chilling cold*: the victim takes an additional 1d4 damage and must then make a DC 12 Will save or suffer "cold madness" and spend the next round attempting to set themselves on fire in an attempt to warm up (a successful Will save merely immobilizes the victim with cold for 1d3 rounds). PCs who land critical hits will shatter large chunks of the ice devil, causing an additional 1 weapon die (+1d) of damage.

"Kill it with fire!" The judge should remember that this is a relatively small enclosed space. While fire is particularly effective against the ice devils, sparking up the oil flask or waving the *flaming hands* within the confines of the pit carries a risk of catastrophic side effects. If the PCs employ fire-based attacks, roll a d6 plus reverse Luck modifier (i.e. a +1 Luck modifier subtracts -1 from the die roll result) and consult the table:

1. Smoke clings low to the ground, reducing visibility: All melee and ranged attacks -1.
2. The heat has caused the ice to start melting, making the ground extremely slippery: All melee attacks and spell checks at -2.
3. Smoke everywhere! DC 10 Fort save or take 1d3 temporary Stamina damage and attacks are -2 due to impaired visibility; fumbles now happen on a natural 1 through 3.
4. Fire funnel: The PCs inadvertently destroy the secret door and the resulting airflow causes a chimney column of flame to shoot upwards. Any PC in the area or standing at the top of the shaft must make DC 10 Agility check or suffer 1d6 fire damage.
5. Thawed Undead. The fire is enough to thaw the half-eaten undead grave bear.
6. All of the above.



Grave Bear: Init always last; Atk claws +2 melee (1d4) or bite +3 melee (1d6); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 20'; Act 3d20 (2 claws + bite); SP un-dead, immune to mind-altering effects; Fort +3, Ref -3, Will Immune; AL C; Crit Table U/d6.

Gartik: The dead giant is the missing tribesman Gartik—his extremities have been gnawed off by the ice devils and most of his torso is missing. Veedarkaleesh consumed most of Gartik as a snack before discarding the “leftovers” down here for his pet ice devils. 60 gp worth of jewelry can be extracted from his frozen torso.

Secret door: A long forgotten, iced-over secret door is covered behind one of the snow piles. It takes some effort to chip off enough ice for it to be opened (and the noise performing such an act will likely draw attention). It reveals a cramped tunnel that once led to area 2-2 but collapsed long ago and is impassable. The corpse of a dwarf, who froze to death long ago while hiding in this passage trying to avoid detection by the wood giants, lays crumpled under a sheet of ice. If the body can be sufficiently thawed out, a suit of chain mail (dwarf-sized), war hammer, and backpack with a magically preserved scroll containing the arcane *breathe life* spell can be recovered.

AREA 2-2: LAIR OF THE BLOOD GOLEMS

As you continue down the tunnel, you notice the earthen walls and rocky ceilings are spattered with large splotches of dried blood. The rancid smell of rotting meat hangs in the air, thick and phlegmy, making even the stoutest among you gag from the odor.

The tunnel eventually opens into a large cavern where the source of the stench becomes apparent: Before you stands one of the wood giant creatures, almost completely devoid of skin and covered with what appear to be foot-long black slugs. As the fleshless horror turns to face you, black rivulets of congealed blood squeeze between its exposed muscles, causing the grotesque slugs to squirm across its body to lap up the drippings. Two smaller but similarly skinless and slug-covered creatures also shift to face you. Several of the giant slugs lay dead and mangled on the floor.

Startled by the sudden stirring of the “blood giants”, a wretched-looking, man-sized humanoid creature with gray skin and the head of a bat lets out a yelp of surprise before diving behind an overturned table.

The skinless remains of the original wood giant shaman Goothlik is now a giant flesh golem of sorts—a soulless husk magically kept alive by Veedarkaleesh’s magic as a “battery” to be drained by the vampire slugs. Consuming the slugs after they’ve drained a host’s life-force enables Veedarkaleesh to prolong his existence on the prime material plane. If the PCs examine the dead slugs on the floor they will notice that they have been

bitten in half by the mandibles of some large creature.

Fetal-pa-Veedarkaleesh (which literally translate to “Useless Servant of Veedarkaleesh”, Fetal-pa for short), is a severely-corrupted human wizard who is currently carrying out 3 years of menial labor service to Veedarkaleesh as part of the terms of his *patron bond* with the demon. Fetal-pa is now corrupted to the point where he’s lost all his hair, his skin has turned stone gray, and he resembles a human bat. He spends his time in this filthy chamber caring for the vampire slugs and catering to Veedarkaleesh’s unholy whims.

The blood golem Goothlik and two flayed squatches—almost entirely desiccated and covered with vampire slugs—will lumber forward to attack anyone that enters the chamber with the exception of Fetal-pa or Veedarkaleesh himself. After diving behind a table for cover, Fetal-pa will first cast *magic shield* and then use his other offensive spells.

Vampire slug attacks: Each time a melee attack is made on or by one of the golems, 1d3 slugs will attempt to transfer to the PC. PCs must make DC 12 Reflex save: failure indicates that the slug has transferred and it gets a free attack; a successful save indicates the slug falls harmlessly to the ground.

Goothlik, Ex-Wood Giant Shaman now Grotesque Blood Golem

Init -4; Atk slam +14 melee (2d8+8); AC 16; HD 8d10; hp 47; MV 20'; Act 1d24; SP crit on 20-24, immune to mind-altering spells; SV Fort +8, Ref -2, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG/d6.

Note: Blood Golem Goothlik fights with the strength of a hill giant (Act 1d24).

Squatch Blood Golem (x2)

Init -4; Atk slam +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 14; HD 4d8; hp 34, 27; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP immune to mind-altering spells; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2; AL C. Crit Table III/d10.

Vampire Slugs (x12)

Init -1; Atk bite +0 (+3 if already affixed to PC) melee (2 hp + special); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 15'; Act 1d20; SP energy drain; SV Fort +0, Ref -2, Will +0; AL N; Crit Hit: 4 hp damage and automatic energy drain (see below)

On a successful bite, the vampire slug affixes itself to its target who must then make a DC 12 Fort save or lose 1 point of stamina for 1d6 days. Once a vampire leech has affixed itself, all subsequent attacks by the slug on its host are made at +3. Each vampire slug can drain up to 3 stamina points per day before becoming satiated. PCs may attempt to eat a “loaded” vampire leech to gain the benefit of the stolen energy: PCs must make a DC 12 Fort check. Success results in a temporary 1d3 hp increase. Failure triggers 1d3 rounds of gagging and vomiting during which time all attacks and spell checks incur -2 penalty.

Fetal-pa-Veedarkaleesh (5th lvl Wizard)

Init +1; Atk sword +2 melee (1d8) or spell; AC 11; HD 5d4+5; HP 22; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d14; SP spells (+7 spell check: *detect magic*, *feather fall*, *flaming hands*, *invoke patron* (Veedarkaleesh 1/day), *magic missile*, *magic shield*, *patron bond*, *mirror image*, *ray of enfeeblement*, and *transference*); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table I/1d10.

AREA 2-3: THE SHADOW PORTAL

A musky animal smell combined with a pungent chemical odor permeates this cool, damp cavern. A mangy pile of animal pelts lies along one side of the cavern, which you surmise once served as a bed for someone or something very large. An enormous table with two crudely-carved chairs clutter the side of the cavern. A large swatch of dried leather covered in cryptic symbols and strange writing rests atop the table.

Most startling, however, is the curtain of dripping black oil, hanging suspended in midair via no obvious means. As beads from the black oil fall and hit the dusty cave floor, they disperse into an inky black smoke.

This chamber was originally the underground sanctuary of the wood giant shaman Goothlik, and is now a dangerous portal to the home plane of Veedarkaleesh, opened recklessly by the shaman as he sought his revenge against Yarr Tik the Tall.

The Skin: Lying on the table is a tanned bear skin with arcane symbols burned into it. While many of the images seem to show a chaotic scene of constellations and lunar bodies, there is one distinctive image depicting a group of people holding hands disappearing into a black circle and grabbing the throat of a demonic creature. Wizards who study the skin for 8 uninterrupted hours and then make a DC 14 Int check will recognize that the spell *planar step* can be deciphered within the symbols and will become available to learn at their next opportunity (see DCC RPG rulebook page 124.)

The Shadow Portal: Toying with the shadow portal is dangerous and unpredictable business, but holds the potential of great reward.

Throwing or pushing an inanimate object into the portal triggers one of the effects listed below with the caveat that each effect can be triggered only once (other than “object is lost forever”). The effects trigger within 1d6 rounds and it is feasible that the PCs will not be aware of the effect until later in the game, if at all. If a PC is still holding the object or the object is otherwise grounded on the prime material plane (i.e., pushing a pole, holding on to an end of the rope, etc.), that object will not pass through the portal, nor trigger any effects.

The first time an ungrounded inanimate object is thrown into the portal, it

attracts the attention of 1d3 ethereal piranhas (see area 3-1 for description and stats) who “swim” through into the prime material plane—where they will fall helplessly to the ground.

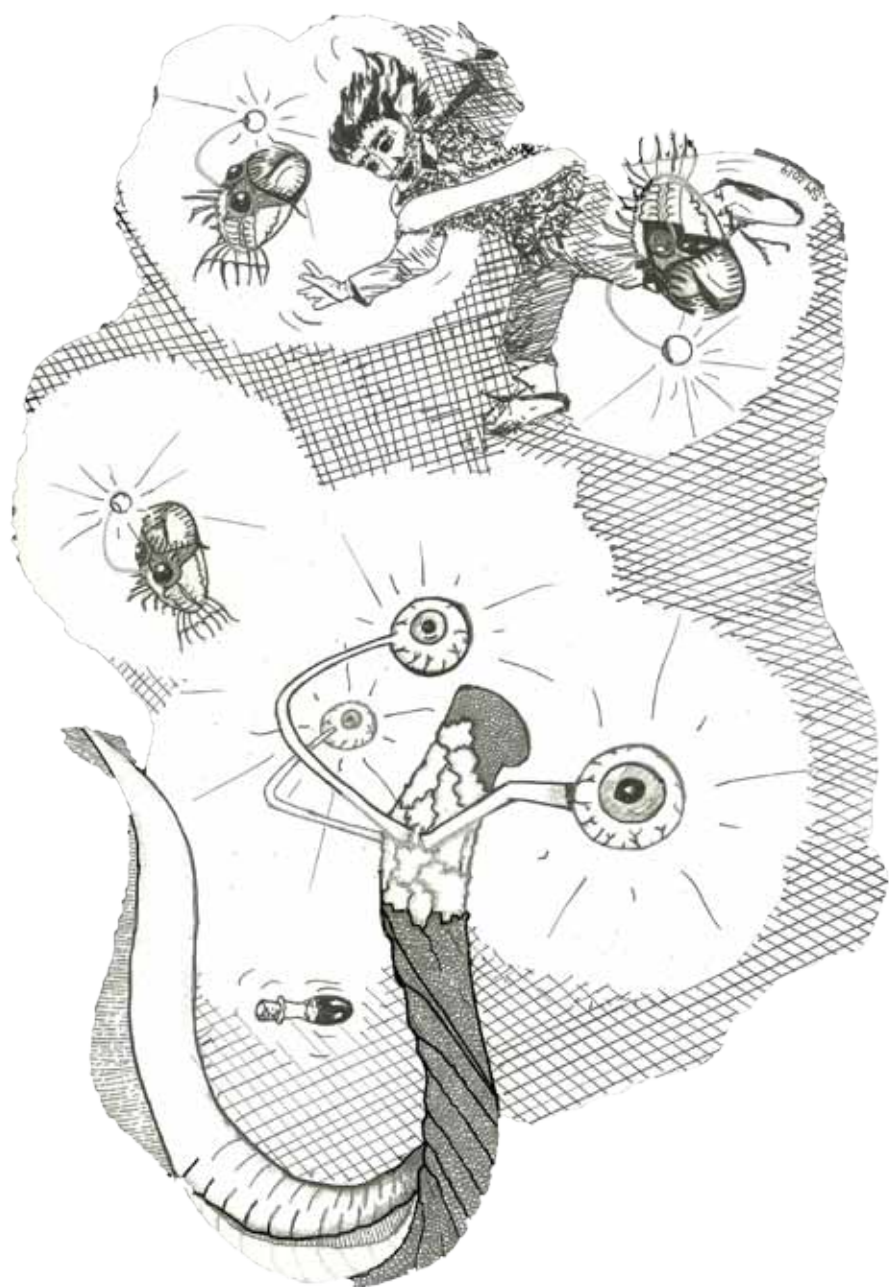
For each subsequent inanimate object thrown into the portal roll 1d6:

1. Object is lost forever.
2. The object is teleported to the feet of Veedarkaleesh, immediately raising his suspicion and causing the demon to appear in “giant form” within 1d4 rounds carrying the object. (If he’s already been slain the object will appear atop the bloody pile left where he was killed.)
3. The object is spat back out of the portal in 1 round, but now carries a demonic taint, granting the wielder +1 to hit and damage rolls against lawful creatures. Future critical hits made by the weapon have a 1-in-4 chance of inflicting additional damage by rolling 1d8 on the Crit Table DN: Devils and Demons in the DCC RPG rulebook.
4. Necrotic shock: PC must make a DC 12 Fort save or suffer 1d10 in damage as a backdraft to “weariness of the soul” which shoots out of the portal, and the object is lost forever.
5. Ghost whisperer: The thrower of the object is immediately inflicted with minor corruption, but suddenly knows the secret to casting *chill touch*. Wizards and elves gain *chill touch* as an extra available 1st-level spell; other character classes can cast the spell using a d14 as their action die when casting.
6. Window to the soul: The portal becomes hazy before eventually coalescing into the spiritual shape of someone recently deceased. The spirit form should be a dead individual significant to the party (e.g., a previously killed PC or NPC, an ancestor of the PC(s), etc.) and will answer 1d3+1 questions with knowledge gleaned from beyond the grave.

Humanoids entering the Shadow Portal, however, are another matter entirely: Be careful to note which PCs are carrying a light source as they step through and find themselves transported to area 3-1: The Shadow Plane.

AREA 3-1: THE SHADOW PLANE

You find yourself floating in a strange environment of shifting patches of light, like moonlight passing through the leaves of a tree on a windy autumn night. You float weightlessly—there is no ground, and no horizon, but the presence of tiny creatures and ethereal jetsam provide a small semblance of orientation.



Around you buzz schools of translucent piranha-like creatures propelling themselves using ghostly ethereal fins that pulsate with light as they move. They look menacing and hungry and their wings begin to glow brighter as they start buzzing towards you.

Barely discernible in the dim light, you can just make out a dark red sphere approximately 8 feet in diameter floating in the shadowy ether.

About thirty feet away—its exact distance is hard to calculate in this environment—you see a clear vial containing a pulsating, red viscous fluid. The fluid bulges rhythmically similar to a beating heart. Near the vial floats a 10-foot long giant slug creature with a round maw, softly glowing tail, and 3 gangly eyestalks which gaze towards you.

A sense of helplessness overcomes you as you float weightlessly while the ethereal piranha, their jaws feverishly snapping, begin to advance.

The PCs have entered the Shadow Plane, where gravity and physics works very differently than the prime material plane. PCs comfortable with fighting using “2D grid tactics” may find themselves at a disadvantage when battling creatures who are comfortable in a world without traditional gravity and who use light as their main source of energy for movement.

For judges using miniatures: PCs should be placed in a random location 1d5 x 10' from the Red Sphere and use some sort of object to represent height relative to other characters and objects.

Movement in the Shadow Plane: PCs can propel themselves using one of two methods:

Movement using force: By carefully pushing off of other PCs, one can move 10' in a desired direction. PCs should describe what or whom they're using to brace themselves and then make a DC 10 Agility check to successfully move in the desired direction—the greater the failure on the DC check, the further away the PC moves from their intended target.

Movement using light: In the Shadow Plane, light is a propellant. PCs may deduce this from the descriptions of the ethereal piranha and shadow slug's pulsating light fins. If players struggle to deduce this in actual game play, judges may choose to reward PCs examining the monsters with this info on a successful DC 12 Intelligence check. PCs holding torches, flints, or glowing magic items behind themselves will travel at between 5' to 10' per round given the intensity of the light source.

Once characters discover how movement works, their move rate becomes 15' plus/minus an additional 5 feet for each Agility modifier point (Agility representing how well they can “steer” their light source).

Combat in the Shadow Plane: PCs will lose any agility modifier bonuses to their AC. Ranged weapons have a -2 attack penalty.

Remember: It's more important to use the Shadow Plane to create a new and fun experience for the PCs than to over-think the physics of movement and combat in the environment.

The giant shadow lamprey guards the Foul Vial and will attack anyone who moves within 20' of the vial's location, concentrating its attacks on PCs nearest to or carrying the vial. The giant shadow lamprey cannot pass through the Red Sphere.

Ethereal Piranha (3 appear on first round followed by 1d3 appearing every other round)

Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4+2); AC 14; HD 2d8+2; MV 30" "swimming" in the Shadow Plane, otherwise 0'; Act 1d30; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will -2; AL N; Crit Table M/d8.

Giant Shadow Lamprey (slug body plus 3 eyestalks):

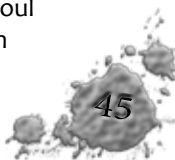
Init +1; Atk bite +5 melee (2d4) or +5 eye stalks (special, see below); AC 16 (body) AC 17 (eye stalk); HD 5d8; hp 32 (body); hp 6 (each eye stalk); MV 25'; Act 4d20 (bite + 3 eye stalk attacks); SP *ray of life stealing* (see below); SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C; Crit Table U/d6.

Life stealing: each of the eyestalks can emit a *ray of life stealing* with a d20 action die (+5 spell). The shadow lamprey regains 1 hp for each point of damage inflicted by the ray, as show below. Fort save vs. attack roll reduces the damage and amount transferred by half.

- | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 1-12 | No damage. |
| 13-15 | 1d5 hit point damage and transfer. |
| 16-17 | 1d8 hit point damage and transfer. |
| 18-20 | 1d12 hit point damage and transfer. |
| 21+ | 1d16 hit point damage and transfer. |

The Red Sphere is the portal back to the realm of mankind; objects or creatures—with the exception of the giant shadow lamprey—that touch the sphere will instantly be gated to area 2-3. Travelling through the Red Sphere while possessing the Foul Vial triggers the Big Finale event (see Event E1 below).

The Foul Vial: The vial contains the Blood of Veedarkaleesh (see *New Magic* below for full details of both items). The first time a PC touches the Foul Vial they must make a DC 14 Will save. Failure briefly taints the PC with



Veedarkaleesh's immortality-based insanity. They will immediately drop the vial and for the next 1d8 rounds spout gibberish about watching the creation of the universe, the rise and fall of drowned gods, reciting the names of 43 generations of their ancestors, and other banalities. PCs that save manage to focus those thoughts and memories and receive the visions of recent events and conflicts between Goothlik, Veedarkaleesh, and the wood giants leading to the present. Judges should describe one vision each turn:

- Goothlik—a virile and powerful wood giant shaman—enraged with his losses to a rival tribe, using Veedarkaleesh's name as a threat against Yarr Tik the Tall.
- The demon Veedarkaleesh pulling Goothlik's soul from him, transforming him into a blood golem, and then peeling away all his flesh to wear as his own.
- Through Veedarkaleesh's mad eyes, the PC sees how the demon bemusedly ordered the other wood giants to fight amongst themselves, and sometimes eats a member of the tribe out of boredom and has Fetal-pal dispose of the bodies.
- In the final vision, the vial holder sees that his/her action has caught the attention of Veedarkaleesh and the demon is not pleased. His repulsive and intimidating stare makes it clear that the demon is coming to retrieve the vial.

Event E1: The Big Finale

The climax of the adventure is triggered if the PCs pass through the Red Sphere returning to the compound and prime material plane with possession of the Foul Vial. The PCs discover a gruesome scene: all the giants that remained in the compound upon their departure have been slaughtered by the demon and their entrails eaten. Dead half-eaten vampire slugs also litter the compound, oozing ichorous blood over every surface.

Veedarkaleesh will *gate* to the PC's location within 1d7 rounds of the party's arrival, his demon minions in tow to retrieve the Foul Vial and punish the trespassers for their transgressions.

The judge should adjust the number of Veedarkaleesh minions to the strength of the party to ensure a climactic finale. If Fetal-pa-Veedarkaleesh was previously killed by the PCs, he will be back as servant undead. The demon hound from area B5 (resurrected if necessary) will also be at Veedarkaleesh's side.

Veedarkaleesh minions x2 (lamprey men, type I demon, Veedarkaleesh)

Init +0; Atk bite +4 melee (1d8); AC 15; HD 4d12; hp 30, 35; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP barbs, demon traits; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL C; Crit DN/d6.

Veedarkaleesh's Demon Hound

Init +6; Atk bite +7 melee (1d10); AC 15; HD 4d8; hp 20; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP fear bite, demonic traits, gaseous form, immune to charm effects; Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table DN/ d4.

The demon hound is a quick and ferocious beast with 2 attacks per round. PCs bitten by the creature see their flesh turn gray and mottled and must make a DC 13 Will save or be struck with fear (as per *scare* spell using target as spell check roll). The grey skin will remain for 1d8 days even after the wound is healed. When the beast is “killed” she turns to gaseous form, returning to the Shadow plane to be reborn later.

Veedarkaleesh, Demon Form (type III demon)

Init +4; Atk +10 giant battleaxe (1d14) or spell; AC 19; HD 8d12; hp 66; MV 40' or shadow shifting; Act 2d20; SP spells (+8 spell check: *darkness*, *detect good*), *disguise self*, *slug soul transference*, plane shift, immune to non-magical weapons, immune to mind-altering effects, demon traits; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +8; AL C; Crit Table DN/d10.

Veedarkaleesh's powers:

- **Slug Soul Transference** (+5 attack): Once every 3 rounds, Veedarkaleesh has the ability to transfer the PC's soul (partial or entirely) between the PC and one of the slugs that clings to his body. If Veedarkaleesh eats the slug containing a PC's soul, the PC's body becomes a soulless automaton—effectively a golem—which can be controlled by Veedarkaleesh or Fetal-pa if he still lives.

Effects (Will save vs. attack roll to negate):

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 1-12 | Nothing happens. |
| 16-17 | PC acts like slug for 1d4 rounds; loses 1d8 hp from the mental trauma. |
| 18-21: | PC's soul is transferred to slug for 1d6 rounds losing 3d4 hp in the process. |
| 22+ | PC's soul is transferred into a slug for 3d5 rounds losing 4d4 hp in the process. |
- **Disguise Self:** When wearing the skin of another creature, PCs must make a DC 24 Will save to see the demon's true form; failure indicates the PC only sees the form of whatever skin he's wearing. (See area 1-3 for more details.)
 - **Plane shift:** Can move between the prime material plane and Shadow Plane at will.
 - **Prime Material Shadow Shifting:** Ability to move into any area which contains a shadow within 20' radius.

In his true demon form, Veedarkaleesh appears as a horrific 12-foot tall red demonic figure with tusks, covered in strips of old flesh and soul slugs (see cover illustration).

Concluding the Adventure

Should the PCs defeat Veedarkaleesh in the compound of the wood giants, it is merely a temporary setback in the demon's immortal life. The demon has literally hundreds of Foul Vials containing small samples of his blood littered throughout the multiverse. It would take 1000 humanoid lifetimes to quest for them all, but lawful gods and patrons are patient and persistent, and more vials may need to be collected to appease them. At some point Veedarkaleesh will reconstitute himself enough to potentially seek vengeance on the party, but he probably won't. For a demon like Veedarkaleesh, being "killed" on the prime material plane, while rare, is not without precedent. It's only happened 5,000 or so times in his immortal lifetime.

Deities and patrons alike will take interest in any PC with possession of the Foul Vial. Those PCs will no doubt be called upon to transport that relic to a location of great significance to those higher powers.

The residents of Dalton's Peak will be ecstatic with the news of any killed wood giants or villagers returned. They will celebrate the heroes, welcoming them into their homes, inns, and taverns.

Unlike Veedarkaleesh, Jaysharla is more likely to hold a grudge. PCs who have scorned her or dispatched her prime material body will undoubtedly receive an angry visit from her in the not-too-distance future.

New Monsters

Wood Giant

Init -2; Atk club +10 melee (2d8+8) or hurled stone +6 missile fire (1d8+6, range 100'); AC 16; HD 6d10; MV 30'; Act 1d22; SP natural spell abilities (*animal summoning*, *animal control*, comprehend animal dialects), wood giant howl, infravision, +6 opposed Str checks; crit on 20-22; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit Table WG1/d6.

Natural Spell abilities: 2x per day, wood giants have the innate ability to perform *animal summoning* and *animal control* similar to the spells (+6 spell check). On a successful check they can summon one of the following:

- Hunting wolves (2d4)
- Mountain grizzlies (1d5)
- Gicastors (2d4)

Wood Giant Howl: Similar to howler monkeys, wood giants can emit a long, shrill hoot/howl (like the sound of a steam train whistle). They can “shape” their hoots for different effects:

- Boasting Shriek Grants the wood giant +2d4 temporary hit points. Can only be emitted once per day.
- *Animal Summoning* / *Animal Control* (see above)
- Hoot of Alarm: A piercing call for help similar to the sound of a train whistle. When used, it will bring 1d4 wood giants within 1d5 rounds.

While wood giants are technically a species of giants, some might find it more accurate to describe them more as semi-intelligent giant apes than a giant humanoid. To the scientific eye, wood giants would seem less evolved—as a Neanderthal is to a Homo sapien, such is a wood giant to a hill giant.

As their name describes, wood giants prefer dwelling in compounds constructed in forested areas, eschewing the caverns and large steadings preferred by other giant races. Technologically speaking, wood giants fall somewhere in-between gorillas and hill giants, creating large wooden structures using simple tools, but still quite animalistic in many of their behaviors and mannerisms (sleeping on skins on the ground, alpha-giant dominance, etc.). Their animalistic affinity provides them the ability to communicate with and influence other lesser animal types. Wood giants have a 1-in-6 chance of smelling dwarves and elves that come within a 50-foot radius.

When fighting, they prefer to use “war clubs” made of tree boughs with ends wrapped in leather straps; they are also proficient in throwing boulders. They’ve also been known to use rudimentary spears and javelins.

Appearance: Wood giants range in between 9 to 11 feet in height and weigh between 700–1000 pounds. They have spiky black hair and elongated, oval-shaped heads. They frequently wear gold and silver rings and hoops as piercings through their dark purple lips and cheeks. Their muscular arms are long and broad, making their torsos proportionally more akin to apes than human. For clothing they drape themselves in big-game animal skins stitched and fastened with clasps made of twine and bone.

Language: Wood giants speak “Wood Giant” which is similar to other giant and large-creature languages. When trying to understand or decipher Wood Giant, PCs who are fluent in one of the following similar languages can make an Int check for comprehension: Giant (automatically understands); Squatch (DC 12); Ogre (DC 12), Bugbear (DC 14); Elf (DC 16).

Treasure: Wood giants pierce their nose, lips, and cheeks with jewelry and adorn their pelts and bags with precious stones found in nature. In addition to whatever weapon the wood giant was carrying, Judges should roll randomly or choose two pieces from the following table when looting a dead wood giant:

- Gold lip ring (40 gp)
- Silver nose ring (20 gp)
- Silver ear rings (20 gp)
- Large pearl (100 gp)
- Gold nugget embedded in flesh (30 gp)
- Sapphire gem embedded in flesh in their forehead (50 gp)
- Small ivory tusk driven through nose (30 gp)
- Teeth earrings (10 gp)

Crit Table WG1: Wood Giants



- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1 or less | Crushed shoulder. The wood giant's blow crushes down on the PC's shoulder causing an additional 1d6 damage and PC thereby has an unflattering hump on his back. |
| 2 | Shattered arm. The attack causes 1d8 damage and the PC cannot use that arm again until healed. |
| 3 | Splintered leg. The attack causes 1d8 +1 damage and the wound never heals, causing a permanent loss of 5' of movement. |
| 4 | Gut shot. The attack inflicts 1d10 + 1 damage resulting in the PC excreting blood in stool and urine for the next 1d10 months and causing a permanent loss of 1 Stamina. |
| 5 | Splintered spine. The attack inflicts 1d6+4 damage and the PC is completely paralyzed until magically healed (3 dice of lay on hands to recover). |
| 6 | Blow to the head. The attack inflicts 1d8+5 damage and the PC is sent into a coma for 1d6 weeks. (4 dice of lay on hands healing to recover.) |

Squatch

Init +2; Atk slam +4 melee (1d8+4); AC 15; HD 4d8+4; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP leg break on 19-20 crit; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table M/d10.

Squatches are ape-like brutes, 9 to 11 feet tall, covered in black, brown, or grayish fur which camouflages them in wooded environments. They have powerful limbs, but weak minds, which is why they are frequently manipulated and exploited by wood giants as laborers. Squatches speak their own language, which can be roughly deciphered by PCs who speak Ogre (DC 12).

Leg Break: Squatches have incredibly muscular legs and large feet. If the squatch rolls a natural 19 or 20, it attempts a horrific stomp onto the PC's leg—the PC must make an opposed Agility check vs. the squatch's 20 Strength (+4). Failure results in 1d12 additional points of damage and the PC's leg is splintered (movement reduced to 5'); success is half damage and leg is bruised but not broken (movement reduced by half).

Musk Taint: Squatches secrete a powerful skunk-like musk from their pelts when they are agitated. Any time a PC comes into melee with a squatch, at the end of the combat the PC must make a DC 10 Agility check; failure indicates that the PC was “sprayed” during the encounter. While the musk taint does not inflict any damage, PCs tainted with the odor have a -2 penalty to surprise or Initiative checks to creatures who use smell as a sense (e.g., penalty would not apply to undead). Unchecked, the spray will linger on the PC for 1d4 weeks (apply inverse Luck bonus: i.e. +1 Luck reduces weeks by 1). The spray can be removed naturally via 1d5 repeated herb baths known to most alchemists, druids, gongfarmers, herbalists, hunters, or other “outdoorsy” occupations. The smell can be magically removed by a cleric invoking a “rarely used grooming magic spell” (spell check 12-13 removes stench by 1d4 weeks, 14 or higher removes entirely; judges should inflict fun and odorous consequences with misfire and corruption if the cleric or wizard dares to employ this option).

Catfish Troll

Init +6 in water, +3 on land; Atk bite +8 melee (2d6+4), claw +6 melee (2d4 plus DC 12 Fort save or 1d4 poison); AC 16; HD 6d8+4; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP poisoned fin, regeneration, immune to critical hits, immune to mind-affecting spells, vulnerable to fire; SV Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +8; AL C; Crit Table M/d14.

Catfish trolls—also known colloquially as River Devils, Hardbacks, and Hags—are a grotesque crossbreed of troll and catfish. They regenerate 1d6 hit points per round.

Gicastor

Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 13; HD 3d8; MV 20', swim 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60'; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit Table M/d8.

Similar to their smaller beaver cousins, gicastors are large natural beasts that live near streams, rivers, and lakes. Sometimes called “water bears,” an adult male gicastor can grow up to 5 feet in length and weigh up to 500 pounds. Like beavers and bears, they have powerful jaws and construct elaborate lodges and dams to help catch prey and protect themselves from predators such as goblins and lizardmen. They are equally fast on land as well as in water.

Gicastors generally avoid humans and humanoids but are known to be aggressive when faced with fewer than 3 predators.

Gicastors' warm and waterproof pelts are worth between 8 to 15 gp to local tanners depending on the condition of the pelt and the negotiation skills of the seller. Trappers tend to favor using gicastor traps (or “rigs”) to trap and drown gicastors as opposed to damaging their pelt with swords or spears.

Stronghold's Notable Wood Giant Denizens

Giant	Initial Location
Prako	Area A1 (Chopping Wood)
Marrijikk (drunk)	Area 1-2 (South Hall)
Buchlod, the wolf keeper	Area 1-3 (North Hall) or investigating if catfish troll or wolves are disturbed
Wood Giant tribesmen: Kartok Bartik Lotok Botok Tar Tar Loman Kotik Malkar	Area 1-3 (North Hall)
Kongtok and Chartik	Area A5 (Bulwarks)
Barkala, squatch master Karkartan, neo-Shaman	Area 1-7 (Barkala's quarters)
Wood Giant females: Kartu Froktu Kiktu Lomtu	Area 1-8 (Female and Children's Quarters)
Wood Giant children: Tok Tok (m) Limtu (f) Lortok (m)	Area 1-8 (Female and Children's Quarters)
Othlik (missing giant, already dead)	Corpse can be found in Area B3 (Outhouse)
Gartik (missing giant, already dead)	Corpse can be found in Area 2-1 (Ice Pit)
Goothlik, Original Wood Giant Shaman, now a festering blood golem	Area 2-2 (Lair of the Blood Golem)

New Magic

The Foul Vial

This 8-inch long slender glass vial is covered in precious jewels that are arranged into the shape of a dark eye. Anyone who fills it with at least 12 ounces of their own blood will be able to use the device as vial of *wizard sense* similar to the *wizard spell*. Wherever the vial happens to be—including on another plane—it enables the blood donor to see within 20' of the vial without illumination required.

Memory Transfer: One major side-effect to handling the vial (which some arcane elf mages argue is more important than the *wizard sense* scrying ability itself) is that anyone who touches the vial when it is filled with another's blood must make a DC 14 Will save or risk having the "donor's" memories merge with their own for 1d8 hours causing confusion, paranoia, and traits of multiple personality disorder. Those who save have access to fragments of the donor's memories.

Blood of Veedarkaleesh

As Veedarkaleesh is a shadow demon, any character that tries to fuse the demon's blood with his own will be granted some of the creature's power—after paying the appropriate penalties, of course. This cannot be done via merely drinking the blood—in fact, foolish characters that attempt to drink the blood must make a DC 14 Fort save or suffer a form of blindness in which they can only see at night. A PC (of any class) can perform a diabolical ritual (DC 12 Will check for success) where the blood is prepared and blended with their own costing no less than 3 points of spellburn and incurring a permanent loss of -1 Stamina and inflicting minor corruption. Once the ritual is complete, however, the PC will have the innate ability to cast *darkness* (as per the cleric spell at 2nd level). It goes without saying that performing this ritual is a highly chaotic act that would displease most lawful gods or jealous patrons.

Ockwig's Holy Chain

This silver magical chain is constructed from the reconstituted plate armor of Ockwig the Holy—an ancient lawful paladin of renown, slain centuries ago while battling a horde of bone devils. The chain is 10 feet long and appears exquisitely crafted with large links of silver. Lawful characters who meditate while holding the chain for 1d7 hours receive divine insight from the now-deified lawful demi-god Saint Ockwig: once per week it gives the caster a +1 bonus to casting *banish*, *binding*, *detect evil* and *protection from evil* spells. Attached to the ends of the chain are weights enabling it to be used as a magical +1 weapon inflicting 1d4 damage (q.v. kusari fundo) although becoming proficient with such an exotic weapon may require a new quest created by the judge to locate an expert with such a weapon.

Sleeping Mushrooms

While not magic, *per se*, when the mushrooms are burned they have the following effects:

- Atk: Roll 1d20 plus Luck modifier
- Range: 60' radius from burning
- Duration: Varies (see below)
- Save: Fort save vs. Atk check DC

Fumble: Rolling a natural 1 indicates a person inadvertently inhales concentrated mushroom oil and falls into a deep sleep for 1d6 hours from which he cannot be awaked by normal means.

Effect:

1-11	No effect.
12-13	Unnaturally drowsy. All creatures in the area of the smoke incur -2 penalty to all attack rolls.
14-17	All creatures in area fall into a a natural sleep for 1d6 turns.
18-19	Any target within range falls into a natural sleep for 1d6 hours.
20+	Any target within range falls into a natural sleep for 1d2 days.

Author's Note

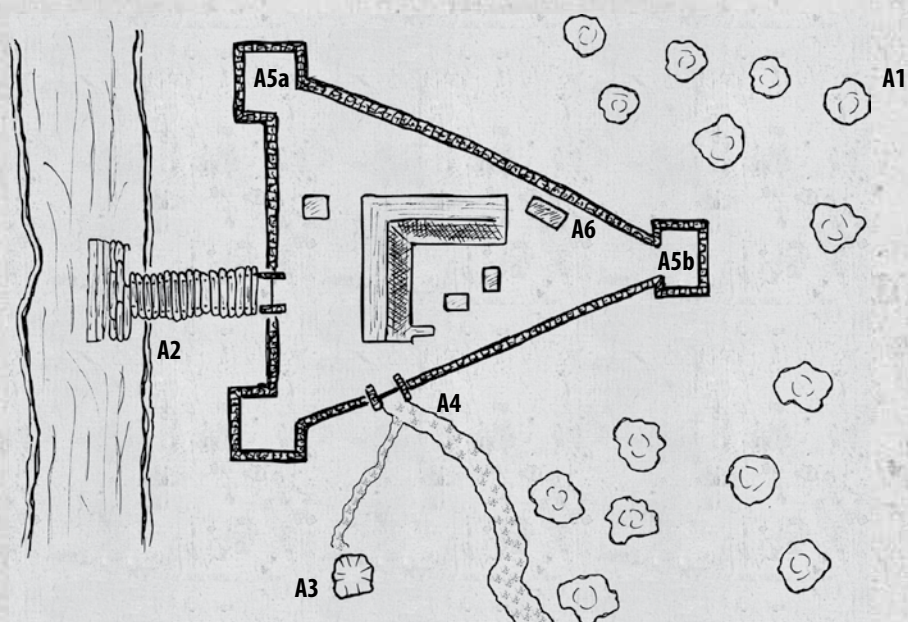
Many old-school RPGers reading this adventure will recognize that *Stronghold of the Hill Giant Shaman* was indubitably inspired by another classic adventure module published decades ago. (Ahem, *The Nosnra River*?) My reverence for the inspirational material should come as no mystery as I have a well-documented soft spot for the aforementioned adventure, having lovingly DM'd it several times with different gaming groups in my youth. Playing that adventure provided some of my favorite childhood memories and drove an inspiration and love for RPG gaming that has lasted a lifetime. I wrote this module as a humble attempt to invoke a bit of nostalgia for other DMs who remember that adventure and would like to re-introduce a somewhat familiar theme into their own campaign with enough *Dungeon Crawl Classics* flavor to hopefully make it interesting for fans of my new favorite game system.

Other influences: In addition to that early adventure, the perimeter map of the stronghold was influenced by my interest in reading and visiting some of America's earlier colonial history sites, in this case Jamestown Fort in Virginia.

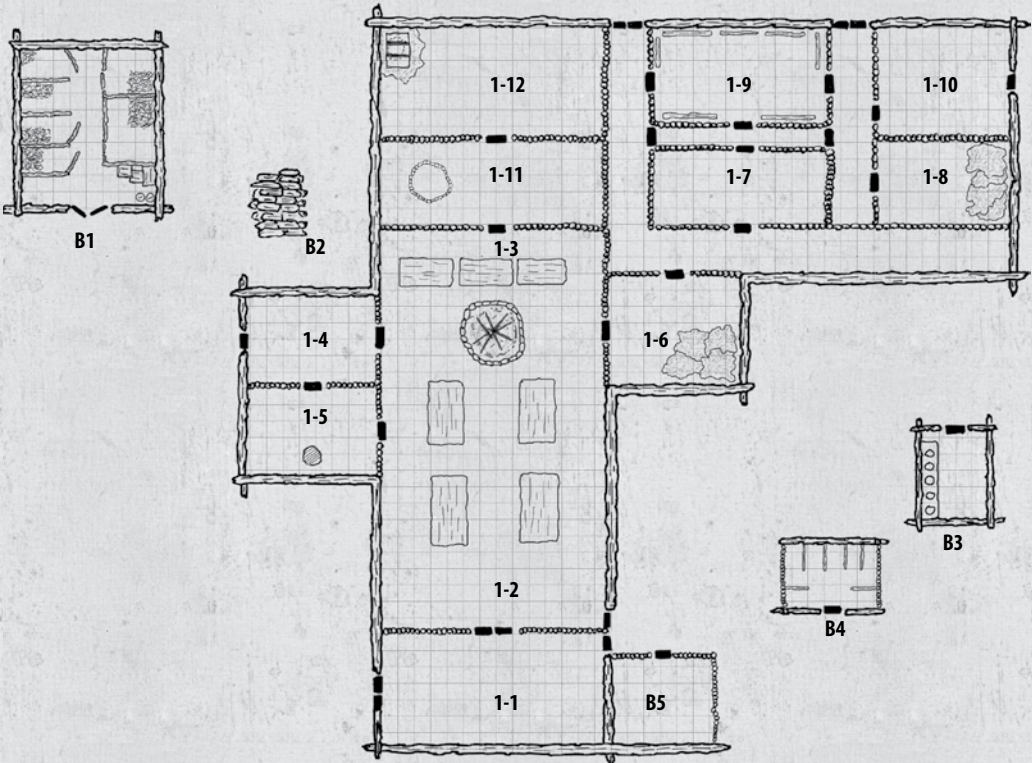
Final thoughts: Depending on the DCC RPG community reaction to this adventure, the author would be happy to write follow-up adventures that pit the PCs against additional races of giants. This was a pretty fun adventure to write.

Stephen Newton, Sept 2014

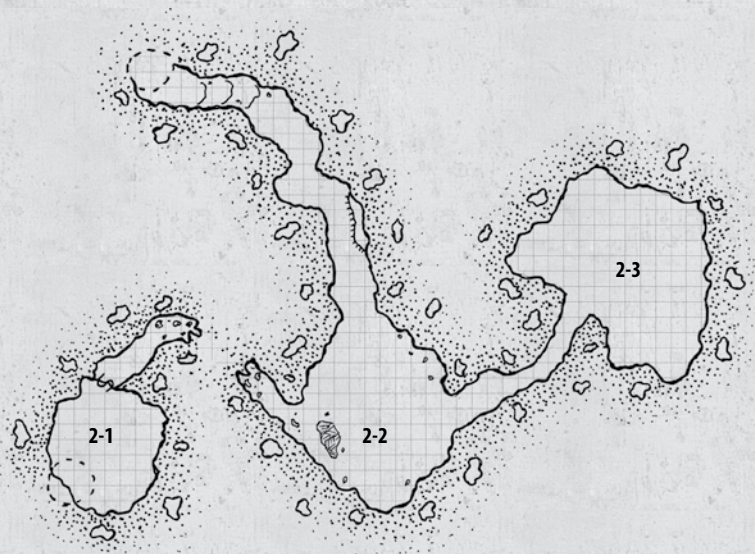
Stronghold Exterior



Stronghold Interior



Stronghold Caverns



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Thick Skull adventures

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These are not your father's giants...

Wood giants—animalistic evolutionary ancestors of hill giants—have emerged from the forests of the Fulthon Mountains to harry and pillage human villages with impunity. Ferocious and feral, they kidnap the weak to sacrifice in their barbaric rituals. Decades ago, your ancestors—stout and brave adventurers of renown—eliminated a previous giant threat, and thus people expect such heroism from you.

But not is all at it seems, as a chaotic force lurks behind the scenes. And if survival against a stronghold of ferocious giants wasn't challenging enough, the machinations of facing an insane, immortal demon certainly will be...

Stronghold of the Wood Giant Shaman is an adventure designed for 4 to 6 5th-level characters. This product is compatible with the **Dungeon Crawl Classics Role Playing Game**

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