

SC-1

Perils of the Sunken City

INCLUDES

MADAZKAN'S COURT

A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE

BY JON MARR

COMPATIBLE WITH

**DCC
RPG**



Perils of the Sunken City

A Level 0-1 DCC RPG Adventure

Introduction

The Great City is old and faded, a pale reflection of its former glory. Life is a challenge for most, but for the weak and unconnected, the city is a place of unrelenting hardship harboring neither hope nor promise of escape.

With one exception: the Sunken City.

Most find death in the crumbling ruins that stretch beyond sight into the mists southward; once rich districts now claimed by swamp and dark denizens. But for the desperate few, the ruins offer treasures the Great City denies them: fortune, glory, and a fighting chance!

Overview

Perils of the Sunken City is a beginning or 'funnel' Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG adventure for 15 0-level characters or 8 1st-level characters. Players running 0-level characters should have 3-4 each, as player casualties are part of the fun! It has been observed: *There should be an expectation of the lessons of mortality.*

Judges are encouraged to tweak the number of enemy combatants (and resulting treasures) to provide the proper level of challenge to players, based on player experience and the size of the adventuring party.

This module is broken into two parts. The first section gives an overview of *Mustertown: Gateway to the Sunken City*, providing judges a consistent milieu to kick-off many different 0-level adventures. The 2nd section, *Madazkan's Court* details the inaugural Sunken City adventure.

Credits

Writing, Cover Art, Cartography: Jon Marr
Interior Art: Jon Marr, Benjamin Marr
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Background

For centuries the Great City has shifted north in hops and spurts as encroaching swamp swallowed the southern extents of the city. The ruins now stretch south for nearly 30 miles, with endless sunken avenues, courts and towers. Structures grow gradually more dilapidated the further one travels from the city, but pockets of higher ground remain in all areas, and the buildings in these locations have weathered the years somewhat more successfully – but these places also attract the worst sort of swamp denizens.

A powerful teleportation device, **The Sending Stone**, stands at the northern end of the ruins, connected to many other stones scattered throughout the city's rubble. The fearsome demon that powers the stone – *Sender* – transports adventuring parties for his own dark purposes between the stones... usually without incident. Bands of desperate adventurers known as Free Companies use the Sending Stone to explore the deepest parts of the sunken ruins, hoping for treasure and glory, but often finding horrible, muddy deaths instead.

Integrating the Sunken City into your Campaign

The Sunken City can be dropped-in as a deadly suburb to most large corrupt cities. In addition, almost any isolated low-level adventure could be placed somewhere in the vastness of the Sunken City, with Sender providing expedient means of travel. Energetic judges could run numerous 0-level funnel adventures in preparation for campaigning, all in an environment where characters, even of differing Free Companies, would be aware of each others activities and capable of forming more experienced bands.

And when the inevitable need for replacement characters arrives, the Judge has an accessible place to quickly send another band of willing serfs to winnow out a pool of replacement PCs.

(If you need a party of 0-level characters fast, visit purplesorcerer.com to use our free 0-level party generator!)

Part I: The Sunken City

Mustertown: Gateway to the Sunken City

Just outside the walls of the Great City a ramshackle collection of buildings known as Mustertown clings to the dry lands at the edge of the encroaching swamp. Any party of adventurers heading to the Sending Stone must pass through this collection of crumbling buildings, enduring the hungry stares of the ne'er-do-wells who inhabit them. Eager gamemasters can simply use Mustertown as a place to scrounge up supplies before setting their players on the causeway that leads to the Sending Stone. Alternatively, players can be introduced to the traditions that shape most ventures into the swamp: traditions formed and refined in a large, dilapidated inn known as the **Soiled Dove**.

The Soiled Dove and the Mustering Compact

The owner of the Dove (known affectionately as **Old Soily**) is a former Sunken City adventurer who built his establishment with treasure purchased with his own blood in the ruins. Though a thoroughly unrepentant rascal in most senses, Soily is honest in his dealings with adventurers, and the inn has become the nexus for most parties heading into the swamp. Over the years, a series of traditions have grown, multiplied, and been "codified" into an informal standard known to all adventuresome sorts as **The Mustering Compact**. Most of the traditions of the Compact are unwritten, but there are three chief elements of which all locals are aware:

The Free Charter: The poor and desperate of the Great City have few generally respected rights, but one is that they are free to form **Free Companies** to explore the ruins of the Sunken City. Participation in a Free Company can delay entrance to debtor's prisons, and often acts as a final stage of initiation for various seedy guilds and apprenticeships. (Even wizardly apprenticeships, as many masters wish to test the will and determination of their charges before providing the final keys to access powerful magics...)

The Counting: Each companion in a Free Company contributes a single copper piece to one of Soily's employees known as the **Muster's Counter**, receiving



ing a brightly decorated arm band of matching colors, as well as a baked clay marker. Adventurers scratch their name or mark on one side and next of kin/location on the reverse and deposit it with the Counter, who will see that it is delivered to next of kin if the adventurer fails to return from the ruins to claim his marker.

Prizes: The dream of most Free Companies (beyond surviving) is to return with a **Bright Prize**: a treasure of particular distinction. Returning with a Bright Prize will result in general acclaim, and the Company's name will be inscribed into a board outside the Soiled Dove. Old Soily will likely be able to fence any bright prize the party returns with. (Though check out **Nardgrog's Note** on Page 5 on how to handle things if your world lacks the buyers necessary for such activity!)

A **Grey Prize** is a prize judged something less than a Bright Prize, but capable of constituting a successful adventure for those wagering on the party's success. (A local known as **No-Legs** determines the nature of all prizes, he's discussed momentarily.)

Key Locations

The Soiled Dove (1): The key tavern of Mustertown. The Dove can provide most adventuring items at the usual prices, along with room, board, and other less savory services.

The Circle (2): An open circle of bare dry dirt that is the traditional gathering place for most companies. No-Leg's shack is adjacent. Typically when a company departs, a crowd of gamblers, gawkers, and pickpockets look on, sizing up the party and shouting out encouragement, derision, or betting odds.

The Causeway (3): A berm of raised ground that serves as a path through the fringe of the swamp to the gates of the Sunken City and the Sending Stone.

The Swamp (4): Straying off the Causeway is dangerous. The swamp is full of grasping muck, hidden channels, snakes, bigger snakes, crocodillos, two-tongued mud-wumpers, and even an occasional shiny-spined turf-hurdler. Feel free to punish those foolish enough to wander.

The Lady's Hovel (5): A small shack located halfway down the causeway that houses a kindly, yet mysterious seeress beloved by all the wayward scum of Mustertown. The Lady is a potential source for both information and blessing.

Oh wise Nardgrog, what is this 'funnel' you speak of...

Welcome one and all to the sausage grinder! During 0-level play your players should expect to lose some or most of their characters! (Pressed through a funnel, as it were.) When mere peasants explore deadly dungeons, what else is to be expected? That's why it only takes moments to create new characters, and in many cases replacements for the unlucky can be found along the way. Those who survive will be ready to choose classes and begin the trek to legendary status!

Mustertown

Gateway to the Sunken City



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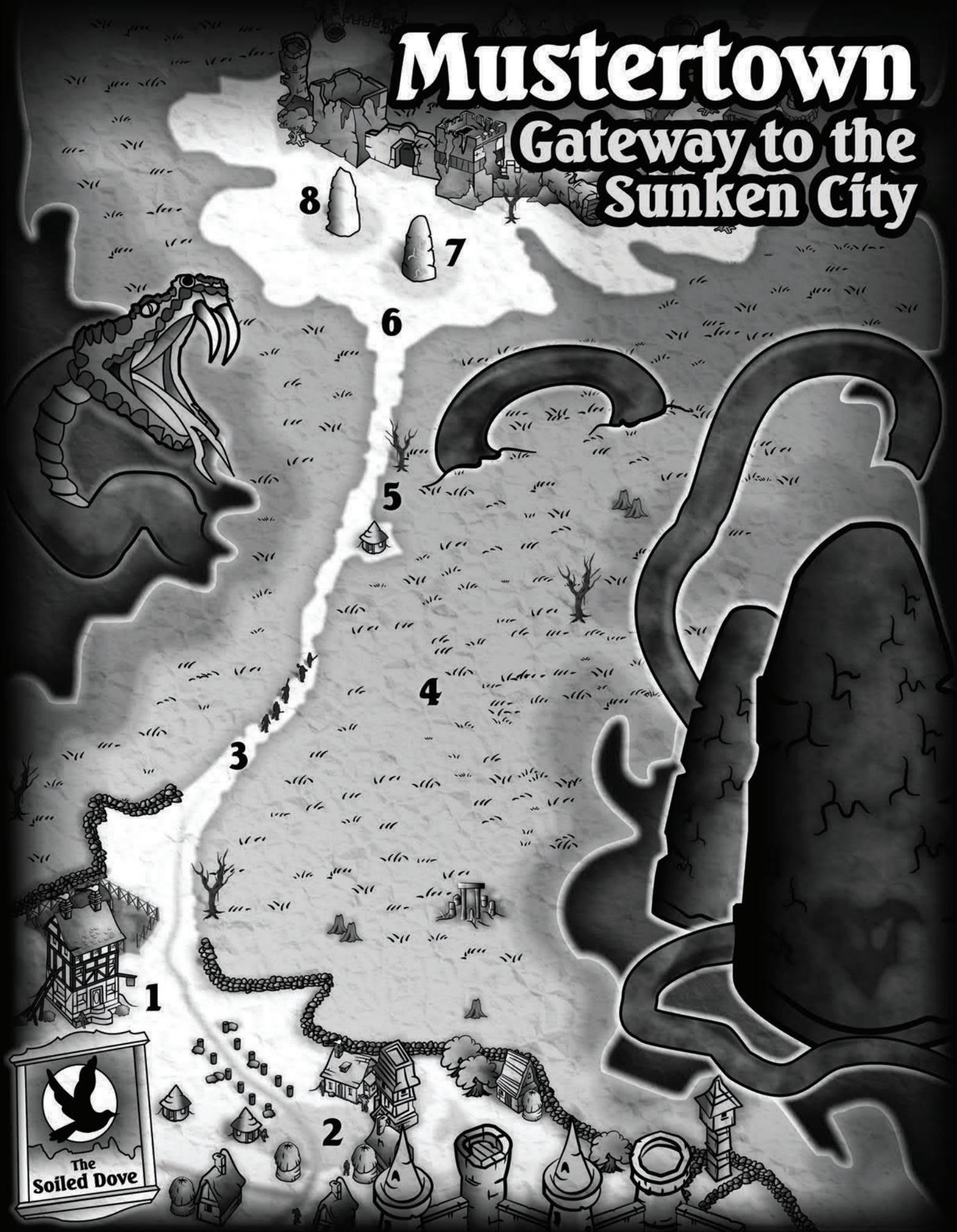
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0-level characters possess many skills gained in their previous professions. Encourage and reward creative solutions from your players to help their blacksmiths and chicken-butchers shine!

Key Figures of Mustertown

Old Soily: Proprietor of the Soiled Dove. A former Sunken City survivor who, regardless of his moral failings, gives a fair price for major finds if he's able to fence the item. Knows everyone in Mustertown, and is a good source of info as long as your coins continue to flow!

No-Legs: A portly former-adventurer who suffered a mishap with the Proving Stone. Appraises all major finds to determine their "prize" status. His word is trusted in Mustertown.

The Lady: Lives in a shack on the causeway. Is kind to all, and has very powerful friends, including Sender. Can grant a limited number of boons to those who impress her. (Applies an ash mark to the forehead, providing a pool of 2 luck points to be expended on a single luck burn during the next adventure).

The Lady is potentially a source of information about the mysteries of the swamp and the sending stones. To many, she is the only source of grace available, and all in Mustertown revere her. Everyone knows that to harm the Lady in any way is to invite death. It is customary for the blessed to reward her with some small trinket left outside her hut on the return trip. Those who ignore this custom will find themselves cursed by fate. (-1 luck for a month).

The Gates of the Sunken City

Once adventurers cross the Causeway, the ground rises slightly as it approaches a large crumbling gatehouse and walls, forming a clearing. Through breaks in the walls, the ruins appear to go on forever...

Key Locations of the Gates

The Clearing (6): The ground is generally dry here. A gatehouse provides entrance to the Sunken City, but few take this route, as the districts close to the gatehouse were picked clean of treasures years ago. In addition, a fearsome warrior known as **The Warden** patrols the ruins near the gate, and is rumored to be quite unkind to sightseers.

This field of dry ground houses two huge stone monoliths, both extremely weathered: far more so than even the dilapidated ruins they shadow, hinting at great age. Most adventures enter the city by use of the first stone: the Sending Stone.

The Sending Stone (7): Standing nearly 20 feet tall, the Sending Stone is roughly cylindrical, tapering slightly at the top. Covered in lichen and grime, the stone sports crude symbols that can barely be discerned. Chief among them is a dark horned face that seems to have weathered the years better than the other markings. When an adventurer presses his hand to the stone, it slowly warms, and after 15 seconds, all who are touching the stone vanish as one - at the whims of Sender's powers.

While not common knowledge, it's possible for a party to return to the same spot on a return trek if they all concentrate on a place while touching the stone. *Remember everyone, there's no place like the Ooze Pits of Jonas Gralk.*

The Proving Stone (8): Slightly smaller and less decorated than the Sending Stone, the Proving Stone provides a destination point for travel back from the Sunken City. The grass immediately surrounding the stone is withered and grey: newcomers might be warned to stand clear in case someone comes through on a return trip. Ignoring this advice could be deadly.

Though Sender is committed to providing safe, reliable service, his *is* a demon, with a demon's sensibilities. Each return traveler must make a DC 5 Luck save upon arrival or roll a d4 and suffer one of the following:

- 1) **Scarecrow:** You're buried up to your calves upon arrival. (Traditionally you buy all surviving companions a drink at the Soiled Dove if you're scarecrowed.)
- 2) **Wiggly Armor Stand (or Mud Dive):** Buried head first to the chest. Friends have to help you out or you suffocate in short order. (Traditionally everyone chips in to buy you a drink if you take a mud dive... but on occasion this has led to folks not getting rescued by stingy compatriots.)
- 3) **Sender's Diet:** Something goes missing. A fingertip, part of a toe, all your hair...
- 4) **Birdy-Birdy:** You arrive 6-8 feet up. DC 5 Ref save or twist your ankle. (-5 to speed and -1 to reflex rolls for one week)

If an adventurer has done something to truly anger Sender, such as harming the Lady, or defacing the Sending or Proving Stone, that traveler will not arrive safely. The usual penalty is known as **Paying Sender's Tithe**: you arrive without your head.



Key Figures of the Gates

Sender: Sender is the powerful demon that energizes the Sending Stones. Few understand the precise nature of his existence, but enough adventurers have returned from sendings with dark impressions to give his legend weight and shape. It is in the Demon's own interest to encourage as many sendings as possible, as each sending brings it closer to reaching the terms of its release. Sender thus avoids mutilating adventures when possible, and occasionally sizes up parties to send them to locations where they can prosper.

If he holds an adventurer in ill-favor, he's perfectly capable of doing extraordinarily nasty things to them during transfer. He has a strange friendship with the Lady, as he is able to manifest in shadowy form in her hut, where she talks to him and treats him with kindness. He will kill anyone who hurts her. When the day finally arrives when he is free of the ages old necromantic compulsion that binds him to the stone, the Great City will mourn indeed.

The Warden: A powerful warrior who haunts the Sending Stone and environs. Any adventurer arriving at the Sending Stone who looks seasoned, experienced, or powerful is likely to lose 20 pounds of ugly fat off the top. Why the warden does this is a mystery: Is he protecting dark forces in the sunken city? Keeping the food supply coming? Defending the rights of the weak to have a chance at success? None truly know. Regardless of motivation, his influence is clear: only the weak of the city approach the Sending Stone. (For the experienced adventurer, there are rumors of another stone five miles to the south on a small, muddy island just off the coast – tales say it transports the bold to the very gates of The Shriven Tower itself - home of the mumbling necromancer Xax - in the darkest heart of the ruins. Be warned! The mumbles of Xax have driven the bravest men mad!)

Mustertown Lexicon

Mustertown has its own dialect. Those who wish to blend in will benefit by picking up some of the local slang.

Rats vs. Snakes: How the lowly of Mustertown describe the city elite's opinion of them. *They don't care whether we or the fiends in the swamp die, it's all just rats vs. snakes to them...*

Over the Undsy: Betting term about the number of warm bodies remaining in a company upon return from the ruins. *What's the over the undsy on this party? Six warm bodies?*

Melon Thumping: Unsavory practice of gamblers attempting to discern the strength/smarts of members of adventuring companies to improve betting strategies. *Shows us your teeth handsome... been eating regular like?*

Croc Scat: A particularly weak looking company. *This band's croc scat for sure...*

Three-Day Pastry: An overly cautious adventurer who has made numerous journeys into the ruins with little to show for it. *That be one stale company: check out the number of three-day's in the muster...*

Kind: Describes an adventurer who has prospered in the ruins, but at a terrible cost. *He's had luck, of a kind...*

Band of Scholars: A party that seems entirely too confident considering the talent at hand. *Like as not Sender will teach this band of scholars a thing or two about proper perspective...*



But Nardgrog, my world is a deliciously grim and brutish place...

It's assumed that the Sunken City rests near a 'great city' wealthy enough for Soily to easily fence the treasures that emerge from the fetid swamps. But what if your world is a darker, grittier place where finding a market for most treasures is nearly impossible? You have a few options:

You call that a city? There is a city adjacent to the swamps, but it's poor, with few wealthy patrons capable of purchasing expensive treasures. It's impossible for Soily to raise the cash for anything the adventures return with: he's barely able to keep the Dove supplied! The party will have to search to find buyers, which could trigger additional adventures. Also, instead of referring to bright or grey "prizes", successful parties will be known as "Bright Companies" or "Grey Companies" - since reputation and admiration are the only coins that the folks of the city will be willing to share.

We ain't got no stinkin' city: Mustertown is all that remains of the once great city, the last fringe of civilization on the edge of the swamp. The Soiled Dove operates as a crossroads inn, Soily spreading rumors far and wide of the riches of the Sunken City to attract customers. Adventuring parties are few and far between, the ring of gamblers a gathering of old-timers and drifters wagering apples to ward off the air of desperation and despair that surround their lives. Sender is not amused.

Part 2: Madazkan's Court

Introduction

Adventurers seek death or glory in the Sunken City, and Madazkan's Court is the perfect place to find both! Madazkan's Court consists of both a surface and dungeon component.

Adventure Overview

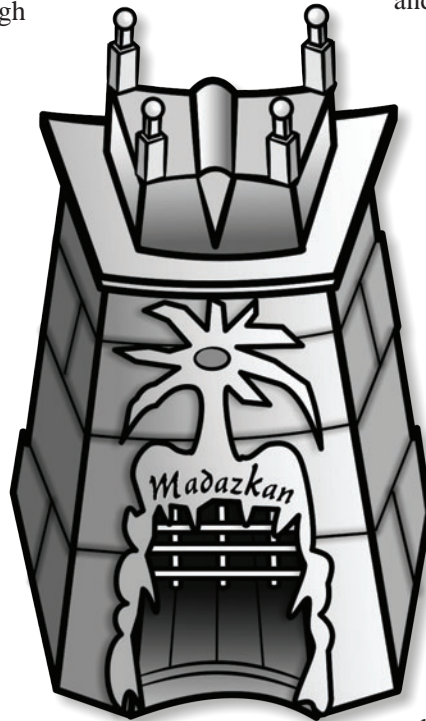
Court: On the surface, players will make their way through an overgrown courtyard, battling a degenerate band of Opossumen and a pair of fearsome, though overfed Crocodillos. Next, they'll enter and explore Madazkan's twisted arena, where they'll eventually be driven to the arena floor by an angry crowd of bloodthirsty spirits. They'll confront sinister traps powered by a crazed elemental that will require feats of strength, agility, and smarts to overcome. At the heart of the deadly playground they'll encounter the only way out of the arena short of death: a blind leap into the blackest of pits.

Dungeon: In the dungeon below, adventurers will be ambushed by the cursed bones of enslaved gladiators, wielding the very chains of their oppression. Next, they can take a side trip to outsmart a gigantic catfish to gain a notable prize. If they manage to get past a potentially deadly shrine that tests their luck, and survive a room oozing with hungry slime, they will eventually discover Madkazan's pleasure chamber, and the true shrine to his dark patron: Malloc the Creeper, the Dark World Tree whose roots penetrate the earth. The shrine holds both death, notable treasure, and opportunity.

Background

Madazkan was a right nasty old necromancer. Delving into the darkest sorceries, he consorted with the worst sorts of demonic and elemental powers. Feared throughout the Great City, he entreated with dark powers to build his signature marble arena and the dungeon that served it.

In the arena he indulged his darkest fantasies, sending hundreds to their deaths by means of an endless variety of death traps and twisted games.



Eventually, his dark ways destroyed him. When he covenanted with new powers to construct a massive tower next to his arena, it angered his original patron Malloc. The Dark Creeper sent forth roots to destabilize the mighty structure, and it collapsed in a terrifying shower of stones, slamming into and nearly burying the northeastern corner of the arena.

Madazkan looked on in horror from his private pavilion in the arena, finding himself trapped as the stones from the tower blocked his only exit. The falling stones also damaged the intricate wards that kept the enslaved elemental who powered the arena in check...

The elemental ran riot, killing every slave and spectator in the arena. Madazkan's guards fell under waves of sheet lightning. The dark sorcerer was the last to die, desperately attempting to bring the monstrous elemental force under control. But without Malloc's help, he proved no match for the enraged creature, becoming the deadly arena's final victim.

Until today.



Once more, into the abattoir! Or perhaps on second thought...

Many role playing games strive to carefully balance each encounter to protect players from 'getting in over their heads'. The DCC RPG is not one of those games! The world that DCC characters inhabit is a dangerous, unpredictable place, and players need to pick up on the clues you drop that on occasion it's best to run for their lives. While you won't find many such encounters in a 0-level adventure like **Perils of the Sunken City** (there's generally more killing by attrition), be aware that deadly encounters **are** out there and be prepared to help your players understand the joys, and perils, of truly heroic adventure!

Madazkan's Court

Arena



Madazkan's Court: Arena

Encounter Table

Area	Type	Encounter
A-2	C	Lethargic Crocodillos
A-3	C	Degenerate Opossumen
A-5	T/C	Arena traps, possible Opossumen

Player Introduction

After an endless moment lost in the swirling dark of the Sending Stone's transporting magic, you emerge into the light, your feet slapping into muddy ground in a shower of dirty spray. Your vision clears to reveal a tall weathered stone monolith rising before you. As you and your companions stumble away from the stone, you turn to discover you're in a huge grass filled court, 120 strides to a side, veiled in a ragged dome of clinging mist. The wall ringing the court is largely rubble, and beyond the crumbling barrier the swamp extends into the mists in all directions. The scent of decay is overwhelming.

But to the north, a gleaming structure rises from the tall grass to dominate the far side of the court: a circular arena of shining marble, seemingly untouched by the years that have left the rest of the court in ruin!

From the west the subtle aroma of wood smoke and roasting meat cuts through the decay. At first glance the court appears empty of life, but the shoulder-high grass could hide almost anything...

Areas of the Map

General Features: Tall grass (3-5 feet) covers most of the court. The ground is generally firm, except near Area A-2 where the grass sinks into muck, and water can stand up to two feet deep. The sky is covered with slate grey mists, and vision in general is limited to fifty yards or so.

The stands of trees in the area contain a number of Weepers: trees that ooze large quantities of sticky sap. Any adventurer with an outdoor background would recognize them, and the sticky stuff could prove useful in the dangers to come.

Area A-1 – Great Stone: *The stone before you is shorter than the Sending Stone at the gates of the city, but nearly as wide around at its base. Moss climbs the stone on all sides. A rough star of shaped granite radiates out from beneath the stone into the tall grass.*

If adventures place their hands on this stone, it acts exactly like the Sending Stone in reverse, returning adventurers to the Proving Stone at the gates of the city.

Area A-2 – Crocodillo Wallow: *As you push through the tall grass, the ground grows less firm with each step. As your final footstep sinks completely into ankle deep water, you make a grisly discovery: the remains of a half-eaten corpse lies mostly submerged a few feet in front of you.*

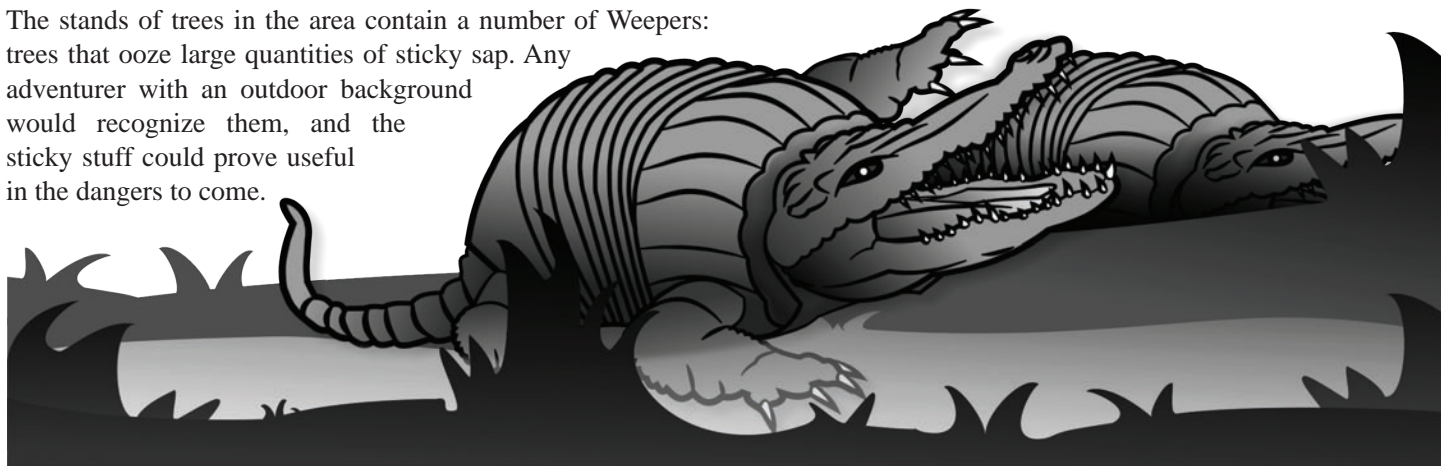
This region of muddy ground is the lair of a pair of fearsome, but overfed Crocodillos, heavily armored beasts resembling crocodiles with massive shoulders and thin whip-like tails. The corpse is a recent victim of the male crocodillo: a half-eaten opossuman (only the bottom half remains) .

Lethargic Crocodillos (2): Init -1; Atk bite +2 melee; Dmg 1d8; (or tail (all within 5 feet) +2 melee; Dmg 1, target(s) tripped prone) AC 14; HP 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -2, Will -2; AL N.

The creatures are extremely difficult to spot in the grass (DC 14 search check). They are deft at moving silently and invisibly and could appear/attack from anywhere in the wallow.

Scattered throughout the wallow are a few prizes: two spears, a battered iron helm, two bottles of cheap wine resting at the edge of the mire, and a finely carved ivory miniature of a dead tree with spreading roots (5 GP).

The Opossumen from area A-3 have proved easy prey, and the crocodillos are well fed, and thus less aggressive than usual. If players flee the area, they won't follow.



Area A-3 – Opossumen Camp: *As you push through the tall grass towards the enticing smell of roasting meat, bristly faces with shining milk-white eyes suddenly appear in the grass at your feet. As you prepare to deliver a well-placed boot to drive the vermin off, they rise from the grass, to nearly the height of man! With a discordant chorus of hissing snarls, the opossum-headed humanoids spring forward with javelins and clubs raised!*

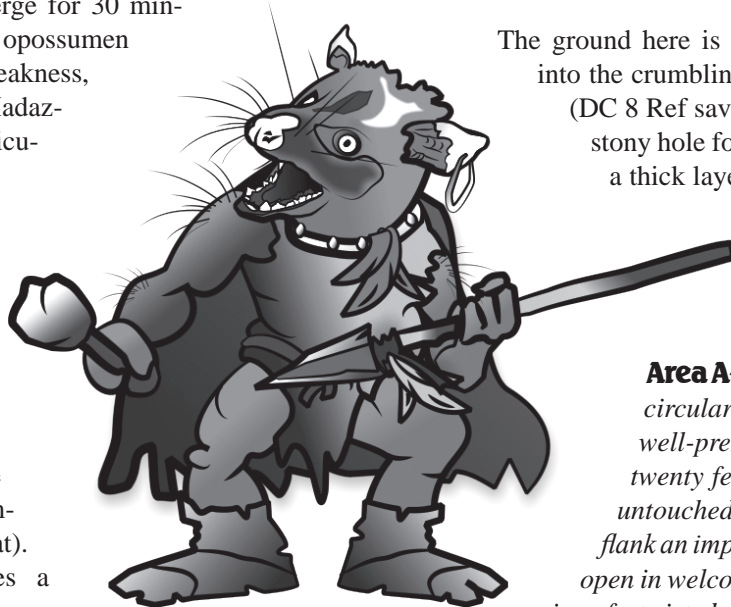
Whether the result of some horrific experiment gone awry, or a fiendish curse, the origin of opossumen is obscure. Regardless, mixing man and opossum has produced some extremely dubious results. Opossumen are shorter than menfolk, less intelligent, and shy away from both bright lights and confrontation (unless defending their food). To their credit, they do possess a certain low cunning, and see extremely well in the dark. Their greatest weakness is their uncontrollable compulsion to ‘play dead’ in combat situations. If any opossumen rolls a 1 in combat, they collapse immediately into a rigid state from which they cannot emerge for 30 minutes. Certain ‘evolved’ opossumen have overcome this weakness, but those who inhabit Madazkan’s Court are a particularly degenerate bunch.

The band is made up entirely of males, arrayed in rags and mismatched bits of hide armor. Most wield clubs, which are little better than their teeth (but won’t cause permanent personal damage if broken in combat). One in four possesses a crude javelin.

The ‘camp’ is a vile charnel pit of filthy lean-tos surrounding a smoky fire.

The meat rotating on a crude spit over the fire is obviously humanoid. On the east side of camp are four new 2x2-foot crates. Three of the crates have been burst open and their contents ransacked, but the fourth is intact. (8 bottles of fortified wine (packed in straw) labeled *The Two Copper Dropper*.) The crates are lashed together with 40’ of good quality rope, and show signs of being dragged from the east. Following the drag marks through a break in the wall reveals a small raft tied up next to a brackish body of water extending into the mists and parts unknown.

Degenerate Opossumen (8): Init +0; Atk javelin -2 melee; Dmg 1d4; (or club/bite - 2 melee; Dmg 1d4) AC 11; HP 2; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SV Fort 0, Ref 0, Will -3; AL N.



Miniatures? The DCC RPG works great without them, but if you use figures in your gaming, visit purplesorcerer.com to download battlemaps, paper miniatures, and other free enhancements!



(On attack rolls of 1 an opossumen “plays dead”: becoming immobile while its face sets in a rictus smile, releasing foul fluids from unsavory orifices. All foes within 10 feet must make a DC 8 Fort save or be at -2 to all activities while in range.)

If the adventurers kill/drive off the opossumen, they can piece together 2 sets of (filthy, repulsive smelling) hide armor (fits all, but only offers +2 protection), 1d5 javelins and 6 clubs.

Area A-4 – Sunken Guardhouse: *The stones of the crumbling wall are somewhat more intact here. In the roofless interior of what appears to be a collapsed guardhouse, the omnipresent grass is replaced by thick spongy moss, rising and falling over mounds of unidentifiable shapes.*

The ground here is extremely unstable. Anyone venturing into the crumbling structure will trigger a breakthrough. (DC 8 Ref save to spring clear, or fall 6-10 feet into a stony hole for 1d4 damage.) In the northwest corner, a thick layer of turf covers a trapdoor down to the only accessible escape tunnel from the dungeons below. This should prove nearly impossible to discover from the surface.

Area A-5 – Madazkan’s Arena: *The massive circular structure before you is in astonishingly well-preserved condition. The walls rise over twenty feet high in glistening marble brilliance, untouched by rot or decay. Two external stairwells flank an impressive gatehouse, its wrought-iron gate open in welcome. Above the gate broods a relief carving of a twisted dead tree. Its roots wrap around the word “Madazkan” and extend down in writhing tangles to border the opening. The air seems to crackle with barely-subdued elemental energy.*

This arena was Madazkan’s joy. In it he sported with the lives of slaves and those unfortunate souls his minions could ‘vanish’ from the poorest districts of the city.

The Elemental: The entire structure is powered by an elemental, once bound here by powerful magics, but who remains as a slave to its own mad compulsion: too keep the arena pristine! Normally the elemental is in a nearly comatose state, its energy and consciousness leached away into the very marble to maintain its beauty. But a fearsome lightning storm two days past repeatedly struck the large metallic orb that stands over the northeast section of the arena and the elemental is currently livelier than it has been in years!

A) The Walls: 20 feet of smooth marble, rises to 35 feet at the gatehouse and Madazkan's Box. The collapse of the massive tower to the northeast has buried the base of the walls in that area, and it's easy to scramble up the stones to within 5 feet of the top of the walls around the stands.

B) Outer Stairwells: These marble stairs flank the gatehouse and provide easy access to the stands.

C) Gatehouse: The iron portcullis is raised. Inside on the left wall a stairwell rises to an entrance to the stands above. In the far wall, a large opening grants access to tunnels disappearing into darkness both left and right under the stands. Otherwise the gatehouse is empty.

Passages under the Stands: These tunnels once circled the entire arena, providing access to bathrooms and concessions. The restricted areas to the northeast (tunnel G to the arena floor, the machinery room, and the stairs down to the dungeons below) are now blocked by floor-to-ceiling rubble. The open areas are empty and dark. (Though if the party is having an easy time of things, a party of opossumen could be lurking in the shadows...)

D) The Orb: This massive metallic orb rests on a 40 foot tall iron pillar near the northeast section of the arena, drawing energy from its surroundings, feeding the elemental and machinery room below. The collapse of the tower to the northeast cut off all external access to the machinery.

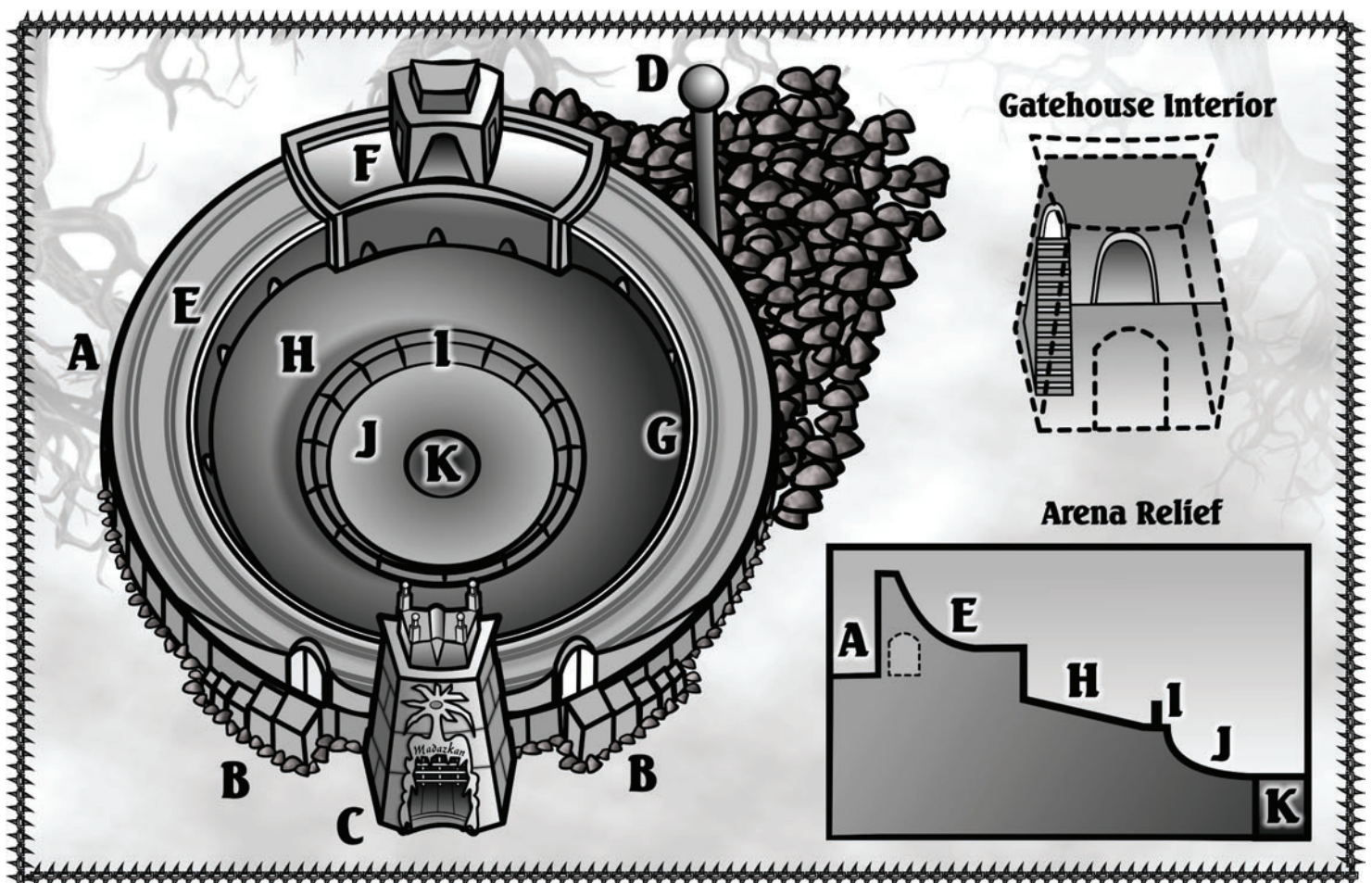
E) The Stands: Stadium style seating for roughly 1000 spectators. There are hundreds of skeletons scattered about, their clothing reduced to rags, many showing scorch marks. Most shiny valuables were picked clean by clever birds in the distant past, but a determined party could recover 2d20 silver pieces if they search long enough.

F) Madazkan's Box: Access to the box is limited, since its entrance tunnel (accessed through the marble 'pavilion') was buried with the tower collapse. Adventures must surmount a 10 foot tall wall to climb into the box. Inside the pavilion are a set of iron levers that control the arena's traps. All levers are in the back, or 'off' position. When the elemental activates the traps of the arena, all the levers will slide forward and lock into position.

Madazkan and his guards made their last stand in the pavilion, and the area's protective enchantments have helped their possessions resist the decaying effects of time. Players can recover 3 sets of black scale mail, 3 long swords, 3 short bows, and a fine spider silk black robe (40 GP) from the desiccated skeletons.

Clutched in Madazkan's bony hand is his **Rod of Chains**: a black rod with stylized spiked-chain links running from above the hand grip to the crown of the rod, forming a spiked mace of sorts. This weapon acts as a mace in combat, and also has special significance to the chain skeletons in area D-1.

G) Access Tunnel: A few yards in the tunnel is completely blocked by rubble from the collapsed tower.



The Deadly Playground

The arena floor rests 10 feet below the stands, empty save for a single skeleton. To access the floor, characters must be lowered down or hang and drop from the stands. Once a single adventurer steps foot on the arena floor, a number of events will be set in motion:

- The elemental that controls the arena will awaken from its slumber, immediately activating its 'lightning screens'. Coursing sheets of impenetrable energy will appear around the entire perimeter of the stands, blocking access to the outer stairwells and the rock pile. Additional screens block the entrance tunnel at G, and the pit at K. Anyone touching a screen takes 1 HP damage per round unless they make a DC 14 Fort save. (Players in the arena might catch vague glimpses of the shapeless elemental arcing along the walls, circling the arena, or flying up to the orb and back.)
- The ghosts of the arena will begin to stir, feeding on the elemental's energy. On the first round, distant shouts and chants will be heard. On the second, menacing phantom forms will begin rising from the remains of the dead, gesturing wildly toward the arena below. On the third round, anyone in the stands will begin to suffer scratches, cold flashes, and strange visions. Phantom hands begin forcing them towards the arena floor. On the fourth round, anyone who has not found their way to the arena floor will be pushed over the edge, suffering 1d4 points of damage when they hit the ground.

From this point on, until the elemental wears down in 24 hours, the only way out of the arena is through the pit to the dungeons below.

H) The Arena Grounds, Outer: The outer arena grounds are floored with smooth marble, and angle down to the wall of spikes at I. The grounds are empty save for the prone form of a single skeleton, which appears to be clutching a golden sword. (In reality just wood covered in gold leaf.) When the arena goes active, the following occurs in the outer grounds:

- Foot-long spikes begin powerfully poking out, then retracting from hundreds of holes in the outer ring of the wall of spikes.
- Steel orbs will shoot from small holes in the base of the outer wall, circling the arena like roulette balls. Randomly target half the adventurers each round. If targeted, the adventure must make a DC 8 Ref save or be struck by an orb for 1 point of damage, and knocked off balance, stumbling toward the wall of spikes unless restrained.

I) Wall of Spikes: All characters must somehow cross the 4 foot tall wall of spikes to the inner grounds. Anyone loitering within range of the stabbing spikes suffers a spike attack (+0, 1d4 DMG). Players can attempt to leap the wall (DC 10 Ref save), or time the spikes properly to scramble over (DC 10 Int check). Failure on either check results in a spear attack. If players leap the wall, they'll likely slide uncontrollably toward the pit unless secured in some manner or caught by friends.

Reward players for clever solutions with a +2 to +4 bonus. Examples would include crossing where dead characters already gum up the spikes, clever use of rope, tree sap, poles, etc. If characters arrive at the wall off-balance from a steel orb strike, they will be forced to make an immediate crossing attempt at -2.

As indicated, characters that fail in their crossing roll suffer a spear attack, and must try again the next round to surmount the wall.

J) The Arena Grounds, Inner: The inner grounds are bowl shaped, steel plated and extremely smooth. Anyone entering the inner grounds with momentum and without means of restraint will slide uncontrollably towards the pit.

The steel plate is heavily charged. Each complete round in the inner grounds characters must make a DC 7 Fort save or take 1 HP damage as electricity arcs about.

K) The Pit: Once the arena is active, the circular pit is covered by a lightning screen. Anyone who slides down on the screen floats there taking 1 hp damage per round unless they make a DC 14 Fort save. They can step/roll off during their next action.

At the four compass points just outside the pit are small separate plates shaped liked twisted trees. (DC 8 search check to spot). Pressing one of the plates disables the lightning screen for 2 rounds, revealing the black pit below. (Anyone on the screen when it is disabled falls into the pit unless they make a DC 12 Ref save to grab the lip of the pit.)

The pit's depths are cloaked in magical darkness: there is no way to see beyond the black barrier. Players must make a leap of faith into the dark to escape the deadly arena!

Spicing things up: A group of less savage Opossumen could be hiding behind Madazkan's Pavilion, forced into the arena by angry ghosts. Will they fight or assist? Perhaps 1 or 2 could provide replacement characters for particularly unlucky players!



The legendary "Opossumen Character Sheet" awaits you at puplesorcerer.com. Download it and other free materials to enhance the fun!



Madazkan's Court: Dungeon

Encounter Table

Area	Type	Encounter
D-1	C	Chain Skeletons
D-2	C	Giant Catfish
D-4	T/C	Purple Slime Monsters
D-5	T	Luck Shrine
D-7	T	Cave In
D-8	T/C	Malloc's Temple Servants

Player Introduction

You fall into darkness. For a gut-churning moment, it seems the dark will never cease, but you suddenly emerge into dim light before slamming into an icy pool of deep clear water. Clawing your way back to the surface, you find yourself in a stone lined pool in a small circular room. A dim light seems to seep from the walls themselves. Apparently there is a dungeon below the arena.

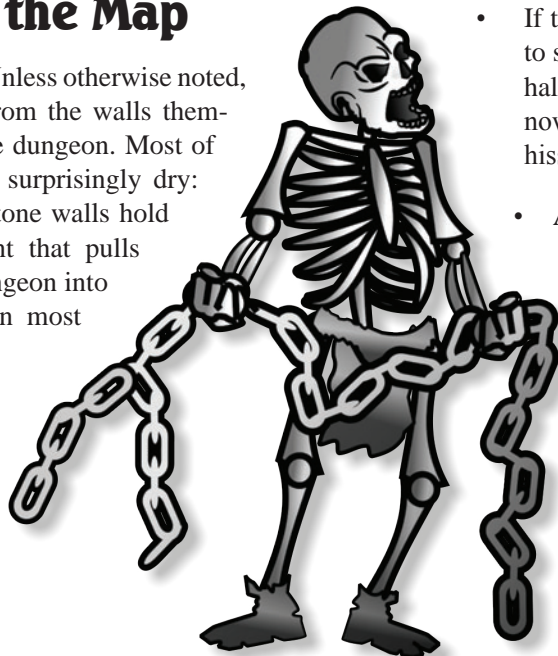
Sputtering, you pull yourself from the pool. As you shake yourself dry, you're astounded to discover that the fall into the pool, rather than causing harm, seems to have healed you in some way. All your pains have vanished; though you feel a strange emptiness somewhere deep down...

Sounds echo ominously in the chamber. Sinking down on a stone bench that circles the room you wait for your companions to make the terrifying plunge, all the while staring at the solitary door before you.

Areas of the Map

General Features: Unless otherwise noted, a dim glow radiates from the walls themselves, illuminating the dungeon. Most of the chambers are also surprisingly dry: the dungeon's rough stone walls hold a residual enchantment that pulls moisture out of the dungeon into the surrounding soil in most areas.

Ceilings are 10 feet, save in the temple and the grotto, where they rise to 25 feet. Doors are oak banded in iron, and are unlocked.



Area D-1 – Cells of the Arena Slaves: The pool where the characters arrive is part of a slave complex used by Madazkan to refresh those he forced into battle in the arena. The waters of the pool heal all temporary ills. (Up to once a week.) All adventurers who enter the pool are restored to full hit points. Long term, however, this healing power robs the body of general health to achieve temporary gain: Each successive use after the first causes a permanent loss of one point of stamina.

Hand grips line the walls of the pool, so even characters in heavy armor can find their way to the surface. When the players are finally gathered together, and pass through the unlocked door, read the following:

The door opens to reveal a large room filled with a twisting warren of small open cells. The walls emit a dim glow here just as in the room with the pool. A sudden rush of bone-dry air rushes past you bearing the unmistakable smell of death. The silence is broken by the clacking of bones and the whisper of chains: a skeletal figure emerges from the dark, twirling a barbed chain like a lasso about its bony skull!

Revenge is the only force that motivates the spirits of these dead slaves. They attack immediately.

Chain Skeletons (8): Init +0; Atk chain +0 melee; Dmg 1d3 and bind (victim immobile until DC 8 Reflex or Strength Check); AC 9; HP 3; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

If a character wields **Madazkan's Rod of Chains** from the arena box above, the skeletons react as follows:

- If the rod-bearer communicates in any way that he wishes to set the skeletons free, or desires for them to be at peace, half of the skeletons will whisper a contented "we sleep now" and disintegrate in a shower of dust. The remainder hiss at the weakness of their brothers and fight on!
- Attempts to control the skeletons in any other way by the authority of the rod results in the skeletons going completely berserk. (Damage increased to 1d4 and the skeletons will hound the rod-bearer anywhere in the dungeon. Normally, the skeletons will not leave this room.)

Scattered throughout the chamber are rotting mats, 13 candles, six torches, yards of rusty chain, and a ten-foot pole. The lone room in the cell complex with a door housed the chief slave. His bones are scattered about his room, all showing signs of crushing blows. The secret door in the north wall of the complex can only be opened from the opposite side.

Madazkan's Court Dungeon



Area D-2 – Catfish Grotto: *The wide gallery running south from the skeleton's chamber opens up into a massive natural grotto. A sluggish underground river cuts the cavern in two, flowing from left to right. On the far side of the river the ground rises, but the chamber appears to have collapsed there, leaving only a small strip of ground that thrusts out into the river. A structure of some kind squats on this 'island' - something sparkling from its shore in the dim light.*

The water glitters a dull red, filled with hundreds - thousands! - of glowing scarlet crayfish. As you examine them, a massive shadow swims by in the depths of the river.

This large cave was once completely dry, and continued up to the surface. Favored victorious slaves could enjoy a portion of freedom here, and enterprising folks from the city set up stalls to serve the slave's various needs.

The cave collapsed with the fall of the tower, and eventually the river cut its way through, forming a deep channel. The dark shadow in the depths is a gigantic 20 foot long catfish, grown massive over the years feasting on the mutant crayfish. In spite of the endless food supply, the catfish is desperate for fresh flavors and will attack anything that enters the water.

Whiskers the Catfish: Init +0; Atk bite +4 melee; Dmg 1d8 and swallow on critical; AC 10; HP 26; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N.

Attempts to attack the catfish with ranged weapons cause it to swim into deeper water until someone tries to cross.

Crossing The Water: Those characters who can swim can always attempt to swim across. The catfish can only eat one of them a round. There are other options:

Let's Go Boating: Two eight foot wide bowl-shaped copper braziers located near the passage north could be used as make-shift boats to reach the island. The catfish will attempt to overturn any such rafts. As it strikes the raft, all passengers within must make a DC 10 reflex save or be dumped into the water.

Jungle Adventure: The ceiling of the cavern is 20 to 25 feet up, but covered in stalactites. It's just possible that players could use them in some type of elaborate acrobatic rope swing.

The island: A man was trapped by the catfish on this thin strip of land for 2 years, where he slowly went mad on a diet of mutant crayfish and glowing water. Over time, he dug up a few treasures: scattered about his skeleton are his journal, 65 SP, a crowbar, 6 caltrops, 12 iron spikes, an empty lantern, and a lovely jade necklace in the shape of a panther (200 GP) that would constitute a Grey Prize.

In the journal, the man makes many claims about the catfish: that it's intelligent, enjoys word games and witty conversation, and hates the name 'Whiskers', preferring to be called 'Errol' instead. Whether these are mad ravings or not is up to the judge.

Area D-3 – Shower of Slime: *This room appears to have once been a combination baths/jakes, a low wall separating the toilets from the rest of the room. The walls drip with moisture... and thousands of humming purple slugs!*

The slugs are harmless, but their masters, two hungry purple slimes, are not. They ooze out of separate potty holes and attack as soon as someone enters the room.

Purple Slimes (2) Init last; Atk pod +2 melee; Dmg 1d4; AC 10; HP 12; MV 5'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +5, Ref -5, Will -5; AL N. (Madness Touch on hit: DC 8 Will Save or target breaks down babbling for 1d3 hours)

In a tightly sealed chest in the corner are 6 fluffy towels, embroidered with a tree motif. (5 SP each.) If characters could understand the alignment language of Slimes, Molds, and Edible Tubers, they could discern that the slugs are all singing a hymn of praise to their slimy god.

Area D-4 – Luck Shrine: *A large stone table sits in the center of this chamber, upon which ten sealed 18 inch tall clay vases rest. A circular symbol of hammered brass (presenting both a smiling and frowning face on opposite sides) is attached to its front. Elaborate but enigmatic twisting shapes are carved into the walls of the chamber. A single vase lies shattered on the floor in front of the stone table.*

Madazkan used this room as a twisted 'reward' for successful gladiators. When a vase is opened, roll a d10 + luck mod. On a result of six or greater, the vase contains a single electrum coin encased in wax at the bottom of the vase (that must be pried out). On a result of six or less, the vase releases toxic gas. (DC 12 Fort save or 1d6 DMG for opener, and 1d3 DMG for those nearby who don't immediately flee.) Each vase weighs 10 pounds. It takes 15 minutes for the poison to disperse enough for players to return to the chamber.

Area D-5 – Madazkan's Chamber: *This room must have once been quite a pleasure den. Tapestries depicting unspeakable acts and plush lounges now sag with decay. A tall bookshelf holds a number of moldering tomes. A padded table with shackles hints at darker purposes. Five stout doors exit the room, the eastern door hanging open.*

Madazkan spent a great deal of time in this room, as it gave him easy access to his tower, the arena, his temple to Malloc, and his slaves. Most of the books rotting on the bookshelf are decayed beyond reading, but one red leather bound tome is intact enough to provide a spell of the judge's choosing. The secret door in the south wall looks normal from this side.

One tapestry is weighted at the bottom by a bar cast from silver. Only the ends protrude from its encasing sleeve, so it might be difficult to spot (DC 7), but is worth 15 gold pieces if recovered.

Area D-6 – Collapsed Tunnel: *This dark tunnel ends in a heap of broken stone. A pair of rotting boots peek out from the rubble.*

The skeletal remains are those of Jaffa, one of Madazkan's chief servants. If his skeleton is uncovered, a golden medallion shaped like a tree (45 GP) is revealed. Doing so, however, triggers a collapse in the last 10 feet of the tunnel. Anyone caught in the fall must make a DC 12 Reflex save or take 1d4 damage.

Area D-7 – Escape Passageway: *The tunnel climbs steeply as you move north. Eventually, you arrive at a trap door, moss dangling at the edges.*

The trapdoor requires quite a bit of muscle to open, but eventually it gives way providing access to area A-4.

Area D-8 – Malloc's Temple: *A large circular chamber opens before you. The cream-colored marble floor is embedded with a pattern mimicking black spreading roots. Alcoves ring the chamber around its entire circumference. 8 gigantic oil lamps hang suspended over 8 black holes in the floor.*

In the very center of the room rests an exquisite stone carving of a tree, its roots spreading down over its base to run along the floor as if a living thing. Hollowed out of the heart of the tree is a gaping maw filled with hundreds of writhing tendrils... tendrils that seem very much alive! As you stare transfixed at the writhing shapes, an oily whisper echoes about the hall: "Blood... always blood."

A skeleton wrapped in fine robes hangs half in, half out of the maw. A beautiful chalice of gold, rimmed with gems, (600 GP) lies on the lip of the maw. The body was that of Rakka, another of Madazkan's servants, who in desperation attempted to appease the idol with treasure, rather than the blood it preferred. Malloc got its blood in the end.

Alcoves: Each of the alcoves hosts a mini-shrine dedicated to one of mankind's secret weaknesses, such as greed, jealousy, and betrayal. (Malloc's roots spread everywhere, and uncover all the dark ways of men.) Each weakness is depicted by a fine oil painting. Removing a painting would likely earn Malloc's ire. Make this clear to players. (Sound of cracking stone, distant massive thuds, etc)

The Cup: The cup, however, is not sacred to Malloc, and players can safely abscond with it. (If they can get to it safely...) The cup constitutes a Bright Prize.

The Tree: The maw wants blood. Fresh blood. If something live is placed in the maw, the tendrils begin wrapping about the sacrifice to extract its blood. In the first round, an escape is possible with a DC 12 Strength check. This rises to a DC 16 on the 2nd round. After two rounds, escape is impossible. The tendrils will try to grab anyone attempting to grasp the chalice. (+2 group attack to attach)

The Black Holes: Unless mystical phrases (now lost to time) are uttered beforehand, once characters cross the circular line formed by the black holes, eight root like tentacles begin shooting out from the holes to encourage sacrifices to make the journey to the maw. The roots attack at +3; on a hit they grab their foe. One of three things can happen when grabbed:

1. **Shun the unbeliever!** The root tosses its victim across the room. (1d4 damage, DC 12 reflex save to reduce damage to 1 point.)
2. **Time for milking!** Squeezes its victim. (1d4 damage, DC 10 strength check to reduce damage to 1 point. Foe is still grasped.)
3. **Feeding Time!** After two rounds of transport, the victim will be deposited in the maw.

Players can attempt to escape the root's grasp with a DC 10 strength or reflex check on their turns. Alternately, if they deliver more than 4 points of damage to a root (AC 8), the root drops whatever it is holding.

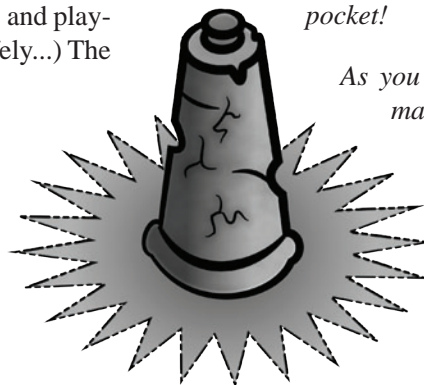
Once live blood is flowing in the maw, 2 rounds later the roots will withdraw down their holes.

When the roots withdraw, all in the chamber who do not have Malloc as a patron will immediately come to its attention. In its own way, Malloc has a soft spot for the wastrels of the earth, and an oily voice will echo in each mind - *Do you seek the blessing of Malloc?*

Those who refuse will fall to the ground, stunned for five minutes. Those who agree will receive +1 to their lowest stat permanently. (They will also receive one of Malloc's 'gifts': a sixth withered toe, a strange tree shaped mark on their back, an overwhelming compulsion to avoid harming trees, etc. Be creative.)

Wrapping Up

As you struggle through the trapdoor to the surface, the misty sky, which had once seemed so dismal, nearly overpowers you with its brightness. In the distance the great sending stone and the safety of Mustertown await. Many who arrived with you will never again suffer the watery beer of the Soiled Dove... but you have survived, and will soon have coin in your pocket!



As you climb over the crumbling wall, and make your way through the tall grass, you imagine even greater treasures to come. But in the back of your mind, you can't help but reflect that a power - one you'd sooner forget - is now aware of you... personally.



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