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THE TOWERS OF DR. XILL

A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE

BY C. AARON KREADER

FOR MCC OR DCC

COMPATIBLE WITH
**MCC
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THE TOWERS OF DR. XILL

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED
BY C. AARON KREADER

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Background

Xillgasor Xillgracone (aka Dr. Xill) had a mind so keen he crafted life with the elements as others might have played with a child's building blocks. His laboratory was a trio of interconnected towers: one in this realm, another in the plane of ice, and a third in the plane of fire. Within, he focused opposing elements to spawn a unique menagerie.

Dr. Xill experimented with the natural order of life on himself and others. Using super-science devices infused with the arcane power of fire and ice, he summoned, enslaved, and then fused elemental entities to his human subjects.

However, the balance of thermal and polar elementals used to control his labs tilted toward the polar side and slowly his menagerie was encased in ice. Dr. Xill's operations lay frozen for millennia. Some rumors hold he miscalculated, others imply his mind cracked and he took his own life, while the shrewd-minded insist his final act was precise and calculated—his plan yet to take effect.

In truth, Dr. Xill was close to death. He halted his work and slowed his body in a frozen lair to await the arrival of an heir. He is fully conscious, watching from deep within his lab, seeking a mind worthy to contain his vast stores of knowledge and continue his legacy.

To this end, Dr. Xill sends agents to lure brave souls and sharp minds into his lair, where a series of deadly tests await. His purpose: find more agents, and perhaps a protégé. Dr. Xill's agents will never reveal these goals. They will construct a story to lure PCs. The Judge can invent a story the agent will employ or use all or part of the following to ensnare the unwitting PCs:

Saviors: *This tyrant entrapped my beloved for his foul experiments. I feel in my heart my adored one lives still. I know where this foul gaol is and I beg your aid.*

Greed: *I found a hidden map in the forgotten chambers below the librus grandal. I cannot make the journey; however, if you allow me to fund the expedition and provide the map, I ask for only 10% of the loot.*

Mystic Knowledge: *Dr. Xill was a true genius and his book of unique spells is a treasure which is beyond value. I can provide you with everything you need to access his tower. Keep what you find; leave me only his book of arcane secrets.*

Divine Balance: *The unholy work of Dr. Xill persists. The balance of our world has been upset. Please purge this foul aberration from our realm lest we fall into the forces of unlife. Destroy his tablets of vile knowledge.*

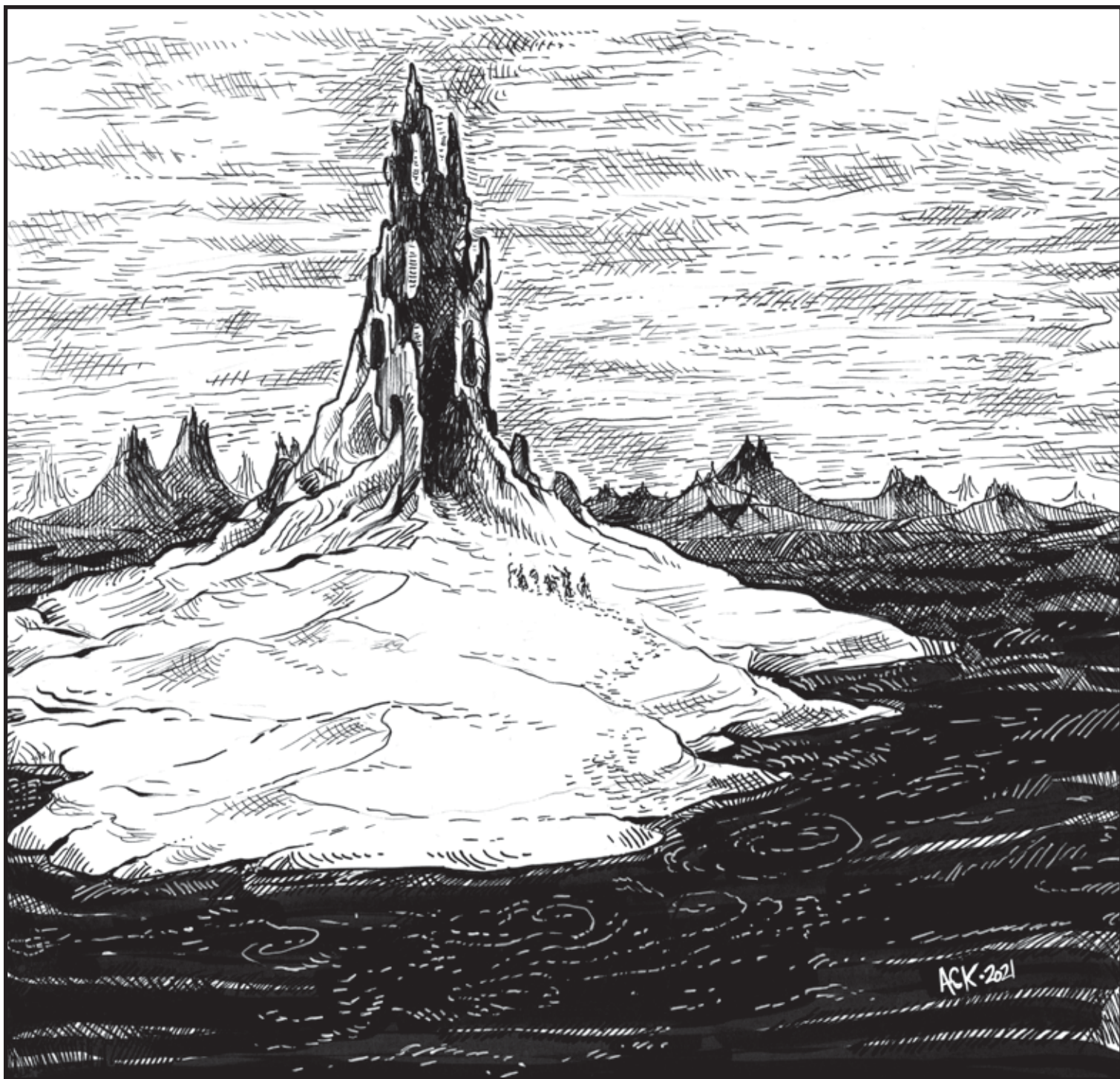
Hired Hands: *Rumors have it that Dr. Xill is long dead. But I have indications some remnant of him survives. I shall pay you a great sum to travel to the tower of Dr. Xill and make sure he is dead. Bring me proof and his treasures are yours.*

Whatever the story, agents provide those lured with the location of the tower within a volcanic wasteland. It is too hot to tread without protection, so in addition, the agent offers each PC a small blue vial attached to a thong and notifies them that they will not reach Dr. Xill's tower without these charms. **The charm:** holds elemental ice, is cold to the touch, and issues a cooling sensation when worn. The wearer reduces 1hp of fire damage per round. It can be uncorked and used once to put out any normal fire instantly or inflict 2d7 damage to a fire-based creature. It then dissipates and can no longer protect the bearer. If worn in cold environments, the user suffers -1D on all rolls, constantly shivers, and has a distracting sensation of being frozen alive until the icy charm is taken off and stashed.

Any other promised rewards are pure fabrication. After the quest, locating agents will prove difficult. But if an agent is found and pressured, she will reveal her affiliation to her beloved patron: Dr. Xillgasor Xillgracone! She'll also disclose her purpose: to test the worth of potential assistants, agents and servants.

The Journey Begins

Any number of encounters could be added to create a sense of adventure to the ashen wastelands. However, once PCs reach these scorched fields, the journey to Dr. Xill's tower is devoid of life. The only encounter is the relentless volcanic ash and lava rocks, which are hot enough to burn travelers. For each hour of travel, PCs must roll a DC 15 Fort save or take 1hp of fire damage. The 12-hour journey through the wastelands is slow and treacherous. Moving without caution increases the DC to 25 but cuts the travel time to 6 hours. Wearing the vials of elemental ice will protect a PC (and mount). **Note:** PCs should detail what items are stored on a mount.



You struggle across leagues of volcanic rock, lava flow, and smoke reeking of sulfur and ash. On the horizon, a patch of gleaming white shines in a distant valley like a jewel. This must be the landmark from your map marked as “Dr. Xill’s tower” with hastily scribbled instructions: “approach the pale white spot.”

Finally, the patch of what appears to be pearlescent sand draws closer. Stepping close to it, you are shocked to discover an impossible island of dense snow. A chill runs up your body as your protective necklace now adds an aura of frost to your breath, locking your joints and

setting your teeth to chatter. In the middle of this frigid field stands a burnt, blackened tower covered in ice.

Area A—Xill’s Tower: The island of snow and ice is a couple thousand yards wide. The tower rests in the middle. Take note of which PCs remove their protective vials and which ones keep them on as they cross the tundra.

Once the PCs get closer to the tower read or paraphrase:

The tower is a gutted, sagging lump of fused, burnt stone.



If a dwarf or a PC with the blacksmith/construction occupation is in the group of PCs, add: *You realize no normal conflagration could have caused the melting of this particular type of stone.*

Otherwise, continue:

The top and one side have sagged and melted inward, opening the structure to the elements. Snow, blown in by thermal winds, decorates the floor and the interior walls to highlight runic engravings. Before you get a closer look, a blurred mass of snow and feather falls on you from above.

A giant ghost vulture has taken nest in the tower above. This massive snow-white raptor has survived on a meager diet of humanoids (and their mounts) lured to the

tower. It has not eaten in days and is eager to feast. It attempts to kill one PC, then carry its quarry up to a high perch to eat in peace. However, if the PCs have mules or horses, it will patiently remain hidden until the animals are left alone, then pounce on the easy target. In this case, what falls from above is nothing but clods of snow, intimating an unseen host (+10 hide check).

Giant Ghost Vulture: Init +3; Atk bite +6 melee (1d10) or claw +5 melee (1d8); AC 14; HD 6d8; hp 30; MV 20' or fly 50'; Act 1d24; SP +10 hide in snow; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; AL N.

Those able to scale the 80' ice-covered tower (a DC 15 climb check) discover a large nesting area where an assortment of bones and rusty gear can be found. In addition, a buckskin coin purse with 22 gp and 43 sp lies near a gnawed and chipped hip bone.

The runic markings are translated as "fire" in every conceivable written language known to the PCs, as well as many unknown. Upon closer examination, the markings repeat over and over to cover every inch of the interior. Any PC touching a rune or speaking "fire" will activate their purpose. This exposes the totality of their extent as each and every one glows orange. A rumbling is then heard deep in the ground. In 1d4 rounds **Event B** occurs.

Event B—The Children Awake: *Steam blasts out from the ground a few hundred feet from the tower. As the vapor clears, a gaping hole remains. Moments later, blackened forms stumble out and collapse in the snow. A few spirals of vapor rising up to meet the sky are the only signs of movement. The forms appear dead.*

Up close, the four figures appear as statues of oversized babies made of rock bearing faint, glowing veins of lava. These Lava Children are one of Dr. Xill's unique human-elemental hybrid creations. Once activated, their life span is relatively short. Their internal lava triggers human instincts to regurgitate until purged. Ironically, the magma is maintaining their form. Once it has been completely vomited, they collapse as a lifeless chunk of stone.

These four Lava Children came to life and expended their magma to reach the surface. They are controlled by the will of Dr. Xill, who directed them to create a passage down into his lab. They fashioned the tunnel on the map from **Area I** to **Area C** and on towards **Area B**.

Three of the Lava Children have expired, but as the PCs approach, one stirs and regurgitates its final bits of lava.

All PCs within 15' must roll a DC 10 Ref save or suffer 1d7 fire damage. This reduces the Lava Child to 4hp (see below). Unless damaged, it will have 2 more purges of lava before it also expires into a heap of solid stone.

Lava Children: Init -2; Atk lava-gurge +0 ranged (see below 15'); AC 16; HD 4d8; hp 16 (6 remaining); MV 30' or tunnel stone 60'; Act 1d20; SP in dormant state cannot be harmed, lava-gurge (DC 10 Ref save or 1d7 fire, reduce lava child hp by 2); SV Fort +3, Ref -3, Will +1; AL N.

PCs approaching the precarious ledge around the hole must roll a DC 17 Ref save or slip down towards **Area D**. In addition, slipping down collapses the ledges, widening the hole from 10' to 20'. The tunnel below is slick with thick ice. Without added precautions, moving into the hole without slipping and sliding to the bottom requires a DC 17 Agi check (dwarves roll at +1D). PCs sliding in might spot **Area C** on the way to **Area D**.

Underground Features

On Ice: Unless defined otherwise, halls and rooms in Dr. Xill's lab are covered in thick, smooth ice—making all movement fairly treacherous. When PCs move more than half their movement rate or take an attack action, a successful DC 5 Ref save must be made to avoid falling prone. In addition, a natural 1, 2, or 3 on active skill checks or attacks automatically causes the PC to fall prone. Creatures encountered here have adapted to the ice and suffer none of these restrictions. PCs can avoid “on ice” penalties with clever methods to gain traction or by finding a pair of **Boot Strapped Spikes**.

Random Encounters: Loud noises will echo throughout the crystallized corridors. Whenever PCs make excessive noise, enter a new area, or spend too much time in one place, there is a 1 in 6 chance of a wandering creation of Xill pursuing the PCs.

1: (1d4) Infants of Xill: These platter-sized, white spiders bear the face of an ugly human baby and have tiny hands at the end of each of their eight hairy spiderling limbs. These hybrid creations of Dr. Xill are formed from elemental frost spiders crossed with human DNA. At their current stage, they are not very obedient to Xill; however, they are left free to mature in his lair because they are relatively harmless when young. After a few dozen years, those that survive evolve into **Children of Xill**. **Infants of Xill** crave

attention and are curiously attracted by the warmth of PCs, whom they wish to “cuddle.” This icy touch causes 1 point of cold damage per round of contact. They are significantly less interested in approaching a PC wearing a vial of elemental ice.

Infant of Xill (hybrid elemental): Init +3; Atk cold cuddle +2 melee (1 dam); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

2: (1d3) Children of Xill: These dog-sized, dirty-white spiders bear the face of a deformed child. They serve as labor for Dr. Xill, whom they are eager to please. However, due to infrequent employment they have become primarily pesky hooligans. After about a century, those that show promise are allowed to survive and evolve into **Elders of Xill**—directly assisting Dr. Xill in his labs. **Children of Xill** are attracted to the PC with the highest Personality, whom they approach, tilt their heads, and eerily ask, “Father?” Unless treated with care, they become annoyed, shed tears of ice, and bite the object of their scorn. They initially seek to please, but their chaotic babbling and questions quickly give way to frustration and violence.

Children of Xill (hybrid elemental): Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d3); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.

3: (1) Elder of Xill: This elephant-sized grey spider bears the head, limbs, and torso of an elderly human. The years are not kind to the sanity of these executive servants of Dr. Xill. They are entirely severed from emotions, yet highly intelligent and inquisitive. They are trained to serve as living calculators who process, annotate, and narrate aloud in scientific terms everything that is occurring around them. Incessantly babbling their morbid curiosities, an Elder of Xill might mutter in combat, “Interesting entity, let's explore the internal workings of this being to see how it is composed,” while carefully trying to dissect a PC. Or, while twitching in death from a PC's blade, it may say, “The blackened void is surrounding my earthly senses which are immersed in a sea of pain . . . a light is visible . . . I am passing beyond the veil . . .”

Elder of Xill (hybrid elemental): Init +0; Atk stomp +3 melee (1d6) or dissect +4 melee (1d4) or icy web +3 range (1d4 and see below); AC 9; HD 4d8; hp 17; MV 35'; Act 2d20; SP icy web (20' range, single target rolls DC 15 Ref to avoid restrain, DC 17 Str to escape or 1chr from Rod of Flame); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3; AL N.

4: (1) Failed Experiment: This muddy grey glob is constantly shifting its composition between ooze and man. It is a semi-coherent result of a botched fusion between human, fire, and ice. These angry aberrations lash out at anything nearby and seek only to grow by absorbing organic matter. They will focus on fallen PCs with their **acidic absorption** ability. Because they clean the halls by consuming the weak and dead, Dr. Xill only has them eradicated when they grow too large.

Failed Experiment (hybrid elemental): Init +1; Atk acid touch +2 melee (1d10); AC 10; HD 2d6; hp 6; MV 25' or climb walls ceilings 20'; Act 1d20; SP physical damage reduced by half, immune to cold/fire, water vulnerability (stuns for 1 round, no save), acidic absorption of deceased or unconscious bodies (1 round to use, adds 1HD); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

Area C—Side Passage: This narrow passage was created by Lava Children activated in **Area I**. It is visible to any PC with a light source who is climbing down the tunnel. PCs sliding down the main passage must roll a DC 17 Luck check to spot it as they zoom past.

Area D—Ice Slide: *You race down the smooth icy tunnel at a frantic pace. Reaching out to slow your descent only reveals more slick ice. You stop picking up speed, descending deeper as the passage angle levels out.*

If the PC has visibility, read: *You pass a few side passages completely blocked by thick walls of ice.*

Then continue: *Suddenly, you tumble into daggers of jagged icicles!*

PCs who are able to climb down the tunnel can avoid the sharp ice. PCs sliding with visibility must roll a DC 10 Ref save or take 1d4 damage. PCs sliding without visibility must roll a DC 13 Luck check or take 1d4 damage. Using a dagger or other tactics to slow the sliding descent gives a PC between +1 and +1D to their rolls, depending on the Judge's assessment of the plan.

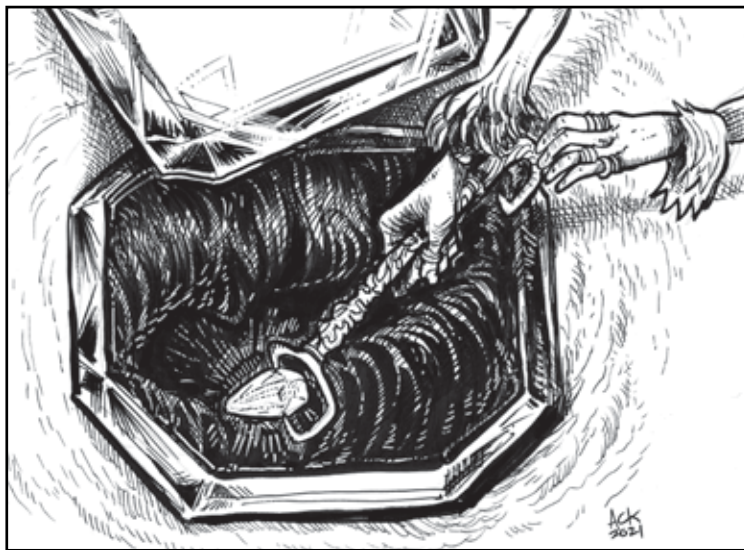
Area E—Preservation Chamber: *A chill here numbs your extremities. All around you the walls and floor of this massive hall are choked with ice, reducing this once-majestic chamber to a small circular cave. Ice-coated bodies in poses of horror and dismay further crowd the space. Across the room, a sparkling cloud of vapor whirls about—inching towards you with willful*

purpose. You cannot tell whether your motion, the cold, or some unseen force has stirred it to life.

The cloud is a cluster of polar nanites made to funnel energy from the elemental plane of ice using the gateway in this chamber—a portal hopelessly frozen shut. Dr. Xill fashioned them by magically fusing techno-nanites with tiny ice elementals. Their main purpose was to freeze organ tissue and bodies for his experiments, but their perception has been distorted. They now respond to any warm-blooded entity entering the room by attempting to place them in deep freeze. **Note:** PCs wearing a vial of elemental ice will be ignored by the polar nanites.

Polar Nanite Elemental Cloud: Init +0; Atk special; AC 10; HD 2d6; hp 7; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP freezing force (DC 13 Fort or 1d6 cold dam to all within 10'x10' space), vulnerable to fire (double damage), cloud defense (physical attacks reduced to 1 damage); SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L.

A search of the room reveals a warm, red, crystalline box half buried in ice. Liberating the box requires a DC 12 Str check. It houses a fully charged **Rod of Flames (Thermal Torch)**, used in the lab to quickly defrost bodies and carve through ice. PCs who roll a DC 5 Spell Check (or DC 10 Artifact Check) comprehend how to activate it. Fire runes similar to those on the tower above are located on the sides of the rod. Speaking “fire” while holding the rod sends a burst of flame out from the large red gem at its tip. At point-blank range, this will inflict 3d6 fire damage. This expends 1 of its 20 charges. Each round of use burns away solid ice at the cost of 1 charge (chr). Various areas on the map show places where ice seals off a passage. The number of charges (chr) required from the **Thermal Torch** to burn through these blockades is indicated by a number within a circle.



The gateway in this chamber is so coated in layers of thick ice that passing through it seems impossible. However, the Judge may wish to create an extra-planar adventure into the elemental plane of ice. PCs who roll a DC 18 Spell Check (or DC 22 Artifact Check) can activate it. The portal opens up into Dr. Xill's Frost Tower lab, where he merged various ice elementals with machines and creatures alike.

The **Rod of Flames** can be used to free bodies in this chamber with 1 charge (Chr) in 1 round. Using a torch or other flame source for this task will slowly uncover bodies after 1 turn. Chipping away at the ice with weapons or tools will destroy anything within. Role 1d7 to see what is recovered from a body:

- 1: A random basic weapon or armor.
- 2: **Boot Strapped Spikes:** The user can ignore all "on ice" effects (see p7) while the spikes are worn. If employed on normal stone floors, all "on ice" effects return to the user until the spikes are removed.
- 3: **Bone Bracelets with Runic Markings:** Spell scroll of Fire Resistance, which is crafted so anyone can cast it with a spell check of 22.
- 4: **Barcula Fur:** This mink-like fur is fashioned from the rare and ferocious barcula beast. A barcula fur cloak provides 1hp of protection from cold damage each round and a +5 to Fort saves versus cold.
- 5: **Infants of Xill:** 1d4 Infants of Xill (see p7) are either released from the ice or skitter into the room while PCs are busy. Unless someone is on guard, they gain surprise and "cuddle" attack.
- 6: **Failed Experiment of Xill:** A Failed Experiment of Xill (see p7) pours forth from the cracked ice and attacks the group.
- 7: **Firesteel Blade:** This short sword is made from a steel alloy found only on the elemental plane of fire. The metal has an orange-red oxidized hue and feels hot to the touch. On this plane, it performs very well in combat, granting +1 to hit. In addition, in warm places (above 100 degrees) the blade ignites, emitting flames, and grants +1d6 fire damage. In this state, the blade is dangerous. On a natural 1, the user must roll a DC 12 Ref save or catch fire and take 1d6 damage each round until the save is made.



Area F—Wall of Ice: Read or paraphrase: *There is a space here vaguely visible beyond a wall of thick ice. It would take a powerful force to breach through to the other side.*

The map shows how many charges (and rounds) the **Rod of Flames** needs to melt a wall of ice. **Every 10 points of artifact or magical fire damage inflicted to the wall reduces the number of charges required by 1.** Non-magical fire (torches, etc) inflicts no damage to the walls due to the extreme cold. Other methods may work with more time and effort. In addition, the noisy echoing of hammering will always bring a random encounter (see p7).

Area G—The Pool Test: *The hall opens up to a large circular space. In the middle, a set of stairs descends into an icy pool of pale green water and rises up on the other end of the pool to a large desk encased in a thin layer of ice. Exits to the left and right are connected by a walkway along the edge of the room. Above you, a low ceiling shimmers and undulates, refracting vibrant blues and greens. There you make out what appear to be various gems under a thin layer of ice. Something about this place makes you feel like you are being watched.*

Show PCs **Handout 1**. Inspecting the pool reveals six tiny crabs. The ceiling is within reach at a mere 7 feet and radiates warmth. The stairs drop down 10 feet before entering the shallow 5-foot pool. Dr. Xill built this room as a test for visitors. The ceiling's thin ice layer holds back a warm pool of liquid that gives the illusion of shimmering jewels. If it is prodded or a torch is placed near it, the ice breaks and warm blue-green liquid pours into the room, down into the pool, and fills the room all the way to the walkway. PCs on the stairs are submerged in an alchemical brew of liquid that burns the eyes and nose. A DC 7 Agi check is required each round to swim out of the pool. On a failure, some of the chemical concoction is ingested and causes 1 point of temporary Stamina damage. In addition, the liquid mixture causes the crabs to rapidly expand in size until they explode.

(6) **Tiny Crab:** Init +4; Atk claw -1 melee (1 dam); AC 12; HD 1d2; hp 1; MV 30'; Act 1d20; +10 swim check; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0; AL N.

Round one: The tiny crabs quickly grow from palm-sized to dog-sized. These larger crabs pinch anyone in the waters. If the PCs are all outside the pool, they use this round to swim toward the PCs. Alter their base stats to the following:

Large Crab: Atk claw +0, AC 14, HD 1d4; hp 2

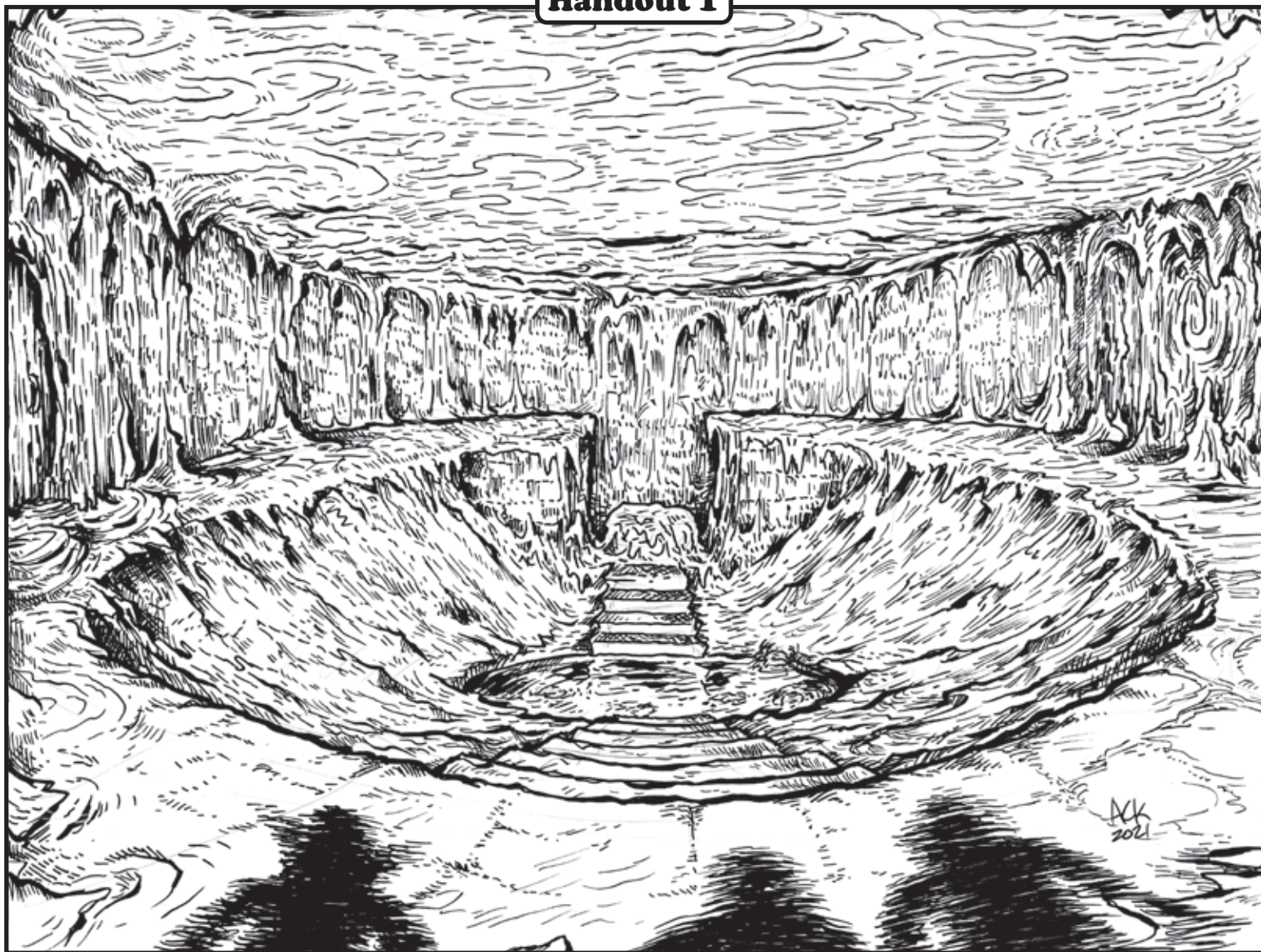
Round two: The crabs double in size. They aggressively claw and pinch the nearest PC. Alter their base stats to the following:

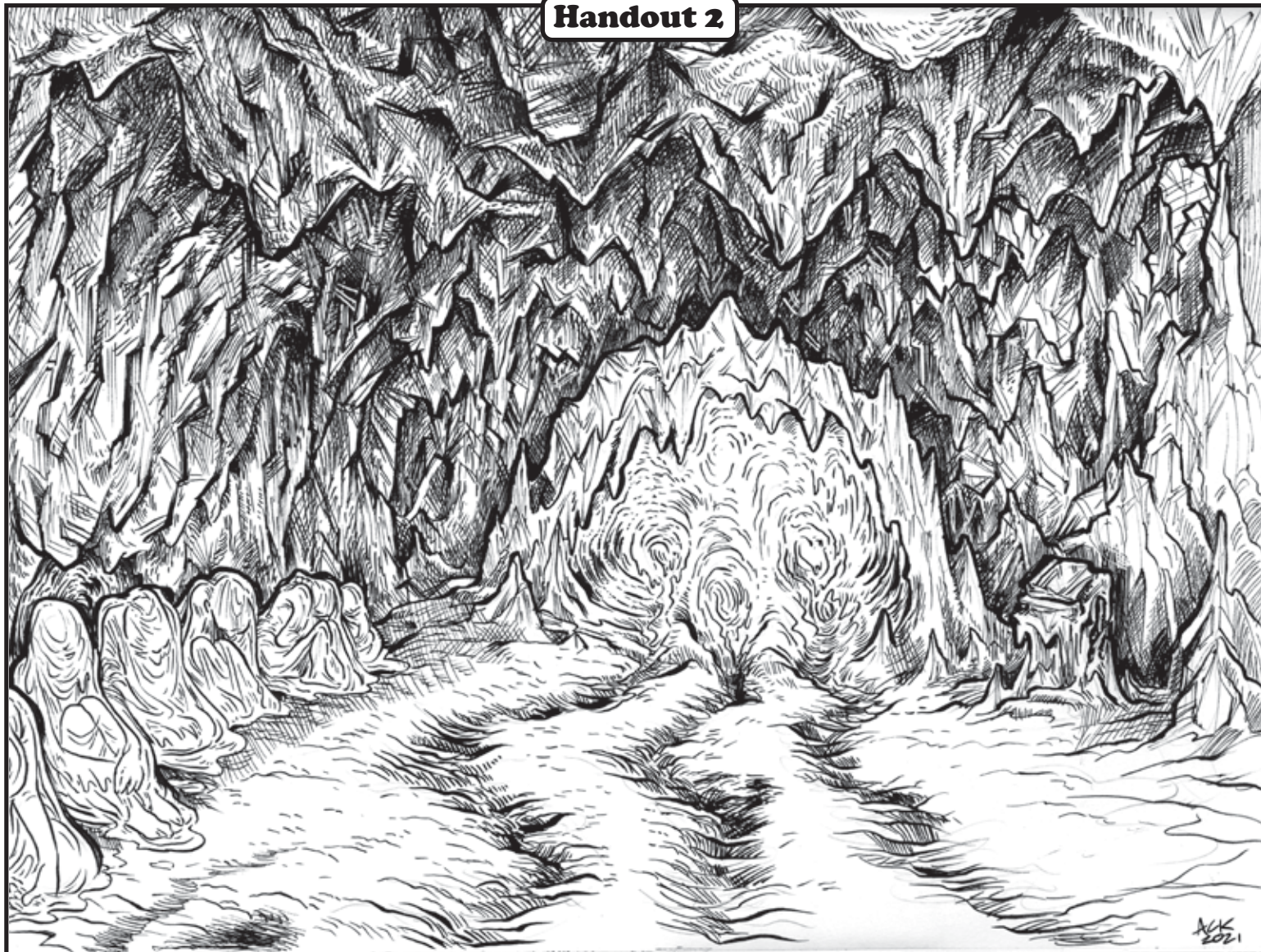
Huge Crab: Atk claw +1 (1d3), AC 14, HD 2d4; hp 5

Round three: The crabs double in size again but begin to hemorrhage and crack. They desperately tear at the PCs with fevered frenzy. Alter their base stats to the following:

Giant Crab: Atk claw +2 (1d6), AC 14, HD 3d6; hp 10

Handout 1





Round four: Their bodies fail to keep up the with the magical expansion. Any living giant crabs burst apart. Each exploding crustacean inflicts 2d3 dam to all PCs within 10' unless a DC 12 Ref save is successfully rolled.

Desk: This metal desk is covered in ice. Removing the ice requires 1 charge from the **Rod of Flames**. If the desk is searched, a DC 10 Int check reveals a concealed drawer. Within is a well-used **Rod of Flames (Thermal Torch)** with 6 charges and an eel skin pouch (worth 30gp) containing a set of **fine tools**. These tools grant a +1 to pick lock, find trap, and remove trap checks.

Pool Test: Dr. Xill is carefully observing a number of rooms to assess the potential of intruders. Secretly make a note that PCs gain 1 point if they avoid spilling the liquid from the ceiling, plus 2 points if they find the **Rod of Flames**.

Area H—Cart Hangar: *Most of this wide hall is filled*

with thick layers of ice. Visible under the ice are two large carts of unusual construction.

The odd carts are half covered. It will require 5 charges from the **Rod of Flames (Thermal Torch)** to release each cart. In addition, a Failed Experiment of Xill is trapped in each cart. Unless precautions are taken, the abomination surprises the PCs.

(2) **Failed Experiment (hybrid elemental):** Init +1; Atk acid touch +2 melee (1d10); AC 10; HD 2d6; hp 6; MV 25' or climb walls ceilings 20'; Act 1d20; SP physical damage reduced by half, immune to cold/fire, water vulnerability (stuns for 1 round, no save), acidic absorption of deceased or unconscious bodies (1 round to use, adds 1HD); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.

These small, fully functional, automated carts (AC 14; hp 20) can carry up to four PCs each. PCs can figure them out with magic or by trial and error (TL: 5 CM: 3). Used in

combat, they add +2 AC for cover and move at 40'. Only one-handed weapons can be used within the cart due to the restriction of motion within the cab. A chest-sized storage space is located under the rear padded seats. They are charged by an elemental battery with a month of energy.

Area I—Portal of Fire Test: Show **Handout 2** and read or paraphrase: *This large, frozen chamber is dominated by a massive gate choked with thick ice. Orange and red lights shimmer within and bathe the room in bloody hues. To the right of the gateway is a frozen lectern with a single crystalline tablet etched with script. To the left is a row of children crouched on the floor. Each is covered in a glistening clear membrane. Three clear membranes lie on the ground between gaps in the otherwise shoulder-to-shoulder row of youth. Three trails of burnt matter lead from the gate to a burnt tunnel exit. You sense you are being watched.*

This is the portal chamber connected to Dr. Xill's tower in the plane of fire. When the PCs approached the tower, Dr. Xill activated this portal and the tablet in this room to execute a ritual of fire. The ritual activated three of the youth who, freed from stasis, entered the gate to fuse with three lava elementals in the sister chamber on the plane of fire. The newly formed Lava Children bored a tunnel up to the surface to "welcome" the guests.

The children are clones and look perfectly identical in every feature save gender. If the membrane is removed, they awake, shivering. A youth can replace a lost PC; otherwise, they quickly die of shock. The membrane itself has curative properties. If placed on a wound within 1 turn of being broken open, it will cure 3 HD of damage. If used on a wound after 1 turn, the membrane causes 1d6 rounds of paralysis to the user unless a DC 13 Fort save is made. If the children are moved, a small, ice-covered passage is visible behind them. If the kids are simply inspected, this discovery is made on a DC 15 Luck check.

The Gate: Although it is covered in ice, the remnants of three recent holes are visible. However, they have completely frozen over. It would take 10 charges from the **Rod of Flames** to clear the thick ice. Should the gate be opened (see **The Lectern** below), have the PC with the lowest score roll a Luck check. If it fails, a fire elemental (DCC-RPG p412) bursts from the gateway and attacks for 1 round before retreating from the unbearably icy chamber. If it succeeds, all PCs within 10' of the portal take 1d3 fire damage as the elemental's heat fills the room, but it does not elect to enter. If the Judge wishes, they can add an adventure to the other side; otherwise, the gate seals up as

quickly as it was opened.

The Lectern: A tablet of crystal perma-ice (like dry ice) rests on the lectern, exuding a heavy, white gas. It requires gloves to handle the tablet; otherwise, the user suffers 1d3 cold damage. Visible on the tablet are notes in a language of moving symbols, which speak to the mind. The viewer must roll a DC 13 Spell Check (non-casters use 1d10, thieves use Cast Spell from Scroll die). On a natural 1, the PC suffers 1 permanent point of Int loss and experiences brain freeze. If successful, the ritual is comprehended as a way to make a living being into a Lava Child. With a 17 or higher, the gate is understood as a portal to the plane of fire and can be opened. On a 20 or more, the ritual can be replicated to fashion a Lava Child under the user's direction. The Lava Child (see p7) survives 10+1d4 rounds before exhausting its lava and dying.

Gate Test: The tablet is the main focus of Dr. Xill's test. A PC gains 1 point if they can successfully read it, another 2 points if they understand the portal, another 2 if the portal is opened, and finally, 3 more points if the ritual is executed.

Area J—Floor Passage: If an elf passes over this area, or any other PC rolls a DC 15 Luck check, read the following:

The floor is covered in thick ice. As you chance to gaze down, you notice a patch of clear ice and a tunnel sloping down beyond it.

It requires 2 charges from the **Rod of Flames** to breach the floor ice and access the passage beyond. This new passage floor slopes gently down. Anyone falling prone on the sloped passage slides 15' before coming to rest. Falling into **Area K** is potentially deadly. Roll for a possible random encounter in this tunnel (see p7).

Area K—Test of Mists: Show **Handout 3** and read or paraphrase: *The air here is invigorating and oxygen-rich. You stand upon a ledge which opens into a cylindrical cavern. The space rises up towards a natural ceiling and down towards shifting fog. The floor is totally obscured by a swirling mist that churns with energy. In the center, rising a few feet above the chilly mist, is a stone platform. Floating upon it is a red, glowing gemstone. You have an uncanny feeling of being watched.*

The mist is a mindless elemental frost entity. It is held in place on the floor by a field of magical heat. This same field holds the gemstone in place. The mist will never approach a source of heat, including a person holding as much as a torch. The actual floor is 30' below the mist. Entering or touching the mist inflicts 1d6 cold damage as it draws out

body heat and flash-freezes moisture. PCs killed by this chill are preserved in a hibernated state and any roll the body checks are made using a d14.

A clean jump to the platform requires a DC 15 Agi or Str check. Results of 10-14 indicate the PC has made the jump to the platform, but some part of their body dipped into the mist, inflicting 1d6 damage. Rolls below 10 result in falling 30' into the mist, inflicting 3d6 falling damage, then 1d6 cold damage each round. Those standing on the platform feel a comfortable warmth.

Once the gemstone on the platform is moved, touched, or grasped, the magical heat field is dispelled. The mist immediately becomes more active and the stone falls (if not secured). The mist moves 10'/round. PCs have 1 round to act before it covers the platform. Afterwards, it rises up to fill the chamber within the next 2 rounds. PCs may notice the stone is identical to the gem in the **Rod of**

Flame. The gem is a focal source of energy for the **Rod of Flame**. PCs can replace the current stone to add 20 charges to the device.

Gem Test: Grants 1 point to the PC who collects the gem, and 2 points to each PC if no one dies.

Area L—The Nursery: Ice-covered stairs lead down to this chamber. To descend safely, PCs must roll a DC 10 Agi check. On a failed check the PC slips, takes 1d2 damage, and slides down into the middle of the room.

You find yourself in a large cavern covered with thick layers of ice. Dozens of small tunnels pepper the walls. Faint giggling and scratching echoes around you. In the center of the room, a woman lies on the floor.

The body is frozen solid. She was killed accidentally by the curious **Infants of Xill** who reside here. Her only

Handout 3





valuable is a pair of **iron-clawed bootstraps**. PCs using the bootstraps can ignore all “on ice” effects. If worn on normal stone floors, all “on ice” effects return to the user until the spikes are removed.

After a few rounds, 12 **Infants of Xill** begin to emerge from their dens. They circle the PCs, smiling, skittering across the floor, walls, and ceiling, then dropping down looking for warmth (see p7). Initially 1 arrives, the next round another 1d4 join, and finally the rest of them.

(12) **Infant of Xill (hybrid elemental)**: Init +3; Atk cold cuddle +2 melee (1 dam); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Area M—Assistant's Lair: There are two entrances to this room. Unless extreme caution is used by the PCs, 2 Elders of Xill wait in ambush at **hall M1** (see map), which is concealed by illusionary walls of ice on either end. After the PCs enter this room, the Elders move around behind the PCs, seal the entrance to this room with frost webbing, and trap the PCs. They will be heard approaching if the PC in the rear rolls a DC 15 Int check. If the check succeeds, that PC can roll initiative before being trapped inside.

You enter a small room littered with bones. Most of the bones have been sharpened into spear-like weapons. The ice flowing down the walls is covered in carved pictographs, writings, arcane formulas, notes and strange verse. You are considering whether this is the work of pure madness or genius when the sound of cracking ice echoes behind you. You turn in time to see your exit sealed in ice!

A pair of **Elders of Xill** lurk behind the ice wall. After trapping the PCs with ice webbing, they move back to **M1** (see map) and ambush the trapped PCs from behind. PCs may find the secret passage if the walls are checked by an elf, or if a DC 15 Will save is made to dispel the illusion with touch. The ice wall trapping PCs can be burnt away with the **Rod of Flame** (4 chr), which takes 4 rounds.

These gibbering aides wait here for Dr. Xill's orders. They are anxious to learn what is inside these PCs. They have a total disassociation from empathy and a lack of respect for life, even within themselves.

More details about the Elders of Xill are on p7.

(2) **Elder of Xill (hybrid elemental)**: Init +0; Atk stomp +3 melee (1d6) or dissect +4 melee (1d4) or icy web +3 range (1d4 and see below); AC 9; HD 4d8; hp 17; MV

35'; Act 2d20; SP icy web (20' range, single target rolls DC 15 Ref to avoid restraint, DC 17 Str to escape or 1 chr from Rod of Flame); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3; AL N.

Area O—The Hatchery: *This small, sweet-smelling chamber is crammed with icy globes. Shards of broken globes litter the floor. Another passage exits the room.*

Three **Infants of Xill** drop down from their hidden niche in the ceiling to greet the visitors. These particularly young Infants have recently hatched and are easily influenced. PCs making strides to care for and communicate with the infants may gain their trust and may even control them by making a DC 14 Pers check. Each day, as their chaotic nature emerges, another DC 10 Personality check must be made to maintain control. Otherwise, they become dangerously “affectionate.”

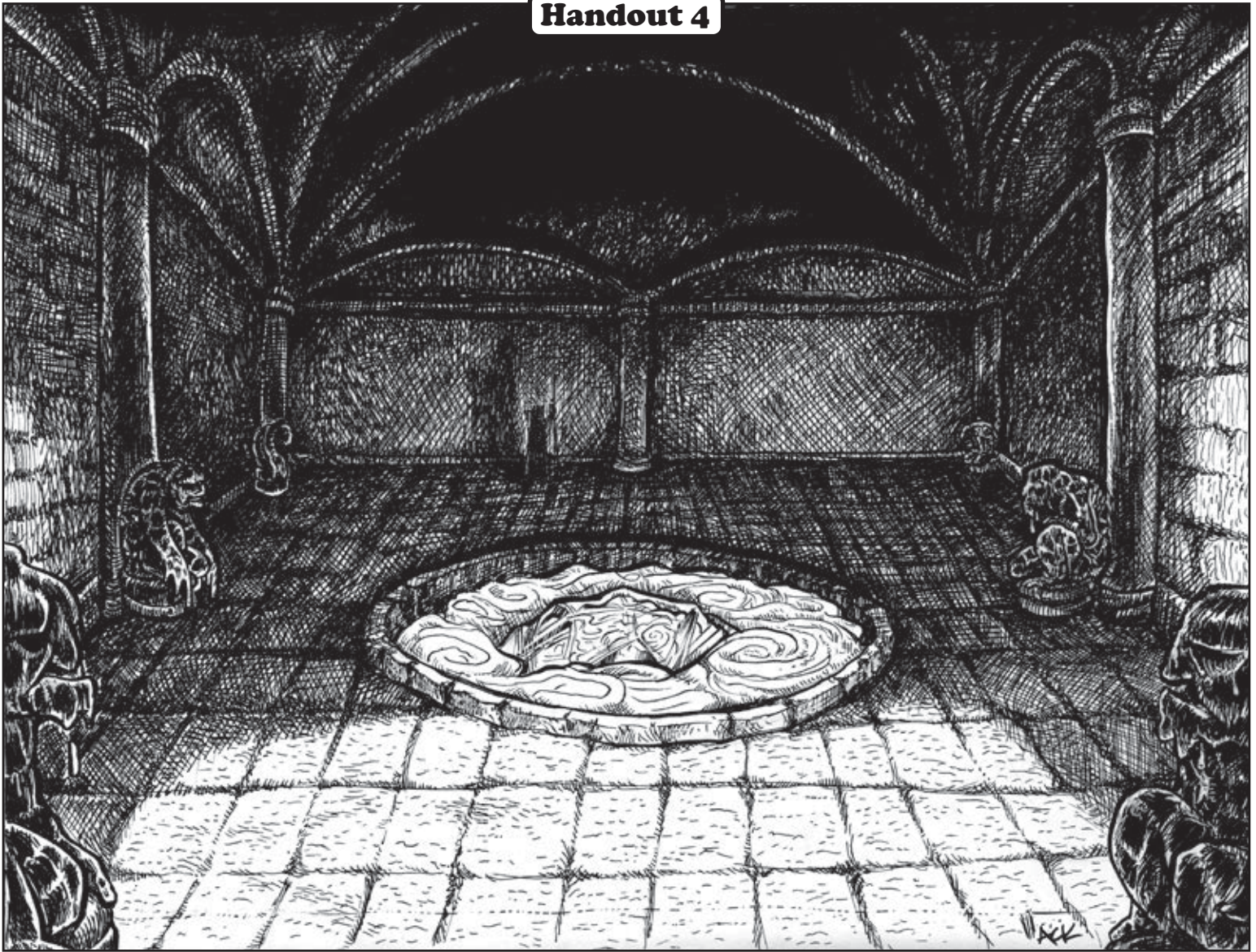
(3) **Infants of Xill (hybrid elemental)**: Init +3; Atk cuddle +2 melee cold (1 dam); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

The hundreds of globes on the floor are eggs incubating in the ice. None are ready to hatch, but 3 eggs are recognized as recently opened. Each of them contains gelatinous goo. This goo is warm to the touch despite the surroundings. If the goo is applied to exposed skin it provides a day's worth of cold protection—reducing cold damage by 1d3/round. There are 3 total applications available.

Area P—Mother: *An unfamiliar warm draft flows out of this small cavern. Low, rhythmic pulses vibrate like the heart of a great entity. Extending out of a wall is an elephantine, fleshy proboscis hovering over a few translucent eggs bobbing in a gelatinous pool. Blue crystal rods rest on the far end of the chamber.*

The great tube pulsates with life but is simply the organic gestation host for birthing Dr. Xill's children. It is not nearly as dangerous as the gelatinous pool. This semi-intelligent ooze seeks to hold organic matter in a chilly, acidic brine before moving a matured egg to the hatchery (see **Area O**). Anyone entering will be mistaken for organic matter in need of chilling. Icy pseudo-pods from the ooze extend out at PCs who approach the blue crystal rods or the pool.

(1) **Frost Ooze**: Init +2; Atk cold pseudopod +1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 5d8; hp 20; MV 20'; Act 1d20/entity; SP half damage from weapons, slashing attacks split the ooze into two entities (divide hps evenly), vulnerable to electricity (double damage); SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +1; AL L.



The four rods on the far end of the room have a radiant glow and a mild electrical charge. Dr. Xill's assistants use the blue crystal rods to stun the ooze while accessing the room. If a rod is thrown into the ooze pool, the ooze goes into a very slow, almost dormant state. It takes 10 rounds for the ooze to slowly move a rod out of the pool, gain its bearings, and return to its normal state.

Area N—The Lair of Dr. Xill (Xill's Final Test): The double doors leading into this chamber are not covered by the usual buildup of ice. In addition, the floor and walls have no ice, so "on ice" rolls are not required. Any PC entering with spiked boots is effectively considered "on ice" while moving on this room's smooth stone floor.

Show **Handout 4** and read or paraphrase:

Warm air issues from the double doors opening into a grand hall. Inside, six stone statues of black rock babies rest upon short pedestals along the walls. Red lava flows

slowly in veins under their cracked skin. They make no move toward you, but it is clear from their warmth that they heat the room.

The central feature of the room is a large blue-green dome of ice with a marbled pink interior. Cool air and frosty mist rolls around it, concealing how deep into the floor it is set.

You feel the presence of some powerful life force, but your eyes fail to find it until a tall, lean figure lights a torch on the far end of the grand hall. Suddenly the statues jerk to life, lurch toward you, and retch lava between violent spasms.

The figure is an image of Dr. Xill as he appeared in the prime of his mortal life. It is also a powerful techno-magic illusionary hard-light hologram. It has all the properties of a real man and is as effective as an illusion created with a spell check of 30.

A 10' wide circular moat of freezing mist surrounds the central dome. Jumping onto the slippery mound requires a DC 18 Str or Agi check. Falling into the mist inflicts 1d6 cold damage per round of exposure. In addition, the mist extends down 10' into a portal leading directly to Dr. Xill's tower in the plane of ice. The central dome is, in fact, the massive housed consciousness of Dr. Xill. It is his true life force and the only way to actually destroy him. Dr. Xill can communicate directly from this central dome, but prefers to relate through his holograph in order to keep his true identity concealed.

(1) **Dr. Xill Holographic Image:** Init +4; Atk staff +1 melee (1d6 dam); AC 14; HD 6d8; hp 28; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP spell check (+6) 3 spells (select from list below*); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4; AL L.

(1) **Dr. Xill Brain Dome:** Init +8; no attack; AC 16; HD 20d20; hp 200; MV 0'; Act 3d20; SP image, telepathy, triple damage from fire, regenerate 5hp/round, powerful illusion generation, create and control holographic Dr. Xill; SV Fort +6, Ref -15, Will +1; AL L.

The Statues: These Lava Children lurch forward from their stone pillars and move toward the nearest PC, spewing lava each round. Clever PCs can lure the **Lava Children** toward the central dome, where their 15' spew will cross the 10' mist gap and automatically hit the dome for triple damage. **Note:** The Lava Children will exhaust their magma and life after 8 spews (fewer if damaged). They regurgitate lava indiscriminately toward the PCs without regard for allies in the path of destruction.

(6) **Lava Children:** Init -2; Atk lava-gurge +0 ranged (see below 15'); AC 16; HD 4d8; hp 16 (6 remaining); MV 30' or tunnel stone 60'; Act 1d20; SP in dormant state cannot be harmed, lava-gurge (DC 10 Ref save or 1d7 fire, reduce Lava Child hp by 2); SV Fort +3, Ref -3, Will +1; AL N.

If any PC attacks the dome, Dr. Xill will immediately use telepathy to distract them by offering to spare them and grant rewards of service under his mentorship. If refused, he summons the Ice Wurm from the mist. If the brain is destroyed, the final test below *will not occur*. The players have truly killed a near immortal entity. Within the dome, a massive pink brain will be seen hemorrhaging under the melted and broken ice. PCs searching the brain cavity discover Dr. Xill's priceless **Tablets of Ice and Fire**. The knowledge within these tablets can be studied to potentially learn 5 spells (**Chill Touch**, **Flaming Hands**, **Ward Portal**, **Fire Resistance**, **Monster Summoning***). However, Dr. Xill's living will force also controlled the delicate thermal balance of his three towers. A few rounds after the dome is

destroyed, the room becomes hot and the entire lair succumbs to surrounding lava wastelands. After 10 rounds, the entire place collapses. See the **Collapsing Lair Table**.

Collapsing Lair Table—C2

Round 1: The room temperature notably rises and a rumbling is heard as ice cracks.

Rounds 2-5: The ice begins to melt. Water pours across the floor. A DC 10 Ref save must be made each round. If failed, the PC loses 1 round falling and attempting to regain balance in the slippery water/ice mixture. Wearing spiked boots grants +5 to this save.

Rounds 6-9: Ice falls in chunks. A DC 13 Ref save must be made each round. If the PC fails, they are struck for 1d6 damage.

Round 10: Huge ice chunks fall. A DC 15 Ref save must be made this round or the PC suffers 3d7 damage from collapsing walls and ceilings.

Round 11: Total collapse, everyone within is dead.

Xill's Final Test

If the PCs destroy his holographic image, they gain 1 test point, or 2 if they do so without a single PC dying.

If the dome is not destroyed, Dr. Xill (holographic) seemingly rises from the dead and brushes off his wounds, slowly clapping. This unbelievable act should give everyone another chance to disbelieve the illusion (DC 25 Will save). His next action is based on the highest total number of test points earned by any PC:

0-1: *"These worthless dolts are good for death alone. Release the misty serpent!"*

From below the mist, Dr. Xill opens the portal to the plane of ice and a massive Ice Wurm will emerge and attack PCs one round after entering the chamber.

(1) **Ice Wurm:** Init +3; Atk SP frost breath +5 ranged (see below); AC 14; HD 6d6; hp 20; MV fly 30'; Act 1d20; SP frost breath (1d10 cold damage to all targets within a 5'x30' space, initiative order lowered by 3, PCs whose initiative drops below 1 are frozen for 1 round, then re-roll initiative); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C.



2-3: *“Congratulations! You have freed my true form. Claim your reward, quickly!” He reveals a book of icy crystal tablets and he tosses it at your feet. “This breaks my bonds! The place is no more!” The room begins to crumble!*

This is an elaborate illusion created by Dr. Xill with an effective spell check of 30. Massive chunks of ice appear to crash down and shatter into the chamber. Use the **Collapsing Lair Table—C2** above. If the PCs do not flee after 3 rounds, the Ice Wurm emerges and attacks. The illusion fades after a day, when the crystal tablets melt into puddles.

4: Dr. Xill reaches out telepathically to the spell-casting PC with the highest Int. and presents an offer for service.

If accepted, the other PCs are teleported above ground miles away. The selected PC must now roll on the **Service Check Table—S3** below.

If rejected, Dr. Xill's mental contact causes a contest of Personalities. Dr. Xill has a +5 in this contest. If the PC wins, they realize the central dome is the focal center of Dr. Xill's consciousness, not the figure standing before them. A loss stuns the PC for 1d3 rounds. Either way, the Ice Wurm attacks the group (as in result 1 above).

5-7: Same as result 4 above. However, Dr. Xill is a little desperate to gain the PC's service, resulting in differences:

If accepted, the PC gains +3 on their **Service Check Table—S3** roll(s) and can ask for a minor favor, including healing a party member or teleporting the other PCs to a specific safe location.

If rejected, Dr. Xill has +3 in the contest of Personalities.

8 or higher: Same as result 4 above. However, Dr. Xill sees the PC as a protégé, resulting in differences:

If accepted, he concedes to almost any bargain requested, and reveals he has the ability to bring any PC who died from a freezing effect back to life. The PC also gains +5 on their **Service Check Table—S3** roll(s).

If rejected, Dr. Xill is extremely dejected—so much so, that no contest of Personalities is necessary, and the PC is suddenly aware that the central dome is the focal center housing Dr. Xill's consciousness, life force, intelligence, and the crystal tablets containing his magical knowledge.

Service Check Table—S3

1d20 + Int mod + Per mod + Luck mod
(cannot burn luck on this roll)

Natural 1 or lower: You suffer a gruesome, ignoble death in a failed experiment.

2-11: After 6 months of labor working in arcane rituals and strange experiments, the PC has gained 1 minor corruption from the work. The PC also gains 1d14 experience points. Roll another service check to see what occurs during your next term of service.

12-14: After a month, you are instructed to make a supply run. You may escape or stay in service by rolling again. Either way, your apprenticeship has yielded a permanent +1 spell check to any one spell.

15-17: After a few weeks, you hatch a plan to escape by sacrificing a simulacrum of yourself. This plan will cause you to suffer 1 major corruption and a permanent -1 to Personality. If you don't execute the plan, you must roll again for the next term of service.

18-19: After 6 months of work, Dr. Xill trusts you to travel outside the tower as his agent. You can break free at this point or stay in service and roll again for the next term. Either way, your diligent work under his mastery earns you a permanent +1 spell check to any one spell.

20-22: After a month of impressive service, Dr. Xill has become endeared to you. He provides you more freedom and the ability to work from the field. You can call on him as a patron with a +2 invoke patron (results as determined by the Judge), and he will require arcane knowledge periodically. However, during your term he also conducted a series of subtle, cruel experiments on your sleep and meditative reality. These experiences gave you 1d7 experience points, 1 minor and 1 major corruption. You also secured some arcane mastery: you gain 2 new random spells with an additional +1 to their spell check results.

23 or higher: After 10 months, you finally outwit Dr. Xill and escape his cruel service. In addition, you make off with some of his famed crystal spell tablets. The magical knowledge within gives you access to 1d3 random spells. You also gain a permanent +1 Int and +1 Luck.

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